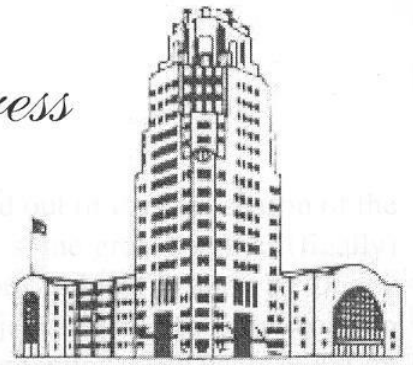


Empire State Express



January 2018

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

The meeting of the Chapter will be held on Friday, January 12, 2018 at 8:00 PM at the Degraff Community Center, 139 Division St., North Tonawanda, NY.

BIG STEAM IS BACK

See how your favorite big steam locomotives are rebuilt and run — from Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum's Southern Railway 4501, to the big steam story of 2016: the return of Union Pacific 844. This must-see DVD includes popular steam locomotives from coast to coast.

This all-new DVD is a wonderful companion to the 100-page collectors issue of the same name. The 90-minute video covers the early years of steam preservation through today's biggest restorations.



July 21, 2012 racing southbound from Fort Collins to Denver, Union Pacific's #844 is 'Big Steam' in all its glory! John C. Dahl photo.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



I hope everyone has had great holidays, I know we did. We had snow and Christmas trees, presents, trains, family, all of it. It was great, and I hope all of you were as fortunate. Now we try to go back to some kind of normalcy. The Holidays soak up a lot of calendar days so it seems like a very short deadline.

This years Winterwalk event happened after our last issue went to press. We were blessed with an overcast, cool but dry day. It was very, very busy, with the pony rides set up out front. Thanks to Becky & Greg Gerstung, Bob & Nancy Andrycha, Dennis Hurley, Bruce Becker, Ben Hiltz, and Marcus Gillebard for their help. Between donations and the raffle proceeds we took in \$271. We could not keep track of how many came through the building, but an educated guess would be several hundred. What a way to end the 2017 season!

I would like to thank all of the officers and directors who have stepped up to be re-elected for 2018. We are making great progress on a number of things, and these folks have invested a lot into the process. It's great that they are all dedicated to seeing the projects through.

We are currently having a little trouble filling out the program schedule for the regular monthly meeting schedule. We have January, April and May filled. But that leaves February, March and June open. Any suggestions from out there in the "Peanut Gallery"?

Membership Chairman Neal Kerin reports that renewals have been coming in at a steady pace, many with donations. Thanks for those! Have you sent in yours? We don't want to lose anyone, this is a great group. National membership is done on line, there is a new program and it's supposed to be easier. I'll let you know if I think so as soon as I do mine which will be as soon as I'm finished here.

We will be going to the WNYRHS train show in February, the weekend of the 17-18th.

Speaking of going out into the winter, should the weather cause the Monthly Membership Meeting to be cancelled, listen to WGR radio AM550, WYRK 106.5 and Oldies 104 as well as Channel 2 on the TV for notification. The decision is usually made somewhere between 3 and 4pm on the day of the meeting.

Otherwise, I'll see you at the meeting.

Jim Ball

ANNUAL BANQUET

In response to our member requests and to encourage higher attendance, we will try out a Sunday afternoon format this year. We will be returning to Ilio DiPaolo's restaurant in March. Date, time and program will be announced as soon as details are complete. Watch for particulars in the next ESX and on our website page.



THE NEXT STOP WILL BE



SYRACUSE

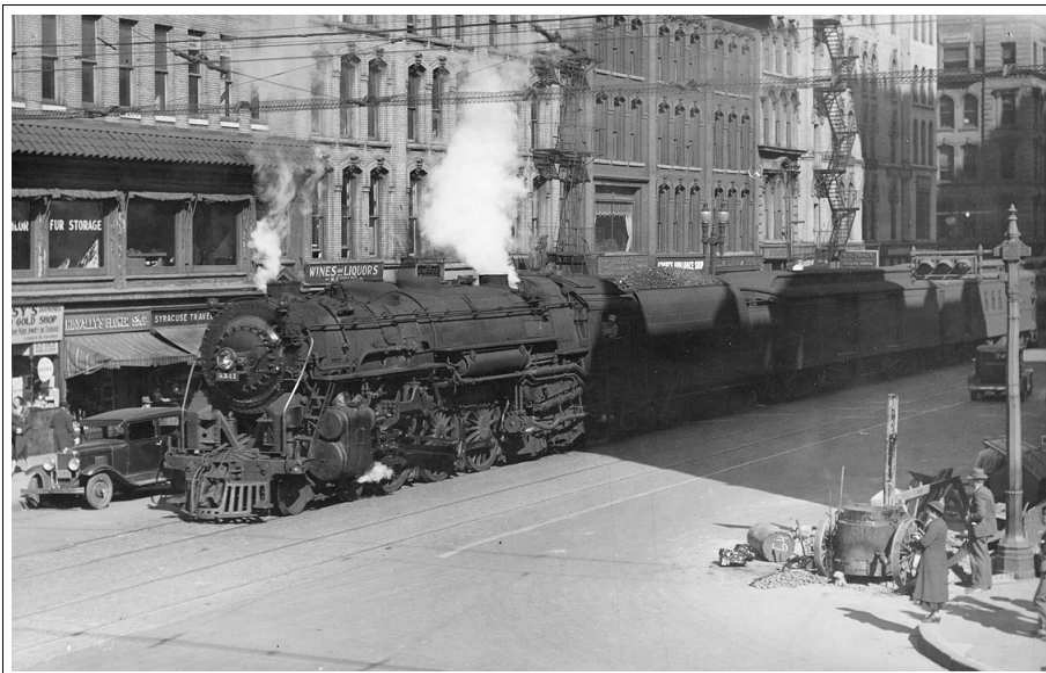


PART 2

THE TRACK ELEVATION PROJECT

Tony Schill

During the 1920's railroad passenger traffic continued to grow. But that growth was dwarfed by the increase in automobile ownership and the ever-spreading network of paved roads. Traffic congestion, which was becoming a problem in downtown Syracuse, was thought to be caused in considerable part by the very slow passage down Washington Street of the New York Central's frequent passenger trains. Indeed, there were nearly four movements (on the average) every hour of the day and night, many of which involved trains of more than 10 cars. So it's not unlikely that pedestrians, streetcars, buses and of course automobiles were often delayed.



Hudson 5341 slowly rolls down Washington Street with a westbound limited

The civic mood of the time was that “something” had to be done; the problem was that there was no consensus as to what that ‘something’ might be. One faction wanted to run all the passenger trains over the freight bypass to the north; but this was unacceptable to the local business community, which insisted on a downtown station. Another proposal was for a hugely expensive below-grade line through downtown, possibly involving the now-abandoned Erie Canal right-of-way. The New York Central itself favored use of the existing and parallel West Shore line, but with the tracks placed on an elevated structure to eliminate the many grade crossings. However, this was opposed by those who feared that such a structure would create a ‘Chinese wall’ through the heart of the city.

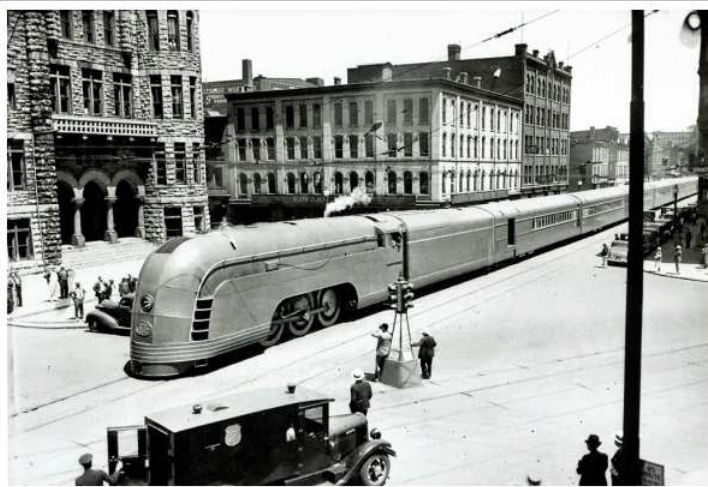
Meanwhile, the trains continued to run down Washington Street. If anything, they grew longer, as the Central's famous Hudson-type 4-6-4's began to replace the less powerful Pacific types.



A 12-car train rolls slowly through downtown Syracuse



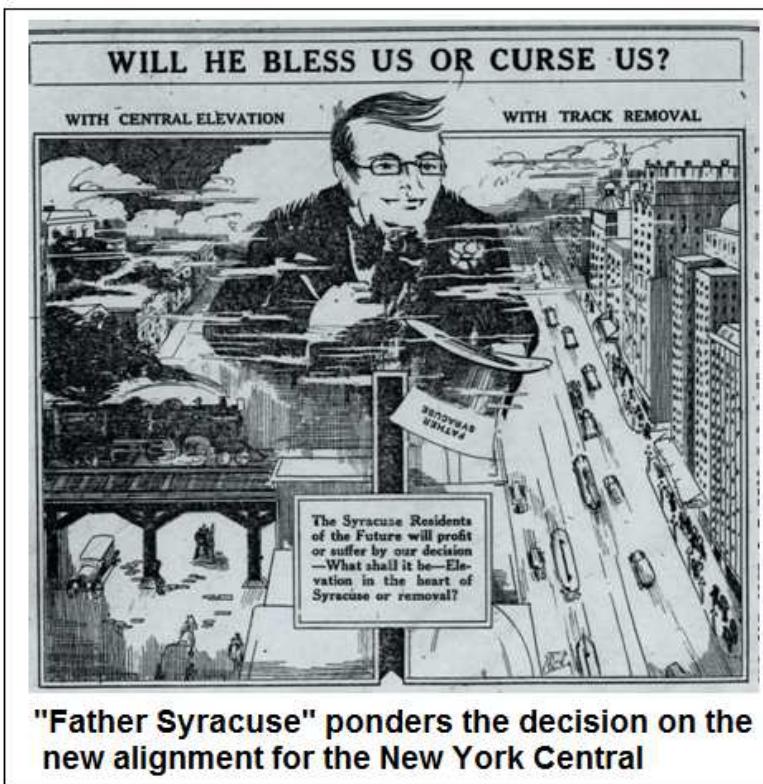
**At left, a Hudson with a westbound train is about to enter the station.
At right, another Hudson passes by Syracuse's City Hall.**



The Mercury on tour in 1936



Trains ran in the street regardless of the weather



"Father Syracuse" ponders the decision on the new alignment for the New York Central

The decision for a new alignment was finally made by the city's voters in a referendum conducted in 1927. What the citizens approved was the construction of an elevated embankment on five miles of the West Shore right-of-way. The project, which carried an estimated cost of \$17 million, provided for a three-track elevated railroad, the elimination of street running (and 62 at-grade street crossings) and the erection of a modern new station of Art Deco design. Construction began in 1930, just as the Great Depression took hold and railroad traffic went into a steep decline. But the project was still considered crucial to the future of Syracuse, and its progress was closely followed by the public. Finally, by mid-1936 the end of construction was in sight, and a great 3-day civic celebration was scheduled to mark the completion of the massive project.

While the five-mile track elevation was the project's largest element, public attention naturally focused on what was then the most

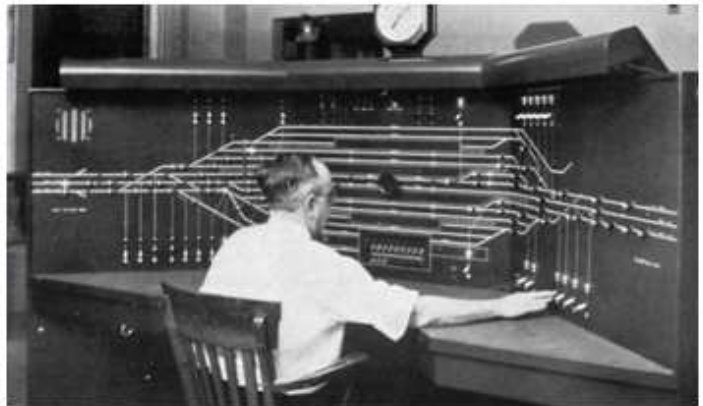
modern railroad station in the country. The new station, ultimately located at 815 Erie Boulevard, included ten through tracks (and several stub tracks), along with five canopied platforms. The station building itself, at ground level, was four stories in height (the upper floors were for the NYC Syracuse Division's offices). The waiting room was approximately 5,000 square feet in size; it included all the features typically provided, including a lunch room, restaurant, baggage room, newsstand, rest rooms and of course a ticket office. The waiting room finishes included travertine and marble walls, a terrazzo floor, and ornamental plaster for the ceiling. Seating in the waiting room was in the modern Art Deco style rather than traditional long wooden benches.

The completion of the huge project was suitably celebrated by a three-day Grand Jubilee having the theme "Inaugurating a New Syracuse." From September 24 thru 26 of 1936 thousands of people thronged both the old and new stations. Needless to say, there were many speeches to be made and brochures to be printed, all of

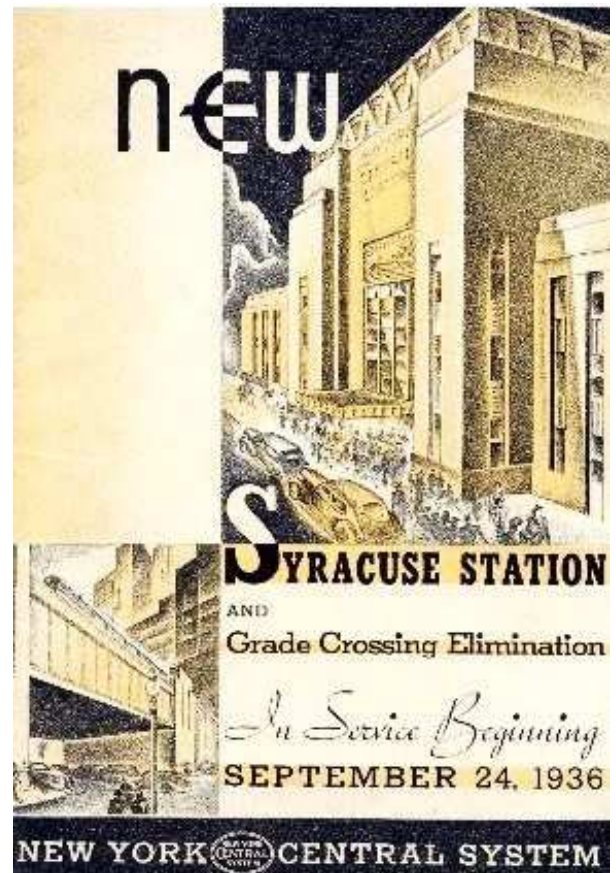
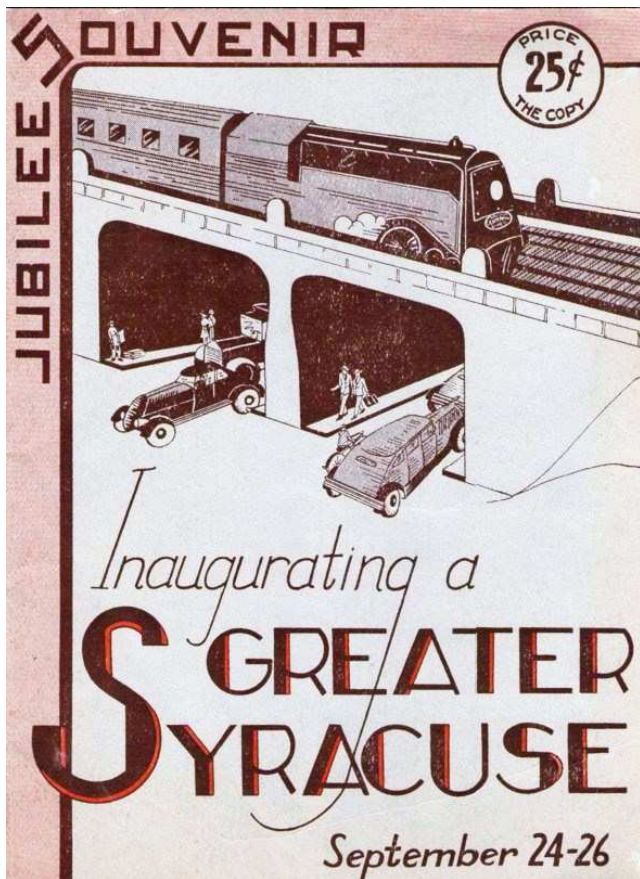
which promised a bright future for both the City of Syracuse and the New York Central Railroad. And, it was indeed a great accomplishment, one which would serve the city and railroad well, especially during World War II when passenger traffic soared to unprecedented levels.

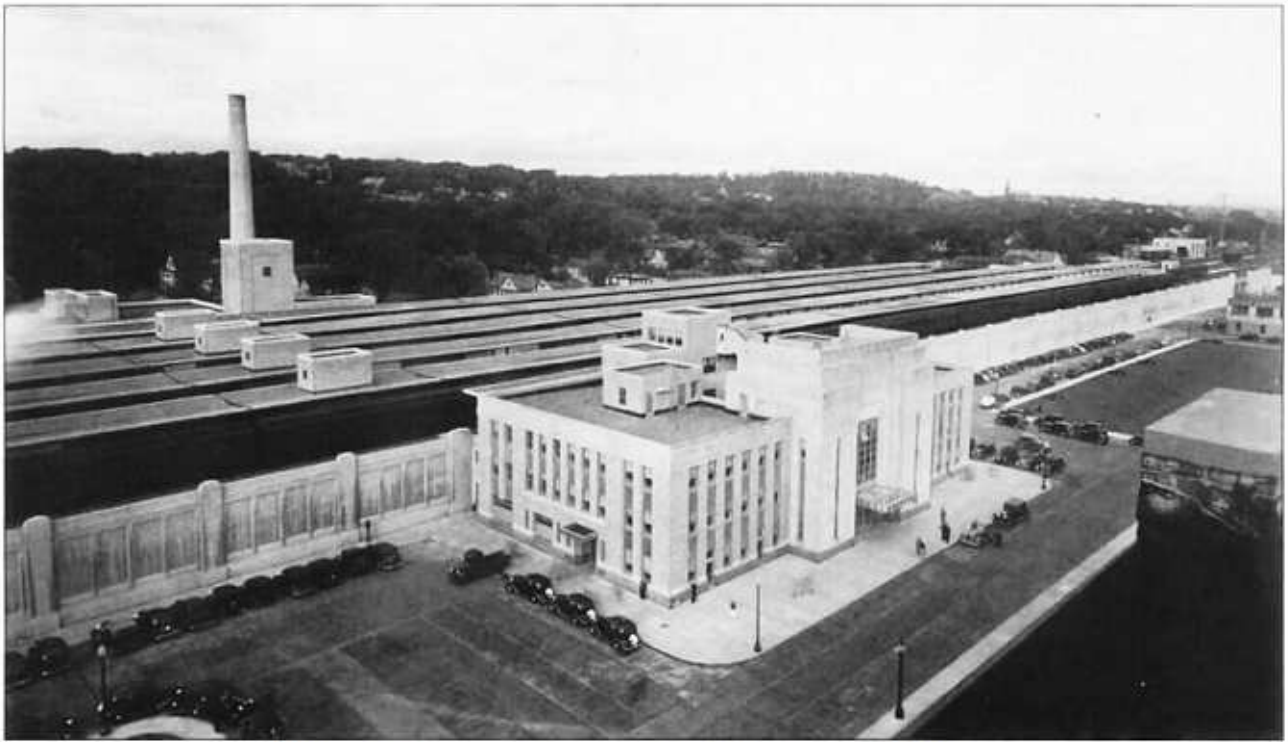


Track laying on new embankment



Control desk for station interlocking plant





View of the new station facilities looking east



View west of tracks and platforms



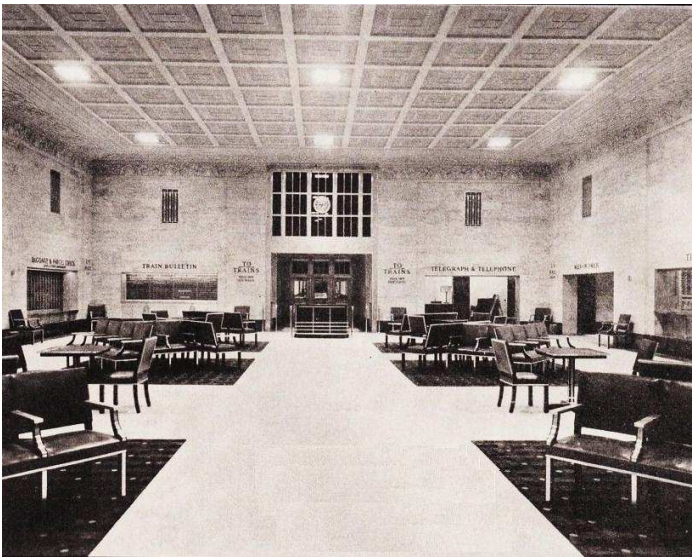
One of the last trains to operate on Washington Street Sept. 25, 1936



First train to arrive at the new station on Sept. 24, 1936

A few years after V-J Day in 1945 the New York Central's passenger business once again went into a steep decline. The railroad fought back against the downward trend with a massive investment in streamlined equipment and diesel locomotives. But, by the late 1950's, it had become painfully obvious that the long-distance passenger train was assuming the status of an endangered species—and so was the passenger mainline through downtown Syracuse, "new" station and all.

The postwar era will be examined next as we continue the saga of Syracuse.



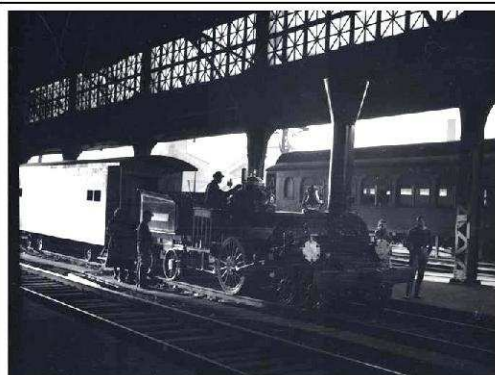
After 97 years, the last train runs down Washington Street



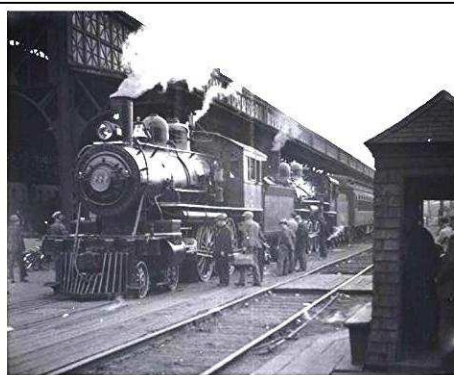
The bas relief over the station's main entrance featured both the DeWitt Clinton, the Central's first locomotive, and one of the famous 4-6-4 Hudsons.



A medallion emplaced in the sidewalk outside Syracuse's City Hall on Washington Street commemorates the end of street running in 1936. An actual section of rail as removed from the street is in the center.



Replica of 1837 B&O 4-2-0 "Lafayette"



New York Central 999

Grand Opening Jubilee included visits by historic locomotives

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

We need program presenters to step up for 2018. Many months have openings. If you would like to offer a program please contact Jim Ball. As of this writing, no program is scheduled for the February meeting.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- JAN 12 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. Big Steam Is Back, a Trains Steam DVD, courtesy of Bob Andrycha .
- FEB 9 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. Program to be announced.
- FEB 17-18 WNYRHS Winter Train Show, Hamburg, NY, 10AM-5PM. Chapter table needs volunteers.

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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