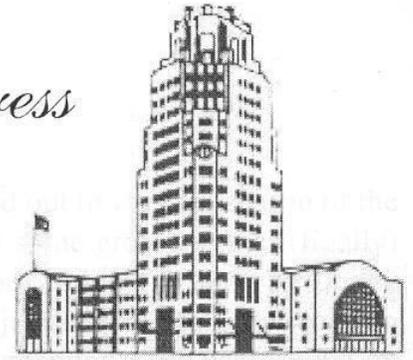


## Empire State Express



December 2021

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

Editor: John C. Dahl    Email [nfcnrhs@gmail.com](mailto:nfcnrhs@gmail.com)

**NOTE NEW INTERIM LOCATION:** The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, December 10, 2021 at 7:00 PM at the Town of Wheatfield Community / Senior Center, 2790 Church Road, North Tonawanda NY. Follow Rt 62 north to Ward Rd, turn left onto Ward Road and turn right onto Church Road.

### MEMBERS PHOTO NIGHT



Wishing you a Merry Christmas, Amtrak train #64 “dashes thru the snow” at the Exchange Street crossing in downtown Buffalo east of the station on December 26, 2020. Bring your photos to present at the December ‘Members Photo Night’. Please limit to about 10 minutes max per person. We are digitally oriented, so bring photos on a std. USB memory stick: JPG or already in a PowerPoint presentation file. If you wish to show traditional 35 MM slides, please contact Jim Ball ahead of time so we can have the Kodak projector on hand.

*Photo: Larry Gustina*

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



I write this column every month and yet when it comes to this being December, I'm always surprised. Where did the year go? We have already had snow, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving!

We are heading into that season where it could happen that we would cancel the regular monthly meeting because of the weather, instead of the Covid-19 virus. We have already had a little taste of that white stuff that makes a mess of the roads. As we have done in previous years, the cancellation will be on TV channel 2, other TV stations if they will accept it, radio stations Oldies 104FM, WGR 550AM, and WYRK 106.5FM. We usually try to make the decision soon enough to make the 5pm broadcasts.

Speaking of meetings, while the Board continues to search for the best possible meeting sight, we will be at the Town of Wheatfield Community/Senior Center for December. See the address and directions elsewhere in this issue. Until we find the next best place, we may have to try a couple of locations. This is uncharted territory, so please be patient. December is usually the month to hold elections. We didn't hold our elections last year, we simply left everyone in office for a second year. This has never happened before that I know of. This year we hope to elect a couple of new faces to the Board. We still need a Recording Secretary; Becky has been wearing two hats on the Board for several years, besides everything else that she does. We also need a Program Coordinator. This can be a Chapter Director or a non-Board position as the holder desires. There will always be plenty of help if needed. Interested?

We participated the WNYRHS show at the Fairgrounds on November 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>. We had a lot of things to sell. The treasury saw over \$1500 deposited. Thanks to all who helped load and unload and to be at the tables. Help loading things at the Museum and carrying them in at the Fairgrounds was much appreciated. Thanks to Greg Gerstung, Becky Gerstung, Karen Frey, Steve Frey, Al LeTeste, Harold Lee and Bruce Becker. We will also participate in the February Show which will be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

We are also planning on participating in Winterwalk this December 4<sup>th</sup>. As I write this, it has not happened yet but, by the time that those who get their ESX by regular U. S. P. S. receive theirs, it will be over. Becky and Ben and their helpers have decorated the Museum. Great news, there is heat in the middle section of the station where the Lionel layout is. We are hoping that a lot of smiling faces come through.

The Chapter Calendar is selling well through the mail and at the train shows. Have you gotten yours? Makes a great Holiday Gift!

Speaking of holidays, it is the tradition in our family to wish you a Merry Christmas! However you celebrate the holidays, make the best of it.

So, with all that, I'm looking forward to seeing you folks at the meeting again.

*Jim Ball*

**LAST RUN:** The ESX has been informed that long time member Richard Sturgis has passed away in November. The Chapter extends its sincere condolences to his family.

**Correction:** November 2021 ESX, page 3, train number should be #281 on Larry Gustina's photo.

## “SCENE” ON THE LINE



New York & Lake Erie thrilled fans with this repainted and rebuilt Alco switcher #308, on August 8, 2021 at Gowanda, NY just north of the depot. The shortline’s heritage is Erie RR and later EL before Conrail. NY&LE took over in 1978. The Alco S1 switcher is a young 75 years old, being built for the Erie in November of 1946. Using a classic pair of Alco FPA4 cab units, NY&LE continues to provide excursions and a quality experience for the rail enthusiast. *Photo: John C. Dahl*



The temperature is in the low 90’s as #113 is crossing over Beaver Meadow Road in North Java, NY with a north bound passenger special on the Arcade & Attica, August 9, 2021. The usually ‘freight only’ north end of the line was part of some ‘rare mileage’ for collectors. The now classic center cab unit was built by GE in 1959.

*Photo: John C. Dahl*

**“SCENE” - continued**



Hamburg, NY October 17, 2021. The Viscose #6 was built by Baldwin in 1925 and restored and operated today by Scott Symans. The jaunty 0-4-0 steamer is viewed at Scott Street near the old Erie RR depot (now a model train shop) and headed a number of short public excursions a few miles to the south in the Eden valley. The aroma of coal smoke and the sound of a steam whistle echoing in the cool Autumn air brought smiles to the many trackside observers. *Photo: John C. Dahl*

**LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR CHAPTER OFFICERS & DIRECTORS FOR 2022**

James V. Ball	President
Gregory G. Gerstung	Vice President
Vacant	Second Vice President
Bruce Becker	Treasurer
Nancy Andrycha	Corresponding Secretary
Rebecca Gerstung	Recording Secretary
Neil Keirn	Membership Secretary
Karen Frey	Comptroller
John C. Dahl	Chapter Director, Editor
Mark Lewandowski	Interorganizational Coordinator
David Skoney	Chapter Director, Historian
Robert Andrycha	Chapter Director, Museum
Randy Bugucki	Chapter Director, Equipment Restoration
Albert Le Teste	Chapter Director, Head Groundskeeper
Steve Frey	Chapter Director, Road Foreman of Engines
Benton Hiltz	Chapter Director, Procurement Officer

The election will take place at the December 2021 meeting.

## CHAPTER MEMORIES

### **A Major Change – But first one more look back By Geoff Gerstung**

In 1942 our organization changed its affiliation from the “Railroad Enthusiasts” over to the National Railway Historical Society. Before we kick off our early days as an NRHS chapter, lets take a brief but closer look back at the start up of our organization in 1938. The following was taken from a Chapter History written by Harold Ahlstrom, then Chapter Historian.

“The founder and strong leader of our chapter, until his death in 1946, was Russell H. Shapley. John M. Prophet (III), chapter member, is the source of this information. Mr. Shapley convened a meeting at his home on April 8, 1938, of people he knew who might be interested. Russ at that time had a job as a collector for a credit clothing store and covered the east and south sides of the Buffalo area. Here he found former and present railroad men, or men who were just interested in railroads. At this first meeting a group of 16 people formed the Buffalo Division of the Railroad Enthusiasts.

Meetings were held every week at the Shapley’s home. In May of that year a trip was run on the New York Central to Cleveland. The Central had an excursion fare every week and generated a lot of publicity for these trips. Through the efforts of Russ two extra cars, one an open platform, were attached to the regular train out of Buffalo, these being taken off at the Collingwood Shops where an inspection was held. Later an electric engine took these two cars into Cleveland. With the help of the railroad, the 16 founding members ended up with about 70 passengers on this first fantrip of our organization.

This started a schedule of monthly trips. In June they operated a special train on the Arcade & Attica RR, in July via New York Central to Westfield with chartered cars on the Jamestown, Westfield & Northwestern interurban line. The Buffalo to Jamestown all inclusive, steam/electric round trip fare was \$1.25. August saw special cars on the Niagara, St. Catherine’s & Toronto interurban system, and in October special cars on the Pennsylvania Railroad day train to Emporium and return.

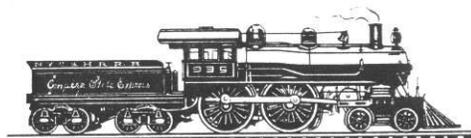
In May (1939) the Collingwood trip was repeated. (*Ed. Note: That trip will be reviewed in detail in the next issue of this column.*) Also in 1939, Albert D. Kerr, Charles Erler, Laurence Burke and Harold Ahlstrom appeared on the chapter fan trips, joining the Buffalo group in 1939 and 1940.

The cost of yearly (RRE) dues in 1938 was \$2.50 plus a small divisional (local) dues.

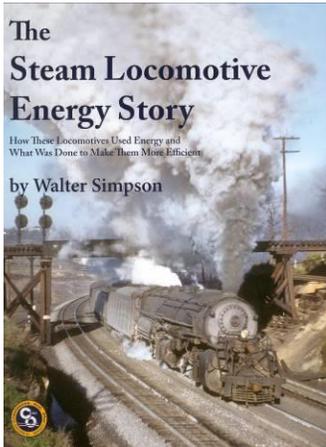
The first “Buffalo Division RRE” officers in 1938 as could be identified were as follows:

Russell H. Shapley, Chairman  
C. Ulysses Paul, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
John M. Prophet, III Secretary  
John Ryan, Treasurer  
Roy M. Zimmerman, Director & Program Chairman”

*Editor’s note: The Chapter’s rich history is in itself a unique part of Buffalo’s railroad heritage. The now late Geoff Gerstung prepared the above text more than 25 years ago, and there is a notebook he made full of such stories dated from 1938 through 1965 on Chapter history. We will print these in ESX going forward. – JCD*



## A RAILFAN's BOOKSHELF - *An occasional column of book reviews*



### **The Steam Locomotive Energy Story**

**How These Locomotives Used Energy and What Was Done to Make Them More Efficient**

**By Walter Simpson**

If you think you're pretty knowledgeable about steam locomotives, think again and acquire Walter Simpson's book which will lead you through the energy story of steam, an area we probably would not be able to fathom on our own. For more than 100 years the steam locomotive had evolved becoming intricate mechanical wonders of their age. They were (and still are, for the few examples we still have operating) dramatic, colorful, sometimes loud, sometimes cantankerous but always photogenic. Steam by the 1930s and early 1940s had hit its pinnacle of perfection with the so called "Super Power" locomotives in examples such as the Hudson style, the Berkshires, and Northern wheel arrangement. And yet, the energy efficiency whether coal or oil fired of these noble mechanical wonders was never very good. That problem led many a great mind to attempt to improve upon the machine. Walter's latest book traces the many ingenious devices and design ideas employed to improve upon the efficiency of steam and in so doing, improve its utilization and cost structure. The result of those efforts was some of the most beautiful engines ever to roll out of the erecting halls of Baldwin, Alco, Lima as well as those railroads who built their own locomotives. The trackside drama they provided continues to thrill those who are privileged to witness steam today, from a lowly steam 0-4-0 switcher like Viscose #6, to the sleek streamlined N&W 611 and the ever-popular NKP 765 to a great 4-8-8-4 Big Boy recently returned to special service on the Union Pacific. While this could have been a very 'dry' subject to relate to readers, Walter's animated style keeps you engaged. The profuse use of beautiful classic steam era photography and vintage railroad trade-press advertising, along with clear, crisp drawings and charts illustrates this book. The Steam Locomotive Energy Story is an outstanding contribution to the science but also the art of locomotive and railroad history. The only sad part is that the diesel inevitably would prevail over steam. But that's a story for another book! – JCD

*The Steam Locomotive Energy Story is available from C&OHS for \$34.95 plus postage. Go to [www.Chessishop.com](http://www.Chessishop.com) and search for "Simpson." \* This is a non-profit endeavor with all proceeds going to C&OHS. Walter's analysis of diesels energy usage was presented as a program to the Chapter in April 2019 and he also has a book covering this topic. See <http://www.diesel-electric-locomotives.com/> The Chapter library also has a copy of Walter's "Diesel-Electric Locomotives".*

## **INFORMATION REQUESTS**

Chapter member John Slater is a frequent contributor to Western New York Heritage Magazine, and is currently working on a project for that publication to document the **Delaware, Lackawanna & Western at Buffalo harbor** between the years 1879 & 1917. He is looking for photographs, prior history articles, references, etc. If you can assist, please email him at [nkphts4431@aol.com](mailto:nkphts4431@aol.com).

ESX editor (John Dahl) is preparing an article for the New York Central System Historical Society regarding Buffalo's Belt Line. I am looking for photographs, especially historic material when NYC operated the line, from the steam era up thru the NYC diesel age and into Penn Central. I'd prefer not to get into use of Conrail / CSX era material. Please email the editor at [nfcnrhs@gmail.com](mailto:nfcnrhs@gmail.com) if you have photos that might assist in illustrating operations on the **New York Central Buffalo Belt Line**.

## CHRISTMAS ON THE LEHIGH VALLEY



In December of 1976 the snow that fell mid month provided a festive element for the upcoming Christmas holidays. In just ten days the blessed date would be here, a time to relax and enjoy the cozy comforts of family and friends and the season. Hurry, better get out and do some Christmas shopping now. You need to help the folks decorate the house and pick out a Christmas tree! Despite this, what should have been a merry time would be one marked by sadness, perhaps even mourning. I had grown up with trains, and one that I held in high esteem was the Lehigh Valley RR. But now in winter 1976 was a tough reality. As a company, the Lehigh Valley Railroad was defunct. The arrival of Conrail on April 1<sup>st</sup> had extinguished the likes of many of the classic Northeastern U.S. railroads. In Western New York and almost all of New York State, the LV was no more. We knew it was merely a matter of a few months before the wreckers would arrive. They would scavenge the weedy right of way and begin removing the tracks – rails, spikes, tie plates and wooden ties – all would be scooped up. The mileposts and round whistle signs and crossing signals would disappear in a tangle of scrap metal. Bridges and often their abutments too would be ripped out or cut down leaving scarred earth. And in many instances whatever was left of the old depots and lineside structures which once upon a timetable had spelled prosperity for the railroad would fall to a bulldozer. The Niagara Falls branch, once a double track raceway carrying innumerable freight and passenger trains was no exception to the rest of the LV's right of way. For many years prior to Conrail, the line had carried on in spite of the corporate bankruptcy. Its colorful Cornell red Alco RS switchers could be seen almost daily shuttling freight cars through the Tonawandas and Amherst. My grandmother occupied a home located just at the edge of what had been Tonawanda Jct. and that afforded me an opportunity to see the dazzling 'Snowbird' scheme engines hauling long freight trains to and from Suspension Bridge with interchange traffic for Canadian railroads. The LVRR was still a railroad of character and so very interesting to observe. For Christmas 1976 and beyond, the whistle was now silent. Nor did the locomotive's headlight pierce the gloom of a winter day. No trains would rumble around the curve at Tonawanda Jct. No more friendly waves could be exchanged with the crew in the buggy. I had grown up but my railroad had died. - JCD *LVRR Williamsville, NY December 15, 1976. Photo by Jon Rothenmeyer.*

## THREE MINUTES FOR NO. 3 at Binghamton



### “The Phoebe Snow”

streamliner, train No.3, glides smoothly to a stop on the westbound track of the Binghamton station as the anxious service crews stand-by. In a moment they will swarm over the train in an effort to accomplish one of the most important jobs on the railroad...keeping a train on time.

The luxury streamliner will be in the station only three minutes before continuing the run to Buffalo. In this time, which is less than it would take the average man to shave, almost a score of railroadmen are kept busy in order that the train will depart on schedule.

As the train comes to a stop activity resounds throughout the station. Red caps, trundling their baggage carts, and passengers, desiring a seat by a window, scurry towards the train. The ticket agent breathes a sigh of relief as he watches the last purchaser race towards the platform.

Two coaches, which were added in Hoboken to handle the overflow crowd, have to be cut out of the train. A switch engine and crew take the last four cars off the train-the two extra coaches, the sleeper and the tavern lounge- sets the coaches out on a yard track and then returns the sleeper and lounge car to the train. Air and steam lines are connected and their part of the job is done.

As the switch work is being done at the rear of the train, the baggage and mail cars are being unloaded and loaded. Mail, baggage and express to be loaded on the train at Binghamton has been put on hand trucks earlier in order to facilitate the operation. Empty and loaded trucks are made ready nearby so that the operation will run swiftly and smoothly and no time will be lost.

In the meanwhile the water tanks in the dining car are being filled and car inspectors are working up both sides of the train, checking the running gear thoroughly. Although speed is the order of things during the stop at Binghamton, it is not sacrificed for safety. The work is performed with one eye on the clock and the other on safety.

Simultaneous with the other phases of the operation is the changing of the train crew. The new crew will take the train to Buffalo and replaces one that started at Hoboken. The old crew leaves any last minute information that might be important as they assist passengers disembarking from the train.

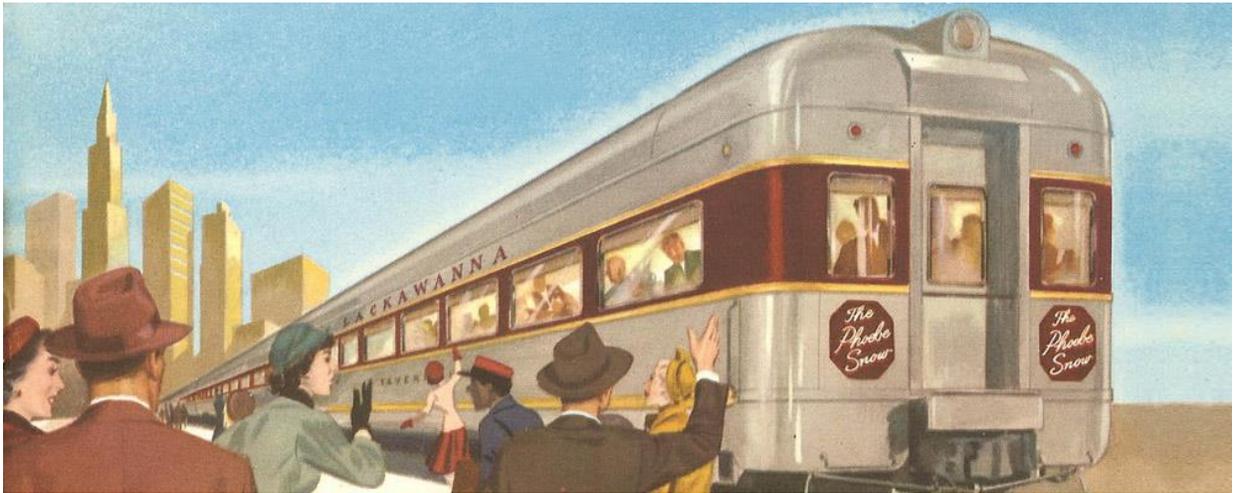
As the new train crew is helping the other passengers board the train conductor is delivering the train orders and clearance to the engineer on the diesel. The engine crew that takes the “Phoebe Snow” out of Binghamton is the same one that brought it in. They run from Scranton to Elmira.

### THREE MINUTES - continued

By the time the conductor has reached the passenger coaches the inspection has been completed, the diner watered, the mail, baggage and express has been loaded, two cars have been taken out of the train and the air has been tested.

Three minutes is a short time, but it is not short when the operation comes off swiftly and efficiently. This has been accomplished by the crews and as they stand away from the track, the train starts to roll slowly out of the station. Waves are exchanged by crew and spectators.

The three-minute time barrier has been defeated again.



*Editor's note: the preceding article originally appeared in Volume 1 Number 1 of "The Lackawanna", official company magazine of the DL&W RR, April 1954. Collection of Jon Rothenmeyer. The new streamlined Phoebe Snow was inaugurated in November 1949 and by 1954 it was a well-established institution, the pride of the railroad. The train direction in the photograph on the previous page is eastbound; the story is of the westbound train but it is such an iconic view at Binghamton your editor decided to use it. The Lackawanna produced artwork above implies the New York City skyline as seen from the Hoboken, NJ terminal of the railroad. The short ride by ferry across New York harbor from the now restored Hoboken terminal is still a fascinating way to enter Manhattan for those of us for whom getting there (by rail) is still half the fun! When time travel is perfected, you can bet the Phoebe Snow will be on my list! Photo & illustration, collection JCD.*

### ON THE TRACK AHEAD



The New York Central's classic Pacemaker boxcar service introduced in 1946 is certainly one way Santa can deliver on time to all good girls and boys! Running on an expedited schedule, the trains were a fast way to move LCL (less than carload) freight well before the days of FedEx, UPS & now Amazon. As we look forward to a new year of 2022, let's take a moment to pause. We wish you a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!  
*Artwork: New York Central.*

## CHAPTER CALENDAR

- DEC 4** Winterwalk in downtown North Tonawanda, Christmas at the Erie RR Station, 10 AM to 4 PM. Operating model train layout, cookies & hot chocolate, visit Santa, Pony rides for kids. <https://www.facebook.com/LumberCityWinterWalk>
- DEC 10** Regular meeting, **NEW interim location: Town of Wheatfield Community / Senior Center, 2790 Church Road, North Tonawanda (Wheatfield).** Follow US 62 north to Ward Road, turn left on to Ward Road then turn right on Church Road. Program: Members Photo Night. 7:00 PM.
- JAN** Regular meeting, **LOCATION AND DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED, CHECK OUR WEBSITE,** Program: Some digitized movie films of Jim VanBrocklin.

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

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