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FEBT Track Crew poses in front of the Robertsdale station on September 18th. - Craig A. Musser photo

WELCOME TO THE NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the new FEBT Newsletter! I hope you find it interesting and informative and with time, each issue highly anticipated. Each month the Newsletter will provide you with the latest news, restoration progress, volunteer and resource needs, and insight into upcoming events. These are exciting times on the EBT and we owe it to you, our dedicated members and supporters, to keep you informed and up to date.

I very much appreciate that Doug Davenport of La Plata, MD has stepped forward to be our Newsletter Editor. He, like me, has had ties to the EBT since very early childhood. Lee Rainey is also to be commended for his efforts in getting the Newsletter off the ground. Without either of them the Newsletter would have forever been "the next priority" rather than the reality. Thank you Doug and Lee!

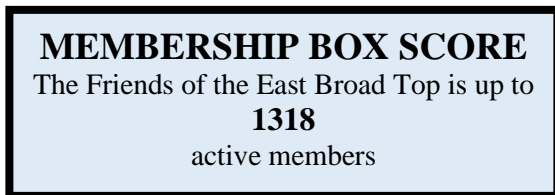
Andy Van Scyoc
President

FALL REUNION GOES VIRTUAL

In the interest of keeping you and your loved ones safe and healthy, FEBT is taking the 2020 Fall Reunion virtual.

Along with the annual business meeting the virtual event will include speakers

- Henry Posner, Chairman of the EBT Foundation
- Dave Domitrovich, Chief Mechanical Officer of the EBT Foundation
- Ron Pearson, "Searching for the Lost Robertsdale Coal Mines and Coal Cleaning Plant"



The event is **FREE**, but registration is required. Upon registration you will receive an email with the Zoom link. Register at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904044DA4AF2EABFF2-febt5>

MAKING TRACKS AT ROBERTSDALE

While COVID-19 has played havoc with any attempt at a normal, reliable work schedule in Robertsedale, FEBT members have nevertheless managed to get an impressive amount of work done so far this year. The focus has been on getting things done to allow us to open the museum for next year's operating season. The primary issue has been getting the doors on the old post office replaced. If you have been there in the past you know that the "crash bar" on one door had to be held up by bungee cords to prevent the weight of the bar from slowly pushing down so far that the door would open on its own. The bottom section of the door was so rotted that it actually fell off the day we started working on replacing it – now that's inspiration to get the job done! The other doors may not have been so impressively bad, but bad they were and all needed to be replaced. Fortunately, past President of the FEBT and former leader of Robertsedale restoration Hank Inman and architect John Bowie (a member) had reviewed the building and worked up blueprints. Hank even had new doors and hardware on hand. All we needed was someone with the knowledge, ability, time, and willingness to take on this project. New FEBT member Bill Reynolds volunteered, and Charlie Wooton joined for the first work session or two. Since then it's been all Bill, and he has worked diligently on it. He's the brains, while Jerry Skeim, Stephen Del Signore, Jane Clarke, and I have served as his assistants. There are four doors on the ground floor and one on the second floor. To date, three of the ground floor doors have been replaced, and the second floor door is well on it's way. Perhaps in a future issue of this, or the *Timber Transfer*, we'll give a detailed description of all the work needed, but for now just know that nothing in a 100+ year old building is straight or level.

The situation on the upper floor required the removal of all the wood back to the concrete blocks. The opening that remained was too large, not straight, not level, and even has a bit of twist to it. Bill had to build the block wall out with concrete. What a wonderful day that was; I had just finished vacuuming the ground floor when Bill turned on some machine to smooth and straighten the hardened concrete. It turned 50 pounds of concrete back into dust (perhaps I exaggerate, but you get the idea). The air currents carried that dust directly down the stairway, around the corner, and deposited it all over the first floor. Oh well, there are more vacuum cleaner bags!



Both sides of a replaced door at the former Robertsedale Post Office building. – Pete Clarke photos



The FEBT carpentry crew of Jane Clarke and Bill Reynolds making progress on the FEBT Museum building second floor door. – Pete Clarke photos

We have also moved the museum store from the station to the old post office. Bill Adams and Andy Van Scyoc worked on the display boards that will be a focus of the museum. Still more to do, but progress is being made. Road crews are working on a new bridge over Trough Creek, so it's hard to get a good overall outside shot of the old post office right now. This work is expected to be completed in a few weeks.



A current view of the Company Square. The old post office is in the foreground, the Robertsdale station in the background, and corner of the Rockhill Coal Company office building can be seen to the right. – Pete Clarke photo



Newly relocated to the museum building, the reorganized Museum Store is almost ready for business. – Jane Clarke photo

Oh, and look what the crew from EBTF have been doing. Yes, that's track that has been installed in front of the station. Its position means that it's what is called the scale track. While the scale is long gone and the pit filled in, this is the track that loaded hoppers of coal would have been rolled along and weighed. There was no by-pass track for this scale, so no locomotive ever used it. It was slightly downhill from mine #5 so they just put a brakeman on and released the brakes. The cars then rolled across the street before the brakeman would have tightened down the brakes to bring it to a stop.

The track restoration was completed in the Robertsdale Yard for the first time since common carrier service ended in 1956. Approximately 75 feet of trackage was restored in front of the former Robertsdale station, after a lot of work had been done to clear the area of brush in previous work sessions. The intent of this trackage, pictured on the cover page, is to allow for the display of East Broad Top hopper cars, in conjunction with the Friends of the East Broad Top Museum, which occupies the former "Company Square". This area is comprised of the former Company Store, the Robertsdale station building, the Rockhill Coal Company office building, and the former Robertsdale Post Office building, all of which is adjacent to the EBT main line at the Main St. grade crossing. The FEBT owns two of the three remaining buildings, with the Company Store building having been torn down in the late 1990s. The East Broad Top Foundation owns the office building.

For more information on the FEBT Museum, please visit the FEBT website at <https://febt.org/robertsdale-museum/>. The museum is currently closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but FEBT continues to make progress on exhibits during the closure. The next Robertsdale work session is scheduled for October 1-3, which will focus on leveling, tamping, and ballasting this section of track to make it ready for hopper car delivery. If you would like to participate and have not already signed up, please visit the SignUp Genius site at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904044da4af2eabff2-october>.

– Pete Clarke and Doug Davenport

FEBT VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE ROCKHILL RESTORATION



The newly-cleaned boiler shop at Rockhill - Randy Lehrian photo

The September work session served to keep the momentum going with 40 plus volunteers showing on Saturday and again on Sunday. The weather was much more manageable with highs in the 70's. Sunday afternoon saw a few, brief, showers.

The window crew was hard at it again. Some worked at getting more glass panes cut in the stone house, while glazing and painting continued in the Foundry. There was a large effort made to get all of the windows replaced on the bus garage. A bit of overtime was put in on Saturday to accomplish this but the Garage really looked good at the end, with all of the fresh white windows installed. Track crews were getting lots done towards the south end of the yard on the track leading to the Paint Shop. The sound of the jackhammer pounding in spikes was fairly constant both days. This seems to be one of the favorite volunteer activities since it is usually the first crew to fill up.

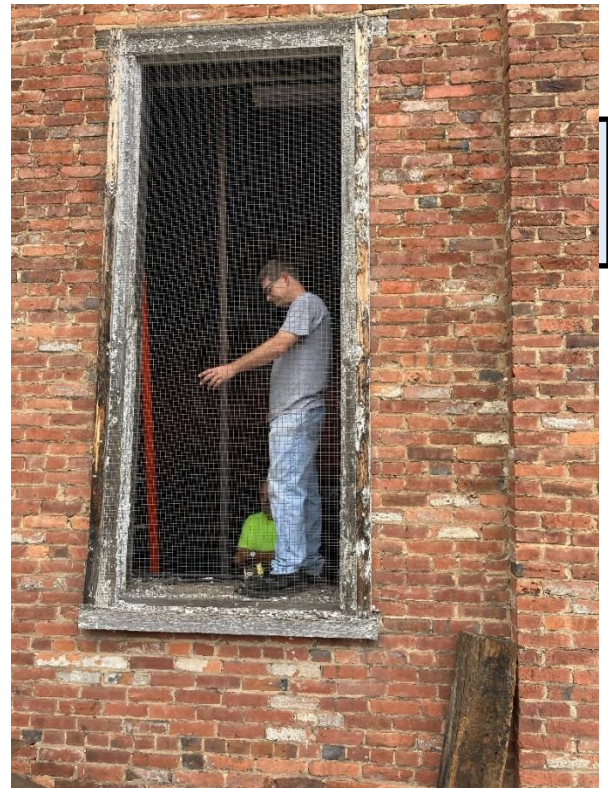
Work continued on Combine 14, with more hardware and vents being cleaned and mounted. The ongoing task of stripping old paint was continued while new wood was also cut for areas that needed repair and replacement.

The paint crew was again making large strides covering large areas of the east side of the foundry and boiler house. They were now employing a pressurized pot sprayer that really seemed to speed things up and allow them to really get the paint

in the many crevices that these buildings are full of. They could be seen prepping the area in front of the machine shop including the large steel tank on Sunday.

The shop crew was split into three groups for the weekend to cover a variety of tasks. One group kept work going on the hanging of gutters in the Shop Alley. By Sunday afternoon they had all of the gutter up with thimbles in place for multiple downspout locations. Unfortunately, the elbows needed to install the downspouts are still on backorder, so this work will have to wait until they arrive. With the extra time at the end of the day Sunday this group exhumed an old brick trough at the end of the alley to connect the alley drain troughs and downspouts to a drain that presumably heads to the Jordan Creek. The second group was contracted to build steps down into the Roundhouse pits on Sunday. They completed two sets and now have a good design that they can copy and order material to complete the rest at the next session. The remainder of the crew spent most of Saturday cleaning up debris and organizing the Boiler Shop. The speeder that had been there for years was moved to the car barn with the rest of them. Steel was moved to other storage areas and templates were hung around on the various nails and racks. Tools were laid out on the benches and work centers that were appropriate. The transformation of this space by the end of the day was incredible.

On Sunday, this group began cleaning out the carpenter shop in preparation for another visit by the Woodford Brothers to right this building. A few old non-original machines that had been thrown in



FEBT vice president Bill Adams works on window replacements – Randy Lehrian photo



The alley between the machine and boiler shops has been a major focus of work. - Randy Lehrian photo.

there for storage were removed and given appropriate homes. A large pile of lumber was pulled out and transferred to the lumber shed late in the day once the track crew put away their work train that was blocking access to the Lumber Shed track. Many pictures were taken to document locations of tools and plans made for storage of other artifacts that will also need removal before the building is rehabilitated.

Even though this year is close to an end and I've had the pleasure of writing several of these rather lengthy work reports now, I am still left amazed and humbled by the huge amount of work that is taking place at our beloved Railroad. It continues to be an incredibly exciting time and I'm honored to be a part of it. It seems that Brad Esposito, the railroad's general manager, is always looking to add to that excitement and fan the flames of enthusiasm. To that end he prepared a great surprise for those there on Saturday afternoon.

Since the last session he was able to straighten and level the main line shaft in the boiler shop ceiling. This allowed him to once again run the steam engine for us but now turn this newly readied shaft to drive the enormous punch and shear that occupy the right side of that building. Wow, what a thrill! It's not often that you are able to see something that hasn't happened in 70 years. Thanks, Brad, for continuing to treat us to new delights.

Here is a [link](#) to a video of the event.

The next work session at the Rockhill complex is scheduled for November 7-8. Check your email for the upcoming invite via SignUp Genius for your opportunity to help out. – *Randy Lehrian and Doug Davenport*

IN THE SHOPS AND ALONG THE LINE

The East Broad Top Foundation has continued their track restoration efforts. Over the past few months, the EBTF track crew has restored the area of Tracks 1 and 2 south of Meadow St., as well as the caboose track, the western yard leads, and some of the roundhouse trackage. FEBT track crews have also assisted some of this process, with Gene “Friar Tuck” Tucker providing the leadership for the FEBT track crew. The Foundation is grateful for his willingness and ability to make this work happen. The first public operating event on the East Broad Top since 2011 was held on August 13-15th to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of tourist operations, and the 260th anniversary of the twin boroughs of Rockhill Furnace and Orbisonia. The EBTF track crews had managed to restore the main line from the Rockhill yard up to the Enyeart Road grade crossing. Since mid-August, the track crew has pressed onward to the north with track being rebuilt up McMullen’s Summit to Horne’s Cut, a total distance of 2.1 miles. Ballast has been installed at least as far as the Little Ice Creamery, with further progress ongoing. The railroad expects to complete the necessary trackwork as far as the Runk Road bridge by the end of November.



The EBT's M-7 diesel sits at Orbisonia station waiting to pull the next train over the restored portion of the right-of-way during the 60th Anniversary event on August 14th. – Doug Davenport photo.

A few weeks ago, Mikado No. 14's cab was loaded and sent to a local contractor for sand blasting. Here we see the results as the EBTF shop crew received the cab, as well as sand domes, smokebox cover, and various other pieces back after blasting and a coat of fresh primer. The cab and other components from 16 will be shipped out soon for the same treatment.



Above - #14's cab after sandblasting and being primered. - EBTF photo

Below – Engine #14's parts have returned from being sandblasted and primered – EBTF photo



Recent evaluations of the shop stacks at the Rockhill Furnace Shops revealed signs of considerable deterioration, causing a significant safety concern for our employees, volunteers, and the general public, in addition to the threat of damage to the historic shop complex below.

The results of the evaluation called for the removal of approximately 30' of the stacks, down to a point at which they are stable enough to remain until further evaluation and engineering can be done to restore them back to their original height at some point in the future. The attached photos show just how significant the deterioration had become.

Meanwhile, the EBT Foundation was the recipient of a \$100,000 grant from the PA Historical & Museum Commission to be utilized for the fire suppression system being installed in the shop complex. – *Lawrence Biemiller and Doug Davenport*

TRACKWORK BOX SCORE

North of Rockhill, track restoration work is now complete to Horne's crossing, 2.1 miles from of the Orbisonia depot.



Cranes remove the top 30 feet of the shop stacks in Rockhill. - EBTF photo



View from the top of the East stack, the older of the two stacks. The white rings are daylight showing through multiple courses of the stack, indicating the severe deterioration that has occurred since it was renewed in 1937. The west stack was renewed in 1944. - EBTF photo.

EDITORIAL - INTRODUCING YOUR EDITOR

Greetings to all! My name is Doug Davenport, and I was recently assigned the task of sharing the progress the FEBT makes with the organization's membership, donors, and prospective members and donors. I grew up in Chambersburg, PA, about an hour away from Rockhill, although I now reside in southern Maryland. I enjoyed a lot of weekends as a kid taking in the tourist operations of the EBT, and of the Rockhill Trolley Museum. I continued to volunteer rather actively into my early adulthood, until military obligations and starting a family got in the way. The allure of the railroad wouldn't let me stay away forever though, and now I'm interested in contributing to the success and preservation of the railroad in any way I can in the midst of a career in the construction industry, raising my four children Maia, Judy, Sammy, and Cora with my wife Tori, and the other struggles of life these days.

My goal as editor is to help share all the good things that the FEBT does and will do in support of the East Broad Top Foundation's preservation efforts. I hope the readers can appreciate what goes into all the things that the FEBT does. It takes people with a wide variety of skill sets and a willingness to help to make it happen. Maybe I can inspire someone who had been helping to get back into it. Giving something of yourself to a cause is a great thing, both for the individual and for the organization, so thanks for climbing aboard with me. There is a ton of both kinetic and potential energy happening here. To quote the story from 1916 that Lee Rainey retold at the Valentine's Day press event, "Let's see what this puppy can do!" – *Doug Davenport*

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The Friends of the East Broad Top Newsletter is a monthly digital-only periodical. Started in 2020, it is intended to keep members and donors apprised of what the organization has done and will be doing. The FEBT Newsletter is distributed by email to the current list of members and donors, and is a privilege of contributing to the FEBT's cause of preserving, restoring, and interpreting the East Broad Top Railroad for current and future generations.



Engines 17 and 18 on display during the 60th Anniversary event – Doug Davenport photo