

SHORT TAKES

Muzzled Lion

The Delaware & Hudson Canal Co. was established in 1823 to build a canal between its namesake valleys to move coal from its mines. A gravity railroad was installed over Moosic Mountain between the mines at Carbondale, Pa., and the head of canal navigation at Honesdale, Pa.

Stationary steam engines winched the loaded coal cars up inclines, called planes, while gravity carried them downhill. On several level stretches between the planes, horses were used to move the short strings of cars.

But new technology was brewing in the form of steam-powered locomotives, and in 1828, the company sent Horatio Allen, a young canal engineer, to England to oversee the building of these recently conceived machines to replace the horses.

Four engines were to be sent by ship to Kingston, N.Y., (Roundout) on the Hudson River and then via canal to Honesdale. The *Stourbridge Lion*, one of three locomotives built by Foster, Rastrick & Co. of Stourbridge, England, was the only one that apparently made it to Honesdale. The others—*America, Hudson*, and *Delaware*—disappeared from the company's records.

The *Lion* was placed on the track in Honesdale and fired up, and Horatio Allen piloted the newcomer out of town and into the woods on August 8, 1829. This was the first steam locomotive ever to turn

a wheel on a railroad in North America.

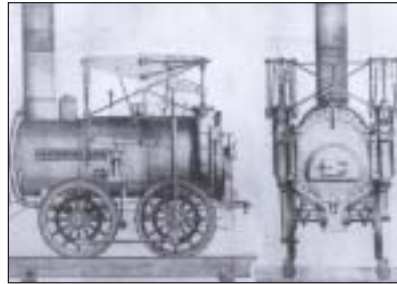
The locomotive performed well, but the track (iron straps screwed to wooden rails) and the wooden bridge structures proved to be too light for the weight of the locomotive. Another trial run was made a few days later, which confirmed the problem. So horses remained in charge of moving the cars on the level stretches. The *Lion's* boiler was eventually used in a commercial foundry in Carbondale, and one of the cylinders were preserved at the Smithsonian Institution.

Lenor F. Loree, a legendary president of the resulting enterprise, the Delaware & Hudson Railroad, was a champion of steam power and founder of the American branch of the Newcomen Society, a British organization devoted to the preservation of industrial history. In 1932, he directed the Colonie, N.Y., shop forces to build a working replica of the *Lion*. Company engineers traveled to England to obtain copies of the original drawings and to take measurements of the *Lion's* sister engine, *Agenoria*, which survived in the British Museum.

The working replica was displayed and operated at the Century of Progress Fair in Chicago in 1933. It was also exhibited at the New York World's Fair during 1939-40 and then permanently loaned

to the Wayne County Historical Society and moved to Honesdale.

In 1973, D&H President Carl B. Sterzing, aware of the significance of the *Lion*, prevailed upon the historical society to release the replica for a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the railroad. The machine was returned to the Colonie shop, where it received a fresh coat of paint and was placed on a flat car to be part



Drawing of original *Stourbridge Lion*

of a special train that toured the system carrying historical displays and goodwill ambassadors.

Upon conclusion of the sesquicentennial events, the *Lion* was returned to Honesdale, and has been housed since 1993 in a display annex built adjacent to the society's museum building on the edge of the old canal basin.

With the 175th anniversary of the *Lion's* trip approaching in August 2004, Rod Brown, a director of the historical society, gathered a group of preservationists together in February 2003. He asked them what would be the best way to celebrate the event.

Several suggestions were made, including holding a plaque dedication and putting the locomotive on a flatbed truck for a parade, but the winner was—run it under steam!

Chris Ahrens of the Steamtown National Historic Site backshop and Linn Moedinger, president of the Strasburg Rail Road, contributed their expertise to the mechanical aspects of the project as other phases of the proposal were investigated. Among the tasks that needed



Jim Shaughnessy

Replica engine at Colonie shop, 1973

to be accomplished was laying additional rail to accommodate the 4-foot, 3-inch gauge of the locomotive on existing trackage along the former canal basin where the first run was made.

The group contacted the Canadian Pacific Railway, owner of the replica by virtue of its purchase of D&H in 1991, for permission to operate the engine. Estimating that about \$25,000 would be needed to get the engine running, the group believed that the necessary amount could be obtained through grants and funding from the community.

At the start of 2004, arrangements were progress-

ing nicely. Certification was needed from Pennsylvania state boiler inspectors under the antique boiler category. The boiler was thoroughly inspected, and the inspectors were comfortable with the addition of a new pressure relief valve, a water sight glass and pressure gauge, and a second water feed pump. By reducing pressure from the original 50 psi to 23 psi, the inspectors indicated that operation of the *Lion* under its own steam would be acceptable.

The plan was to take the replica to the Strasburg, Pa., shop of the state-owned Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania to have about 200 hours of restoration work completed at a cost of \$15,000. The extra rail placement would require about \$4,000, and the purchase of a

road trailer to move the replica out of the museum and back and forth from Strasburg about \$3,000. An additional \$1,000 was budgeted for insurance.

Community interest in the project was growing when, unexpectedly, the directors of the historical society, meeting on March 18, voted 6 to 4 against implementing the project. They cited a number of issues, including the absence of written permission from Canadian Pacific (only a verbal commitment had been received to date), the cost of insurance, and the adverse effect that the project might have on the museum's efforts to raise \$500,000 for a

new addition.

The importance of what the Brown team was trying to do apparently eluded the directors. One of them quipped, "This is a lot of money just to crank it up for a few days."

The directors also did not seem to understand the piggybacking effect of the project—namely, how favorable publicity from the reenactment could foster the museum's other goals, like the new addition.

A glimmer of hope surfaced when two businessmen offered a substantial donation to the project after the negative decision was reported in the local newspaper, but the museum board did not reconsider its decision.

Brown and his team believed that no fatal problem existed with the machine itself, and saw no reason why it couldn't run. The fatal flaw was the board's lack of imagination and the issue of insurance. A policy had been difficult to obtain and, when coverage was finally offered, it stipulated that spectators must be kept 100 feet away from the engine. Perhaps that was a prudent precaution in the eyes of some distant corporate lawyer, but it was a condition that would be almost impossible to implement in the limited area available at the proposed reenactment site.

A celebration is still planned on August 8, but the *Lion* will not steam to its 175th birthday party. It will remain silent and sheltered at the museum, and America will be the lesser for it.

—Jim Shaughnessy