

Empire State Express

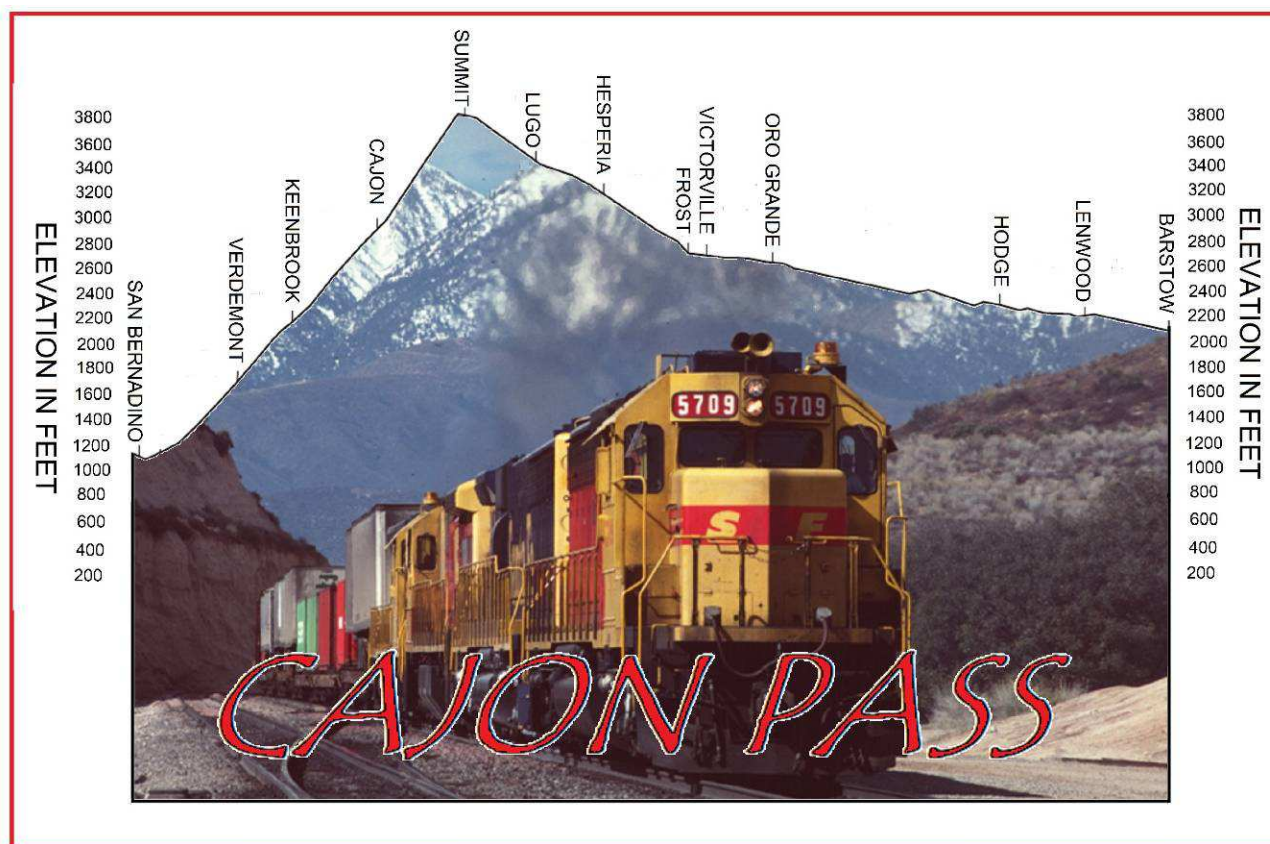


April 2018

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

The meeting of the Chapter will be held at 8:00 pm on Friday, April 13, 2018 at 8:00PM in the Degraff Community Center, 139 Division St., North Tonawanda, NY.



Railfanning Cajon Pass 1979-2018

Much has changed on Cajon Pass in the past 40 years, as the Santa Fe has become BNSF and the Southern Pacific has been absorbed into the Union Pacific. But the spectacular scenery, 3% grades and the near-constant parade of trains still make Cajon Pass one of the great railfan experiences of North America! Join us at the April meeting for a colorful look at railroading on Cajon Pass, both past and present.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Here we go. It's April and we are headed into summer, downhill on a straightaway at 79 miles an hour and per rule 281, high green on the signals.

Restoration projects require a lot of labor and money. The Chapter takes those opportunities that present themselves to earn a few bucks to help out the budget. In 2017 we did something in every month, or at least I arranged to report it that way. In January we collect dues and many gave us a donation with theirs, this totaled \$2685.00. In February we did the WNYRHS train show form which we earned \$106.00 this time. In March we report the Calendar Sales, and file the sales tax. 2016s calendar made us \$656.00. In April we held our annual Banquet, which is designed to break even, but we wound up \$295.00 in the black just the same May's Chicken Barbeque earned us \$709.00. In June we had a tour from the Annual Convention of the Daughters of the Nile. We provided them lunch and earned over \$400. We parked cars

for the Parade Night of Canal Fest in July and earned \$120.00. In August, we had our annual bus trip from the University at Buffalo which nets us a hundred dollars. In September we were in our second home, Central Terminal, for the train show, earning just over \$600. In October we held our fall chicken BBQ and earned about \$400. The November train show added \$100 and our trip on the Falls Road made us \$1328. Winterwalk rounded out the year with \$65. If you have been keeping a running tab on this, you can see how these kinds of activities keep us working on the many projects without having to run to you the membership for money to buy supplies and materials every time. It keeps the work flow of the projects moving. The Officers and the workers sincerely appreciate your support of these activities.

Our spring Chicken BBQ is coming on May 12, we will be doing presale this time, it will save you a dollar! Look for a flyer in the upcoming May ESX. We will need volunteers for the day, folks to assemble the dinners, people to take orders, collect the money and run (OK, walk) dinners to the cars. Please let Becky know if you can help.

Volunteers are needed to staff the Museum. We own the Museum and if we are not there, it can't be open. People keeping asking when we are open. Please call Becky at 434 5665 if you can help. One Saturday, from 12:30 pm to 4 pm is all we are asking. It's your Museum.

Our 78th Annual Banquet was held March 24th at Illo Di Paolos Restaurant. In response to several suggestions, we changed the time of the event to 11 am. We had fifty five people in attendance, most comments at the event were positive. The meal was excellent. I presented Dick Eastman with his twenty five year pin, two others, Humbart Cipriano and Mark Kraus will get theirs by mail. The program was the Films of Jim Van Brocklin. These were digitalized by the Chapter and shown by Greg Gerstung in that form. Al Le Teste added a musical sound track. These films, originally 8 mm, are now preserved for future generations. There are two more batches of films to be done, one in work now. This kind of preservation work is what the NRHS is all about and seeing it, you should be proud to be a member.

Breaking News! We have just received notice that the East Hill Foundation has awarded us a \$15,000 grant! This is for EL-2. We will give you all the details at the meeting. See you there.

Jim Ball

A Visit to Buffalo & Niagara Falls (In 1945)

By Bob Janssen

On Monday, October 29, 1945, I was called at 5:30 AM by the hotel staff and I was soon checked out of the hotel in Buffalo, NY. I took a bus to Central Terminal where I checked my suitcase and ate breakfast. I then took the 7:00 New York Central train to Suspension Bridge, NY, which is located on the north side of Niagara Falls. After wandering a bit, I found my way to the bridge and walked over the bridge to Niagara Falls, Ontario.

I paid a five cent toll on the American side and answered Customs questions when I reached the Canadian side. The bridge was over the rapids below the falls. In Canada, I then boarded a Cincinnati lightweight streetcar of the Niagara, St. Catharines & Toronto Railway and rode out to the end of the line at Montrose.

There was an excellent view of the Canadian Falls from the car. On the return, I got off where the interurban cars terminated. While I was waiting for an interurban, a number of passing tourists asked me questions. Finally a large old maroon interurban car pulled in and switched over. I boarded and noted we had a new operator in training on this trip. When we reached Thorold, I changed to a big steel interurban which was waiting on the branch. It soon pulled out and ran down the branch to Port Colborne.

Like the main, the branch was single track private right-of-way – 19 miles long. We had a two man crew and I soon made friends with them and got some transfers for my collection. This line paralleled the Welland Canal and on the return run a gunboat was moving parallel to us through the farmlands and under giant lift bridges. Back at Thorold station, I had a short wait until the same wooden interurban car, #130 I had come down on earlier came by on another trip and I rode it to St. Catharines. I walked down the main business street and had lunch in a very nice restaurant in a confectionary. I also bought some post cards before riding a roundtrip on the suburban trolley line to the lake port of Port Dalhousie, a quite scenic ride through farms and vineyards. At the end of the line was an amusement park, but it was closed for the season. Some steamboats that operated to Toronto were tied up there for the winter.



It was a nice warm day and I rode most of the Facer St. car line. This was a looping route that was confusing to a stranger and I got off by mistake before I had completed the entire loop. As it was now getting late, I gave up on properly completing the line, and took the 5:00 PM car back to Niagara Falls, Ont. I noted that the main line reminded me of the Lehigh Valley Transit and its 700s. I got off at the end of the line and took a city car back to the International Bridge, passed Customs, and with the help of a local policeman, found an IRC bus to Niagara Falls, NY. At a joint bus terminal there, I found a Flexible bus of the Grand Island Transit Corp., which left at 7:15 PM for Buffalo. I sat right behind the driver whom, I noted, really knew his

business. Arriving at the Buffalo Greyhound terminal at 8:00 PM, I ate some supper there before walking to Lafayette Square and taking a city bus out to Central Terminal to get my suitcase. Returning on the next bus, I got a room at the Lafayette Hotel, which was old but nice.

Tuesday, October 30, I was called at 6:00 AM and soon was ready and checked out and walked to the Greyhound Terminal where I put my bag in a locker and ate breakfast. Then I took a route 9 streetcar to the foot of Main Street and looked over the joint railroad station of the B&O-NKP-DL&W. Returning on a no. 9 streetcar, I rode through to its upper end in the morning school rush. I stayed on back to the Greyhound Depot, where I waited and got a no.12 streetcar and continued south to Main & Terrace and again stayed aboard back to the outer end where they wye'd around. Unlike most transit employees I've met in my travels who were quite pleasant and friendly, especially when you showed an interest in their work, I had an old grouch of an operator who went off to eat lunch and wouldn't chat, give sample transfers, or anything.

Back near the downtown end of the line, I saw a black Army band called the *Jungleers* forming a small parade. So I got off and followed them down to City Hall where photos were taken with the Mayor of Buffalo. I then left and in walking down to Terrace, passed the printing room of the Buffalo Evening News which at that time had the world's fastest press. So I stopped and watched through the window for a while. Then I continued to Terrace and took a no.13 streetcar to Kensington and back with an old motorman who was half shot and very outgoing friendly. I got off at Main & Terrace back downtown and walked around some and had a nice dinner in "Mac Soel's" on Main St. Then I rode a roundtrip on route 6 – Sycamore. Then I called at the general offices of the International Railway Company (the full name of the transit company at the time) and got a map of the system from a man who was nasty / nice and saw the prettiest girl I had seen in Buffalo at their telephone switchboard. Leaving there, I took a no.6 car back to Fillmore and then a 23-Fillmore car north bound. At the terminus, I got another 23 car back. This was their longest car line at the time.

I changed cars at the southern end and got back to Sycamore St. about dark. I then took a no.6 car back to Buffalo's shopping district and ate supper at a drugstore fountain. I then went to the Buffalo Theatre and saw Hedy Lamarr and Robert Walker in the movie *Her Highness and the Bellboy*. There was a second feature called *Dangerous Partners*, but I only saw a little of it as I had to leave at 9:00 PM to go to the Greyhound terminal to

retrieve my bag from the locker and take a bus out to Central Terminal.



I soon boarded Pennsylvania Railroad's *Dominion Express* which left at 10:00 PM for Baltimore. I slept all night. The train filled with soldiers at Harrisburg. I stayed awake after York and reached Baltimore at 8:43 AM. I took (route) 29, 13 and 19 streetcars to get home from Penn Station. Later that day, I went back into Baltimore for more streetcar riding. I must have had more energy back then than I do now.

Previous page: a view of NYC's Terrace station about 1945 gives us an idea of what that part of lower Main St. looked like. (Niagara Frontier Chapter, NRHS archives.)

Left: Perhaps Mr. Janssen stopped like this unidentified gentleman to peruse some magazines or other novelties at the information desk and clock in Buffalo's then still vibrant Central Terminal. Photo courtesy Central Terminal Restoration Corp.



Here is PRR 6941, train 574 Dominion Express at Tower 49A leaving NYC entering PRR after backing from Central Terminal. Mr Janssen noted his train was a night operation. Maybe the schedule later changed, as this daylight photo of June 22, 1952 attests.

*John Prophet,
Niagara Frontier
Chapter NRHS
archives*



A few years after Mr. Janssen's trip, the "plastic" buffalo seen here replaced the original 'Stuffy' buffalo in BCT's concourse. The above photo is circa 1950. Niagara Frontier Chapter, NRHS archives.

Editors note: the above article is an excerpt from what was originally a two part series. It appeared in the Interchange, January 2016, a publication of the Baltimore Chapter, NRHS. The photo illustrations used here have been added for this re-print.

FAREWELL TO THE PORTAGEVILLE TRESTLE - HELLO TO THE NEW PORTAGEVILLE BRIDGE

photos by John C. Dahl



The honors for what would be the last steam locomotive to cross the famed Portageville trestle in Letchworth State Park would fall to Nickel Plate Road No. 765 on its excursion trips in the summer of 2015.

Left: westbound
August 2, 2015.

For the past few years a new bridge just to the north of the old has been under construction across the gorge of the Genesee River and it has recently been opened to rail traffic. The old trestle seen in the background of the photo

below is rapidly being dismantled. The new arch style bridge built by Norfolk Southern who now owns and operates the former Erie RR mainline through the Southern Tier of New York was photographed on March 17, 2018. The new arch fits the scenic location well, and looks almost “like it has always been there”. Kudos to NS are in order for designing an ascetically beautiful replacement bridge. This represents the most substantial, single investment in rail infrastructure in Western New York in many decades.

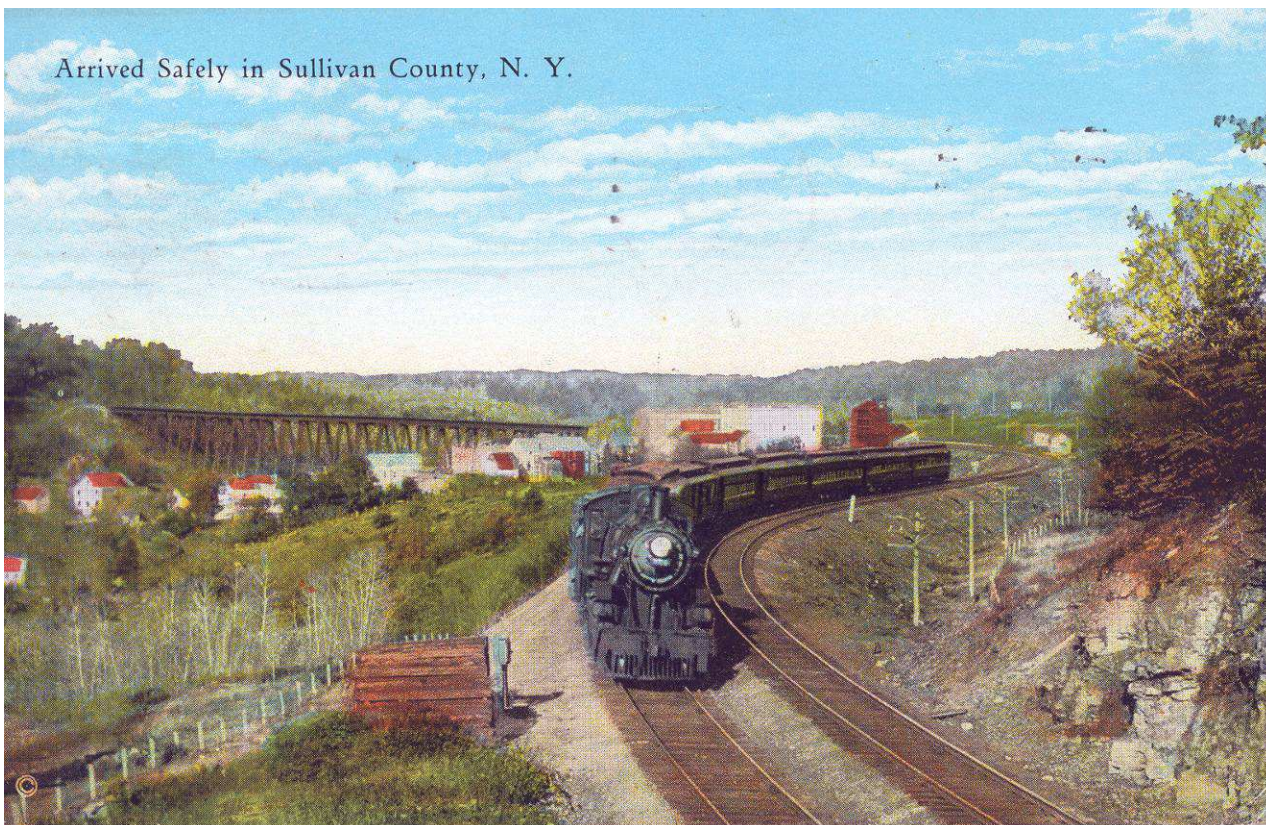


A CONNECTION TO THE OLD WOMAN

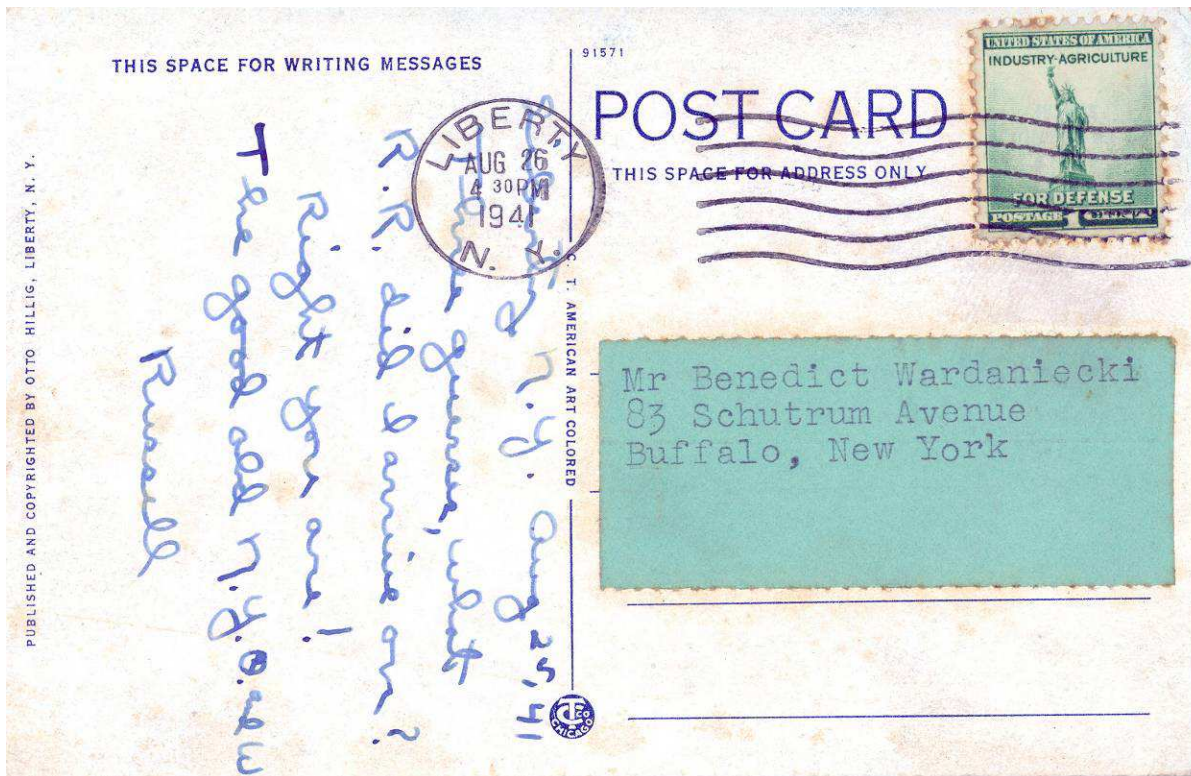
Most long time members of the Chapter have heard mention of the name of our founder, Mr. Russell Shapley. It was he who formally organized a group of like minded railfan friends in the late 1930's, first as the Buffalo Chapter of the Railroad Enthusiasts, and then becoming in 1942, the Buffalo Chapter, National Railway Historical Society.

At a recent antique postcard show, this neat image of a New York, Ontario & Western train turned up. The O&W of course has been abandoned now over 60 years; the last sad train running on March 29, 1957, closing out a colorful era in railroading. But even six decades after its demise, the line is still admired for its unique history, has been studied in multiple publications, and has one of the largest following of fans as any of the major eastern railroads. The NYO&W was affectionately called the "Old Woman" by railfans.

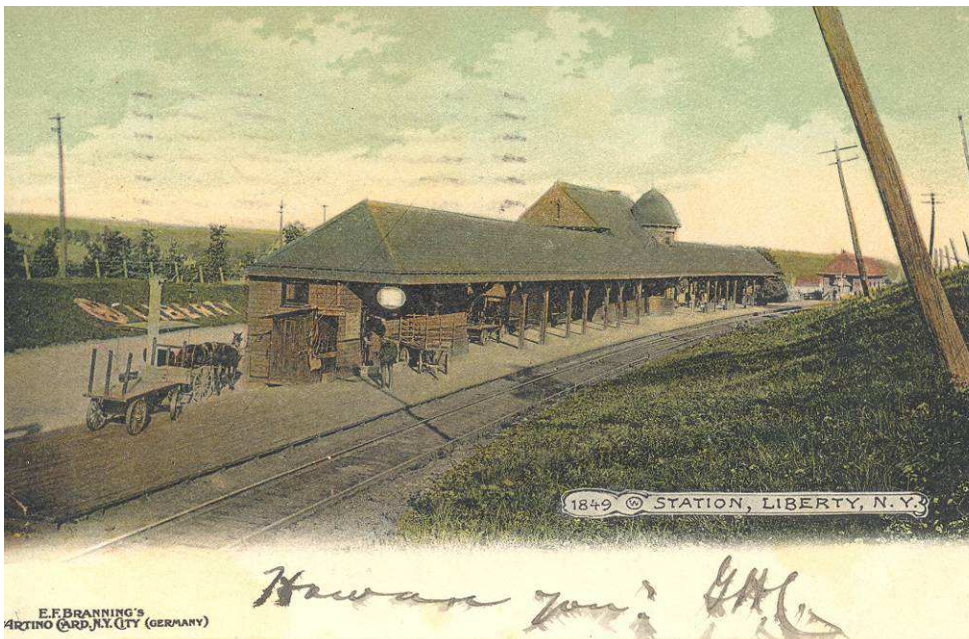
At the time I purchased the card, I made no connection to Chapter history. The message was quaint, the stamp a classic one cent "For Defense" and the postmark was good and clear. The illustration of an O&W passenger train rounding a neat curve with high trestle bridge in the background and pulled by one of the classic high-boiler 2-6-0 "Teakettle" engines, is what appealed to me. The card's sender, "Russell" could have been just about any old bloke who had the good fortune to have had a ride on the O&W when it was still alive. However, upon further reading of the message and the date, I decided to pull out the History of the Buffalo Chapter, 1938-1974, compiled by the now late Harold Ahlstrom. To my amazement, on page 31, is a copy of a letter Russell Shapley wrote to the membership. It is personally signed in his distinctive handwriting. And, the signatures on the postcard and in the history match in my opinion.



A CONNECTION TO THE OLD WOMAN - continued



Turn the page on its edge and compare the signature for yourself to your copy of the Chapter History, page 31.



What is known is that earlier in 1941, the Chapter (as RRE) sponsored an excursion over the New York Central and NYO&W. That trip operated on April 20th and its destination was Sidney, NY. Apparently, Mr. Shapley returned to the O&W for another trip in August of 1941, to Liberty, NY. Perhaps, he was on business. The use of a pre-typed addressee label is also interesting. I wonder if Mr. Shapley sent out a number of these cards to his many friends in the Chapter or to other business contacts. The "Old Woman" continues to charm us all. – JCD



78th ANNUAL BANQUET celebrated March 24, 2018



A very cool image in icing of the Chapter's EL2 tower was featured on the cake at our annual banquet. Our usual venue at Ilio DiPaolo's in Blasdell once again provided a delicious meal and along with the silent auction and program featuring digitized films by the late Jim Van Brocklin was a great success. An unplanned but very special bonus was when Fred Furminger offered to give some additional narration to the films, as he and Jim often traveled together. Some of the films dated to these trips. Al Leteste added period background music to the films, this adding a sparkle of liveliness to the scenes Jim had recorded over 60 years ago.



25 Year NRHS member Richard Eastman (left) receives his pin and certificate from President Ball. Congratulations Richard on 25 Years of membership!

And a large "Thank You" to the banquet committee, Nancy & Bob Andrycha, Becky Gerstung, Jim Ball & Bob Korthals is in order for organizing the highly successful event. *Photos by Greg Gerstung.*

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

On **Thursday, April 19th**, Chapter member Mark Lewandowski Jr. will present a slide show at the Niagara branch of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, 280 Porter Ave, Buffalo, NY. Mark will showcase historic and contemporary views of railroading, all across America, including scenes in Buffalo & Western New York. Mark is a member of several local rail history groups, in addition to the Central Terminal Restoration Corp. The show starts at 6:00 PM. Free and open to the public.



For our regular May meeting, part 1 of Devan Lawton's program, entitled "**ALCOS I HAVE KNOWN**" will encompass Alco/GE and ALCO power covering various parts of the US and Canada--1971 to recent times. If you like classic diesels, this will be a show **not to be missed, Friday May 11.**

The day after Devan's show, our **Spring Chiavetta Chicken BBQ** will be held at the station, **Saturday May 12**, 111 Oliver St. North Tonawanda. Dinners ready 11:30 AM, Tickets: \$10 presale, \$11 at the door, Drive In, Take Out. **Please help support this vital Chapter fundraiser. Thanks!**

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- APR 13 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. Railfanning Cajon Pass by Tony Schill.
- APR 19 Railroads all across America will be featured in a slide show by Mark Lewandowski Jr. Historic and contemporary photos, including local material of Buffalo and Western New York, will be seen at the Niagara branch of the Buffalo & Erie County public library, 280 Porter Ave, Buffalo, NY. The show starts at 6:00 PM. Free and open to the public.
- MAY 11 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. Program by Devan Lawton, "ALCOS I HAVE KNOWN", Part 1.
- MAY 12 Chiavetta Chicken BBQ at the station, 111 Oliver St. North Tonawanda. Dinners ready 11:30 AM, \$10 presale, \$11 at the door. Drive In, Take Out.
Please help support this vital Chapter fundraiser. Thank You!

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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