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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER of the Military Railroad Society

the RAILHEAD

Any opinions expressed herein are those of author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Military Railroad Society



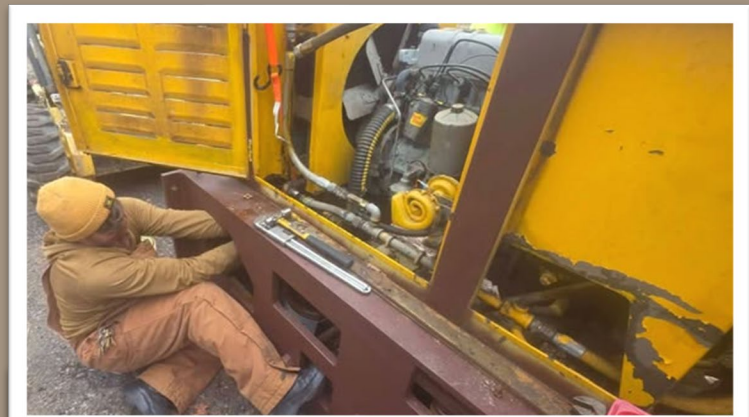
Welcome to The Railhead

Hello to all our members, and welcome to the If you would like to contribute to future issues, please let us know by the 10th of the month before the next edition. We would love to have some help with production of The Railhead.

You can contact us, or send articles/ submission ideas to info@armysteam.com.

Happy Reading!

Major M.R.S. / ODC Summer Accomplishment Progress has started on the restoration of engine 595. With the weather warming up, primer has begun!



RECENT EVENTS!

Thanks to a Grant from our friends at NS and donations from members, Restoration projects continue in Hallsboro, VA!

Anyone interested in volunteering for restoration, please ensure you are a member of MRS or ODC. Work weekends are always the 3rd sat and sunday of each month (weather depending)

To Volunteer for work weekends, please become a member and reach out to MRS @ info@armysteam.com or ODC @ junehodges@verizon.net



M.R.S. TREASURY REPORT

As we become more comfortable with the new accounting software, we will notice significant improvements in our goals. We will happily share the progress in the quarterly Newsletter, like this one.

The donations to the M.R.S. is truly fantastic, seeing to all-in-one place. We believe it will prepare us to meet our goals being discussed within the organization. It is important to remember supporting Non-Profits is crucial! They play an important roll in our community and solid backing can greatly increase the efforts in preserving our Military history.

Our main goal has always been to preserve, protect and educate on all items Military Rail.

Our hope is to keep these items from being thrown away or damaged beyond repair. Many still have a lot of use, they just need to be rescued. By taking the time to restore and preserve these artifacts, we can ensure that they are not only saved from becoming scrap, but can also be enjoyed and appreciated for generations to come. Bringing a piece of the past back to use, allows us to learn, appreciate and celebrate our shared history of our Military.

We have many exciting plans for the future, some of which cannot be shared just yet. However, we want you to know that we will always keep looking for artifacts that need assistance. Our fundraising efforts are becoming more organized and campaigns will be created. Together, we can make a real difference in preserving and protecting important pieces of history.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us! You are making a great impact!

Cheers to the Future!

Aimee Stemig

Treasurer Protem



Fundraising Totals

Year Month

	2024	2025	2026
Gifts	15 / \$671.36	51 / \$26,957.36	2 / \$107.65
In Kind	1 / \$500	3 / \$901.36	0 / \$0
Other Income	0 / \$0	0 / \$0	0 / \$0
Pledges	0 / \$0	0 / \$0	0 / \$0
Installments	0 / \$0	0 / \$0	0 / \$0

Last updated: 2026-03-28 at 06:51 AM

Total Raised by Retention Status

2024 2025 2026

	Donors	Total Raised	Gifts	Pledges (balance)
First-time Donors	2	\$107.65	\$107.65	\$0 (\$0)
Retained Donors	0	\$0	\$0	\$0 (\$0)
Recaptured Donors	0	\$0	\$0	\$0 (\$0)
Total	2	\$107.65	\$107.65	\$0 (\$0)

Last updated: 2026-03-28 at 06:51 AM



"Move Over, Sir!" Women Working on the Railroad

Credit: www.uprrmuseum.org/uprrm/exhibits/traveling/women-railroad/index.htm

Centuries of American history have seen gender wielded as a weapon to limit women's opportunities within the workplace. Despite this, during wartime and periods of economic upheaval, women slowly transitioned into positions of authority, knowledge and skill in all areas of the workforce – including American railroads. In fact, women have served in critical railroad roles since the early 19th century, working to Build America right alongside men.

When the railroad allowed the American public to move westward, it not only opened up possibilities for men seeking their fortunes, but for women seeking opportunities outside of the home. In the late 1830s and 40s, telegraph lines expanded alongside new railroad tracks and created new professional opportunities for women, despite continuing social norms discouraging women working outside of the home and interacting with the public. Early pioneer women telegraphers were still the exception rather than the rule, but they blazed a trail for women to follow in the century of progress to come.

Abolitionists Become Suffragettes

Using the same arguments for personal rights and freedoms as they did when fighting to end slavery, women abolitionists turned their efforts toward securing equal rights for women after the Civil War. Influential public speakers like Elizabeth Cady Stanton used their leverage and political connections developed during the abolitionist movement to contend U.S. women should not be treated as second-class citizens, but

given the full rights and privileges of citizenship – including the right to vote and obtain financial freedom through the right to work. This work reached its peak in 1920 with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, giving women the right to vote. It cannot be ignored that while these women promoted equal rights for

women, they predominately were speaking about white women. There is no doubt this movement later helped the cause of all women fighting for equality in the workplace and in politics, but initially the impetus was not inclusive. Eventually, this movement's effects began to offer hope to women of color, especially during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.



Times of War Provided Women Opportunity to Work on the Railroad

U.S. Civil War

Wartime presented all American women, regardless of ethnicity, with opportunities to stretch beyond the narrowly defined roles and expectations of what was considered "women's work." Wars tend to turn society on its head as every citizen is asked to contribute to the war effort. Women stepped in to fill gaps in the railroad workforce as men were called away to serve as soldiers on the front lines. During the Civil War, more than 100,000 women stepped up as men were drafted into the military. Many of these positions were as railroad telegraphers. When the war was over, women were expected to step aside as men returned from the fighting front, and a resurgence in public discussions about women's proper place continued after the war. Railroads, however, were willing to retain female employees, perhaps because of their lower labor costs compared to men. This led to companies like Western Union specifically reaching out to train women for careers in the communication industry. A decade after the Civil War, it was no longer a novelty to see women working on the railroad as

telegraphers, station agents and ticket agents. These women managed complex operations and transmitted train orders to train crews. Through the dedication, service and bravery of these women, they earned the right to be respected members of the railroad workforce.

World Wars

In the first nine months of 1918, the number of women working in the railroad industry rose 66% from 82,370 to more than 100,000. By the end of World War I in November 1918, more than 100,000 women were working in railroad jobs. While many were in an office setting or as a station agent, some pioneers worked in mechanical shops and along railroad right-of-ways. Due to the overall lack of training in railroad careers, new methods were put into place providing women with comprehensive training alongside men, without having to spend years learning a role alongside a veteran railroader. This leveled the playing field considerably for women choosing nontraditional railroad roles. After the war ended and soldiers began to return home, women in these nontraditional roles were expected to give up their jobs, return to their lives at home and not compete with men for work. While many women stayed on as telegraphers and station agents after the war, even those jobs were dwindling as the nation neared the Great Depression era at the end of the 1920s. As the number of jobs overall declined, women in the workforce, and at the railroad, were expected to give up their jobs for their male counterparts.

This was also true during World War II, when women once again were called upon to enter the workforce to keep the American economy moving forward as millions of men were called to serve in the armed

forces. By December 1941, when the U.S. entered the war, 13 million women were part of the American workforce. This increased to 20 million women by 1944, with 6 million alone working in factories. 250,000 women were working on American railroads by the war's end in 1945, but this number dropped to just 122,000 by 1948 as women were again pressured to leave these jobs open to returning men.



During World War I, many women joined the workforce both for the economic opportunity and out of a sense of patriotism. The War Department cataloged this photo of two women working on the Great Northern Railway near Great Falls, c. 1918. National Archives, Records of War Department, General and Special Staffs (165-WW-595-D-14).



The Great Depression Derails Women in the Workforce

The 1929 stock market crash and the following Great Depression unilaterally impacted American society for the worse, undermining social progress achieved by women during the 1920s. Women had to fight societal pressure to keep their hard-won jobs because it was seen as selfish for them to take jobs away from men trying to feed their families. Ironically, women had the same goals and also were trying to feed their families during a trying economic climate, just like men. In spite of this, some women managed to retain employment during the Depression.

Union Pacific's Challenger train set the new standard for coach travel, introduced in 1936 on the Chicago-to-Los Angeles route. UP President William Jeffers, who started

as a railroad call boy in North Platte, wanted to provide a first-class experience for passengers who could not afford to ride UP's luxury Streamliners. In 1935, he hired Avis Lobdell to ride the entire UP route

and ask passengers what they most wanted in a train. Her research, derided as unnecessary by other railroads and even some UP managers, helped develop what became one of the most successful trains in UP history.

The Challenger's mission was to offer outstanding service at Depression-era prices. Air-conditioning, dimmable lights and personal wake-up calls for each stop were some of the popular new services. Dining was simple but maintained a high standard, with three meals costing only 90 cents per day. Most notably, staff was specifically instructed to be friendly and helpful to passengers.

These were new instructions for many passenger passengers, disliked crew members. During her research, the most important information Mrs. Lobdell learned was that women, comprising more than half of coach the inconveniences of traveling alone or with only their children. To make UP more comfortable for women travelers, Jeffers created the Women's Travel Department, placed it under the direction of Mrs. Lobdell and instructed her to hire nurses to assist single women, mothers traveling without help, and the elderly and infirm. These nurse/stewardesses were placed in charge of new women-only cars, where even the passenger conductor had to get permission before he could enter. The service was tremendously popular, and by mid-year 1936, some 39 nurse/stewardesses were serving on the Challenger and other trains. Hiring criteria were strict: candidates had to be a registered nurse and a member of the American Nurses' Association, between the ages of 25 and 28, 5'3" to 5'7" tall, and weigh between 125 and 145 pounds. Most importantly, they had to be able to think on their feet and be independent enough to work with the otherwise all-male train crew. UP's nurse/stewardesses served passengers until the U.S. entered World War II, when most reported for military duty.

The Modern Era of Women Working on the Railroad

With soldiers' return from abroad, women were dismissed from their industrial positions nationwide. During the war, industrial companies and the government argued women could easily hold factory positions. Yet, after the war, women specifically were

excluded from the industrial workplace due to their so-called physical limitations. This gender discrimination in hiring was characteristic of the idealized, nuclear society of the 1950s that relied heavily on gendered roles of acceptable behavior. Workplace discrimination against women who deviated from feminine careers was both socially acceptable and legal. The "homemaker" depiction of



women replaced Rosie the Riveter as the ideal American women for this decade. However, a minority of women did not completely abandon railroad life, with many working their way up the chain to hold management positions at a variety of railroads.

Railroading in the Civil Rights Era

The 1970s was a tremendous period of societal change for the U.S. as the Peace Movement, civil rights and equality began to dominate the national conversation. Young, college-educated women were encouraged to enter the workforce and change organizational structures from the inside out. This led to dramatic changes in railroad employee composition. Whether this represented a specific desire to enter railroad work, or a general interest in employment, the 1970s represented the highest level of women working on the railroad since World War II. Many women were moving into "operational" areas of the railroad previously only held by men, including switchmen, yardmasters, brakemen and carmen. These positions involved physically rigorous outdoor work.

Women also were becoming highly qualified and technically competent electricians, dispatchers and locomotive engineers. This represented a significant change for women working on the railroad – from more clerical, communication jobs to operational work – as women continued to work in all aspects of the railroad.

Across The Pond

Credit: Author Susan Major provides an insight into life as a woman working on the railways in wartime.

It was around five years ago that I first discovered the collection of interviews with railway workers carried out by the Friends of the National Railway Museum some ten years earlier. Over 1,000 hours of recordings are stored in the museum's Search Engine as the National Archive of Railway Oral History, a treasure trove of memories and viewpoints from a varied range of railway people across the country.

So, two years ago, when I was looking for ideas for a new book, I decided that some of these voices needed to reach a wider audience. My interest focused on the few women in the collection, recounting their experiences of work on the railways during the Second World War. There are of course books about women working in wartime industry, in the Land Army and joining the military services, but little to date capturing the experiences of women railway workers doing a vital job.

My book, [*Female Railway Workers in World War II*](#), published by Pen & Sword in August 2018, features these voices, women working across Britain, who were mostly in their late 70s when they were interviewed. They had taken on railway roles in wartime which were completely new to females, working as porters and guards, on the permanent way, and in maintenance and workshop operations. Others were taken on as clerks, surprisingly usually a male role at this time.

Many were working in 'men's jobs', or working with men for the first time, and these interviews offer tantalising glimpses of conditions, sometimes under

great danger. What was it about railway work that attracted them? It's fascinating to contrast their voices with the way they were portrayed in official publicity campaigns and in the light of attitudes to women working in the 1940s.

These women talk about their difficulties in a workplace not designed for women—no toilets for example, the attitudes of their families, what they thought about American GIs and Italian POWs, how they coped with swearing and troublesome colleagues, rules about stockings. They describe devastating air raids and being thrust into tough responsibilities for the first time.



'1, 2, 3 platforms after raid', York, 29 April 1942.

Betty Chalmers was working on the switchboard at LNER York Station. When the station was bombed in 1942 she had to move to a replacement switchboard in a corridor under the bar walls, in hot, unventilated conditions, while colleagues at the station were clearing out broken glass and sorting wet tickets. Gladys Garlick talked about her training as an LNER guard at Hatfield: 'There was a bit of a bad feeling by some of the guards cos they thought it made their job look cheap. Well, I suppose in a way it's like my husband working to be a driver. You don't jump straight into it, do you? You have to work your way up to get to be a guard. And they were, some of them were a bit resentful of that. But on the whole they were all very good.'

Nellie Nelson joined LNER York as a porter in 1940. She tells us how they helped to get injured passengers off the bombed train in 1942 and how her



bike was destroyed. She also worked as a blackout attendant on the trains, going up and down to Darlington to check that the blinds were kept down.

Joan Richards was a GWR parcels clerk at Hartlebury in Worcestershire, who related how her father warned her of bad language from male colleagues and of the difficulties of doing overnight relief at Kidderminster Fire Station as well as her day job. Joan Cox was helping to run a mobile canteen caravan for SR railwaymen at Redhill, and talked about her encounters with Italian prisoners of war.

Vera Jones was an apprentice fitter with LMS at Crewe, fitting handrails on locomotives and later working on fire-box lagging plates for the new 2-8-0 locomotives. Marjorie Pateman was a lathe operator at LMS Wolverton, very disappointed to be moved into the frame shop, where they had to work on the rivet carrier in extremely hot and noisy conditions.

Personal accounts of railway work by women in wartime offer valuable insights into the perceptions and concerns of these young women. For most it was a hugely enjoyable experience, meeting a variety of people, proving themselves, appreciating fresh air and good company and discovering surprising capabilities. As generations die out and families lose a direct connection, it becomes more important to be able to share their voices with a wider audience.



Fort Holabird was a U.S. Army post located in southeast Baltimore, Maryland, operating from 1918 to 1973. Originally established training center and depot, it became famously known as the home of the Army Intelligence School and Counter Intelligence Records Facility.

Established in 1918 as Camp Holabird on 96 acres of marshland to train vehicle mechanics and drivers, the military installation grew to include approximately 350 acres and 286 buildings. Renamed Fort Holabird in 1950, it also played an important role in testing and refining the Jeep.

A B&O spur connected to the base, where military locomotives, such as Davenport Diesel Switcher 7707, operated. During WWII, Fort Holabird acted as a vital hub for vehicle design, test and maintenance, along with modifications. Its functioned as the premier Army Intelligence training center and housed the U.S. Army Intelligence School from 1945 until 1972. Due to its proximity to Washington D.C., the fort was used to guard key witnesses in major federal cases, including Watergate co-conspirators John Dean and Charles Colson.

Surviving equipment, such as USATC 7707, was moved to the Walkersville Southern Railroad in Fredrick County, Maryland. Renumbered Engine 3, will undergo repairs

The Fort Holabird closed in 1973, with the most of land being transferred to the city of Baltimore between 1977 and 1979 to create the Fort Holabird Industrial Park.



Engine 7707, renumbered Engine 3, is under repair at Walkersville Southern to date.

M.R.S OPERATIONS

Hello Members,

We have been working hard on 595 to get her restoration done. There has been some great progress made with a lot of the cosmetic work in progress and pictures being posted to the Facebook page. We received \$5,000.00 towards the locomotive from our generous friends at Norfolk Southern, and they continue to be great partners to us in the restoration efforts of the locomotive. Lease paperwork has been sent to the prospective railroad that wished to use the locomotive, and we will update everyone on where you can go to see it as soon as we are able.

As always, we cannot continue our work without the support of our members and donors, so please consider a donation to the cause, and help us to reach this year's fund-raising goals. If you are interested in the work weekends which will be held at the Old Dominion Chapter yard in Hallsboro, VA where the engines are located, the next work weekends are planned for the 3rd sat of every month (weather dependent). We have also been working on parts and the archives at our other location in Gloucester, VA where there is an additional shop. If you have any interest at all in helping with archives, please let us know. There is a need for people who would like to help catalogue artifacts, pictures, uniforms, and manuals. We have received a lot of research requests as of late from other museums and groups looking for information on locomotives, paint schemes, and histories. We will notify all who contact us who are interested in volunteering for work weekends. We can be reached at info@armysteam.com. Look forward to seeing everyone there!

Brett Goertemöller

Operations Director

HONORING MEMBERS ! *This Fiscal Year*

We are honored to Welcome our Newest Members:

“General” Ralph C. Boyd - March 22 2026

“Corporal” Thomas Charnley- March 16 2026

“Specialist” Robert O'Donnell- March 19 2026

From all of us at the M.R.S.,

We thank all our supporters for your continued support!

NEW MEMBERSHIP BRACKETS Select any of these great options upon renewal as well

Military Railroad Society Memberships

<p>Specialist</p> <p>\$ 3</p> <p>Every month AKA: E-4 Mafia</p> <p>Select</p> <p>Quarterly Newsletter with M.R.S. Updates Recognition on our Website Donor Page Access Volunteer Opportunities including Work Weekends</p>	<p>Corporal</p> <p>\$ 5</p> <p>Every month Now the Battle Begins</p> <p>Select</p> <p>All the Benefits of the Specialist...but more recognition! Work Weekends and Skills Training with Project Leaders Early Access to Our Annual Impact Report</p>	<p>Sergeant</p> <p>\$ 8</p> <p>Every month Hey Sarge!</p> <p>Select</p> <p>All the Benefits of Corporal...but more! Thank you Certificate From the Board of Directors Access to Semi-Annual Meeting with the BoD</p>	<p>Captain</p> <p>\$ 11</p> <p>Every month Official Chaos Coordinator</p> <p>Select</p> <p>Same Benefits as Sergeant...but not a Sergeant! Official M.R.S. Coffee Mug (First year only) Voting rights at Virtual Meeting with BoD Special Recognition at our Annual Donor Dinner Exclusive Access to behind the scenes Tour of projects</p>	<p>Major</p> <p>\$ 15</p> <p>Every month Following the Rules, but with style!</p> <p>Select</p> <p>Same Benefits as Captain...but now you are more awesome! Personalized Certificate of Recognition from the M.R.S. Invitation to a Quarterly Virtual Meeting with the BoD</p>	<p>Colonel</p> <p>\$ 20</p> <p>Every month Balance is Everything</p> <p>Select</p> <p>All the Benefits of a Captain...but with bragging rights! Exclusive Invitation Strategic Planning Meeting (Annual) Opportunity to Name a Project Initiative</p>	<p>General</p> <p>\$ 25</p> <p>Every month Things, All the things!</p> <p>Select</p> <p>All the benefits of Colonel, but ALL the bragging rights! VIP Access to all Events Personalized Plaque in Recognition of your Generosity</p>
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Donations can be made at armysteam.com



As you know, Narrow Gauge 595 Engine was donated to Military Railroad Society Spring of '24 and travelled from Wisconsin, making the journey to the new location in Virginia. Summer of '24. Summer was productive with replacement of seats, hydraulic hoses, wiring and fuel lines. However, after some more discovery, a lot more is needed until 595 is ready to roll again. 595 started work in Badger Army Ammunition Plant in Wisconsin. These little engines were used to move large flat cars and other supplies through the yard to prep for loading.

During World War II, Badger was managed by Hercules Powder Company. It produced rocket propellant, smokeless powder, and E.C. powder. Smokeless powder had been patented a decade before World War II by DuPont and Hercules Powder Company had the rights to make it at Badger. E.C. Powder was used in hand grenades, tear gas canisters, and blank cartridges. Badger also produced acid and oleum which are necessary for the production of these forms of ammunition. The acid and oleum produced at Badger were used both on site and at other Army ammunition plants in the area.

On 10 May 1943, the first train load of finished product left Badger; 60,000 pounds of smokeless powder was sent to the Twin Cities Ordnance Plant in Minnesota where it was used in M-1 rifle cartridges.

The Badger Ammunition Plant has been decommissioned. Only a few of these engines still exist today. To be a part of the restoration, we have started a go fund me specifically for this restoration. Visit armysteam.com. Updates will be announced on social media.

MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS

NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR OPEN BOD POSITIONS

- **TREASURER**
- **1 SLOT FOR EXECUTIVE B.O.D.**

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter,
please email us at info@armysteam.com

To support efforts of MRS, visit armysteam.com



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