

*Empire State Express*



**March 2020**

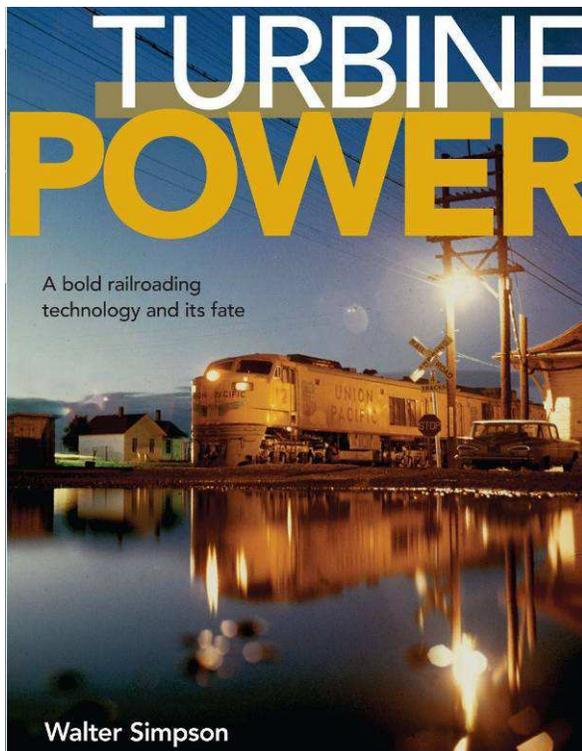
PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

The meeting of the Chapter will be held on Friday, March 13, 2020 at 7:00 PM at the Degraff Community Center, 139 Division St., North Tonawanda, NY.

## TURBINE LOCOMOTIVES

At our March meeting, member Walter Simpson will discuss steam and gas turbine locomotives and trains. His talk will feature photographs and other illustrations from his new book, *Turbine Power: A Bold Railroading Technology and Its Fate* (Kalmbach Media 2020).



*Turbine Power* is the first book to bring together technical information and analysis about all the various American railroad steam and gas turbine motive power projects during the 1939-2003 period. Tom Dixon, founder and chief historian of the Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society, describes Walter's *Turbine Power* as "by far the best thing that has been done on this subject." In a review published in the current COHS newsletter, Dixon concludes, "I simply can't say enough good about the appearance, content, and tenor of the book."

Walter says he was drawn to turbine-powered locomotives because he found them technologically outrageous, weird, and clever. His presentation will cover UP's early steam turbine electric locomotives, PRR's S2, C&O's M-1, N&W's Jawn Henry, UP's giant fuel-oil burning "Big Blow" gas turbines, Westinghouse's "Blue Goose," UP's coal-fired

gas turbine, Amtrak Turboliners and others you may not have heard of.

Walter will bring a few copies of his book to sign and sell to anyone interested. This promises to be a very interesting evening you won't want to miss.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



According to urban legend, Wednesday is Hump Day, as in we are over the hump and heading down hill to the weekend. Following this logic, then should February not be called Hump Month? I hope we are over the hump now and headed to spring.

We have been working on expanding the physical space for the Archives, but we also need to take that next step in inventorying the contents as well. Bruce Becker located and has now installed an Archive Inventory Program on the computer at the Museum. This program is an open source (meaning we don't have to pay for using it) program and it was written for exactly what we want to do. With this in place we can build on the work that Hal Douglass has been doing for several years. The two projects will work side by side until Hal is finished. There is a lot of data entry to be done to get to where we want to be, but this is a great first step.

I am pleased to announce that we have entered into an agreement with the executor of the Howard W. Ameling estate for the privilege of becoming the repository for a portion of his photo collection. Howard was a well-known railroad photographer of the transition era. His work is very familiar, even legendary, to fans of the Nickel Plate Road.

Every year as we approach the "Tourist Season" we look at the Museum exhibits and refresh or tweak or even outright replace some of them. We have had two or three displays set up on local shortlines. These include the Buffalo Creek, the Niagara Junction and the Tonawanda Island Railroad. The Tonawanda Island display was put away to make room for a Railway Express exhibit, but that turned out need a lot of development work and was put on hold. Becky will re-establish the Tonawanda Island Display and we will begin work on a South Buffalo Railway exhibit to complete the "Local Shortlines" theme. Make plans to come and see these.

The Chapter was set up at the WNYRHS train show at the Fairgrounds over the weekend of February 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to Becky and Greg, Bruce, Steve, Dennis and Al for their help. Besides the sales of calendars, books and magazines, it is great exposure to the public. It's also a great networking event.

In the event that we have to cancel the meeting due to the weather, the first place to look is Channel 2 on your TV. We will ask the other stations to carry it, but we are registered with Channel 2. We will also ask the usual radio stations as well; they being Odies 104 FM and WGR 550AM and WYRK 106.5FM. We usually try to make the decision soon enough to make the 5 PM broadcasts.

I am hopeful that this will be the last time this season that I need to include the previous paragraph in this column. Now, you did send in your reservation for the 80th Annual banquet didn't you? If not, please do it now. Nancy is waiting.

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

*Jim Ball*

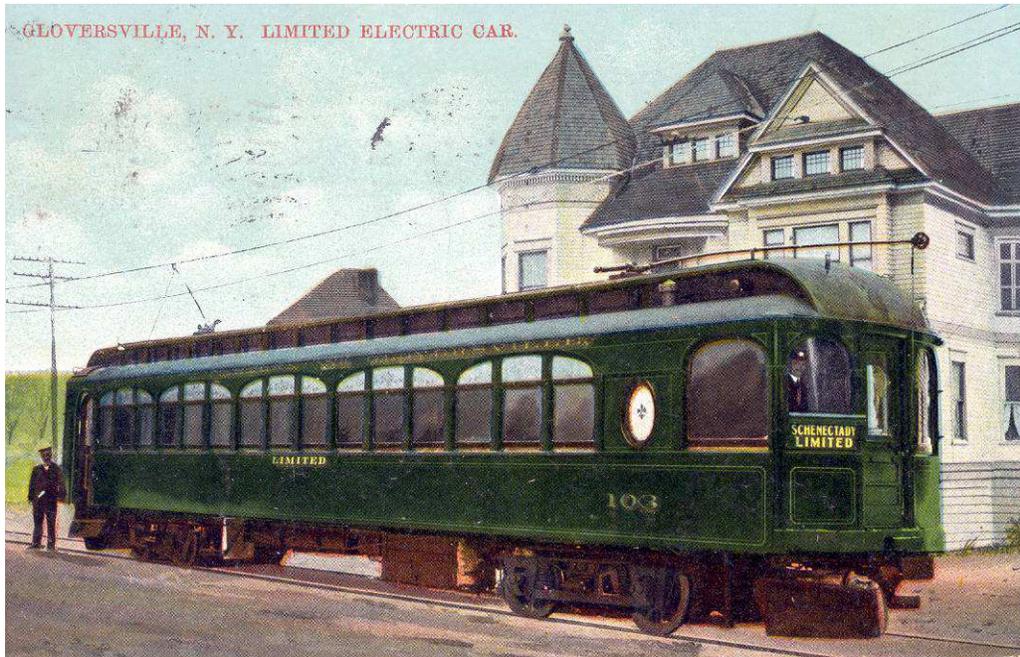
## “SCENE ON THE LINE” – NEW ACELA UNITS ON WAY TO TEST TRACK



Amtrak’s new second generation Acela trainsets which will operate on the Northeast Corridor are under construction / assembly at Alstom in Hornell, NY. This set moved west through Buffalo on its way to the Federal DOT test track facility in Colorado on President’s Day, February 17, 2020. Top: South Park Ave, Buffalo. Bottom, Lake View Road. Both photos by Bob Andrycha.

## INTERURBAN INTERLUDE

In the Mohawk Valley, west of Albany, lies the small city of Fonda. A century and more ago, a once upon a timetable steam railroad, the Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville opened a Schenectady-Gloversville electric division just after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The “Limited” as it was known, had its passenger accommodations built by the St. Louis Car Company, and its luxuriously appointed interiors included a paneled and mirrored smoking room for the gentlemen. It was the very apex of those pre First World War I years, when the railways, steam and electric, carried just about everything that moved by land. Pausing here in Gloversville with a Victorian era mansion behind, car 103 gives us a glimpse of the well ordered, modern world portrayed in the all too brief age we call the “Interurban Interlude”. - JCD



## “PACEMAKER MAKES HASTE” OF AN OVERNIGHT JOURNEY



Even on an overnight 'coach train' New York Central offered a level of comfort and class unsurpassed on other railroads. Train nos. 1 & 2 were among the first to receive a matching set of all new Budd equipment in 1948. Departing daily mid-afternoon from New York as #1 westbound and Chicago as #2 eastbound all seats were reserved. Morning arrivals and a schedule of 17 hours appealed to the traveling public. In 1949, the schedule was speeded up to just 16 hours and 20 minutes. In 1950, the train was combined with the all Pullman *Advance Commodore Vanderbilt*, although no mention of this was made in public timetables. Although one train, each had its own schedule listed side by side in the timetable! By the mid 1950's, the *Advance Commodore Vanderbilt* was dropped with its sleeping cars added to the *Pacemaker*. Still, the train retained its appeal for "low-cost luxury" as a lounge car and "thrift grill" car had been added. By the end of the decade Central had further consolidated and the downsizing of services resulted in the *Pacemaker* losing its observation car west of Buffalo. In 1958 #1 had been dropped from Form 1001 and the eastbound was combined with the *5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Special* in Cleveland.

In 1948 it was a different world, and what would we travelers of today give to have such luxury available...an expertly cooked, delicious dining car dinner and breakfast the next morning, a spacious reclining seat on an economy minded, all weather safe overnight train that was fast indeed. Get out of the way Southwest... I'm going coach on the *Pacemaker*! -JCD



## ON THE TRACK AHEAD

Looking ahead to April, Tony Schill returns with “Two More Checked Off the Bucket List” his latest overseas excursion this past September, this time to Bulgaria in Eastern Europe.

## CONTENT NEEDED FOR THE EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS

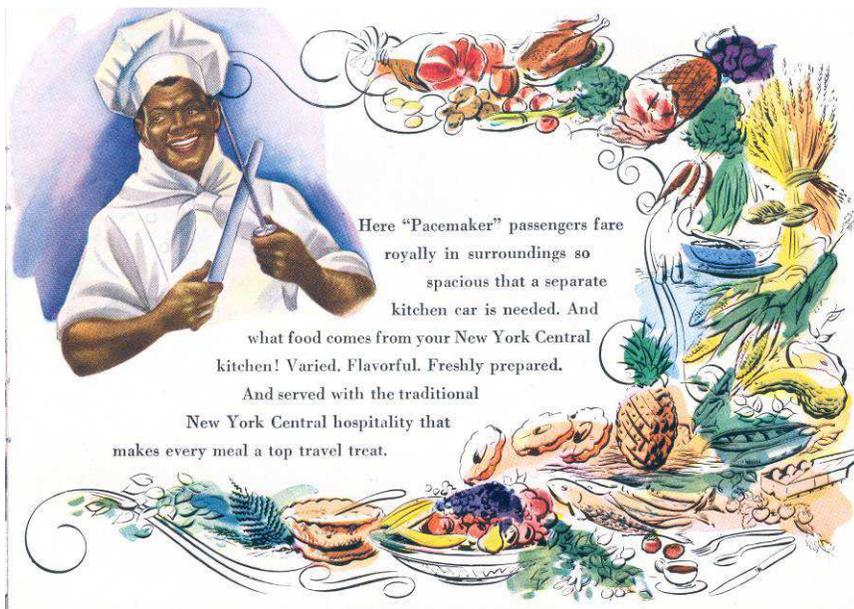
Your editor is always on the lookout for publishable material for the ESX. Lately, we have had a dearth of submissions. Without much content to draw upon, we have to reduce the number of pages in the monthly printing. Can you write about some aspect of railroading, relate anecdotal stories of working on the line if you were a railroader? Do you have some historic photos you would like to share? We can use all those and more in the pages of the Empire State Express. Contact the editor with any questions. The email is [newsletter@nfcnrhs.com](mailto:newsletter@nfcnrhs.com)

## LAST CALL FOR DINNER - 80<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BANQUET SATURDAY MARCH 21



New York Central was famous for its great passenger trains and the dining car services on these trains was a large part of that persona. This will be the theme of our program at the 80<sup>th</sup> annual banquet, Join us Saturday, March 21, 2020 at Ilio di Paolo's restaurant on South Park Avenue, Blasdell. Dining room opens 11:30 AM, dinner served at 12:30 PM. Mr. Jerry Bertoldo will relate the story of New York Central's dining car services, focusing on Buffalo, which was a major commissary point for the Great Steel Fleet. The flyer with all details

and reservation coupon is included in this issue of the ESX. As the steward says....*THIS IS YOUR LAST CALL FOR DINNER* .....



Here "Pacemaker" passengers fare royally in surroundings so spacious that a separate kitchen car is needed. And what food comes from your New York Central kitchen! Varied. Flavorful. Freshly prepared. And served with the traditional New York Central hospitality that makes every meal a top travel treat.

*Artwork from a New York Central brochure, issued in 1948*



### **Have you missed me?**

As winter turns to spring, our thoughts naturally migrate to getting out of doors again, perhaps to trackside for a day. Why, wouldn't it be great to spend a sunny day among the hills and lakes east of Buffalo along the right of way of the Lehigh Valley Railroad?

Forty years and more have now passed since the "Route of the Black Diamond" disappeared as a railroad, and our landscape is that much the poorer for this loss. Those days of observing a long merchandise train on the Valley have ended. We can only look back with fondness at an all too brief period when strings of boxcars...the colorful as well as the bland, the banged up hoppers of coal and gravel, inky black tank cars and numerous piggy-back flats trailed some now beloved Alco diesels chanting up a storm as they highballed. The caboose was like dessert at the end of a meal...you always looked forward to it and catching a wave from those crew on board who seemed to us to be "privileged" to get such a ride.

Spring returns again, the sun will shine, greenery and foliage on trees will blossom anew and a robin's song will fill our ears with delightful music. The Earth will awaken from winter. But surely we dearly miss our old friend, the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The spring-day-train of now is just not the same any more without the likes of caboose "95011" bringing up the markers. -JCD

*Artwork from a greeting card / watercolor by James Mann*

## CHAPTER CALENDAR

- MAR 13 Regular meeting at Degraff Community Center, 7 PM Turbine Locomotives by Walter Simpson.
- MAR 21 80<sup>th</sup> Annual banquet March 21, Ilio Di Paolo's, doors open 11:30 AM, dinner served 12:30 PM. New York Central's Dining Car Service by Mr. Jerry Bertoldo
- APR 10 Tony Schill returns with "Two More Checked Off the Bucket List" his latest overseas excursion to Bulgaria and Eastern Europe.

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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 NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.  
 POST OFFICE BOX 1043  
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