

Empire State Express



NOVEMBER 2022

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

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The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, November 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.

RAILROAD MOVIE NIGHT WITH DEVAN LAWTON **Scenes on the Erie Lackawanna and Lehigh Valley RR's**



Retired railroader and Chapter member Devan Lawton joins us and will be showing two super 8mm silent movies for our membership and visitors. Photo: At Lanesboro, PA EL #3632 is eastbound with hotshot "Santa Fe 100" as the pushers head west at "JA", May 25, 1972. *Devan Lawton photo.* For Detailed program info, please see next page.

Meeting program info – continued

Reel #1: Erie -Lackawanna Railway: Devan worked as a locomotive fireman on train BM-7, ordered 6 am on October 27, 1974 (Buffalo, New York to Steamburg, Penna. via the River Line). Devan was called for train MF-74 at 12:30 pm on October 28. Worked Meadville, Penna. to Waterboro, New York. Filmed on BM-7's lead diesel-electric locomotive EL RY E-8A # 816 (D,L&W # 816) and on MF-74 was EL RY F-7A # 6321 (D,L&W # 632A).

Reel # 2: Lehigh Valley Railroad: Various locations trackside from Western New York to Sayre, Penna. April, 1970 to March 31, 1976. This last day was at the Niagara Junction block station/ train dispatcher's office, Depew, N.Y. (note: this film covers the LAST trick on the LV RR prior to Conrail's start up).



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The leaves have changed and now they have fallen. The temperature outside causes us to don warm clothing. We are beginning to hear the word “snow” again in the weather forecasts. The season being upon us, I need to review the meeting cancellation procedure. We are listed with WGRZ TV channel 2. We send it to the other stations, but look to Channel 2 first. We also send it to radio stations WGR 550AM, Oldies 104.1 FM, WYRK 106.5FM. We try to make the decision soon enough to make the 5 pm broadcasts.

Neal has begun the process of sending out the renewal notices. Please attend to that promptly and please be as generous as you can with your donations. All donations are carefully monitored so that they are invested in the project exactly as the donor intended.

The S Scale Resource, the magazine of the NASG group, featured a multipage article on their “CanAm” convention held in Buffalo back in August. There were two photos of our Museum taken while they were visiting. In addition to that, they gave us a nice donation for the day.

Here's a link: [Volume 9 No.1 \(sscaleresource.com\)](http://sscaleresource.com)

Speaking of group visits, the Studebaker car club came to visit our Museum on Saturday the 29th. Twenty some people lead by Howard Newberry, descended upon the Museum looking at everything and asking questions and taking pictures. It was a great day.

Coming up is the WNYRHS train show at the Fairgrounds, November 19 & 20 and Winterwalk. Winterwalk will be Saturday December 3rd, time to be announced. The Museum will be open.

There will be published in the next issue the list of Candidates running for election to the Board of Directors. This is in accordance with the Chapter Bylaws. The Election will be held at the December meeting.

While preparing that list, I jotted down a quick list of the names of the people who seem to do everything in the organization. We have approximately one hundred members. That list includes all the Board members as expected, but also another half dozen names besides. Thanks to everyone who makes this all work. Many of them wear several hats.

While the job of Program Coordinator is not a Board position, we are in need of someone to fill the position. It requires that the Coordinator keep track of the program schedule and report to the members at the meeting. Is this something that you could do?

With that, I hope to see you at the meeting.

Jim Ball

Election notice for NRHS National -Chapter Advisory Council Representative.

Becky Gerstung has agreed to serve again . The election for this will be held at the November meeting.

SCENE ON THE LINE



Signaling has sure changed in recent years, gone from former New York Central lines are the searchlight style signals that were replacements themselves for the semaphore style blades once so common on many railroads. With PTC (Positive Train Control) now in place and interlocking towers long since banished, it is still good to see these trackside sentinels, even if modern and controlled from some very distant dispatching center and now electronically interlocked. The photo location is in Buffalo, NY at the junction of the Compromise and Niagara branch. Amtrak's train 64, The Maple Leaf, eastbound, whisks past. *Larry Gustina photo, June 6, 2022.*



Scene at the Chapter's Erie RR Station

A classic 1948 Studebaker Commander is spotted next to Erie caboose C345. The two are near contemporaries with the auto just a couple of years older than the caboose! October 29, 2022. - JCD



Chapter member Howard Newberry is the proud owner of this classic Studebaker of the early 1960s. Thank you Howard for arranging this mini-classic car meet with the WNY Studebaker owners club. It was a beautiful day for an autumn trip. October 29, 2022. - JCD

SCENE – continued



“Autumn glory” on the New York & Lake Erie, October 16, 2022. Alco FPA # 6758 and an Alco switcher in a sharp looking Erie RR heritage paint scheme of black and yellow, # 308, leads a trio of passenger cars with a sellout crowd of ‘leaf peepers’ on board southbound past what was the old station location in Markhams, NY. (Note: usual power FPA 6764 is ailing with a leaky radiator system and under repairs from what we understand.) The all too brief season of nature’s splendid color will be mostly over by the time this photo gets seen by ESX readers. But its memory will last and will help get this railfan through those dull, dreary days of winter which will soon follow. It makes me think of that famous quote: *“If winter comes, can spring be far behind?”* – *Ode to the West Wind*, English poet P.B. Shelly, 1792-1822. John C. Dahl photo.



WHAT THE HECK ARE THESE?

A Salamanca Surprise

By Tony Schill

It's a warm summer's day back in the mid-1950's, and we're on the platform at the Erie's big brick Salamanca Station, on what was then a busy Main Line, just watching trains. Steam has been gone since 1954, but this is still a great place to spend a few hours. The distant blast of an air horn lets us know that an eastbound train will soon be passing our way. We expect to see some of the Erie's many F-units or perhaps a brace of Alco FA's. In a couple minutes the freight is rolling by the platform, and on the point are indeed four shiny "covered wagons." The Engineer gives us a friendly wave; he's no doubt looking forward to the impending crew change. The locomotives are a fine sight to see, but as we take a closer look at the units we realize that they are, well, a bit "different" from the General Motors F-units we normally see here. The lead unit has a funny-looking headlight, corrugated sides, and the trucks are definitely not the Blombergs usually found under EMD F units. What the heck are these creatures?



Here is the story. Let's start by going back to 1939, when the General Motors EMC Division (later EMD) completed the first commercially successful diesel-electric road freight units in North America. That first set of four "FT" units (in an A-B-B-A configuration) soon proved to a skeptical railroad industry that diesels could revolutionize the railroad freight business and that the long reign of the steam locomotive. Indeed, most railroads became fully dieselized within a mere 20 years after the debut of the FT.

The FT's barnstorming tour of 1940-41 covered the nation over every kind of railroad and under good conditions and bad. When the tour was over, the results were found to be overwhelmingly positive, and EMD's mailbox was soon filled with orders for FT's.

WHAT THE HECK- continued



EMC FT 103 ON TOUR, 1940

Meanwhile, the legacy locomotive builders, especially Alco (American Locomotive Company) and Baldwin, were also aware of the potential of the diesel locomotive, and they too were developing products of their own for freight service. Unfortunately, they were behind the curve and could only watch as the 103 showed its stuff.

In 1940 Alco and General Electric formed a formal partnership to build road freight diesel-electric locomotives. Alco would build the car body, trucks, and prime mover, and GE would supply the electrical gear. Alco, one of the two major builders of steam engines (Baldwin was the other) had worked with GE for years to produce diesel-electric switchers, but never a road freight diesel. General Electric was the successor company to Edison General Electric (founded by the great inventor Thomas Edison). GE had built hundreds of straight electric locomotives over five decades, but it had never attempted to build a road freight diesel. But now Alco/GE wanted to challenge EMD, a relative newcomer (compared to Alco and Baldwin) to the railroad business. So did Baldwin; it was already allied with Westinghouse Electric, with which it too had built many straight electric locomotives as well as diesel-electric switchers. Westinghouse, of course, was a bitter rival of GE, and their combative history went way back to the “War of the Currents” in the 1890’s between George Westinghouse and Thomas Edison.

Shortly after the Alco-GE partnership was formed the nation was plunged into World War II. Soon the War Production Board decreed that absent WPB approval only EMD, with its already successful FT, would be allowed to build road freight diesel-electric locomotives. All builders could construct diesel-electric switch engines.

In 1944 Alco-GE was allowed by the WPB to construct a single experimental diesel-electric road freight A-B-A set (commonly known as the Black Maria). Later the WPB restriction was relaxed further and in 1945-46 Alco-GE began producing the FA model for road freight service. Of course, by that time EMD had taken a commanding lead in the road freight diesel locomotive business.

WHAT THE HECK – continued

Alco/GE tried hard to catch up to EMD. Unfortunately, for various reasons including perceived poor maintainability, the Alco-GE road units (and those of Baldwin and Fairbanks-Morse) produced after the war came to be considered by many railroads as somewhat inferior to the corresponding EMD models. Sales were impacted accordingly. Alco and GE ended their partnership in 1953, as GE had become intent on building complete locomotives at its own plant in Erie, PA.

That brings us back to our morning in Salamanca. The locomotive before us was built in 1954-55 by General Electric in Erie, PA in an A-B-B-A configuration having a total of 6,000 hp. However, the four units were not the same. One A and B each had a single 12-cylinder, 1200 hp engine, while the other A and B each had a single 16-cylinder, 1800 hp engine. This was the first, last and only diesel-electric “covered wagon” road freight locomotive built by General Electric. While it ran on the Erie from 1954 to 1959, and sported the full Erie paint scheme, it was leased, not owned, by the railroad.

The design was never intended for fleet production. Rather it was built as a sort of research project to support the subsequent development of GE’s “Universal” series of locomotives. The Universal series debuted with the U25B in 1959. Other “U-Boat” models soon followed and their great success helped GE (now Wabtec) begin its climb to where it is today, the largest producer of diesel-electric locomotives in North America.

As for the units photographed that long-ago day in Salamanca, in 1959 they went back to GE in Erie to be upgraded (and given a model designation: UM20). They were then sold to the Union Pacific which operated them until 1963, after which they were scrapped. However, the prime mover of one unit was saved and today is in the collection of the Lake Shore Railway Museum in Northeast, PA.

As for GE, it remains a major industrial corporation, but it no longer manufactures locomotives. In 2019 GE’s Transportation unit, including the locomotive factories in Erie and Fort Worth, TX were merged into Wabtec. Ironically, Wabtec is the direct descendent of the Westinghouse Air Brake Company, founded by none other than a young George Westinghouse in 1869. Considering his battles with George Westinghouse more than a century ago, Thomas Edison would probably not be pleased by how things had evolved!

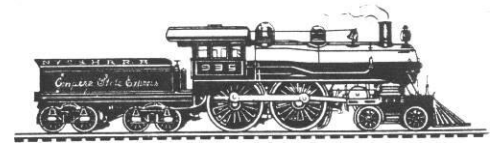


ALCO-GE BLACK MARIA, 1945

CHAPTER MEMORIES

Story collected by Geoff Gerstung

The Railroad Enthusiast – March 1940 issue



January [1940] Meeting

A regular meeting was held on January 5 in the Lehigh Valley Terminal. The date and schedule for the Jamestown winter trip were decided, and various other matters were discussed. The Chairman appointed William C. Kessel Chairman of the Membership Committee and Clayton J. Lovejoy Chairman of the Finance Committee.

On January 25 a special meeting was held in the Lehigh Valley Terminal. Several guests from the Niagara, St. Catharines & Toronto Railway (an electric interurban line of the Canadian National) were present. One of them, Mr. Henry J. McIntyre of St. Catharines, Ontario presented an illustrated lecture on "The Progress of Transportation." He showed more than 50 slides of railroad scenes from various parts of the world. Mr. Arthur Pink, a motorman on the N..St. C. & T. gave a short talk on the collapse of the Falls View Bridge at Niagara Falls in January 1938. He showed several slides, some photographed during the actual collapse of the bridge.

This meeting was jointly sponsored by the Enthusiasts and the Rochester Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. One of the Rochester fans planned and arranged the program and also showed some motion pictures of the N. St. C. & T Ry.

February [1940] Meeting

A regular meeting was held on February 2 in the Lehigh Valley Terminal. The speaker of the evening was Mr. Walter McCausland, Public Relations Director of the International Railway Company, the local streetcar and bus system. He gave a talk, accompanied by slides, on the history and present operation of the IRC.

At the close of the lecture several members inquired about the possibility of PCC cars (modern, silent, streamlined streetcars) being used in Buffalo. Mr. McCausland replied by stating that the IRC would never use PCC cars and would not even consider obtaining one temporarily for a trial. He claimed that small buses are more adaptable to the "peculiar conditions" in Buffalo, such as the "frequency of fires, floods and parades" which block streets. He practically admitted that PCC cars represent the ultimate in comfort and efficiency for urban transportation, but nevertheless, he said that because of Buffalo's "peculiar conditions" his company had decided to substitute small buses for all streetcars in the city as rapidly as possible. Needless to say, almost no one at the meeting could sympathize with this bus policy.

Following this open discussion, Secretary [John] Prophet showed color motion pictures of PCC cars in action in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Toronto.



ON THE TRACK AHEAD

December's program will feature Member's Night. Bring your digital photos and videos on a memory stick for projection on the big screen. Please limit your talk and photos to about 15 minutes maximum. If you want to show traditional 35mm slides, please contact Jim Ball ahead of time so we can have a projector on hand.

AUTUMN'S LAST GASP - THE WELLSVILLE, ADDISON & GALETON



It is late October in 1973 and we're looking at one of the H.E. Salzberg's Company shortlines, Wellsville, Addison & Galetton. Classic in all regards, the train creeps along once storied trackage of the old Buffalo & Susquehanna Railroad. An F-7 cab unit diesel purchased second hand from the Southern Pacific several years earlier hauls the short consist of a few boxcars with a center cupola caboose tacked on the end bringing up the markers. The old Gaines, Pennsylvania depot soldiers on, her roof in tatters, and probably vandalized inside as the overgrowth creeps in from all sides. Even the track itself seems to be buried in the weeds. The WAG existed on a very meager diet of freight from the few industries still left along the "Sole Leather Line" which at one time included the Sinclair refinery in Wellsville, NY and a few tanneries in Elkland and Westfield, PA. Reduced to just 40 miles of track (from an original total of 91) between Galetton and Elkland after Hurricane Agnes's rampage of 1972, filing for abandonment was made in 1975. ICC approval took another three years as operations became sporadic, with the final freight running on March 13, 1979. Equipment moves thru November would linger. I recall a day trip with my friends and fellow Chapter members Howard Newberry and Jon Rothenmeyer in October of 1978 as we hoped to catch some of the last bits of this shortline icon. We were able to see a few physical remnants; a couple of her depots and the weedy right of way of the once upon a timetable railroad. But no train ran that day. We never did get another chance to revisit. The WAG is gone. Only our memories and photos can attest to her great charm, and the sadness in our hearts. - JCD
Photographer unknown, collection John C. Dahl.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- NOV 11** **Regular meeting, Town of Wheatfield Senior Center. Retired railroader Devan Lawton presents movies filmed on the Erie Lackawanna and Lehigh Valley Railroads, before Conrail.**

- NOV 19-20** **WNYRHS Train Show, Hamburg, NY Fairgrounds. Chapter will have display and sales tables.**

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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