

THE MARKER LIGHT

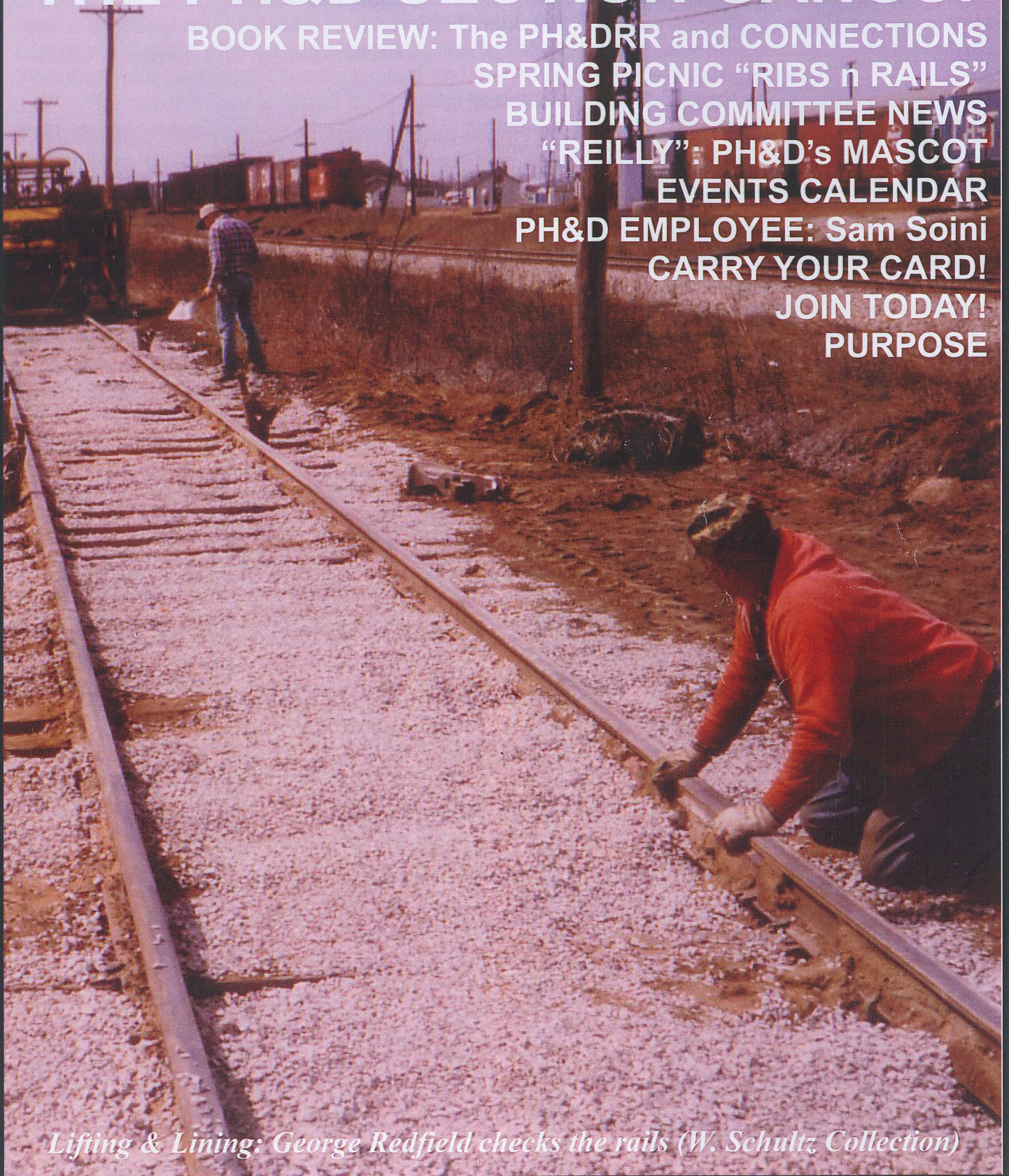
NUMBER 22

THE PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2015

THE PH&D SECTION GANGS!

BOOK REVIEW: The PH&DRR and CONNECTIONS
SPRING PICNIC "RIBS n RAILS"
BUILDING COMMITTEE NEWS
"REILLY": PH&D's MASCOT
EVENTS CALENDAR
PH&D EMPLOYEE: Sam Soini
CARRY YOUR CARD!
JOIN TODAY!
PURPOSE



Lifting & Lining: George Redfield checks the rails (W. Schultz Collection)

Cover: Section Gang foreman Redfield gives an eye to assure a level track. That small gravel was easy to tamp.

PG. 2: From Where I Sit; Book Review: *PH&DRR and CONNECTIONS 1982 -1984*

PG. 3: Building Committee News

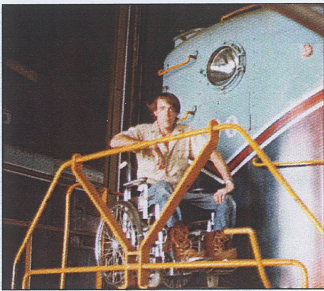
PG. 4: The PH&D Section Gangs

PG. 5: (Cont.)

PG. 6: REILLY: A Real Railroad Mascot

PG. 7: "Ribs N Rails": Annual Spring Picnic

PG. 8: 2015 Calendar; PH&DRR Employee: Sam Soini; Join; Purpose of the Society; 2015 Board of Directors



Dear Friends of the PH&D:

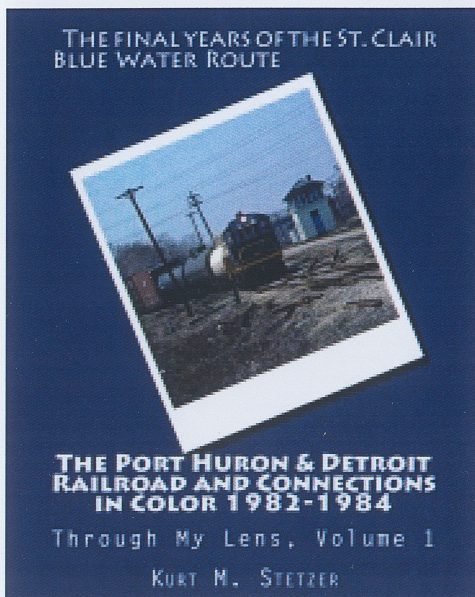
I always respect those guys I meet who actually held a spike mall on a section gang. I know how hard that work is. Today's roads are mostly all mechanized. Saves time and money. I had the rare opportunity to work on the PH&D section gang each summer, starting in 1965. It was in every sense of the work back-breaking work.

FROM WHERE I SIT Working alongside many different guys with all different backgrounds was a learning experience that taught me tolerance and compassion. It also gave me confidence and a strong back. Working on a railroad teaches respect for heavy equipment, some of it moving! Everyday you could be seriously injured if you were careless. We were out down south of the Davis Road crossing replacing rail when I saw some fellow college boys get their fingers crushed when someone dropped the rail off the jacks without warning. No lawsuits, just stupid moves.

One year, when the first unit train of coal came online, it physically moved the line south four or five feet because of the light 85 pound rail! Next summer, we watched a huge gang of Mexicans brought in to replace the line from Tappan to Belle River with 132 pound rail. Tough dudes.

If you've been out to the Wye offices, you've seen some incredible changes. We continue to improve thanks to a dedicated volunteer group. Slowly but surely. Why not come out? We need your help. You can lend a hand and watch trains at the same time. Perfect combination. And our new patio area has been used recently for slabs of baby back ribs cooking on the grill. Sounds like a plan, eh? Matter of fact, our Spring Picnic on June 20 features "Ribs N Rails". Bring the family and your camera!

Finally, best wishes to Board Member Chad Thompson for a successful recovery. **Sandy Duffy**



BOOK REVIEW: PH&DRR and CONNECTIONS 1982—1984 by Kurt M. Stetzer

Through My Lens Volume 1 - The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad and Connections in Color 1982-1984 is the first book by our long time "unofficial" photographer and friend Kurt Stetzer. Kurt witnessed the last years of operation and was in the roundhouse when the Last Train North finished its run.

"This book features 127 color photographs in a retrospective of the operations of the PH&D, Grand Trunk Western, Chessie System, and Canadian National in Port Huron as I saw them through my lens from 1982 to 1984." The book contains invaluable down line images of a train from Tappan to Marine City, perfect for scale modeler reference. Included are shots of the roundhouse, the 32nd Street office, engines, and cars assigned to customers, as well as never before published shots of the end of the line.

Kurt has offered a generous donation to the Society of \$5.00 per book available at phdrrailroad.com or Laughing Frog Images. Order today!

BUILDING COMMITTEE NEWS

If you come out to the “RibsNRails” on Saturday, June 20th, you’ll see some exciting new improvements to our Society’s office building! First, we’re dedicating our new patio area by cooking up some lip smacking baby-back ribs, courtesy of Maryann and Sandy Duffy. These babies are dripping with sweet Kansas City BBQ sauce. Next, the former Agent’s and Superintendent’s offices are getting new drywall with a wooden tongue and groove wainscoting, with a nice, new blue carpeting. Visitors will see some exquisite matted and framed magazine ads showcasing the New York Central’s Twentieth Century Limited and the Pere Marquette’s dining service.

The second floor is slated for finishing the plywood subfloor which will invite future additions such as our research library, theater, archive storage, and the Society’s main offices.

All of these improvements have been possible from local donors, member volunteers, and a board of directors who share the vision of a world-class Michigan short line transportation museum. In time, visitors will be able to use original artifacts such as period maps and blueprints, a room full of books and periodicals related to Michigan railroads to aid in research and study.

A theater room will allow hundreds of films about railroading in the last century to be shown on a monthly basis. Noted speakers, experts in transportation history, will appear quarterly to lecture on topics of interest. Subjects may range from railroad collectibles, Thumb-area railroads, and downriver commerce.

All of this takes time and money. But someday, Port Huron will boast of a railroad transportation museum that will draw tourists, students, and researchers from the entire Midwest. Come on out and see the beginnings of this dream. We’ll have a plate of ribs waiting for you!



Society volunteers **Andrew Armstead** (L) and **Bill Rauli** chisel away excess glue to reach an even plane for drywall.



The heavy lifters: (L2R) **Dave Schultz**, **Bruce Sawdon**, and **Jack Allison** helping to renovate the Agent’s office.

PH&D SECTION GANGS

He and Goulet were up on the stake truck sliding off the blackened ties made heavy with creosote. The sun wasn't high yet and there was a slight breeze coming off the St. Clair River. He was at one end with Bob at the other. He held the closed-handled track shovel with his right hand, raised it over his head and threw the square blade into the tie. It lodged with a dull thud. In unison, both men pulled their shovels and slid the tie out and onto the pile below. They went for another tie. He aimed for the middle and raised the shovel again and threw. Just as the blade hit the tie, a wet splash of creosote stung his eye. "Jay-sus!" he cried. "Sonna-bitch, you better get to the water bucket," yelled Goulet. With his eye blinking and burning, he climbed down and headed for the big yellow water Thermos. It was going to be a long day.

From "Stones From the Roadbed" by George Y. Duffy

The men of the PH&D section gang contained an assortment of different types from green college boys working during the summer, seasoned veterans with a family to support, to others with a rough past. All spent 8 hours a day of hard physical labor. In the mid 60s, the only machines this group had were a pair of generator-driven hand tamping machines. The rest of the work was done by hand. Pulling spikes with claw bars, yanking worn out ties with tie tongs, digging out trenches for new ties, spiking rails through tie plates, moving rail with lining bars, and tamping gravel and cinders with track shovels, it was all done the old way.

The gang would gather at dawn under a porcelain light on the west side of the round-house before heading down the line. The motor car would sputter out hitched to two lorries filled with tools. A brief stop in South Park for some donuts and then down to the "job". Whether replacing rail, lifting track, or replacing a 150 feet of track with new ties, it was tough, back-bending



A torch is brought in to heat up angle bar bolts as the men try to feed loose gravel into that Diamond Crystal switch.



Two Simplex jacks stand next to the blue Dodge Powerwagon near the high mount switch stand.



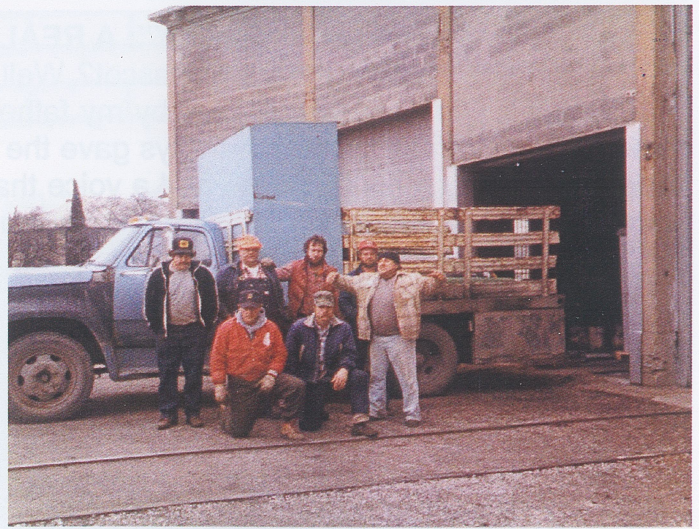
The gang has just replaced a switch point which is being ground with a grinder as more loose gravel is brought in.



Bob Goulet (L) and Fred Witter (R) lean on the pneumatic tampers as Sandy Duffy, and Bill Parneski feed the gravel.



Superintendent Bill Munce listens as the gang gathers for the day's assignment. Foreman George Redfield is on the right.



Joe Zuniga raises both arms as the boys pose in front of the bay. He could swing a spike mall like a windmill.



The trucks are separated and on the ground as Bill Munce and Bruce Sawdon walk around the wreck. Sladowski smiles.



This was back in the day when junction railroads helped each other. The PH&D was loaned that hook to get the job done.

All Photos this page from the William A. Schultz Collection



A bulk head flat car is jacked up as the brass stops by to inspect the job. A line of PH&D cars await cleaning.



He's leaning on that lining bar as another man drives a spike home. In the 1980s, a small backhoe made the work easier.

“REILLY”: A REAL RAILROAD MASCOT

Did you know we have a mascot? Well, we do. His name is Reilly. Reilly came to life in 1965 from a pile of parts collected by my father and Roundhouse Foreman Nate Georgian. Nate was a cantankerous gent who always gave the section gang hell, usually with a half chewed cigar clenched between his teeth. He had a voice that sounded squeezed and forced from a tight wind-pipe. In a recent interview with my mom, we learn how Reilly came to be:

ML: How did we get Reilly?

KH: *It all started when your father and I were at the Greenbrier Hotel in the Spring of 1965. Some friends of your father were the owners of the Ohio Stove Company and one night, when we came into the Old White (cocktail lounge in the Hotel), we saw this huge custom-made cast iron frying pan on one of the tables. They had it made at the Stove Company especially for George. It was so big that it covered the table and was filled with peanuts. So when we returned home, we wondered what we could do for them.*

ML: That must have been amazing. Then what happened?

KH: *We went out to the railroad where George talked to Nate in the roundhouse. Between them, they began to assemble a pile of parts and pretty soon they had “Reilly” all laid out on the floor. Over the next few days or so, Nate put him together. He was a smash when he was finished!*

ML: Very cool. Then what?

KH: *Well, during the Fall, we returned to White Sulphur Springs and we had to get him there. We put him in the vestibule on the Chesapeake and Ohio train bound for the Greenbrier station in West Virginia. He was covered with a burlap bag. After we arrived, that evening, we arranged for a bell hop to bring him into the Old White, across the dance floor, and placed him in front of the Stove Company officers. They were bowled right over and were completely surprised.*

ML: Ok, now they have him. How did you get Reilly back?

KH: *Well, about 20 years later, the Stove Company changed hands and the owners figured that Reilly should be returned. And we’ve had him ever since! I think as soon as the Society is ready, it should go to you all.*

ML: *Fantastic! We should have an elaborate ceremony! On behalf of the Board, I thank you!*



Nate Georgian and President George Duffy with “Reilly” after fabrication in the PH&DRR roundhouse.



50 years later, Kay Houghton stands with “Reilly”. Note the Bill Boyd roller skate next to Reilly’s right foot: future article.



CHEF DU JOUR

“RIBS N RAILS”

THE PH&DRRHS ANNUAL SPRING PICNIC

SATURDAY, JUNE 20 ~ 10:00AM to 3:00PM

PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD

HISTORICAL SOCIETY WYE OFFICE

BRING YOUR FAMILY! BRING YOUR CAMERA!

FREE BABY BACK RIBS! LEMONADE!

LATEST MARKER LIGHT AVAILABLE (FREE TO MEMBERS)

2015 EVENTS CALENDAR

June 20	Spring Picnic	PH&D Wye	10:00AM
July 9	Board Meeting	“ “	6:00PM
Aug 13	“ “	“ “	6:00PM

All members are welcome to attend monthly board meetings.

Saturdays at the Wye is in effect. Check the website for last minute weekend gatherings and schedules.

Website: www.phdrailroad.com
 Email: info@phdrailroad.com

If you'd like to come up on a Saturday and spend time watching and photographing trains, make sure you have a paid-up membership card allowing unlimited access to the Society-owned half of the "wye" property, which is marked by the yellow stripe. You may park in 32nd Street west of the stripe.

PH

PORT HURON and DETROIT RAILROAD CO.

- St. Clair Blue Water Route -

D

PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP CARD

NAME: _____

JOINED: ____ / ____ **MO/YEAR**

Regulations covering access to U.S. rail yards are in effect, administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and enforced by local enforcement agencies. Accordingly, those with PH&DRRHS membership cards must, if requested, present their cards to authorized personnel from either CN, CSX, or St. Clair County Sheriff's officers. When visiting, please stay on the west side of the yellow line (PH&DRRHS property).

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

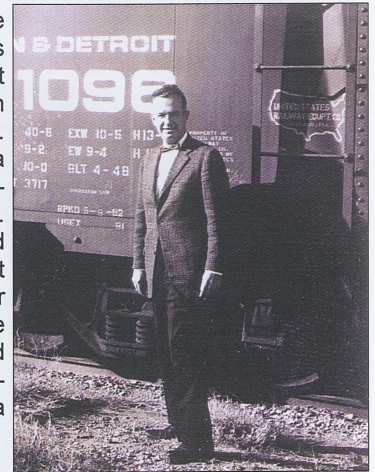
To collect, archive, preserve, and present, all for the education of the community, historical documents, photographs, drawings, artifacts and equipment relating to The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Company and its predecessors, The Port Huron Southern Railway and The Detroit Bay City & Western Railroad, as well as the Grand Trunk Western/Canadian National, and the Pere Marquette/Chesapeake and Ohio.

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.

**PH&DRR EMPLOYEES:
 SAMUEL SOINI**

Sam joined the company in July of 1939. His position was Vice-President of Sales. Sam was also an expert at routes and rates. All cars were assigned a commodity code which determined the freight charges. When other roads switched to the computer, we kept using pen and paper. If ever a question came up from the Class I roads, they could always go to Sam for accuracy. Sam always wore a bowtie and smoked a pipe!



JOIN NOW AND GET ONBOARD!

The *Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Historical Society* needs your talent! We invite you to join committees, contribute your time with hands on restoration projects, and be on board at this early, critical stage.

Membership, publicity, web design, resource development, lawn mowing, and acquisitions, are just a few of the areas that you can help out with.

For only \$30 a year, you'll receive 4 nifty newsletters (hard copy and pdf), a chance to help create the area's first railroad transportation museum complex, have exclusive Member-only access to the 32nd Street "Wye" and a Class I rail yard.

Mail to: PH&DRRHS, P.O. Box 217, Marysville, MI 48040.

**BOARD of DIRECTORS
 2015**

- Jack Allison
- Thomas Boswell
- JoJo Burgette
- George Y. Duffy, Jr.
- Aaron Farmer
- T.J. Gaffney
- Bruce Sawdon
- David N. Schultz
- Chad Thompson

SPECIAL THANKS:

To Douglas Paquette for the donation of a PH&D marked switchlock!

SPECIAL THANKS:

Again, long time loyal member Hugh Hales for covering the publication of *The Marker Light* for 2015!!!