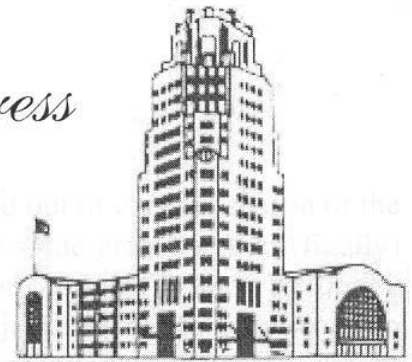


## Empire State Express



**December 2019**

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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The meeting of the Chapter will be held on **Friday, December 13, 2019 at 7:00 PM** at the Degraff Community Center, 139 Division St., North Tonawanda, NY. **NOTE EARLIER MEETING START TIME.**

### MEMBERS PHOTO NIGHT

Once again, the December meeting entertainment will be an Open House with Member's photos. Please bring in your steam, diesel, trolley or any rail related photos...we can accommodate digital photos on a USB memory stick or traditional 35mm slides. We can also show digital video and sound as long as it is in one of the standard formats for Windows computers. Please limit your show to about ten minutes. This is a fun night with variety and informality the key. Join in the fun!



*Southbound from Buffalo's DL&W terminal, Baltimore & Ohio train (on the ex: Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh) is slowing for the station stop at Ridgway, PA. Although not dated, let us imagine this beautiful portrait of classic railroading was taken just a week before Christmas of 1947, when steam still powered many of the still numerous passenger trains. We wish all of our readers a very Merry and Happy Christmas season.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



This is the last column for this year. Next month I'll try to sum up the year, but for right now, this year is still happening. We exhibited at the WNYRHS toy and train show at the fairgrounds. Thanks to Greg and Becky, and Nancy Andrycha for helping set up. Thanks to Steve Frey, Bruce Becker, Bob Andrycha for their help and to Dennis Hurley and Al Le Teste for carting the displays back to the Station on Sunday evening. The treasury benefited to the tune of \$640 for selling Calendars, Gorge Books, Puzzles, books and magazines.

This issue with this page will go to press before Winterwalk happens so let's hope it's a great day. Word on the street is that the guy in the red and white suit may be there. The new gas furnace that we were given has been installed in the rafters of the middle section of the station and is now operational. We can turn it on whenever we need to heat that area. The upgrade to the gas supply line is also done. The electricians are working on the service upgrade and will be done by the time that you are reading this. Then the archive room expansion can go forward, finally. Greg Gerstung has built an insulated door cover to fit inside the north end door. That should keep the winter gales from blowing snow into the building.

This March we will hold our 80<sup>th</sup> annual Banquet. It should be a grand event, so mark your schedules now.

This month, according to the Chapter bylaws, we will elect the members of the Board of Directors who will serve for the year 2020. See the list published separately in this issue. Thanks to all the Members who agreed to be reelected. Having a stable Board has made possible all the many things that we do. These folks are dedicated, good at what they do and are all usually "on the same page". I would ask you to tell them how much you appreciate their work when you see them. We could still use a Recording Secretary and while not a board position, a Program Coordinator.

Please send in your membership renewal or renew it on line at the meeting. Bruce has set us up to do that, and it's so easy.

In the event that we have to cancel the meeting due to the weather, the first place to look is Channel 2 on your TV. We will ask the other stations to carry it, but we are registered with Channel 2. We will also ask the usual radio stations as well; they being Odies 104 FM and WGR 550AM and WYRK 106.5FM. We usually try to make the decision soon enough to make the 5 pm broadcasts.

So as is our family tradition at this time of year, I wish all of you Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and let's all have a great new year!

Until then, I'll see you at the Meeting.

*Jim Ball*

## Utica Morning Herald Tuesday, March 28, 1876

The last spike in the Lake Ontario Shore Railroad was driven at Lewiston, Niagara county, last Thursday, at which point it will connect with the New York Central railroad and with Canada, when a bridge will have been built. An exchange says:

There were no formal ceremonies on the occasion, but a large crowd assembled to see the last spike driven. Ground was first broken for the Lake Ontario Shore railroad in the town of Hannibal, Oswego county, on the 20th of July, 1871., and the first rail was laid about the first of May, 1878, at Oswego. The entire length from Oswego to Lewiston is about 148 miles. It was completed to Ontario, 52 miles from Oswego, during the winter of 1873-74.

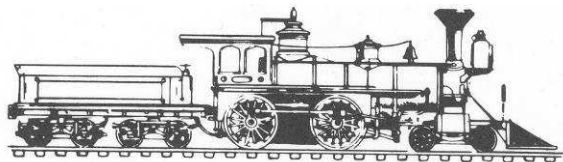
The original Lake Ontario Shore Railroad Company laid the iron to Ontario and did a portion of the grading through to Lewiston. During the summer of 1874, arrangements were made with the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg Railroad Company, ny which it assumed control of and completed the new road. In February, 1875, the road was finished and trains commenced, running to Charlotte, 70 miles from Oswego. The total cost of the road, when completed, is estimated at \$6,000,000.

The last fifty-five miles of the track have all been laid during the past winter, the contractors, Messrs. John Hunter & Co., of Sterling, Cayuga county, having pushed the work with commendable energy. This section, in extending the work from Lewiston to Kendall, passes through Ransomville, Wilson, Olcott, Somerset, Gordonville, Kendall, Hamlin, Parma and Charlotte. The work of ballasting the now otherwise finished track will be next in order, and it is expected that the road will be open for through business by the first of June.

The connection with the Central at Lewiston brings passengers from the east in communications with all the roads centering at Buffalo and for those from Buffalo and the west a direct route to Portland via the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg, and also a route to New York via the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western road from Oswego. A large freight business is anticipated for the new route, as it opens a way directly to Buffalo and the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern for freight which its now obliged to cross the St. Lawrence and follow the circuitous Canada route.

The construction of a new and great suspension bridge at Lewiston in order to obtain a connection with the Great Western without the necessity of climbing the mountain, which is so serious an obstacle between Lewiston and the present bridge, is under serious consideration, and it is quite positively stated that its construction will begin this year. Surveys and plans for the bridge have long been made. Its cost as estimated three years ago was \$600,000. The completion of the line to Lewiston created quite a sensation in that usually quiet little community.

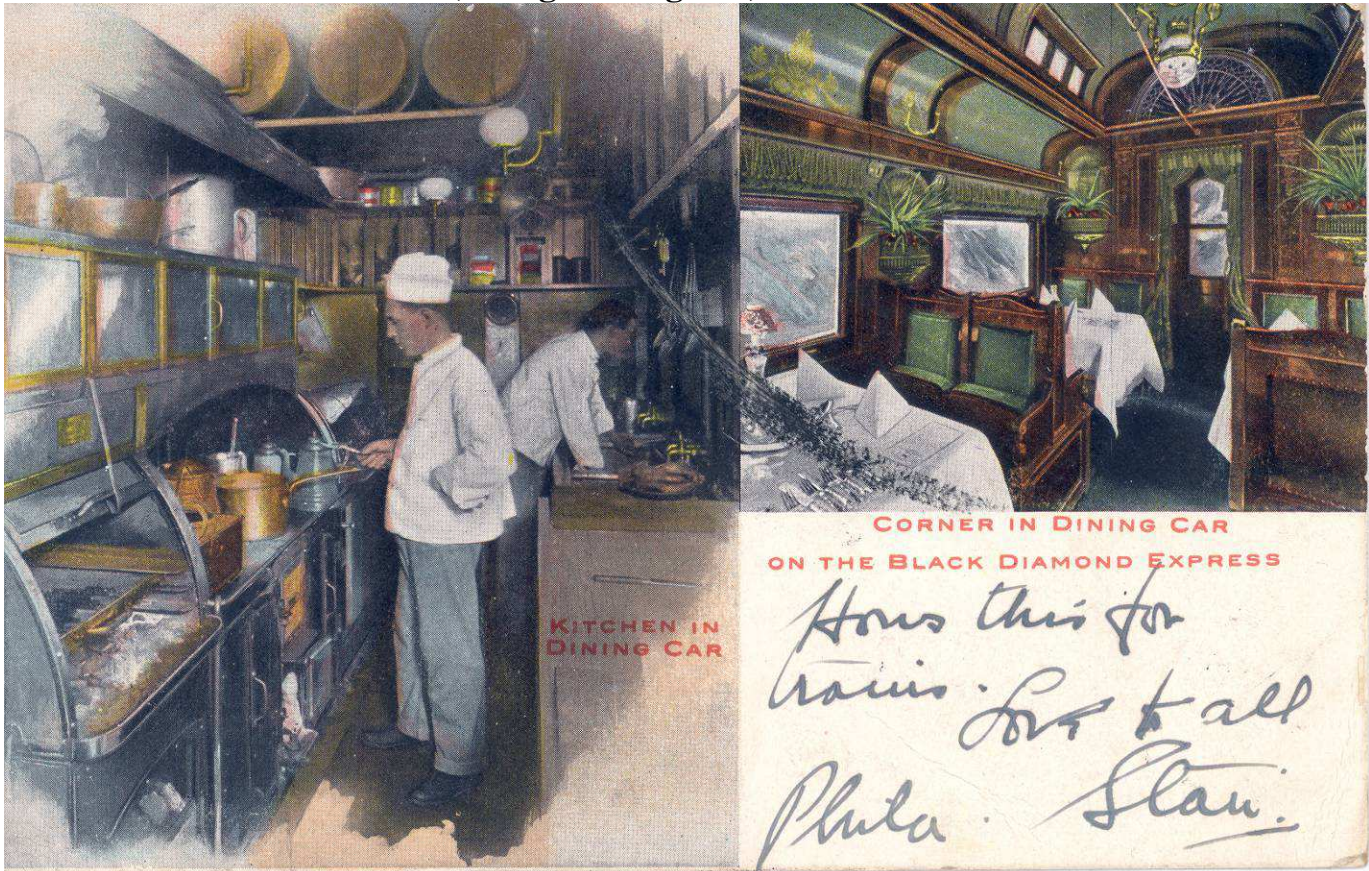
*Submitted by Mr. Richard Palmer, Syracuse, NY*



*Editor's note: Along with authors John Taibi and Peter Gores, Dick Palmer is collaborating on a forthcoming book on the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg railroad. The line would be absorbed by New York Central. Tthe "Hojack" as it was known has a unique and fascinating history. The Chapter archives hold some interesting photos of a railfan trip over the some of the line in the late 1940's and hopefully some of these photos will find a spot in the forthcoming publication. We are hoping for an early copy to review in this publication.*



## “SCENE” ON THE LINE (a long time ago....)



What better place was there more than one hundred years ago to enjoy lunch or dinner in the elegant confines of a Lehigh Valley dining car on the railroad's crack express from New York to Buffalo. The culinary delights that were offered to the travelling public as a matter of daily routine were numerous and exotic. The Black Diamond made its regal daylight journey for more than sixty years over one of the more scenic of routes between Gotham and Buffalo through the Finger Lakes Region of New York State until the train's demise in 1959.

The card's inscription is also interesting: "How's this for trains". The card was mailed from Philadelphia to an address in London, England. It eventually made its way back to the United States.



Speaking of "dinner in the diner"...be sure to check out the flyer in this issue of the ESX for our March 2020 Banquet. Not only is this year marking our 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of annual dinners, but we have a very special program lined up by Mr. Jerry Bertoldo, a railroad dining car aficionado and railfan / historian. Jerry's talk and picture program will review some of the glories of New York Central's once extensive dining car service...the exquisite menus, superb service, beautifully appointed dining cars of the post war period; tables covered with crisp white linen and set with gleaming silver and sparkling china especially crafted for the railroad, much of it made in Buffalo and Syracuse. With Central Terminal a major commissary point for the railroad, we can be additionally proud of what Buffalo contributed to the making of New York Central's extensive fleet of rolling first class restaurants. They were among the best and accompanied almost every long distance train in the golden years of rail travel. Get your reservations in early as seating is limited.



## WHY THE PROPOSED ERIE-LACKAWANNA MERGER IS IN YOUR INTEREST

Merger of the Erie Railroad and the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad to form a new company to be known as the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad Company, is now under consideration by the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Managements of both companies, important shippers and scores of public officials have gone on record favoring the merger as being economically feasible and in the public interest. Such a merger will result in a larger and stronger company, better able to meet the challenges faced by the railroad industry.

As a user of railroad passenger service, we believe you are also interested in the future of this form of transportation. In this brief message, we would like to give you the background of this proposed merger.

It is apparent that Congress and other government agencies will be appropriating more and more of the taxpayers' money for the support and promotion of airways, waterways and highways. In the last five years, the various federal, state and local governments have spent more than \$48 billion for the support of these competing transportation facilities.

As examples of this government help to railroad competitors, consider the St. Lawrence Seaway, with ship tolls which do not cover the operating cost; the federal highway program used for the construction of free throughways, the extensive airport expansion program to accommodate the huge jet airliners, or the \$18 million appropriated recently for expansion of a bus terminal by the New York Port Authority.

Part of the huge taxbills paid by the railroads to these governing bodies is used to support these competitors of the

railroads. None is spent to help the railroads. Admittedly, the railroads are struggling to exist against these mounting threats of subsidized competition.

Instead of seeking government handouts, and as an example of self-help, the Erie Railroad and the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad are asking for approval to merge their properties. Because both railroads parallel each other for substantial distances in the area east of Buffalo, there are opportunities to reduce costs and improve their competitive status.

Among the many benefits to be derived from such a merger is an indicated increase in earnings, before federal income taxes, of \$13 million annually within a five year period. These increased earnings will benefit all segments of the public—employees, customers, investors, suppliers and communities. Shareholders and bondholders of both companies have given overwhelming approval to the merger proposal.

Congress has encouraged mergers for the solution of recurring railroad problems. In approving another merger earlier this year, the Interstate Commerce Commission cited

such actions by individual railroads as "part of a general and inevitable movement in the railroad industry toward greater efficiency and economy in railroad operation."

Obviously, one strong railroad system can do a much better job than two weaker railroads. The public generally will benefit from a reduction in the cost of, and an improvement in the quality of, the rail service of these two important carriers.

This merger should be welcomed as a forward step in the development and preservation of a good system of railroad transportation.

*Erie-Lackawanna merger will  
be clearly in the public interest  
because it will:*

- \* Provide more efficient and economical transportation
- \* Enable the combined lines to offer improved service
- \* Attract new industries to the areas served
- \* Strengthen competitive position of combined railroad
- \* Generate additional traffic volume
- \* Stimulate capital improvements in railroad property
- \* Stabilize employment opportunities
- \* Restore earning power



## Erie Railroad

Erie's October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1959 timetable included this center piece editorial on why the proposed merger of the Erie and Delaware, Lackawanna & Western was both necessary but also in the public's interest. The success or failure of this merger is still debated to this day.



## THE “ARCH” OF TIME



With construction of the new downtown Amtrak station on Exchange Street now well underway, we can see the start of a barrel vaulted concourse recalling a much grander station and a much grander Buffalo (in railway terms) when ninety one years ago Central Terminal was under construction. We look forward to a vastly improved downtown station, a fitting gateway to the Queen City of the Great Lakes.

*Left: Buffalo News Photo, November 16, 2019*

Architects Alfred Fellheimer and Steward Wagner designed Buffalo's Central Terminal. This view, below, probably taken from a perch on the roof of the adjacent facility power house on May 22, 1928 shows the progress on one of the greatest rail terminals ever

built in North America.

Ironically, New York Central had promised to build a new downtown facility soon after Central Terminal was completed. The Great Depression, World War II and then the changing economy and postwar decline of rail passenger services rendered that idea moot. The State of New York rebuilt Exchange Street in the early 1950's when Central's tracks were relocated off of Church Street. The tiny station served for only a few years before all service to Niagara Falls ended.



It sat in forlorn abandonment until revival under Amtrak reinstating service to Niagara Falls and beyond to Toronto in 1979. Now, 91 years later, perhaps we're finally going to get a downtown station we once again can be proud of. *Above: Warren Inskip photo, Fellheimer & Wagner, New York Central.*

## SANTA TRAINS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The Buffalo, Cattaraugus & Jamestown will offer a series of short excursions out of Scott Street depot in Hamburg that may appeal to parents with very young kids.

<https://www.bcjrailroad.com/train-rides/santa-express/>

The venerable New York & Lake Erie is offering rides on the Saturday Nov 30, Dec 7, and Dec 14.

<https://www.facebook.com/wnytrainrides/>

Medina Railroad Museum has its usual Polar Express excursions the same weekends, Nov 30, Dec 7, Dec 14.

<https://www.medinarailroad.com/polar-express-excursions-2019>

## O HOLY NIGHT



Number L-3, the westbound *Phoebe Snow* has arrived at Buffalo's Lackawanna Terminal on a biting cold winter evening. Although the photo date is actually February 2, 1961, a similar scene would have been in place during the Christmas season just prior to this. With snow on her nose and misty, damp conditions along the platform, we can attest to the battle with Mother Nature's elements which we witnessed from our coach seats

while enroute. The Lackawanna's diesel units are softly throbbing. The convenient across the platform connection to westbound Nickel Plate train #5, the City of Chicago is welcomed by several passengers. It appears mail and express are already lined up on the platform and the warm glow of lights inside the streamlined sleeper on the NKP beckon those folks onward. But for us, Buffalo is home, and we savor the interlude to explore the magnificent Lackawanna station while we have a few minutes. In the distance we can hear church bells with a Christmas carol pealing out in the winter gloom. JCD

*Photo: Clifford A. Redanz JCD collection Right after the merger of Erie & DL&W, former Lackawanna trains were given the designation "L". Erie services were prefixed "E".*



## AT THE RECENT TRAIN SHOW

*Photos by Bob & Nancy Andrycha*



The Chapter's display and store participated in the annual Train Show sponsored by the WNYRHS in Hamburg the Saturday before Thanksgiving. L-R, Becky Gerstung, Steve Frey , Bob Andrycha, and Greg Gerstung.



The Chapter's display is seen with Nancy Andrycha who also helped at the show. "Thank You" to all who assisted with setup, sales, and takedown!



## **ELECTION TIME AGAIN - NRHS National representative and Chapter officers**

Becky Gerstung was re-elected as the Chapter's representative to NRHS National. The list of positions and nominations for Chapter officers & directors is as follows:

President – James V. Ball

Vice President – Gergory Gerstung

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President - vacant

Treasurer – Al LeTeste

Recording Secretary – Rebecca Gerstung

Corresponding Secretary – Nancy Andrycha

Membership Secretary – Neal Kerin

Comptroller – Bruce Becker

Interorganizational Coordinator - Mark Lewandowski

Chapter Director (Editor ESX) – John Dahl

Chapter Directors – Robert Andrycha, Dennis Hurley, Steve Frey, David Skoney

The election will be held at the December meeting. Nominations from the floor can be made, and the Chapter also has several openings in non Board positions for anyone who wants to help. Contact Jim Ball for details

## **ON THE TRACK AHEAD**

January 2020 will review “Rail Camp” the NRHS's effort to support and educate young persons with an interest in railroads, transit and related history. Mark, “MJ”, Lewandowski will be our guide to the events and programs offered at the summer 2019 Rail Camp.

Looking beyond, we need programs for the balance of the 2020 meeting cycle through June (and beyond). Please contact Jim Ball with any suggestions or better yet, sign up for a month and assist. It's your Chapter!

## **IMPORTANT MEETING TIME and other REMINDERS**



The Chapter meetings now begin **EARLIER, at 7 PM** per demand from our members. It is hoped the earlier start time, and thus earlier end time, will help encourage attendance at meetings. Mark your calendar now!

Remember too...its winter in Western New York! If weather forces cancellation of a meeting, the closing information will be aired on local TV and radio.

With the end of another year, we can look back at a very successful 2019. Have you renewed your dues yet? Do it now before your forget! Thank you for your continued support.

## CHAPTER CALENDAR

- DEC 7 Winterwalk, station open from 10 AM to 4 PM, Pony rides for kids, Lionel model train layout, exhibit tours, hot chocolate & cookies, plus Santa Claus will be visiting. Free. Volunteers needed to assist.
- DEC 13 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 7:00 PM. Program: Members Photo Night. Bring in your train, trolley, railroading photos and digital video.
- JAN 10 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 7:00 PM. Program: Rail Camp 2019 by Mark "MJ" Lewandowski.

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 [newsletter@nfcnrhs.com](mailto:newsletter@nfcnrhs.com) THANK YOU

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