The Route of the Black Diamond and Reconnecting with our Industrial Past

By NBLT Staff

The Black Diamond, also known as the Black Diamond Express, was the flagship passenger train of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. It ran from New York to Buffalo from 1896 until 1959. The train was named for the railroad's major cargo, anthracite coal from the Wyoming Valley, which was known as "the black diamond" because of its exceptional hardness and high value. As a result, the railroad used "The Route of the Black Diamond" as its slogan. The sister engine to the Black Diamond was the John Wilkes pictured here and named after John Wilkes a British Member of Parliament and supporter of the American War of Independence. Wilkes-Barre and Wilkes University take their names from him. The John Wilkes was one of the most attractive streamlined locomotives ever to operate on American rails.

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Soon the Route of the Black Diamond will come alive again but in a different way. North Branch Land Trust (NBLT) will honor the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L) organization at the Trust’s Annual Dinner on May 3rd for their efforts to complete the D&L Trail and connect people to nature and our industrial past. The D&L Trail is a 165-mile hiking and biking trail that runs from Bristol, PA to Wilkes-Barre and much of the trail runs on the “Route of the Black Diamond”. NBLT is working with the D&L to complete the last 5.5 miles of the trail from Oliver Mills to Northampton Street (See the map of the complete D&L trail on page 3).

As a community based non-profit, NBLT’s Annual Dinner & Auctions is the Trust’s largest fundraiser of the year with proceeds going toward important land conservation projects that benefit us all. This year and next the Trust will be working diligently to complete the D&L trial into Wilkes-Barre. NBLT has been successful in acquiring grant funding through the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) to help design and construct this section of trail. However, many of the Trust’s administrative costs are not covered by the grant funding. Support of our Annual Dinner & Auctions fundraiser will help defray these costs.

You can support the Trust’s efforts by coming to the dinner, donating an auction item, or purchasing a dinner sponsorship. For information on donating dinner auction items, sponsorship opportunities, or to purchase dinner tickets please contact NBLT at (570) 310-1781, email info@nblt.org or go to www.nblt.org/events.

This O Scale full brass working model of the John Wilkes (pictured below) will be on display at the Annual Dinner and will be available for sale at auction. Built in 1963 by Weaver Quality Craft Models, retail value today is about $700.00. Please join us and help us complete the trail.
Preserving the historic pathway that carried coal and iron from Wilkes-Barre to Philadelphia, the 165-mile D&L National Heritage Corridor Trail connects people to nature, culture, communities, recreation and our industrial heritage.
We are happy to report that as part of our efforts to protect the Penobscot Mountain Highlands from Mocanaqua to Mountain Top, we received a DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program grant to conserve over 1,000 acres along Little Wilkes-Barre and Penobscot Mountains in Newport Township, PA. These highlands harbor a diversity of flora and fauna unique to our region as well as providing scenic views and places to recreate. These highlands are listed in the Luzerne County Natural Inventory and the Luzerne and Lackawanna Open Space, Greenways & Outdoor Recreation Master Plan as critical areas for conservation.

Working with our partners the Earth Conservancy and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry we look forward to permanently protecting this beautiful area and making it available to the public for passive recreation activities.
Please call NBLT at (570) 310-1781, or email info@nblt.org, or go to www.nblt.org/events to learn more or to register for any of these events.
**YES**, I want to be part of conserving our natural heritage in Northeastern Pennsylvania!

- $100
- $250
- $500
- $1,000
- Other _______________

**CONTRIBUTE ONLINE AT:**
www.nblt.org

**OR MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:**
North Branch Land Trust
251 Huntsville-Idetown Road
Dallas, PA 18612

North Branch Land Trust is a 501©(3) organization. Your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

**PLEASE SUPPORT NBLT WITH YOUR DONATION TODAY!**

North Branch Land Trust works to conserve the scenic, natural and working landscapes in Northeastern PA that sustain us. We believe that balancing the conservation of our natural heritage with the practical development of other land resources will help improve the quality of life for everyone in the region. If you are not a member please consider a membership donation today. If you are already a member we thank you. With your help over 17,000 acres conserved to date! Let’s save thousands more acres together!

**YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name ____________________________________________

Address__________________________________________

City, State, Zip ____________________________

Email __________________________________________

With your email we can save money and trees and we never share your personal information with anyone.

*Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.*

— Rachel Carson