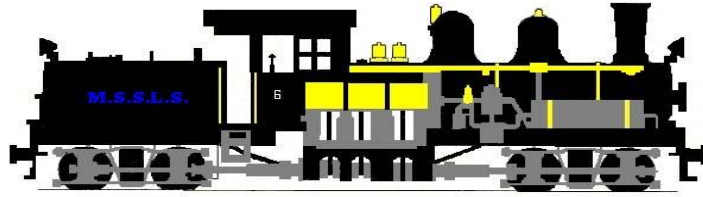


Michigan



Small Scale Live Steamers

MSSLS Steamup at the PH&D Historical Society by Bob Winkel

September 18, 2010

The MSSLS' invitation to run at the home of the Port Huron & Detroit Historical Society (PH&DHS) turned out to be a private run at a "public" place and certainly a new adventure. Although originally envisioned as a much bigger event, PH&DHS president Bud Gilbert arranged for our visit and had a big turnout of his group to see the scale steam trains.

Setup got underway around 9am as MSSLS members unloaded and got the portable track assembled fairly quickly. Just about that time the threatening clouds opened up and began a steady downpour. At that point we ducked into the PH&D offices, which are being refurbished by Bud and his group. From an upstairs vantage point we could observe the adjacent CN tracks and traffic as well as the old PH&D round house and wye. PHDHS members Ted Frantz, Bruce Sawdon and Tom Grambau told us some of the history of the PH&D RR as well as the activities of their group to restore the facilities. One of their current projects is the acquisition of a caboose to display on the property.

After the rain quit, out came the steam locomotives and the bbq grill. Tom Meyers had a steamer on the track by 11:30 that morning and John Wessels was running his Shay soon after. Meanwhile a hot dog lunch was being served courtesy of the PHDHS members. At that point Bud Gilbert brought out his new Accucraft American, SPC #9 for its inaugural run. With a little help and lots of encouragement, Bud got her lit and up to pressure. With very little coaxing, she chugged away and never looked back. Then, with a couple of coaches brought by some divinely inspired MSSLS member, Bud had an instant passenger train and even received a round of applause for his first successful 1:20.3 scale steam run!

Quite a large number of PH&D members came to the track to see the afternoon's steamup. By 12:45 the sun had emerged and it was starting to warm up outside. Harold Maxwell and Bob Winkel ran their black moguls and Will Lindley ran several locomotives including his coal fired Annette. John Ehrmin ran his remote control 2-8-2 and was seen to be pulling a flat car with a miniature caged raccoon (no lie), reminiscent of the recent Canterburybury rabid raccoon incident.

Jim Bowers steamed his SRRL #6 several times during the afternoon. Tom Meyers fired his Aster Climax and had his British 4-4-0 running also. It was fun to see the full-scale trains running on the adjacent tracks and we even got a wave from one of the cabs. One train came through really accelerating towards the tunnel that, we heard, has a 55mph minimum entry speed.

It was fun to be hosted by a group that's so knowledgeable about railroading. We got the chance to listen to PHDHS member Orville Swick tell some tales about steaming in the old days. If you ever get a chance, ask him the story about when the coal chute door stuck open while servicing a steam locomotive tender... All in all, it was a fun and interesting day. Our thanks go to members of both groups for the opportunity.