

# The Rockton-Rion Flyer

News and Information from the South Carolina Railroad Museum  
Volume 42 Number 1 Winter 2014

## **SANTA TRAINS SELL OUT!**



More than 1,100 passengers were carried on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. Twilight guests are treated to cookies, cocoa, and a story.

### **FLYER NEWS FLASH:**

The Santa Trains were a huge success with nearly all trips sold out. December 14<sup>th</sup> broke records as 1,137 passengers were carried. The inaugural Twilight Santa Train sold out in less than 3 days and was very well received. The “Better Late than Never” Valentine Dinner Trains were rescheduled with two successful runs on Friday the 21st and Saturday the 22nd despite the weather delay. Also, a visit to the Florida Railroad Museum shows similarities to our operation.

**HOT TOPIC:** **WE NEED YOU** to help out with our upcoming events as a car host or in the gift shop. Contact Rodger Stroup or Joe

Palma for more information. Do you want to make a difference that shows? Help spruce up and letter our locomotives and passenger cars and see your efforts every time you visit! Contact Rodger or Vince for more details.

**NEW BOARD MEMBER:** At the annual membership meeting in January, Bill Eccles was elected to the Board of Directors. Be sure to congratulate Bill on his new appointment when you see him.

### **CONTACT US:**

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**Vince LiBrizzi, Editor** ◊



Santa and Mrs. Claus host passengers on the Twilight Train.

## **Santa Trains Break More Records**

**By Vince LiBrizzi**

The RR&W had one of our most successful Santa Train seasons ever. On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1,137 passengers rode the 5 sold out trains, including the first-ever Twilight Santa Train, which was a sold-out success. This was the biggest one day event held at the museum in nearly 7 years and eclipsed our previous one day record set back in October! Slick rails and passenger demand necessitated SW8 No. 2028 and RS4-TC-1A No. 1249's combined 1,400 horsepower to handle the diner and four coaches. This consist was one of the longest and heaviest trains operated on the RR&W in years! The 80 passengers on the Twilight Santa Train were treated to delicious hot cocoa, cookies, Christmas stories, and a visit from Santa, of course. Plans are in the works to offer this special night train all three operating Saturdays this year. Kudos to the hard working members who planned, staffed, and operated the trains during this event! <>



This design will be on tickets, brochures, ads, and the Rockton sign.

## **Tickets and Promotion Focus on RR&W Railroad**

**By Rodger Stroup**

The Board of Directors and the Museum's operating officials have decided to focus on the railroad rather than the museum in all promotions and communication. This was in response to feedback from passengers in a marketing study that showed more interest by the public in visiting an operating railroad than a museum with static displays. A new sign, shown above, will replace the current one in the Rockton station area and serve as our logo on many publications.

The sign was designed by a marketing firm with an emphasis on the railroad but still including the museum's name and website address. Our new passenger tickets and brochure will also incorporate the new logo design and RR&W name. As time and budgets permit, all passenger cars and locomotives will be lettered Rockton Rion & Western to reflect this new image. SW-8 diesel locomotive No.2028 has already been lettered Rockton Rion & Western, with plans for sister No. 2015 to receive the same treatment along with a new paint job soon.

All advertisements and communications will have this focus and new look Contact Rodger or Vince for more information about our new look and focus. <>



The Valentine Dinner Train entertains passengers on Saturday night.



Passengers depart a GP7 diesel-powered train at Parrish, Florida.

## Rescheduled Valentine Trains Popular

*By Vince LiBrizzi*

Despite the unseasonably cold weather and snowfall from the previous week that caused postponement of the event, we ran two well patronized Valentine Dinner trains on Friday, February 21<sup>st</sup> and Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>. The trips were promoted as the “**Better Late Than Never**” Valentine Dinner Trains and many passengers who had tickets from the previous week kept their reservations. The three hour, three course meals were served in the **Lake Rion** dining car while passengers enjoyed the 60 degree spring-like weather, which was quite a contrast to the 8 inches of snow and 30 degrees of just 6 days earlier!

Bill and Trish Eccles did an outstanding job decorating the dining car and serving as uniformed car hosts for both dinner trains. The train crew, consisting of Clif Hall, Rufus Timms, Vince LiBrizzi, and John Parker as Engineers and Rodger Stroup and Jim Owens as Conductors braved the “cold” and operated the two trips. Former Air Force RS4-TC-1A diesel locomotives No. 1249 and No. 1276 were used pull-pull style on each end of the train for enhanced visibility during night operation. It made for an impressive looking train!

All aboard had an enjoyable and romantic experience and plans are being formulated for more operations like these. <>

## A Visit to the Florida Railroad Museum *By Rodger Stroup*

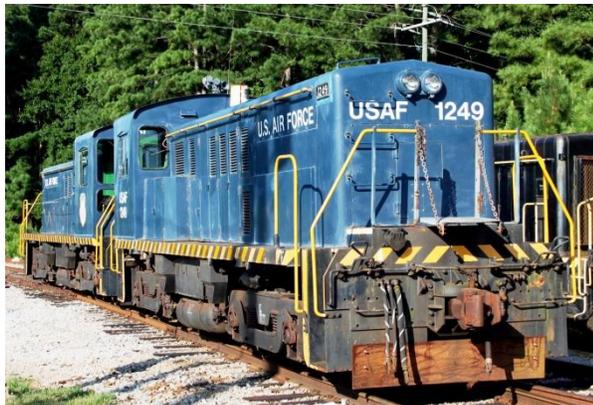
Recently, I visited the Florida Railroad Museum in Parrish, located about 30 miles from Tampa and Sarasota. The FRM is a non-profit organization that has two paid full-time positions, Director and Track Maintenance Supervisor; while all others are volunteers. The FRM operates on 6 miles of track from Parrish to Willow through somewhat monotonous saw grass country. There are some farm fields, swamps, and a few structures with two slight curves in the right-of-way. Originally, the FRM was a static museum in Tampa, but in 1992 was granted access to this track. The line was originally Seaboard Air Line and was taken out of service in the 1960s. It was purchased by Florida Light & Power since it provides access to one of their plants and is the only way to move heavy equipment there. CSX moves the heavy equipment to the plant once or twice a year.

The FRM has about 30,000 passengers a year, with 9,000 carried on the Santa trains. This is possible since the FRM is in a heavy tourist area and they operate two trains every Saturday and Sunday year-round. The museum also does the **Day Out With Thomas** event, but apparently the event is more for publicity than for revenue.

The FRM uses a baggage car for their ticket office and gift shop, and operates pull-pull style with EMD GP-7 diesel locomotives on each end of the train. <>

**South Carolina Railroad Museum  
PO Box 7246  
Columbia, SC 29202-7246**

*Return Service Requested*



Diesels No. 1276 and No. 1249 powered the recent Valentine dinner trains.

### **2013 Successful Year for Railroad**

*By Henry Nechemias*

2013 was another successful year for the museum! Over 9,200 passengers were carried, close to our goal of 10,000 for the year. We had a new one day record of 1,008 passengers on the Pumpkin Patch Trains and over 2,100 riders on the Santa Express Trains. Charter trips increased, special events did well, and the Dinner Trains proved very popular. Detailed survey data has shown that advertising in markets such as Rock Hill, Fort Mill and Charlotte continue to attract new customers to the railroad. In addition, large sums were spent repairing the a/c on the diner, rebuilding and redecorating the gallery, and repairing important pieces of mechanical equipment. But, as in 2012, this past year ended in the black. Thank you to all who helped with monetary donations! <>