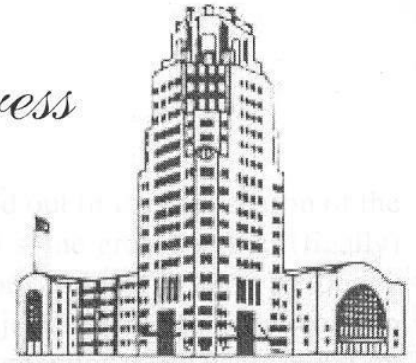


Empire State Express



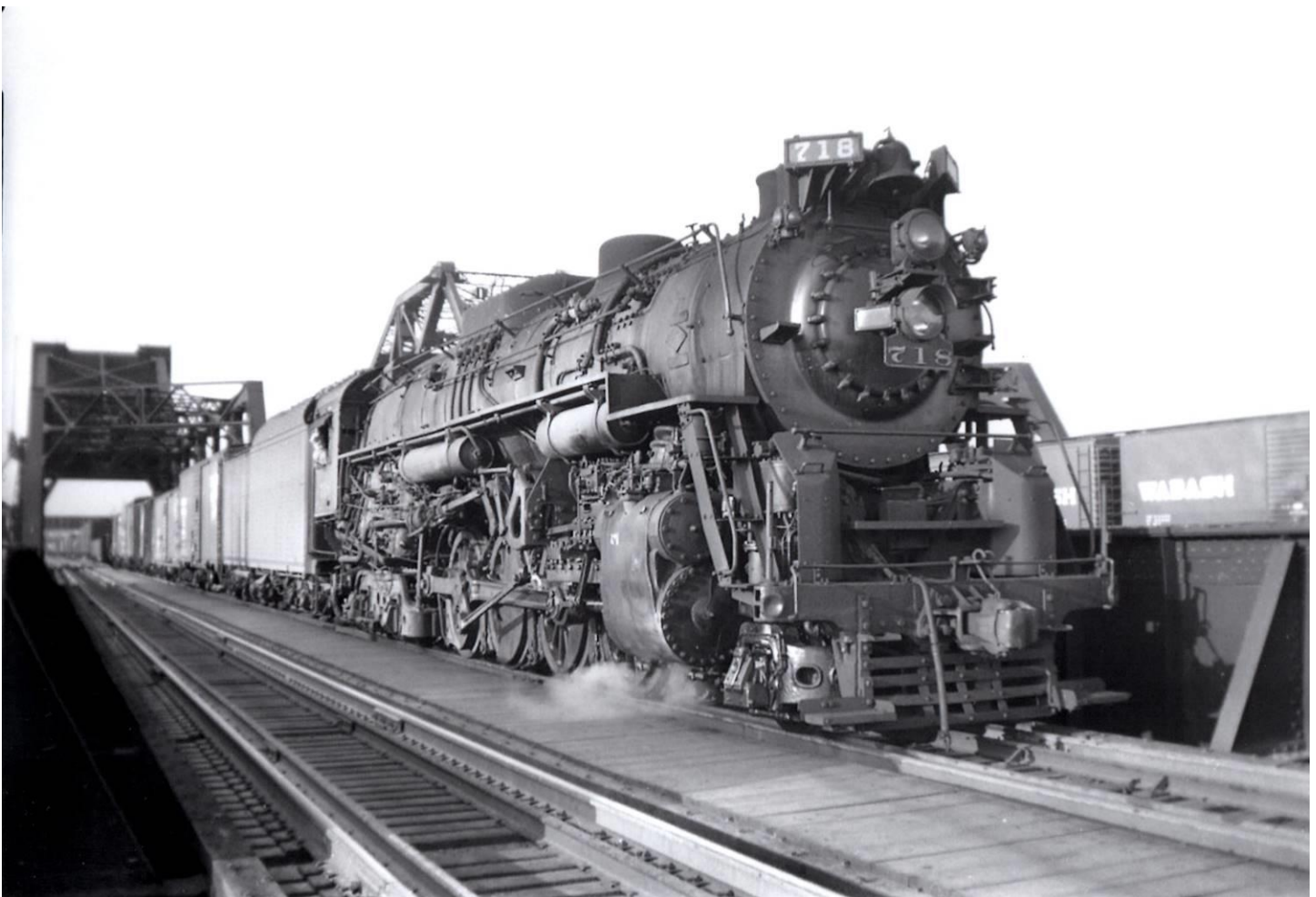
February 2022

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

NOTE NEW MEETING LOCATION: The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, February 11, 2022 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.

NICKEL PLATE MEMORIES WITH FRED FURMINGER.



NKP #718 class S-1 2-8-4 Berkshire (Lima, June 1942). It is June 15, 1957 as the 718 is crossing the Buffalo River drawbridge leaving the NKP Buffalo Junction yard with a westbound hotshot. Fred B. Furminger.

On the cover: The New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, better known as the “Nickel Plate Road” operated a fast freight service in the 1950s that rivaled and beat anything its competitors could muster. The NKP’s eastern terminus in Buffalo with timed connections to the DL&W, Erie, & NYC meant there were a lot of trains. Steam power lasted well into the late 1950s putting the NKP at the top of most railfans ‘must see’ lists, especially for the famous Berkshire class locomotives. A young Fred Furminger was trackside back then to capture much of this drama and we will welcome Fred’s first hand memories of the NKP, its steam locomotives and trains in both still photos and in color movies now in digital format which Fred shot during numerous trackside outings more than 60 years ago. **Don’t miss this evening of outstanding firsthand memories and excellent rail photography - from a guy who was there!**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



The winter that we were all wondering about has arrived. It came in like one hundred and fifty car coal drag, blowing and snorting and blocking traffic at the crossing. It’s at times like this that I’m glad that I’m retired. January, by the time that you read this, will be in the history book. Thanks to our Procurement Officer, Ben Hiltz, for finding us a snow plow service for the Station. Thanks also to Al Le Teste, Ben Hiltz and Greg Gerstung for helping clear the steps and sidewalk so that those who have to get in, can do so. Unlike past years, we will attempt to be in our station on Saturdays as often as possible during the first quarter. We have some projects that progress incrementally, and others that require research in the Library or the Archives. Cleaning is also ongoing, as is planning and the occasional Committee meeting.

The Archive Room Expansion Project, now entering its eighth year, will continue as soon as the outside temperature allows working in the north end. We received an anonymous donation of \$1000 to the project. This will certainly help with the insulation. Work will continue Saturdays as is practical. We have received a significant donation of materials from the estate of Daniel Bierut. There were several items in the collection that I never knew existed. Now they are part of our growing archives.

Neal reports that dues and donations are coming in at a good pace. If you haven’t sent your renewal in yet, please do. We don’t want to lose you.

The Chapter will be participating in the February WNYRHS train show. This will be the last weekend of February. We have received a lot of materials from several sources recently. Some of that will go to the show for sale, and magazines, always lots of magazines to put out.

March brings us our Annual Banquet. Come join your fellow Chapter Members at Ilio Di Paolo’s Restaurant for lunch and some great entertainment. See the flyer elsewhere in this issue for more details and reservations. Nancy Andrycha and her Committee have set up a great day for us.

This year’s calendar was a true keeper. The fiftieth edition is a classic that has sold well and continues to sell. This is the time of year for you to look for a photo of your own to submit to the Calendar Committee (Bob and Greg) for the next edition. If your photo is used, you will get a free calendar. I will ask the Committee to republish the selection guidelines. Look for those next month to remind you.

We are comfortable at this point that our meeting room situation is stabilized for the year. The Town of Wheatfield Community/Senior Center is an excellent venue. It has all the amenities; plenty of room, everything on one level, parking, outdoor lighting, nice restrooms, the price is reasonable, and we can have our usual second Friday night. I look forward to seeing all of you at our monthly meetings.

Jim Ball

“SCENE” ON THE LINE



Eastbound Amtrak # 64, The Maple Leaf, exits Tunnel 2, under Erie St/Perry Blvd. into the bright sunlight on Friday January 7, 2022 moments before entering Tunnel 1 under Lower Terrace/Main St. and then stopping at the almost new Exchange St. station. These tunnels were part of the Niagara branch track relocation project (1949 - 1952) as part of the construction for the Buffalo Skyway and the new (fourth, 1952) Exchange St. station. (Ed. Note: the latest Exchange St. Station opened in late 2020, an architecturally pleasing and functional railroad station on essentially the same physical location as its predecessors.) *Photo by Larry Gustina*



On January 20, eastbound 64 is passing over West Ferry Street in Buffalo, NY, with a short but classic stretch of brick pavement still in place. Next stop for the train -Exchange St station. *Photo by Larry Gustina.*



New York Central steam in Buffalo –

A Debate

By Larry Gustina

The Chapter's December 1991 calendar shows NYC J-1D Hudson # 5374 on the West Shore roundhouse lead under Bailey Ave. with the hostler getting instructions before running the locomotive to the Central Terminal coach yard to make up the afternoon TH&B train to Toronto. The photo was taken by Jim Van Brocklin on a cold February 1954 day.

According to most available NYC records and information from railroad magazines (e.g., Trains Magazine, the "Bible" for railfans) there was no NYC steam in Buffalo after August 1953, when the NYC banished steam east of Cleveland, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan. This photo must be incorrect," a number of people I consulted told me!

I submit that Jim Van Brocklin – who was a stickler for detail, was correct regarding the date for this photo. Let's see what additional photo and other information I can provide to back up my submission!

1. February 1998 Chapter calendar showing TH&B Hudson # 501 (originally NYC Hudson # 5311) at West Shore roundhouse. Caption states: While NYC steam disappeared from WNY in August 1953, the TH&B ran steam into Buffalo for eight more months (until March 1954).
2. February 1994 Chapter Calendar showing TH&B Hudson # 501 crossing Erie canal on Buffalo's Waterfront on Niagara branch heading for Black Rock and Toronto on train 379. Caption states: Sister TH&B Hudson # 502 operated until late 1953.*
3. John Prophet picture showing TH&B Hudson # 502 (originally NYC Hudson # 5313) passing Tower T on the Belt Line enroute from WS engine house to Central terminal. Both TH&B Hudsons 501 and 502 were bought from NYC in 1948.
4. TH&B Hudson # 502 heading west from Central Terminal with TH&B train 379, the afternoon train to Toronto, passing M&E train X-35 to Cleveland being pulled by Niagara 6003 and Hudson 5445 with 22 cars. Photo taken in August, 1953 - from Jeremy Taylor in "The Fifty Best of New York Central System" Vol. III, book published by Barnard Roberts & Co., Inc. (Baltimore) in 1978.
5. Page 27 from "Know Thy Hudsons" book by Thomas R. Gerbracht – showing original Hudson's "assignments" – with # 5374 assigned to Michigan Central's Canada Southern (CASO) division (St. Thomas to Ft. Erie/Buffalo).
6. Page 64 from "Know Thy Hudsons" book – The Last Miles heading: Locomotive Mileage and Tire Report issued 12/31/54 for MC – Canada has three Hudsons listed; # 5363 undergoing terminal repairs and #'s 5373 and 5374 having low mileage.
7. Classic Trains, Winter 2008 issue – Article on NYC steam still "active" in 1954-55; 44 engines in Canada; one lone Hudson # 5374 – was retired in August 1955 and sent to scrap in November.
8. Scrap Order for 14 NYC engines sold to Luria Brothers and Co., Inc. in Cleveland – dated 11/9/55 lists Hudsons # 5374 and # 5201 (the first Alco regular production Hudson built) current location; Gardenville Yard, Buffalo, NY.
9. Website – http://trainweb.org/oldtimetrains/CPR_Bruce/nyc5276.htm - shows Hudson # 5276 at top of page at Oakville, Ont. pulling CPR/TH&B train 712 – and discusses the "pooling" of NYC, CPR and TH&B locomotives between Toronto and Buffalo. At the bottom of the page, the final paragraph states the following: "The last NYC Hudson to visit Toronto was # 5374 on March 22, 1954 when it arrived on Train No. 792 and departed on Train No. 821 (back to Buffalo). Also on that date the last TH&B steam engine into Toronto was Hudson # 501 (ex NYC No. 5311) arriving on Train No. 772 and leaving (for Buffalo) on train No. 801."
10. "Empire State Express," January 2022 issue (the publication of the Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS) with a photo from the archives (by Jim Van Brocklin) showing another photo of NYC Hudson # 5374 – leaving Central terminal westbound with a TH&B train for Toronto – you guessed right – in January 1954!

NYC steam – continued

11. Classic Trains magazine from Winter 2008 has an article on “TH&B Passenger Service” – and in a sidebar entitled “Super-Power for passengers, too” talks about the two J-1D Hudsons # 5511 and 5513 becoming TH&B # 501 and # 502 being used exclusively on the Toronto to Buffalo through trains; and states “The last regular steam powered passenger train ran on TH&B on March 23, 1954,” and the 4-6-4s were retired in June.
12. Articles from Buffalo Newspapers : one from 9/30/53 mentions the closing of the West Shore roundhouse to NYC steam – and the only steam engines left in Buffalo which the NYC has anything to do with are those pulling trains on the TH&B Railway , which will still be serviced at the West Shore roundhouse. Another from 8/1/54 states “sometime later this week, the old West Shore roundhouse on Bailey Ave. near Walden will be abandoned in favor of a new Diesel center at the foot of Gittere St. off Sycamore.”
13. Finally: a wonderful article from the NYC “Headlight” magazine (2Q, 2019) titled “The Strange Case of Hudson 5374” by Thomas R. Gerbracht – which summarizes almost everything I have previously presented here to back up my argument for the authenticity of Jim Van Brocklin’s photo showing NYC (MC) Hudson # 5374 being serviced in Buffalo in February 1954!

I submit for a second time: NYC steam was active in Buffalo, NY in 1954 – until March 22, 1954, to be exact.

- * Hudson # 502 suffered a leak in the crownsheet and was sidelined sometime in late 1953.

Editors note: Jim Van Brocklin’s photo of #5374 in last month’s ESX opened up quite an interesting discussion. The evidence Larry presents is overwhelming, plus we have first hand confirmation from Fred Furminger that indeed while New York Central steam on the mainline east of Buffalo had been banished, the TH&B trains still ran with steam, including, most appropriately, a NYC Hudson, #5374.



The #5374 is heading around the sharp curve in the street-running-trackage from the Terrace to Church Street in downtown Buffalo, probably no later than 1949 because soon the construction of the Skyway and Interstate 190 will totally change this location with demolitions and track relocations. *Photo from Lower Lakes Marine Society collection, photographer not known, courtesy Larry Gustina.*

NYC steam – continued



Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Railway – 4-6-4 Hudson No. 501 pauses at the West Shore (NYC) engine house in Buffalo, NY waiting for the next passenger train assignment. While NYC steam disappeared from Western New York in August 1953, the TH&B ran steam locomotives into Buffalo for eight more months. The 501 was built by Alco in 1930 as NYC class J-1d no. 5311. Richard Ganger photo, NFC NRHS archives.



A late 1940's shot shows Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Railway – 4-6-4 Hudson No. 501 has just crossed over the former Erie Canal on Buffalo's waterfront heading for Black Rock and the International Bridge to Canada. Train No, 379 is destined for Toronto. Her sister engine, No. 502 operated until late 1953. TH&B acquired these engines from New York Central. Her NYC number was 5311, and she was built by Alco in 1930. Tom Mulaniff photo, NFC NRHS archives.



NICKEL PLATE Memories

All Photos by Fred Furminger



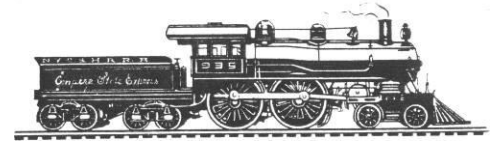
NKP #212 class U-3b 0-8-0 Switcher built by Lima, May 1924. Photo was taken opposite GB block station in Blasdell, NY on July 21, 1957



NKP #175 class L-1b 4-6-4 Hudson built by Lima, November 1929. Photo was taken at Shaletton, NY, west of Buffalo, on January 9, 1958 as the 175 headed up a work train.

CHAPTER MEMORIES

May 1939, the Hamilton trip
Story collected by Geoff Gerstung



Editor note: Just a couple of weeks after the Buffalo Division's "largest yet trip to Cleveland" (covered in last month's ESX), another outing, just as fascinating to us today, was organized for the group!

The Railroad Enthusiast – July 1939 issue

On Sunday, May 21st a small group of Enthusiasts and a few members of the Model Railroad Engineers of Buffalo made a trip to Hamilton, Ontario, Canada over the Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Railway as the guests of the Hamilton Society of Model Engineers whose elaborate model railroad in the T.H.& B. station attracted much interest. After viewing the activities on the model layout for some time, the group was escorted by model engineers to the T.H. & B. enginehouse which is noted for its neatness and cleanliness. Here the various types of T.H.& B. locomotives were seen, as well as a few Canadian Pacific engines, one of which was a high-speed, streamlined 4-4-4 Julilee type.

Next, the Canadian national enginehouse was visited. This contained, in addition to many steam locomotives, a 14 year-old Diesel-electric car which makes a daily run of 300 miles at a cost of only \$7.60 per day for fuel and lubrication. The group visited two towers, at Hamilton Junction where a New York Central engine was seen pulling T.H.& B. coaches in a Canadian Pacific train over Canadian National track.

On the return trip to Buffalo the T.H.& B.'s little Pacific type engine had twelve heavy cars. Soon after leaving Hamilton a stop was necessary at the bottom of a heavy grade, and fifteen minutes elapsed before the train could get moving. It finally had to back down several hundred feet to get off the hill. The members spent this time voicing their various opinions as to the best method of solving the problem. After finally topping the grade, a fast run to Buffalo was made.

Editor's note: The Chapter's rich history is itself a unique part of Buffalo's railroad heritage. The now late Geoff Gerstung researched this trip using the Chapter's archives more than 25 years ago. Geoff prepared a notebook of such stories dated from 1938 through 1965 on Chapter history. This is the third installment in the series. Some of these same trips and anecdotes are written up in Harold Ahlstrom's 1986 History of the Buffalo Chapter, taken from his scrapbook of Chapter activities – JCD

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.

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 if you have photos that might assist in illustrating operations on the **New York Central Buffalo Belt Line**.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

March's meeting program has not been finalized as we go to press.

The Chapter's annual banquet (a luncheon format) is set for Saturday, March 19, doors open 11:30 AM at the ever popular Ilio DiPaolo's on South Park Avenue in Blasdell, NY. The program will feature historic, 16mm movie film, originally shot by John M. Prophet and now converted to digital format. Chapter member Aaron Heverin who has digitized and preserved many of John's early priceless wire recordings of railroad sounds will narrate these visual treasures from the Chapter's archives. Please see the flyer included with this issue of ESX. Don't forget, the banquet also includes lots of goodies and unique gifts in the annual silent-auction fund raiser. Get your reservations in now! Reservations can be made on-line with a credit card, on the chapter's secure website.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



Take a good, long-lasting look at this beauty my friends. Number 814, class S-4 2-8-4 Berkshire built by Alco-Schenectady in January 1939. Constructed for the Wheeling & Lake Erie, it became Nickel Plate with the December 1, 1949 merger of W&LE into the Nickel Plate. The photo was taken by Fred B. Furminger as the 814 was departing the NKP Buffalo Junction yard with a westbound local freight on February 20, 1958. This wintertime scene would soon vanish. NKP steam would drop their fires forever in the next few months. While a few engines were stored "serviceable" to 1960, the call never came. Sadly, #814 would make it's last run two months later per John Rehor's *Nickel Plate Story* on April 28, 1958 on a Bellevue to Conneaut, Ohio train. It would be scrapped in December 1963. It was a seismic shift in railroad technology. The early diesel era that replaced these machines is now also long gone. To ALL those men like Fred Furminger who documented this last bit of the great age of the steam locomotive we owe a debt of gratitude. Today when the occasional excursion locomotive can take to the mainline, it is a cause for sensation among the faithful. When sister Berkshire #765 was last in Buffalo in 2015, your editor and I'm sure many of you too spent a weekend in a frenzy focused on one of the few survivors of this regal class of locomotives. JCD

CHAPTER CALENDAR

FEB 11 Regular meeting, **NEW 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: NICKEL PLATE MEMORIES, digital photos & movies
 by Fred Furminger. **7:00 PM.**

FEB 26-27 WNYRHS Winter Train Show, Hamburg Fair Grounds, 10AM-5PM Sat, 10AM-4PM Sun.

MAR 11 Regular meeting. **Program: TO BE ANNOUNCED**

MAR 19 Annual banquet, Ilio DiPaolos 11:30 AM. See flyer this issue for details.

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 THANK YOU

The Empire State Express is mailed free to all members of the Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc. Anyone who is not a Chapter / NRHS member may receive *The Empire State Express* by mail at a subscription rate of \$35.00 a year postpaid, e-mail rate \$25.00. Please contact the Chapter at PO Box 1043, North Tonawanda, NY 14120 for details.



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