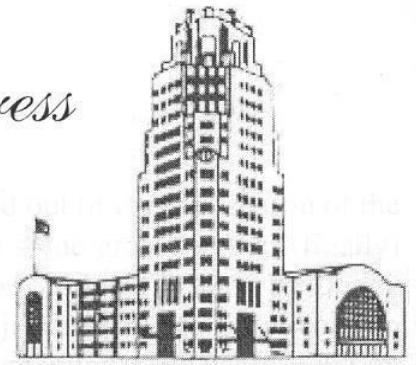


Empire State Express



October 2021

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

The meeting of the Chapter FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2021 HAS BEEN CANCELLED BECAUSE OF LOSS OF OUR NORTH TONAWANDA MEETING LOCATION. EFFORTS ARE IN PROGRESS TO SECURE A NEW LOCATION. WE HOPE TO BE BACK 'ON TRACK' IN NOVEMBER AT A NEW LOCATION.

PLEASE REFER TO THE CHAPTER WEB SITE AND/OR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR THE LATEST UPDATE. Our apologies to Duncan Richards who had planned an evening of great entertainment covering the Salt Trains around Retsoff, NY. We will reschedule Duncan's program as soon as possible.



With brilliant Autumn foliage as a backdrop, on October 26, 2009 Western Maryland No. 734 rounds Helmstetter's Curve west of Cumberland, Maryland on the point of a railfan photo freight charter excursion. John C. Dahl photo.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Wow, wasn't Septembers program just incredible?! I was spellbound by Aaron Heverin's presentation on John M. Prophet. We had forty five people at the meeting. I'm hoping that there is a follow-up to that somewhere down the line. This month we were to expecting see the work of noted photographer Duncan Richards. However, the meeting room that we so long enjoyed, is no longer available to us. The Board elected to cancel the October meeting since we did not find a suitable venue. Look carefully for information as to where the next meeting will be and when on our website and Facebook pages. Tony Schill will bring us more Pennsy in Pittsburgh in November. Those of you who have something to show the rest of us, be ready for December. We will do Members Night again.

As of this writing we are still waiting for a date for the Historic Marker unveiling at Midway Park in Chautauqua county. The markers have arrived so stay tuned.

The Chapter Annual Banquet has been rescheduled to March 19, 2022. We were nowhere near ready this year with covid problems and it always was in the spring. The Board and the Banquet Committee felt that it was much better to do this well than hurry and be disappointed with it. It will still be mid day and still at Ilio Di Paolos.

We are planning on participating in the WNYRHS show at the Fairgrounds on November 20th & 21st. We have a lot of things to sell. Help loading things at the Museum and carrying them in at the Fairgrounds would be much appreciated.

We are also planning on participating in Winterwalk this December 4th. Becky will be decorating the station and she could always use help.

I always feel that I am "short changing" all of you with my report on restoration at the meeting. There is a great deal of work and progress happening at the Museum. Unfortunately, there really isn't enough time to devote to a thorough report at the monthly meeting. The Editor has graciously allowed me an extra page this month to fix that. I hope that it's enough.

We have no less than six major projects working (or trying to work) at Oliver Street. This is the rundown on them beginning with the Loading Dock rebuild. The dock was added to the station sometime in the 1950s to allow for the unloading of automobiles from boxcars. The underlying structure is sound, but the decking needs to be replaced. The last estimate for that was over \$6,000.00. This will have to wait until the price of lumber comes down and we have the money to buy it. We will continue to patch it until then.

We have five pieces of railroad equipment on the property. Our Erie caboose, C348, was last worked on in 2011. The Erie logo decals have come off and there are a couple of spots that need touching up. Altogether it's in good condition. Our Plymouth locomotive was painted many years ago and needs a lot of body work, windows and to have its wheels "trued". The motor was being reassembled by Steve Frey. We asked him to do some other things, so the motor waits. The same is true of our Tonawanda Island locomotive. It is operable, but it needs body work and paint. We also have a former PRR box car (in Conrail paint). It's in fair condition, but the day will come when we have fix it or lose it. The bright spot in this category is the New York Central/PC/CR caboose number 21005. Work has been proceeding on our jade green girl for several years. Currently Randy Bugucki is working on the roof. That phase is currently about ten percent completed but it is ongoing. The sad thing about equipment that sits outside is that Mother Nature is relentless. Every day the sun,

MESSAGE – continued

the wind, the rain, and pollution degrade our collection. Case in point, the first restoration of C348 lasted only ten years. We then invested 350 person hours into redoing it and we can see the “weathering” that is happening again.

In 2020, as we were having the concrete work done for the ADA project, we uncovered another problem. The sewer was plugged. That could have been a disaster. We were very fortunate to get it taken care of at an extremely reasonable cost. The concrete work not only provided the base for the lift, but a solid walkway all the way to the south end stairs. The contractor “finished” it to match the original sidewalk that was there.

On to good news, the ADA Compliance Project is nearing completion. The concrete work is complete, the lift is installed and operational. The bathroom, formerly the men’s room, needs only to have the sink installed to be complete. We have the sink and the hardware and connectors to do it. We just need to finish the work, hopefully by the end of the year.

More good news, the Archive Room Expansion project has made great progress this year. Some unexpected sources of funding and the relaxation of the Covid 19 restrictions have allowed work to progress. Backing up to 2019, we had a major upgrade done to the electric service for the Museum. This included a new service, a new breaker box which corrected a defect that we had been living with for years, new overhead lines and some drops for additional plugs and lights. This provided feeders for the electrical plugs and lights for the new Archive space. We also closed in Door #4 and made a solid wall out of it. Door # 5 was then rehabbed to be operational. That gave us a working door that opened into the full width of the building. The fireproof underfloor was completed in July and the metal framing is proceeding weekly. I hope there was room for Gregs pictures; he has been documenting the progress weekly. One door is installed, and the ceiling joists are going in. Once the framing is complete, the electrician will return and complete his work. Then we insulate (pending funding to buy it) and drywall. If you will recall, we have the drywall on site. I would not want to predict a completion date, but I think I see a light somewhere down the track....

Speaking of track, we have a lot of deferred maintenance to catch up on for the track on the property. This keeps getting put off because we don’t run on it. There is always something more urgent to do first. The cost for doing the track work is unknown, any previous estimates are no longer relevant.

So that brings us to EL-2. It may not seem like anything has happened there recently, but we are making new interior windows for it. Since 2000 we have invested over \$20,000 in the tower. If we had had to pay for all the labor that was invested in it, that figure might well be double or more. We began with the roof, later we had the students from the Iroquois Job Corps. repoint all the brick, completing that in July of 2018. We hired their instructors to rebuild the concrete corners and later, the chimney. We used grant money to enclose the upper floor in storm windows and do some interior work. We had the opening for the cables in the north wall bricked in. The building, now 110 years old, has been secured, stabilized and preserved for generations to come. There is still a lot to be done but work will continue as resources are available.

Thanks to Stephen Trinder for his work as Docent. Stephen volunteered to greet visitors and conduct tours so that the rest of us could work in the north end. My apologies for having spelled his name wrong previously.

Saturday work sessions and Museum Operations will continue as is practical.

So, with all that, I’m looking forward to seeing you folks when we have a meeting again.

Jim Ball

“SCENE” ON THE LINE - “Babbling Brook” still rolls on the Water Level Route



Babbling Brook, a Budd built five bedroom sleeper / observation lounge car ordered in December 1945 to plan 9506 and builder lot 9664-023 but not delivered until June 1949 for New York Central's *New England States* was one of four identical cars, two of which saw service on this premier streamlined train between Boston and Chicago. It is now in private car service, seen here on August 30, 2021. The *New England States* was among the several of the "Great Steel Fleet" of overnight services which passed through Buffalo's Central Terminal in the glory years. At 12 Midnight in June 1950 the train's schedule would place it about 20 minutes west of Buffalo, just 10 minutes behind the westbound Commodore Vanderbilt! The eastbound *New England States* would have been about 15 minutes east of Buffalo. Sister cars were also named; *Bonnie Brook*, *Fall Brook* and *Plum Brook*. The last two of these were used on the *Ohio State Limited*. Car data source: "New York Central's Great Steel Fleet 1948-1967" by Geoffrey H. Dougherty, TLC Publishing, 1995.

Our photographer, Larry Justina, writes: "Taken from Seneca St bridge – the eastbound Amtrak Maple Leaf traverses a slight upgrade paralleling the Compromise track toward Central Terminal. What I find most interesting is the current setting; which looks like you are out in the country - but you are close to downtown - and during the 50s and 60s, this was a populated residential and industrial urban area! There were at least seven or eight tracks here; sidings for the factories, the main line of the mighty NYC heading west from Central Terminal, the Niagara branch heading to Exchange St station and to the Falls (and to the MC connection at Black Rock) - and today, we have six Amtrak trains and a few CSX freights on the Compromise bypass. I miss the old days."

REMINISCENT OF THE L.V. R. R.

The early days of the Lehigh Valley Railroad were days of tribulation. There was lack of encouragement and lack of financial help. Skepticism of the feasibility of the project ruled in Lehigh Valley communities, and both skepticism and ridicule were meted out to its projectors by outside critics. Expressions of good will and wishes for success were not entirely absent, but the helping hand was withheld. It was a cave somewhat parallel to that of Dr. Johnson and his dictionary, and it recalls his famous reply to Lord Chesterfield, who was profuse with proffers of encouragement and aid when the work was projected, but left the author to struggle alone through the years of toil and penury necessary to the completion of the work.

Then he came forward to bask in its success through a dedication as its patron, and Dr. Johnson, in his letter declining the honor, administered the just and dignified rebuke: "Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern of man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help?"

"The Lord helps them that help themselves," was the main standby of the pioneers of the L. V. R. R.

The original preliminary survey for a railroad in the Lehigh Valley was made by Roswell B. Mason, of New York, for a number of citizens of the State of New Jersey, who procured a charter for the line. But the project proved too formidable for them and they abandoned it. Later, this charter was secured by Asa Packer, who had an unwavering faith in the resources of the Lehigh Valley, the inflexible determination to utilize them. His foresight and faith in the enterprise in the face of difficulties that would have appalled most men, were backed by splendid courage and a tireless energy, which won victory for him and the faithful band of brave spirits who cooperated with him.

The scanty and almost the only financial aid they obtained was from Commodore Stockton and William H. Gatzmer, of the Camden and Amboy Railroad, and from the Central R. R. of N. J., and this through pledging stock of the Lehigh Valley line at a liberal discount.

Asa Packer and the Chief Engineer Robert H. Sayre, were the active powers of the road. Upon their shoulders rested the responsibility and work. The two represented the functions of all the departments that make up a railway organization of today; the one, the executive and financing departments, the other, the construction and operating departments. The little, as well as the big things, demanded their personal attention, exacting of them eternal vigilance.

The original time schedule here reproduced is eloquent of this and an interesting study. It is in the handwriting of the Chief Engineer, written with a quill pen, and its erasures and changes say as plainly as words that here is a busy man, with all the details of arranging a first passenger service on his hands, who has stolen some odd minutes to give to the preparation of an off-hand schedule.

Spanish coin was current at that time, the sixpence or fippenny bit, the shilling or 'leven penny bit, etc., hence the fractional rate for tickets. The 68 3/4 cents fare from Allentown to Bethlehem is, of course, an error, the MS. showing it 18, the curve of the six having been blurred by a hasty swipe of the thumb, no doubt emphasized by an original remark or two. But the camera in reproducing cannot tell a lie.

This schedule tells of the responsibilities crowded upon one hand, and it also suggests some briefs of the road prior to and up to the time of its being opened for business. Any one can read between the lines that there were difficulties to be met and overcome that would have broken the spirit of ordinary men.

About the middle of May, 1855, some progress had been made at track laying westward from South Easton, but the work was hampered because of the lack of motive power. Arrangements were then effected with the Central Railroad of New Jersey for the use of one of their lighter engines, named "General Wall."

There were also hired from this company one second-class passenger car, one flat car and ten gravel cars. These had to be transported from Phillipsburg to the end of the track in South Easton. At the first move of the "General Wall" toward South Easton by boat it was upset into the Morris Canal basin. This meagre equipment was all there was to depend upon for distribution of material and track ballasting.

It took about ten days to get "General Wall" and the cars on the track in South Easton and to complete the water tank. Then, toward the end of May, the work of ballasting was begun and rushed. On June 6th the construction train way run as far west as Bethlehem. On June 7th the passenger car and flat car were hauled over on the public road from Phillipsburg to South Easton, and on the 9th a train left South Easton equipped with a second-class passenger car and a flat car with unplanned board seats for its virgin excursion.

REMINISCENT - continued Among its guests were Judge Asa Packer, Judge James M. Porter, Andrew H. Reeder, Matthew Hale Jones, John N. Hutchinson, Alexander Brown, Dr. Edward Swift, David Barnet, John Davis and other citizens of Easton, with employees of the road, all in high spirits as this, the first express of the Lehigh Valley, moved westward to Bethlehem, its first stop. Here they were met by all Bethlehem, and a procession was formed which marched to headquarters without music, except in their hearts. The Chief Engineer has been heard to say that his heart was fuller of proud satisfaction than it ever was before or since. The Eastonians were welcomed with expressions of delight, and substantial comforts by the Bethlehemites, a large contingent of whom continued with the excursionists to Allentown, where like expressions of delight, with good cheer, met the visiting party. And so, on the 9th day of June, 1855, the three principal boroughs of the Lehigh Valley were joined with bands of iron, which, in the course of years, have become bands of steel stretching from the metropolis to the Great Lakes.

On the 18th of June, 1855, two passenger trains daily each way, went into operation between South Easton and Allentown. It required hustling to do this, as the services of the road's only locomotive, the busy little "General Wall," was available only part of the time, there being construction work as necessary for it to do in the intervals. This first passenger train equipment was made up of the second-class passenger car and the flat car. The latter was used to carry the overflow of passengers and the express packages from New York and Philadelphia, contracts for said service having been made with A. D. Hope, of New York, and Howard & Co., of Philadelphia.

Mr. John Smylie was Superintendent of the Howard Express Company, and this company subsequently built the temporary passenger and freight houses and carried all the freight, except coal and iron, under a contract with the Railroad Company, for a number of years. Edward Young, of Boston, was the first passenger conductor. The development of traffic was remarkable, and it was a surprise where all of the passengers came from. A two horse hack had been ample to carry all the travel between Easton and Allentown, and now frequently there was not standing room on the train.

Receipts from passengers the first week averaged about \$40 per day, and for the second week \$80 per day. The receipts of the first three months of 1855 - October and December inclusive - were \$26,317.95; the expenses, \$23,756.33, leaving a profit of \$2,781.62. Passengers from the C.R. R. of N. J. and the Bel.-Del. Railroads were wagoned from Philipsburg to South Easton by reason of the unfinished condition of the railroad between those two towns.

Included in this stretch was "Porter's Pond," just west of the L. V.'s present baggage room. The bottom of this pond was four or five feet below the surface of the Lehigh river and it had to be filled. The heavy rock cutting between the present passenger station and the Delaware River was twenty-two feet deeper than it now is, and the Delaware River bridge, three spans of which had to be raised, without false work in the river, had been much delayed in erection by freshets.

Instead of false work, the novel use of wire cables was resorted to. This bridge, by the way was a unique structure, with two tracks on top connecting with the Central Railroad of New Jersey and the Morris Canal, and one track on the bottom chords connecting with the Belvidere-Delaware Railroad, which ran at right angles to the Central and twenty-two feet below it. In other words, the bridge was so constructed as to permit the L.V.R.R. to connect with two roads running at early right angles to each other, and with a difference in elevation of more than twenty feet.

Rude as were the facilities afforded the traveling community, they were such an improvement on those of a month previous that they were gladly availed of.

On the morning of July 17th, 1855 the Chief Engineer left Mauch Chunk by carriage for Allentown, having as a companion Mrs. Asa Packer, who expected to take the train at Allentown for Easton. No train came, but after a wait of two hours, word came by a messenger - no telegraph on L. V. until that the road's only engine, the "General Wall," lay on the track at Freemansburg with a broken driving axle.

Mrs. Packer was taken to Bethlehem and put in charge of Conductor Young to drive her to Easton. The Chief went to the scene of the wreck, where, with the assistance of the engineer, fireman, a few laborers, and the tools on the engine, it was jacked up, the broken axle, with a driving wheel on each piece, was loaded onto a farm wagon and started for Phillipsburg to catch the 6 A.M. train for Elizabethport. The Chief walked behind,

REMINISCENT – continued

kept team moving, made the train, and landed with the pieces of the wreck at the shops of the Central Railroad about 9 o'clock A. M.

John O. Stearns, Superintendent of the road, lent a willing hand, sent his master mechanic to New York for the iron for a new axle, the work was put through the shop with expedition, and was returned to Phillipsburg by the noon train on Friday, and hauled by wagon to Freemansburg, the machine put together, and steam raised before midnight, and the engine backed down to South Easton ready to take its train out on Saturday morning, thereby causing great rejoicing.

An interruption to the trains of those days created more inconvenience and annoyance to travelers than was ever felt before in this region. Everything that had wheels was sought for and pressed into service, and still the cry was, "Give us the cars."

On August 34, the false work under the 183 foot span of the Delaware bridge was carried out by high water. The first freight engine of the L.V., the "J. M. Porter," was received on August 4 from the builders, Baldwin & Co., by boat from Philadelphia. On August 21st, a locomotive and flat belonging to the Beaver Railroad Co., were run from Mauch Chunk to Lehigh Gap and return.

Track laying was begun on the Delaware bridge on August 27th, and the engine, "J. M. Porter," was put on passenger duty between South Easton and Allentown, and the "Gen. Wall" relegated to gravel train duty, being no longer fit for the passenger service.

On August 29th an engine and car were run to Mauch Chunk from South Easton, having to wait a short time north of Slatington to complete the track. They arrived at Mauch Chunk at 10 P.M. On September 8th, track laying on the Delaware bridge was completed and the engine "Lehigh," of the Central R. R. of N. J., crossed into Pennsylvania. A short piece of track was yet to be laid between the rock cut and South Easton.

On September 12th, the track being completed, a train was run through to Mauch Chunk, which, leaving there the next day at 8.30 A. M., arrived at Easton at 11.30 A. M., thereafter leaving Easton at noon for Mauch Chunk. The first coal train over the L. V. arrived at Easton on September 15th, and passed on into New Jersey.

On September 19th, the L. V. R. R. Board of Directors met at the office of President James M. Porter in Easton, and resolved to accept the road from the contractor, Asa Packer, subject to the completion of some unfinished details, 'but to take possession of the road and such equipment as the contractor had purchased.

At this Board Meeting, Mr. R. H. Sayre, who had been employed by Mr. Packer as Chief Engineer of Construction, with the approval of the Board, was elected General Superintendent and Chief Engineer of the Company. A week was taken to arrange with the Central R. R. of N. J. and the Bel.-Del. R. R. for connections between Mauch Chunk and New York and Philadelphia. A through service between the L. V. R.R. and the Central R. R. of N. J. and connecting service with the Bel.-Del. R. R. was established, and on Sunday, September 30th, 1855, a passenger train of the Central road, consisting of a locomotive, a baggage car and two passenger cars, in charge of Conductor Captain Hill, reached Mauch Chunk to take the 4.30 A. M. train through to Elizabethport. James I. Blakeslee was the L. V. conductor. John Alpaugh and Peter Decamp were the engineers of the Central who ran the first trains in connection with this joint arrangement between the two roads. Mr. Alpaugh is still in the employ of the Central Railroad.

Mr. H. P. Baldwin, afterwards General Passenger Agent of the C. R. R. of N. J., was the conductor of the corresponding west and north bound train. His train made its first through trip on October 1st, arriving at Mauch Chunk at 1.30 P.M. Conductors Hill and Baldwin did not collect the tickets on the L. V. end of the route, their duty being to take care of their trains.

The foregoing concerns mainly the opening of the line to business. In a subsequent issue will be published briefs of the prior or construction period. of the L.V. R.R. and those connected with it, very few of whom are living at the present time.

Editors note: The above originally appeared in the Black Diamond Express Magazine, April, 1904

It was submitted to the Empire State Express by Mr. Richard Palmer of Syracuse, NY. Our thanks for this most interesting piece of LVRR lore.

SCENE ON THE LINE – about 40 Years Ago!
Salt Train Photos by Duncan Richards



D&H C424m 453 making the turn from the ex Erie Attica Branch onto the former DL&W main at North Alexander, NY with GV1 March 1982



D&H U23B 2312 shoving empties into the yard at Retsof NY across RT 36 with the GNWR (Genesee & Wyoming RR) metal marker on the crossing post. August 1978

LOCAL FALL FOLIAGE EXCURSION TRAINS



New York & Lake Erie will offer fall foliage trains from late September thru early November. See online at <https://nylerailroad.com/schedule> for details.

New York & Lake Erie Alco FPA 6758 is on the point at Gowanda NY, October 17, 2020 Ahead: the foliage glories of autumn in rural Cattaraugus county. Photo by John C. Dahl

Arcade & Attica will host several trips. Please see <https://www.aarailroad.com/train-rides/fall-foliage/> for details.

Medina RR Museum will have several excursion trains. See <https://www.medinarailroadmuseum.org> for details.

LAST RUNS

Old Timer's will recognize the name of members LaVerne Cooley and Jim Arcara. LaVerne resided in Batavia, NY and sadly passed away last February but word has only now reached the Chapter. I remember him as a regular on trips on those many Canadian trains we rode in the glory years when Al Kerr and Kevin Mugridge headed many a great safari to locations both near and far, that are dear to railfans. Jim Arcara was well known locally as a model railroader in addition to his Chapter membership. He was a regular at our meetings for many years and passed away recently. May both of these gentlemen enjoy an everlasting "clear block" ahead!

ON THE TRACK AHEAD & EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The LOSS of our meeting location and unsuccessful efforts to locate a suitable venue has forced cancellation of the October event, and the following month's will be subject to change. Kaleida Health, owners of the Degraff Hospital and the Community Center building which we have utilized for many years have permanently closed the North Tonawanda Division Street premises. Please check the Chapter website for details - which will be posted as soon as possible so we all can get back 'on track'. But, even without being able to have Duncan Richard's program in October, we still wanted to show you just a small taste of some of the excellent photo gems we would have seen, hence our use of two shots in this month's 'Scene'.

November's program will feature Tony Schill. The late, great Pennsylvania Railroad's Pittsburgh Division will be explored in depth. Join us as we journey to "The City of Steel".

Next month the ESX will feature an excellent "Railroader's Memory" feature by Greg Lund. In addition, we will start a new regular series on "Chapter Memories" using material that Geoff Gerstung prepared more than two decades ago. As space permits, we will also begin to re-print Harold Ahlstrom's classic Car barn Comment series and we hope to be able to illustrate all of these features with great photos from our members as well as the Chapter's archive collection. All of this takes time and effort to organize, and I hope you will join me in thanking those who take the time to submit material for the ESX and for those who are tirelessly working behind the scenes to organize and make accessible our photo archive. Now....do you have a memory of some Chapter trip or just a special day of railroading? Get your memory recorded in the pages of the Empire State Express where it can be shared and appreciated by those who love the history and drama of railroading.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

OCT **Regular meeting has been CANCELLED DUE TO LOSS OF MEETING ROOM.**

NOV ? **Regular meeting, LOCATION AND DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED, CHECK OUR WEBSITE, Tony Schill, PRR's Pittsburgh Division.**

NOV 20 & 21 **WNYRHS Train Show, Hamburg, NY @ the Fairgrounds. Chapter table needs volunteers to work the show.**

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.

***** IMPORTANT REMINDERS ***** If you receive hardcopy of the ESX and your mailing address changes, please send to the attention of Neal Kerin so that your Empire State Express can be addressed properly. Likewise, if your email address changes for any reason, please let Tony Schill know by sending it to the nfcnrhs@gmail.com THANK YOU

The Empire State Express is mailed free to all members of the Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc. Anyone who is not a Chapter / NRHS member may receive *The Empire State Express* by mail at a subscription rate of \$35.00 a year postpaid, e-mail rate \$25.00. Please contact the Chapter at PO Box 1043, North Tonawanda, NY 14120 for details.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED DATED MATERIAL – PLEASE EXPEDITE

The Empire State Express
NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.
POST OFFICE BOX 1043
NORTH TONAWANDA, NY 14120