

# Empire State Express



June 2019

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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The meeting of the Chapter will be held at 8:00 pm on Friday, June 14, 2019 at Buffalo Central Terminal.

## BUFFALO & SUSQUEHANNA



Join us in June at Buffalo Central Terminal for a program by Pete Gores on the long gone Buffalo & Susquehanna RR. Opened for service by 1907 to Buffalo, the line failed to prosper in the highly competitive era when western New York was thick with iron trails. As a latecomer, the B&S never could quite turn the corner and after the deaths of its chief backers, brothers Frank and Charles Goodyear, the line fell into receivership. The line from Wellsville to Buffalo would be shut down by the late autumn of 1916. But there is much, much more to the story than just an abandoned railway. Come hear the tale of the great railroad empire once touted as 'The New Way', the Buffalo and Susquehanna!

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Those of you who are model railroaders probably know what a fast clock is. I think someone set the real world up on one when I wasn't looking. Wow, things are really flying; here we are in June already! I hope the weather catches up soon.

In project news, we have received the films of John Walker from the company that converted them to digital format. We look forward to seeing them shown at a meeting. The Archive Room expansion project continues as we tear up the wooden floor in the north end. This will be replaced with sheets of cement board prior to erecting the steel stud framing.

Anton Schwarzmeuller reports that he received the check from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation for the historic marker about the Great Gorge Route that is to be installed at ArtPark in Lewiston. Al Le Teste has sent a like check to the foundry for the marker to be cast. It will then be shipped to ArtPark and stored there until it can be installed. We hope that this will all happen "before the

snow flies". We will let everyone know when it will be.

The contractor has finished the siding work on EL-2. We have some issues to be dealt with and then some work of our own to do. We also want to have the chimney rehabilitated this year. That is just waiting for the folks who are going to do to fit it in to their schedule.

We hosted the Independent Model Railroad Club of Jamestown on Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>. A dozen curious modelers descended on our Museum and looked, listened, photographed and asked lots of questions. They stayed for lunch. It was a great day. Thanks to Becky Gerstung, Greg Gerstung, Dennis Hurley, Steve Frey and Ben Hilts for their help.

On May 18<sup>th</sup> we held our annual chicken barbeque fundraiser at the Museum. It was a beautiful day and we did a steady business. Bruce Becker had set us up with the ability to accept credit cards on site. We had over one hundred dollars in sales that way and it was not advertised that we were doing that.. It was also advertised on Facebook for the first time. Thanks to Becky for being Chairperson and to Greg Gerstung, Bob and Nancy Andrycha, Steve and Karen Frey, Al Starkweather, Dennis Hurley, Al Le Teste, Harold Lee, Bruce Becker and Dave Skoney for their help. Thanks to Betsey Ball for printing the tickets and the loan of her tent. Thanks to Karen Anstey for putting out and retrieving the yellow chickens. The sales figures are not final as of this writing but we estimate that the event raised over \$700 for the treasury.

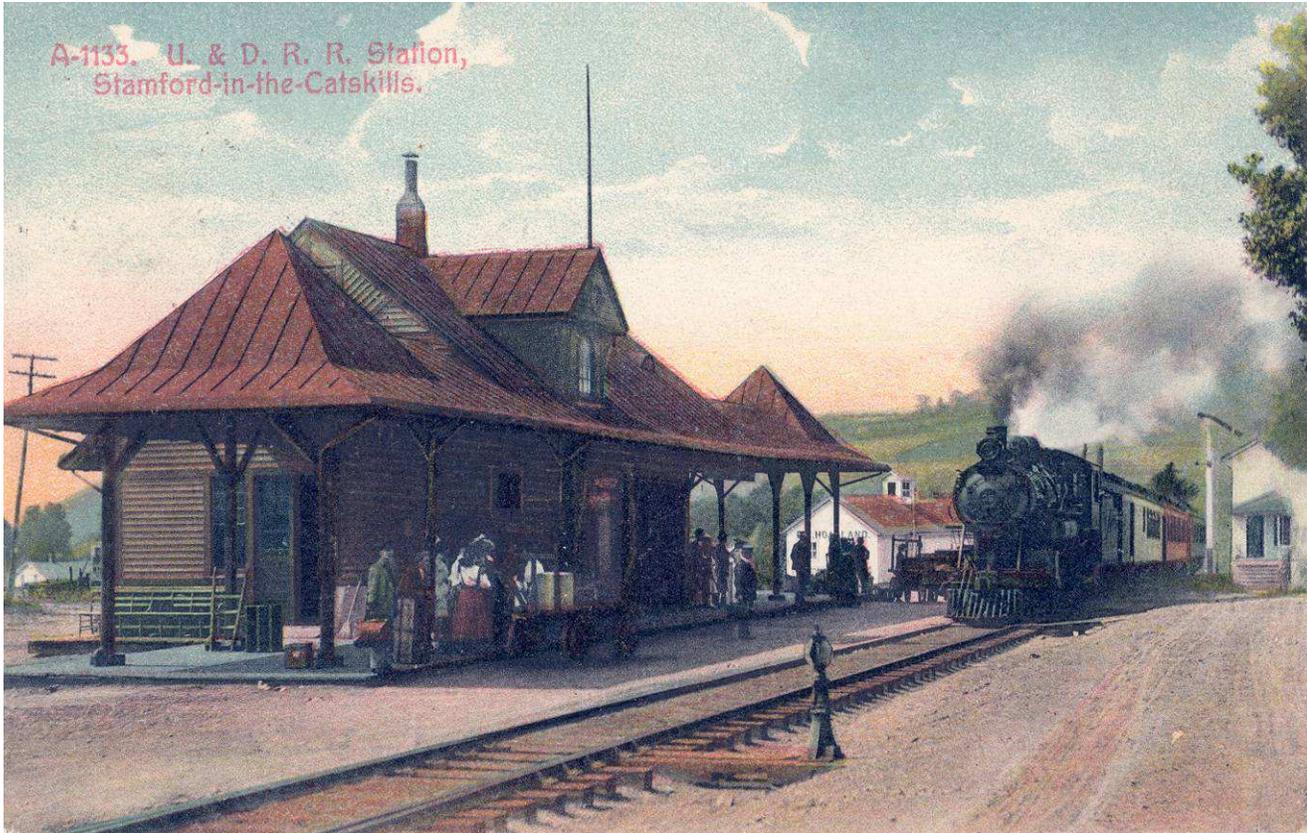
Friday May 31<sup>st</sup> was the opening day of the New York Central System Historical Society Convention held in Buffalo this time. We opened our Museum on Friday afternoon for them and when it was over there were twenty five names on the visitor register. They were curious and complimentary, especially in regards to what we had done with EL-2. That was great to hear coming from Central fans. Thanks to Bob and Nancy Andrycha, Bob Scheib and John Dahl for helping.

I have proposed that we start the monthly membership meeting at 7pm beginning in September. This seems to be agreeable to the majority at this time. We'll try it and if it doesn't work, we'll do something else. We will ask Tony Schill to send out an email reminder of the time change just before the meeting. While we are on the topic of meetings, I'll remind you that the June meeting will be at Central Terminal.

Until then, I'll see you at the Museum.

*Jim Ball*

## RAILROAD RELICS



With summer just ahead of us, take a moment and study this old-time postcard view of Stamford-in-the-Catskills and step back in time to that world. The railroads were in a kind of “golden age”; one could seemingly travel just about anywhere by train or within cities by convenient electric streetcar. High speed electric interurban railroads were the cutting edge of transportation technology and several were already in service with more being planned. Whether it was to a seaside resort on the Jersey shore or in this case the pleasant Catskill Mountains of New York State, the railroad could take you there.

Here a eastbound passenger train of the much storied Ulster & Delaware RR is approaching for a station stop at Stamford, NY. The summer hotels that once abounded throughout the region catered to city folk who sought the deliciously fresh mountain air in those days before air conditioning. They may have boarded a Hudson River steamboat earlier that morning in Manhattan and sailed up the majestic river to Kingston, where transfer to the waiting coaches of the U&D would continue their journey into the mountains.

The simple pleasure of getting out of the city for a brief holiday was enough. President Taft was the occupant of the White House. World affairs generally had a tranquility that has never been seen since. In a few short years, drastic changes in technology, age old rivalries, and misguided alliances would usher in a terrible war in Europe, in which the United States would eventually get involved. The Ulster & Delaware would never quite be the railroad it once was in those peaceful years before the Great War.

After four terrible years of suffering, death and destruction, the war would end. But, the orderly scene of 1910 depicted in the postcard did not return. Passenger trains would become fewer as the 1920's gave way to the 1930's. By the onset of the Depression, the once well to do Ulster & Delaware was now penniless and would be absorbed into New York Central in 1932 and become the Catskill Mountain branch. The bucolic age of the

grand Catskill hotels and the trains which served them faded away and by World War II had pretty much vanished.

The railroad would soldier on for several more decades as a freight only operation thru Penn Central and then into Conrail. Abandonment was at hand. Luckily, the Catskill Mountain RR tourist operation out of Phoenicia with a separate operation out of Kingston would polish the rail heads for several more years, but recent local politics have killed that operation in favor of a rails-to-trails usage. Another tourist line, the Delaware & Ulster still runs its trains seasonally out of Arkville on the western side of the Catskills. Much of the right of way east of Phoenicia into Kingston has become a hiking trail. Railroading in the Catskill mountains has become mostly just a relic. – JCD

## OPERATION LIFESAVER – 1922



Once the motor vehicle became a reliable way to get around, and both train and vehicle speeds increased, safety at crossings was ever more important. This vintage reminder from 1922 is as pertinent today as it was back in those summer days of old. "Safety First" is important at all railway crossings. Have a safe and accident free summer whether you travel by train or your own automobile.

## MORE P&LE PHOTOS

By: Tony Schill



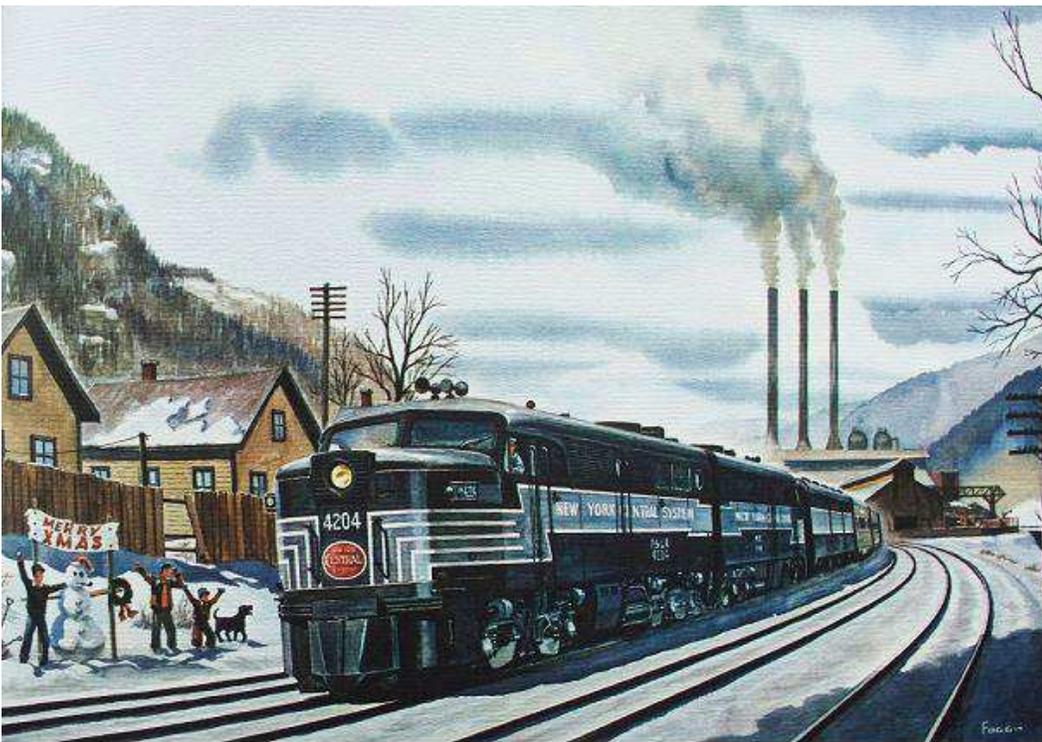
A PA LEADS AN EXCURSION TRAIN AS IT PACES A STEAMBOAT RACE. PITTSBURGH, 1951.



P&LE 4206 LEADS THE "AFTERNOON STEEL KING" ACROSS THE OHIO RIVER BRIDGE AT BEAVER, PA



PA-1 4206 AT PITTSBURGH, 1949



ONE OF THE P&LE PAINTINGS BY HOWARD FOGG



Editor's note: See the Empire State Express, April 2019, for the story of P&LE's stylish Alco PA locomotives.

“SCENE” ON THE LINE



A trip sponsored by Lehigh Valley Chapter NRHS & Railroad Historians of the Lehigh River Valley over the Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern with three historic RDC's is viewed on a photo stop deep in the gorge of the Lehigh River. The former Central Railroad of New Jersey trackage was combined with that of the parallel Lehigh Valley RR when Jersey Central abandoned its Pennsylvania operations in the early 1970's. The Lehigh River runs to the left and a biking trail now occupies the old Jersey Central right of way. May 18, 2019.

*Photo: John C. Dahl*



Wanamaker, Kempton & Southern with its historic Whtcomb #602, a side rod diesel built in 1944, is seen at the quaint ex-Reading country depot at Wanamaker, Pennsylvania on May 19, 2019. The tourist railroad has operated since 1963 on a few miles of track in the bucolic countryside of Lehigh county, delighting all who visit. *Photo: John C. Dahl*

“SCENE” ON THE LINE - continued

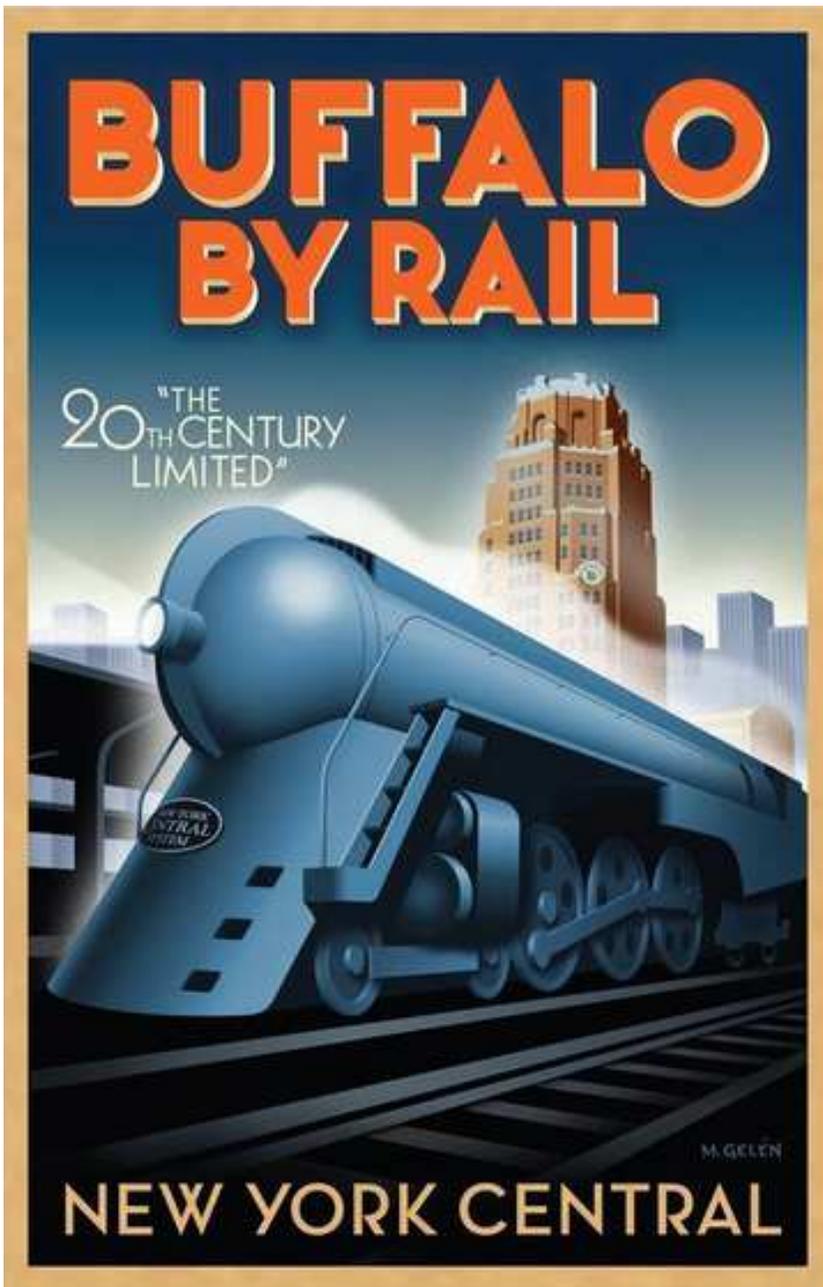


New York & Lake Erie’s Alco FA cab unit #6758 and mate #6764 are rolling southbound. Emerging from deep woods and climbing the steep grade of Dayton Hill, the Alco’s are just about to cross Jolls Road. The occasion is a Mother’s Day weekend special on May 11, 2019. *Photo: Jon Rothenmeyer.*



A quick run around completed, #6764 will lead the sharp looking mini-streamliner back to Gowanda. The small village of South Dayton is the setting for this vignette of classic passenger excursion railroading. May 11, 2019. *Photo: Jon Rothenmeyer*

## 90 YEARS FOR CENTRAL TERMINAL



It is hard to believe, but Buffalo's railway Art Deco masterpiece, Central Terminal, turns 90 on June 22. When the New York Central threw open the doors at 3:30 PM that bright beautiful summer afternoon after the completion of the dedication ceremony and luncheon for some 2200 invited guests, the public by the thousands streamed inside to marvel at the wonder of their new station.

Earlier, a ceremonial visit by the Empire State Express at 2:10 PM was followed by the raising of the American flag as the Central's own Avis, PA shop band played the Star Spangled Banner. An aerial stunt by aviatrix Mary Daly followed the Empire State Express from Exchange Street to the new terminal. Just after midnight, official use by the more than 200 trains per day then in the public timetable would commence. For the next fifty years, Buffalo's Central Terminal would reign as the city's primary rail passenger station. Through the dark days of the Great Depression of the 1930's to the unprecedented levels of rail traffic in World War II, Korea and to a lesser extent, Vietnam, the Central Terminal would be the scene of countless personal dramas. She was the heart and soul of travel in the Queen City for decades.

New York Central modernized its Great Steel Fleet after World War II, but sadly within a decade, rail travel had peaked and began its downward slide. With each year the schedule grew thinner. The Central and

rival Pennsylvania RR which also used the station would merge in 1968 and collapse in financial ruin within two years. Out of the wreckage emerged Amtrak for passenger service and Conrail would assume not only the NYC and PRR but many of the bankrupt Northeastern railroads. Central Terminal's final forlorn October of 1979 would see its closure as a rail station and sadly marked its further descent into what became an abandoned hulk. But the story was not over, and the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation was formed and now owns the facility. It has spent countless hours in stabilizing and securing, and undertaking restorations of the facility. While we will never again likely see over 200 trains a day call at her train gates, there is hope for eventual return of passenger trains and a revitalized, repurposed and restored building that we can once again be proud of as western New Yorkers to call our own.

Happy 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Central Terminal!

Artwork: *New York Central System Historical Society*

## CHAPTER CALENDAR

JUN 14 The fascinating story of the Buffalo & Susquehanna RR will be explored in this presentation by Pete Gores at our annual Buffalo Central Terminal meeting, 8 PM

JUN-JUL-AUG- SEPT Station open to the public, Saturdays 1PM to 4PM. Volunteers are greatly needed to assist!

The Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) publicly supported organization.

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