

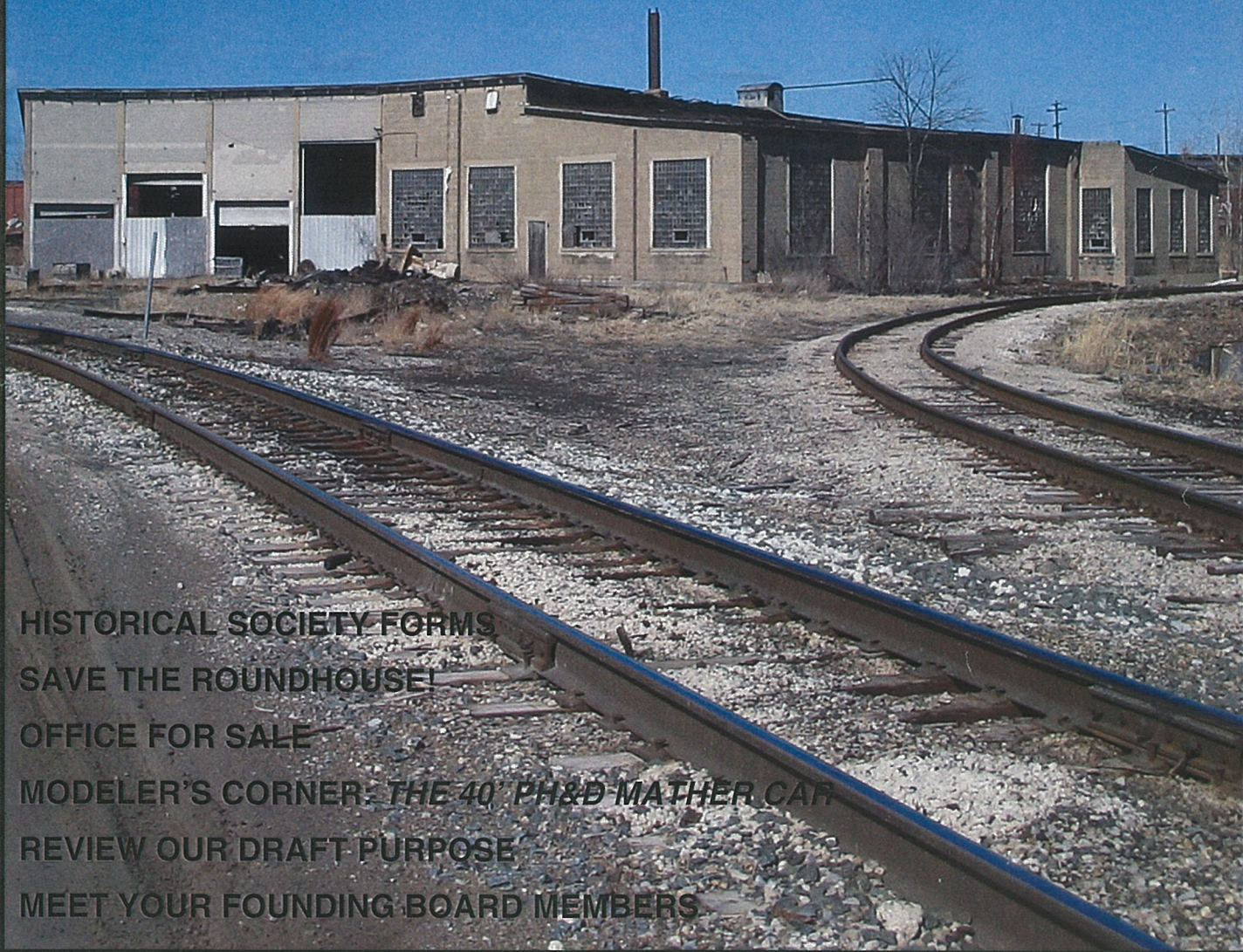
THE MARKER LIGHT

NUMBER 1

THE PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2008

ONLY THREE REMAIN



HISTORICAL SOCIETY FORMS

SAVE THE ROUNDHOUSE!

OFFICE FOR SALE

MODELER'S CORNER: *THE 40' PH&D MATHER CAR*

REVIEW OUR DRAFT PURPOSE

MEET YOUR FOUNDING BOARD MEMBERS

COVER: ONLY THREE REMAIN ~ We have a chance to save this local rail transportation treasure before it's too late.

PG. 2: From Where I Sit; Rail Historical Society Forms

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PG. 4: Modeler's Corner: The 40' Mather Box Car; Draft Purpose for Your Review; The Founding Board



Welcome to the PH&DRR Historical Society!

Ok, we're in! I'm very excited about this new organization for a number of reasons. First, we all get a chance to meet on a regular basis to swap stories and share opinions. Since many of us are railroad modelers, the opportunity to trade information helps those who want to base their layout on this classic short line.

Second, our major concern is the future of the roundhouse in the wye at the end of 32nd street. Incredibly, there are only three, original roundhouses in the entire state and we have one of them! We are very fortunate that this still stands in St. Clair County, in Port Huron Township, and we will be the leading organization in the effort to save and restore this historic building. It will take work but we have the talent and the vision to make this happen. With everyone's help, we can preserve the roundhouse as a transportation museum that will be an asset to our community and contribute to the history of the south end of the city

Third, this little short line has many fans. Besides being home to generations of employees who spent a large part of their lives, going to work and raising their families, there are a significant number of rail fans and historians who understand the unique history and design of the line and how special this railroad was, serving so many diverse industries during its 67 year history.

FROM WHERE I SIT

And finally, it's up to all of us to help preserve the memories, the history, the documents and the archives that will be useful to rail preservationists and transportation historians for years to come.

So heads up: a membership meeting will be scheduled this Spring which will give you a chance to choose committees to join and become actively involved in the Society. See you soon!
Sandy Duffy, Editor

RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY FORMS

On Friday evening, January 4th, a small group of people met in the basement of the Quay Street Brewing Company to share the memories of a very special Michigan short line railroad known as the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad.

Among the notables who attended were former employees, 91 year-old Grace Paterson, Agent, Bill Schultz, Trainmaster and Bruce Sawdon, roundhouse foreman. And just 2 days shy of her 90th birthday was Kay Houghton, whose spouse was the late George Duffy, President. Also in the audience were daughters Michaela, with husband Gerry Kramer, Kathy Duffy and pal, Chuck Smith, Scott Beedon, supervisor of Port Huron Township, Dennis and Kay Klymko, longtime owners of Blue Water Hobbies, and 94 year-old Hubert Smith, who came with Gene Buel who is a noted dealer in area historic photographs. Mr. Smith's relatives worked for the predecessor, The Detroit Bay City & Western Railroad!

It was nice to see several rail fans from the southern end of the county attend, which shows how much the old PH&D is still remembered with fondness from so far away.

The focal point of the evening was a PowerPoint presentation which featured old shots of steam engines, diesels, different examples of boxcars through the decades, ex-PM cabooses, interior shots of the office and the roundhouse. These brought out feelings of great nostalgia.

A proposed draft of the purpose of the *Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Historical Society* was distributed to all for study. Duffy urged that suggestions and comments to the draft be submitted which would be used for final adoption by the new founding board of directors.

As the evening came to an end, enthusiasm was noticeable and many came away excited about the prospect of a railroad historical society formed to honor the PH&DRR.



Bruce Sawdon (left) scopes scrapbooks.



Kay Houghton hobnobs with Smith.



Bill Schultz (left, center) trades tales.

**SAVE THE ROUNDHOUSE:
82 YEAR-OLD STUCTURE LAST OF THREE**

The most noticeable feature in Duffy's Powerpoint presentation was news that the roundhouse at the 32nd street "wye" is now one of only three railroad roundhouses left standing in Michigan. Saving and restoring this historical structure is one of the major proposals behind the formation of the PH&DRRHS.

The roundhouse was rebuilt in 1926 after a fire which all but destroyed the older 4-stall building. At that time, capacity was increased to the current 6-stall structure.

Curious visitors will find that all tracks have been removed leading from the building, and the once spotless roundhouse floor is overgrown with weeds and shrubs. While the walls are basically sound, the roof has fallen in and needs

a total replacement. Windows, doors, heating and plumbing would also need to be re-installed.

Since this is the last of three, vintage, railroad roundhouses, it would be an irreplaceable loss to this community if we continue to ignore the historical importance of this unique building. Restoring this roundhouse as a transportation museum would be an educational asset and tourist attraction that the entire city would be proud of.

As a member, you can play an important role in helping to save it. By becoming actively involved on committees, you'll be able to help spread the word.

If you dare to dream, imagine how we can restore the building and perhaps even provide housing for, say, a lonely ex-PH&D caboose. Gee, I wonder where we can find one of those?



Ca. 1948 photo by Askar-Shain



Ca. 2007 photo by Sandy Duffy

PH&DRR OFFICE FOR SALE: \$25,000

The former office building is for sale. It's currently owned by Peter Frantz, whose brother Ted was also in the audience in January. Peter had begun restoration of the main office with a new roof and was planning on installing a tooling operation until ill health prevented further work.

Vandalism has occurred, with some exterior walls

"tagged" with gang markings and graffiti and many windows are missing. A roof replacement is needed for the "annex", which is the original office building, built in the 1920's.

Wouldn't both office and roundhouse, inside the "wye", make a wonderful transportation museum for the city, township and the county?



East side graffiti. Note new roof, thanks to Pete Frantz!



Annex roof damage above office entrance.



MODELER’S CORNER: THE 40’ MATHER CAR

From its inception in 1917, the railroad practiced thrifty management; it bought used motive power and cabooses from other roads, kept them serviced and used them efficiently. This approach also included rolling stock.

In the early 1930’s, the railroad began leasing cars, rather than buying, with 400 wooden, outside-braced, 40’ boxcars from the Mather Stock Car Company out of Chicago (“Old Nate” Georgian, a roundhouse foreman, came

from Mather). Numbering was from 1006 to 1405, although some historians extend the numbering to 1522

Interior dimensions were 40’ 4” by 8.5’ and 7’10” tall with a 2,672 cubic foot capacity, and a carrying load rated at 40 tons. The ends were supported by four vertical “Z” braces and the roof was metal with a noticeable overhang. Top-sliding doors, wooden roof-walks and a vertical brake assembly completed the design. When asked about the color of these cars, the late Sam Soini, Vice-President Sales, described them as “shit-brown” with cream lettering!

The November 1931 edition of the *Railway Equipment Register* lists those exact same 400 cars. By the beginning of the 1960’s, most were gone, replaced by the PS-1, 1300 series, Pullman-Standard box cars, also leased, which came online in 1947.

Sunshine Models came out with a kit in the early 1990’s, with the 1006 to 1522 decal numbers. Currently, two excellent ready-to-run, detailed versions by Proto 2000, #1393 and #1509, are available at Pastime Hobbies (810-982-2874), 2700 Pine Grove Avenue in Port Huron. Order from owner Gary Kenney, a longtime PH&DRR fan.

Railroad Model Craftsman, Feb 1991; Martin Lofton, Prototype Data Sheet, Sunshine Models; Railway Equipment Register, Vol. 46, Nov 1931

DRAFT PURPOSE PROPOSED

For those who could not make it to the meeting, a draft of the purpose of the Society is offered for your evaluation and comment. Please offer any additions or comments to WHLRYDR@aol.com or in writing to PH&DRRHS, 3114 Strawberry Lane, Port Huron, Mi. 48060

“The purpose of The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Historical Society is:

To collect, preserve, and archive historical documents, photographs, drawings, artifacts and equipment relating to The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Company and its predecessors, The Port Huron Southern Railway and The Detroit Bay City & Western Railroad;

To obtain, restore and maintain the roundhouse at 32nd Street for use as a museum, as well as other structures, artifacts, and rolling stock, as they may become available;

To accumulate, conserve, and index all data relating to the above-named railroads for the use of scholars, rail fans and scale modelers. ”

FOUNDING BOARD FORMED

In February, nine individuals agreed to form the first board of directors of the *Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Historical Society*. All those involved hold the short line in special esteem and want to see it recognized in and outside the community. Each man brings his own unique talent to help the Society reach the goals in these early stages of formation.

Immediate tasks have begun to emerge. First, to agree on and adopt the Purpose of the Society and a set of By-laws, then identify working committees, and finally apply to become a recognized non-profit entity.

The Board will schedule a Spring Membership meeting to sign on members, attract committee activity and discuss the future of the society.

**BOARD of DIRECTORS
2008**

- D. Scott Beedon**
- George Y. Duffy, Jr.**
- Ted Frantz**
- Thomas J. Gaffney**
- Cecil “Bud” Gilbert**
- Dennis Klymko**
- Joseph Mericka**
- Bruce Sawdon**
- Allen Stevens**

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