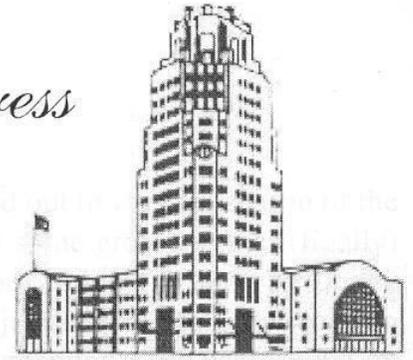


Empire State Express



September 2021

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday September 10, 2021 at the Degraff Community Center.

TURNING A HOBBY INTO A LIFELONG LEGACY- HOW JOHN PROPHET LIVED WITH STEAM

The September meeting entertainment will be a tribute to one of the Chapter's founder's and perhaps one of the most prolific railfans of the late, great Pennsylvania RR, the "Standard Railroad of the World!" John passed away many years ago, but his legacy of photographs, movies and sound recordings which were made from the 1940's onward is a rich historical record. At a time when the steam locomotive and the electric interurban and trolley were still extant in Western New York and nearby locations in Ontario and Pennsylvania, John was also there at trackside, recording them for fun to be sure but as we now know, really for posterity. His life long passion for all things railroad (he was employed by NYC at Buffalo Central Terminal) and the resulting contribution to rail history preservation will be examined in this special program. Aaron Heverin will lead the program and we will also have one of John's surviving nephews, Gary Prophet join us to offer a unique perspective on the legacy of his uncle's work.



Husky 4-8-2 Mountain type No. 6835 has just arrived at Buffalo's Central Terminal from the Pennsy's Ebenezer round house to be backed onto passenger train No. 570 the "Washington and Philadelphia Express" on August 13, 1952. John M. Prophet, Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS archives.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



So here we are going into the fall. It's my favorite time of the year. It did show up much sooner than I anticipated, however.

We are a mission driven organization. From our Mission Statement we pull the three words that define what we do. Preservation, Restoration and Interpretation. During the last almost two years we have been engaged in a lot of infrastructure work at the Museum. Electrical work, heating work, and ADA compliance work have all absorbed our energy, funding and attention. The electrical work solved a major problem as well as made the preliminary infrastructure preparation for the Archive Room Expansion and the ADA project.

Infrastructure doesn't make it to the stage of a framed 30" X 40" enlargement that gets hung on your wall. It doesn't get shown at Members Night. But like the chairs in the meeting room, it's something that you really need. So, once we get past the ADA compliance issues, we'll get back to where we were.

We made a good deal of progress over the summer.

The floor of Archive Room Expansion is complete and the metal studs for the walls and ceiling supports are going up. Thanks to Bruce and Steve and the others who donated to the purchase of them. Once the studding is complete, the electricians will wire for plugs and lights. Beyond that is setting the doors, and the drywall stage; the drywall which has been just sitting and waiting for nearly four years.

We are also looking forward to a stellar program lineup at our meetings this fall. Besides that we are looking at a road trip to Midway Park near Bemus Point to unveil two historical markers. Oh, and did I mention that our Fiftieth Edition of the Chapter Calendar is now available? I had the opportunity to look over the shoulder of the Calendar Committee as they finalized it, and oh, you are going to want one of these!

With the expansion of the Archive Room making great progress, it's time to look ahead. We began converting the Chapters film collection to digital a couple of years ago. This was begun from pure necessity; convert it or lose it. Some of you have seen the fruit of the process at meetings, Jim Van Brocklin's work, John Walker's work, Bill Kessel's work and others. Randy asked if we had a formal photo to digital program. It may not be that now, but that is where we are going. And the quicker the better.

A big thanks to Bob Schieb and Steven Trinder for stepping up to be tour guides this last month. Those of us who are usually on hand on Saturday found ourselves busy, busy, busy. The presence of these gentlemen allowed us to be working in the middle and/or the north end and there still be smiling faces to greet our visitors. We anticipate being open through the fall, even into the end of the year. We could use help on all those Saturday afternoons. Contact Becky @434-5665 if you're interested.

Randy Bugucki has been working on the roof of NYC 21005. He is also measuring and researching toward painting the NYC herald on both sides the car. We put decals on it twice, but they came off. Painting the herald on might be a better answer. We'll see.

Thanks to Bruce Becker for setting up and hauling and Becky and Greg for representing the Chapter at the WNYRHS Railroad Heritage Festival.

So, with all that, I'm looking forward to seeing you folks at the meeting.

Jim Ball

Remembering John M Prophet III

By Fred B. Furminger

Back in the 1950's some of the members of the Buffalo Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society referred to the Pennsylvania Railroad's Horseshoe Curve as "Prophet's Park". Although John was employed as a clerk by the New York Central Railroad at Buffalo's Central Terminal, he was a Pennsylvania Railroad purist at heart.

John was born into a rather well to do family in Mt. Morris, NY in 1915. He was the eldest of three children, having a sister Annette, and a brother, Lewis. The family eventually relocated to Buffalo.

I first met John in the autumn of 1954 when I was 14 years old. I had an intense interest in trains, and had begun buying Trains magazine. I happened to see a notice in the magazine of a "Fall Foliage" fantrip sponsored by the NRHS Buffalo Chapter, going from Buffalo to Hornell, New York on the Erie Railroad in October of 1954. Inquiries were directed to John M. Prophet III, Trip Secretary. I called the phone number listed and wound up talking to John. He gave me directions to his house, about five miles from where I lived in Kenmore, New York. The next day I hopped on my bicycle and rode to his house to pay for and pick up my ticket. He lived with his parents in what I perceived back then as a mansion. John answered the door. I introduced myself and he did the same, and took care of my ticket request. He was a little over six feet tall and very mild mannered, obliging individual.

Over the next 40 years, we became very good friends. At age 16 I was able to join the NRHS and became an active member. Besides attending monthly meetings and going on fantrips, motorcades were organized. John was instrumental in organizing the spring motorcades over the time change weekend every April. There were usually three to four carloads of us, and we would head for Pennsy territory where steam was still operating. In 1956 and 1957 we visited Renovo, Lock Haven, Williamsport, Tyrone, Northumberland, Altoona and Southport in Elmira. John was always there to answer questions. Another good friend, Dick Adams, was a regular on these motorcades.

Steam was gone on the Pennsy by November of 1957, but it lived on thanks to John's famous 16mm films, wire recordings and photographs. In addition to the PRR, John also took 16mm movies, wire recordings and photographs of New York Central steam. He was very knowledgeable of not only the PRR and the NYC but many other railroads in both the USA and Canada. He was one of the first to take 16mm railroad films.

One thing that sticks out in my mind about John was his ability to answer questions. All you had to do was pose the question and sit back and listen: you didn't interrupt until he was done. He could go on for more than an hour, depending on the question. If he didn't know the answer, he would say he didn't but would promise to find out. John wouldn't pretend to know or make up an answer. That's the kind of a person he was.

John was one of the originators of the railfan movement in the Buffalo area and was a member of the railroad enthusiasts. He was one of the founding fathers and charter members of the Buffalo Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, now known as the Niagara Frontier Chapter. He was a 64-year member and co-founder when he passed away at age 86 in September of 2002.

In the early 1960's he became involved in running a 14-inch gauge amusement park type railroad with a friend, Sam Harrington, called the Indian Falls Railroad, near Akron, New York.

John was a very private person and when his health began to fail and he couldn't drive a car anymore, I would offer to take him to chapter meetings. He never took me up on the offers, although I did pick him up on

Remembering John M Prophet III - continued



occasion and take him to his favorite place to eat, a local Denny's restaurant. We had some nice conversations about the old days, in his last few years.

John never did get married. His first and only love was railroads, especially the Pennsylvania railroad.

We miss you John...long live "Prophet's Park."

The above tribute originally appeared in "Prophet's Pennsy", published by the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society in 2009. This book is a collection of some of John's excellent camera work recording in vivid Kodachrome color some of the steam locomotives, early diesels, electric locomotives and myriad passenger and freight equipment of the late, great Pennsylvania Railroad. Our sincere thanks to Fred Furminger for permission to re-print this remembrance of John in the Chapter's digitized copy of some of John's movie films and also here in this issue of the Empire State Express. -JCD

Left: With a PRR passenger coach as his exhibit, John points out his favorite railroad. Undated photo: Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS archives.

Below: one of New York Central's massive 4-8-4 Niagara's, 6001 steams past Central Terminal on April 7, 1951. This ultimate design in NYC's stable of 'super power' steam locomotives would all too soon yield to the diesel. John Prophet photo, Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS archives.



“SCENE” ON THE LINE



CP's daily Montreal to Chicago double stack crosses the Black Rock Canal swing bridge entering Buffalo's West Side a bit after 8:30 am on Saturday, June 12, 2021. It will traverse the Belt Line around Buffalo before arriving at Seneca Yard near Ridge Rd. Lackawanna, where CSX will take over for delivery to Chicago. Photo by Larry Justina.



Reading & Northern's beautiful #425 is on a backup move, crossing West Broad Street in Tamaqua, PA on Father's Day, June 20, 2021. A coach and a bit of revenue - a single tank car, are in her consist. The 425 will spot the tank car in the yard and pick up more coaches for a series of short excursion rides in the anthracite coal region of eastern Pennsylvania. Photo by Jon Rothenmeyer.

“SCENE” – continued



In regal royal blue, Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern 4-6-2 Pacific # 425 marches thru Tamaqua, PA on June 20, 2021. The loco was built by Baldwin in 1928 for the Gulf, Mobile & Northern just as the Roaring 20's were drawing to a close and the steam age entered a golden era. With a flurry of whistle shouts and bell clanging, this aristocrat of the rails glides to a stop to board excursionists headed to a day's outing in historic Jim Thorpe (originally known as Mauch Chunk.) Photo by Jon Rothenmeyer.



Port Clinton, PA on the Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern. On June 19, 2021 a medical fundraiser special in support of an R&N employee was held utilizing Central Railroad of New Jersey 0-8-0 number 113. The gutsy 1923 Alco is now owned by a volunteer group in nearby Minersville who have restored it to operating condition. Photo by John C. Dahl.

“SCENE” - continued

Progress on museum Archive Room expansion



July 10, 2021. The cement board fireproofing underfloor for the archive room expansion has been placed. Next will come erection of steel studs for the walls and ceiling support. Progress! Photos by Greg Gerstung.

Forgotten Stations of Western New York

By Jim Ball

Most of us, as Railfans, look at a map differently than everyone else. We see not just the roads, with their route numbers and the town and county names. We also note the rights of way of all the railroads. We see the railroads that are still there as well as the railroads that are gone. We note the evidence of long gone rights of way in the current landscape. We know that Depew and Sloan were named for Railroad Tycoons. Street names like Erie Avenue, Depot Street and Central Avenue bear witness to the Rail History that we find so fascinating. We still find evidence of long gone stations in place names that survive.

I was looking for something which I have already forgotten on a Google map of my local area not long ago. I came across a name for a station that I was not familiar with; Idlewood Station. I began an internet search and found that it was on the Pennsylvania Railroads Chautauqua Branch. It was built in the Southwest corner of Hamburg where modern day North Creek Road crosses the NS track at grade. It was intended to serve the company town of Idlewood (or Gatling City as it is shown on one map), being developed by a Mr. Richard Gatling. There would be a planned community along Eighteen Mile Creek and a cannon factory. More than thirty farms were purchased in anticipation. All this was happening in 1893 and would come to be known as the great Gatling Land Boom*.

Chris Anderle writes,

“ Idlewood Station was located just south of Lake View where the Pennsylvania Railroad crossed the present North Creek Road. According to the Buffalo Express, “The site of the proposed town is well chosen and commands a fine view of all the surrounding country. The town is cut in two by Eighteen-mile Creek, a lively, sparkling stream which flows through a kind of canyon with precipitous sides of solid rock about 100 feet high. The hamlet of Idlewood can be seen nestled among the trees about 2 miles as the crow flies, from Gatling, and the natural beauties and picturesqueness of Eighteen-mile Creek are some of the attractions which make this place so popular as a summer resort.”

By 1904 the railroad was petitioning to discontinue the Station. Apparently, they were successful. The map, published in the Buffalo Express, shows the station on the west side of the tracks and on the north side of North Creek Road. I find that unusual in that it was a Pennsy station and the Pennsy track was on the east side of the Nickel Plate track. Visual inspection of the area by the author did not shed any light on the question. The topography of the area is such that North Creek Road runs downhill from east to west. The NS track crosses it at grade and at that point is slightly higher than the CSX track which passes over the road on embankment. Perhaps after the leaves have fallen and before the snow falls, another try will be in order. What became of it after all is, well ...to be found out.

The name however will live on as a place on a map to be investigated by the like us of us. So, if you find the elusive photo or text that more specifically describes or locates this station, then we can take up a follow on article. History is there, sometimes we just have to find it.

Until then, happy researching.



EDITORS NOTEBOOK

It's not often we get to see working steam locomotives in 2021. But venture to the Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern railroad in the old anthracite mining areas north of Reading, PA around Pottsville and you will find a time machine of sorts. The company operates a wonderful collection of vintage power on occasions. This past June Jon Rothenmeyer & I joined several other friends for a visit over the Father's Day weekend. CNJ 113, R&N 425 and a trio of vintage, restored Budd RDC cars were all out on the property handling excursion duties to the delight of locals and the many out of town railfans who stood trackside eagerly awaiting the special trains. The sound of train whistles filled the air with delightful music, a whiff of anthracite coal smoke and Budd car exhaust dusted the foliage. Toss in a dinner at the beautifully restored former Reading RR Tamaqua depot which is now a fine restaurant and with some blue-sky early summer weather you have the makings of a memorable weekend. Not only does the R&N have some vintage operable equipment but they have restored and built new and replica railway structures in a historic theme reminiscent of the Reading all along their line. They have a robust freight service and have revived much of what had been a forlorn, forgotten nearly abandoned railroad. Visit them when you can. It's a unique, live working railroad where truly 'the Road of Anthracite' spirit survives and thrives. A recent NRHS National Bulletin has details on the line's history and operations. Tamaqua, PA, June 20, 2021. Photo by Jon Rothenmeyer.



ON THE TRACK AHEAD

October will feature Rochester, NY railfan and master photographer Duncan Richards with another of his "mostly trains" spectaculars. One never knows what photo gems and zany stories Duncan will come up with! Join us for all the best and the most fun too in railroading.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- SEP 10** **Regular meeting, Degraff Community Center, 7:30 PM –
How John Prophet Lived with Steam. (note slightly later start, this month only.)**
- OCT 8** **Regular meeting, Degraff Community Center, 7 PM –
Duncan Richards Presents**

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