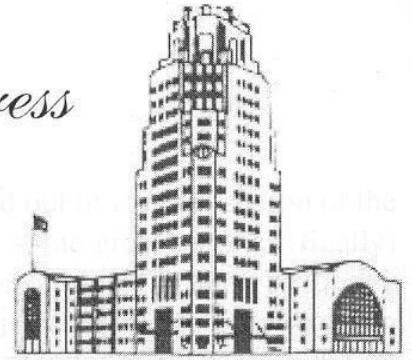


Empire State Express



OCTOBER 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, October 13, 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.

THE LEHIGH VALLEY BUFFALO DIVISION



A DVD of the Lehigh Valley's Buffalo Division will be viewed at the October meeting. This is an excellent, professional quality production with sound digitized from vintage movie film. It includes many rare views including such exotic things as switching of passenger cars at Buffalo's downtown LV station in the late 1940's.

LVRR steel caboose A95100 is one of 105 "Northeastern style" cabooses was built in the Sayre, PA shops in February 1941. Restored in 2012 it is seen at the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum in Industry, NY on October 9, 2022. The well-travelled hack turned many a mile on the Lehigh's Buffalo Division. Photo by Jon Rothenmeyer.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



On Saturday September 9th we gathered about fifty people at the Museum for a celebration. On a gray but otherwise pleasant afternoon, we held a ribbon cutting ceremony. The event was conceived by Bruce Becker and the work crew spent nearly two who weeks getting the building ready. The Museum needed lots of cleaning and painting, moving things around. North Tonawanda Mayor Austin Tylec was on hand and spoke. He introduced City Council President Frank Di Bernardo. The ceremony marked the official end to phase one of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant work. Steve Frey had both the Tonawanda Island Whitcomb and the 25-ton GE locomotives fired up and the horns were heard throughout the neighborhood with the cutting of the ribbon.

Greg Gerstung posted his video of the event to our Facebook page.

The ceremony was followed by a delicious spread of picnic food including hamburgers, hot dogs, salads, and desserts. Chef Bruce presided over the grill. Thanks to Karen Frey and Nancy Andrycha for their food preparation and set up. Thanks to all those who helped put the Museum back together and who cleaned and painted in the weeks leading up to the event.

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.

Anton Schwarzmuller has been guiding our application for a historic marker for EL-2 through the process with the Pomeroy Foundation. They are the ones who provide those familiar blue and yellow markers seen everywhere where there was history made. The marker will be for the tower only, one of the new Transportation Series just introduced by the Foundation.

Elections are conducted at the December Meeting. We need a Recording Secretary as Becky has stepped down from the 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.

It is not a Board level position, but we need a Program Coordinator. One of the other areas that we need help in is that of Docents. 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 well as 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.

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 550 AM; Oldies 104.1 FM and WYRK 106.5 FM. We try to make the cancellation decision early enough to make the 5 PM broadcasts.

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 within budget. Order by mail, pick them up the Museum, the monthly meeting or at the WNYRHS train show. They make a great Holiday Gift!

With that, I hope everyone is well and I hope to see you at the meeting.

Jim Ball

2024 RAILROAD CALENDAR

The 2024 edition of the Chapter's railroad calendar which offers nostalgic and historic photos of railroading in and around western New York and nearby Ontario is now available. Outstanding images by several renowned photographers grace its pages. The calendar makes a great Christmas gift. This year many more months' photos are rendered in beautiful full color. All proceeds support the Chapter and its ongoing mission to preserve and interpret the history of railroads in Buffalo, Western New York and nearby Ontario, Canada. 'Thank You' in advance for your continuing support of the annual calendar.

SCENE ON THE LINE



In the early 1950's tourist travel by train to Niagara Falls was still popular and New York Central sought to capture some of that traffic, and they offered a free stop-over privilege on tickets. The passenger services department issued this illustrated guide to all the attractions that could be reached once one alighted from one of the Central's sleek, comfortable, streamlined trains that served Buffalo and Cataract City.

A LEHIGH VALLEY MEMORY

By Robert B. Meyer

These are my recollections of growing up in Stanley, NY in the 1950's, not far from the railroad.

My grandfather, George Davie, owned the farmland around the railroad properties in Stanley.

Stanley was a busy railroad town from the late 1800s until the early 1960's. There was a depot, a turntable, and a tower to control the activities. The Lehigh Valley and Pennsylvania Railroad crossed in Stanley. The tower was at this intersection. A two-story tower building controlled the movement of freight on the Lehigh Valley from Geneva to Naples, and the coal from Pennsylvania to Sodus Bay on the Pennsy. They also had a line that went to Canandaigua from Corning, as far as I know. As I remember, I spent time visiting with the control tower attendant, Chet Welc, (who lived in Stanley), in 1957-1958. He let me go up and sit in the tower. It had windows all the way around so you could see all the way around and down the line, observing any activity. On one wall there were at least 8 to 10 red handled levers that could be pulled to move the switches on the railroad rails.

There also may have been switches to control the flag directional signals, similar to a stop light. Next to the levers was a rolltop desk with a lot of cubby holes. Next to the desk was an accordion like arm that came out of the inside of the desk, that was the phone. On the wall was a big Pennsylvania Railroad calendar. Also on the wall were lanterns that you could set down and put your arm through so you could wave it as a signal. They were used when they were coupling cars up. Also, there were large, long bamboo poles with a loop on it and clothespin on the end that you could attach a message to. Chet would stand with the bamboo pole on the ground below the tower, with the message on the pole. The train engineer would put his arm through the loop to get the message and then throw the pole on the ground and Chet or I would pick the pole up. The message could be something like... "Pick up three freight cars at Zornows" (a grain mill in Seneca Castle) and other assorted directions.

There were steam engines in earlier days that were hauling the freight. They converted to diesel a few years later, in the early 1950's. My fun thing was that he let me sit and look out the window, with my elbow out the window as if I were a part of the action. I remember waving to hobos who were riding the train. They had a camp just on the edge of my grandpa's farm, in the woods. You could see their campfires and empty cans where they had spent the night. I used to go over there and look around. I rode the last passenger train from Canandaigua to Hall, NY with my sister Donna, my cousin Brenda and George Kickert. It was during a terrible snowstorm, but my Dad drove us to Canandaigua and met us in Hall, in his 1951 Chevy.

It was a neat, interesting part of my youth and I feel fortunate to be able to look back on it.

Editor note: I would like to thank Bob Meyer for sharing this memory from his youth along one of the Lehigh Valley's numerous New York State branches that were located in the scenic Finger Lakes region. The Lehigh Valley dieselized all its operations by 1952. PRR steam lasted a few years longer. The last LV steam locomotives operated on the Hazelton, PA branches in the heart of the anthracite coal mining districts according to author / historian Chuck Youngkurth in his book "The Steam Era of Lehigh Valley". In New York State, just about all traces of the Lehigh Valley's once bucolic rural branches have vanished. A few depots and other remnants exist scattered across the countryside and some of the routes are now 'Rails to Trails' paths. The "Route of the Black Diamond" is no more, and only a ghost whistle of a train and a faint rumble at an old road crossing can be conjured up in one's imagination today.

A LEHIGH VALLEY MEMORY – continued



Stanley Tower, about 1952. Here we are looking along the Pennsy's branch and their station is in the distance. Note the PRR position light signal which guards the diamond.

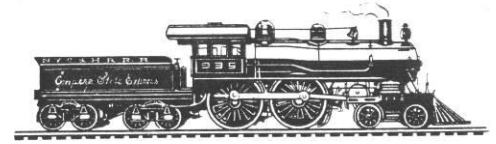


LVRB had its own depot, seen in this photo card view. Both images, JCD collection.

CHAPTER MEMORIES

The Railroad Enthusiast – March 1939 issue

Rochester Trip



On January 29th [1939] twenty-two Enthusiasts, most of them in full uniform, (overalls,) made a trip to Rochester over the New York Central RR. Upon arrival, the group was met by members of the Model Railroad Club of Rochester, including Mr. Charles Banks, Mr. Adam Buyse, and Mr. Hugh Jack. A visit was made to the model railroad clubroom and layout in the NYC station.

After lunch the Enthusiasts took a complete round trip ride over the Rochester Subway. The subway is nine miles in length, and the tracks are laid in the bed of the old, abandoned Erie Canal which passed through the center of the city. The rolling stock consists of fast interurban trolley cars. Part of the line resembles a real subway as it is completely covered where it passes under the main business district of the city.

The group was next escorted through the Baltimore & Ohio and New York Central enginehouses at Rochester, and numerous locomotives were seen at both places. Part of the group also visited the Pennsylvania enginehouse and the Erie Station. This was the first trip since October, and it was greatly enjoyed by all.

Niagara Falls Trip

On February 12th [1939] thirteen Buffalo Division members made a trip over the New York Central to Suspension Bridge station at Niagara Falls. There they were met by Mr. F.G. Winters, Lehigh Valley Agent and Yardmaster who hailed a LV Diesel-electric switching locomotive with a caboose. The Enthusiasts piled aboard and were given a swift ride of about a mile through the freight yard to the enginehouse. Later, another Diesel switcher was taken out of the enginehouse and provided transportation back to the station where the Lehigh Valley freight office was inspected.

The group next visited NYC Tower 65 which controls train movements over two international bridges and on several branches. Trains of the New York Central, Michigan Central, Lehigh Valley, Erie, Pere Marquette and Canadian National pass this busy point.

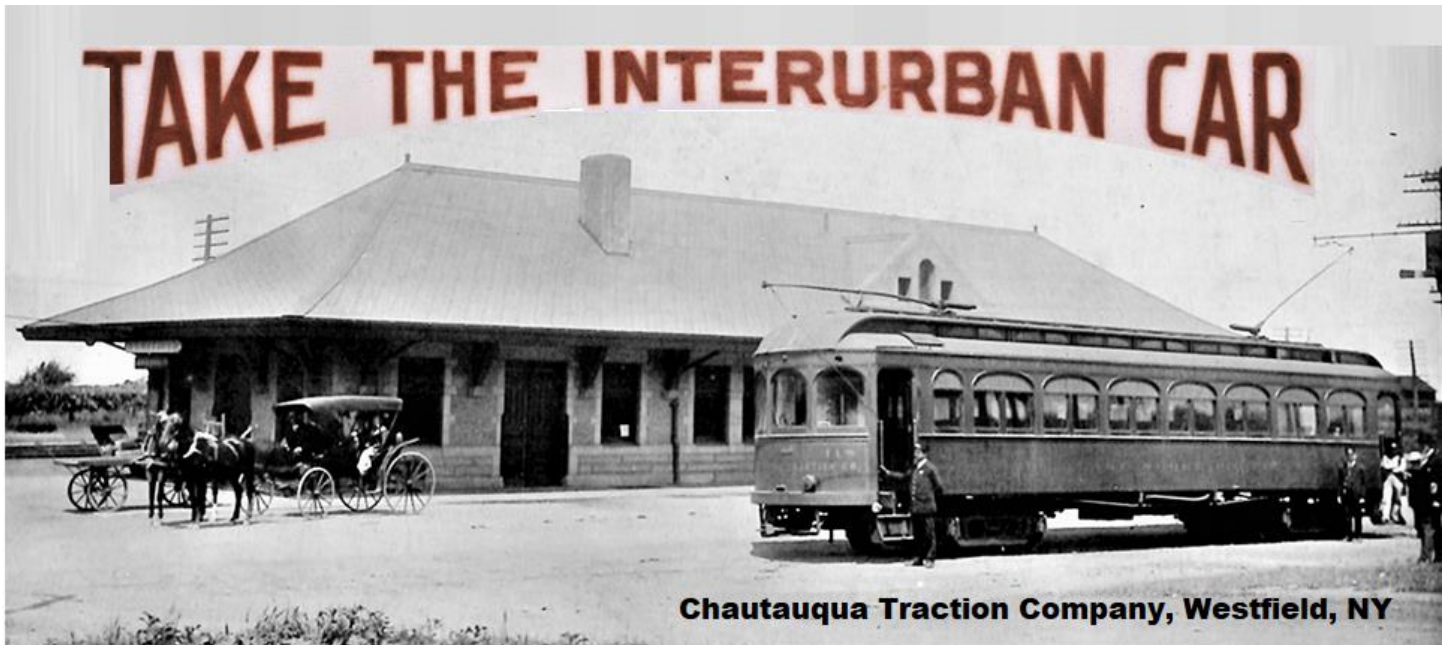
With Mr. Harry Holcolm, New York Central Police Sergeant, as a guide a visit was made to the NYC enginehouse a mile distant. Part of the return trip to the tower was made on a NYC 0-6-0 switcher. Some of the Enthusiasts then walked across a bridge to the Canadian National enginehouse at Niagara Falls, Ontario. Among the several locomotives observed there was a Wabash 2-6-2 Prairie type.

The return trip to Buffalo was made late in the afternoon.

Editor note: The above story pre-dates the collection of material prepared over two decades ago by Geoff Gerstung which I have been utilizing for this series. Geoff began his notebook in 1939 with the July issue of the Enthusiast magazine. The March 1939 issue has several intriguing stories. Here are a few of the other things going on back then: the Coronation Scott locomotive of Great Britain had just arrived in Baltimore and was scheduled to visit 37 American cities and towns, covering some 3,121 miles in the process; Steam Turbine engines were under development; railroad "lantern slides" were discussed and how to use them for programs; another "challenge" to steam was underway with those upstart "Diesel" engines on the Chicago & North Western; Cascade Tunnel was ten years old; and The Detroit Arrow, a fast freight hotshot from Chicago to Detroit via the Pennsylvania and Wabash was profiled. Wow! What a time that year was to be a railfan!

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

By Tony Schill



Chautauqua Traction Company, Westfield, NY

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. All Aboard!

SAFETY FIRST



With the Empire State Express apparently stopped on the mainline and presumably a crew member is checking something in the running gear, we have to wonder what the other gentleman is doing “standing in the gauge”! Perhaps he is not a railroad employee, so is oblivious to the potential danger?

No other details as to specific location or date are available, but it looks like some of the streamlined shrouding has been removed from the Hudson above the driving wheels, so the date is likely well into the World War II era to facilitate faster maintenance. Photo submitted by Bob Andrycha.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- OCT 13** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center, 7 PM. Program: “The Lehigh Valley Buffalo Division”.**

- NOV 10** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center, 7 PM. Program by Tony Schill, “Take the Interurban Car”.**

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