

\$100,000 payment gets Californian onto farm

WILLIAMSTOWN — The California entrepreneur who made a \$100,000 down payment on the Mt. Hope Farm last weekend has been given free access to the 1,009-acre estate by owner August E. Mansker.

Mansker said Saturday John R. Campbell is expected to visit the estate soon and he will be given free access to the property as a result of the additional down payment. Mansker maintains that Campbell is free to move in, although he is still awaiting approval from the

bankruptcy court to sell the estate. Campbell made a deposit of \$10,000 at the time the first sales/purchase agreement was signed in May. Approximately \$4,700 of that was used to pay three employees back wages following a ruling this week from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge allowing Mansker to use a portion of the funds to pay them. The workers had gone without paychecks since May.

Under the terms of the original sales/purchase agreement Campbell planned to pay the \$100,000 down payment seven days after

Williams College exercised its option of first refusal on the property.

Philip J. Hendel, the Springfield attorney representing Mansker, has rewritten and resubmitted the sales/purchase agreement following a ruling from Judge Paul W. Glennon that the college's 30-day option does not begin until the bankruptcy court has approved the sale of the estate.

Hendel resubmitted the agreement Friday, providing additional information requested by the judge. The college contended that the first

agreement was an option to buy, not a firm contract to purchase the property.

Mansker's Macon, Mo., estate may also have a buyer soon, according to John Doherty, a representative of the U.S. Trustee, the office overseeing Mansker's assets. He would not identify the potential buyers for the Oak Hill estate.

Nor would he identify the woman who has apparently expressed serious interest in Mansker's Clearwater, Fla., health spa. Doherty said a buyer is also being sought for Mansker's "Take Control" diet

plan.

If these properties are sold, the sales should generate sufficient capital to continue operating Mt. Hope for the next two and a half months, according to Doherty. He said he is optimistic that the sale will be approved by Judge Glennon and the property sold by September.

Doherty also reported that Williams College has assumed the \$200,000 mortgage owed to Carley Capital Group of Madison, Wis., which sought to purchase the property in December. The development company withdrew its offer in Feb-

ruary after Williams College successfully challenged its sales/purchase agreement with Mansker. The company had already made a \$200,000 downpayment and sought to recover it when Mansker filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the bankruptcy code in May.

Mansker now owes the college \$550,000 in mortgages for the 1,000-acre estate and 72-room Elm Tree House. He also owes \$60,000 in back real estate taxes to Williamstown and \$65,000 to the Bank of New England.

Berkshire railway chugs to opening

By JILL WALLACH
Republican correspondent

LEE — The Berkshire Scenic Railway opened for business Saturday with ceremony, a full load of passengers, and a 15-mile journey to Great Barrington.

The two passenger cars carried more than 170 passengers on the rolling museum's first official trip to Great Barrington, with a brief stop in Stockbridge.

Passengers included U.S. Rep.gressman Silvio O. Conte, R-Mass., state Sen. Peter Webber, R-Pittsfield, and state Rep. Christopher Hodgkins, D-Lee.

Berkshire County commissioners and Lee selectmen were also among the guests participating in the inaugural run.

Conte said the opening of the scenic railway was a "historic occasion."

Webber welcomed the addition of a new business that will provide "a catalyst for viewing the historic and natural sights in the Southern Berkshires."

Hodgkins read a proclamation issued by the state House of Representatives congratulating the Berkshire Scenic Railway on its new beginnings.

A telegram was also read from Gov. Michael S. Dukakis who had been invited to participate in the inaugural run, but was unable to make it. The governor and his family own a summer home in Tyringham.

John Herbert, president of the railway's board of directors and one of the eight founding members, thanked all those involved in making the new railway happen during the last nine months.

He noted, as did Donald Saint-Pierre, another director and co-owner, that one of the cars will eventually be converted for dining and the eight owners hope to purchase a steam locomotive for the four-car train.

Herbert said the board of directors is negotiating with the Boston and Maine Railroad to clear the right-of-ways along the 15-mile route and eventually upgrade the tracks so the train can travel at a higher rate of speed. At present, the train can legally travel at 10 miles per hour.

The owners have sought assistance from Congressman Conte in urging the B & M to improve the

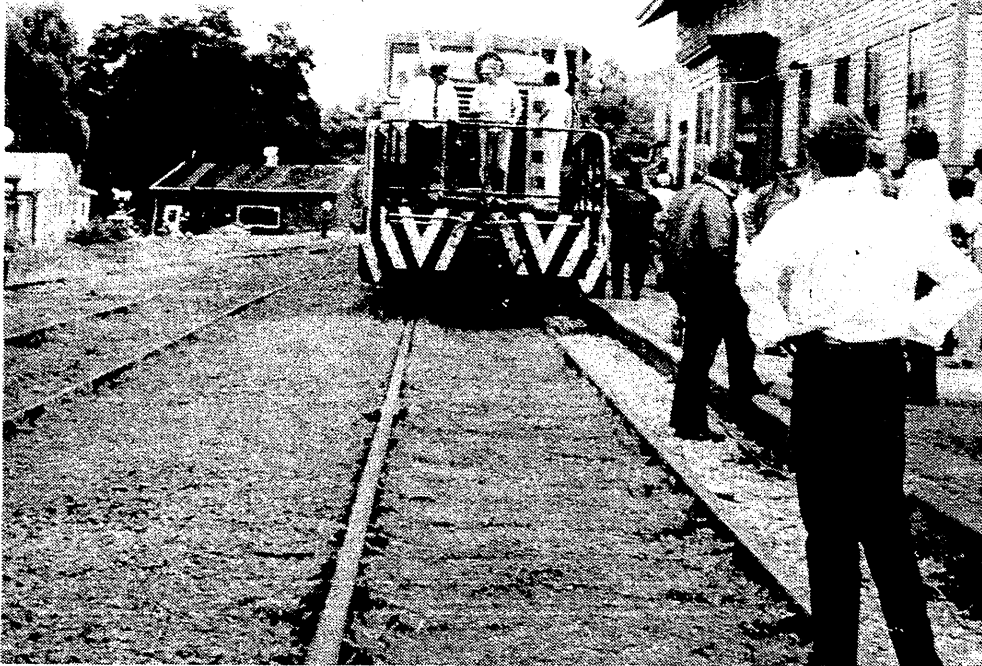


Photo by Jill Wallach

Well wishers cheer as the Berkshire Scenic Railway prepares to leave Sullivan Station in Lee for its first 15 mile trip to Great Barrington Saturday. More than 170 people took the two-hour trip, including Congressman Silvio Conte, state Sen. Peter Webber and Lee Representative Christopher Hodgkins.

tracks and do the brush cutting during the next few weeks.

Music at the opening ceremonies was provided by St. Mary's Royal Knights Drum and Bugle Corps of Lee which was formed a year ago and has members as young as seven.

The musical group "Fancy Train" provided music to passengers on the second car during the trip down to Great Barrington.

The Rev. James Graham of St. Patrick's Church in Hadley, a Lee native and one of the directors of the railway, and The Rev. William Tourigny of Springfield gave the

blessing for the new train.

Nancy Herbert, wife of John Herbert, christened the new locomotive, with a bottle of pink champagne before the conductor called "all aboard."

John Dadak, another owner of the rolling museum, said during the trip that if all goes well with the railway the group may be able to purchase the tracks from Pittsfield to Canaan, Conn., in a couple of years from B & M or Conrail.

The railroads were required to maintain the "island" line until 1986 under the federal legislation

authorizing Conrail. But the tracks can be sold once the stipulation expires, Dadak said.

The railway will operate on weekends and holidays from Sullivan Station in Lee and will offer passengers the opportunity to disembark at four stops.

Restoration of the 1920s Erie-Lackawanna cars and 80-ton locomotive, has been done by a small army of volunteers over the last two months.

One car remains to be restored inside, but the group will continue work on the exteriors during the next year.

Candidate pushes Northern Tier plan

NORTH ADAMS — Urging a quicker start of the Northern Berkshire segment of the Northern Tier concept, state representative candidate Clark H. Billings Saturday called for establishment of "a partnership with the Berkshire Scenic Railway" which opened for business Saturday.

Billings, a candidate in the First Berkshire District, said plans for Northern Berkshire should provide inducements for tourists to stay overnight and longer in the communities surrounding "the end of the Mohawk Trail."

Although state Sen. John D. Oliver, D-Amherst, who proposed the plan, has maintained that attracting the tourist dollar is not the primary goal of the Northern Tier Proposal, Billings said it must be a major goal for Northern Berkshire communities.

Billings proposed the development of "active tourist attractions" in conjunction with the Western Gateway Urban Heritage State Park in North Adams.

He suggested the Berkshire Scenic Railway investigate establishing a route to Adams, particularly if the Greylock Glen Resort is developed with a tramway or scenic cable car to the summit of Mt. Greylock. Another route might be a shuttle trip through the Hoosac Tunnel.

The trip through the Hoosac Tunnel could be extended as far as Greenfield, providing a rail connection parallel to Route 2, Billings suggested. He said the concept is consistent with the Northern Tier proposal.

Billings also calls for the state to acquire property from the Boston and Maine Railroad next to the Hoosac Tunnel. He suggested a small park can be constructed at the site with picnic facilities and an observation tower "so tourists can actually see the "western gateway" tunnel."

"As it stands now, the Hoosac Tunnel, for which North Adams is most famous, is illegal to see because the B & M has posted no trespassing signs on the property. This has to be changed," Billings said.

Billings called for a number of marketing techniques to be started to entice visitors to complete the

Northern Tier trip and remain a day or more in Northern Berkshire. One technique he outlined is that inns and motels give discounts to tourists who have receipts proving they visited the various heritage parks along the Northern Tier. He suggested a 5 percent discount for each park visited.

Billings also accused incumbent Frank Costa, an Adams Democrat, of "trying to ride to re-election on Governor Dukakis' popularity in Northern Berkshire."

Billings denied recent charges by Costa that he was critical of the efforts by the governor and the state to assist laid-off Adams Print Works employees.

"My complaint is not with the governor, it's with Frank Costa. The governor has to respect the judgment of the district representative as to what is needed for economic development; he must look to the local legislator for creative ideas, and Frank Costa has fallen short in both accounts," Billings said.

Billings accused Costa of holding out for the "big score, high tech manufacturer," when what the region needs are firms that use computers and provide information services.

"It is incredible that Costa hasn't seen that need when his former employer, Don Thurston of WMNB Radio and president of North Adams Futures, has a vacant facility designed for computer services in the Berkshire Plaza, over the Berkshire Bank," Billings said.

Billings has called for the transfer of state agencies, that are primarily computerized information storage, retrieval and dissemination operations, from Boston to Northern Berkshire.

"We could fill the office space in the Berkshire Plaza tomorrow if we had the governor's support, but we won't get it unless the state representative pushes for it," Billings said.

Billings said he has "come up with more creative ideas in the last eight weeks of the campaign than Frank Costa developed in the last 19 months."

He also charged that Costa is partially responsible for the lack of jobs for which laid-off APW workers can be retrained.

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