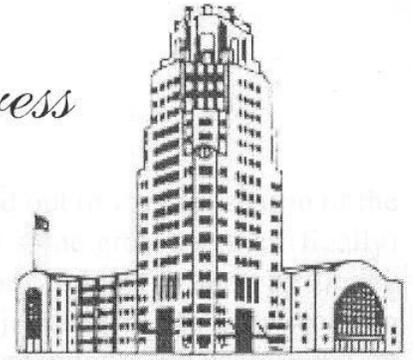


Empire State Express



February 2019

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

The meeting of the Chapter will be held on Friday, February 8, 2019 at 8:00 PM at the Degraff Community Center, 139 Division St., North Tonawanda, NY.

THE NICKEL PLATE ROAD & NIAGARA FRONTIER FOOD TERMINAL

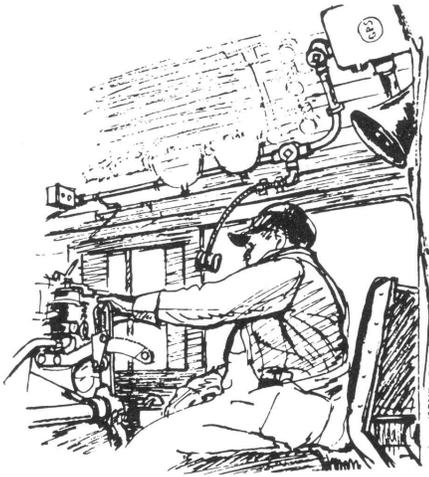


Chapter member, John Slater will present the history of the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal at our February meeting. This program traces the history of food distribution in Buffalo, the Nickel Plate's fast freight perishables business, the opening of the railroad's Northern Ohio Food Terminal in 1930, and the subsequent 1931 opening of its second major food terminal facility; Buffalo's Niagara Frontier Food Terminal at the corner of Clinton Street and Bailey Avenue.

More than four dozen vintage images illustrate this interesting and informative program,

which provides insight into the development of the food distribution business in the Buffalo and Western New York region and how the partnership between the Nickel Plate and the Erie established the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal as a dominant distribution point for perishables and commodity food products for almost six decades. *Photo: aerial view of the NFFT about 1940. Note the Erie's smoky locomotive facility. John Slater collection.*

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



A couple of years before I was born, Sammy Kahn and Jule Styne wrote a great song that Vaughn Monroe recorded. Although not a Christmas song, it is often played during the holidays. It made a comeback of sorts on the sound track of the movie Die Hard. Yes, I'm talking about "Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow." I'd like to add, and get it over with, we have things to do.

We have had and will have several restoration projects that are ongoing. Some of these are waiting for the season to permit working outside again, as with EL-2, the equipment collection, the loading dock and the track work. Other work can continue, like the film digitalization project and the archive room expansion. The films of

John Walker are in process now, the archive room will hopefully be working again by the time that you read this. I will report to you on the progress.

As I wrote last time, we will be attending the WNYRHS train show at the Fairgrounds on February 16th and 17th. Volunteers to haul our materials to and from the show and to man the tables would be needed. Please call Becky at 434 5665 if you can help.

The annual Banquet will held at Ilio Di Paolos Restaurant on Saturday March 23rd and, as previously at 12: 30PM. The midday schedule seems to work well as so many of us now don't drive at night. Well known rail photographer Duncan Richards will have the presentation. See the enclosed flyer to make your reservations. If you have items for the auction please get them to Nancy Andrycha ahead of time. You can bring them to the meeting if that works for you.

Looking well forward, the New York Central System Historical Society will be in the Buffalo area for their convention beginning May 31. We are looking at Friday afternoon to have our Museum open for them and volunteers will be needed. Call Becky at 434-5665 if you can help.

The Calendar Committee is accepting photos for the 2020 edition of the Chapter's Famous Calendar. Greg Gerstung and Bob Andrycha will be glad to see what you have to offer. As always, if we use your photo, you will receive a free calendar.

If the weather should cause us to cancel our regular monthly meeting, check on your TV on channel 2 first, WGR 550 AM, WYRK 106.5 FM, and Oldies 104 FM on the radio as well, all the usual places. We will try to make the decision soon enough to make the 5 pm broadcasts.

Finally, for the very few of you who have not renewed, please get that done. We don't want to lose you. Until then, I'll see you at the meeting.

Jim Ball

SCHENECTADY OPENS NEW AMTRAK STATION



It may not be as grand as Schenectady's old Union Station, but for the first time in a half century the city has a railroad depot it can be proud of.

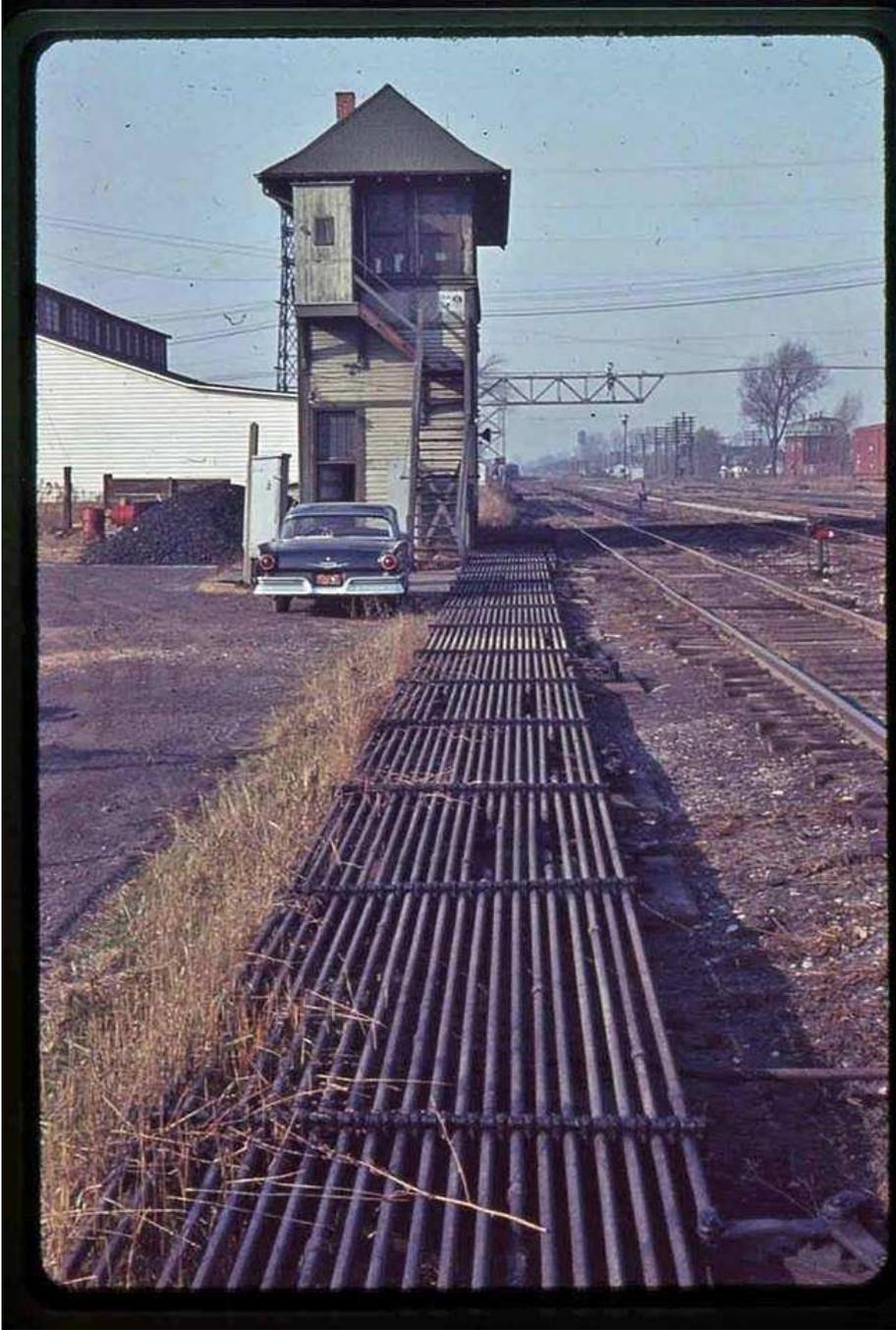
The new Amtrak building, which opened in October, certainly passes muster with Earl Shirkey, a lifelong Schenectady resident who knows something about railroads. Before there was Amtrak and Conrail, both of Shirkey's grandfathers were engineers for the New York Central, and as a young boy in the 1950s he often visited the majestic structure that was Schenectady's railroad station from 1908 to 1969.

"The original station was a little more grand, but I think they've done a wonderful job," said Shirkey, who visited the new building soon after it opened on Oct. 17. "No, it's not quite like the old one, but I was very impressed. It really looks fantastic."

from The Daily Gazette, Schenectady NY November 22, 2018

SEEN ON THE LINE

Another View of Tower 59 in North Tonawanda, NY about 1960



Last month's photo of Tower 59 garnered several inquiries, so this month we present additional views, and also rare looks at tower Erie 3.

Looking north, we are standing on the west side of New York Central's Niagara branch. The overhead cantilever bridge holding signals for the Erie's dock line crossing is another one of those details now vanished from the scene. The buildings in the distance at right still stand and just two tracks remain in service. Tower 59 and its marvelous mechanical interlocking plant has been gone some 50 years or more. You classic car guys can no doubt identify the operators make and model. Note the sizeable coal pile at left. Perhaps this is a late autumn shot and the pile has been stocked for the coming winter.

Bob Andrycha submitted this great selection of vintage photos.



SEEN ON THE LINE – continued

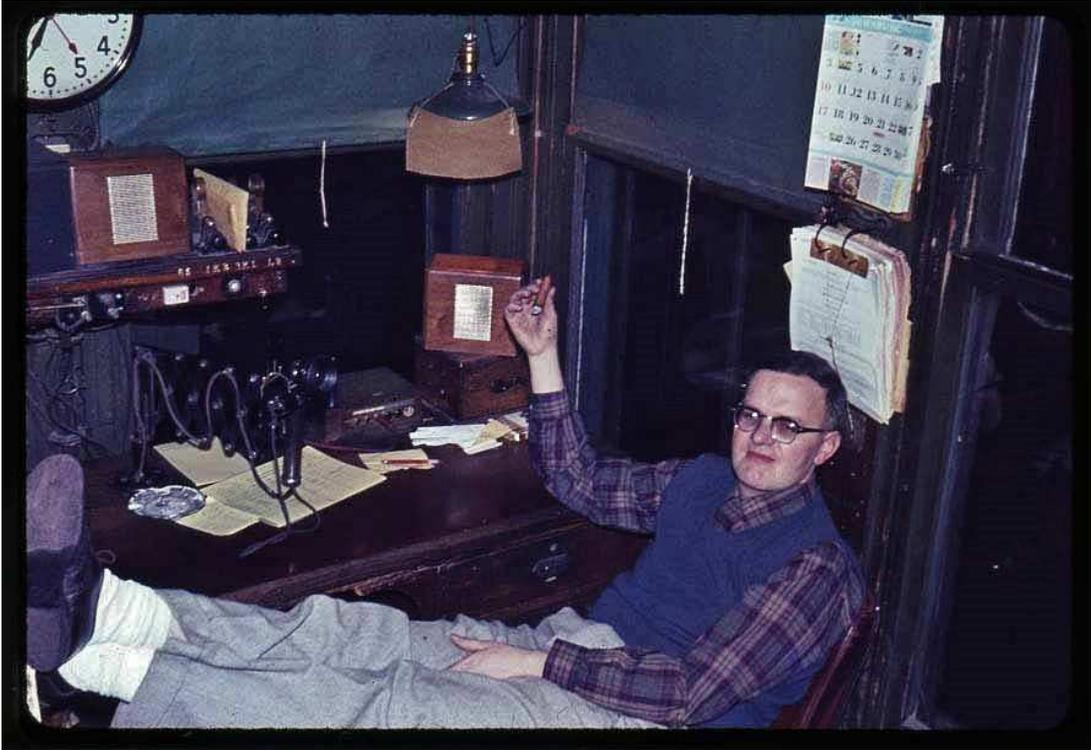


Inside tower 59 was this impressive set of switching and signaling levers

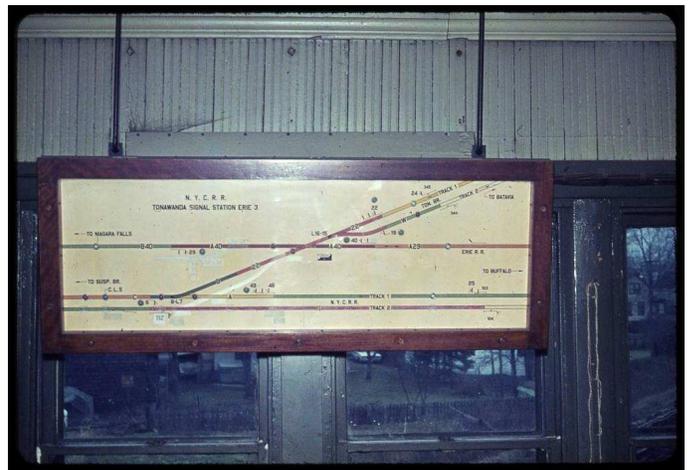
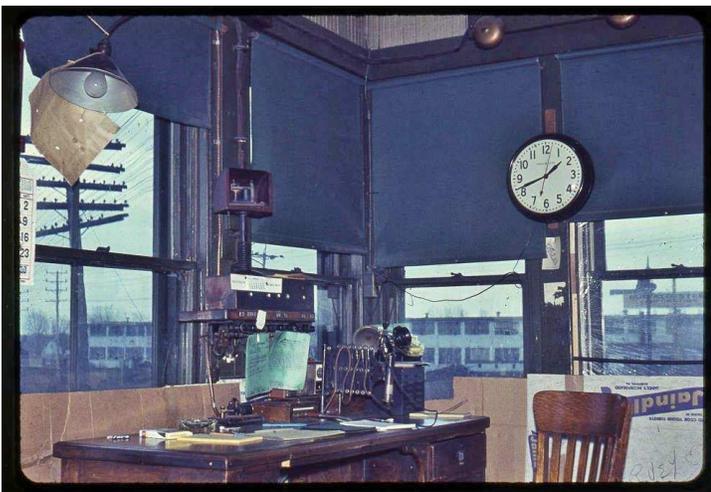


Tower Erie 3 controlled the crossing of the Erie and New York Central's Peanut and was just south of the Erie Barge Canal in the City of Tonawanda. This view looks north on the Erie. The Lehigh Valley RR Niagara Falls branch joined the NYC Peanut about a two miles east of this location at Tonawanda Jct, and utilized trackage rights from there to get to the Falls. The Erie track is now gone, the former NYC/LV is still a spur serving the former Exolon plant (now Washington Mills) about a mile east.

SEEN ON THE LINE - continued

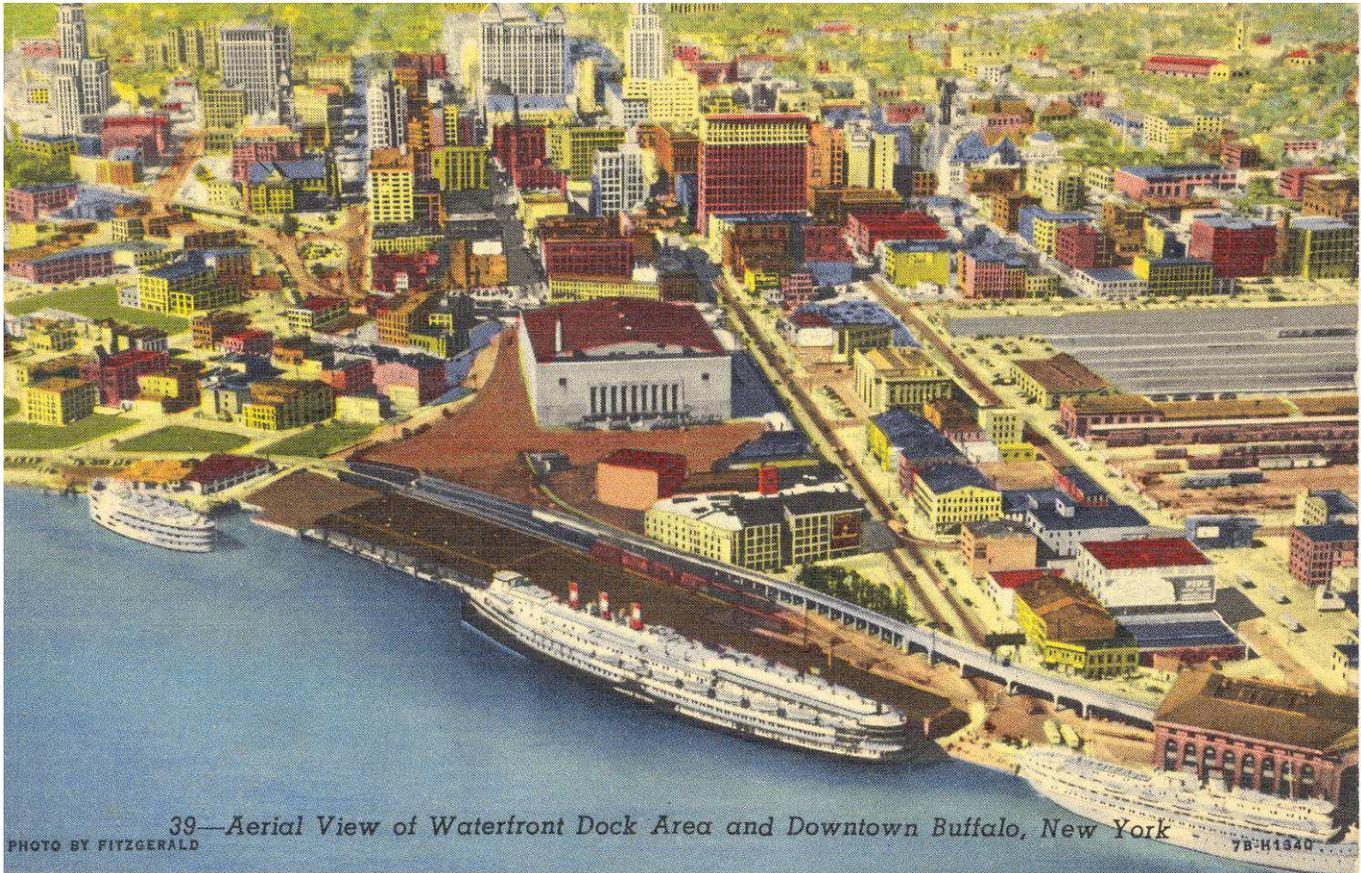


The operator in Erie 3 is enjoying a lull in traffic. Can anyone identify the gentleman for us?



Erie 3's operator desk (left) and model board (right). Where is the model board today?

BUFFALO 1940



One of Buffalo's revival points has been centered on the waterfront area of lower Main Street.

This vintage 1940's era postcard shows us a host of interesting details. Many historic structures line lower Main Street and the now late, Art Deco style Memorial Auditorium is at center. To its right across Main Street the once magnificent passenger station of the Lehigh Valley with its train shed stretching out behind can be seen. Just below, the LV's downtown freight depot is pictured on Washington Street. At the lower right, the sumptuous terminal of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western occupies a prominent place. Lake steamers still called in those days. The New York Central's Niagara Falls line route can be traced twisting up its Church Street right of way towards the left before the track relocation in 1952 moved it to the former bed of the abandoned Erie Canal. Not discernible in this view, the Central's ancient wooden Terrace station still hosted passenger services to and from Niagara Falls. No I-190 Thruway extension with its associated ramps and ugly elevated roadway mars the urban view.

Revival is good, and times do change. Progress is important. But let us not forget what was once a waterfront filled with immensely more interesting things that moved by water, and by rail. - JCD



ONCE IN A TIMETABLE

Now 43 years ago....this was the scene at Rochester Junction on a cold February day in 1976.



Alco RS-2 number 217 has a classic steel LV caboose in tow on the mainline as the brakemen work with the head end shuffling a mix of covered hopper cars around the interchange tracks. No doubt the hack's stove is radiating some very welcome warmth to which the crew will retreat when they can on this clear but frigid afternoon. Although 217 looks a bit the worse for wear, she's a good old workhorse and certainly is as photogenic and great to listen to as any diesel locomotive can be.

The low winter sun will soon fade in the west and the crew will be done for another day, heading for home and beans in the cozy confines of their hack. For some of them it may just be another day on the job, slogging it out in the tough world of winter railroading. For us it is a reminder that soon this everyday mini-drama would end. In just a couple of months, Conrail would take over, and the Lehigh Valley Railroad would officially die. Many of her locomotives would be dispersed or scrapped; the once proud name 'Lehigh Valley' would be painted over in a vain attempt to erase history. Crews would migrate to jobs in the new company and maybe even improvement would be brought in as Conrail blue replaced Cornell red. A few of the Lehigh's traditional steel cabooses would hang on, and a handful have been thankfully preserved for us to enjoy today as reminders that 'Once In a Timetable' there was a place named Rochester Junction and a railroad called the Lehigh Valley.

- JCD

Photo by R. Amberger, author's collection.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

We need program presenters for 2019. Many months have openings. If you would like to offer a program please contact Jim Ball.



For March, we will view **“Ed Weber’s Look at the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western...In the 1950s”**. This is a truly remarkable photographic record of the stations and many interlocking towers which once lined the magnificent “Route of Phoebe Snow” right of way from Buffalo to Hoboken, NJ before the merger with the Erie and subsequent downgrading and abandonment of much of the line. Many of Ed’s photos appeared in Thomas Taber’s history of the DL&W in the 20th Century. The photo series ran in print in *The Bulletin of the Railroad Station Historical Society* from 2012 to 2018, and by special arrangement, your editor is pleased to be able to present it to the Chapter. *Above: DM tower, crossing of the DL&W with the Pennsylvania RR near Bailey Avenue. Bridge piers for one of Interstate 190’s many elevated sections are under construction. May 18, 1958. Ed Weber photo.*

ANNUAL BANQUET

Our annual banquet is fast approaching next month. See the flyer included this month and get your reservation in for a delicious lunch (yes.... lunch...please note the time on the flyer.) All are welcome to our luncheon, silent auction, and what will be an outstanding program of railroad photography, *Steam in China*, by Duncan Richards from Rochester, NY. Don’t miss this event.

EDITOR’S NOTEBOOK

Last month’s program drawn from the Chapter’s digital archives featured Bill Kessel films from the 1950s through the 1960s. It was a great hit with all who attended; the scenes were like a time capsule just getting opened for the first time in decades.

I would like to thank Al Leteste for his wonderful musical background that he added to what would otherwise have been silent images. The music brought them to life! We have another short digitized Kessel film of rail travels to western states and will reserve that for a future meeting night.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- FEB 8 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. John Slater reviews the history of rail food terminals in Cleveland & Buffalo and their connection to the Nickel Plate's perishables business

- FEB 16-17 WNYRHS Winter Train Show, Hamburg, NY, 10AM-5PM. Chapter table needs volunteers.

- MAR 8 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. Ed Weber's Look at the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western...In the 1950's

- MAR 23 Annual Banquet. Ilio DiPaulo's restaurant, Doors open 11:30 AM, luncheon served 12:30 PM. Duncan Richards will present Steam in China, an outstanding photo review of the last of big time steam in regular service in China. Flyer enclosed.

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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