

Connections

*2011 Annual Report
Celebrating 40 years*





Our Mission

To provide educational, recreational, and heritage railroad experiences and provide alternative transportation to and within Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the Ohio & Erie Canalway.

Letter to Our Stakeholders

At times during 2011, our railroad felt more like a roller coaster. Fuel costs rose, floods delayed the re-opening of our renovated station in Independence, and track construction delays played havoc with our peak summer schedule.

Yet, despite those headaches:

- We enjoyed our second-highest ridership year ever, saw volunteer participation climb to a record 76,000 hours, and completed a five-year strategic plan named *Destination 2016*.
- High-level officials of the National Park Service rode our trains and were greatly impressed with the job we are doing to provide alternative transportation within Cuyahoga Valley National Park.
- A “green” hybrid locomotive that we tested for much of last year reduced both fuel consumption and emissions, catching the attention of those same officials.
- As a not-for-profit organization, we were gratified to see memberships and foundation grants remain strong during a period of economic downturn, helping fund our operations and capital improvements.
- Last but not least, we ended the year 2011 in strong financial condition – thanks to aggressive cost controls, a fuel surcharge program for part of the year, excellent turnouts for our two largest special events (Polar Express™ and Day Out with Thomas), and financial assistance from the National Park Service and Cuyahoga Valley National Park that helped offset losses from track and station closures during the summer.

As one of the nation’s premier excursion railroads, we are in the business of connecting people and places. In particular, we helped over 150,000 passengers connect with the scenic beauty and rich history of the National Park and Ohio & Erie Canalway. Thanks to the rail and station improvements that occurred in 2011, we now offer smoother connections than ever before. And thanks to the many connections with our members, donors and volunteers, we are able to provide a level of passenger service and comfort that is the envy of our competitors.

CVSR turned 40 in February of this year, and we are hosting an anniversary celebration at Hale Farm (where our railroad began) on September 8, 2012. We hope you can attend and greatly appreciate your continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven W. Wait".

Steven W. Wait
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George Snider".

George Snider
Chairman, Board of Trustees





1972: Picking Up Steam

The year was 1972. Richard Nixon had ordered the start of the space shuttle program, digital watches were introduced, and Atari kicked off the first generation of video games with the release of PONG. Popular movies of the year included *The Godfather* and on television screens across America, *Hawaii Five-O* was a big favorite. Here in Ohio, Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad was formed under the previous name, The Cuyahoga Valley Line. The inaugural run took place on June 28, 1975. In 2012, we celebrate our 40th Anniversary and the 51 miles of smiles that make up our track system. To get the wheels turning on the celebration, we have put together a timeline of Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad milestones that tell some of our story.

Program Diversity

From the good old-fashioned fun of Steam in the Valley and our Wine Tasting Excursions, to our numerous Educational Programs and perennial kid favorites like The Polar Express™ and Day Out with Thomas™, we strive to bring a diversity of programming for people of all ages and interests. 2011 program highlights included:



Explore the Underground Railroad

The valley is as rich in scenic beauty as it is important history. And dedicated volunteers like actress Tina Thompkins bring that history to life—quite literally. Northeast Ohio played a pivotal role in the abolitionist and the Underground Railroad movements, and it's thought that the Ohio & Erie Canal was a possible route followed by runaway slaves. Our educational Underground Railroad programs are designed to tell and explore that history, and since their inception in 2002, Thompkins has volunteered her acting talents and played a variety of characters. One of the most dramatic is Mary, a runaway slave.

“Audience members, students usually, are also in the role of runaways; they are hiding out just like my character,” Thompkins says, “and they meet a number of characters who are for or against slavery during the performance—such as John Brown, for instance, and Mary, of course.” Thompkins, who is active in local theater as well, remarks that one of the more intense aspects of the Underground Railroad performances is that “the audience isn’t sitting down in front of a stage; they are on it with you.” Performed at night along a 2-mile lantern hike, this program ends with participants boarding the train at Howe Meadow where they learn their fate. Free. Or not free. “As far as my character goes, I am captured by slave catchers and taken back. Audience reactions are very intense sometimes. One little boy asked his dad if he could take me home so he could take care of me. A group of kids once actually restrained the slave catcher.”





Circa 1995

As the story goes ...

**"It's a magic carpet ride on a rail
Never takes a rest
Flying through the mountains and the snow
You can ride for free and join the fun ..."**

Polar Express™ Charity Run

Each year, 1,000+ kids and their families do ride for free aboard our Polar Express™ Charity Run. In all, we transported 36,985 kids and families to the North Pole last year aboard The Polar Express™, and while each trip is as sweet as the hot cocoa we serve, our charity run might be the sweetest. This is the story within the story. Each year, we donate over 1,000 of these very hard to get tickets to charities that serve families with kids who are facing major challenges such as life shortening illnesses or homelessness—families who could use a little magic. As one "thank you" note put it:

Our families were so very appreciative to spend this time with their children in an activity that would typically be way out of their budget ... and the children have been talking about the experience ever since. Thank you for helping to build lasting memories for the families of Head Start!

Aboard this private, free ride event, kids and their families sing songs, play games, and listen to the classic Van Allsburg story while sipping hot cocoa and enjoying cookies. It takes a lot of Santa's helpers and elf power to make this happen, but in the true spirit of giving, about 350 volunteers took time out of their busy schedules to make these kids' dreams come true.

As the boy in the book says, "though I've grown old, the bell still rings for me, as it does for all who truly believe." Does it still ring for you? We hope so. It rings for us; but so does another equally magical sound: the singing and laughter of these children, having the time of their lives. That is a sound that rings deep in our hearts, a sound with the power to make believers out of all of us here at CVSR.

**Each charity is given its own car;
some of 2011's recipients include:**

- *Children's Hospital : Hematology/Oncology*
- *Stephen A. Comunale, Jr.
Family Cancer Foundation*
- *Macedonia Head Start*
- *Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*
- *National Multiple Sclerosis Society*
- *Children's Hospital: Pulmonology, cardiology,
neurology, endocrinology/diabetes*



CVSR through history

1832

The Ohio & Erie Canal opens, connecting Lake Erie at Cleveland to the Ohio River at Portsmouth.

1880

The Valley Railway opens, offering freight and passenger service between Cleveland, Akron, Canton and points beyond.

1915

The Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad purchases the track.

1963

B&O service ends, and B&O is subsequently merged into the C&O to become The Chessie System, which later becomes CSX Transportation.



Winter Clothing Drive, Brianna Machuga

You don't need a giant red sleigh and magic reindeer to deliver a mountain of gifts. Just ask Brianna Machuga. Brianna, a 16-year old CVSR volunteer and sophomore at St. Vincent – St. Mary High School, organized our first ever hat and coat drive in 2011. A long-time Polar Express™ volunteer, Brianna remembers the night she thought of doing the drive. "One night at the North Pole, a particularly frigid night, we were all leaving for the evening and I started thinking how nice it was to be going back to a warm house; and then thought of those who didn't have a warm place to sleep or even worse, simply were not able to stay warm." She then proposed the idea of a coat and hat drive to CVSR President Steve Wait. Once the idea was approved, families attending The Polar Express™ were encouraged to donate new or gently used coats, hats, scarves, and gloves.

The drive was a huge success. After sorting and bagging the donations, they were packed into her family's car and dropped off at area charities. "Everyone was very grateful. One place had a very small room for donations and only two boxes in it for clothing. We completely filled that room with bags."

140 coats and 300+ hats, gloves and scarves were gathered and donated to the following charities:

- Haven of Rest: A faith-based rescue mission serving the homeless in the Akron, Ohio area with meals, shelter, safety, clothing, and drug rehabilitation
- Access House: sheltering homeless women and children in Summit County since 1984
- Freedom House: helps veterans who are homeless

"This was the first one and it won't be the last. I hope to do it again next year," says Brianna.

Brianna is the daughter of Park Ranger Pamela Machuga, the National Park's liaison to the train—clearly a spirit of supporting the park and community runs in the family! Brianna has been a National Park volunteer since she was seven and a Polar Express™ elf since she was nine, working both aboard the train and at the North Pole in her Cindy Lou Who wig. "My whole life has been about volunteering," adds Brianna. "The people who have things should give to the people who don't." We are pleased to announce that Brianna received a National Global Youth Service Award presented by the City of Akron for her outstanding work. That's the spirit that keeps us on track and why we thank Brianna for her many gifts to CVSR.



1972

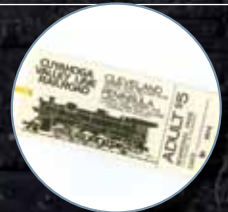
Cuyahoga Valley Preservation & Scenic Railway Association dba Cuyahoga Valley Line (CVL) is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization.

CVL enters into agreements with Midwest Railway Preservation Society and Chessie System initiating passenger service between the Cleveland Zoo and Hale Farm & Village.



1974

President Gerald Ford signs a bill establishing Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (CVNRA).



1977

CVL changes its northern terminus from the Cleveland Zoo to Rockside Road in Independence and extends service south from Hale Farm & Village to Akron.

Volunteer hours have climbed consecutively since 2007, and in 2011 reached an all-time high of
76,414

CVSR Volunteer Corps

Sean Veney, Volunteer

"I am one of those people who likes having to stop at crossings for a train, to be right there watching all that power pass by, feeling the sound. I find it all very moving," explains Sean Veney, one of our busiest volunteers. Sean has been with CVSR since 2008 when he started as a Trainman. He has since graduated to Conductor and is currently an Engineer in training. When he's not on the train, he is at the front of a classroom. Veney is an Associate Professor of Biology at Kent State, and shares, "I definitely see a connection between what I do in the classroom and what I do as a volunteer. Because whether I am answering guests' questions about our railroad and its history, or railroad history and culture in general, or passing along what I have learned to other volunteers, there is a strong teaching component to what I do." Veney recalls his first solo trip as a Conductor. "Yeah, I was a little nervous. Not about operating the train, but afterwards, when we returned to the yard. I must have walked up and down that train at least three times to make sure everything was switched off, nothing was being overlooked." When asked about why he volunteers, Veney is quick to explain, "I love trains, and have had a strong connection with them my entire life starting with model trains as a kid. In fact, right now I am rebuilding a fantastic three island HO layout in my basement." It's people like Sean that don't just keep the railroad strong, but also peoples' passion for it by bringing his own enthusiasm to everything he does.



Volunteer of the Year

When we talk about connections, they don't get any stronger than the one we have with Tom Johnston, this year's Volunteer of the Year. Johnston began his volunteer career in 2008 and has been giving constantly ever since. Besides being Vice President of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad Volunteer Association for the past two years, over time Johnston has worked in multiple volunteer roles such as: Trainman, Maintenance at Fitzwater, Brakeman, Conductor and he is now an Engineer in training. He has been the "Face of CVSR" during orientation sessions and was also instrumental in the creating and implementing of the Conductor Assistant position. In addition, Johnston was a key architect of the "Gold Star Program" which identifies volunteers who are qualified to work in the Saint Lucie Sound. We thank Tom for his positive, reasoned approach to volunteering at CVSR and for inspiring those around him to do the same.



Tom Johnston
Volunteer of the Year
1,096 hours volunteered



CVSR through history

1985

CSX operates the last freight train between Cleveland and Akron. Steam locomotive 4070 completes the season.

1986 & 1987

CVL service is suspended.

1987

The National Park Service (NPS) purchases the Independence to Akron track and infrastructure from CSX.

1988

CVL purchases its first diesel-powered locomotive, 4056, for backup power in case the 4070 steam engine fails. A few short years later, the diesel ended up failing and the steam engine was actually used to rescue it!



Back on Track: Infrastructure Investments

As many of you may know, our goal is to become America's premier excursion railroad – in terms of safety, the quality of our facilities and equipment, and total customer satisfaction. To help CVSR meet those goals, last spring Cuyahoga Valley National Park began a major upgrade to nine miles of track infrastructure that included replacing bolt-joined rail with new continuous welded rail, resurfacing of all rail, and replacing 3,200 old ties and ballast. Additionally, the park began major improvements to Rockside Station including an expanded boarding platform that allows for quicker boarding, a permanent restroom facility and many forward-thinking "green" enhancements. With safety in mind, an emergency exit lane was installed across the west side of the tracks. Both projects were funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

While the Rockside Station improvements were finished on time, flooding caused by heavier than usual spring rains caused delays in re-opening the station. On top of that, the contracted rail upgrade project, which ran over schedule and needed to be extended, was causing up to 2-hour delays for passengers. Though we tried to work around the inconvenience, it became clear the best course of action was to suspend service temporarily.

As we look ahead to our 40th anniversary, the long-term gains for these short-term pains take their place in a long history of overall steady growth. In fact, considering that in spite of these bumps in the road we had our second highest ever year for ridership—155,310—you can see just how strong a connection we have with the community.

New Dome Car

In the fall of 2011, thanks to generous donor support, we added the stunning new *Emerson* Dome car to our line. This stainless steel dome coach, formerly the *Silver Bronco*, was renamed in honor of Emerson®, a major corporate donor. Aboard the *Emerson* Dome car you enjoy an unprecedented 360-degree view of the world. Instead of watching the scenery race by your window, you can see the horizon in every direction. Suddenly, passing through blue heron rookeries and eagle's nests in the trees above you becomes a much richer experience. Think train car meets IMAX—now that's a connection.

Funding from the Emerson Charitable Trust and the following divisions of Emerson supported the purchase and refurbishment of this rail car. It is through such generous gifts as this that Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad is able to carry out its important mission to provide a heritage passenger railroad experience and transportation to and within Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Emerson is pleased to have a significant role in this historic venture.



Emerson Commercial & Residential Solutions, Ridge Tool Company, Elyria
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A Greener Connection

In 2011, CVSR celebrated the reopening of a "Greener" Rockside Station. Using sustainability practices and "green" materials, NPS Landscape Architect Kim Norley reconfigured the old gravel lot to improve riverbank stability and to maximize the riparian buffer between the lot and the Cuyahoga River. The new parking area consists of asphalt with permeable pavement that allows storm water to seep through, filtering pollutants. Adjacent to the main parking area is a stabilized turf overflow parking area. Its low-mow grass mix grows only to a maximum height of six to eight inches. The greener design also includes new energy-efficient LED lights and drainage islands with rain gardens to collect runoff.



A special thank you to all of our donors who made the car possible:

Akron Community Foundation
The George W. Codrington Charitable Foundation
The Mary S. and David C. Corbin Foundation
GAR Foundation
The Avis E. Singleton Lappin Fund of
The Cleveland Foundation
The Lehner Family Foundation
Ohio & Erie Canalway Association
State of Ohio
Timken Foundation of Canton

1989

The NPS and CVL enter into a cooperative agreement, formalizing the partnership for excursion passenger rail service in CVNP. CVL resumes service.

1991

CVL discontinues leasing the 4070 steam locomotive from Midwest Railway Preservation Society. 4099, a diesel engine, is CVL's only locomotive until 1998.



1992

The NPS begins a ten-year capital improvement program to upgrade track conditions within CVNP.



DONORS

Cuyahoga Valley National Park Donor Recognition Garden

Dedicated in October 2011, the new *Cuyahoga Valley National Park Donor Recognition Garden* symbolizes the support and passion of the donors who help us grow. The *Garden*, located at the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park Hines Hill Center, is exclusively composed of plant and wildflower species native to Ohio, and is intended to inspire the public to utilize native plants in their own gardens.

The *Garden* honors the hundreds of people, businesses and foundations that support the national park and its three primary partner organizations: Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Countryside Conservancy, and Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. Donors may see their names displayed on nameplates recognizing the different categories of their support. Donor nameplates are updated each year.

Honor or memorial contributions of \$100 or more are recognized in the *Garden* with colorful nameplate markers. Annual Giving, Capital and Endowment gifts of \$1,000 or more are recognized, and special locally crafted ceramic medallions are featured in the *Garden* to recognize individual donors whose lifetime giving totals \$100,000+ or a business or foundation whose lifetime giving totals \$500,000+.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park and CVSR are grateful to Jerry J. Jacobson, Emily and Bob Warren (pictured above), and The Robert M. Warren Trust who are part of this special group of supporters.



St. Lucie Sound Founders Society

Built in 1946 and refurbished in 1986, the *Saint Lucie Sound* was and still is the quintessence of luxury train travel. And as a member of the St. Lucie Sound Founders Society, besides indulging in the car's elegant atmosphere, you'll enjoy quite a few other luxuries: for instance, as a member you can reserve the *Saint Lucie Sound* luxury car for your private use one day each year for up to 20 guests. Members can also buy exclusive tickets to The Polar Express™ ahead of the general public. CVSR recognizes the following individuals for their annual donation to the St. Lucie Sound Founders Society at the \$1,500 membership level and above in 2011 and first quarter 2012.

Acme Fresh Markets

Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. De La Porte, CVSR Trustee

Mr. and Mrs. R. Thomas Green, CVSR Trustee

Mr. and Mrs. John J. Hetzer

Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Kruszka, CVSR Trustee

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Jackson, CVSR Trustee

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas L. Johnston

Robin Kirk

Christopher and Christina Kmetko, CVSR Trustee

Craig Moore

Larry R. Parsons

George and Nora Snider, CVSR Trustee

Mr. and Mrs. Steven W. Wait



Through your generosity you help provide outstanding education programs and enable us to conserve, restore and maintain the vintage locomotives and passenger coaches that are an important part of Cuyahoga Valley's history.



1994

Cuyahoga Valley Preservation & Scenic Railway Association dba Cuyahoga Valley Line changes its business name to Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) and adopts the wings logo still in use today. The paint scheme changes from the blue/gold of the CVL to the red/yellow/black seen today on CVSR.

CVSR runs the very first Polar Express™ for just 3 nights. CVSR's signature event now runs over 30

nights. It takes over 2,000 dedicated volunteers to pull this off night after night for 36,000 passengers. That's a lot of hot chocolate and cookies!

CVSR discontinues leasing passenger coaches and purchases its first fleet of 6 streamlined era passenger cars; along with a vintage, round-end observation car (the *Saint Lucie Sound*) for use in its chartering operations.

CVSR through history

It is through the generosity of our donors and the individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations listed here that Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad is able to provide the best passenger service and programs, many of which were highlighted in this report. While space limits our ability to list all donors' names, we are grateful for the support that each provides, no matter the size of the gift. It is because of everyone's support that CVSR continues to flourish.

Giving levels are representative of the donor's total contributions made between January 1 and December 31, 2011, regardless of the purpose or intent of any specific gift. CVSR has made every effort to ensure accuracy in listing all donors at the \$100 and above levels. Donor names are listed in accordance with the preferred publication name provided by the donor. Those wishing to change the way in which their names are listed in future publications may contact the CVSR development office at 330-657-1906.

\$10,000+

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1995

Combine Car #727 (formerly the Ft. Mitchell, now the Invacare Car) is purchased from the National Railroad Historical Society for conversion to CVSR's first wheelchair-accessible car.

1996

The Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway is established by an act of Congress.

1998

The first station is built at Indigo Lake for improved passenger service to Hale Farm & Village. First Day Out With Thomas the Tank Engine™.

1999

Fitzwater Maintenance Yard is completed by CVNRA to provide CVSR with a state-of-the-art equipment maintenance facility.



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CVSR through history

2000

Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area is designated Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP).

CVSR begins leasing nine streamlined stainless steel coaches from Akron METRO Regional Transit Authority (METRO). The coaches are still in use today.

2001

METRO purchases the Canton-Akron Line from CSX. The Rockside, Canal Visitor Center, Brecksville, Boston Mill, Botzum and Akron Northside Stations are completed.

2003

METRO, CVSR and NPS enter into an agreement for CVSR's passenger service between Akron and Canton. The Canton Station is completed and CVSR inaugurates Canton Service on July 2.

Flooding causes a major washout by Szalay's Farm Market in Peninsula, taking several weeks to repair.

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STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

December 31, 2011 and 2010

	2011	2010
CURRENT ASSETS		
Petty cash on hand	\$2,100	\$2,100
Cash- checking	1,102,440	1,466,893
Grants receivable	341,229	162,000
Pledges receivable	165,000	20,000
Inventory - concessions	66,558	65,912
Prepaid insurance	18,305	16,368
Prepaid expenses	181	415
Employee advance	1,588	2,838
Deposit	-	8,000
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,697,401	1,744,526
INVESTMENTS		
INVESTMENTS - ENDOWMENT	347,917	370,274
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT		
Rolling stock	3,907,484	3,458,549
Machines and equipment	249,825	225,950
Track Truck	78,853	43,759
Office equipment	32,041	49,426
Furniture	124,014	124,014
Seasonal fixtures	89,652	85,428
	<u>4,481,869</u>	<u>3,987,126</u>
Less accumulated depreciation and amortization	<u>2,621,620</u>	<u>2,361,054</u>
	<u>1,860,249</u>	<u>1,626,072</u>
	<u>\$3,905,567</u>	<u>\$3,740,872</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$ -	\$7,762
Gift certificate liability	35,022	45,172
Accrued payroll, payroll taxes and withholding	55,044	60,985
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	90,066	113,919
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	3,040,408	2,909,003
Temporarily restricted	427,176	347,676
Permanently restricted	347,917	370,274
TOTAL NET ASSETS	3,815,501	3,626,953
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$3,905,567	\$3,740,872

2006

Major flooding from the Cuyahoga River shuts the line down for several weeks. In coming years, CVNP invests significant funds in bank stabilization which later minimizes damage and preserves the line when flooding returns in 2011.

Personal Connections

Steve Wait: a history of making history

Thinking of Steve Wait's retirement in mid-2012, it is hard not to recall a familiar railroad quote made by Charles Frederick Carter: "It would be difficult to overestimate the transcendent importance of the part the railroad has played in making the Nation what it is to-day. Perhaps it would be within bounds to say that without railroads to bind the States into one homogeneous whole, the Nation never could have attained its present size and importance." Within these words, we hear a strong echo of Steve's contribution to CVSR. Though on a more modest scale, without question, his efforts to strengthen the bonds between CVSR and the National Park into a mutually beneficial whole have been a driving force behind our continued growth.

Since November 2006, Wait has led the railroad, which provides transportation to and within Cuyahoga Valley National Park under a joint operating agreement, as president and CEO. His 35-year career in railroading includes time with the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad and Kansas City Southern Railway. From 1995 to 2005, he served as President and Chief Operating and Marketing Officer of the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway, and as Steve explains, "I'm retiring from CVSR but not railroading altogether." Steve will become full-time with the new Cleveland Harbor Belt Commercial Railroad Line, switching from excursion to commercial railroad and bringing his years of railroad experience and business railroad acumen to a new set of challenges. "I got my first job in railroading as a switchman in 1974 in Salt Lake City," tells Wait, "so this is more of a return to my roots than a departure from railroading."

Wait is guided by his roots to the outdoors as well, and speaks with reverence for the country's national park system. "Throughout my life, I have spent a lot of time enjoying this country's national parks—as a young child, then as a Boy Scout, and then as a father sharing the outdoors with my own children." Wait recalls his time hiking through the redwoods, his trips to Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, and explains "I have always loved the country's National Parks and saw this opportunity with CVSR as a way to give back to the park system, in this case Cuyahoga Valley National Park."

During his tenure, Wait has expanded CVSR's visibility, increased ridership levels over 70 percent and stabilized its financial condition. As CVSR Chairman George Snider sees it, "He pushed for numerous infrastructure improvements, better equipment and professional staff development—all of which helped CVSR grow. Steve has helped CVSR become one of America's largest and most respected excursion railroads."

But as busy as he was on the administrative side, Wait always found time to attend our many special events such as The Polar Express™ and Day Out with Thomas™. Wait describes his experience as a runaway in the Underground Railroad program as "definitely one of the most emotional experiences of my life." Truly, a window on our train provides a dramatic window on the past and programs like the Underground Railroad, as Wait observes, are one of the many ways CVSR helps people connect to this region's history: the history of the valley, of the park, of the Ohio Erie Canalway, and the Native Americans who made their homes here. "A lot of people don't know this area's amazing history, but whether hearing the *Voices in the Valley* audio tour aboard the train, or through any of the railroad's many programs, they get that connectivity to the past." Speaking of his own more personal connections, Steve says he looks forward to spending more time with his five grown children and 13 grandchildren.

As Steve heads toward his next destination, we wish him well and extend a heartfelt thanks for making all of our connections here at CVSR, internally and externally, that much stronger as we move forward in our mission.



CVSR through history

2007

Visiting locomotive 1293 steams into Cuyahoga Valley, the first main line steam engine to run in the Valley since the 4070 last ran 16 years earlier. The Steam in the Valley event is born, with other steam engines visiting in subsequent years.

The Bike Aboard! Program is revived, attracting 5,849 riders in its first year. The program explodes in its second year, increasing to 18,252. Over 20,000 riders now enjoy this popular program.



Peggy Wood

Among the pages of our 40-year history, Peggy Wood surely has her own special chapter. Wood, who is retiring to part-time after 20 years, first “got on board” with us in the early 90s. Ever since then she has been dedicating her time, energy, knowledge and passion to helping make the railroad the success it is today. When Peggy joined the railroad in 1991 it was still called the Cuyahoga Valley Line and there were just three employees: her, the Executive Director and a seasonal engineer. Oh yes, and one locomotive. When asked what stands out about her time with CVSR, Wood is quick to say “the growth.” During her time with the railroad she has seen ridership climb from 15 or 20,000 a year to over 150,000 today.

As the railroad grew, and more cars and locomotives were purchased (today there are 31 in all) and the operating season became longer, Wood took on more responsibilities. In the late 90s she became Office Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, which she did until she retired. Along the way, Wood touched just about every aspect of the railroad’s operations. “I got the necessary certification to be a brakeman and sometimes filled in as conductor. But I wasn’t the best brakeman,” she says laughing. “Throwing switches, hooking up brake hoses and lining up knuckles requires a lot of upper body strength.”

Wood points out that volunteers are a huge part of the railroad’s success. “There are hundreds of volunteers who put their heart and soul into the railroad—and we need them all. Polar Express™, which went from 3 nights to 32 over time, utilizes over 250 volunteers a night.” When asked what attracts her to the railroad Wood added, “I don’t know exactly. When I was a kid I was scared to death of trains. But volunteers will tell you, it’s just something that gets in your blood. It got into mine.” We are glad it did, Peggy, and thank you.



New Connections

Dennis Varian, new Director of Operations

In 2011, Dennis Varian assumed the role of superintendent and later Director of Operations. Varian comes to CVSR with over 28 years experience in railroading. Larry J. Blanchard, a volunteer with CVSR for more than 16 years and the Director of Operations for the past four years, is returning to the position of Trainmaster. As Trainmaster, he will primarily be responsible for overseeing the Yard operations and track inspection. Of stepping into his new role, Varian says, “I am excited to be working with CVSR and Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The people are great, the area is beautiful and I look forward to a great 2012.”



2008

CVSR runs the first Polar Express™ in Canton.

2009

CVNP receives funding enabling CVSR to acquire and refurbish a second wheelchair-accessible car, #105. Developed by NPS, the Voices in the Valley audio tour debuts on CVSR.

CVNP makes significant upgrades to 10 railroad crossings, installing gates and signals to ensure safe use of the historic Valley Railway and area roadways by park visitors and the traveling public.

CVSR's business offices relocate from Fox House in downtown Peninsula to the Daniel Tilden House, a historic 1870 farmhouse beautifully restored by NPS.

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CVSR through history

2010

NPS receives federal funds for a comprehensive rail transportation study to plan for the growth of the line in the next 5-20 years.

Ridership peaks at 189,000, the highest in its history.

2011

NPS upgrades nine miles of CVSR railroad line from bolt-jointed rail to welded rail between Akron and Brecksville to provide a smoother ride. Given CVSR's relatively light tonnage, the welded rail could have a life span of about 60 – 100 years. Another 3,200 old ties were also replaced. New ties have an estimated 30-year lifespan.

NPS expands and improves Rockside Station.

The newly acquired refurbished Emerson dome car (formerly the Silver Bronco) begins service. CVSR tests LOCX 1005, the first low emissions, high fuel efficiency environmentally-friendly locomotive in CVNP.



2012

CVSR celebrates its 40th anniversary.

NPS has invested approximately \$55 million in the track and related infrastructure since acquiring the line in 1987.

The Volpe Transportation Study will be completed, ensuring the future of the historic Valley Railway line in CVNP for the next 5-20 years. This comprehensive rail planning study will suggest ways to improve the passenger experience, encourage the use of CVSR as alternative transportation, streamline operations and reduce costs.





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