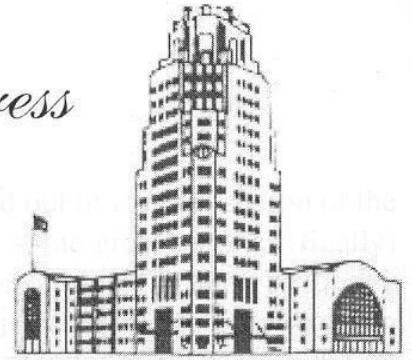


## *Empire State Express*



**MARCH 2023**

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

Editor: John C. Dahl    Email [nfcnrhs@gmail.com](mailto:nfcnrhs@gmail.com)

The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, March 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.

## **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.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



I mentioned at the beginning of last month's column that there was a lot going on.

Since that went to press, our newest acquisition arrived. ADM Milling donated the 25 ton GE switcher that was at the Ganson Street [Buffalo, NY] Flour Mill. Winters Rigging picked it up there on Friday morning the 10<sup>th</sup> and it was on our rails by 11 AM. ADM not only donated the engine but the move as well. See page 8 for photos.

Many thanks to Bruce Becker for putting together our Cabin Fever trip to Toronto. There were 18 smiling train riders on the GO train on Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup>. Chapter

Member John Freyseng traveled down from his home in Toronto to Niagara Falls to ride back with us. His commentary on the route and the developments along it added greatly to the experience. We had bright sunny weather for our trip and a good day was had by all. I spent more for my lunch than the train fare cost! What a deal!

On the very next weekend we were at the WNYRHS Toy & Train Show at the fairgrounds. Thanks to Greg and Becky Gerstung for packing and hauling our materials to the show. Thanks also to Dan Sikorski for helping cart stuff in. We were very busy all of Saturday, we sold 23 Calendars and a lot of other stuff over the two days. Thanks to Steve Frey, Bruce Becker and Bob Andrycha for their help at the table. Thanks to Greg for loading and for hauling the stuff back to the station and to Al Le Teste for being there to help unload. The Chapter Treasury took in over eleven hundred dollars! Something that is seldom mentioned about these shows is that a lot of networking goes on at these events; a valuable enterprise indeed.

This month we are hosting our 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Banquet on March 18<sup>th</sup> at Ilio Di Paolos. Thanks to the Committee for their work, especially Nancy Andrycha as Chairperson.

We have been working at the Museum most Saturdays right through the winter. Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> was the first time that we had a "snow day". The parking lot was a foot deep or so in snow and covered with a thick crust of ice. Oh well, snow happens. We have been lucky so far this year, a lot of work is getting done.

Some things that are "on the drawing board": The Rochester & Genesee Valley Museum group will be in town on Saturday April 29. They would like to visit us as part of their tour of the area. There may be construction going on, but we will do our best to work around that. We will need a few tour guides for that day, please let Becky know if you can help.

May 13<sup>th</sup> will be our Annual Chiavetta's Chicken BBQ sale.

We are also formulating plans for a trip over the NY&LE, date not yet selected.

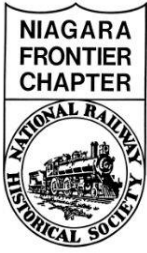
Finally, as of last meeting we have 85 members. There are still a few members that have not renewed yet.

Please take care of renewing your membership right away. We don't want to lose you! With that, I hope everyone is well and I hope to see you at the meeting.

*Jim Ball*

# NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER - NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Invites You To Their*



## 83rd ANNUAL BANQUET Saturday, March 18, 2023



**Ilio Di Paolo's Restaurant  
3785 South Park Ave - Blasdell, NY 14219**



**11:30 am Cash Bar - 12:15 pm Luncheon - Silent Auction/50-50 - Program Following**

### The Family Style Luncheon

Will Feature Roast Beef & Sliced Turkey, With Penne Pasta, Potatoes, Vegetables, Coffee/Tea & Dessert.

**\$30.00 per person**



### Banquet Program

### *The 1941 Fan Trips*

*of the*

### ***Railroad Enthusiasts - Buffalo Chapter***

*Enjoy newly discovered film scenes from trips on the  
New York, Ontario & Western, DL&W, Erie, Lehigh Valley,  
Coudersport & Port Allegany & New York Central!*

**Reservations must be received with full remittance no later than Friday March 4, 2022**

Note: No tickets/confirmations will be mailed. You may pick up your tickets at the door.

For information call Nancy Andrycha at 716-442-5222 or Becky Gerstung 716-434-5665.



**Reservations By Credit/Debit Card  
Are Available At [www.nfcnrhs.org](http://www.nfcnrhs.org)**

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### **Reservation Coupon - Niagara Frontier Chapter Annual Banquet March 18, 2023**

Make Checks Payable To 'Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc.' - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed

Mail With Full Payment To: Nancy Andrycha, 6915 Cedar Street, Akron, NY 14001-9669

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**SCENE ON THE LINE – photos by Chapter member Larry Gustina**



With PSR sadly limiting the number and frequency of freight trains, about all one is certain to see are Amtrak services on the Niagara Branch. Larry Gustina has been dutifully out trackside recording the scene in Buffalo, NY with train 64 shown here in two “Christmas card-like” scenes photographed before the infamous Christmas Blizzard of 2022.

## **Early Lehigh Valley Long Distance Trains**

By Richard Palmer

The dawn of fast long distance express trains between New York, Buffalo and Chicago is normally associated with the 1890s. Traditionally the focus has always been on the New York Central's "Empire State Express." But long before this train was even thought of, the Lehigh Valley Railroad had been operating long distance overnight passenger trains with Pullmans on a variety of routes since the 1870s. These were in association with the Erie, New York Central, Pennsylvania and Reading.

By the time its famous Black Diamond Express was conceived in 1896, the Lehigh Valley had considerable experience in this burgeoning business.

A Lehigh Valley timetable dated Aug. 1, 1870, shows two daily overnight trains between New York and Chicago in each direction. They ran over the Central Railroad of New Jersey to Easton, Pa.; over Lehigh Valley trackage from there to East Penn Junction between Bethlehem and Allentown; then over the Philadelphia and Reading (North Pennsylvania Railroad) to Reading, and on to Harrisburg. There it was turned over to the Pennsylvania, which took it to Chicago. (The Lehigh Valley finally opened its own line between Easton and Jersey City on June 28, 1875).

The same 1870 timetable advertised a "Fast Express Train" originated at the Berks Street station in Philadelphia. This ran to Easton on the North Pennsylvania Railroad. From there it continued to Waverly where through passengers detrained and boarded the Erie for the balance of the trip to Buffalo. This route developed when the Lehigh Valley's wholly owned subsidiary, the Pennsylvania & New York Canal Railroad, opened for business between Wilkes Barre, Pa. and Waverly on Sept. 13, 1869. The train included parlor and sleeping cars.

For a brief period, passengers had to change trains in Waverly due to the fact the Lehigh Valley was standard gauge, and the Erie was six foot gauge. Soon, a third rail was laid between Waverly and Elmira to accommodate standard gauge trains - mostly anthracite coal runs which were turned over to the Northern Central at that point. It was made operational on Nov. 10, 1870.

Laying of the third rail did little to enhance the Lehigh Valley's through passenger service. In June 1874 it added Pullman sleeping cars to this run. But patrons were inconvenienced by being awakened at 12:30 a.m. to change to an Erie train for Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Finally, the Lehigh advanced funds to the Erie to extend the third rail 170 miles from Elmira to Buffalo which was opened on May 22, 1876 - just in time to take advantage of heavy passenger traffic to the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. The consists included Pullman Palace cars, chair cars and sleepers.

A train dubbed the "Comet" (Trains 2 and 9) commenced running between New York and Geneva on May 14, 1877. This train ran via Ithaca over the Lehigh-owned Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre to Geneva, where it connected with the New York Central. It was then taken to Rochester on the Auburn branch, and switched to the mainline for the balance of the journey to Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

This routing was changed slightly on Nov. 10, 1878 when the trains were re-routed over the newly-completed Geneva & Lyons ("Fall Brook") Railroad. At Lyons they connected with New York Central mainline trains. The Lyons connection as well as running rights over the Erie were terminated in 1892 with completion of the new mainline from Van Etten to Buffalo. In 1893, the Lehigh Valley carried a record 6,306,039 passengers that generated \$2,606,025.28.

The high volume of business that year was attributed to two factors. One was the heavy rail traffic to the Early

## Lehigh Valley - continued

World's Fair in Chicago - more commonly known as the Columbian Exposition. The other was a substantial increase in through passenger business from New York to Buffalo, as well as a connection with improved service to Chicago, via the Grand Trunk. This allowed the railroad to introduce a popular high-grade, hotel-quality parlor and dining car service.



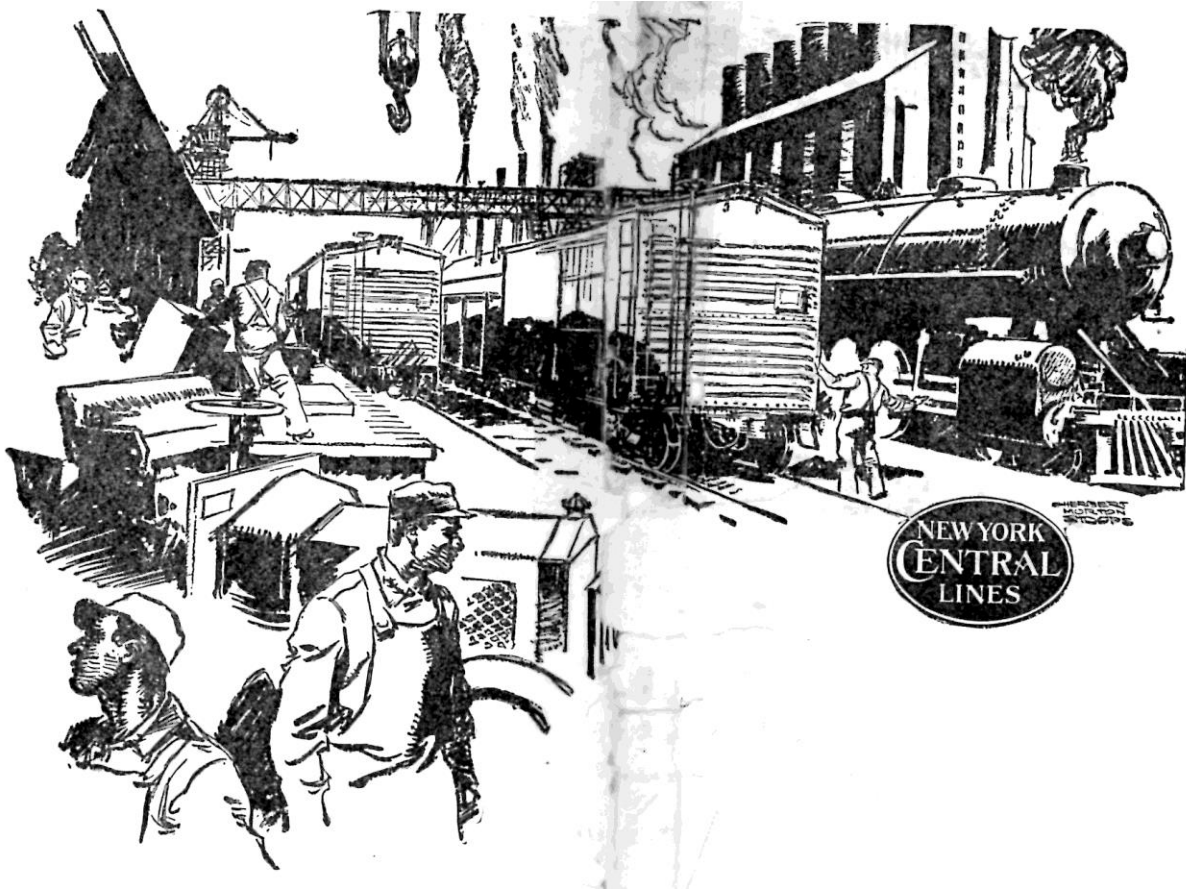
Richard Palmer collection.

*Editor note: Richard Palmer is a prolific writer, author and contributor to numerous rail history books, magazine articles and is a member of the Central New York Chapter, NRHS. For more information about the Lehigh Valley's passenger services, the following books are recommended reading and can be found in the Chapter's library:*

**The Handsomest Trains in the World**, by William T. Greenberg, Jr., and Frederick A. Kramer with Theodore F. Gleichmann, Jr.

**A History of the Lehigh Valley Railroad** by Robert F. Archer

1923



In 1923 the New York Central Lines were enjoying the robust economy of the Roaring 20's. Rail traffic was hitting all time high figures; travel by fast overnight Pullman sleeping car trains and luxurious heavyweight day trains equipped with coaches, parlor cars and of course full dining services were the norm. The Central's timetables were thick with multiple pages of express, limited stop trains operating across a far-flung empire in the industrial powerhouse states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Massachusetts, on Central's Boston & Albany subsidiary was home to a wealth of mills and high value manufacturing facilities. Secondary train services existed in a wonderful abundance we can only marvel at today. The great city stations on the Central and elsewhere boomed with a flow of humanity through their marble portals. New stations were being planned across the line. Buffalo's old New York Central station on Exchange Street was an anomaly as outdated but plans were soon afoot within a year. Its replacement, the magnificent Art Deco style Central Terminal was being conceived by her architects and designers. I think the above illustration from Form 1001 of September 30, 1923, evokes some of that optimistic spirit of the 1920's. It was a busy time for the railroads.

In that decade of the Twenties, the Central would complete a major track relocation at Tonawanda; build Selkirk Yard and a high-level cutoff bridge across the Hudson below Albany at Castleton; the magnificent Hudson style locomotives were designed and rolled out of the Schenectady works of Alco to begin hauling the Great Steel Fleet in 1927. New York Central would open new stations in Elyria, OH ('25), Springfield, MA ('26), Erie, PA ('27). Buffalo's station would debut on June 22, 1929, to great fanfare and acclaim. Cleveland's new Terminal Tower and its electrification were to open in 1930 and NYC would participate in a major union station project in Cincinnati set to open in 1933. The party would come to a sudden halt with the Wall Street collapse of October 1929. (Cincinnati's Union Terminal would be completed.) No one at first believed the economic setback would be serious or prolonged; the Great Depression would by contrast be a very tough time of hardship. The New York Central would not be the optimistic organization it was in 1923 until the very end of the next decade. JCD

## STANDARD ELEVATOR NO. 1



Ben Hiltz inspects our latest arrival “on the property”, the former Standard Elevator No. 1 which recently served at the Ganson Street “Great Northern” grain elevator. Camera shy, and tucked away working in the cab was Steve Frey. Both photos, February 11, 2023. *Photos: John C. Dahl*





## LAST RUN

We regret to report on the sudden passing of Chapter member and noted author Walter Simpson on this past February 2. A man of numerous talents and achievements, Walter completed a set of three different books dealing with the areas of railroad locomotives and their energy usage properties in each including the diesel-electric, turbine propulsion and steam locomotives. These books are a remarkable treatment of what can be a very technical subject in a manner that is understandable to the average reader and yet still includes the sharp insight and in-depth perspective of a knowledgeable engineer. The volume on steam engines is illustrated with numerous photos of some of the best examples of classic steam from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is a much sought-after publication by anyone who likes classic North American steam engines. Walter was by profession the longtime energy conservation officer for the University of Buffalo and is credited with saving the institution over \$100 million in energy costs. An avid environmentalist, he was also a teacher and mentor for the university. Most recently, he authored an article for this publication regarding his other love in the railroad world, that of historic streetcars, specifically the PCC. (See January 2023 Empire State Express.) Walter had been scheduled to present his talk on steam locomotives and his recent book this coming April to the Chapter. I had the great pleasure of getting to know Walter at a Chapter banquet a few years ago. Perhaps he is even now enjoying a ride on a heavenly PCC car passing a rail yard with dozens of steam locomotives simmering on the service tracks awaiting a call to duty on the high iron. The Chapter extends its sincere condolences to his wife Nan and son Jayson and daughter Skye. - JCD

## ON THE TRACK AHEAD

**PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING DATE FOR APRIL MEETING ONLY TO 3<sup>RD</sup> FRIDAY, APRIL 21**



April's program (Note change of date from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday, **this month only**, because of a schedule conflict at our usual meeting room location) will feature a DVD of the Buffalo Division of the Lehigh Valley Railroad with much footage from the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. This will also include a look at the branch line to Niagara Falls and Suspension Bridge and a rare view of passenger cars being shuffled at the downtown Buffalo station in the 1940's. The Lehigh was always my favorite railroad growing up and this DVD brought back many great memories from being a kid and watching the Lehigh's always interesting trains pass through Tonawanda Junction. – JCD

*Looking due east where once the Lehigh Valley and New York Central's Batavia branch (aka "the Peanut") joined with NYC to the left and straight ahead and Lehigh Valley, once double track here, to the right on the curve. This was Tonawanda Junction. Like a sentinel standing guard, an old telegraph pole remains upright and tall as nature reclaims the right of way. The Peanut was abandoned and torn up here about 1950. The Lehigh Valley would cease operations on March 31, 1976, when Conrail absorbed the company. An old battery box lies half buried at left, a remnant from the semaphore signals which once graced the former junction and its crossovers located about a hundred feet west of this spot. Photo April 17, 2008, John C. Dahl photo.*

# CHAPTER CALENDAR

- MAR 10**      **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center. Duncan Richards will review Salt Trains of Western NY.**
- MAR 18**      **Annual Chapter luncheon, Ilio DiPaolo's Restaurant, Blasdell, NY, 11:30 AM**
- APR 21**      **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center. The Buffalo Division of the Lehigh Valley RR. NOTE change of date, 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday this month only!**

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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