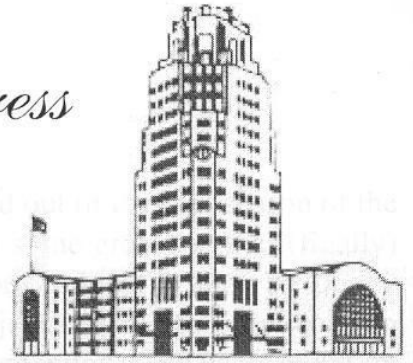


Empire State Express



May 2020

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

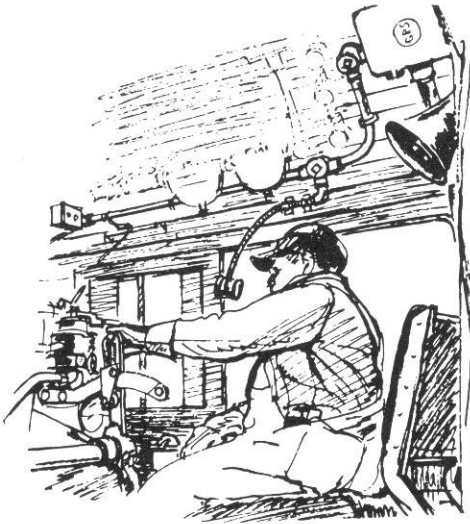
Editor: John C. Dahl Email: newsletter@nfcnrhs.com

The meeting of the Chapter for May 2020 has been cancelled due to the continuing pandemic crisis caused by Corona virus. Please check the Chapter's web site and Facebook pages for the latest news. The Station & Chapter library remains closed and restoration projects are essentially on hold.



EASY DOES IT.....New York Central re-aligned the dangerous and very tight "Gulf" curve on the Mohawk Division at Little Falls, NY in 1947. This illustration by Frederick Blakeslee graced the cover of Railroad magazine in July 1948. The curve was the scene of a tragic wreck on April 19, 1940 of the westbound Lake Shore Limited.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Last month I said that “The Current Situation” was unprecedented. Talk about being Master of the Understatement, that’s me. Almost everything that we as a group were doing has been suspended. When we cancelled the April meeting, we did not consider the possibility that our meeting place would be unavailable to us. We were notified shortly thereafter by the Hospital that they closed the De Graf Community Center because of the Corona Virus situation. This has forced the cancellation of the May Meeting as well. June remains to be seen, but I’m optimistic. The Chapter Banquet has been moved out to September 26th. The Chicken Barbeque has been cancelled. Canalfest has been cancelled. Wow!

Thanks to the Team, John Dahl for overseeing the digitalization of the film collection, Al LeTeste for adding the musical score and to Bruce Becker for putting those up on YouTube. If you haven’t seen them yet, go to https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiB68URo_eGTrnN5pi9BxDw/

On that same topic, John Dahl is looking for a volunteer to help with the selection process for film to be digitalized. Since his eye surgery he finds that looking at the originals tiring and difficult. The qualified individual will be a Chapter Member, have patience and an eye for good photography as well as historical relevance. The work will have to be done at the Museum when we can be there regularly again. I’m hoping that will by June.

Thanks to Anton Schwarzmuller for his contributions to the You Tube page.

We see on the Central Terminal Facebook page that Mark Lewandowski is “Transitioning off the Board” there after a twenty two year career. I like to think of Mark as a quarterback in a football game. He calls the play, he gets all the people lined up in the right places and starts things in motion. When everyone is moving, he passes the ball off to someone else to keep the play going. On behalf of the Chapter, Mark, Well done!

Looking for something to do? Put a story together to be published in the ESX. I’ll help you write it if you need me to. Pull out those slides and start writing what they are on the mount itself. It’s amazing how information like that fades with time.

Some weeks ago, we were poring over a 1918 valuation map of the Erie RR. The particular map page was the area in the City of Buffalo, near the intersection of William Street and Bailey Avenue. If that locale says “SK” to you, you’re right on. In 1918 there was a maze of track work there. A wye was located south of William Street and west of Bailey Ave. The depression in the pavement of William Street at Central Avenue and the two concrete abutments that are still there, attest to the first mile of the Suspension Bridge and Erie Junction. You may have seen the photo of IQ tower at the Museum. It was located between the legs of the wye. You can read more about this line soon in an upcoming ESX.

Until then, I’ll see you when we can have a meeting again. In the meantime, stay safe, stay healthy.

Jim Ball

BUFFALO CREEK No. 26 IN CANADA?



Recently, Bob Andrycha acquired the photo above. Location was not identified but our intrepid member and expert historian of Canadian railroading was soon able to put the mystery to bed.

John Freyseng of Toronto writes:

“A few more comments with respect to the picture of Buffalo Creek No.26; She is indeed in Toronto, just east of the Bathurst St bridge, switching the CNR north side yard (judging from the direction the fireman is looking, she is backing up). The photographer is standing on the east sidewalk of the bridge, looking north, and the street on top of the concrete wall is the west end of Front St, just before it ends at Bathurst.

The machinery foundry in the background on the north side of Front St was in existence into the 1990's, but is now gone and today there are new(er) condominium buildings on its location. Where no. 26 is, has been rebuilt into the west lead track into GO Transit Bathurst North GO train daytime storage yard, being the weekday layover yard for GO train rush hour 10 and 12 car trains. At night, on weekends and holidays, this yard is empty.

BCK No.26 was one of six 0-8-0 switchers first leased by CNR, Feb 23, 1947, and then subsequently purchased by CNR affiliate Grand Trunk Western on Dec 31, 1947, with No.23 being acquired by CN itself in July, 1951. All the engines apparently arrived in Canada by May 1947, according to Don McQueen and his authoritative very comprehensive publication CNR Steam ! (Railfare Publications). Like a number of major railway companies, CN had a severe shortage of motive power after WWII, and leased a number of freight engines from various Eastern US railways.

BUFFALO CREEK No. 26 IN CANADA? (continued)

BCK's 21, 23, 25, 26, 27 & 28, (built by Brooks Alco 1914-1923) became CNR 8417-8422, Class P5j, and were renumbered when they became due for overhaul, being shopped at the CNR Stratford locomotive shops between July and November 1949. No. 26 was shopped and modified in August 1949 and came out as CNR 8420.

The BCK switchers were all put into service right away, so this picture was taken, in 1947, 1948 or the first half of 1949 prior to shopping. Notwithstanding the engines being owned by GTW (other than BCK 23 - CNR 8418 as noted above), these engines spent their lives stabled at Spadina Avenue roundhouse (other than 8422 which was assigned to Mimico) working CN's Spadina coach yard, transfers of passenger train consists in and out of Toronto Union Station, station switching (express, mail cars, through sleeping cars from Chicago and Windsor to Montreal), transfers to Mimico freight yard, switching Bathurst St freight yard, and transfers to West Toronto stock yards.

Being owned by GTW, when the engines were taken out of service, they were returned to GTW and scrapped at Battle Creek, Michigan. Only 8418, owned by CN (as noted above) was scrapped at East London Reclamation Yard.

The modifications carried out when shopped in Stratford included:

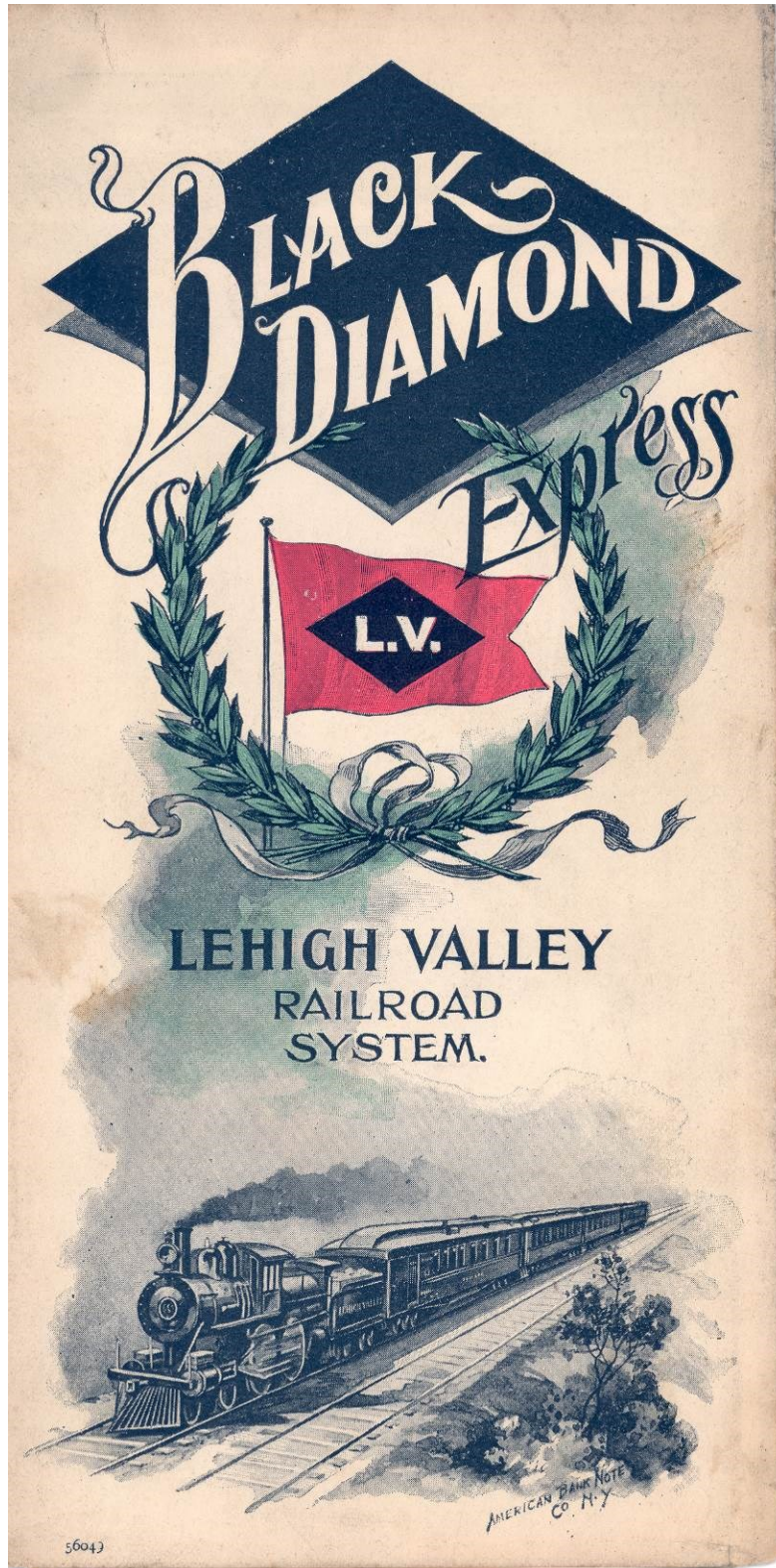
1. Headlight moved down to center of smoke box door;
2. New brass number plate attached under re-located headlight;
3. V-shaped glass engine number board attached at top of smoke box;
4. Whistle moved, now located between 2nd and 3rd domes;
5. Bell moved to space in front of smoke stack;
6. CNR standard foot boards installed at engine front and rear of tender, but they all kept their BCK slope back tenders, which made it easy to identify these engines as ex-BCK; they were the only CNR 0-8-0's with slope back tenders.

There are quite a few pictures of these engines as CN locomotives, but this is indeed a rare picture and the first I have seen of one of them switching before modification and re-numbering. Any idea of the identity of the photographer ? “

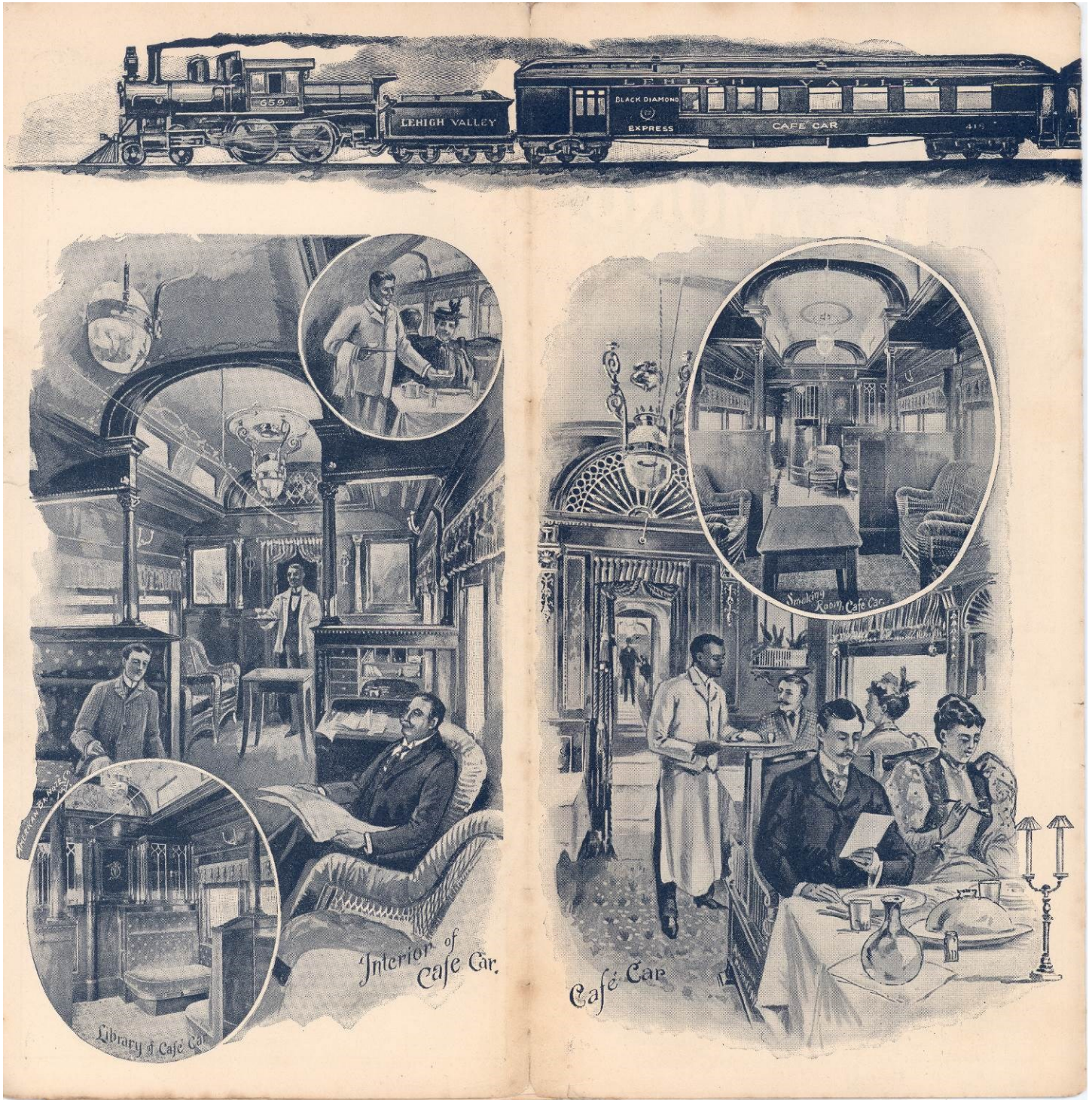
Thank you John for sharing this fascinating bit of history of how the Buffalo Creek Railroad indeed got to Canada!



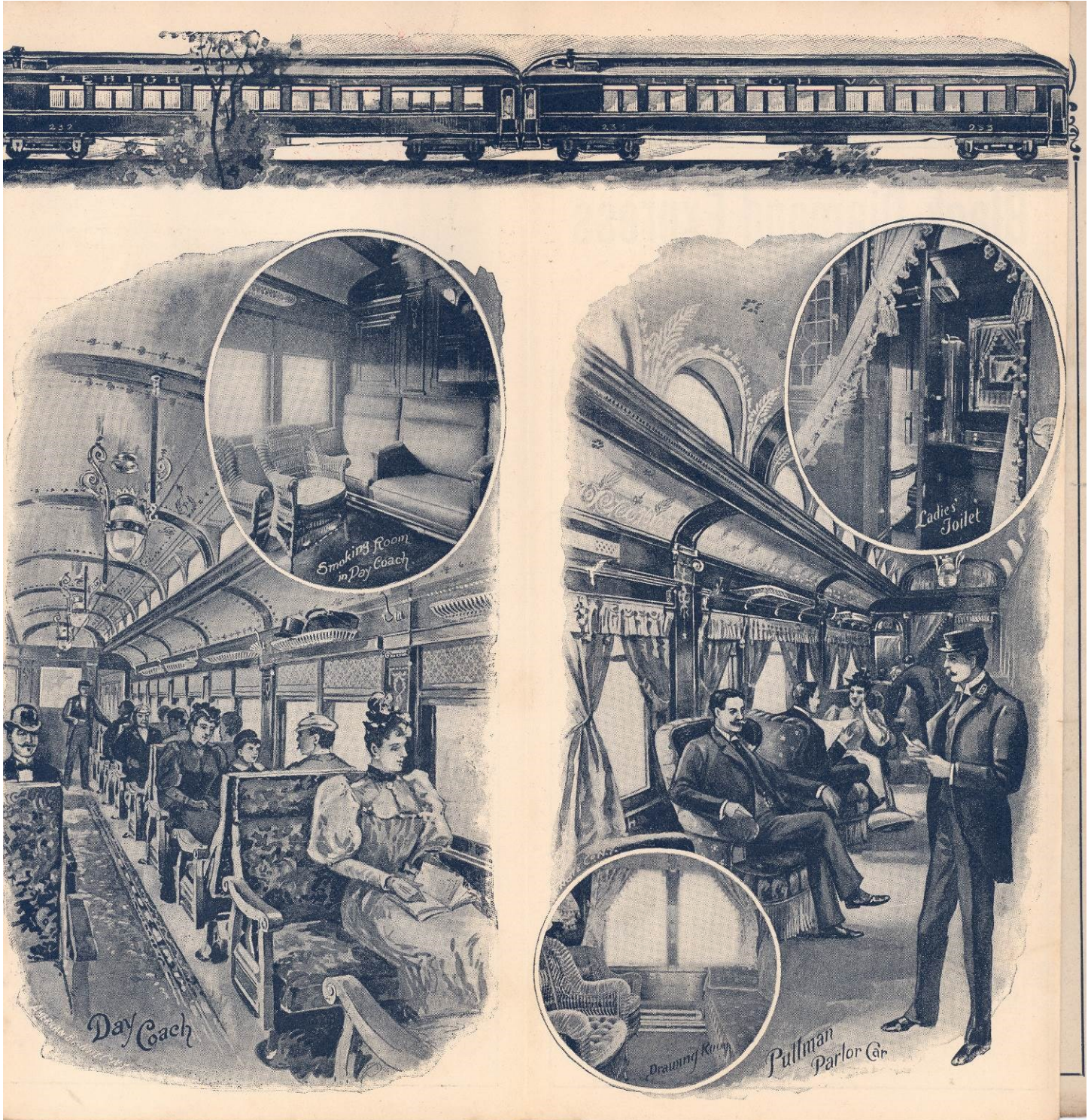
THE ELEGANT BLACK DIAMOND EXPRESS



When the Lehigh Valley Railroad inaugurated the Black Diamond between New York (Jersey City) and Buffalo on May 18, 1896, it was touted as "The Handsomest Train in the World". With a scenic and fast route from New York to Buffalo, it became one of the enduring icons of railroading.



The Black Diamond featured a level of luxury heretofore not available on the Lehigh and placed it at or a cut above its competition. Its Café Car featured fine dining and French wines, only the most exclusive of delicious ingredients were prepared by expert chefs to be served to the most discerning of guests.



Whether in Day coach, or Parlor car, one was always in the most genteel of company and lap of luxury.



Ladies too had their own exclusive Parlor and the train's observation lounge and open end deck were delightful to ride on pleasant weather days in those golden years.

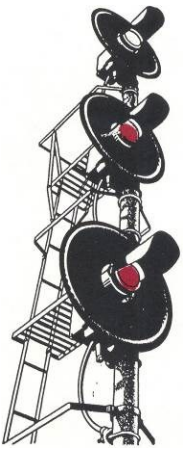
The train operated on a daily except Sunday schedule in those early years. With a running time of just under ten hours, it was considered a speedster. Always the railroad's top varnish, the daylight trip across the beautiful countryside of New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, the fabulous Lehigh River valley and westward sweep following the Susquehanna River up to New York State was intriguing. The Lehigh followed a scenic route through the Finger Lakes region to Geneva, NY where the line turned due west for the race to Buffalo.

Right from the start, the train was popular with Niagara Falls bound newlywed couples, and it acquired the nickname "Honeymoon Express". Although New York Central's Empire State Express was faster on the Water Level Route, the Black Diamond remained an icon of railroading until its final run of May 11, 1959, just one week short of its 63rd birthday.

The historic advertising brochure from which these images were copied is almost certainly circa 1896 and has been loaned to the ESX for publication from the collection of Chapter member Jon Rothenmeyer.

We hope you have enjoyed this brief, but spectacular look back at the Black Diamond Express. - JCD

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

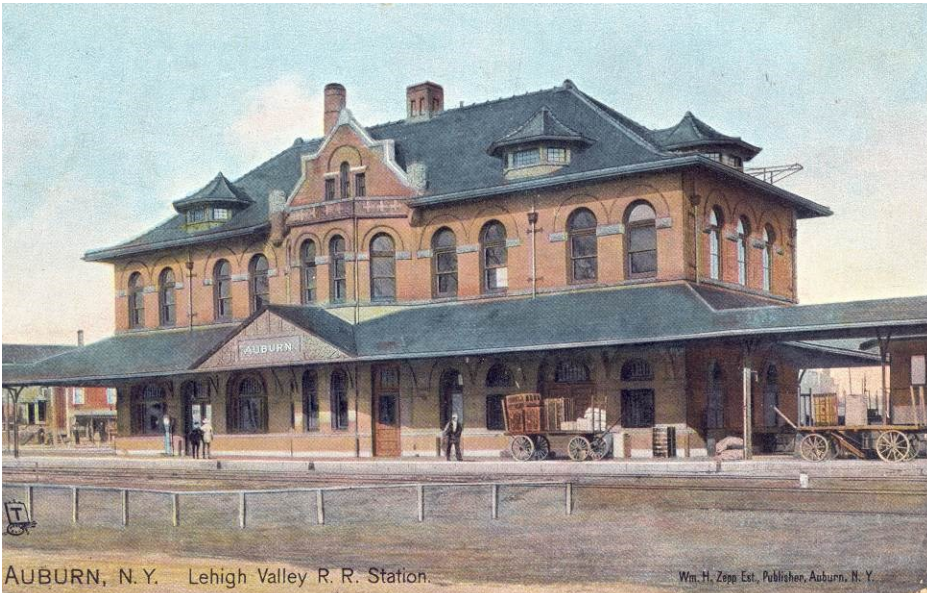


We're halted on the mainline at 'RED OVER RED', and have no idea of when the track ahead will clear. Like every aspect of life, the Corona virus pandemic has effectively shut down all aspects of our public activities. While there are some signs of things starting to ease, experts say we're still a long way from that day when 'normal' returns. Our ESX cover 'Easy Does It' reflects these times. The New York Central had to contend with several months of slowdowns on its very busy mainline as the Little Falls curve realignment was under construction and it was a slow process getting back "on track". All we can do is try to stay safe and stay well, and with that we wish everyone the best of luck in these trying times.

HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT THE CHAPTER'S "YOU TUBE" CHANNEL ?

The Chapter has posted online several of the historic digitized films from our archives for your viewing enjoyment. It is part of our mission to bring this historic material to the public. With today's online world, what better way to share some history, remind ourselves what railroading was like, and educate the public on this subject. Thanks to the great efforts of Bruce Becker, Al Leteste and Anton Schwarzmuller, the digitized versions of these films can be enjoyed by a wider audience. Response from viewers has been very positive. More material will be posted as it becomes available

IT IS SPRING TIME IN AUBURN



One of the more impressive of the Lehigh Valley's stations was this gem that once stood in Auburn, NY. As headquarters for the Lehigh's extensive collection of rural branch lines in Central New York State, the station was a bee-hive of activity in those golden years when the rails carried the majority of the freight and passengers. The branch lines originated with several different small scale railroads, but the Lehigh Valley put them together and operated a most interesting set of routes. Even today, after many of the lines have been long abandoned, the stations remain, and are fun to seek out on a spring time photo safari, true landmarks of railroading. - JCD

CHAPTER CALENDAR

MAY 2020 MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED

THE STATION IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

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