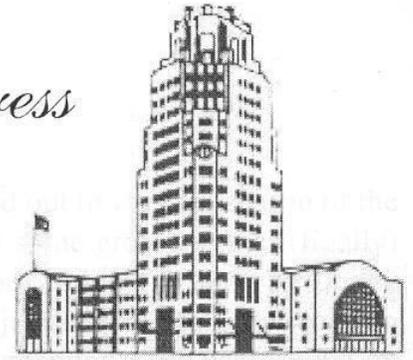


Empire State Express



January 2022

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

NOTE NEW MEETING LOCATION: The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, January 14, 2022 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.

SOME DIGITIZED MOVIES OF JAMES A. VAN BROCKLIN



A westbound train is under the command of New York Central's Hudson #5374 on a snow free day in January 1954 at the then still vibrant Buffalo Central Terminal. NFC NRHS archives, James A. Van Brocklin photo.

On the cover: The name James A. (Jim) Van Brocklin was well known in rail enthusiast circles as a master movie photographer and he had the nickname “Cecil A. Van Brocklin” in reference to the classic era Hollywood epic film mogul, Cecil B. DeMille. The Chapter archives hold some of Jim’s work, and these have been digitized to preserve them for future generations. These great images of railroading where Jim aimed his movie camera record an era now long past. We will view these at our January meeting. Al LeTeste has graciously agreed to edit and set these otherwise silent films to music. Join us for an enjoyable look at some classic camerawork by our old friend.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Here we are, in the early part of winter. We begin a new year, in the afterglow of the Holidays, a blank white sheet. It’s also very white outside as I write this. That, of course, is to be expected. In the event that the aforementioned winter weather causes us to cancel our meeting we will make due notification. Look to TV Channel 2 and the others. Listen to radio stations Oldies 104 FM, WGR 550 AM or WYRK 106.5 FM. We always try to make the decision on cancelling in time to make the 5 pm news.

The Museum was open and festively decorated on December 4th for the annual Winter Walk Celebration. The Polar Express train ran on the floor under the tree and the Movie played on the flat screen. Popcorn was made and sold on site.

Cookies and hot chocolate were passed out to the children. Santa Claus himself was in residence for a time. The pony rides operated outside by the cabooses. They were a big draw; the Museum was jammed for most of the day. Estimates were as high as two hundred people going through. Thanks to Becky, Karen and Steve Frey, Greg, Dave Skoney, Caden Frey and Bruce Becker. Thanks also to Ben Hiltz, M. J. Lewandowski and Al Le Teste for lighting and decorating the outside of the Museum as well as being on hand.

We accomplished a lot of things last year despite some hardships. The Museum is now ADA compliant. Perhaps some of you who haven’t been to visit in a while can venture out to see it again.

The Archive Room Expansion Project, now entering its eighth year, continues. We received an anonymous donation of \$1000 to the project. This will certainly help with the insulation. Work will continue on Saturdays as is practical.

Neal reports that dues and donations are coming in at a good pace. If you haven’t sent your renewal in yet, please do. We don’t want to lose you.

We begin the new year with two new Board Members, Karen Frey as Comptroller and Randy Bugucki as Chapter Director, Equipment Restoration. Please join me in welcoming them aboard. Bruce Becker has moved over to Treasurer and Al Le Teste moves to Chapter Director, Groundskeeper.

Two of our long time Board members have stepped down. Dennis Hurley has moved to North Carolina to be near his children and grandchildren. Bob Korthals has retired as webmaster. Bob was instrumental in getting the original Chapter Website up and running, bringing us into the digital age for the first time. We thank these gentlemen for their many years of service to the Chapter.

We hope at this point that our meeting room situation is stabilized. The Wheatfield Senior Center is an excellent venue, it has all the amenities, the price is reasonable, and we can have our usual Friday night. I look forward to seeing all of you at our monthly meetings.

Jim Ball

Clarification: December 2021 ESX pg. 6 re: The Steam Locomotive Energy Story:

C&OHS refers to the Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society. Please order online at www.Chessieshop.com for Chapter member Walter Simpson’s book.

LAST RUN - Thomas Gascoigne

With the passing of Thomas “Tom” Gascoigne on Thursday, December 2, 2021 (one day shy of his 79th birthday), not only did the Niagara Frontier Chapter lose a long-time member and supporter, but the rail history community lost one of its most knowledgeable and active advocates.

A native of Oshawa, Ontario, Tom’s lifelong passion for railroads and transportation expressed itself through service with the Toronto Transit Commission, the Bowmanville Museum, *Transit Canada Magazine*, and more than a decade of service with the Mechanical Department at CP RAIL. In the late 1960s Tom was at the forefront of the emerging railroad history movement, holding memberships in more than 30 railroad historical societies in the US and Canada (many of them charter memberships). He served the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society in numerous capacities over a period of 45 years, retiring with the title of Director Emeritus.

An avid collector of model trains, Tom was co-founder of the *Lionel Collectors Association of Canada*, and was also active in TCA and TTOS. In 1993, he founded Buffalo Creek Graphics, which would become widely known for its limited edition, custom decorated O-scale freight equipment.

In recent years, Tom devoted much of his time and resources preserving high-quality vintage 35mm color railroad slides, establishing a collection that has often been accessed for publication purposes, including the 2022 Chapter calendar. In accordance with Tom’s Last Will and Testament, the Niagara Frontier Chapter has been named as a beneficiary of a portion of the THOMAS J. G. GASCOIGNE 35mm SLIDE COLLECTION. More information on the bequest will be forthcoming in January 2022.

Tom successfully battled the ravages of three major heart attacks, but the damage done to his heart was eventually more than could sustain life any longer. He passed away peacefully, leaving his wife of 31 years, Patricia (Battaglia) Gascoigne. - *John Slater*

“SCENE” ON THE LINE



Jon Rothenmeyer photo, March 13, 2021.

Truly a survivor, the wooden caboose at left was constructed for the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh in 1923 as its #289. It passed to Baltimore & Ohio as its #2640 when that line acquired the BR&P in 1932. It migrated to the old Buffalo & Susquehanna, also under B&O. Then it became Wellsville, Addison & Galetton #2640 in 1956 when B&O spun off many branches. The buggy survived to the end of that legendary shortline’s existence, whose final revenue run was on March 13, 1979. Today it can be viewed along NY Route 19 north of Belmont, not too far from the long-abandoned right of way of the old B&S mainline.

“SCENE” - continued



In early December a lake-effect snow blanketed Buffalo and the North Towns offering an early prelude to a Christmas winter scene. Running late, we see westbound # 63 on December 9, 2021 by the Belt Line connection at Hertel Ave. in Buffalo, NY. *Photo by Larry Gustina.*



Some former Newark, NJ subway PCC cars were spotted along NY Route 21 near Canaseraga, NY. What are the plans for these old timers ?

John C. Dahl photo, March 13, 2021

SCENE AT THE STATION



LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Two of the long boarded over transom windows above the freight doors #4 and #5 on the Oliver Street side of the station have been restored. For the first time in likely more than 70 years, these allow natural light into the north end of the former freight floor area. Steve Frey took the lead on this additional project to return some of the original character to the now almost 100 year old building that is our museum and archive center. Many thanks to all who helped with this in addition to Steve. *Jim Ball photo, November 6, 2021.*



This is the inside view of door #5, with Steve at lower left adjusting the door. The amount of natural light these allow into what was a 'dark place' is an amazing improvement. *Jim Ball photo, November 6, 2021*



CHAPTER MEMORIES

May 1939, the Collinwood, Ohio trip
Story collected by Geoff Gerstung

The Railroad Enthusiast – July 1939 issue

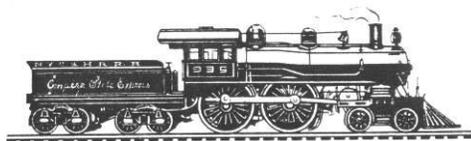
A regular meeting was held May 5th in the Lehigh Valley terminal. After a routine business meeting, the Southern Pacific motion picture, “Daylighting the Padres’ Trail”, was shown. It was obtained again for this meeting because so few were present to see it at the previous meeting, and it was so greatly enjoyed by those who saw it.

The largest rail-fan trip yet operated by the Buffalo Division took place on Sunday, May 7th, when 110 persons boarded New York Central train no. 55, leaving Buffalo at 7:15 a.m., for an inspection tour of the N.Y.C. Collinwood Shops and enginehouse at East Cleveland.

Two special cars on the rear of the train were provided, one being a deluxe observation coach, and needless to say the observation platform was filled beyond capacity throughout the entire trip. After an enjoyable ride of 176 miles, Collinwood was reached at 11:20, and while an electric locomotive replaced steam power, a switch engine removed the two special cars from the train and spotted them near the railroad Y.M.C.A. Here the entire group alighted, and after eating dinner, crossed the tracks to the shops where guides were provided. The various departments of the shops were visited and locomotives and parts were seen in all stages of repairs. In one of the large buildings a special performance with an overhead crane was enacted. In the large enginehouse adjacent to the shops many more locomotives were seen, and also such operations as changing a pair of driving wheels.

After thoroughly covering the extensive shops and enginehouse, the group boarded the special coaches. A switch engine then pulled them over to the Cleveland Union Terminal electric locomotive shops a short distance away. Following a brief visit there, the two cars were placed on one of the main tracks and an electric locomotive was coupled. This provided a fast and thrilling nine-mile ride in to the Cleveland Union Terminal. Upon arrival there in the late afternoon an inspection of the terminal facilities was provided while some of the group visited the model railroad of the Cleveland Society of Model Engineers, and others rode the rapid transit line of the Cleveland Interurban Railroad Co. A sightseeing trip in Cleveland was arranged for the women and any others not desiring to go through the shops again this year. The return trip was made on train No.6, leaving Cleveland at 7:20 p.m. and arriving Buffalo at 10:50. As usual, the Buffalo Division’s illuminated sign on the rear of the observation car presented a very impressive appearance.

Editor’s note: The Chapter’s rich history is in itself a unique part of Buffalo’s railroad heritage. The now late Geoff Gerstung researched this trip in the Chapter’s archives more than 25 years ago. Geoff prepared a notebook of such stories dated from 1938 through 1965 on Chapter history. This is the second installment in the re-printing of this series. – JCD



Bustling Buffalo Is BIG BUSINESS FOR LACKAWANNA

Located in the heart of the world famous Niagara region and at the gateway to Canada is Buffalo, New York. The city sits athwart one of the busiest crossroads of American commerce. As an industrial center, Buffalo is ninth in size in the United States and at the same time it is the second largest city on the state of New York.

The superlatives concerning Buffalo could go on and on, but it is important to note that the city is regarded as the second largest railroad center in the United States and the largest inland water port in value of water-borne commerce handled.

The city has the distinction of being the first city in the world in flour and feed milling and the center of one of the largest electro-chemical and electro-metallurgical production areas of the world.

As a consequence of Buffalo's position, it is one of the Lackawanna's most important freight and passenger points. Freight solicitation offices of the railroad are located in the passenger station. In charge of freight solicitation is E.C. Ennis, general freight agent, whose staff includes A.J. Kemnitzer, E.J. Sanborn and P.L. Bolger, traffic representatives; John O'Hearn, chief clerk; A.W. Wild, assistant chief clerk, Charles Crowe, statistician, and Helen Plarr, secretary.

Passenger offices are located at 11 W. Genesee Street, in downtown Buffalo, where Neil A. Mitts, general agent, passenger department has his office. He is assisted by C.A. O'Brien, Jr., city passenger agent, R.C. Grabenstatter, chief clerk.

The operations of both the passenger and freight departments at Buffalo are not consigned strictly to the city and its immediate vicinity.

The territory of the freight department, for instance, includes an area that extends east as far as Rochester and Painted Post, NY, south to a line that runs between Clearfield and Greenville, Pennsylvania, thence northward along the Pennsylvania state line to Lake Erie. The territory includes a small section west of Niagara Falls and north of Lake Erie on a line between Pt. Colborne, Welland and St. Catherine to Lake Ontario. The mainline of the Lackawanna runs through the upper third of the territory.

The territory is a rich producer of many things that are basic to America and at the same time for export.

Buffalo itself bustles with activity with its towering grain elevators; flour and feed manufacturing; big steel works and rolling mills; airplane manufacturing; food products; paper and paper products; automobile assembly, and scores of other diversified industrial and commercial activities.

The touchstone to Buffalo's growth and position industrially and commercially is economic distribution by rail. The Lackawanna's big East Buffalo yard and the railways' fast, dependable freight service in and out of the city has not been without its importance to this bustling territory.

The city has 12 railroad freight terminals, at which approximately 45,000 trains enter annually. There are five passenger terminals with more than 50,000 trains scheduled annually. Combined, the terminals have some 600 miles of trackage with a car capacity of approximately 57,000.

Approximately 60,000,000 bushels of wheat are milled every year in the city, with 70 per cent of it becoming flour and the remainder going into poultry and dairy feeds.

Bustling - continued

In addition to these things commercial and industrial, Buffalo fairly teems with interesting things to see and entertaining things to do. As proof of this more than two million people visit every year...many of them via The Route of Phoebe Snow.



Editors note: The above article was reprinted from The Lackawanna, employee magazine of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western RR, Vol 1, No. 1, April 1954. Collection of Jon Rothenmeyer

JUST AN INSTANT IN TIME LONG AGO IN BUFFALO



It was 80 years ago, December 7, 1941 when the New York Central instituted its newly streamlined limited stops daylight train, the *Empire State Express* between New York and Cleveland, with a section that split off at Buffalo for Detroit travelling across southern Ontario, Canada. The consist of stainless-steel cars built by Budd were among the finest equipment ever to roll on the Water Level Route. And here, one of the two streamlined class J3a Hudson type locomotives, either No. 5426 or 5429 rests in Buffalo for servicing at the former West Shore roundhouse just east of Buffalo's Central Terminal. This photo, found at a local flea market a few years ago, may not be the most flattering ever taken of these graceful locomotives, but wouldn't we love to step into this scene and see what else is nearby especially a better peek at its companion engine just to the right. The photo is undated but based on the auto at extreme left, I place this to about 1945. The camera and some unknown photographer captured just a moment in time and luckily the image was preserved. The locomotive and its train remain timeless in memory, even if some 75 or more years later. - JCD
Photo, John C. Dahl collection

INFORMATION REQUESTS

Chapter member John Slater is a frequent contributor to Western New York Heritage Magazine, and is currently working on a project for that publication to document the **Delaware, Lackawanna & Western at Buffalo harbor** between the years 1879 & 1917. He is looking for photographs, prior history articles, references, etc. If you can assist, please email him at nkphts4431@aol.com.

ESX editor (John Dahl) is preparing an article for the New York Central System Historical Society regarding Buffalo's Belt Line. I am looking for photographs, especially historic material when NYC operated the line, from the steam era up thru the NYC diesel age and into Penn Central. I'd prefer not to get into use of Conrail / CSX era material. Please email the editor at nfcnrhs@gmail.com if you have photos that might assist in illustrating operations on the **New York Central Buffalo Belt Line**.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

We have **open months needing a program in 2022**. Contact President Ball if you can help. And we're looking for a volunteer to manage the Program schedule. The Chapter's annual banquet returns to its late winter, early spring format in March 2022. The program will be a look at the films of John M. Prophet now in digital form residing in the Chapter archives. Watch for the official flyer with all details coming soon to the Chapter's website and Facebook pages.



If winter comes can spring and summer steam trips be far behind? It's something to look forward to on a cold winter's night. Happy New Year, 2022. *At Penobscot, PA on the Reading & Northern. Locomotive 425 whisks past with an excursion special on July 12, 2008. Photo by John C. Dahl.*

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- JAN 14** **Regular meeting, NEW location: Town of Wheatfield Community / Senior Center, 2790 Church Road, North Tonawanda (Wheatfield). Follow US 62 north to Ward Road, turn left on to Ward Road then turn right on Church Road. Program: Digitized films of James A. Van Brocklin. 7:00 PM.**
- FEB 11** **Regular meeting, see above for location, Program: TO BE ANNOUNCED**

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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