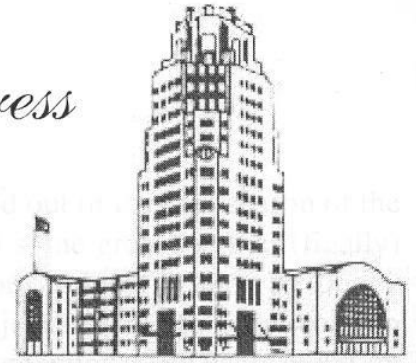


Empire State Express



January 2019

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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

The meeting of the Chapter will be held on Friday, January 11, 2019 at 8:00 PM at the Degraff Community Center, 139 Division St., North Tonawanda, NY.

THE *digitized* FILMS OF BILL KESSEL

The name William C. Kessel, or “Bill”, as he was known, first appears in our Chapter history in 1942.

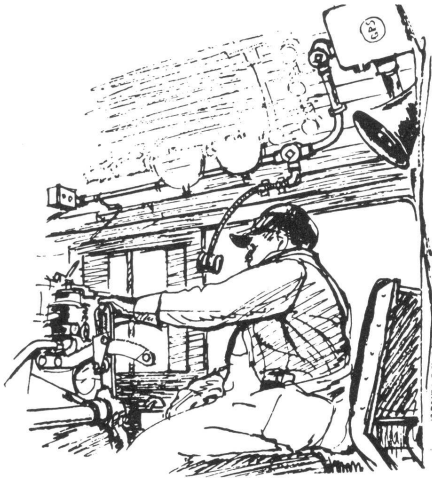
Bill was ‘V/P Publicity’, which in those days included getting out the word on the Chapter’s meetings and trips, and there certainly were an abundance of trips back in the late 1940’s through the 1950’s and 1960s. Like many railfans of that period, Bill was also an amateur photographer, and over the course of several decades he shot much 8 mm movie film, some black & white, but mostly color.

Bill passed away many years ago, but luckily for us had donated to the Chapter his railroad films. The ongoing digitization project to preserve these images of railroading past has yielded the program you will see. Al LeTeste has graciously taken the time to edit and set these otherwise silent films to music for your enjoyment. We hope you will join us for a look back many decades at railroading as seen through the lens of Bill’s movie camera.



On June 13, 1954 a joint special trip operated by the Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse Chapters ran to Watkins Glen starting in Buffalo, on the Central to Rochester, then Auburn Road to Canandaigua, then PRR to Watkins Glen. Photo by Howard Ameling.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



I have always thought of January, being the first month of a new year, as a new beginning. That mindset is clouded, however, by a bit of Holiday Hangover. We put away the colorful lights and the traditional music, there are no more packages to open. No more parties, fancy meals or getting dressed up. We should be all invigorated and recharged from the Holidays and this is good because January is a kind of a Monday morning month, all business and responsibility. That being said, lets get started.

Instead of trying to relate all the restoration and preservation news in this one page, I have issued another edition of the column Milepost 13.2. It was intended to appear last month but wouldn't fit in that issue. You can read it now and look back at last months pictures, it will all work together.

Thanks to Becky for organizing, planning, arranging and running our Winterwalk event this year. I was laid up due to a fall and could not be there. Thanks to Nancy and Bob Andrycha, Ben Hiltz, Steve and Karen Frey, Greg Gerstung, Dennis Hurley and Bruce Becker for their help. We had the pony rides outside, popcorn for sale (new this year) and hot chocolate and cookies inside along with Lionel trains running and a raffle of a train set. There was a jolly gent in a red suit there as well. Becky estimates that possibly three hundred people came through. The event generated a lot of exposure, about \$140 for the treasury, and promises of items to be donated.

The next event after the February meeting should be the WNYRHS train show at the Fairgrounds, Feb. 16th and 17th. We can always use some help at the table and for setting up.

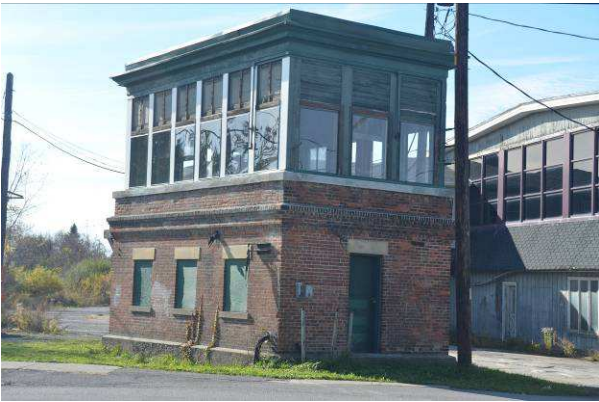
I know that I said this last month, but we'll remind you again, it's time to renew your membership. The renewal form should have turned up in your mailbox by now. Neal said that nearly half of you had sent in your renewals already, and that's great! Now if the rest of you would please be prompt, we can wrap this up and get on with our mission. I hope that there will be donations to help us continue our preservation and restoration work. Please be generous if you can, thanks to those who already have. You can bring your renewal to the meeting if that's easier for you. Renewals to National have to be done separately. This can be done on line or you can still write them a check if that's what you are comfortable with.

If the weather should cause us to cancel our regular monthly meeting, check on your TV on channel 2 first, WGR 550 AM, WYRK 106.5 FM, and Oldies 104 FM on the radio as well, all the usual places. We will try to make the decision soon enough to make the 5 pm broadcasts.

Congratulations to the Officers and Directors who were elected at the December Meeting. Welcome to Bruce Becker who has joined the Board as Comptroller. His work will cement the efforts of the rest of us to run a "tight ship". I hope to be back to brewing coffee on Saturday mornings at the Museum very soon. We still have a lot of stuff to do. I hope that we can get into the building on a regular basis in spite of the white stuff. We'll see.

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

Jim Ball



Milepost 13.2

This column hasn't appeared very often in the past, one or twice here and there. This is the second or third time that it has appeared recently. I'll take that as a good thing, as it means that there is a lot of positive news.

How about milepost 0.16 on the NYC Wurlitzer branch. We know that better as EL-2. A lot of work has been done there this year. Back in May and June 2018 the apprentices from the Iroquois Job Corps. worked weekly on re-pointing the

brickwork of the tower. The corners of the masonry walls which were badly crumbling were previously remade in 2017. We engaged Niagara Construction to shore up the interior window frames and install aluminum storm windows on all the window spaces. Along with covering the exposed wood with aluminum trim and replacing some of the rotted wood as needed, they installed new siding over the tops of the windows. The vertical boards between the windows were replaced with manmade material. As of this writing, the south side and the west side are done and the east and north sides will be completed in the spring. This project will continue after they are done, we will repair those interior windows that are repairable. We will rebuild some others and make a couple from scratch.

When they can schedule it, Marty and Bob from the Iroquois Job Corps. will repair the chimney.

Getting back across the street, the archive room expansion is progressing. The foot print has been cleared, no small accomplishment. Keeping it clear is also an accomplishment. We have been collecting shelving, filing cabinets, map cases and other assorted stuff to hold our growing collection. Whenever someone asks "can you use this?" it's hard to turn down quality fixtures. The price may have been right but the stuff has to be stored somewhere until it can go inside the new area. Becky and Greg have been rearranging and condensing the stuff. Steve Frey, Greg and I pulled down all the lumber that had accumulated in the overhead racks. Some was disposed of, the rest will be relocated. The two glass doors that we acquired were stood up and leaned against the wall. That cleared twenty square feet of floor space. Once the metal stud frame of the room is up, the doors will be installed. Once the electrical part of the room is done we can start on the drywall. When that is hung we will regain another 48 square feet of floor space.

It was reported before, but we hired a contractor to fill in the opening of door number four of the station and then we moved the door to number five. We can now open and close door number five for the first time. We will still need to do some insulating and weather sealing.

Marcus was rebuilding the wooden floor of NYC 21005 when the season ended. I don't know as of this writing how far that got.

The Board had decided to post pone the loading dock work until 2019. The rescheduling should save us significant money in material cost.

So there you have it, more news as we make it.

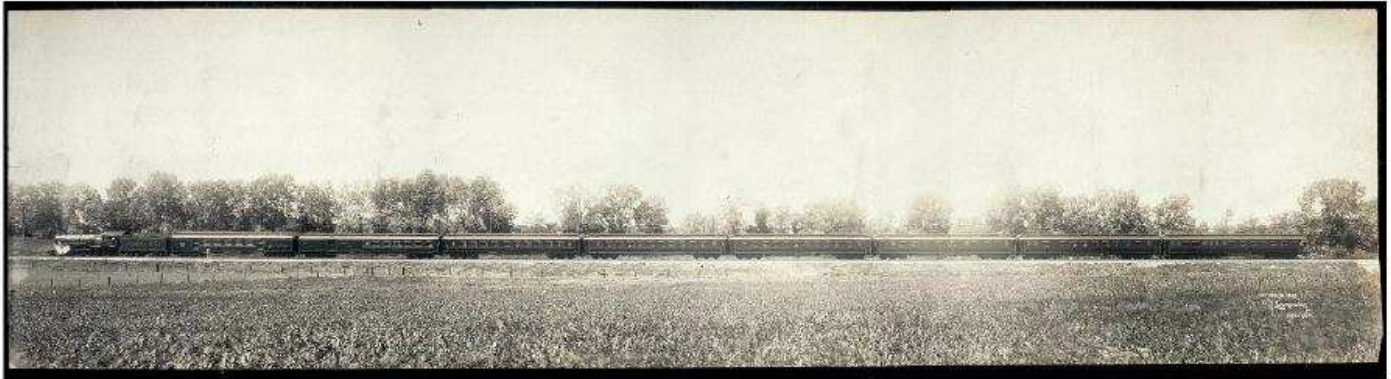
Jim Ball

THE LARGEST CAMERA IN THE WORLD

A Brochure produced by the Chicago & Alton Railway in the 1890's

The largest camera in the world was constructed especially by the Chicago & Alton Railway to photograph The Alton Limited. Send a 2c. stamp to George A. Charlton, G.P.A., C.&A. Railway, Chicago, Ill., and receive an illustrated pamphlet with full account of the first exposure made with the extraordinary machine.

THE LARGEST PHOTOGRAPH IN THE WORLD OF THE HANDSOMEST TRAIN IN THE WORLD HOW THE BIG PICTURE CAME TO BE TAKEN



During the summer of 1890, the workmen at the Pullman works, at Pullman, Ill., were building two trains, the plans for which differed materially from anything they had hitherto worked upon. Like all work done in the separate departments of a great manufactory, and then assembled and put together, it required the ensemble to demonstrate whether or not the trains would surpass anything which had heretofore been constructed. One afternoon in November the first completed car was wheeled out of the workshop and placed upon the storage tracks; later in the day another made its appearance, and during the succeeding week there followed ten more cars which, with the first two, made up two complete trains of six cars each. Engines were attached, and the manager of the works, his master craftsman, and, practically, every workman in the shops turned out to witness the departure from Pullman of "The Alton Limited," to go into fast daylight service between Chicago and St. Louis on the Chicago & Alton Railway.

Thousands of cars and trains have been built at Pullman—from the equipment of little narrow-gauge lines to luxurious private cars. At Pullman rolling palaces have been built for the rulers of the greatest nations of the earth, and equipment for display at international expositions has been constructed. Yet no trains which had ever left the works attracted so much attention and elicited so marked a degree of appreciation from the workmen—critics of The Alton Limited. This was because no railway train in the world had ever presented so uniform and symmetrical design. No train of cars had ever before been built with windows of the same size, shape and style from mail car to parlor car; the cars in no train before had all been mounted on standard six-wheel trucks; no former effort had been made to have every car in the train precisely the same length and height; and no railway, except the Alton Road, had ever caused the tenders of its locomotives to be constructed to rise to the exact height of the body of the cars following; the hood of its locomotives to be the exact of the roofs of the cars.



This gave a fascinating beauty to the train—carrying out of the principal features with classic regularity—the absolute unity of detail from cow-catcher to observation platform. Indeed this is what created, and

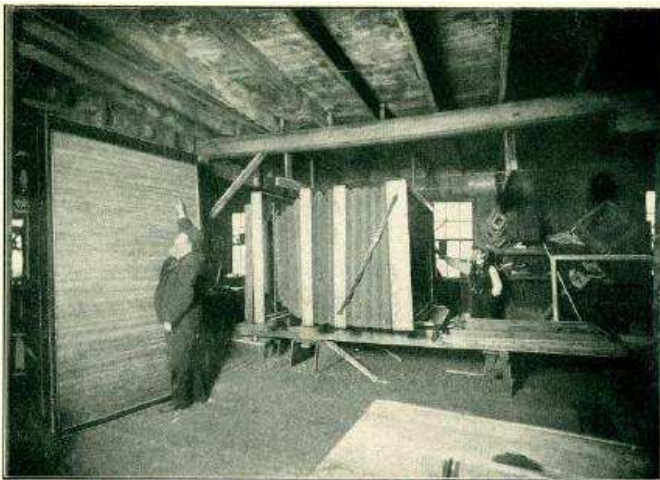
impelled, the idea to obtain a photograph of the “Limited” sufficiently large to readily impress the public with the train’s uniform conformation.

Mr. Geo. R. Lawrence, the Chicago & Alton’s photographer, who had previously taken some very large photographs of the “Alton’s” new standard passenger locomotives, was called into conference. At first it was Mr. Lawrence’s opinion that the train would have to be photographed in sections and these sections fitted together in the process of printing, an ordinary method which, however, does not preserve the absolute truthfulness of perspective, and, indeed, shows the joints no matter how carefully the different sections are blended together. The Chicago & Alton, however, had built a faultless train of which they demanded a faultless photograph, insisting that in length the picture measure not less than eight feet.

Some time elapsed between the first conference with Mr. Lawrence and that gentleman’s second visit, but in the interval the photographic possibilities of the nineteenth century had been reached and passed, for the photographer presented plans to photograph the Alton Limited on a single plate, 8 by 4.5 feet—which is three times as large as the largest plate ever before exposed.

It should be distinctly understood that this, the largest camera in the world, was built expressly to photograph The Alton Limited, Mr. Lawrence being given a free hand by the Chicago & Alton Railway.

It took two months to build to big the big camera, in regard to which the following data will prove interesting:



CAMERA BUILDER WITH PLATE

The mammoth camera was designed and built in Chicago. It is finished throughout in natural cherry, and at the top of the back part of the camera is a small track upon which two focusing screens are moved back and forth like a sliding door. These focusing screens are made of semi-transparent celluloid stretched across the frames. The bed, which is composed of four 2x6 inch cherry beams, is about twenty feet long when fully extended. The camera has double swing front and back. The bellows is made of an outside covering of heavy rubber, each fold

being stiffened by a piece of veneered whiteboard one-fourth of an inch thick, it is then lined inside by a heavy black canvas and an additional lining of thin black opaque material, thereby making it doubly light proof. In the construction of this massive bellows over forty gallons of cement, two bolts of wide rubber cloth, and over five hundred feet of one-fourth inch whitewood were used. The bellows is divided into four sections and between each section is a supporting frame mounted on small wheels, which run on a steel track; the back, supporting the plate holder, being operated as easily as an ordinary camera.

The plate holder is of the roller-curtain type. This curtain contains about eighty square feet of ash three-eighths inch thick, and is lined with three thicknesses of light-proof material. Over ten gallons of cement were used in the construction of this curtain, and it is mounted on a ball bearing roller. Ball bearing rollers are also mounted every two inches in the grooves in which the edge of the curtain slides, thereby reducing the friction to almost nothing.

The weight of the camera is 900 pounds and the plate holder when loaded weighs 500, making a total weight of 1,400 pounds.

In operation the camera is so constructed so that after a long journey the plate may be dusted in a unique manner. The holder is put in position, the long front board, or front door as it may be called, is swung open, the operator passes inside with a camel's hair duster, the door is then closed and a ruby glass cap placed over the lens, the curtain slide is drawn and the operator dusts the plate in a portable darkroom, after which the slide is closed and he passes out in the same way as he entered.

The lenses, which are of the Carl Zeiss patent, were ground at great expense and trouble. They are the largest photographic lenses ever made, one being a wide angle lens five and a half feet of equivalent focus and the other being a telescopic rectilinear lens of ten feet equivalent focus, the latter being the one used when taking the huge photograph of The Alton Limited.



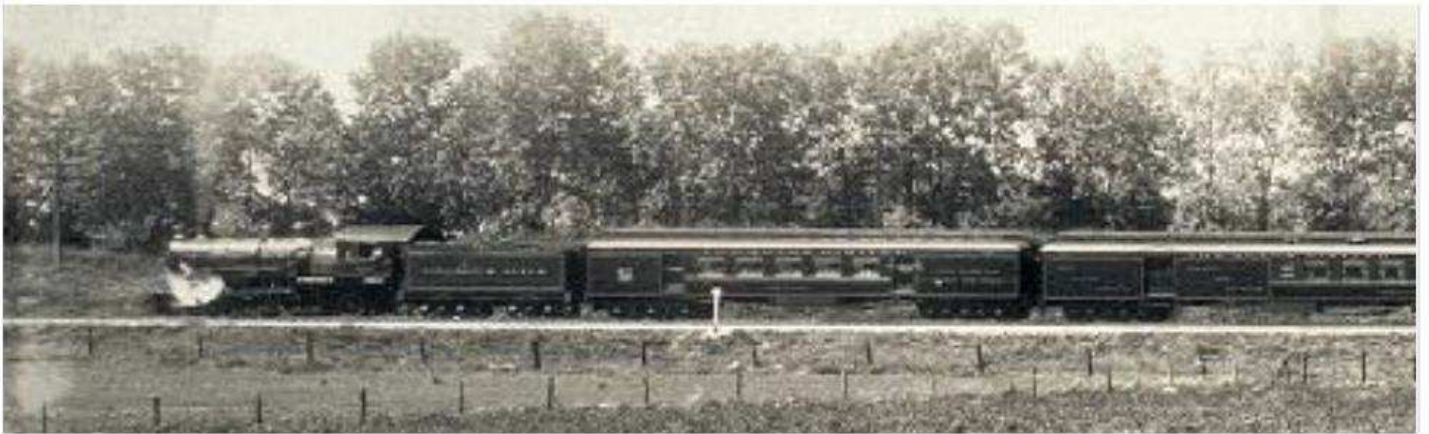
LOADING CAMERA ON VAN

Early one morning last spring, an immense padded van drove up to the Chicago & Alton's station in Chicago, from it the giant camera was transferred to a Chicago & Alton flat car, and the start made for Brighton Park, at which point, about six miles distant from Chicago, the "first exposure" was made. The accompanying photographs illustrate the manner in which the camera was handled, set up, focused, and the picture taken, the operation requiring the services of no less than 15 men.

The day was clear but a high wind was blowing, notwithstanding which, after an exposure of two and one-half minutes, on a full Cramer Isochromatic Plate (this special plate being used to preserve the color view of the

train), a perfect negative was secured. The picture of The Alton Limited was reproduced, without the slightest “retouching” on the part of the engraver, from a platinum print from the negative obtained.

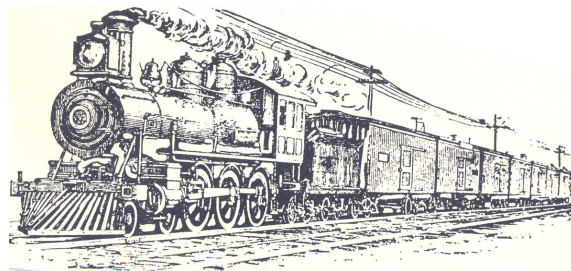
The first three prints were sent to the Paris Exposition. One of them was placed in the railway station, another was hung in the photographic section, while the third was accorded a place of honor in the United States Government Building, a liberality of exhibition privileges accorded to no other single exhibit in the entire Exhibition. The stir which the immense picture created in Paris is illustrated from the fact that affidavits were required before the Exposition officials consented to label the exhibit: “The largest photograph ever made on one plate.” American railway car builders sent no exhibition passenger trains to Paris, and, therefore, the immense picture of The Alton Limited was to visitors at the Paris Exposition what the exhibition English train was to Americans at the World’s Fair in Chicago. And citizens of the land of the free, who viewed the big pictures in Paris, saw truthfully portrayed every improvement which time and invention have wrought in the rolling stock of their native land, and witnessed foreigners impressed with the beauty and practicability of car construction which is revolutionizing the equipment of railroads throughout the world. Americans could be pardoned for the naturally proud feeling that America sent [the photos] to the Exposition Universalle.



THE LARGEST PHOTOGRAPH IN THE WORLD OF THE HANDSOMEST TRAIN IN THE WORLD

Equipment consists of standard Chicago & Alton high-speed passenger loco-motive; United States Mail car; combination baggage and smoking car; day and parlor chair car; parlor chair car, free of extra charge; café car, with dining, buffet, library, and smoking apartments; and Pullman parlor observation car.

Editor note: the above article was provided by Tony Shill



SEEN ON THE LINE



At Huron, Ohio New York Central F-7a # 1716 races into the sun on the Water Level Route. This portrait was taken by Howard Ameling sometime in 1954 (probably late winter or early spring.)



Penny's old depot in Franklinville, NY still stood in the late 1970's, with a Santa Fe boxcar spotted on the team track. Such a pleasant scene as this is now no more. The depot was removed around 1980 and the line sees little traffic this days. Photographer unknown. Collection John Dahl.

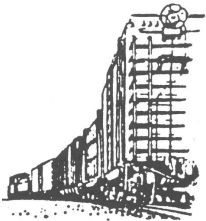
SEEN ON THE LINE – continued



Once upon a time, Tower 59 of the New York Central guarded the crossing of the Erie's dock line spur to the North Tonawanda waterfront, (which ran about where the old Tonawanda News had its printing plant. The NT waterfront was once thick with industrial concerns in those days, including the Tonawanda Iron Works. Just look at all the multiple tracks which once occupied the right of way, plus vintage semaphore signaling. Bob Andrycha submitted this immensely interesting photo. Circa 1960.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

We need program presenters for 2019. Many months have openings. If you would like to offer a program please contact Jim Ball.



For February, John Slater reviews the history of railroad food terminals in Cleveland & Buffalo and their connection to the important perishables business of the Nickel Plate Road.

ANNUAL BANQUET

In response to our member requests and to encourage higher attendance, we will repeat a Saturday afternoon format this year for our annual banquet. We will be returning to Ilio DiPaolo's restaurant in March. Date, time and program will be announced as soon as details are complete. Watch for particulars in the next ESX and on our website page.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

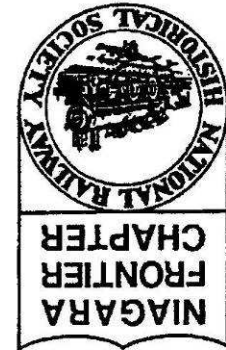
- JAN 11 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. The digitized films of William C. Kessel
- FEB 9 Regular meeting, at Degraff Community Center, 8 PM. John Slater reviews the history of rail food terminals in Cleveland & Buffalo and their connection to the Nickel Plate's perishables business
- FEB 16-17 WNYRHS Winter Train Show, Hamburg, NY, 10AM-5PM. Chapter table needs volunteers.

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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