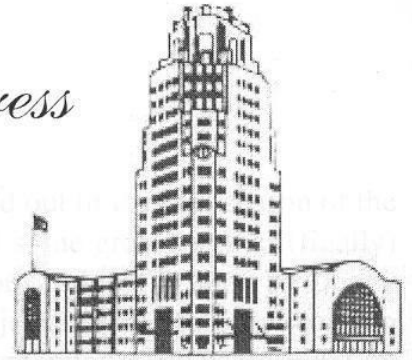


Empire State Express



JUNE 2024

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, June 14, 2024 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.

**GET YOUR TICKET TO SEE THE NEW YORK CENTRAL
Boarding June 14th 2024 at 7: 00 PM**



Program by Brian Angevine.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



We talk a lot about our activities; the meetings, train shows, trips and such. We mention the preservation and restoration work that we have been doing for almost forty years. Along the way we have published the *Great Gorge* book, our annual railroad calendar and reprinted a couple of noteworthy items such as the *Railroads That Serve Buffalo* and the opening day brochure of *Central Terminal*. We have hosted any number of visiting groups at our Museum.

We are about to take the first steps in new adventure. With the completion of the Archive room expansion, we will now embark on the long awaited next step. We are about to inventory and record everything that we own. Think about that for a second. The Chapter has been in existence since 1938. Yes, the math says eighty-six years. How many

lanterns, maps, timetables, photographs, books (not counting the Library), switch keys, signs, pencils, post cards, etc. do we have? Don't forget two buildings and six pieces of railroad equipment.

Oh, and how about those Kodachrome slides? We have thousands, yes many thousands. They have to be sorted, labeled, cataloged and properly stored.

Well, now that we have our new space set up, we can begin the process. We are currently seeking expert advice on how to do it. To this end we invited Mr. Jim Tommaro to look at who we are and what we need to do. His initial visit was Saturday the 27th of April and shortly thereafter we received his initial recommendations. He advised who to contact and what to first. We have a lot of work to do but now the way forward is becoming clear.

Speaking of summer work, there will be some painting to do if that is more within your capabilities. There are a number of other low effort outdoor jobs as well. Stop in and we'll talk.

As we get ready to go to press we are still totaling up the results from this years Chicken BBQ fundraiser. My initial impression was that we had done well, but the final report will probably be after this edition goes to press. Many thanks to Bruce Becker for being General Chairman, and to Nancy Andrycha and Karen Frey for being co chairwomen for the event. Thanks also to Steve Frey, Granddaughter Amelia, Bob Andrrycha, M. J. Lewandowski, Becky Gerstung, Greg Gerstung, John Dahl, Ben Hilts and Carl Butland for their help. Thanks to all of you who supported this event, you make it work.

The Summer Tourist Season is here! People who are looking for additional things to do while they are in the area to see Niagara Falls are finding us. We are always looking for tour guides. We would love to have the Museum open a day during the week through the summer. This is dependent on having people to be there. Training for tour guides is also available on demand. Saturdays from 11 am until 4 pm. It's your museum, come show it off to the world. It's very rewarding.

Speaking, actually writing, about showing off things, Frank Pastore, very active in the early days of the Museum Project, has issued an invitation. Following the June 14th meeting we are invited to visit his model railroad. His home is at 7362 Balla Drive in Wheatfield. It's right around the corner from the meeting room. The layout is fully operational with scenery, lots to see. Directions will be available at the meeting.

See you at the Meeting, or at the Museum.

Jim Ball

ON THE COVER We have a unique perspective in this photo, an engineer's view on a westbound train approaching Buffalo Central Terminal. It is the post World War II era when New York Central invested a huge amount of capital into new diesel locomotives and equipment to refurbish its Great Steel Fleet. Alas, it was an all too fleeting era. Brian Angevine collection.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

The Empire State Express will take its usual break for July and August. June is the last meeting and newsletter issue before summer officially begins. **Check our web site, nfcnrs.org for hours at the station which will be open to the public most Saturdays throughout the summer months as well as September's meeting program.** It has been pointed out that we have not officially made the museum address a part of the ESX banner, so this month the address has been added below the Chapter Calendar.

SCENE ON THE LINE



Amtrak locomotive #98 sweeps eastbound on the Niagara Branch across the twin truss bridges spanning Scajagada Creek and Niagara Street in the Black Rock section of Buffalo, with the Maple Leaf from Toronto bound for New York City. May 10, 2024. Photo by Larry Gustina.



Some Memories of Milk trains on the Lehigh Valley

Text and Photos submitted by Richard Palmer



This early 1900s view shows area farmers lined up to load their milk aboard the morning Lehigh Valley train which will transport it to Sayre, Pa. There the cars will be coupled into a train that will speed it to New York. Depot at left was burned down in 1972 by the fire department. The freight house at right still stands and is a home. It was the former freight house for the New York & Oswego Midland Auburn branch abandoned in 1879 between DeRuyter and Norwich.

Interview with Lehigh Valley Engineer Jim Lathrop

Author note: Before they were gone, Railroad Historian Herbert V. Trice of Auburn spent considerable time interviewing old time Lehigh men. This interview was conducted with retired engineer Jim Lathrop on March 25, 1982.

James Russell Lathrop Sr., was born in Auburn on September 2, 1915, son of another Lehigh Valley veteran, Guy Lathrop. He resided in Auburn until moving to Sayre in 1954. On March 24, 1939 he married Lillian T. Cramer and they had four sons. He retired in 1975 and passed away at Elderwood Health Care Center in Waverly on December 30, 2015 at the age of 100. Mrs. Lathrop died there in 2013. Jim began his railroad career in 1937, serving as fireman, engineer and road foreman of engines. Following is the interview

Jim Lathrop came to the house in the evening and we spent some time discussing his days on the railroad. At that moment I was researching the milk business. Since the milk trains were discontinued in 1948 and Jim went on the LV in 1937, his experience covered only its latter days and in its more modern aspects, i. e., the use of tank cars. However, he did remember the business of handling the milk cans due to his early exposure to the railroad, and gave the best account of it I have heard so far.

I have been a little confused about this matter of the size of the milk cans, since others merely stated they were large, one person and they held 40 gallons.

Milk trains – continued

From my own experience I have some idea as to the size and weight of such a container, at least as compared to water tanks. After talking with Jim, I am quite sure that the cans were the usual 40 gallon size, a number of which I have tried to repair for farmers in 'the past, so I know what they looked like. In the dim past, I have heard of the prowess of certain LV trainmen who were reputed to be speedy can handlers, and Jim mentioned a few - Guy Rockwell, John Toomey, Bill Davies and Gus McGrain. Doubtless there were others since apparently it was the practice to hire men on as can handlers who then gradually were assimilated as road brakemen as their railroad experience widened. Apparently when loading, a platform would be laid into the milk car from the milk loading dock. Then the men would space themselves to pass the cans from the dock to the interior of the car. This was accomplished by tipping the cans on edge and giving them a deft spin so they would travel unattended from one man to the next.



The first man on the platform would spin them to the second man stationed in the door of the car who would intercept the cans and spin them as required to a third man who would place them and stack them in the car. Cans would be stacked three tiers high. I expect that a number of the cars were loaded at the creameries in advance of the train's arrival, so that the loading of cans by the milk train crew was mainly devoted to station pickups, and loading at plants where only a partial car was shipped. I never thought to ask about the use of any shipping restraints, either.

Lehigh Valley milk train with #5126 on the head end at Rummerfield, Pa. on Nov. 10, 1941.

And then no one has ever mentioned the return of the empties which must have been the same process in reverse, although some one must have had to do the bookkeeping, to see that the right numbers of cans were dropped off at the right destination. So it must have been a great improvement when the tank cars were introduced, for then the cars didn't have to be iced since the milk was cooled at the plant, and the can handling was confined locally at the milk plant.

There were two types of milk tanks - those enclosed in what appeared to be a conventional milk cars, and those exposed on a flat car. Both cars described had two tanks. The enclosed cars had a tank on either end of the car, the ends of the tanks being accessible from the center car doors; the flat cars carrying the tanks suitably spaced and retained. Ordinarily, the tank cars were loaded prior to the milk train's arrival, though in some cases only a partial car was loaded at, one creamery and then moved in the train to another where the loading was completed. I remember that a car was backed into Owego to complete loading on some of the trips I rode. Stainless steel dairy pipe with quick couplings was run from the plant to the car to do this.

Whatever the style of tank car, they were moved to Jersey City to be unloaded. Jim said they were pulled into a circular unloading track to provide access to all the cars at once. In the case of the flat tank cars, Jim says they were removed (i. e. the tanks were removed from the flat cars) at JC and carried by truck to their final

Milk trains – continued

destination. As I remember the tanks per se, they were flat on the bottom with sloping ends and sides and a rounded top, say 20' long.

Jim said they were dogged on to the flat car with pieces of steel that also served as skids when the tanks were moved to or from the car. A couple of stories about these cars. On a date not yet determined, one of these tanks became unsecured while in transit eastbound, loaded. The incident is reputed to have occurred on the east side of the Lehigh River between Bridgeport and Penn Haven. As the story goes, the tank flew off the flat car as the milk train was making a curve (apparently to the right) just as it was passing a westbound freight train. The tank hopped over the opposing train on the other track with no contact and landed along the base of the mountain where it laid unnoticed.

When the milk train reached some terminal, the absence of the tank was noted and an inquiry began. Eventually the container was found at its temporary mountain retreat, and as a result of the inquiry it was conjectured that there was no collision with the opposing train because the tank took flight as a string of empty flats in the westbound train was passing and hence met with no obstruction. Jim said he had been firing 282 on the day this occurred, and the inquiry was eventually extended to his crew in an effort to determine why the tank was not properly secured.

Eastbound milk train, Coxtton, Pa.



Bill McLane relates a similar incident which may or may not be the same one since in Bill's version; the tank came to rest on a flat car in the west bound train and was carried back to Coxtton unnoticed. Whatever the true facts here, the situation (or situations) provide a bit of humor. Also, my father related a funny story which he sent in a note when I was on National Guard maneuvers at De Kalb Jct. in 1939. He was working somewhere (perhaps around Newark Valley) when 282 was picking up.

In the course of their moves which involved a drop, a flat tank car eluded Marty Brennan and coupled with another car quite briskly so that the milk was flying. I can't clearly recall the details of the incident, but I remember reading them to young Marty who was in the same tent.

Milk trains – continued

Apparently the milk companies owned the tank cars, as Borden and Sheffield. And not all the product was in bulk since the Dairymens League shipped bottles from Auburn, and bottles were shipped from another plant close to Owego, maybe Newark Valley. I remember that at the wreck of 282 in 1937 at Smithboro, there were milk bottles strewn around the scene. Jim could remember milk being loaded at Martville, Cato, Throop, Auburn, Moravia, Locke, Dryden, sometimes Peruton, Newark Valley, Owego, Smithboro, and probably others. I must look at the valuation maps to see how many milk plants I can locate.

Here is something that puzzles me: by and after 1937, most of the milk was traveling in bulk, and the milk companies were owners of some of the tank cars. Yet, in 1937 the LV listed 118 milk cars and in 1941, although the number was reduced, 91. Were all of these cars still in the milk trade or were they just laying around.

Jim provided some interesting insights on the milk trains which can't be determined from the timetables. For a period, as yet undetermined, after the Elmira and Cortland branch was torn up between East Ithaca and Spencer, the E&C milk trains ran over the Lehigh & New York from Freeville to Sayre. This was changed to add the E&C milk train to 282 at Freeville. Then, in the period not long before 1941, the eastbound pick up on the L&NY would shed its duties as a pick up at Freeville and become a milk train composed of the E&C cars, and run as a section of 282 from Freeville to Sayre without stops.

Sometimes it would be the first section, sometimes the second. Jim fired one side of this, Leo Gorman the other. I think this explains what I thought might be a discrepancy in some of the timetables whereon the E&C milk train was scheduled to arrive at Freeville after 282 had left.

Jim also verified the existence of the so-called "little milk" and described its moves. This train left Sayre in the morning going first to Smithboro where it picked up an L&NY milk car to deliver to Sayre for the main line milk train. Then it traveled the main line to Wysox where it picked up a milk car which it left at Towanda for the return trip to Sayre. Then it went up the SL&S where it turned in the vicinity of Bernice and returned to Towanda picking up a couple of milk cars and perhaps a car of freight enroute. (I think Jim mentioned a reed factory around New Albany that shipped car loads.)

Back in Towanda, the job retrieved the Wysox milk car and returned with its other collections to Sayre around 1 p.m. in time for the milk cars to be added to 36. Because this job ran on the L&NY, the Auburn men received a monthly equity of 5 days, and it was through them that I was aware the job operated. Guy Lathrop (Jim's father) was engineer at times, and Archie Bain was a trainman. The power on this was a motor car which number I haven't determined yet because it didn't appear in the tabulation Fabregas made from the motor car performance sheets which apparently were pre-1930. However, it must have been one of the big ones considering the grades it had to climb.

Guy Lathrop stated that at times he had handled ten loads back to Sayre with it. This would have been only on that part of the trip returning from Towanda to Sayre; if I remember correctly, some loads of S&NY coal may have been handled over that distance, according to Guy. Jim didn't remember the motor car taking any empty milk cars up the SL&S, and after reflecting a moment decided this must have been the duty of the SL&S local which would probably have been using an 1100; this seems reasonable. Guy told me as did Jim that at Dushore it was necessary only to release the brake to have the train move without power to Monroeton, and after looking at the SL&S profile this is a credible statement since Dushore had an elevation of 1492 feet while Monroeton lay at 755 feet, and in the 15 miles between the two there is a consistent grade which would average about 1.25%. One other thing, I remember Railroad Magazine printing a little squib, say 1939, about a pigeon which used to ride this train every day. Seems to me the bird would get on around New Albany and ride to Monroeton perched

Milk trains – continued

on the cowling--something like that. Jim said Ken Ackerman worked out some equity on this job so I must see what he can contribute.

Jim also remembered a motor car originating at Geneva and running to Sayre which picked up milk cars for 36. And he is of the opinion that milk was shipped off the Montrose branch since he had an uncle who did so, but he couldn't provide any details. Actually both old timetables and the motor car performance sheets indicate there were two motor cars originating at Geneva and running to Sayre, one on the main line and the other on the Ithaca branch, and I expect both picked up milk.

Also, seems to me I have a fleeting memory of a motor car hanging around Tunkhannock which, if my memory is correct, was undoubtedly used on the Montrose branch. This matter will bear checking, though.

Jim mentioned an arrangement in Auburn which must have existed around 1937-38 whereby 283 would take loads of coal from Auburn to the NYC at Weedsport on its evening run to North Fair Haven. The milk train crew got an extra hour for this move. Jim thinks that Nelson Thomas was instrumental in making the arrangement in an effort to keep 283 running north of Auburn. It finally came off July 24, 1938.

Jim remembers the use of motor cars on 282-283 which is indicated in the motor car performance sheets. We talked about the different engines which must have originally been 4-4-0s, then 4-6-0s which probably included the 1100s when they were new, and we know the 1800s were used. These were replaced by the 2000s around 1932, Jim thinks. Also, he describes a trip made in the closing years of the milk train on a day when a 2000 wasn't available and an 1100 was substituted. He says they went into Sayre right on time; Jim was firing and Walter Guiles was the engineer.

Lehigh Valley in Eastern Pennsylvania in the 1920's and 1930's included extensive milk train operations. The LV owned at least 135 refrigerated milk cars and operated two heavy fast first class milk trains from Sayre to New York City each day.

Author note: The mainline milk trains ran between 20 and 30 cars each and ran at express train speeds. Also at least eight local and branch line trains in New York and Pennsylvania that carried milk cars for many years until discontinued and turned over to trucks in 1948.

NEW LOCOMOTIVE ON THE ARCADE & ATTICA



Last summer the A&A took possession of a "new" Alco locomotive to replace the veteran center cab diesels like no. 111 at left it has operated for decades Not yet re-lettered, the 406 poses for admiring fans on a beautiful July 14, 2023 at the Arcade, NY enginehouse. Perhaps we will see this engine on excursions this summer. *John C. Dahl photo.*

A PAGE OUT OF THE OLDE PHOTO ALBUM

Submitted by Richard Palmer

Although not a Buffalo Chapter trip, this NRHS sponsored excursion looks like it was a dandy! This is the scene in rural Niagara County at Burt, NY Sept. 17, 1950 – New York Central’s old Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg, the “Hojack”, is still in service and a pair of steam locomotive was still available for the special. The other engine has not been identified. Those were the days!



Robert Gerling photo



CHAPTER CALENDAR

JUN 14 Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center, 7 PM. New York Central night. Program by Brian Angevine. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MEETING Model Railroad layout tour at 7362 Balla Drive in Wheatfield. See President’s Message, page 2, for details.

**JUN-JUL-
AUG-SEPT** Station open Saturdays, 11 AM to 4 PM. Please see Chapter Website nfcnrhs.org for latest hours and days the station is open. Tour guides needed! Please volunteer.

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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