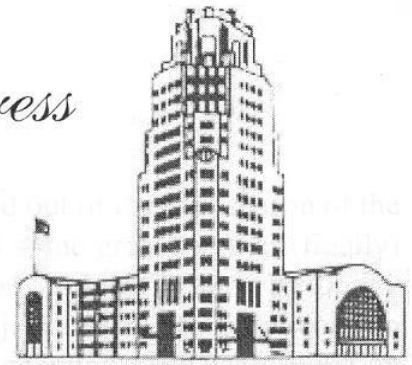


## *Empire State Express*



**January 2021**

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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The meeting of the Chapter has been **CANCELLED** for January due to ongoing concerns for our members due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Please continue to check our web site for latest information!



The way we like to remember the Lehigh Valley Railroad is seen in this photo taken at Rochester Junction in the waning years of the railroad's existence, but before Conrail and the many changes that swept away not only the "Valley", but also the Erie Lackawanna, Penn Central and several other railroads. The rural setting of Rochester Junction is still there but the trains and tracks are not. The right of way has been converted to hiking and biking trails for a generation who never had the pleasure of hearing the bell or whistle or rumble of freight cars moving over the crossing behind Alco # 217 with its rugged diesel hammering a song in a staccato chorus accompanied by puffs of blue and sooty black 'Alco' smoke.

No, they just do not know what they missed!    *Photo: Hemenway Collection, courtesy John C. Dahl*

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



This column is for the January issue of the Empire State Express. The time of the writing is however, still December, and the year, as I write this, is just coming to a close. What a year it was, unprecedented in my forty plus years with the organization. We were cruising on restoration and infrastructure projects. That is until the signals all went red last February. It was like going into a siding and finding out that there was a wreck up ahead. There was! We thought that after the summer things were beginning to move forward again. Not so much. After a great September meeting at Central Terminal and October and November meetings at our usual venue, we had to stop again.

We are cancelling the January meeting. The decision on a February meeting is not made yet.

The strength of any organization lies in its people. Those who are dedicated and tireless in their commitment to a Mission Statement can take a project a long way. I am very proud of the people who make up the Niagara Frontier Chapter. I would like to thank the Officers and Directors and the other volunteers who make it all happen. If you appreciate their efforts, as I do, please let them know.

We are currently looking for someone to be treasurer. Al LeTeste has done an excellent job for many years and will retire at the end of 2021. If you would do this for us please contact Becky at 434-5665.

You may recall that we had some concrete poured along the west and south sides at the Museum this Fall. It is to serve as a base for the installation of the handicap lift. This was paid for by a grant from National. It is part of the project to make the Museum ADA compliant. Shortly after that we found the sewer to be plugged. That resulted in the station being closed. On December 9th we got the sewer repaired and functioning again. This was helped by an anonymous donation of \$2,000. Thanks to all who helped and all who donated to this.

This has allowed us to go there to work and to be able to spend time there again. We still can't be open to the public, but cleaning, maintenance, repair and restoration and some research can go on again. I look forward to the days of inviting the public in for tours again.

Becky wrote an article that appears in the January NRHS news about the historic marker unveiling. Anton has another marker in the pipeline and we will announce the date of the unveiling ceremony once it is finalized.

Be sure to send in your membership renewal if you haven't already. We don't want to lose anyone. Thanks to all those who already have.

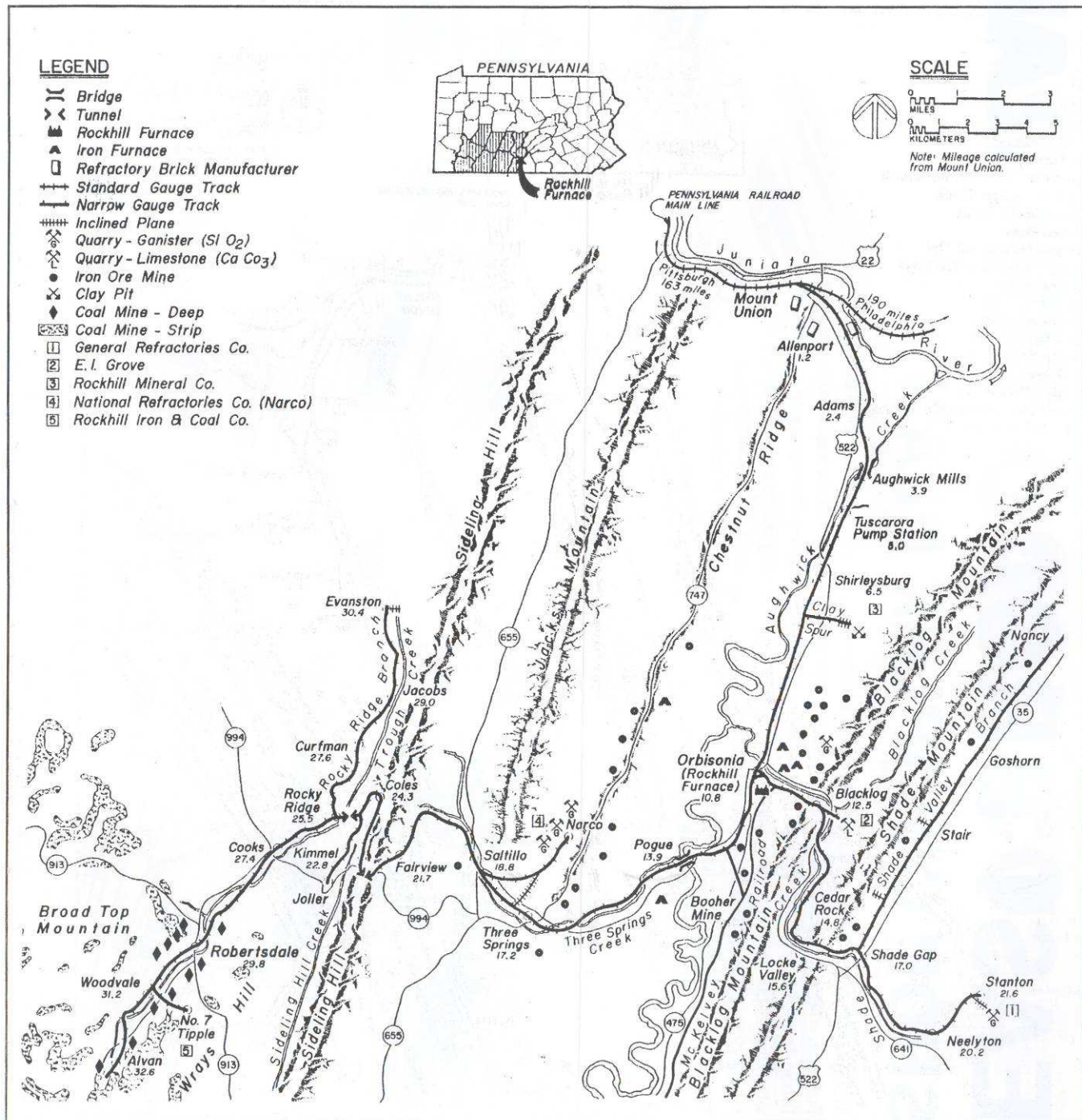
Thanks to Ben Hiltz and M. J. Lewandowski for putting up the Holiday Decorations at the Museum. If you haven't seen them, drive by the Museum after 5 pm and check it out.

I hope that this finds all of you safe and well. We look forward to better times in the New Year.

*Jim Ball*



## “SCENE” ON THE LINE



This edition of the Friends of the East Broad Top Guide to the East Broad Top Railroad Rockhill Furnace Shops and Yard published in 2002; all rights reserved.  
Text based on information in Lee Rainey and Frank Kuerstner, East Broad Top (1982); maps from Historical American Engineering Record.

Map: Friends of the East Broad Top, courtesy Sheila Dorr.

Amid the general gloom of 2020's cancellations of numerous rail excursions and Amtrak cutbacks due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, one truly remarkable bright spot is the in-progress revival of the 3 foot narrow gauge East Broad Top Railroad located in south central Pennsylvania. The line has been acquired by the Friends of the East Broad Top after having been essentially dormant for the last several years. The group has long supported and assisted the railroad, keeping its historic setting intact and undertaking restoration projects of its shops facilities in Rockhill Furnace, adjacent to Orbisonia, PA. Ambitious plans are underway to restore operations including its iconic steam locomotives. Watch the various railfan magazines for ongoing progress reports. The EBT is truly a time machine into the golden age of railroading.



## “SCENE” ON THE LINE - continued



On October 9, 2010, East Broad Top #15 is returning to Orbisonia with a short freight train with a classic ‘crummy’ on the tail end. The railfan weekend was blessed with spectacular “Indian summer” weather and fall foliage beginning to paint the hillsides with a splash of color. Let’s look forward to such scenes again as the railroad re-opens to tourists and rail buffs in 2021.



With a string of coal hoppers behind her tank, venerable #15 is heading north towards Mount Union and an imaginary interchange with the Pennsylvania RR, recreating a scene that once played out almost daily during the railroad’s many years of hauling black diamonds out of the hills of the Broad Top coal fields. October 8, 2010. – Both photos JCD







## ON THE TRACK AHEAD

The RED BLOCK of the ongoing Covid pandemic with its restrictions on non essential gatherings has the Chapter on a siding as we begin 2021. The station remains closed to the public. A reschedule of program will be necessary for “MJ” Lewandowski with his colorful and historic look at Bicentennial Railroads. We’ll look forward to that in Spring 2021 when its hoped that the virus will be under control and life can return to some semblance of its former ‘normalcy’.

Once meetings are resumed, we will be needing volunteers for programs. Can you help?

Chapter dues notices have gone out for the 2021 year. Remember, National members should have received separate dues notice for the National membership office. Please return your Chapter renewal as soon as possible and **Thank You** for your extra financial support, especially this year.

## LAST RUN

Long time Chapter member Jim Fitzery passed away December 7, 2020. Jim loved to ride steam excursions with N&W engines 611 and 6218 being favorites. He was a member of the informal group of railfans that frequently can be found at the Amtrak station in Depew, watching the parade of Amtrak and freight trains along a busy portion of the former Water Level Route of the old New York Central. The Chapter extends its sincere condolences to Jim’s family.

## RAILROAD RELICS



During a hike this past November along the old now abandoned Erie main to Dunkirk in the tiny hamlet of Dayton Jon Rothenmeyer and I found some rounded concrete walls in the woods that are adjacent to where once the high iron had been. What were these? No, they were not a foundation for a round barn. They are not the remnant piers of a large storage tank. Dayton hill was and still is a formidable railroad grade of 2.5% from Gowanda up to the crest of the grade in Dayton for today’s shortline New York & Lake Erie on the old Buffalo & Southwestern branch. In the steam era, helper locomotives were stationed in Gowanda to assist trains up the hill. The two lines, Erie, Dunkirk main and Erie, B&SW connected but as far as I can determine, never crossed each other in a diamond at-grade

configuration at Dayton. (The physical ‘crossing point’ is at the Dayton tunnel, with the B&SW passing under the Dunkirk main.) A turntable was once positioned along the old Dunkirk main of 1851 and likely it preceded completion of the B&SW in 1875. Its presence was a welcome tool to turn locomotives for the journey back down grade on the B&SW. One can easily conjure up a scene of momentary flurry as the helper uncoupled from a up-grade train on the Buffalo line and it would whistle off continuing along the now relatively level line south through Markhams and beyond to South Dayton & Jamestown. The helper engine would navigate the connection track to the Dunkirk main, passing the Dayton depot to get to the turntable. With orders in hand it could retrace its steps over the connecting track to return north to Gowanda to repeat the process of pushing another train up the hill.

## RAILROAD RELICS - continued



The backup moves involved could be complex but were a necessary component of the operation. Just outside of Gowanda, a wye was located at the then State Hospital. This could be utilized to turn engines at the foot of the grade. Subsequent research dated some ten years ago in the Erie Lackawanna discussion group confirms the once-upon-a-time turntable at Dayton. The remnants are unmistakable, like a railroad “Stonehenge” they form a circle around what is an obvious depression in the earth. If any old timer Erie men can shed additional light on actual operations on

Dayton hill, please submit them to the editor and we’ll see that these important memories get published in the ESX. *JCD photo, November 7, 2020*



The station photo pictured on the previous page was taken circa 1910 and is likely one of the J. E. Bailey series of glass plate photos that the railroad commissioned to record its facilities.

Many of these are now in the collection of the Steamtown National Historic Park in Scranton, PA.. In later years a tiny fragment of that station or perhaps a section house was all that was left of the facilities in Dayton.

Shortline New York & Lake Erie utilized it for storage or track maintenance for a few years but now even that remnant building has vanished from the landscape. Above, is the Markhams, NY depot which once stood a few miles south of Dayton. It appears here as a relatively newly built station. Both station photos: *Steamtown National Park Service, posted on the Internet.*

## CHAPTER CALENDAR

### **JANUARY 2021 MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS & CONCERNS FOR MEMBERS HEALTH / SAFETY.**

Please refer to Chapter website and/or Facebook pages online for the latest updates regarding upcoming meetings.

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DATED MATERIAL – PLEASE EXPEDITE

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