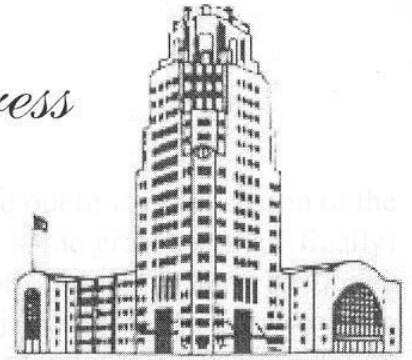


Empire State Express



JANUARY 2025

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, January 10, 2025 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.

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN TRAINS



In 1948 Harry Truman seemed to be the underdog as he ran for election in his own right after having come into the Presidency upon the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in April 1945. He ran against New York's Thomas E. Dewey (the Republican nominee) and Strom Thurmond (a 3rd party "States Rights" or "Dixiecrat"). To everyone's surprise Harry won, garnering 303 Electoral votes to Dewey's 189. He is seen here on the rear platform of one of his campaign trips in that pivotal time just after the end of World War II but before the Korean War.

The use of trains in Presidential elections and for other purposes has a long and fascinating history almost from railroading's beginnings right up to our modern age. Join us at the January Chapter meeting as Mark (MJ) Lewandowski takes us on an in-depth dive into this history.

Photo: John C. Dahl collection.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I have been writing this column for over twenty years now. Holy Express Train, Batman, where does the time go? Ye Editor says we have a short deadline this month so let's get right to business.

We held our annual election of Officers and Directors at the December meeting. Thanks to all the hardworking folks who are continuing in their posts for another year. Their experience and dedication have moved this organization ahead steadily and solidly. When you see them, please let them know that you appreciate their work. A lot of things "just get done" by folks whose job title says something else entirely.

The Museum was open for Winterwalk and this year we had the "Petting Zoo" which was set up at the sidewalk. The interior of the station was trimmed for Holiday Season. We had a fair number of visitors. A lot of pictures were taken with the jolly gent in the red suit. The Lionel layout got a workout. Thanks to everyone who participated. Beginning in January we will resume our usual Regular Monthly Membership Meeting with program, second Friday of the month, as always. The Museum will be open on the first Saturday of the month each month until May when we go to every week. We are always looking for tour guides; would you be interested? Let us know. We will again be heading to the Fairgrounds in February for the WNYRHS Train Show. Bruce Becker will be organizing a day trip to Toronto, watch our Facebook page (or see page 3 of this ESX) for details on that.

In looking back at 2024 I see the list of members and fellow railfans that left us in the last year. Lamar Todd, John Thompson and Dave Skoney all passed away in 2024. We will miss them all.

The annual Chapter Banquet will be held Saturday, March 22. The Program will be spectacular; I have had a sneak preview! Somewhere in the spring we will hold another Historic Marker unveiling, this one for our station. You are all invited to the unveiling ceremony. Please send in your renewals as soon as you can, we don't want to lose anyone. Something that I'll bet few have thought of; we have received over 500 used ties from CSX over the last year. If we value these at half the price of new ties (new ones are \$60.00 each) that works out to \$21,000 in materials that we didn't have to pay for. We will however be buying some more ballast and hardware. We have already received the order of spikes that we purchased. The track crew can't wait for grass and the trees to go green again.

Now, if this looks like you have read it before, it's because you have. We have contracted a plow service to have the Museum open on Saturdays. We publish that it is open on the first Saturday of the month after the regular season is over. If the need to cancel the Monthly Meeting should arise please look to Chanel 2 on your TV. On the radio listen in to WGR 550AM, Oldies 104.1FM or WYRK 106.5FM. We will try to make the decision early enough to make the 5pm broadcasts. When in doubt, err on the side of caution. I will see you at the meeting or the Museum.

Jim Ball



Cabin Fever Train Ride

GO Train Round Trip
From
Niagara Falls, Ont.
to Toronto

Saturday,
February 8, 2025

- Depart Niagara Falls, Ont VIA/GO Station: 12:04pm
- Arrive Toronto Union Station: 2:24pm

- Depart Toronto Union Station: 6:21pm
- Arrive Niagara Falls, Ont VIA/GO Station: 8:39pm

**Round Trip Fare - \$10.00 CDN
(Approximately \$7.00 USD)**

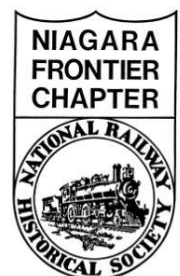
During The 3 1/2 Hour Layover...

*See The Ongoing Improvements At Toronto Union Station,
Enjoy A Meal, Going Shopping At Eaton Centre Or Take A Ride On The TTC!*



**Full Trip Information
& Registration
at www.nfcnrhs.org**

(Registration Required By February 3rd)



SCENE ON THE LINE



A CSX stack train highballs eastbound to Buffalo near Sheridan, NY on December 20, 2024. Winter along the former New York Central Water Level Route west of Buffalo can have its moments of blinding lake-effect snow. Luckily for the photographer only a light “Christmas snow” was falling creating this pretty winter scene.



This is a far cry from the picture at left of a snowbound depot in Eden Center NY on the former Erie Buffalo & Southwestern branch, now Buffalo Southern. It is December 14, 2024 and just a few days after a massive lake-effect storm dumped several feet on areas south of Buffalo. But take heart folks, Ground Hog Day and thus mid-winter, is only a few weeks away now!

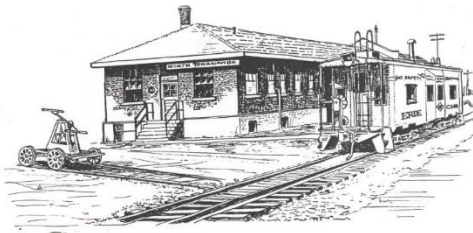
Photos: Above; Larry Gustina. Left; John C. Dahl

SCENE ON THE LINE – continued



North of Province Street at Richburg, VT, Conductor Alex Schwarzmüller (son of Chapter member Anton) halts tri-weekly train G18 from Farnham, Quebec to Newport, VT for inspection by U.S. Customs and Border Protection on December 4, 2024. Motive power was CP2248 and CP2291, both GP20C-ECOs, pulling 14 cars. Alex is a former Niagara Frontier chapter member and Railcamp graduate, and now serves as a Railcamp counselor and is a Champlain Valley chapter NRHS member. By happenstance the CBP officer assigned to inspect the train was his sister. *Photo courtesy of Anton Schwarzmüller.*

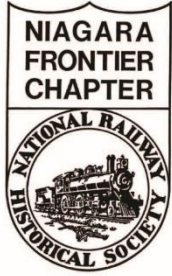
2025 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS



At the December meeting it was announced by Membership Secretary Neal Kerin that renewals for 2025 will be done online for those of you who subscribe to the Empire State Express via the emailed PDF edition and by US Mail for those who receive the printed ESX.

PLEASE WATCH FOR YOUR RENEWAL NOTICE EMAIL or US Mailed copy and renew as soon as possible.

With the cost increases in especially postage and printing, we are trying to economize and thus keep your dues as low as possible. Thank You in advance.



2025 Western New York Railroad Calendar

53rd Edition

Another Fine Publication Of The Niagara Frontier Chapter - National Railway Historical Society

Outstanding Color And Black & White Photographs Are Featured In A Limited Edition Printing Of The Chapter's Annual Railroad Wall Calendar. This High Quality Publication, A Tradition Since 1972, Contains 12 Photographs of Steam, Diesel And Electric Railroad Action. All Scenes Were Recorded In And Around Western New York, Northwest Pennsylvania And Nearby Southern Ontario. The 2025 Photographs Were Carefully Selected From The Chapter Archives And From The Collections Of Chapter Members.

- **Rochester Transit Corporation** - #66 (Cincinnati Car Company 1916) a former Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway car
- **New York Central** - 4-8-2 class L2c Mohawk #2836 (American Locomotive Company, 1929) near Tower #47 in Buffalo, NY
- **Erie Railroad** - A set of FA-1 locomotives (American Locomotive Company, 1947-1949) lead a freight train in Corry, PA
- **Canadian National Railway** - HR-412 #2587 (Bombardier, November 1981) leads two other locomotives passing Dundas, Ont
- **International Railway Company** - Car #2002 (Kuhlman Car Company, 1916), a Niagara Falls High-Speed car, in Buffalo, NY
- **CSX Transportation** - ES44AH #911 & #1976 (General Electric, July 2008 & May 2012) are both wearing special paint schemes
- **Lehigh Valley Railroad** - GP-9 #300 (Electro Motive Division, September 1959) is at the Tiffit Street diesel locomotive service track
- **New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad** - Nickel Plate 2-8-4 S-3 Berkshire #776 (Lima Locomotive Works, May 1949) in Pomfret, NY
- **Chessie System** - Sperry Rail Service car #136 (J.G. Brill Company, 1928) was built for the New York Central RR as Doodlebug car M-1
- **Conrail** - U33-B #2909 (General Electric, September-1968 built for Penn Central) is westbound on train HB-1 in Alden, NY
- **Baltimore & Ohio** - 2-8-0 class E-60 #3140 (Alco-Brooks Locomotive Works, 1908, ex-Buffalo & Susquehanna #166) at Westfield, PA
- **Arcade & Attica Railroad** - 4-6-0 #14 (Baldwin Locomotive Works, February 1917) is passing the depot in Arcade, NY



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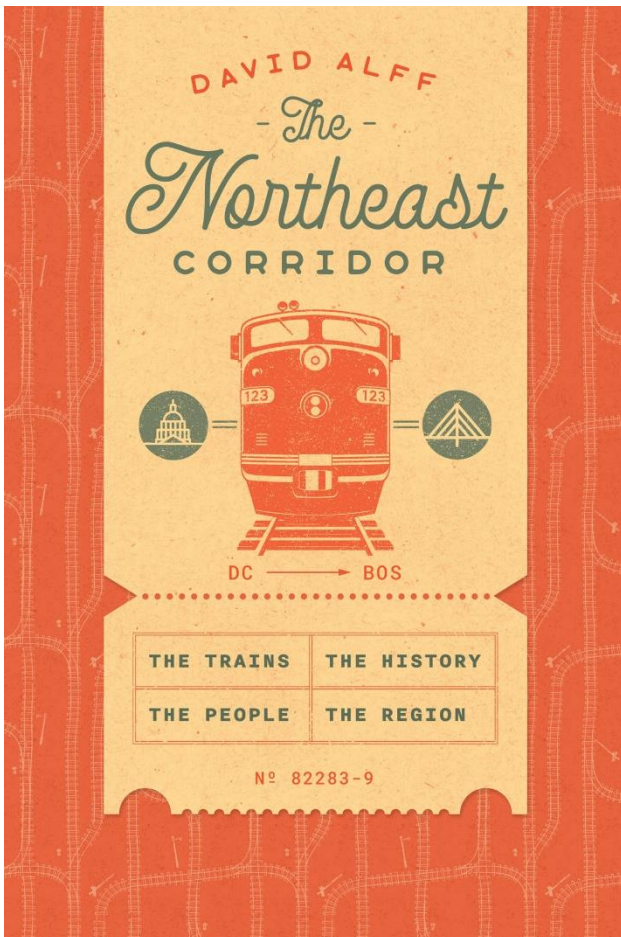
ELECTION OF CHAPTER OFFICERS

All officers and director candidates for 2025 were elected at the December 2024 meeting. Congratulations!

LAST RUN

As noted by Jim Ball at the December meeting, we sadly announce the unexpected passing of long-time Chapter member and board member Dave Skoney. Dave died last month just a few days before the meeting and we are told he had been active up almost to the end. Dave served faithfully in various director positions for many years, and he will be missed. I recall him providing a great photo for use on the cover of the ESX many years ago when I was preparing to do a program on the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The image of a passenger train leaving Buffalo's once fabulous downtown LVRR terminal pulled by a set of Alco PA diesel engines in the early 1950s remains one of my all-time favorite rail pictures of Buffalo. When he brought the photo to me so I could scan it for reprinting, Dave recalled some memories he had of those all too brief glory years just after the end of World War II but before the automobile and air travel decimated the LVs rail passenger trade. Those first-hand recollections that folks like Dave could tell us are unfortunately becoming a rare commodity. The Chapter extends its sincere condolences to Dave's family.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD



The Northeast Corridor – David Alff

My new book offers the first comprehensive history of America's most important inter-city passenger railroad, and the region it built. It shows how a fistful of train tracks transformed America's Atlantic shoreline into a political capital, a global financial hub, and home to fifty million people. *The Northeast Corridor* reveals how freight trains, commuter rail, and Amtrak influenced—and in turn were shaped by—centuries of American industrial expansion, metropolitan growth, downtown decline, and revitalization. In this talk, I will discuss how I came to research the corridor, what I learned while writing the book, and how I hope it can spark conversations within and beyond the rail heritage community.

Join us next month as David discusses his new book on this fascinating part of US railroads.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD – continued

2025 Annual Banquet

SAVE THE DATE

2025 Chapter Banquet & Program
Saturday, March 22 11:30am to 3:00pm
Registration Opens February 1st

Program Featuring The Newly Digitized & Remastered
B&O Films Of Jim VanBrocklin



New York Central 2-8-0 #1199 with a classic NYC wood caboose in tow is seen at Black Rock (Buffalo, NY) on October 26, 1954. *James Van Brocklin photo, Niagara Frontier Chapter Archives. Jim was a decades long member of the Chapter, served on the board and was a prolific photographer of railroads around Buffalo, with a particular interest in steam. His slide and movie films earned him the nickname of “Cecil B. Van Brocklin” after the great Hollywood film maker, Cecil B. DeMille. Chapter member Aaron Heverin will present the results of his work preserving Jim’s iconic images now housed in our Archives at the 2025 Annual Banquet.*

WINTERWALK HOLIDAY CHEER AT THE STATION, December 7, 2024

All photos by Bob Andrycha



CHAPTER CALENDAR

- JAN 10** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center, 7 PM. Program by Mark (M.J.) Lewandowski. "Presidential Campaign Trains"**
- FEB 8** **CABIN FEVER TRAIN TRIP TO TORONTO. REGISTRATION ONLINE BY FEBRUARY 3, 2025 IS REQUIRED. See details inside, page 3.**
- FEB 14** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center, 7 PM. Program by noted author David Alff. David will discuss his new book "The Northeast Corridor".**

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 us know by sending it to 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 US mail or Email. Please contact the Chapter at PO Box 1043, North Tonawanda, NY 14120 for current membership and subscription rate details. Web site www.nfcnrhs.org

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