

Empire State Express

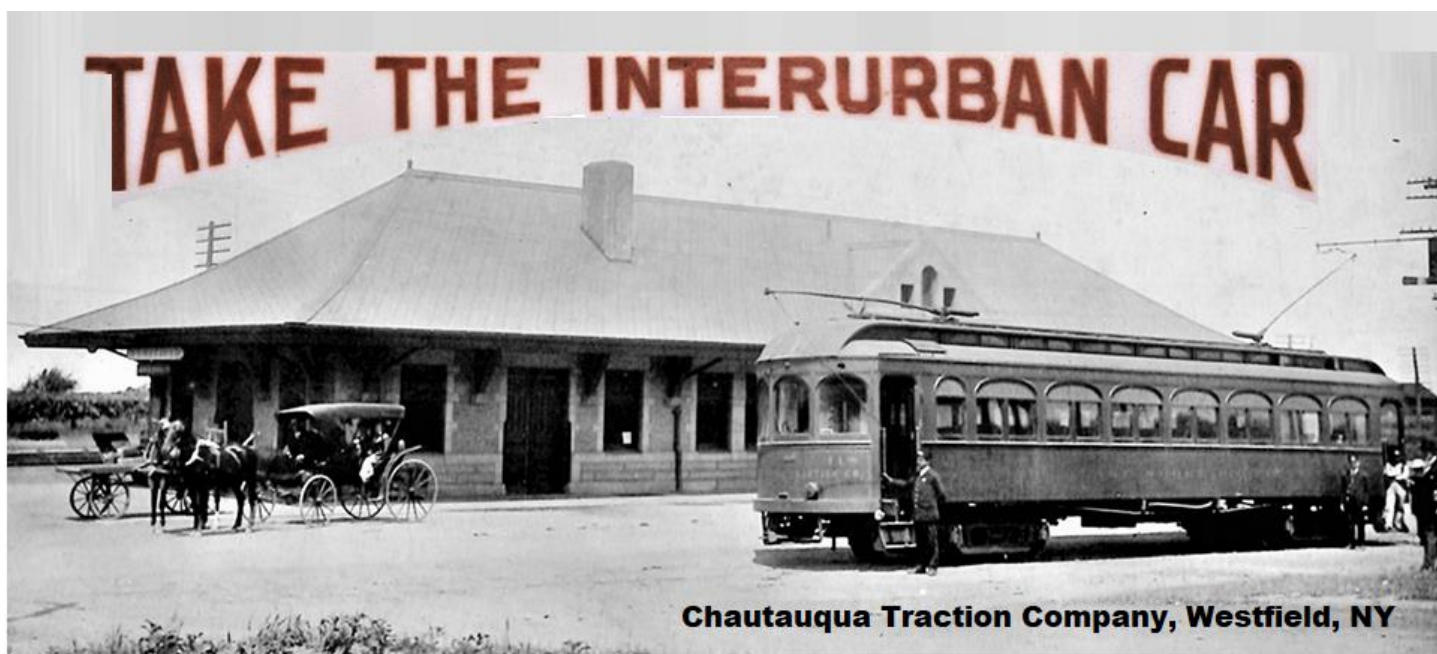


NOVEMBER 2023

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

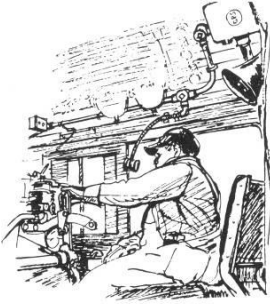
Editor: John C. Dahl Email nfcnrhs@gmail.com

The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, November 10, 2023 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.



A century ago, it was at least theoretically possible to travel incredibly long distances—hundreds of miles--from Buffalo by electric interurban trolleys. But though the trolley lines may have been linked together just like the railroads, no rational traveler would take a much slower and less comfortable trolley ride of a couple hundred miles or even more when a fast express on a main line railroad could get him or her there in a fraction of the time. But some shorter (but still rather lengthy) trolley routes from Buffalo were popular with travelers—and reasonably competitive with the steam railroads. Our November program will take us just over a hundred miles, from Lafayette Square in Downtown Buffalo through scenic country to the lumber mill city of Sheffield, Pennsylvania. We'll be under the "Singing Wire" the whole way, so you can open the window all the way without fear of being engulfed by smoke and pelted with cinders. Join Chapter member Tony Schill for a nostalgic look before the automobile eclipsed the once upon a time interurban empire. All Aboard!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



I sat down at my computer to begin this month's column, you know, just a few bullet points for right now. Items to be developed as I go along. The leaves on the trees are already in major color. When this arrives in your mailbox those trees will be nearly bare. We all know what happens after that.

We have experienced some problems in the last two months with the printed ESX being late. Both times the delay, from two different problems, was compounded by there being a Monday holiday in the mix. The two problems were rectified, one only to be derailed by the other. We think that we have this under control and we sincerely apologize for the inconvenience.

Coming up, we have the WNYRHS Toy and Train Show on November 18 & 19. We would appreciate any help gathering and loading the materials that we take to the show and reloading and unloading at the station afterward. Contact Becky (716 434 5665) to volunteer.

Chapter elections are conducted at the December Meeting per the Chapter bylaws. We are in need of a Recording Secretary as Becky has stepped down from that post after serving for many years. Our status as a 501 (c) 3 corporation requires us to keep minutes of our meetings. The job requires attendance at the regular monthly meetings and the Board meetings. Minutes of these meetings are prepared and distributed to be approved. If you are interested, please let me, or any Board Member, know. The slate of candidates will appear in the December issue of the ESX. The election will be held at that December meeting.

Speaking of December, should we need to cancel the meeting because of the weather, look to the usual sources for information. On your TV, channel 2, on the radio WGR 550AM, Oldies 104.1FM and WYRK 106.5FM. We try to make the cancellation decision early enough to make the 5 pm broadcasts. When in doubt, err on the side caution.

Other needs, and while not a Board Position, we need a Program Coordinator. One of the other areas that we need help in is that of Docent. We have been losing some long-time helpers in recent years, Al Starkwether, and Jon Rothermeyer to name just two. Usually I'm there as are Becky and Greg, but not always. When the building is full of people, It's easy to be overwhelmed. We will provide training if needed. We were seeing a dozen visitors a week during "tourist season". If you are comfortable talking to people, we can certainly use your help.

On another weather-related note, the Board has contracted with the people who plow the History Museum to plow the station lot as needed. This will allow us to be in the building during the winter.

The Chapter 2024 Calendar is now available. The Committee has done an excellent job. Considering everything else that was going on, they brought a truly fine product in on time and in budget. Order by mail, pick them up at the Museum, the monthly meeting or at the WNYRHS train show. They make a great Holiday Gift!

To all the Veterans in the Chapter, **Thank You for your service.** With that, I hope everyone is well and I hope to see you at the meeting.

Jim Ball

Election notice for NRHS National - Chapter Advisory Council Representative.

As announced at the October membership meeting, Becky Gerstung has agreed to serve in 2024. The election for this will be held at the November meeting.

CHAPTER PICNIC & MUSEUM

With the completion of major construction which was funded through the New York State North Tonawanda Downtown Revitalization Project grant, the Chapter celebrated on September 9, 2023 with a public picnic, museum ribbon cutting and tours. The museum has been literally transformed and if you have not yet visited you will be amazed. A huge **THANK YOU** goes out to all those individuals who helped make the nearly half-million dollar project grant become a reality; to the contractors who executed the work, and especially those who managed and oversaw its progress. More work was accomplished in a few short months than we could ever have dreamed of doing as an all-volunteer organization even with years of patient effort. The vision for a first-class railroad museum and archive center, championed by many of the Chapter's leaders and members over several decades since we acquired the once derelict building have now come true.



From left: Chapter Treasurer Bruce Becker, Chapter President Jim Ball, North Tonawanda Mayor Austin J. Tylec, and NT Council President Frank DiBernardo cut the ceremonial red ribbon officially re-opening the museum, September 9, 2023. *Photo by Greg Gerstung.*

SCENE ON THE LINE



CP Rail's freight transfer to Fort Erie is on the Belt Line in Buffalo, NY near the Dewey Avenue overpass. Much of the Belt Line is below grade in this part of the city, work that was undertaken over 100 years ago. Notice that there was at one time a third track in this area on account of the once dense amount of industry along the route. October 19, 2023. *Larry Gustina photo.*

STEAM & FOLIAGE 2023



Reading & Northern restored the great 4-8-4 #2102 to service last year. It has been running various excursions since then across the R&N's collection of former Reading RR lines in eastern Pennsylvania. Not only does she look great but oh boy, does she make some great 'stack music' on the stiff mountain grades hauling the long passenger trains filled to the gills with admiring fans. The crew poses with their charge at Jim Thorpe, PA on October 21, 2023. *John C. Dahl photo.*



Former Great Western 2-10-0 #90, a Decapod built in 1924 did the honors at Strasburg, PA on a sunny but sharply chilly October 22, 2023. This location is near the parking lot entrance with the former "J" tower (PRR) behind the locomotive. *John C. Dahl photo.*



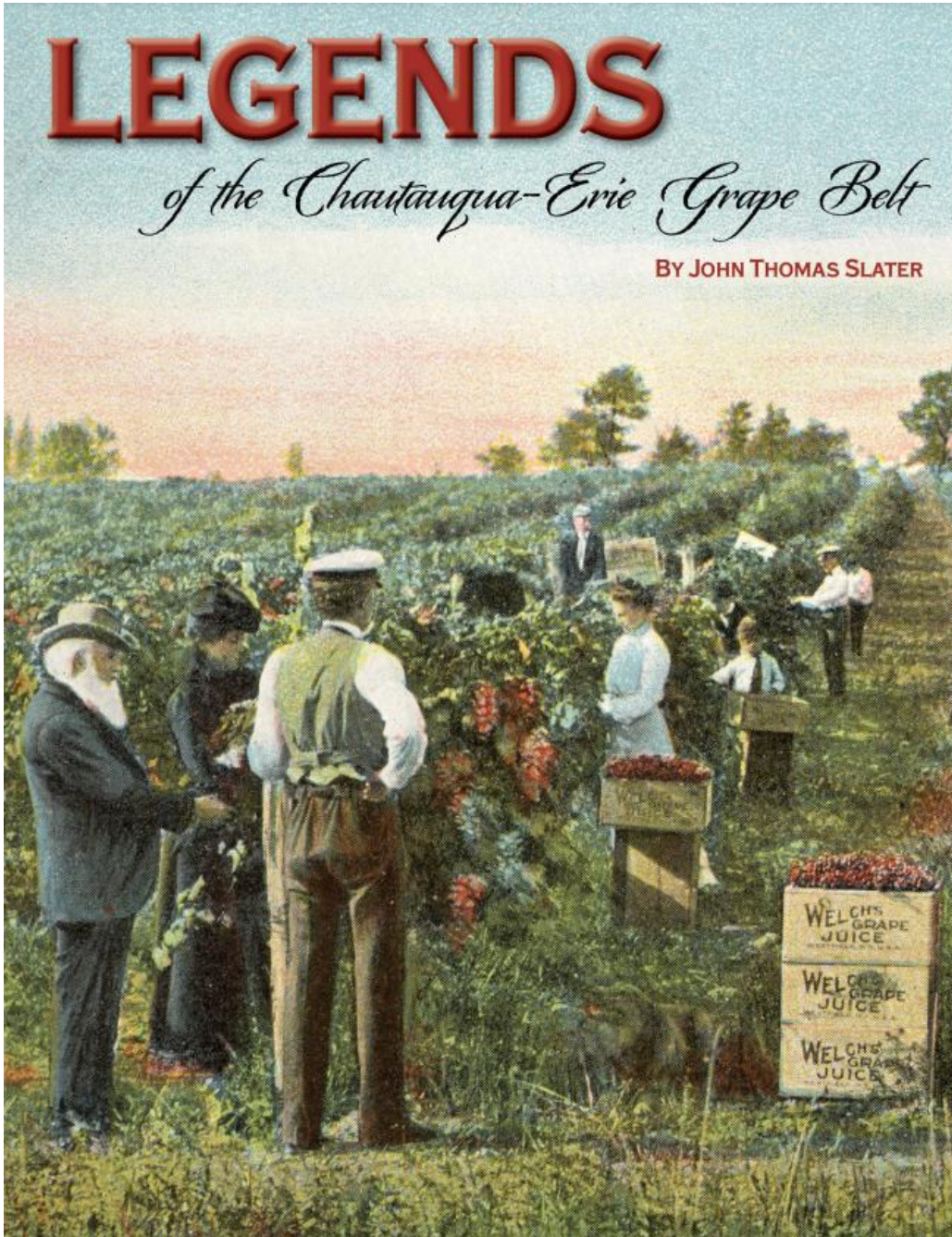
One of the most anticipated steam restorations of recent years is that of former Chesapeake & Ohio Mallet 2-6-6-2 #1309, now operating on the Western Maryland Scenic between Cumberland and Frostburg, MD. She looks and sounds great. On October 25, 2023 the crew is replenishing her tank from the Cumberland station standpipe. *John C. Dahl photo.*

EL2 UPDATE



Inside and outside, EL2. Several new wooden windows, identical to the originals, have been constructed by Steve Frey and glazed and painted by several others for our interlocking tower, EL2. These will be gradually installed and will greatly add to the authentic look of the building. And they will be able to be opened, just like the originals. We also now have much easier access to the tower with a partial restoration of the stairway to the second story. For security, the lower access portion has not yet been fully restored. Above, September 2, 2023. Below, August 5, 2023. The former New York Central Lockport branch right of way was at right and is now a walking trail and greenspace between Oliver Street and Thompson Street near the Carousel Museum. *Both photos by MJ Lewandowski.*





Western New York Heritage is pleased to announce the release of a new book entitled *LEGENDS OF THE CHAUTAUQUA-ERIE GRAPE BELT* by well-known author and NKPHTS Director Emeritus, John Thomas Slater. This unique publication, printed in full color, features dozens of vintage images that illustrate the evolution of viticulture, winemaking, the “grape trade”, and juice production along the South Shore of Lake Erie from 1818 to the present day.

Of special interest to regional railfans are details of the Nickel Plate’s relationship with local grape growers, packers, and shippers that allowed the NKP to dominate the carload distribution of fresh Concord grapes to eastern and midwestern markets from the mid-1880s to the mid-1930s. Aided by the construction of two dozen dedicated grape tracks between Silver Creek, N.Y. and Harborcreek, Pa., the Nickel Plate provided empty cars (and motive

power to move them) unequalled by its competitors, LS&MS/NYC, WNY&P/PRR, and ERIE.

When Dr. Charles Welch brought his Welch’s Grape Juice Co. to Westfield in 1897, the NKP had installed a siding before Plant 1 even opened and immediately constructed a second siding when Plant 2 opened two years later. The NKP and its successors have also continually serviced Welch’s largest juice facility in North East, Pa. since it opened in 1911.

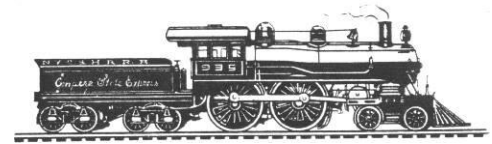
Published with the support of the Western New York Heritage Foundation and several regional sponsors, the limited press run is only available from the publisher, Western New York Heritage. The Chautauqua-Erie Grape Belt is the oldest and largest Concord grape-growing region in the world, as well as a world-class, award-winning wine destination. Join us as we explore the vineyards, farms, wineries, railroads, and people that made up this unique viticultural region.

For further details or to place an order, visit the Book Shop at www.wnyheritage.org

CHAPTER MEMORIES

Story collected by Geoff Gerstung

The Railroad Enthusiast – November 1940 issue



Altoona Trip

The big trip of the year [1940] took place on Labor Day weekend when 27 railfans from western and central New York and Pennsylvania enjoyed the long-publicized two-day trip on the Pennsylvania Railroad to Altoona, the railroad showplace of the nation.

The group left Buffalo on the morning of September 1st in one of the Pennsylvania's famous open-end inspection cars on the rear of train 570. After a 194-mile scenic ride through the mountains to Lock Haven, Pa., the inspection car was transferred to train 511 for the run through Bald Eagle Valley to Tyrone and Altoona. The arrival in Altoona was late in the afternoon and the car was placed on a siding near the station so that the fans could use it as headquarters during the night. Some spent most of the night watching the many trains at the station. Between 5 p.m. and 10 a.m. the following day, 49 Pennsylvania passenger trains pass through Altoona, not to mention the freight trains and helper engines.

Early in the morning of September 2nd the group was taken on an inspection tour of the Altoona Works, the largest railroad shops in the world. The many buildings of the Juniata Shops and Altoona Car Shops were visited.

At 10:15 a.m. the inspection car was attached to westbound train 13 for the 14-mile awe-inspiring ride up around the Horseshoe Curve and through the Gallitzin Tunnels to Cresson. The P.R.R. main line rises 1,015 feet in the 11 miles from Altoona to Gallitzin, winding its way up through the highest and most beautiful part of the Allegheny Mountains. During this ride the fans all sat spellbound in speechless amazement at finding such spectacular mountain railroading as this on a busy 4-track main line in the East.

After a brief wait at Cresson, the group boarded an extra coach on eastbound train 8 and returned to Altoona where the coach was transferred to train 510 for Lock Haven. From here the journey was continued on train 571, arriving in Buffalo at 7:15 p.m.

October Meeting

At the regular meeting held on October 4 in the Lehigh Valley Terminal, Mr. Vincent C. Ryan showed several reels of motion pictures which he had taken on various trips this summer. They included some excellent colored scenes of streamlined trains at Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, and other places.

Editor note: October 1940 also featured an incredible trip by some 253 participants for an autumn leaf peeping excursion to Sayre, PA on the Lehigh Valley RR. That trip will be reviewed in the next installment of this column.



ON THE TRACK AHEAD

December will feature a winter theme program by Brian Angevine. We will see some of the ways snow fighting equipment is used on the railroads.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- NOV 10** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center. 7 PM. Tony Shill presents Take the Interurban Car.**

- NOV 18-19** **WNYRHS Train Show, Hamburg, NY Fairgrounds. Chapter will have display and sales tables.**

- DEC 8** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center. 7 PM. Brian Angevine presents a look at winter snow fighting on the railroad.**

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.

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Likewise, if your email address changes for any reason, please let us know by sending it to [nfcnrhs@gmail.com](mailto:nfcrhs@gmail.com)

THANK YOU

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