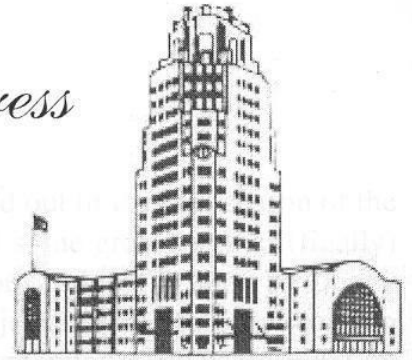


Empire State Express



APRIL 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, April 21, 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. **NOTE DATE CHANGE ONE WEEK LATER.**

SALT TRAINS



From the inception of Conrail to 1985, the Delaware & Hudson had access to the Retsof salt mine via a somewhat circuitous routing from Binghamton to Attica, then east on former Erie and DL&W track to Greigsville NY, initially using a unique "push/pull" operation with two crews, then later in the Guilford Era, operating out of Buffalo. The presentation by our member and renowned railfan photographer Duncan Richards will look at the operation of D&H train GV1/GV2 and some follow up after the service ended.

IMPORTANT note about meeting program: Because last month's meeting was cancelled due to the snowstorm and bad driving conditions, Duncan Richards has agreed to present his long-anticipated program on Salt Trains this month. But please make sure you are aware of the ONE TIME date change to the 3rd Friday, April 21st, for this month only!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Just when we thought that the possibility of a Winter Weather Cancellation was past....the March meeting got "whited out" by Mother Nature. Duncan Richards, the scheduled presenter for that night has advised us that the Salt Train program will be put on at the April meeting. On that same thread, Tony Schill will be on deck for May and June will feature the Boys from Utica, John Koslosky and Bill Moll. More details on that as we get closer.

Projects at the Museum often proceed at their own pace. Sometimes that pace is maddeningly slow. Then, every so often, the signal heads light up green and the project takes off. We have been working on EL-2 since 2004. We got the roof redone then, the brickwork repointed in 2020, the second floor closed in with storm windows. We had the chimney rebuilt; the corners rebuilt by 2015. All the necessary things to keep it solid against the elements and to hold its iconic appearance fast for the generations to come. It is a survivor and work will continue as we can.

Now, after a period of inactivity, just this month, all fifteen, yes fifteen, of the interior windows for the second floor have been manufactured and glazed. Just the way they were made in 1911. The raw wood of the frames is being primed and painted by Becky on an ongoing basis. Once finished they will be transported to the tower and stored there until they can be installed. By the time that you are reading this they should be in the tower waiting installation. That will be a great day and one of other great days to come.

As long as we are speaking of great days, the loading dock is now redone. This is or was the single longest tenured project on the project list. It was known from Day One that it would need to be re decked. We have repaired it, patched it, even sheeted it with plywood over the years.

I have rewritten this part of this column a couple of times already. That's because things are happening so fast at the Museum. The Contractors are hard at work on the improvements that the NY State DRI grant is paying for.

On March 18, 2023, forty-five Chapter Members and a few guests gathered at Ilio Di Paolos Restaurant for our 83rd Chapter Banquet. Bruce Becker put together a very unique program. He took the DVD of a selection of films that had been digitized by the Utica & Mohawk Valley Chapter, NRHS and added the relevant names, places, dates and times from the Niagara Frontier Chapter's history. The result was a fascinating look back at the early adventures of this group. As one of the Railroaders commented back then, "Those Railfans are crazy!". It's nice to know that some things never change.

Our Chicken Barbeque fund raiser will be held Saturday May 13th. We need volunteers to work on the event. The new parking lot should be all done by then.

Speaking of events, we have pushed the date for a proposed trip on the NY & LE out into the Fall. There is just too much going on right now. Isn't it great?

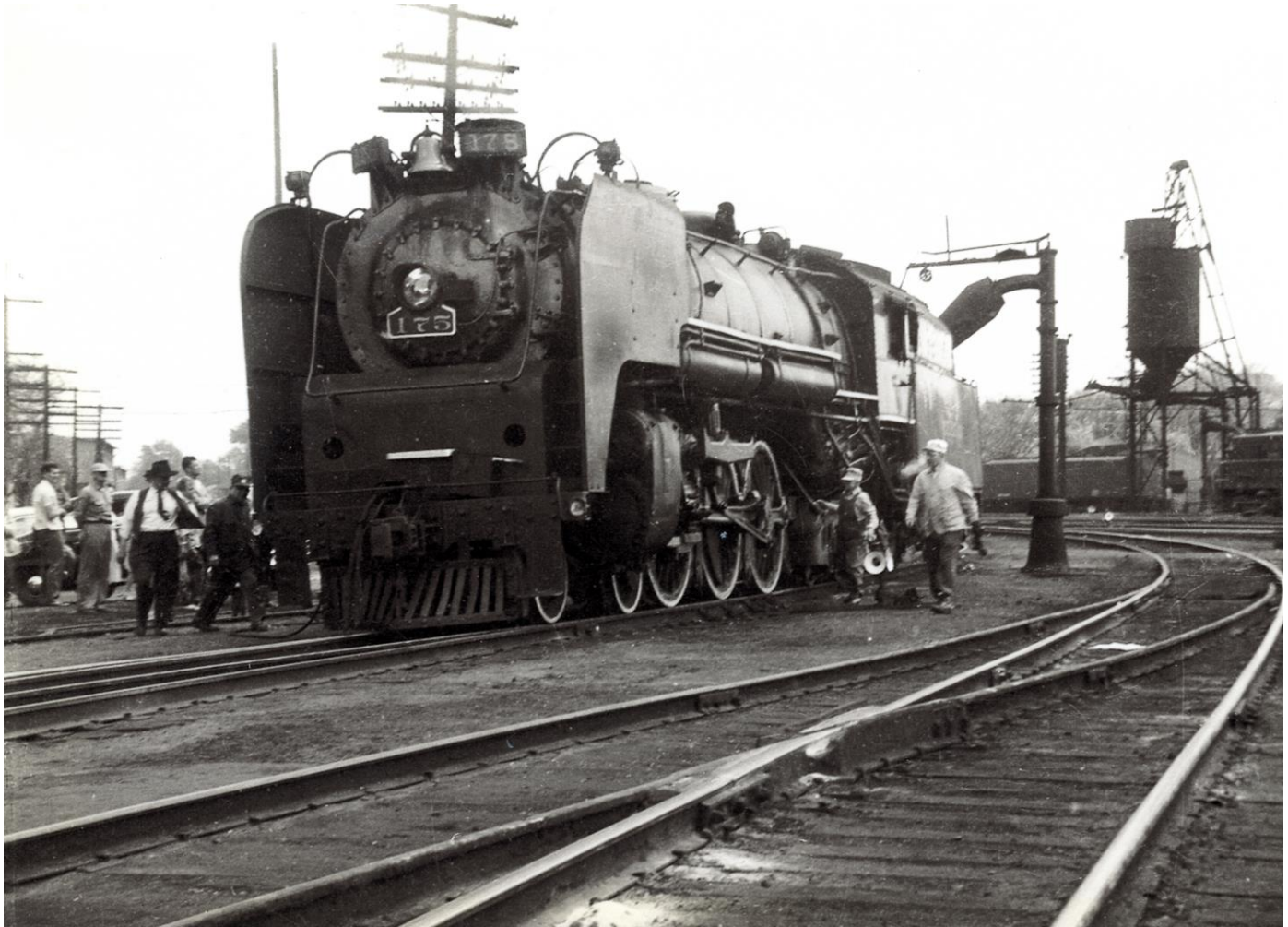
Bob and Greg (the Calendar Committee) advise that they are actively seeking submissions from members for the 2024 edition. If they use one of your photos you will get a free Calendar!

With that, I hope everyone is well and I hope to see you at the April 21st regular meeting.

Jim Ball

NKP Hudson Fantrip Finale

By: Larry Gustina



Leon Speaks, the engineer who ran the special from Conneaut to East Cleveland, on May 18, 1958 oils around Hudson 175 at Conneaut, Ohio. Larry Gustina photo.

In the history of the Buffalo Chapter-National Railway Historical Society, 1938-1974, under “Trips for 1958” is the following entry:

“On Sunday May 18th a steam special was run on the Nickle [sic] Plate to East Cleveland. Here passengers transferred to the Rapid for the rest of the way into Cleveland. A special set of cars on the Shaker Suburban line took up the rest of the day, and a one hour stop was made at Conneaut, Ohio, for roundhouse and shop inspection on the way down.”

This brief entry does not do justice for this trip and leaves out many details worth mentioning. This was a thrilling trip (for me) behind Hudson 175 pulling 18 cars of Buffalo railfans from Delaware, Lackawanna & Western’s downtown depot to East Cleveland and back to Conneaut. Due to a somewhat labored performance by 175-and being way behind schedule, S-2 Berkshire 763 took over and latterly “scorched the ballast” back to Buffalo-we arrived more than two and a half hours late! For true NKP fans, this tardy arrival did not diminish the terrific performance put on by both engines.

Hudson 175, one of only two NKP Hudsons still active in 1958, was the logical choice to head this special Buffalo Chapter-NRHS excursion since it was assigned to the Abbott Road roundhouse in Buffalo at the time.

NKP Hudson – continued

It had served as a protection engine in case of an Alco PA-1 “Bluebird” failure, or in work-train service as needed, and occasionally as power for local trains. In addition, it had powered numerous baseball excursions between Buffalo and Cleveland for Indians baseball games prior to this date.

For me, a 14-year-old railfan about to graduate from eighth grade, the ride behind two steam locomotives, on the Rapid to CUT, and then the trip on the three-car Shaker Heights Rapid Transit set of Kuhlman center-entrance cars was an unforgettable experience!

When comparing this trip to the many other Buffalo/Niagara Frontier NRHS trips in which I participated from the 1950s through the 2000s-steam, diesel, and electric-this was by far my favorite. Let me share it with you now via some photos and a short narrative.

My oldest brother and I arrived early at the DL&W depot at the foot of Main Street in downtown Buffalo. Lackawanna shared this station with NKP and B&O until B&O ended passenger service (behind steam) in October 1955. We were unable to get close enough to 175 for a clear shot before we left, so my first picture was of the streamlined NKP coach we chose to ride in (one of four NKP lightweight cars in the consist). I picked this car because I had never ridden in a streamlined car before this trip. We were shortly advised to board the train, and it left right about the advertised time of 9AM.

The first leg of the trip, paralleling the four-track main line of New York Central and the southern shore of Lake Erie through vineyard country, was uneventful. While in the baggage car located directly behind the tender, we were able to enjoy the sharp exhaust and whistling of the Hudson, Standing on the left side, we got a brief look at the passage of NKP train 6, the eastbound City of Cleveland, as it slammed by us with its two Alco Pas as we sat on Westfield passing siding. Westfield is home to Welch’s Grape Juice.

By far, the best part of the trip came next: the servicing stop at Conneaut, Ohio, site of Nickel Plate’s major steam-repair shop and roundhouse. An hour was scheduled for inspection of anything/everything in the yard, the roundhouse, and turntable areas. Fans had complete access to everything in sight. In this age of litigation, with most railroads being unfriendly to railfans, the atmosphere was unbelievably relaxed-just a “please be careful and feel free to indulge yourself” sufficed, which is exactly what we did!

The ride from Conneaut to East Cleveland was right on the advertised. Shortly after arrival, we boarded the Rapid to Cleveland Union Terminal, where we boarded the set of three Kuhlman center-entrance cars for the tour of the Shaker Heights Rapid Transit System. At the conclusion of this interesting trip, we returned to East Cleveland station and got on the excursion train to return to Buffalo.

On the return leg to Conneaut, it started to rain, and it became apparent that 175 was laboring in its attempt to keep our lengthy train up to speed. Word quickly spread among fans that NKP officials had made the decision to remove the Hudson from the train for the last lap of our trip from Conneaut to Buffalo. Following a very late arrival in Conneaut in darkness, the switch was made, and S-2 763 took over for the 175 and ran like the wind to Buffalo, arriving at DL&W depot well after 11:30 PM.

Did 175 ever return to Abbott Road roundhouse in Buffalo where it was assigned? In John Rehor’s The Nickel Plate Story, the locomotive index lists 175 as “laid up at Buffalo” June 1958. Or did it remain in Conneaut where it is pictured in the roundhouse there in March 1959 in Morning Sun’s Color Photography of Willis McCaleb, Vol. 1? The only NKP steam I ever saw after this trip in Buffalo were four dead 0-8-0 switchers laid up next to the South Park Avenue bridge next to the Abbott Road roundhouse well into 1960-61.

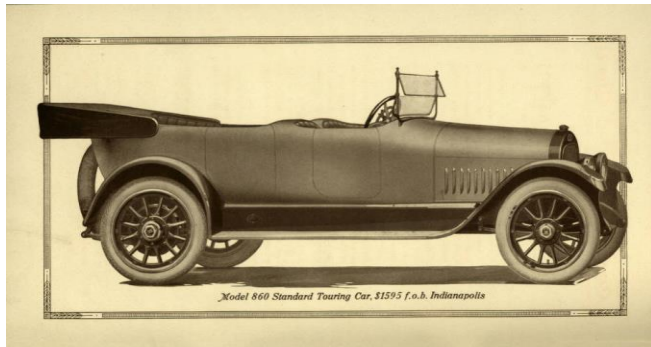
NKP Hudson – continued

One final thought: I knew before this trip in May 1958 that NKP was the only steam show left in Buffalo at this time, although Canadian National steam was alive and well across the Niagara River in Canada at Fort Erie and Niagara Falls. After the Conneaut stop, I thought it was alive and well on the NKP too. Little did I know that it was on borrowed time and would disappear from the main line two months later in July.

Editor's note: The above story originally appeared in the Spring 2020 issue of Nickel Plate Road Magazine. Reprinted with permission by the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society. Chapter member Fred Furminger was also a young man at this time and rode this very memorable excursion as the end of the steam era of NKP in Buffalo was closed out. The Spring 2020 issue of the NKPH&TS magazine has many additional photos and a beautiful copy of the advertising trip flyer. We regret that space constraints prevent us from reprinting those items. And we can cry a bit too: round trip fare from Buffalo, \$8.50. Those were the days!

Cole Eight touring car beat the Black Diamond Express between Buffalo and Geneva by 14 minutes

by Richard Palmer. Illustration this page and Black Diamond postcard next page, provided by the author.



The race between Buffalo and Geneva which gained nationwide publicity started at the new Lehigh Valley terminal on Main Street in Buffalo between the LV's Black Diamond Express and a "Cole Eight" touring car on November 7, 1915. The car, with a 70-horsepower, eight-cylinder engine, manufactured in Indianapolis, Ind., was driven by A. E. Higgins of Buffalo. From Buffalo to Geneva was a distance of 107 highway miles in 1915. The race was completed in an hour and 55 minutes; the Cole

Eight beating the train by 14 minutes.

The railroad was 102 miles long in that distance. An average of 55.8 miles per hour for the entire trip was attained by the car including two stops and one delay necessitated by a detour. The main highway, portions of today's Routes 5 and 20, had been cleared for this event. The car built in Buffalo, shattered every known stock pleasure car highway speed record for the distance of 100 miles or more.

The race had been announced several days in advance. The engineer of the Black Diamond knew that his train had been pitted against the automobile and pressed his locomotive to its utmost. But from the actual start of the race, there was never a moment when the train could have been considered as a contender for the honors of the day. The car and the express train left Buffalo on even terms, passing the city limits neck and neck. Just as Higgins stepped on the accelerator at the starting line, and from then on, the eight-cylinder car never once gave the train a chance to catch up to it.

About 40 miles out a tire blew, which was quickly changed. "We had Howk wire wheels on the car, and made the change in just two minutes after the car stopped," Higgins said. "We had a moving picture camera stationed along the road as well as at the station at Geneva, where the express was photographed," he said.

But even with this stop the express train could not begin to catch up. Route 5 and the Lehigh Valley railroad closely paralleled each other as far as Caledonia where the highway veers off to the southeast and joins Route

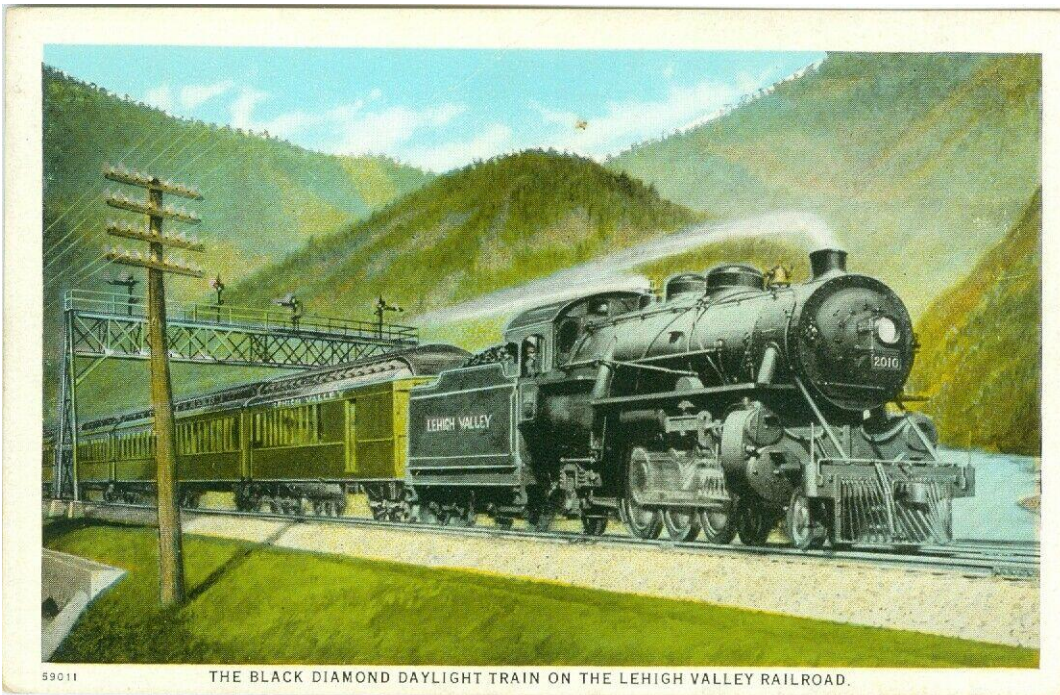
Cole Eight - continued

20 at Avon. There, the car lost some time when it was held up by a switch engine, shunting some freight cars, lumbered on to the Erie crossing and stopped. Then, a short distance east, it was found necessary to make a six-mile detour to avoid a stretch of road that was under repair. With all these hindrances, however, the car still made good time, making the first 89 miles of the journey in exactly two hours and 5 minutes.

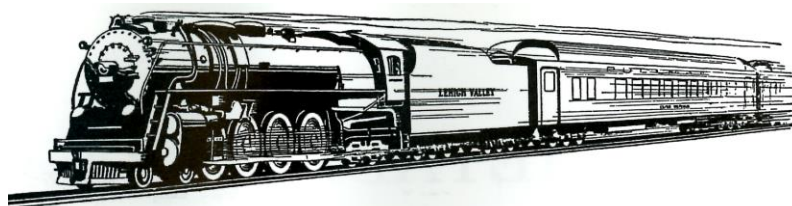
With the necessary six-mile detour, the car negotiated 107 miles in making the trip. The Black Diamond, in point of actual distance covered, had a five-mile advantage on the Cole Eight.

Because of the two stops and the detour which prevented the motor car from making the best possible time, Higgins was determined to repeat the performance in the very near future. He was sure the trip could be made in an hour and 45 minutes. As far as could be determined this was not repeated.

But the Cole Eight was a national sensation. One owner drove his car up Lookout Mountain in Denver in high gear without reducing the water level of the radiator by more than a half inch. On another occasion, a Cole Eight beat the running time of a fast passenger train between Denver and Glenwood Springs, 320 miles, by two hours and 10 minutes.



Editor note: Even though the LV had a slight advantage in mileage, it would have needed to make some scheduled station stops along the way including Batavia, Caledonia, Rochester Junction and possibly would have needed a water / cooling stop for the steam locomotive at Manchester. Still, it is remarkable given 1915 road and auto technology that the car beat the train.



Lehigh Valley Railroad
The Route of The Black Diamond

2023 Annual Banquet

The private meeting room at Ilio DiPaolos restaurant in Blasdell, NY was a sell out on Saturday, March 18th as the Chapter celebrated its 83rd annual banquet. Although we have changed over to a luncheon format for several years now, the annual gathering remains a popular event. Every year we get a variety of good food, a great silent auction, an excellent historical program and best of all, the priceless fellowship that comes with our organization. Thank you to Nancy Andrycha, chairperson, and the whole committee: Becky Gerstung, Karen Frey, Jim Ball and Bob Andrycha for their hard work making this a great success! A special thanks to Bruce Becker for the program. This rare and remarkable movie footage, now digitized, of some trips operated by the then Railroad Enthusiasts - Buffalo Division (predecessor of the Chapter), also included some shots of the new 1941 edition of the New York Central's all streamlined Empire State Express at Rochester, NY taken on the infamous December 7, 1941.

Here are a few photos from this year's event. All photos were taken by Nancy Andrycha.



Our guests included John Koslosky and Wayne Freed from the Mohawk & Hudson Chapter, NRHS, Utica, NY who assisted Bruce Becker (at right) in presenting the very entertaining and rare “1941 Fan Trips of the Railroad Enthusiasts-Buffalo Division”. The film was discovered in their archives, taken by one of their old-time members who rode some of the various 1941 trips sponsored by the Buffalo Division.



“MJ” Lewandowski, Mark Lewandowski and guest Jane Wittmer enjoy dessert. Delicious home baked pies were on the menu this year; a nice change from our usual cake and ice cream!

2023 Annual Banquet – continued



Pat Coghlan and Bob Scheib. At left background Fred Furminger and Terry Sprague among other members and guests.



Devan Lawton, Jon Rothenmeyer and John Dahl are all smiles!

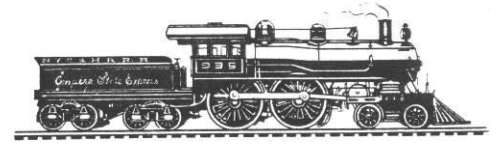
CHICKEN BBQ TIME

It is Springtime again, so our annual Chiavetta chicken BBQ fundraiser will be held at the Station, 111 Oliver Street on Saturday, May 13. Dinners ready at 11 AM. Drive In, Take Out only please. Get advance tickets online at nfcnrhs.org/2023-bbq or pay that day, cash or credit card accepted. Complete dinner with a dessert only \$14.00. Thank you in advance for your support of the Railroad Museum of the Niagara Frontier through this event.

CHAPTER MEMORIES

Story collected by Geoff Gerstung

The Railroad Enthusiast – May 1940 issue



The regular meeting of April 5 [1940], held in the Lehigh Valley Terminal was designated as “Erie Railroad Night.” The speakers were Mr. Howard Beattie, Erie Road Foreman of Engines, and Mr. F.D. Kennedy, Erie Enginehouse Foreman, both of whom gave some very interesting facts on the subject of Erie locomotives. Accurate O gauge scale models of Erie 4-6-2 and 2-8-4 type locomotives and an Erie gas-electric car under construction were exhibited by Vincent C. Ryan, who is a member of the Enthusiasts and a skilled model builder.



Editor's note: It was appropriate to have an Erie Railroad theme program held in the Lehigh Valley's Buffalo station in 1940. Since 1935, the Erie utilized the LV facility for its Buffalo passenger service. In the depths of the Depression, the Erie closed its own Victorian era Buffalo station located on Exchange Street near Michigan Avenue, east of the New York Central's old Exchange Street Station. In photo, from a public domain Internet archive source, we are looking west along Exchange St. at the Erie facility, towards the New York Central depot. LV's passenger-mainline into downtown would have been to the south of the Erie's tracks, and the Central's Belt Line tracks. It was sure a real "railroad alley" back in those days!

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

Don't miss Duncan Richards program at our regular meeting this coming April 21. The schedule for this program has been in flux for the better part of two years. Hopefully the third attempt will be “the charm”. The program we had scheduled on the Lehigh Valley's Buffalo Division will be held in reserve. It is an excellent DVD, but we will hold it in reserve for a time with a short notice cancellation. It is not too often that a meeting gets dropped, but that night of March 10th, travel conditions were exceptionally poor, and like on the railroads, “Safety First” is important! May's program will feature another long-postponed program, Tony Schill's look at “Switzerland's Railroads”.

LAST RUN

Several rail hobby magazines have noted the passing of Thomas T. Taber III last year. Along with his father, he authored the definitive history of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad in a three-volume series that remains the iconic source for information about the gone but not forgotten “Route of Phoebe Snow”.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- APR 21** Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center. Duncan Richards will review Salt Trains of Western NY. NOTE change of date, 3rd Friday this month only!
- MAY 12** Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center. Tony Schill presents Switzerland's Railroads. NOTE return to 2nd Friday of the month schedule!
- MAY 13** Chicken BBQ, 11 AM to 2:30 PM or Sell Out. Take Out Only! Complete Delicious Chicken dinner, 111 Oliver St., North Tonawanda, NY at the Station. Pre-Sale tickets online at nfcnrhs.org/2023-bbq

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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