

# THE MARKER LIGHT

NUMBER 27

THE PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FALL 2016

## THE “LITTLE BAR SPECIAL” THE ULTRA-RARE SHOTS of RON PISKOR

Holiday Luncheon ~ Project 52 Update  
Collector's Corner: PH&D Switchlocks



SPECIAL & FREIGHT MEET AT THE CHRYSLER PLANT (PHOTO: RON PISKOR)

Cover: North-bound #60 waits in the Chrysler passing track as #62 heads south with *Castleblayne* in tow.

PG. 2: *From Where I Sit*; 2016 Holiday Luncheon December 11

PG. 3: Project 52

PG. 4: The "Little Bar Special": The ultra-rare shots of Ron Piskor

PG. 5: (Cont.)

PG. 6: Collector's Corner: *The PH&D Switchlock*

PG. 7:

PG. 8: 2016 Calendar; PH&DRR Employee: *George Duffy*; Join; Purpose of the Society; Board of Directors



### FROM WHERE I SIT

Dear Friends of the PH&D:

We have our display track! Thanks to the generosity of our donors and the collaboration of our volunteers, as well as Burgess Contracting and Armond Cassil, we got it done. The crew absolutely nailed it and it's properly "dressed", as Section Foreman **George Redfield** would say. Caboose #52 has been spotted westerly and now we must raise the money to get her assigned engine, ALCO S-1 #52, back home.

I know you'll be pleased with the interview with and the incredible photographs of Ron Piskor. He reveals that he was in the area one day to catch the consist of the "Special" and began following it! Lucky for us, his photos of the "Little Bar Special" are the only ones that we know in existence. He followed it all the way to Chartier Street in Marine City, where *Castleblayne* was spotted.

Area collectors and PH&D fans have sought out PH&D-marked Adlake switch locks and we cover them in this issue. These are relatively rare and their values continue to increase. Locks with keys are the ultimate goal and now is the time to snatch these up. Generally, these switch locks from the small shortlines are getting harder to find, especially the Michigan roads. Fortunately, the Society already has an impressive inventory and are always looking for more.

Be sure to note this year's date for our annual **Holiday Luncheon** at the Dorsey House, December 11. It's on a Sunday afternoon instead of Saturday. Beth and the fantastic crew out there know us by now, as this is our third outing. As usual, it'll be upstairs, and we have the same room. Please come out and enjoy a few hours of railroading memories.

Lastly, we note the passing of **Ray Warsinski**, **Charlie Brennan**, and **Carmen Farquhar**. Ray and Charlie were train crewmen and Carmen was on the section gang. They are dearly missed.

We have 5 months to raise approximately \$40,000 needed to bring our beloved ALCO home. "Project 52" has donors responding to the call. But we need you! Will you help us get her home? We've set up a special savings account which is on our website for your donation. See you in December!

**Sandy Duffy**

## HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

**Sunday, December 11 ~ NOON - 3:00PM**

**DORSEY HOUSE BAR & GRILLE**

**Special Presentation: *FOLLOWING 62* by Jeff Mast**

**Come Join Us! Railroad Memorabilia Auction**

CASH BAR      SEPARATE CHECKS      CASUAL DRESS  
DROLL STORIES      FADING MEMORIES

## PROJECT 52 NEWS

It took the gang from Armond Cassil a little over two days to install the 100 foot display track and it was impressive! Their determination and persistence resulted in a roadbed that, when finished, was “dressed to the nines”! The ballast was even between every tie, the angle bars were fitted perfectly with all bolts, washers, and nuts, and they even installed a Ramapo switch stand! Caboose #52 was moved back to its resting spot to the western end and awaits its matching numbered engine, ALCO #52.

Our next task is to raise the approximately \$7,500 to retrofit the engine for travel and the \$7,500 cost to move it over connecting lines bound for CSX and our PH&DRR wye. Then there’s the cost of contracting to lift both engine and trucks, swinging them over, and placing both onto our display track. Accordingly, the PH&DRR Historical Society has created a “Project 52” account which is set up to receive donations to help cover this historic undertaking. So far, we’ve seen donations of over \$10,000 to pay for the installation of this display piece, for which we are deeply grateful. Members of the Society have been generous in gathering and paying for the rails, ties, and parts which were used to make this wonderful display possible. We wish to thank **Kay Houghton, Mino Kramer, the Gaffney family, Hugh Hales, and Allen Stevens** for their generous donations to get this started. Then **Dave Burgess** and his crew for preparing the site at a discounted rate. And speaking of discounts, Adair Salvage, for their cost of the ties. In-kind donations of labor and materials, **Dane Reynolds, John Strauchman** for the original PH&D rails from the Michigan Elevator siding, **Chad Thompson, Aaron Farmer, Bill Rauli, Shawn Maerten**, for their physical efforts in getting the materials on site, and **James Baker** for the use of his trailer. Lastly, a nod to **Dennis Rieck** of *Armond Cassil Railroad Construction* for the installation. He even remembered a job he did for the railroad back in the early 1980s!



*Ah, the good ol’ days. Spikin’ to gauge!*



*The wonderful crew from Armond Cassil. Thanks guys!*

Caboose #52 has been getting much-needed attention. Thanks to **Tom Gaffney** and **Aaron Farmer, Dwayne Fuehring** from the *Mad River & NKP Railroad* in Bellevue, Ohio, came in to lend his skills with the welding torch. Metal work repair is needed before flooring replacement and we are very grateful for this collaboration between the two museums.



*Dwayne grinding away.*



*The bay window exposed.*



*Gaffney, chop-chop.*



*Aaron, preparing the site.*

## FOLLOWING THE SPECIAL: The “Little Bar Special” Shots of Ronald Piskor

Recently, we were contacted by one Ron Piskor who revealed that one day he happened to see a “Special” heading south: ALCO #62 with *Castleblayney* in tow. He immediately canceled plans to head further north, turned around and began to follow, camera in hand. What resulted was a series of remarkably rare photographs. We don’t run across anyone who’s ever taken a shot of the car heading downline, let alone anyone who followed the trip all the way to Marine City. Let’s find out how that happened.

### Interview

**ML:** How did you happen upon the “Little Bar Special”?

**RS:** *Back then, I loved windsurfing and would come up to Port Huron to surf Lake Huron. For some reason, normally I’d run 94 all the way up but this time I cut up Gratiot and saw the headlight and I figured “Well, we’ll see what’s going on.” That’s when I saw the locomotive with the consist, with Castleblayney on her and thought there’s no way I’m going to do any beach activity that day. I had the camera with me that day and basically photographed you from here (32nd Street Wye) all the way to Marine City. I think I have couple shots of it here in the yard. Then I started thinking about making the first shot count so then I went down to the Edison plant where I got that “going away” shot of you guys going past the power plant. And then beyond that, it was just hit or miss, trying to gauge what speed you were traveling at. I was like a paparazzi!*

**ML:** That shot is remarkable for a number of reasons. The plant, engine, and Castleblayney are all gone.

**RS:** I’ve always been intouch with Tom Dixon with the C&O Historical Society so I know the history of Castleblayney. When I showed them these slides, they were always flipped out about shots of that car because it was once a C&O business car. Yeah, that shot at the power plant, I wanted to get that with the business car, I knew it was going to be kinda rare

**ML:** Did you head to Marysville then?

**RS:** *Yeah, the next shot was where I captured the “meet” shot, probably just north of Busha Highway, at the Chrysler Plant passing siding.*

**ML:** Did you get any shots of the Marysville depot?

**RS:** *Uh, no. (He’s right. But on another day, he got a wonderful shot of the freight engine spotting a car into the outside spur along side the loading docks.) I started trying to go in at the intersections but I wasn’t real familiar with them, but that’s what I did; kind of backtracked my way in from there.*

*When you guys got down to the Little Bar, I pretty much stayed there while they did the switching, you know, put the locomotive on the head end. When I was rolling south, I was looking for one area where the sun was breaking out. I did get a couple of them somewhere near the Belle River power plant. Always want to get one with the sun on it.*

**ML:** At Marine City, Bruce spotted the car just past Chartier Street where everyone got off. What happened then?

**RS:** *I can’t remember where the runaround was but that’s where they went next. It was down at the lumber yard?*

**ML:** Belle River. At the power plant.

**RS:** *Yep, at the power plant. Yeah, I kinda stayed with the engine since you guys had gone over to the Little Bar, while they did the runaround. They came back in abit and backed into the siding. Given the time you got down there, I figured it was going to be awhile before you came back. It would have been real dark then. These days, these guys with these high-tech digital cameras could have gotten some shots. Since I lived in Warren, I decided I’d head back.*

**ML:** Suppose it looks different now, eh?

**RS:** *Well, that was more than 30 years ago. It’s been a long time since those tracks were pulled.*

**ML:** One impressive shot was showing the crew switching the John Biewer lumber spur.

**RS:** *Those freight pictures were of course on another day. Any of those other shots were just random. I’d windsurfed Marysville Beach and down near Marine City and I always carried my Canon. If I heard the air horn blowing, I’d come out and try to catch the train. I’ve seen Kurt Stetzer’s shots and I kind of shot a lot of the same; it’s strange I never ran into him. I’d gotten the crew switching Chrysler near the depot and some of the yard down in St. Clair.*

**ML:** Any time we run across shots of switching customers, it’s special. Everything matters, car numbers, time of day, crew members. It all adds to the details rail fans and modelers like to have.

**RS:** *Well, I brought a bunch of slides most all PH&D. They’re out in my car. I can bring them in.*

**ML:** By all means!

And with that, Aaron Farmer and I were treated to an incredible show, viewing over 100 images of the PH&D that we’d never seen before. Perhaps we’ll encourage Ron to share with you!



*Ex-B&O PH&D ALCO #62 heading south with Castleblayney. Bruce Sawdon and Ray Warsinski in the cab.*



*Rarest of the rare, the Special meets the north-bound afternoon job waiting on the Chrysler run-around.*



*Cocktails and heading south bound for the Little Bar steak house in Marine City.*



*Might be Whiting Street in St. Clair. Can you hear that bell?*



*“Special” Engineer Bruce Sawdon waits as Conductor Ray Warsinski prepares for disembarkation.*

*Ray’s up on the steps while Bruce looks on. The director’s chairs were custom embroidered with “Castleblayney”. They’ve spotted the car just past Chartier Street where the party will disembark and head east to the Little Bar, a few blocks away. In the meantime, Bruce will take the car up to the Belle River plant run around to position the consist for the north bound trip. The President would alert them with a walkie-talkie in the restaurant when they were ready to leave the restaurant.*

**(ALL PHOTOS FROM THE RON PISCOR COLLECTION)**

## COLLECTORS CORNER: PH&DRR SWITCH LOCKS

When we were working for the PH&D, we all knew about switch locks. Both superintendents, **Bill Frazier** and **Bill Munce**, had a drawer full of them, along with their brass “PH&D” marked keys. Both lock and key were stamped “PH&D” and all trainmen, including Trainmaster **Bill Schultz**, carried keys. Roundhouse foreman **Bruce Sawdon** had keys, as did his predecessor, “**Old Nate**” **Georgian**. Bruce had keys because you never knew when the “brass” wanted the PV *Castleblaney* available for a trip down to the Little Bar in Marine City!

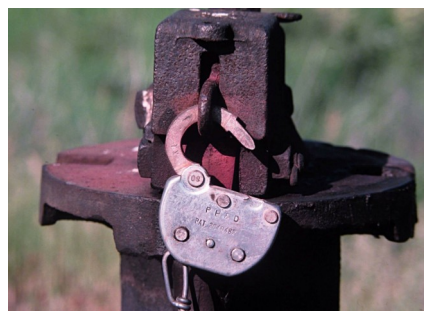
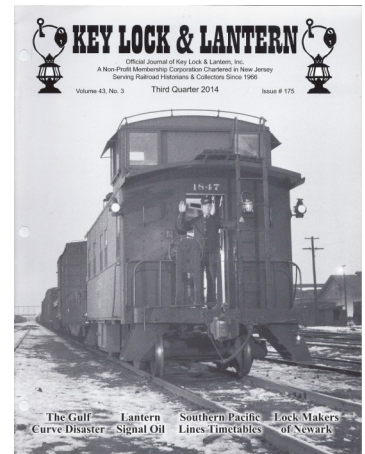
As for collecting, PH&D-marked locks occasionally appear on eBay, but not very often, making them relatively rare. Values can go up to \$125.00. Sold with a matching brass key, and that value goes further. Collectors prefer both when obtaining locks.

According to *Railrodiana Online*, “Railroad locks had to be strong enough to endure harsh, industrial conditions as well as repeated use. They also had to be standardized so that different employees could open them, provided they had the proper key. Locks evolved through a progression of styles, from very ornate customized variations to more utilitarian, standardized models.” Adams and Westlake (“Adlake”), supplied the PH&D with a standard steel switch lock.

**Bruce Sawdon** verified that most PH&D switch stands, both yard and main, were “high-mount” designs with red and green rectangle targets with a “V” shaped end. Low mount stands were seen in some of the yards, such as Diamond Crystal, Chrysler, and South Park areas. These earlier stands had just a large red round target.

All PH&D switch stands from incorporation were manufactured by Ramapo Ajax Corporation, later known as “Racor”. These were marked with #17 on the housing under the throw lever. Earliest patent dates are 1911. That makes these switch stands a direct connection to the Bill Boyd/Handy Brothers-era.

If you’re interested in collecting switch locks and keys, there is an organization called *Key, Lock, & Lantern* ( [www.klnl.org](http://www.klnl.org) ) which publishes a quarterly magazine for collectors. Additionally, there are railroad artifact collector events during the year and many are within a day’s drive from Michigan.



*Photo by Ron Piscor of a high mount switch stand with a PH&D stamped lock, ca. 1984.*



*(L) Ramapo Ajax #17 with original red target. This stand was originally assigned a switch leading into the roundhouse. Switch and stand removed in around 1975.*

*(R-top) “Ramapo-Ajax Corp Chicago, Ill” is an early stamping. Later versions read “Racor” which reflected the changes in the corporation name.*



*(R-Bottom) The patent date of “Oct 8, 1911”, dates this to the Handy Brothers era when the railroad and roundhouse were constructed.*



*“Mint” condition. Both front and back are virtually spotless. This lock features a script key hole cover, with “Adlake” in script, and a brass lock hook with stamping. On the rear is an excellent, clearly-stamped “PH&D” with patent number. An excellent example that went for over \$100. Dated 1974. From the Duffy Collection.*



*“Good” condition. The front shows little wear and the dust cover has strong spring action, with “Adlake” in script lettering. No stamp on lock hook. The back has a fairly legible “PH&D” and shows some surface patina. This lock hook contains stamping on this side. Attached to an original chain and dated 1974. Very nice example. From the Gaffney Collection*



*“Fair to Good” condition. This is a well worn example. “Adlake” is in block lettering, with stamping on the front of the lock hook. The reverse shows a very faint “PH&D”. Surface has an earned brown patina. The date of this one is 1975. Knowledgeable collectors inform me that both script or block dust covers depended upon whatever was in inventory at the time. From the Duffy Collection.*



**HOBOFEST 2016**

Friday night began with the traditional lighting of the “jungle” fire, with the *Michigan Kid*, Larry Yaek. This is always accompanied by a short history of hobos in America during the Great Depression. Then came the crowning of our Hobo King and Queen, **Mark and Michelle Wrubel**. They are special friends to the Society whose restaurant, Chef Shells provided the hobo stew which helped keep the crowd warm.

Notables in the crowd were **Bill Schultz**, former Trainmaster, and **Bill Munce**, Superintendent, as well as Sue and Kurt Stetzer.

Live music was on tap throughout Saturday, masterminded by the ever-popular **Dave Knisley**. A spam carving contest was under the direction of morning radio talk host, **Paul Miller** of WPHM.

The weekend ended with our traditional pancake, egg, and bacon breakfast on Sunday morning, held for the volunteers.



*Kind Lady (Jean Hall) anoints King & Queen Mark & Michelle Wrubel as HFest Chair Jo Burgett looks on.*



*Michigan Kid stands by the Spam Carving Contest. 83rd District candidate Jim Frank was the winner.*



*Music coordinator David Knisley serenades the Sunday crew.*

**2016 EVENTS CALENDAR**

Nov 12 Board Meeting 32nd St. Wye 9:00A  
 Dec 10 Board Meeting 32nd St. Wye 9:00A  
 Dec 10 Holiday Luncheon Dorsey House 12-3:00P

NOTE: **Board Meetings changed to 2nd Saturdays**  
 All members and guests are welcome to attend monthly board meetings.

**Saturdays at the Wye** has moved indoors. Check the website for events and announcements.

Website: [www.phdrailroad.com](http://www.phdrailroad.com)  
 Email: [info@phdrailroad.com](mailto:info@phdrailroad.com)

All members in good standing are issued membership cards which allow unlimited access to the Society-owned west half of the "wye" property marked by a yellow stripe.

**Please stay off CSX property especially the Roundhouse.**

	PORT HURON and DETROIT RAILROAD CO. - St. Clair Blue Water Route -
	PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY <b>MEMBERSHIP CARD</b>
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, PH&DRRHs members must, if requested, present their membership 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 Detroit Bay City & Western Railroad, and The Port Huron Southern Railway as well as the Grand Trunk Western/Canadian National, and the Pere Marquette/Chesapeake and Ohio railroads;*

*To obtain, restore and maintain the roundhouse at 32<sup>nd</sup> Street for museum use, 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.*

**Special Thanks to Ron Piscor  
 For sharing his wonderful pictures!**

**PH&DRR EMPLOYEES:**

**George Young Duffy**

Mr. Duffy joined in July of 1938, as General Manager. He became president on the passing of his brother Jim and retained the post until the sale in December, 1984. He was regarded by his employees as a fair man who treated all with kindness. Near the end, he took the entire PH&D family, office, train crew, and section gang with spouses, to the Little Bar on *Castleblayne*, to show his appreciation.



**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 classy newsletters, a chance to help create the area's first railroad transportation museum complex, and have exclusive Member-only access to the 32nd Street "Wye" and a Class I rail yard.

Please mail to:  
 PH&DRRHs, P.O. Box 217, Marysville, MI 48040.

**BOARD of DIRECTORS  
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**Special Thanks to**