

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 1, 2018

Professional Railroaders on the Wilmington & Western: Tom Gears, a long-time volunteer, editor, and present board member of Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc. (owner of the Wilmington & Western tourist railroad), has asked me to recall the professional railroad men who helped start the W&W in the 1960s. My initial reply was, "Most of them tried to prevent a bunch of rail buffs from leasing the Landenberg Branch of the B & O, rather than help us get started." While this was true, even from top B&O management, many full-time railroaders helped us immeasurably to get the operation started in the spring of 1966 and for the years that followed.

There was only one precedent for volunteers to operate trains on a Class One railroad, regulated by the Interstate Commerce Commission. W. Nelson Blount, owner of Ocean Spray Cranberry Company, with his dream of a future Steamtown, had convinced the Boston & Maine Railroad. to lease him the use of a branch line from Keene, New Hampshire, about 6 miles northwest toward Bellows Falls, Vermont, for operation of a steam train run by volunteers. My father and I rode on this train in 1962, with Blount himself as the engineer. B&O management had not heard of this operation, but we brought it to their attention. The local railroad unions were not impressed, however, and they vigorously fought our idea on a B&O branch. Despite these many obstacles, we pulled it off and operated W&W trains on this branch line of the B&O (and its successors) until 1982, when Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc. bought the line.

Here are my recollections of those who helped in the early years:

	Regular Job	Job on W&W
B&O Railroad		
Bill Lakel	Trainmaster at Wilsmere Yard	Construction of Greenbank complex, constant advice
Johnny Forrest	Diesel mechanic at Wilsmere kept diesel locomotives running	Inspected our steam locomotive on all W&W operating days
Paul Fortin	Brakeman working from Wilsmere	Early supporter, helped W&W trainmen & brakemen, active volunteer on train
Dan Deery	B&O engineer. Qualified on all nearby B&O lines, had experience with steam locomotives	Steam engineer & instructor
Douglas Turnbull	B&O Vice President, friend of Delaware Governor Elbert Carvel	Got wheels turning to lease the Landenberg Branch to HRCV
R.L. Minser	Bill Lakel's boss from Baltimore	Frequently inspected W&W operation and was always very complimentary
Lawrence Lorenzoni	Retired track superintendent	Built track into Snuff Mill building for storage and repair of locomotive 92
B & O man in Baltimore (name forgotten)	Negotiated railroad union contracts	Worked out contract for W&W operation in 1965
Pennsylvania Railroad		
George W. Bailey	Mainline passenger conductor	Offered to help train crews
Jack Paradee	Conductor and local union leader	Tried to sell the local railroad unions on allowing volunteers to operate train on Class One ICC-regulated railroad

John Evans Eastburn	Passenger Engineer	Active engineer who helped train volunteers of W&W
Weldin V. Stumpf	Boilermaker at Wilmington Shops	Headed rebuilding of Loco. #92 for ICC service. Engineer and shop foreman who signed monthly mechanical reports.
Harrison Tweddle	Foreman at Wilmington Shops	Worked on miniature Auburn Valley Railroad for HRCV in 1960s
Danny Pantaleone	Track superintendent	Supervised building of tracks at engine house. Lived in a tiny trailer as caretaker.
Reading Railroad		
Paul C. Moser	Worked in Reading (PA) shops	Worked in shop and engine house on locomotives & cars
Jim Cooper	Retired manager of Beech Street engine house, Wilmington	Checked steam locomotive monthly and signed boiler papers
New York, New Haven & Hartford R.R.		
Earle C. Paine	Train service at Woods Hole, MA	Long-time conductor

In addition to the above, several W&W volunteers went on to make railroading a career. These include Dave Watterson, Alan Tweddle, John Darling, Tom Smith, and possibly Evan Stauffer, Bruce Lind, and Woody Messara.

I know there are more, but these are the ones I remember.