

Museum celebrates Roosevelt in Sayre with ice cream social, caboose exhibit

SAYRE – A new book documenting the 1905 train excursion that carried President Theodore Roosevelt through Sayre made its debut at the Sayre Historical Society's Caboose Day on Saturday, June 28.

Railroad historian and author Richard Palmer was available to sign copies of his newest book "A Moment in Railroad History: Theodore Roosevelt's Presidential Special to Chautauqua in 1905." Palmer also presented a program on Roosevelt's excursion in the museum.

Palmer's book, published by the Sayre Historical Society, offers a unique glimpse into the special accommodations the railroads made for the president's excursion. The trip began in Jersey City, N.J. and ran over the Lehigh Valley Railroad to Waverly then transferred to the Erie Railroad and continued onto Chautauqua. Huge crowds turned out for the popular president who made speeches of various lengths wherever his train stopped.

At his first stop in Phillipsburg, N.J., Roosevelt paid special tribute to the railroad man.

"You men who do your work in connection with the railways of the country typify to a peculiar degree the qualities that we need in American citizenship," Roosevelt said. "We like to think that the average American is a man who is willing to work hard and take risks. That is just what a railroad man has to do, and has to be willing to do."

A stop in Wilkes-Barre, Roosevelt spoke to a joint meeting of United Mine Workers Union and the Catholic Total Abstinence Society. An incredible 200,000 people met the presidential special when it arrived in town.

"Enormous crowds thronged the streets," Palmer writes. "After the train halted, Roosevelt walked to the nearby viewing stands. The audience was so large it was becoming uncontrollable. Strong cables surrounded the stand, but they threatened to give way under the pressure of the crowd. Quickly grasping the situation, Roosevelt shouted to the people to stop pushing forward and stand still. He was applauded, and it instantly quieted down."

Palmer also tells of Roosevelt's visit to Sayre, citing an article that appeared in the *Valley Recorder* newspaper.

"His hearty laugh as the train stopped and men and women were whirled in a ludicrous scramble to fill the space vacated by the train, his genial, pleasing bearing, his simplicity and whole-heartedness – these are the things that won him the regard of our people here in an instant," the newspaper account said.

The Roosevelt book is the second manuscript Palmer has donated to the historical society for publication. Palmer has previously written "The Handsomest Train in the World: The First Twenty-Five Years of the Black Diamond Express." A resident of Syracuse, N.Y., Palmer was the author of "Rails North," a pictorial history of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. He has also written nearly a dozen short histories of various local railroads as well as many articles for journals and magazines.

The book is available for \$10 at the Sayre Historical Society Museum, located in the former Lehigh Valley Railroad Passenger Station in downtown Sayre, PA. Books can also be purchased by mail by sending \$10 (tax included) plus \$2.50 for postage to:

Sayre Historical Society
P.O. Box 311
103 S. Lehigh Avenue
Sayre, PA 18840

For information, call the museum at 570-882-8221 or e-mail the museum at sayrehistorical@yahoo.com. The museum is open Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Wednesdays from 5 to 7 p.m.

The Sayre Historical Society is a recipient of United Way funds.