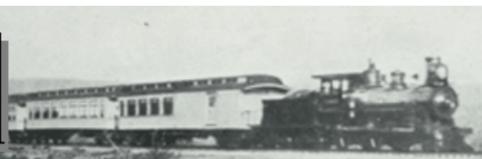


# The Ghost Train Journal

The Monthly Newsletter for the members of the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum

Photo Credit: Turner Railroad Collection/Connecticut Historical Society



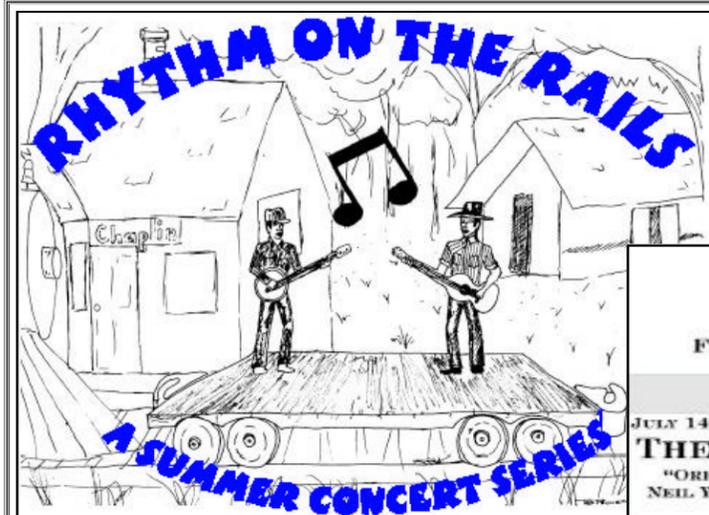
# The Ghost Train Journal

Tom Nanos Photo

Photo Credit: Turner Railroad Collection/Connecticut Historical Society



The Monthly Newsletter for the members of The Connecticut Eastern Chapter of the NRHS & the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum  
 Tom Nanos - Editor in Chief | Bob LaMay - Editor  
 Volume 13, Number 5 July 2005



SCHEDULE FOR EACH EVENING	
4:00 PM - MUSEUM IS OPEN FOR TOURS	
6:30 TO 8:00 PM - LIVE MUSIC	
FEEL FREE TO BRING YOUR OWN PICNIC & BLANKET!	
THURSDAY	SATURDAY
JULY 14TH <b>THE SCREWDRIVERS</b> "ORIGINAL ROCK MUSIC BY WAY OF NEIL YOUNG, REM AND THE BEATLES" EVENING SPONSORED BY: SAVINGS INSTITUTE BANK & TRUST CO.	JULY 23RD <b>TARA'S THISTLE</b> "IRISH/CELTIC & FOLK MUSIC WITH LOTS OF HUMOR" EVENING SPONSORED BY: LIBERTY BANK GATEWAY & DOWNTOWN BRANCHES
JULY 28TH <b>THE DOWNTOWN DUO</b> "COUNTRY, ROCK, FOLK & A LITTLE MORE" EVENING SPONSORED BY: WILLARD'S LUMBER	AUG 13TH <b>TBA</b> EVENING SPONSORED BY: SAVINGS INSTITUTE BANK & TRUST CO.
RAIN DATE • AUGUST 20TH	



## From The Editor's Desk

More stories! Yep, this issue again has more text than photos! This time around, we've got three perspectives of the same event - the NERCA rail car ride that brought a number of speeders to the NECR and the museum. First Bob LaMay covers the Ghosts of Windham event that the museum participated in, and also a look at the speeders arriving at the museum Saturday evening. Second, Jeff Laverty shares with us his ride on one of the speeders between Willimantic and New London on Sunday. And finally, I'll give you a taste of what the view from a chase was like as I chronicle my trip following the group from Willimantic to New London and back. Enjoy!



The first visitors of the 2005 Season!

### Rhythm On The Rails

Ray Axelrod has put together our first concert series! You can see more details on the back of the newsletter, but the short version is this - there will be four concerts on alternating Thursdays and Saturdays starting Thursday July 14th. Suggested donation is \$5 at the gate, and we need volunteers to help out. Contact Ray or Mark Granville if you're interested in lending a hand. Ray has also secured sponsors for the entire series, so all of our fixed costs

(bands, advertising, etc.) have been covered. This is a great fundraising opportunity for the museum - try and help out in whatever way you can!

### Shorts from the June 26th Meeting

- \* Hebron Harvest Fair will be Sept 6 - 9 this year. We'll need folks to man the booth. Contact Mark Granville for more info.
- \* Timbers from the Niantic River Drawbridge may be available for the museum's use. Rich Cizik is investigating.
- \* Entertainment at the general meetings - if anyone has any suggestions for speakers or other entertainment, please contact Mark Granville.

Thanks for reading & enjoy the issue!  
 -Tom Nanos & Bob LaMay

## Ghosts and Speeders Invade CERM

Text & Photos By Robert A. LaMay

Where else could one expect to see ghosts of years past and many small speeder railcars at one location during the same day. Saturday and Sunday May 14 & 15, 2005 they came together at the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum. The ghost of Elmer C Jewett and his wife Lizzy returned to the old Chaplin Station, six times on Saturday and three times on Sunday. He used to be the Station Master at the Chaplin Station during the late 1800's. He came back to tell visitors



about the days he spent working at the station, the historical account of the famed White Train, which had been referred to as the Ghost Train. He also spoke about the history of railroading in Eastern Connecticut. Its' rise to fame and its demise during the 1950's. "Forty to fifty trains

a day would pass through here" he said. He described how he purchased the old station and had it pulled by eight horses to his property nearby.

Later that day a horde of rail speeders, those little motorized railcars that railroads used to inspect track, could be heard clackety clacking their way down the track. Members of the Northeast Rail Car Assn. (NERCA), which is a sub group of the North America Rail Car Owners Assn. (NARCOA), participated in a rail trip from Palmer, MA. to New London, CT. and back to Palmer. Thirty-one rail cars and one



trailer rolled through the gate of the museum to spend the night. Prior arrangements had been made with the museum that the rail cars could be stored inside the fence at the museum for the night. The loan trailer in the parade carried the member's porta-potty. Bright and early Sunday morning the group traveled to New London and later that day they rolled by the museum on their way to Palmer, MA. Once again the site of the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum proved it is centrally located for those traveling by rail between New London and points north. It also proved it was the safe place to keep railroad equipment overnight.

## 'Speeder' Ride to New London

Text & photos by Jeff Laverty

On Saturday, May 14th, Warren Riccitelli (a former CERM member and owner of the blue speeder in the roundhouse) led his group of speeder aficionados (the Northeast Railcar Owners Association) down from Massachusetts through Palmer and on to

Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum &  
 Connecticut Eastern Chapter, NRHS, Inc.  
 P.O. Box 665  
 Willimantic, CT 06226

Willimantic on the New England Central. A few weeks earlier, I had spoken with Warren to ask him to help us restore the Vermont excursion on the NEC (Warren is a friend of Charles Hunter, NEC Gen. Mgr.). In return, Warren asked if our museum could provide sanctuary



for the speeders while the group overnights in Willimantic. With executive committee approval, the 31 speeders spent Saturday night on our west-end track inside the fence. As a sign of appreciation for my efforts, Warren invited me to ride in his speeder on Sunday for the trip (starting at 8 a.m.) from Willimantic to New London and back. That was the first time I had gone more than a couple hundred feet in a speeder. Riding along the track at 20-30 mph like that was quite a thrill and it gave me a totally new perspective on the line to New London. I took several pictures through the windshield, especially on the tight curves along the Thames River. At New London, each speeder had to be lifted and turned 180°. One



speeder owner had it easy since his speeder was fitted with a hydraulic stand. On our way back, we stopped for lunch at Indian Leap Park in Norwich. There, we were met by Tom Nanos, your GTJ editor, who took additional pictures. By 2 p.m., we were back in Willimantic. Warren left me off, stopping on the NEC opposite our main museum gate. He then raced to join the rest of the speeder group

heading back to Palmer.

## Speeders On The NECR

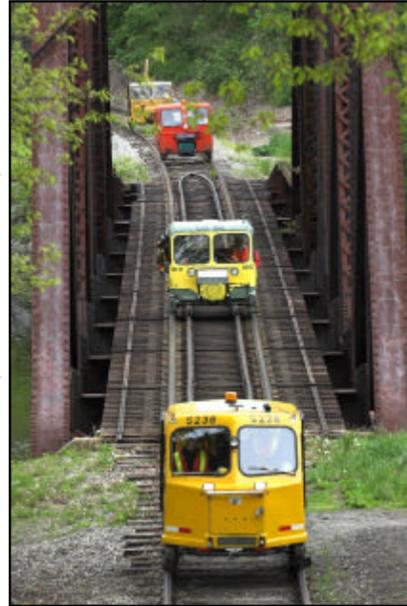
Text & Photos by Thomas J. Nanos

Sitting on a footbridge straddling the tracks, aiming my camera carefully through the chain link fence down at the truss bridge carrying the New England Central main over the Yantic River in anticipation of the southbound excursion. Moments later, I can hear the wheels on the rails, starting to make their way around the bend to the north of the bridge. As my subject begins to leave the curve and cross the bridge, entering into my camera's viewfinder, I gently

squeeze the shutter release, taking a number of photos of the trip as it crosses the river. Mind you, this isn't your typical excursion - it's led by a white NECR hi-rail truck, followed by 30 or so self-propelled railcars of various types. Yes the same rails where you would expect to see matched sets of blue & gold NECR GP-38s hauling boxcars of copper, flatcars of steel plates, and covered hoppers of grain, are now hosting a group of Farimont track inspection cars. Warren Riccitelli of The New England Railcar Association arranged this two-day trip on the New

England Central - of which, this is the second leg of the trip. The first leg happened the previous day on the Massachusetts Central Railroad north of Palmer, MA. After completing their ride on the MCER, the group moved onto NECR rails in Palmer and proceeded south to Willimantic to wrap up their first day's ride. The group parked their railcars inside the fence of the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum in Willimantic for safe keeping, and the riders spent the night at a local hotel. The second day of the tour, Sunday May 15, 2005, is where we pick up the story.

On a foggy, overcast day that would make most photographers just roll over and stay in bed, I got to Willimantic at about 8am in anticipation of the departure of the group. Pulling into the driveway of the Connecticut Eastern



Railroad Museum, there was one blue railcar visible at the switch leading onto the NECR main at milepost 30. The operator of that car, Al Elliott, sporting a white Santa-esque beard and orange safety vest, gladly filled me in on the day's schedule. They were to depart Willimantic once their NECR escort obtained a Form D from the dispatcher, and head straight to New London yard. Once in New London, they'd turn their vehicles, and head back north, stopping at milepost 14, also known as Indian Leap State Park in Norwich, for lunch. After a brief stay there, it was back to riding the rails, for a straight trip returning to Palmer. So I had my plan for the day - I'd chase them in both directions, photographing them at numerous locations along the line between Willimantic and New London - some spots that I had visited before, and some that have eluded my lens.

Once NECR Foreman Duguay received his Form D from the dispatcher in St. Albans, Vermont, he headed to the Bridge Street crossing to get his hi-rail pickup's steel wheels on the rails. As he was getting on the iron, the remaining cars made their way to the switch, all lining up along the lead into the Museum. Once all the speeders arrived, numbering around 30 in all, the crews were summoned for a safety talk and a review of the day's

agenda. With the talking of flagging crossings and wearing safety vests finished, it was time to get to the day's task - riding the rails. The NECR escort unlocked and aligned the switch for the Museum lead, allowing the cars to make their way south. Once all of the cars were through the switch, and across the Bridge Street crossing, the railroad foreman realigned the switch for the mainline, and locked it in place. The group was now ready to move south out of Willimantic Yard - what was once the interchange point between the NECR's predecessor, the Central Vermont, and the then-fledgling Providence & Worcester Railroad.

The departure of the group meant that it was time for me to begin my pursuit south. The NECR main runs nearly parallel to State Route

32 from Palmer all the way to New London, giving ample opportunities for different types of photos. The first stop of the day was only a quarter mile away - where the rails cross over the Willimantic River and then quickly under Willimantic's famed Frog Bridge - a bridge adorned with large spools of thread topped by large copper frogs. The steep arch of the Frog Bridge gives a great vantage over the river crossing, and a decent view into the heart of Willimantic Yard as the stream of speeders runs past the former interchange.

The rest of the trip south afforded a number of different photo opportunities, ranging from pacing shots, to standard 3/4 wedgies, but there were two locations in particular I wanted to photograph from - one would work for the northbound trip, and the other on the southbound leg. The southbound location was at the truss bridge spanning the Yantic River at Indian Leap State Park. After catching the first cars at the Route 87 crossing three miles to the north, I knew I had enough of a lead to get to the spot and set up my shot.

With the arrival of spring, the leaves on the trees were starting to come in, creating photographic obstacles. Because of this, the photo angles at the Park were limited to trackside, and an overhead view, which peered down the length of the bridge - the bridge shot was, in my mind, the only viable option. Anyone can shoot a trackside wedgie, and I had enough of those already. Only catch with this framing was I had to shoot through a chain link fence. Not a problem with



the telephoto. So I set up, and waited for the first car - the NECR hi-rail - to come into view. Followed right behind were the 30 speeders in groups of around 5, toddling along the rails, their riders enjoying the passing scenery. From there, it was time to head to New London - the southernmost terminus of this trip.

At New London, the group assembled in the northernmost part of the yard, and one by one, they were manually turned to face north. Some had mere wheelbarrow type handles on the rear, requiring a manual turning move, while others had a jack in the center of the car riding on a bearing, enabling the driver to lift the car, and gently push it 180 degrees pointing it north.

Once all the vehicles were turned, it was time to head back north. Only one shot remained on my "must shoot" list - a shot from the Norwich Marina, located at the head of the Thames River.

Here the tracks skirt the river, passing in front of a large "Norwich Harbor" mural painted on a concrete retaining wall. Leaving the group, I headed straight for Norwich Marina Park, also listening to the scanner for the NECR foreman to get his track warrant for the trip from New London to the lunch break spot back at Indian Leap Park.

After grabbing a few frames at the marina, it was time to catch up with the group at the lunch

break spot - just to the south of the Yantic River Bridge I had shot the group on the southbound leg earlier. By the time I got there, the group had already started to relax around the park, eating lunch and discussing the ride thus far. With the passing of about an hour, it was time for the group to head north again, this time, uninterrupted all the way to Palmer, MA. For me, however, the trip would end where it started that day - in Willimantic. Picking three more locations along the way, I was back on the road for my final leg. First stop was another truss bridge spanning the northern end of the Yantic River, and after a couple shots there, it was off to the last two shots in Willimantic.

The first of the last two used the former American Thread mills in the background, along with the top of one of the waterfalls in the Willimantic River. The former mill buildings are now being renovated into industrial and apartment space - finally putting the vacant facility to good use. The final spot, back at the museum, also had a bonus waiting for me - my wife and two daughters were waiting at the museum entrance for me to arrive ahead of the speeder convoy.

When I arrived back at the driveway of the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum, I shot my last four frames of the day. This wasn't exactly by choice, but rather I had completely filled up my 2GB of storage, shooting over 200 frames. But there was nothing wrong with that at all - this gave me the opportunity to watch the procession pass by with my 2-year-old daughter. As the cars sped by, all waving to us, my daughter told me in her cutest voice, "Daddy, I like these little trains." My heart just melted - what a perfect ending to a great day of railfanning. Who says girls don't like trains?

## Museum & Chapter Contact Information

### Chapter Leadership

President	Mark Granville <a href="mailto:mgranville@charter.net">mgranville@charter.net</a> 860-456-3956
Vice President	Duke York 860-423-1878
Treasurer	Jeff Laverty <a href="mailto:jefflr@cshore.com">jefflr@cshore.com</a> 860-429-7961
Asst-Treasurer	Bob LaMay <a href="mailto:cermf19@aol.com">cermf19@aol.com</a> 860-228-9671
Secretary	Bill Robinson <a href="mailto:billrobinson@charter.net">billrobinson@charter.net</a> 860-456-4903
National Director	Ray Axelrod 860-228-3197

### Ghost Train Journal

Editor in Chief	Tom Nanos <a href="mailto:tom@nanosphoto.com">tom@nanosphoto.com</a> 860-729-0955
Editor	Bob LaMay <a href="mailto:cermf19@aol.com">cermf19@aol.com</a> 860-228-9671

### Calendar of Events

Jul 24	Membership Meeting
Aug 7	Buisness Meeting
Aug 21	Membership Meeting
Sep 4	Buisness Meeting
Sep 18	Membership Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Connecticut Eastern Chapter, National Railway Historical Society will be at

Windham Community Memorial Hospital  
112 Mansfield Ave., Willimantic, CT  
on Sunday, July 24th @ 7:00 PM.

Please note: The monthly business meeting will be held on Aug 7th at the same location.

All members are welcome and encouraged to attend!