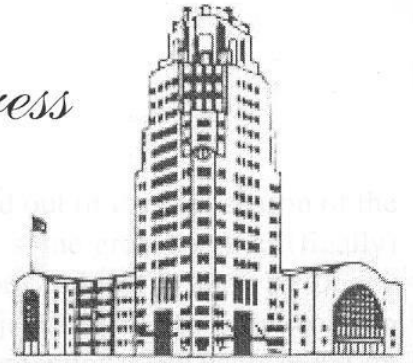


## *Empire State Express*



**November 2020**

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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The meeting of the Chapter will be held on **Friday, November 13, 2020 at 7:00 PM** at the Degraff Community Center, 139 Division St., North Tonawanda, NY.

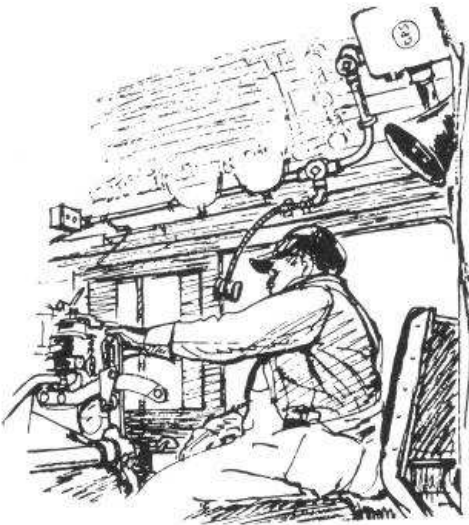
### BUFFALO's TROLLEY LEGACY



The program for November will be presented by Greg Gerstung, and was originally put together by Albert Kerr, Harold Ahlstrom, John M. Prophet III and Laurence Burke and donated to the NRHS National Film Library. Greg has digitized these priceless images for our archives. Come and enjoy familiar scenes as they looked when trolleys traveled the streets of Buffalo.

“Nearside” #6014 at the Terrace in 1946 showing the green and cream color scheme that was soon to be replaced by orange. The I.R.C. had approximately 350 Nearside, many of which ran until the end of service.  
*Photo: Albert D. Kerr Niagara Frontier Chapter, NRHS archives*

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



There is a line from the Mamas and the Papas album California Dreamin' that goes "All the leaves are brown and the sky is gray". Yes, it's that time of year, actually I'd say it's all the leaves are down and the trees are bare. The sun sets very early and the air has a nasty chill to lately.

We are heading into that season where it could happen that we would cancel the regular monthly meeting because of the weather. You all remember 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 5 pm broadcasts.

We have a bit of a mystery on our hands. We have unearthed what we believe to be a foundation buried in the parking area about twenty five feet off the west side of the station. It's a poured concrete wall. Steve Frey says is too big to be a catch basin. Do any of you have any idea what it might have been for? We have yet to find any pictures of the property that show that area from "back in the day".

We have faced our share of challenges in the last thirty years in creating the "The Railroad Museum of the Niagara Frontier". Those of us who were involved from day one remember a few that seemed insurmountable at the time. Things like rebuilding the entire west side of the station roof in 1988. In maybe 1990 we tore out and rebuilt the entire three hundred feet of the siding that our equipment currently sits on. We did it ourselves, with some rented and borrowed equipment. Today most of us are too old to do that kind of manual labor any more. We hire things done when and where we can. We have been doing better with finding grant money to pay for these things. This year has been especially difficult because of the Covid-19 situation. We lost most of our fund raising opportunities. This led to a halt in work on the Archive Room expansion and now on the ADA compliance project. The problem with the sewer was totally unexpected. It has the potential to cost us a lot of money to fix. We had J. R. Swanson Plumbing in for a look at the situation. They recommended installing a "Test Tee" or port in the line. This will allow the insertion of a video camera and hopefully locate the problem. The station is nearly one hundred years old and it was built into the footprint of the previous one. Until we know what we are up against, we don't know how to proceed.

Soon you will be seeing the notice in the mail asking you to renew your membership. Please return them as soon as you can. I would also ask that you be as generous as you can with your donations during this lean time.

In the good news department, we are beginning to get back some things that we sent out to be scanned. We have also received the latest round of digitalized films. These might show up at future meetings as special programs. Those of you who follow Facebook on line have seen what a great job Bruce Becker has done to put us out where the world can see us. We continue to chronicle and preserve the past and present it to the future.

The 2021 Chapter Calendar is for sale, and it's moving well. Pick one up at the meeting or get it by mail. It makes a great Holiday Gift.

I hope to see you at the meeting, In the meantime, stay safe, and stay healthy.

*Jim Ball*

**More about the cover photo:** "Nearside" refers to a streetcar design by in-house engineers of the Thomas E. Mitten management team, which ran the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company. The car would pick up and discharge passengers on the "nearside" of an intersection rather than the "far side" as the previous generation of conventional cars did. (The latter method of operation caused frequent gridlock, as the stopped cars blocked cross traffic).

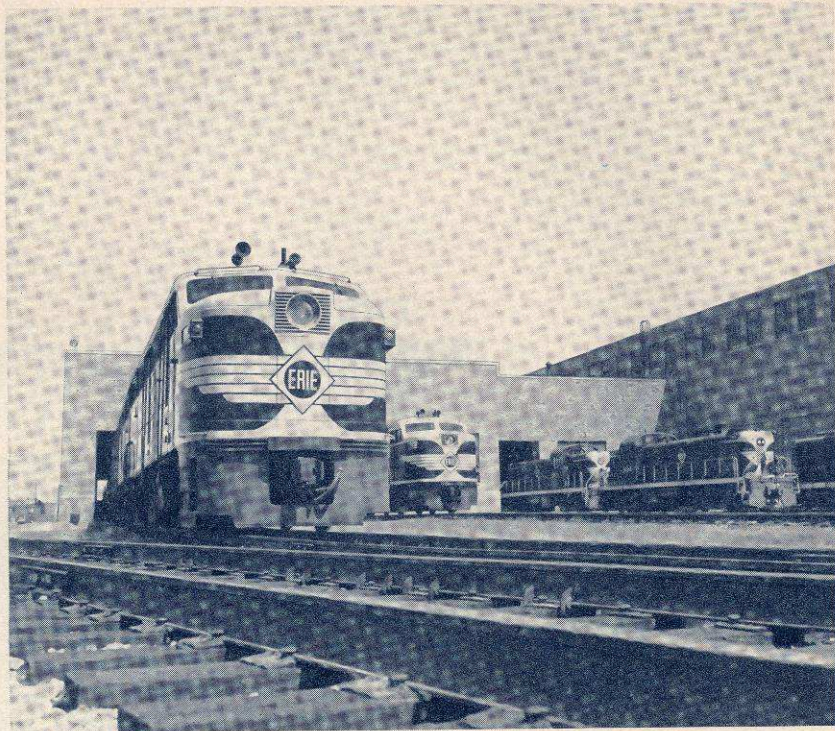
## **“SCENE” ON THE LINE - AUTUMN GLORY ON THE NEW YORK & LAKE ERIE RAILROAD**

**Photo by Jon Rothenmeyer**

2020 marks forty-two years that the New York & Lake Erie has been operating on the former Erie branch lines south of Buffalo. Today it is the operator of the rail in Cattaraugus County from Gowanda to Conewango. The Buffalo & South Western was leased by the Erie in 1880 and fully absorbed in 1895. Today the line appears to be out of service below South Dayton. NY&LE once also operated from the tiny hamlet of Dayton, NY to Cattaraugus. That line was the original Erie mainline, completed in 1851. Rails are in, but are out of service between Dayton & Cattaraugus. They are torn up beyond. Once upon a time, the B&SW extended to Jamestown, and the original Erie went eastward to Salamanca and westward from Dayton to Dunkirk, NY. Dayton was thus “Crossroads of the Erie”. The climb up Dayton Hill from Gowanda to Dayton is in places 2.5% making it one of the steepest mainline grades in the eastern United States. In the steam era, Gowanda was a helper station and heavy southbound trains required pushers to get up the hill. Steam is long gone but the drama of Dayton hill can still be enjoyed today on one of the New York & Lake Erie’s passenger excursions behind vintage Alco FPA4 diesels.



Engine 6764 is on the point on a beautiful October 17, 2020 afternoon at James Road in Dayton, NY. With bell clanging and horn blasts hooting for the rural crossing, the classic Alco FPA diesels have started the descent of the famous 2.5% grade of the hill. A sumac’s foliage is ablaze in red. The train exited the Dayton tunnel a few minutes before; above it is the now abandoned Erie main to Dunkirk. The stone portal can be discerned at the extreme left of the photo. “AUTUMN GLORY” almost seems an understatement for this vignette of classic railroading the way we hope it will always remain. -JCD



## What happened to the old roundhouse?

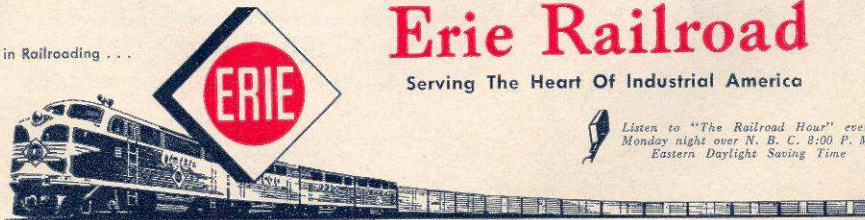
You don't have to look far—you'll find the answer in this picture. Actually, on the Erie the roundhouse has gone "square" and with it a long tradition in railroading has changed for the better.

For many years, steam engines were serviced in the roundhouse with its giant turntable. Today, Erie's diesel fleet is washed, refueled, lubricated and kept in sweet running order at modern diesel facilities like the one shown. Clean, ef-

ficient as the locomotives themselves, these diesel shops keep the fleet rolling on a dependable, round-the-clock schedule.

Here you have another example of Erie's progressive railroading—finding a way of meeting efficiently every new problem in providing the best in safe, dependable transportation. Take this idea a step further and you know why so many shippers say "Route it Erie!"

Mark of PROGRESS in Railroading . . .



Listen to "The Railroad Hour" every Monday night over N. B. C. 8:00 P. M. Eastern Daylight Saving Time

In this ad from August 1953, the Erie was proudly touting its new diesel locomotives and their modern diesel shops that were rapidly replacing the steam age landmark "round houses". Who would have guessed that two of the Alco built cab units (albeit, ex-CN) would still be running just a few miles from us on the old Erie's Buffalo & Southwestern branch almost 70 years later. And yes, they look sharp and still sound great today just as they did to railroad and the public all of those years ago.

## PLOUGHING IN

Erie Railroad Showing Result of Expenditures.

Gradually Growing Toward Standard Rank.

Erie Operatives Working with More Pride and Under Strong Stimulus.

Erie, like a number of other stocks, made a new high record for the year this week, but the interesting point about Erie's advancement witnessed in other stocks, it began before the Standard Oil decision was handed down. The facts are that the public is just beginning to realize that a remarkable change is taking place in Erie. Only a few years ago everybody was calling the road "an underdog," and to the traveling and shipping public it was quite evident that the Erie's officers and employees recognized the title. Today it is different. Anybody can see that Erie's employees go about their work with heads up and shoulders back. When you see an Erie locomotive with a name painted on the cabin in large letters it means that the engineer in charge has made the high record for fuel, repairs, and ton mile service performed. That locomotive is his as long as he stays with the company, and it is his proudest possession. So far, few engineers have had locomotives named for them, but many of them have rescheduled the next honor by being elected a member of the "Order of the Red Spot." When you see an Erie locomotive with a name painted on it or the round number plate in front of the boiler painted red, you are sure that it is a good one. As for Erie's roadbed, the right of way has never been kept in such "shipshape." In the near future the section-gang making the best showing will be rewarded by a specially painted and marked section house. Such good nature rivalry as now exists among the Erie's employees does much to explain the change that has taken place. As for tangible results, during the nine months of the year New York Central, and Baltimore and Ohio show decreases in net \$2,159,000 and of \$2,500,000 respectively, while Erie during the same nine months increased its net \$361,000. Those figures put an end to the old legend that Erie is the first road to feel hard times, because it exists on the overflow of business discarded by kindhearted neighbors. When there is not enough business to go around and empty box cars are piling up on sidings, there is no such thing among railroads as charity. In hard times the railroad that is best is the one that has the most business originating along its own lines. In that respect, most people would hardly think of comparing Erie with the New York Central; the facts, are that last year the number of tons of revenue freight hauled one mile per mile of road operated amounted to 2,880,000 on the Erie compared with 2,290,000 on the New York Central. Erie got the name of "under the dog" because of its heavy bonded debt that amounts to \$107,000 per mile, compared with \$71,000 for the New York Central. Only recently, however the management determined to "plough in" earnings until the property grew to its fixed charges. Having determined upon that policy, the management took another step by accepting every opportunity to talk to employees in man-to-man fashion as follows: "Now look here, you have been called the under dog until you believe it yourself. Get on the job and shake that idea." That was before the Erie had locomotives with names or red-spots instead of numbers, and before the traveling public began to miss the pieces of rear wheels, axles, coupling pins, and bolts that had been strewn along the right of way. Erie has considerable ploughing in of earnings to do before bonds can be sold to advantage. When that time comes, one of the first problems that will be solved will be the erection of new freight terminals where the Jersey City passenger station now stands. A new passenger station to be built over the Hudson tunnel will house the executive and clerical forces, and thus, by saving New York office rent will pay its way. All of the plans for the new Jersey City freight and passenger terminals have been drawn and the exact cost ascertained.

Source: Western New Yorker, Warsaw, N.Y., June 1, 1911

*Transcribed by Richard Palmer*



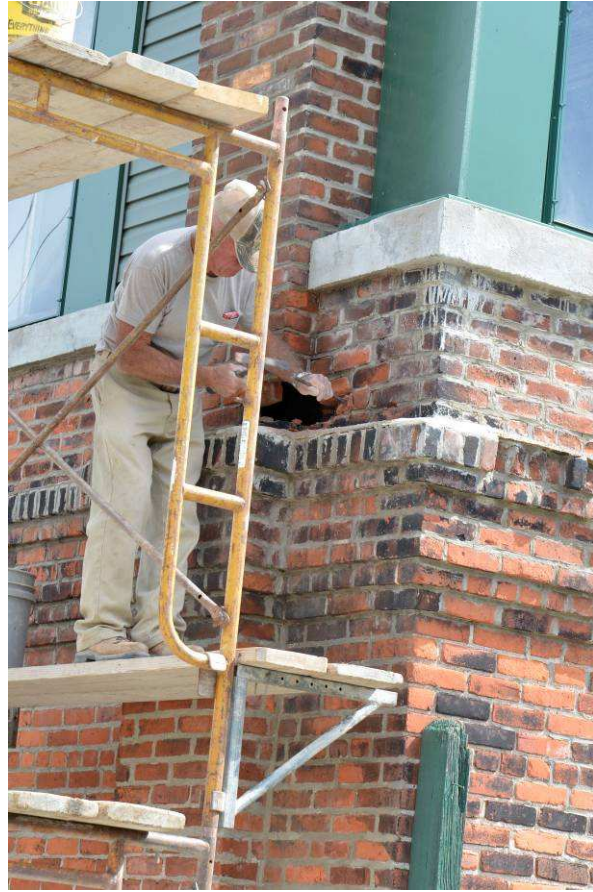
## SOUTH DAYTON, NY – Then and Now



Around 1910, the old South Dayton, NY depot was still in use. This building was replaced with a newer structure about 1915 (seen below) and it has been preserved. Famously used as a setting for memorable train scenes in the movie “The Natural”, the village sees an occasional passenger excursion train of the New York & Lake Erie RR. Below: October 17, 2020. *John C. Dahl photo.*



## POINTING THE WAY – EL2 TOWER CHIMNEY & BRICK REPAIRS



The Chapter has put considerable capital into preserving our landmark interlocking tower across from the station. In 2019 we did major work to stabilize and repair the lower (ground level) brickwork. We uncovered the boarded up second story and repaired and preserved with more modern weather resistant materials while at the same time undertaking to repair and rebuild the original tower windows. This year work on rebuilding the original windows has continued, and the upper level masonry and especially the chimney received attention. As you know, the 2019 work was completed with the assistance of a grant, but the needs of the long neglected structure have required much more effort. Despite the ongoing pandemic, good work has been accomplished. Thank you to all who have donated towards our preservation efforts. Slowly but surely the old interlocking tower will come back to life as one of the crown jewels of our museum project. Your continued help and support will get us there. Thank you to all!

As a part of this work, masonry contractor Marty Bryant is seen re-pointing the chimney on the tower, September 3, 2020. *All photos by Greg Gerstung.*



## 80<sup>th</sup> CHAPTER BANQUET



the cars, the crews, the elegant table settings and descriptions of railroad menu selections. We also enjoyed a tasty lunch beforehand, and the always popular silent auction. Many thanks especially to banquet chair Nancy Andrycha with assistance from Becky Gerstung, Bob Andrycha, Jim Ball and Bruce Becker who made a video of the program and posted it on our Facebook page. And thank you to all who attended making this a very successful event. *Photo by Greg Gerstung*

On September 26 our 80<sup>th</sup> banquet was held at Ilio DiPaolo's restaurant. Jerry Bertoldo is introducing his wonderful program on the Dining Services of the New York Central Railroad. Jerry's program was filled with great anecdotes of the Central's once extensive dining car operations (including a short talk by Jim Ball recalling his dad's work for the Central's dining car commissary in Buffalo Central Terminal during the glory years of passenger trains), and illustrated with great photos of



## ANOTHER VIEW FROM OUR NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Steeple cabs P-1 and P-2 roll down Mill Street in Lockport in 1950.

*Photographer unknown. Niagara Frontier Chapter, NRHS archives.*

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

Becky Gerstung has graciously accepted the nomination to once again be the Chapter's representative to NRHS National. The election confirming this will be held at the November meeting. December will feature the election of all other Chapter officers. The list of positions and nominations will appear in the December newsletter.

## **ESX & CHAPTER FACEBOOK PAGES NEEDS YOU**

The Empire State Express and our Facebook pages are in need of your photos, new feature article items, railroading memories, etc. Send your material to the editor c/o the Chapter's email address: [nfcnrhs@gmail.com](mailto:nfcnrhs@gmail.com).

## **ON THE TRACK AHEAD**

December is Member's Night. We can accommodate digital photos and digital video (with or without sound included) and 35mm traditional slides. Please limit your presentation to about 10 minutes so all who want to participate will have time to do so. This is YOUR night, so come on out and show some photos. It's informal and lots of fun.

January 2021 will feature now vintage views of Bicentennial locomotives and equipment in a slide collection review by Mark, "MJ", Lewandowski. This will be lots of fun for all, looking at the 'red, white and blue' paint schemes that honored the Nation's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1976.

Looking beyond, we need programs for the balance of the 2021 meeting cycle.

**NO TRAIN SHOW IN HAMBURG, NY THIS YEAR. NO WINTER TRAIN SHOW IN SPRINGFIELD, MA. in January 2021.** Victims of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, both shows have been cancelled. (It's sure going to be a long winter with no train shows.)

## **IMPORTANT MEETING REMINDERS**

**Chapter meetings begin at 7 PM. Because of NYS Covid-19 restrictions, our meetings like every other public event, require face coverings and chairs are socially distanced. We are limited to a maximum attendance of 50 persons. Your temperature will be recorded and sign in is required. If you have any Covid symptoms or have been recently sick with other respiratory illness, please do yourself (and the rest of us) a favor and stay home. We want everyone to enjoy our program but to also be safe. Until this pandemic is over we must follow all safety and health guidelines. Thank you for your cooperation.**



The NY&LE will operate on Halloween & November 7 and plans to run several trips out of Gowanda for the Christmas holiday season, starting November 28. Check out their Facebook page and web site for ticket sales and details: <https://nylerailroad.com>

Coasting downgrade at James Road, Dayton, NY, October 17, 2020. *JCD photo.*

## CHAPTER CALENDAR

- NOV 13 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 7:00 PM. Program "Buffalo Trolley Legacy" shown by Greg Gerstung. Vintage photos from our archives, newly digitized.
- DEC 11 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 7:00 PM. Program: Members Photo Night
- JAN 8 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 7:00 PM. Program: Bicentennial Rails by Mark "MJ" Lewandowski, a look at colorful locomotives and equipment in 1976.

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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