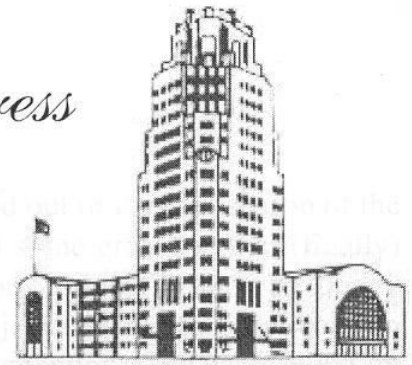


## *Empire State Express*

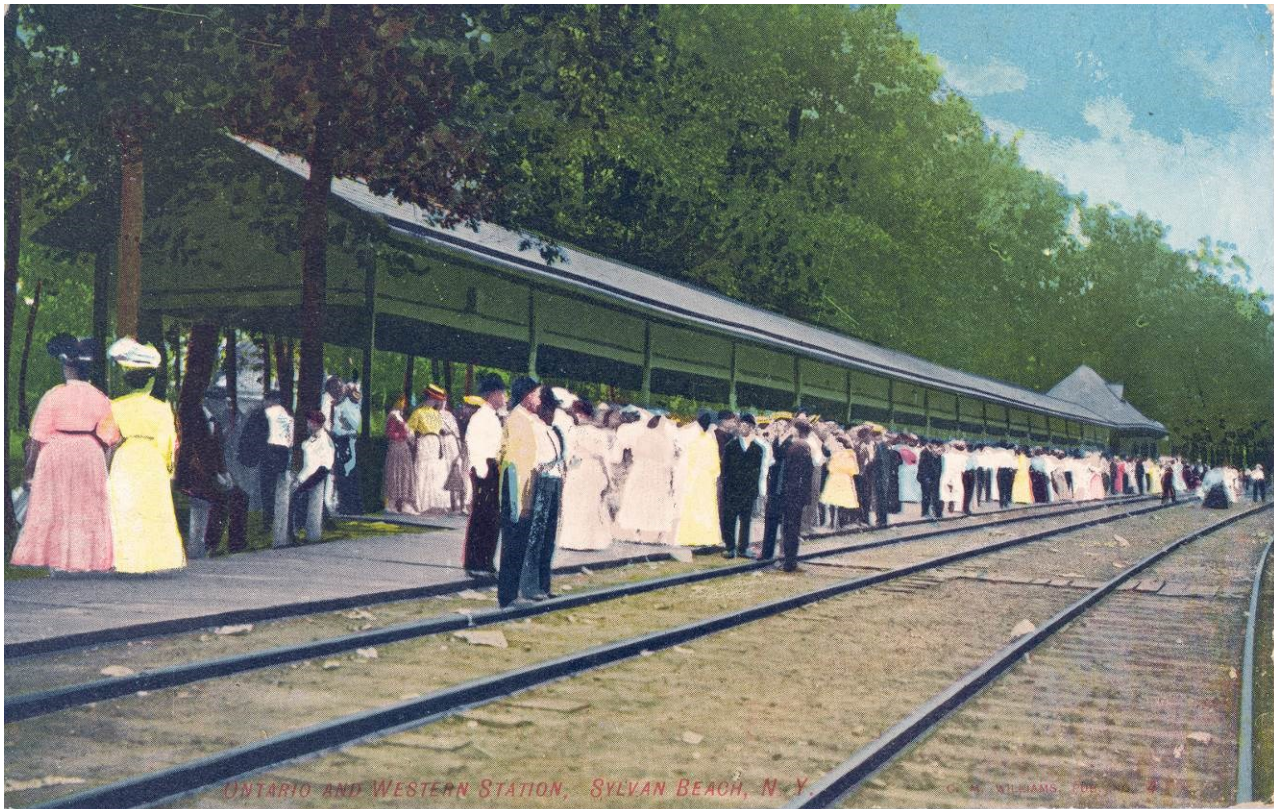


**Summer Extra 2020**

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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## SUMMER EXTRA



The “summer extra” was a staple of many railroads. One hundred years and more ago, the New York, Ontario & Western ran excursion trains to the Oneida Lake resort of Sylvan Beach. The trains would be packed with day trippers from the small towns and cities of the Northern Division looking for some respite from summer’s heat in those pre- air conditioning times among the shaded picnic groves and bathing beaches that were found on its eastern shore. Getting an assignment on these runs was considered a plum job on the railroad. New York Central ran many a summer extra to the pristine Adirondacks. Ulster & Delaware served the many grand hotel resorts in the Catskills. In Western NY, we had trolley and interurban lines like the International Railway and its line up to Olcott Beach, the famous Buffalo & Lake Erie Traction Co. to Erie PA, the Jamestown, Westfield and Northwestern and the Chautauqua Traction Company that ran along the shores of Chautauqua Lake, delivering loads of happy excursionists to the amusements at Celeron and the cool tree shaded grounds of the Institute where summer gatherings were filled with arts, philosophy, and religious studies for those of a certain intellectual bent. With this year’s pandemic having eliminated almost all travel, all special events and vacations, we can think back to those glory days of the railroad and trolley when a ‘summer extra’ was the fun thing to do.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



To say that these are unprecedented times is a massive understatement. What has transpired in the last five or so months has been so unusual that it will affect our lives for a long time to come. We lost a third of our meetings, several of our fund raiser activities and a lot of work opportunities at the Museum. We had just finished two projects, the center section furnace installation and the electrical upgrade. We were about to restart the Archive room expansion again when the whole Covid-19 situation dumped the air on us. The Museum was closed and empty for three months. We are now coming back. Saturday morning sessions are happening again, within allowable circumstances. A few things are getting done.

Some things to report. We received a 50 year membership pin from National for John Penniston. Congratulations, John! John lives in Brooklyn, so Becky sent it off to him in the mail.

Greg and Bob have been working on the 2021 Chapter Calendar so that it will be ready for September. Anton Schwarzmüller has confirmed September 19<sup>th</sup> at Noon to have one of the historic markers dedicated and installed. You are all invited, it will be at Artpark in Lewiston.

We continue with the film digitalization project. We are also digitalizing some maps and other historic paper.

The two items of major importance are that we have received a \$5,000.00 grant from National for the concrete work to install the handicapped lift that we bought last fall. Thanks to Becky for all her work on that one! The check is in the bank. We hope that the contractor can have that done soon.

The other big news is that as of this writing, the Central Terminal Train Show will go on as scheduled. The Show Committee met with the management of the Terminal and they agreed that it could go on. There will be some hoops to jump through, but right now, we are going ahead full throttle! See the included notice.

Now, because the show falls on the second weekend, and set up would be on Friday and Friday evening, our regular monthly meeting would be postponed until the next week. We also have to confirm where the meeting will be, because we don't know at this point if the De Graff Community center will be available to us.

One other thing in September, our Annual Banquet at Ilio DiPaolo's Restaurant is scheduled for Saturday the 26th. I hope to see all of you there.

There are still a lot of uncertainties as we go to press. Bruce Becker does a great job of keeping the Facebook page up to date for those of you who follow that. The YouTube videos link is still there for you as well.

Thanks to Al Le Test for keeping the station grounds groomed. The grass grows whether we are in the building or not.

Until then, I hope to see you at the Train Show! In the meantime, stay safe, stay healthy.

Jim Ball



## CENTRAL TERMINAL TRAIN SHOW SEPTEMBER 12 & 13

Help us get the word out and promote our show! As of this writing, the show will go on. If State restriction due to Covid require cancellation, we will get the word out on our web site and to the general media. But right now, the intent is to proceed, but naturally safety protocols such as hand sanitizing, social distancing and face masks will be required, the same as in any public or private gathering place.

## NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

It is not certain if our meeting location at the Degraff Community Center will be available or not.

PLEASE CHECK THE CHAPTER WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGES FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!

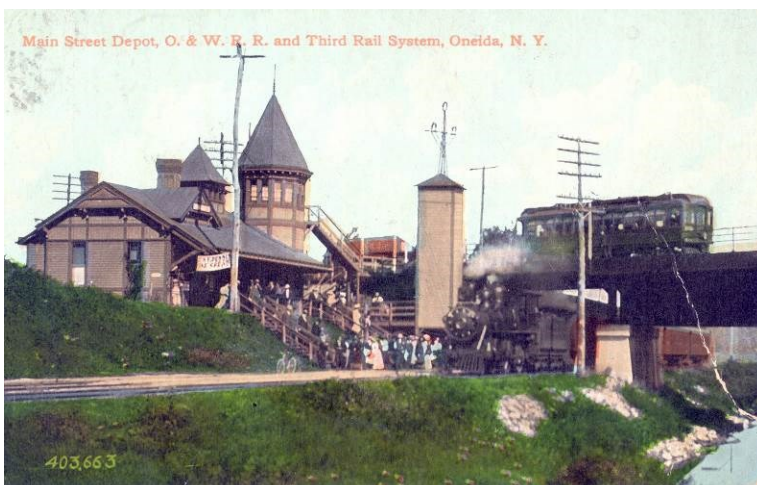
If there is a meeting, the date for September HAS BEEN SHIFTED to Friday the 18th due to the Train Show. The scheduled program will be a railroad travel-log by Tony Schill. Tony visited Eastern Europe (Bulgaria) and the Isle of Mann to discover the exotica in trains and trolleys that these countries still offer. Join us for “Two More Checked Off The Bucket List”.

## CHAPTER BANQUET

The rescheduled banquet will take place at Ilio DiPaolos on Saturday September 26<sup>th</sup>. Doors open at 11:30 AM. Everyone who made a reservation should have been personally called regarding the rescheduling several months ago. Our speaker will be Jerry Bertoldo of the New York Central System Historical Society who will have a delightful program on New York Central’s famous dining car operations, and Buffalo’s important place in this service.

## WANTED

The Chapter film digitization project is in need of a working 8 MM movie projector and a Super 8 MM projector (some models handled both formats). If you can donate one to the Chapter this would greatly assist the project. Check your basements, garages, etc, and if you have a working unit you no longer need or want, we can use it! Thanks in advance.



Oneida Castle depot was a unique two level affair. The NYO&W was crossed by the West Shore here, which by that time sported a third rail electrification by parent New York Central. Many a summer outing departed from this Victorian era depot.

## The Suspension Bridge and Erie Junction Railroad

By Jim Ball

When visitors come to the Museum we relate to them the history of the tracks that run along the east side of the building. We do this to place the building in its context as a component of the historic whole that was the Erie and later on, the Erie Lackawanna Railroad. The Suspension Bridge and Erie Junction was built by the Erie Railroad in 1870-71 and opened for business on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1871.

In the years just before the Erie Railroad began construction of the S. B. & E. J., Cornelius (Commodore) Vanderbilt and Jay Gould were engaged in a monumental struggle to be the first to turn their East Coast empires into through routes to Chicago and the Midwest. It is near impossible to distill the wrangling and maneuvering that went on as [Commodore] Vanderbilt sought to wrest control of the Erie from Jay Gould, Jim Fisk, Daniel Drew and their allies. Gould, in turn did some unprecedented things to further his ends. He proposed a line to the new International RR bridge at Buffalo / Black Rock to give the Erie another western connection. It would take a great deal more space to do justice to that aspect of the story than we can devote here. Suffice it to say that it was a real life Wall Street soap opera that played out on the railroad map of the day.

By 1872 Jay Gould would find himself pushed out of the Erie. His fight with Vanderbilt over control of the Erie was now over and others would manage what he had been building in trying to thwart the New York Central. The Erie was in great debt and would struggle with that for the rest of its corporate life.

The purpose of the new line was two-fold, to connect the Erie's yard in East Buffalo (SK) to the Suspension Bridge at Niagara Falls, the gateway to Canada, and connect to the International RR bridge at Black Rock. It consisted of 28.815 miles of railroad, including the dock line (in North Tonawanda), beginning at IQ tower between the legs of a wye near the intersection of William Street and Bailey Avenue in the City of Buffalo. The line ran north through Buffalo, Tonawanda and North Tonawanda to Suspension Bridge, originally known as Bellevue, in what is now the City of Niagara Falls, N. Y. When built, the line was 6 foot gauge but was re-gauged by 1880 with the rest of the Erie system. Until 1918 there was passenger service between Buffalo and Niagara Falls.



IQ tower, milepost "zero" on the Suspension Bridge & Erie Junction. Note Central Terminal in distance at right. NFC NRHS Collection.

There were eleven stations in the U.S. and one in Canada at Clifton. The station at Clinton Street (Buffalo), it could be argued, was technically on the Erie main, due to it's being on the southwest end of the yard. The line left the yard on embankment headed due north parallel to Central Avenue. It crossed William Street on two separate bridges, one for each leg of the wye. The west leg of the wye was double tracked, the east leg was single tracked. At this point the New York Central's Belt Line was a mere ten blocks to the west. There were stations at most of the City thoroughfares, some being less than a mile apart. East Buffalo station was not far from IQ tower, just off the west leg of the wye. That's actually the yard in the background of the photo. There is no indication of a driveway or access road on Sanborn maps of the era, even though it appears that the station is several hundred feet from the street. There was a connection to the West Shore at East Buffalo Junction, near where the line crossed over Broadway. The Walden Ave. Station was on the corner of Walden and Rapin Place. The site is currently occupied by a brick warehouse that was erected in 1930.

Interestingly, the Mathews-Northrup map of Buffalo dated 1893, shows a Delevan Ave. station, located on Northland Ave. between Norfolk Avenue and Herbert St. It does not show on the 1909 Erie time table. This same map shows a station at Genesee Street at the corner of Colorado Ave. This station is also not on the 1909 timetable. North of this area the line curved slightly west and the Delaware Lackawanna & Western moved in the parallel the Erie Line.



East Buffalo

The Kensington Station was at the northwest corner of Liberty Street and Kensington Avenue. It was a much grander edifice than many of the others including a two story bay window and four sided steeple.

At Main Street, the Erie station was on the northwest side and the D. L. & W. had a station on the south side of Main Street. This area is near where the NFTA Metrorail LaSalle Station is today. Just as it was at East Buffalo, the rival New York Central was just ten blocks away here as well.

International Junction was at the foot of Flower Street. The D. L. & W. made a nearly 90 degree left turn and climbed up and over the S. B. & E. J. The Erie International Railway, completed in 1872, took off from the Suspension Bridge and Erie Junction there and ran due west alongside the D. L. & W. toward the Niagara River

and the International Bridge. This effectively gave the Erie its own beltline. The bridge abutments are still in place at the foot of Merrimack Street where the D. L. & W. passed over. The main part of the line continued northward, straight as an arrow. There was a station on the Mathews-Northrup map at Stone Ave. in what was called Ellwood (in Tonawanda). It's another instance of a station not on the 1909 time table. Approaching the northern limits of Erie County, the line crossed the NYC's Batavia branch, aka "the Peanut Line" on a diamond. The Lehigh Valley had trackage rights on this section from Tonawanda Jct, about a mile east of the crossing to Niagara Falls. The diamond was guarded by tower Erie 3 or after 1960, EL-3. Crossing Tonawanda Creek it entered Niagara County and the City of North Tonawanda. The Creek is also the Erie Barge Canal and the railroad was elevated on an embankment and the bridge style was a "thru pin truss". The bridge has since been removed and almost all trace of a rail line here has vanished.

At milepost 13.9, in North Tonawanda there was station complex consisting of a wooden passenger station and a brick freight house. The earlier photo thought to be about 1890, shows two doors and a single window in the south end of the station. A wooden platform extends across the track. A later photo shows a single door and two windows and the addition of a concrete platform. Passengers who had bought through tickets to Lockport changed for the electric cars at the North Tonawanda station.

The property was a .31 acre triangle with three sidings and one which crossed Oliver Street to reach the Alan Herschell (later Herschell-Spillman) complex. When the passenger station burned on January 1, 1920, it was replaced with a state of the art brick freight house, built onto and matching in size the existing building. It was opened in 1923 according to the Erie company magazine. It is still there today as the Railroad Museum of the Niagara Frontier.



North Tonawanda

It is interesting to note that the passenger service came off the S. B. & E. J. in 1918 and the IRC "High Speed Line" began service from Buffalo, getting on the S.B & E. J. right of way in Tonawanda (roughly where the I290 today crosses the rail trail) and then turned east and north on its own right of way through North Tonawanda along what is now Division St. to Niagara Falls in the same year. Back in those years, that portion of the City was mostly vacant land, with only a few scattered farmsteads. The S. B. & E. J. continued northwest, crossing the New York Central's Wurlitzer Branch at grade in the middle of Oliver Street. The NYC&HRR built a tower here, Erie 2, later EL-2, in 1911 which still stands. There was a small yard between Oliver and

Thompson Streets, three tracks on the west side and the IRC's Lockport trolley line on the east side besides the "main". There were more siding tracks north of Thompson Street.

Just north of Robinson Street, between Robinson and Sommer Streets, there was a wye track and a connection to the NYC. This was there until the coming of CSX and the cleanup of the Booth Oil site in the early 1990s. North of the Wheatfield Street crossing the S. B. & E. J. and the NYC ran side by side along the mighty Niagara River. The "Dock Line" took off from the same wye between Robinson and Sommer Streets. It ran due west across the S. B. & E. J. and the NYC then turned and ran along the edge of the Niagara

River with track in Main Street as far north as what is shown as Tenth Street. Southward it ran nearly to Tremont Street. In that short distance the S. B. & E. J. crossed the NYC half a dozen times. The swing bridge where the dock line crossed Tonawanda Creek to serve industry is still there.

Roughly paralleling the New York Central and the Niagara River the line entered the outskirts of Niagara Falls. La Salle station was on the east side of the tracks between what is now 87<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> street. The La Salle Expressway is there now. At milepost 21.6 there was a connection with the Niagara Junction electric line. Beyond the Niagara Junction interchange the line made a ninety degree turn to the right or north and there was a yard beginning near the junction of Portage Road and Chilton Ave., what are now 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> streets. The north end of the yard, fittingly called Suspension Bridge Yard, was at Lockport Road. A portion of 16<sup>th</sup> street was never built because the yard was there. At this point the line made a sweeping curve to the left to approach the Suspension Bridge and Canada. Both the New York Central and the Lehigh Valley also had yards at Niagara Falls called Suspension Bridge Yard.

A typical wooden station was erected inside the curve near the junction of North and West Streets. The street name of West Street was changed to 10<sup>th</sup> street at some point. On the other side of the curve a roundhouse and turntable would be built.



Suspension Bridge

Niagara Falls station would be built at Niagara and Second Street in 1887. Its location was just a block away from the New York Central station. The Wabash would share the building. This location is where the Rainbow Center Mall is today. The station was relocated to Niagara and fourth streets in 1900 and the abandoned by 1930. In the early days passengers could ride across the Suspension Bridge and detrain at Clifton station in Canada.

From the Railroads that Serve Buffalo (published in 1927 by the M & T bank, and reprinted by the Chapter), "At Suspension Bridge interchange is made (sic) Canadian Roads, namely Canadian National, Grand Trunk, Michigan Central, Wabash and Pere Marquette. The NYC and Lehigh Valley are also interchanged with here as well. There is a connection with the Niagara Junction Railway".

The Suspension Bridge and Erie Junction was leased by the Erie for 99 years. It was operated by them as the Niagara Falls Secondary and appeared in their timetables as such. The Wabash used the line to access SK yard in Buffalo. The line was active through the merger with the D. L. & W. in 1960 and into the early Conrail era before it was deactivated and sold to the NFTA. The NFTA still holds the title to the right of way.

Thanks to John Dahl and Greg Gerstung for their assistance in preparing this article.

#### References

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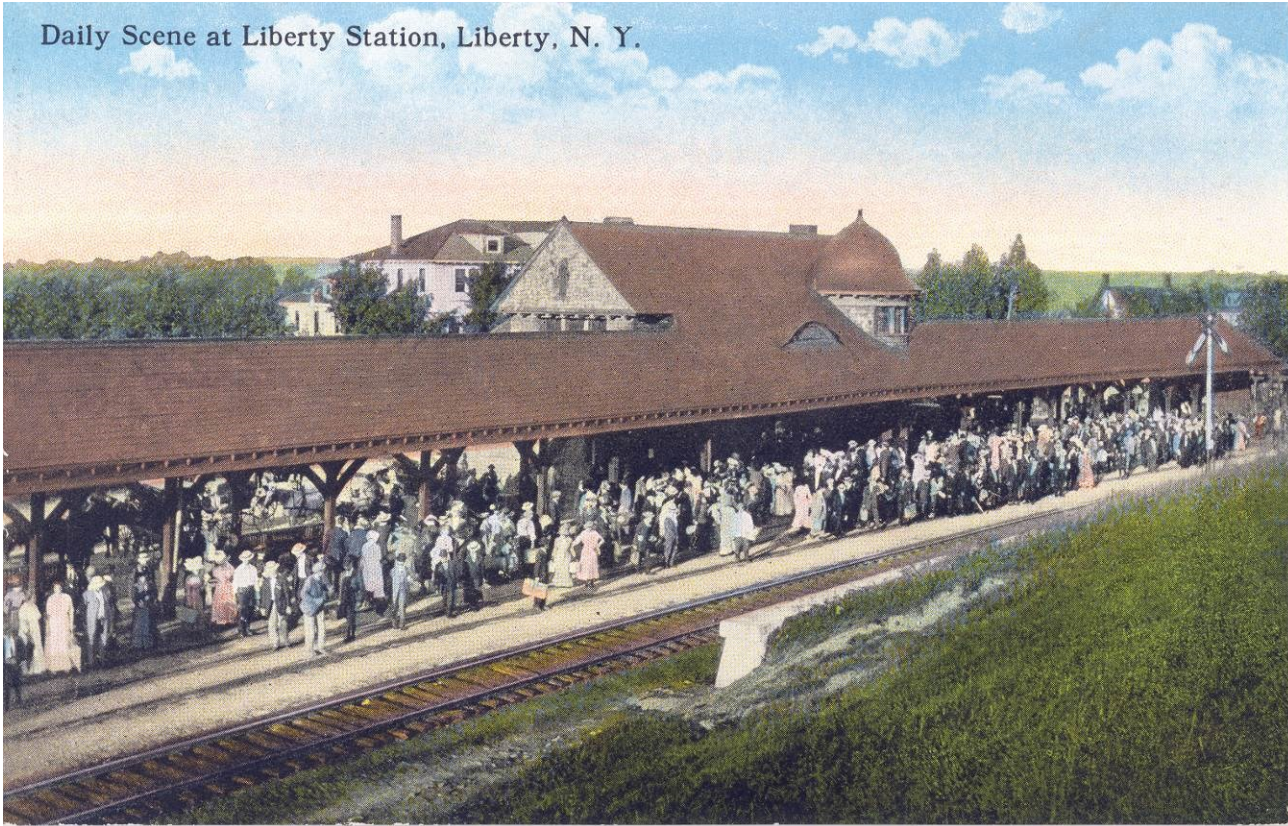
Editor's note: an expanded version of this article featuring maps and more photos will be available at the Chapter's Erie depot home when the museum re-opens.



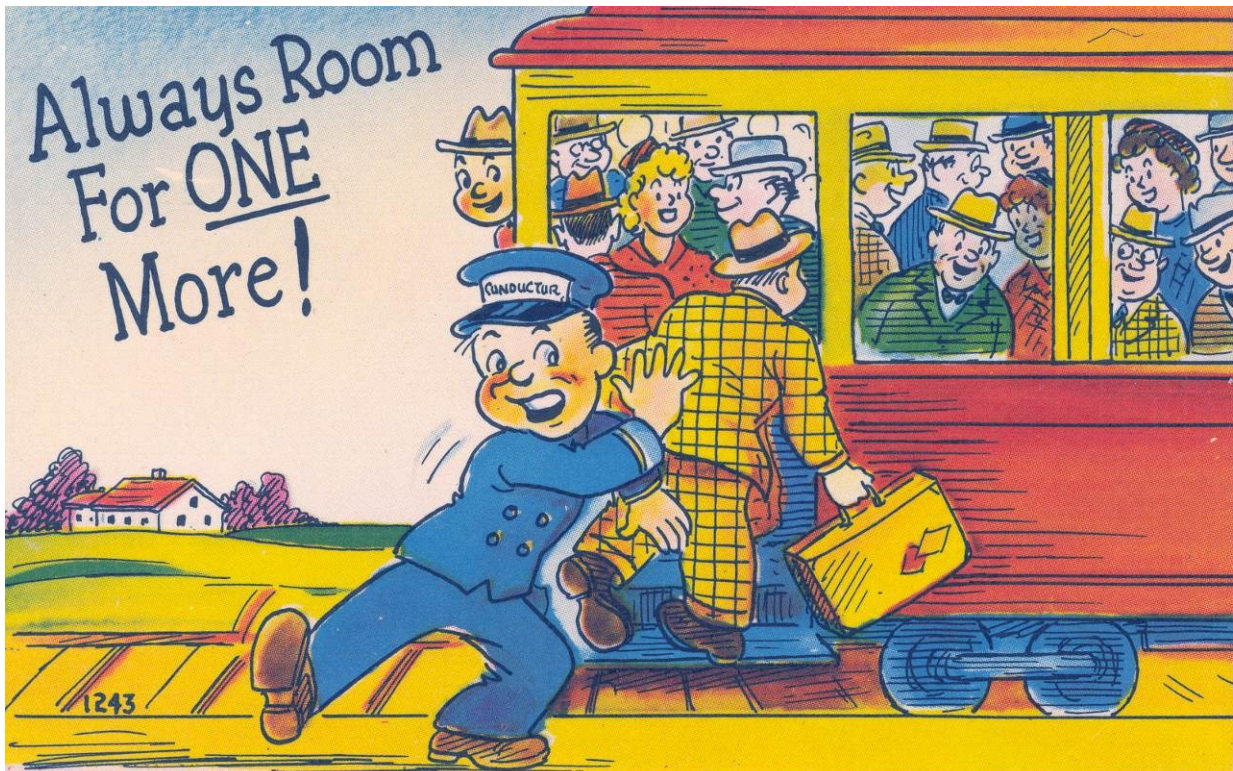
Walden Avenue



Daily Scene at Liberty Station, Liberty, N. Y.



Liberty, NY NYO&W's Southern Division in the Catskill Mountains was in the heart of the grand hotel resort areas that flourished for decades. Heat weary city dwellers from Gotham "took to the mountains by rail".





## CHAPTER CALENDAR

### CENTRAL TERMINAL TRAIN SHOW SEPTEMBER 12 & 13

SEPTEMBER MEETING DATE HAS MOVED TO FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18 DUE TO BUFFALO  
CENTRAL TERMINAL TRAIN SHOW ON SEPTEMBER 12 & 13

PLEASE CHECK THE CHAPTER WEBSITE FOR LATEST INFORMATION. MEETING LOCATION IS  
NOT CERTAIN, AND COVID RESTRICTIONS MAY ALTER BOTH DATE AND LOCATION.

SEPTEMBER 19, NOON, ARTPARK, LEWISTON, NY. HISTORIC RR MARKER UNVEILING.  
ALL ARE INVITED

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