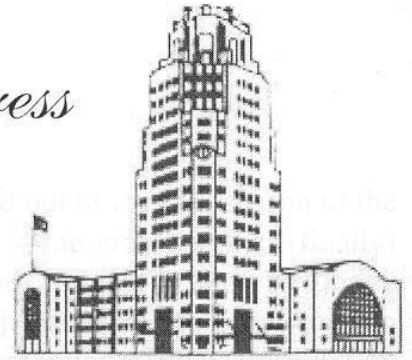


Empire State Express



MARCH 2025

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

Editor: John C. Dahl Email nfcnrhs@gmail.com

The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, March 14, 2025 at 7:00 PM at the Town of Wheatfield Community / Senior Center, 2790 Church Road, North Tonawanda NY. Follow Rt 62 north to Ward Rd, turn left onto Ward Road and turn right onto Church Road.

WANDERINGS OF A RAILFAN

Now that I'm officially a senior, it is time to look back at some of the many memories I hold of friends, trains and lots of great places along the railroads. It has been an incredible journey since I joined the Chapter in 1977. There are so many places, so many great train rides and so many things photographed alongside a like-minded group of "rail-fan-tastic" friends! Your Editor will show just a bit of these "wanderings" at the March meeting.



The now late Jon Rothenmeyer joined me on almost all of my various rail wanderings over more than four decades. Here is Jon at the Dayton, NY "tunnel" on the New York & Lake Erie RR, the former Erie RR Buffalo & Southwestern branch, April 25, 2020. The massive stone arch dates to the 1870s. Photo by John C. Dahl



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

There is nothing like a traditional Western New York winter. Beautiful snow frosted trees, skiing, tobogganing, sledding, snowmobiling and photographing colorful locomotives blasting snow drifts at the crossing. As we get a little older winter seems to stay a little longer than we want it to. We are ever the optimists planning for green foliage and warmer temperatures.

On Saturday February 8 a small group of Chapter Members gathered on the station platform in Niagara Falls, Ontario. At approximately 11:45 am we boarded the GO train to Toronto for a day of Rail travel and exploration. We rode the Go train, and the TTC, both surface and subway. We absolutely got our money's worth. Upon arrival back at Niagara Falls we found three inches of fresh snow on our cars.

The annual Chapter Banquet will be held Saturday, March 22. The Program will be spectacular; I have had a sneak preview! If you have items for the raffle, please get them to Nancy Andrycha before the event. Please note that we can't accept items on the day of event.

Somewhere in the spring we will hold another Historic Marker unveiling, this one for our station. You are all invited to the unveiling ceremony. We will let you know as soon as the date is selected.

If you have not already done so, please send in your membership renewals as soon as you can, we don't want to lose anyone.

The Calendar Committee is again accepting images for consideration for the 2026 Chapter calendar. Bob Andrycha and Greg Gerstung will be glad to see what you might submit and will be glad to guide you as to what makes a great calendar shot. As always, if your photo is selected for use in the calendar, you will receive a free copy. I am advised that there are still 2025 calendars available if you didn't get one. (Please see page 6 for ordering details.)

In spite of February being "the dead of winter" it has been a very busy time for us. In addition to the Toronto trip on the 8th, there was the regular monthly meeting and the Train Show on the weekend of the 14th-16th. Speaking of the Train Show, thanks to all who participated to make our presence happen, Becky Gerstung, Greg Gerstung, M. J. Lewandowski, Bruce Becker, Bob & Nancy Andrycha. Special thanks to Bob and Greg for the use of their pickup trucks to haul our stuff to and back. Thanks to Al LeTeste for being there at the station to unload on Sunday. The treasury took in over \$800 for our efforts.

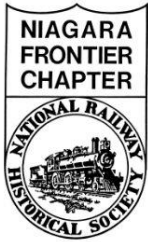
Looking forward to warm days and being outside again, please mark your calendar for May 10th. This will be the date for our Annual Chiavetta's Chicken BBQ fundraiser event. More information will be coming as we get closer. Volunteers are always needed and all help on that day is appreciated.

I hope that you are all inside where it is warm and safe as you read this. Now that we have actual winter, there exists the possibility that we might need to cancel the membership meeting. We have contracted a plow service to have the Museum open on Saturdays. So far that is proving to be a good deal. We publish that the Museum is open on the first Saturday of the month after the regular season is over. If the need to cancel the monthly meeting should arise, please look to Channel 2 on your TV. On the radio listen in to WGR 550AM, Oldies 104.1 FM or WYRK 106.5 FM. We will try to make the decision early enough to make the 5pm broadcasts. When in doubt, err on the side of caution. See you at the meeting or at the Museum.

Jim Ball

NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER - NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Invites You To Their



85th ANNUAL BANQUET Saturday, March 22, 2025



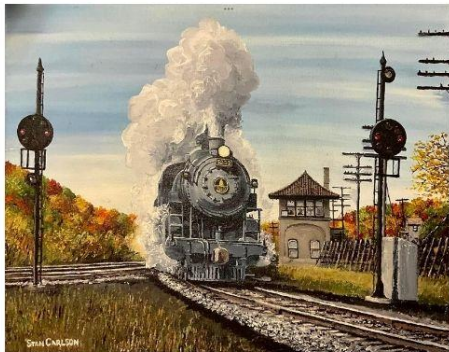
**Unitarian Church Of Amherst Social Hall
6320 Main Street - Williamsville, NY 14221**



**11:30 am Beverages/Snacks - Silent Auction/50-50 - 12:15 pm Luncheon
Presentations & Program Following Lunch**

Buffet Style Luncheon

**Featuring Sliced Ham, Chicken Marsala, Baked Ziti, Mashed Potatoes, Vegetables, Coffee/Tea & Dessert
\$25.00 per person**



Banquet Program

The B&O Films Of James VanBrocklin

*Enjoy newly digitized & remastered films taken by
noted area rail enthusiast James VanBrocklin*

Prepared & Presented by Aaron Heverin

Reservations must be received with full remittance no later than Saturday, March 15, 2025

Note: No tickets/confirmations will be mailed. You pick up your tickets at the door!

For more information contact Nancy Andrycha at 716-442-5222



**Reservations By Credit/Debit Card
Are Available At www.nfcnrhs.org
Or By Scanning This QR Code**

Reservation Coupon - Niagara Frontier Chapter Annual Banquet March 22, 2025

Make Checks Payable To 'Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc.' - \$_____ Total Enclosed

Mail With Full Payment To: Nancy Andrycha, 6915 Cedar Street, Akron, NY 14001-9669

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SCENE ON THE LINE

NEW YORK CENTRAL MAGAZINE 87

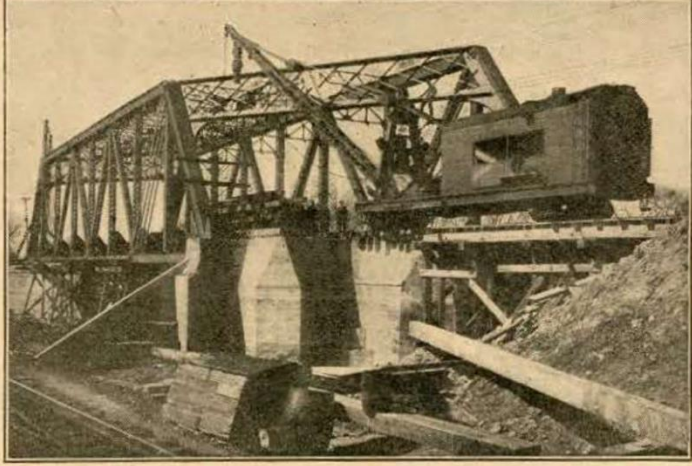
THE JOBSON-GIFFORD CO.

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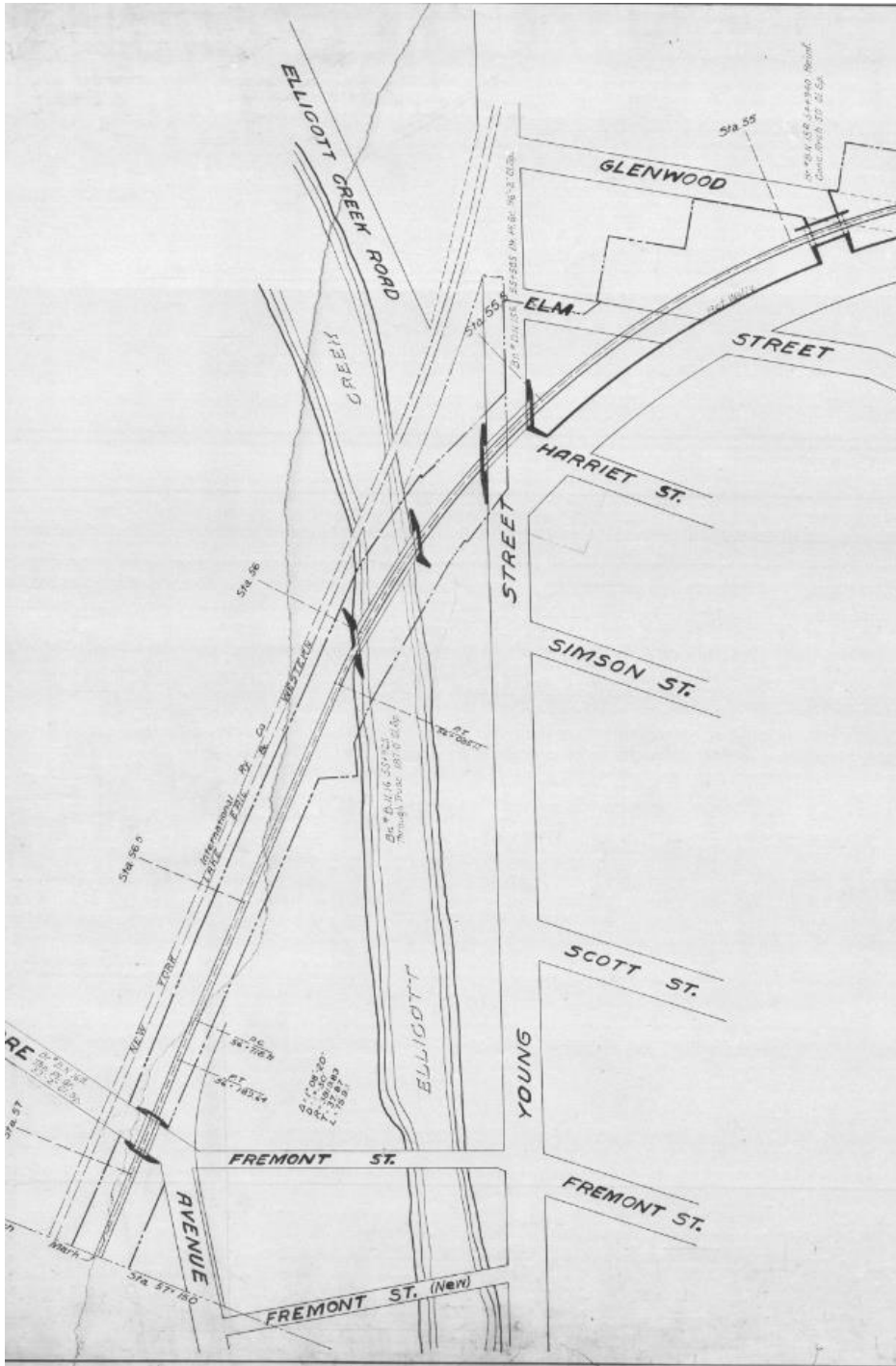
"ELLICOTT CREEK BRIDGE"—New Tonawanda Cut-Off

General Office: 30 EAST FORTY-SECOND STREET
NEW YORK CITY

In July 1919 the New York Central Lines company magazine published this advertisement showing the then under construction cutoff through Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. The relocated alignment required several bridges, one of which crosses Ellicott Creek in the City of Tonawanda. An article in *Engineering News Record* and a virtually identical version in the Central's company magazine from that era details that the bridge itself was relocated from the Mohawk valley downstate and had served on the Central's West Shore line where it crossed over the Erie Canal. That part of the Canal was being abandoned with the coming of the new Barge Canal which is the project that necessitated the Tonawanda cutoff in the first place. In 1919 steel shortages caused by the just ended World War I and a frugal Central management reused the existing bridge instead of contracting for an entirely new structure and scrapping the old one. Obviously, the bridge would have had to be dismantled at its old location and then transported to Tonawanda. Confirming exactly how that was done has been an ongoing investigation by Larry Gustina and your editor for some time now. Finding specific documentation on this move has proved to be elusive, but thanks to the above ad, we now know just a bit more of the puzzle, identifying the contractor who performed the work. My guess is that the bridge trusses were at least partially disassembled and then moved via the Erie Canal on barges west to Tonawanda and then moved upstream on Ellicott Creek, but we have not yet found any reference to this bit of local history. Does anyone have some additional information or recollections from family history they can share? Contact the editor at the email address on the top of page 1 of ESX if you can assist.

A portion of the railroad track "valuation map" for the bridge area is shown on the next page. Map source: *Niagara Frontier Chapter, NRHS, archives.*

SCENE ON THE LINE – continued



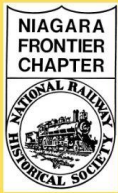
Note the additional tracks entering to the left (or east side) of the realigned New York Central's Niagara branch in the City of Tonawanda. These tracks are the Erie's own Suspension Bridge & Niagara Falls branch (which was freight only by 1920) and the International Railway's electrified interurban trolley line (which utilized a track leased from the Erie at that point in time.) The International also had its own High Speed Line just out of view on this map less than a quarter mile upstream on Ellicott Creek. That route between Buffalo & Niagara Falls had opened just a few years before work was underway on the Tonawanda cutoff. Those were indeed busy days for rail service in the Twin Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda.

Today the former Erie right-of-way is a biking / hiking trail. The Erie crossed Ellicott Creek on a plate deck steel bridge and that is in use today as a part of the walkway. Incidentally that spot makes for a nice train watching location for the parallel former New York Central, now a part of rail giant CSX. The International Railway line was decommissioned by the mid 1920's and the High Speed line service ended in the middle 1930s, a victim of the Great Depression.



2025 CALENDAR IS NOW ON CLEARANCE SALE!

March is here and so is this bargain shopper's special. The 2025 Railroad Calendar, produced by your organization, is now on clearance sale! Take advantage of this price cut and enjoy the images in a high quality printing of historic photos of local railroading. There are still nine more months of 2025 to enjoy this on your wall at home or office. As we know, western New York and southern Ontario were rich in railroad history. Get your copy while the limited supply lasts.



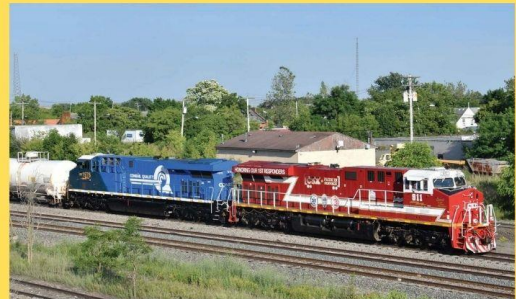
NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER STORE



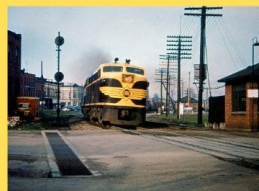
2025 Chapter Calendar



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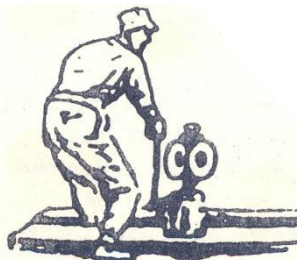


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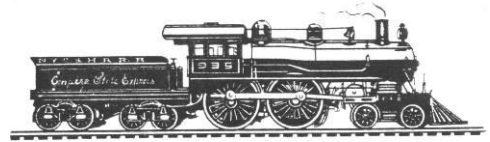
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CHAPTER MEMORIES

Story collected by Geoff Gerstung



The Railroad Enthusiast – July-August 1941

At the regular meeting of March 7 [1941] in the Lehigh Valley Terminal, Mr. Laurence Burke, a member, showed motion pictures of railroad ferry boats at New York. Pictures of the Milwaukee Road's Olympian were also shown.

The meeting of April 4, held in the Lehigh Valley Terminal consisted of informal discussion and exhibition of rail-fans' collections. Various members brought their railroad scrapbooks and pictures, and an interesting evening was spent looking at this material.

At the meeting of May 2 in the Lehigh Valley Terminal the program included a motion picture entitled "Cordwood Limited" showing many excellent scenes of the Live Oak, Perry & Gulf RR, that famous wood-burning road in Florida.

On Sunday, May 18, a group of 74 fans enjoyed a trip over the London & Port Stanley Railway, an electric interurban line in Canada. The group left Buffalo at 7:55 am on Michigan Central train 35 and after having dinner in St. Thomas, boarded a two-car special train on the L & PS. The special then proceeded to London where a stop was made at the shops and car house. Here various cars and locomotives were brought out and spotted for photographs. Later, at the station, the fans were greeted by the President of the L & PS, who is also the Mayor of London.

On the run to Port Stanley, stops were made at various points of interest such as at trestles and bridges to let off camera fans. Then the special would back up about a quarter of a mile and make a speedy run past the photographers, thereby providing real action shots. After a short layover at Port Stanley, the return to St. Thomas was made in time to meet M.C. train 44 early in the evening for the trip back to Buffalo.



2025 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE NOW UNDERWAY

Have you renewed your Chapter membership? Please renew as soon as possible! The Chapter NEEDS YOU!

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

April's program will be presented by retired railroader Devan Lawton. More tales of his adventures on the Erie Lackawanna will delight you. Join us at the meeting.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- MAR 14** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center, 7 PM. Program by John Dahl, "Wanderings of a Railfan".**
- MAR 22** **Annual Chapter luncheon . See flyer this issue ESX for reservation details. Deadline for reservations March 15.**
- APR 11** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center, 7 PM. Program by Devan Lawton, more Tales of the Erie Lackawanna.**

The Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) publicly supported organization. Contributions may be deductible for income, tax purposes in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service.

***** IMPORTANT REMINDERS ***** If you receive hardcopy of the ESX and your mailing address changes, please send to the attention of Neal Kerin so that your Empire State Express can be addressed properly. Likewise, if your email address changes for any reason, please let us know by sending it to nfcnrhs@gmail.com THANK YOU

The Empire State Express is mailed free to all members of the Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc. Anyone who is not a Chapter / NRHS member may receive *The Empire State Express* by US mail or Email. Please contact the Chapter at PO Box 1043, North Tonawanda, NY 14120 for current membership and subscription rate details. Web site www.nfcnrhs.org

RAILROAD MUSEUM ADDRESS: 111 OLIVER ST. NORTH TONAWANDA, NY



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