

# THE SEMAPHORE

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM

VOL. 63 NO. 9  
SEPTEMBER 2020

**NEXT MEETING:**  
**Sept. 17**  
"Railroads Around Rochester"  
slide show by Otto Vondrak



Jeremy Tuke's 1940 Buick was one of the many antique auto exhibits during our Classic Cars & Train Rides event on August 23, marking our first public train rides of the 2020 season. Operating on reduced capacity and taking all precautions, we served 250 happy visitors this day. PHOTO BY OTTO M. VONDRAK

# Back on Track

## ***INSIDE***

Health/Safety Plan . . .	2
BNY 12 Update . . . . .	4
Classic Cars . . . . .	5
Salute to Veterans . . . .	5
Election Committee . . . .	6
Mercado, Swisher . . . .	6
Nick Tahou's . . . . .	7

While it's not quite the type of operating season anyone expected, your museum hosted its first public event with train rides on August 23. While operating on reduced capacity, we welcomed 250 visitors to our museum, taking all precautions for sanitizing and social distancing. The weekend was a huge success on all points, from operation to attendance (and we even netted a few new members, too)! Encouraged by this progress, we have scheduled a two-day train ride event for **September 19 and 20**. "Salute to Veterans" will also include the cooperation of the Black Lions 2-28 Vietnam Living History Group to provide World War II and Vietnam era military exhibits and demonstrations.

Your museum is making preliminary plans to host some sort of fall pumpkin

patch event in October, but we are being very cautious with our announcements as we monitor the health situation in the coming weeks. The good news is, with a little extra work on our part, we can break even on our expenses this year. In an extraordinary season full of obstacles no one could have expected, this is the best possible outcome for your museum.

Our annual elections are coming up in November. Many positions are up for election, including president. Want to get on the ballot? See **page 6** for details.

We want to keep you all connected during this difficult time. Your ideas for the future are welcome. Please email me at [ovondrak@yahoo.com](mailto:ovondrak@yahoo.com) or call me at (585) 820-2341.

—Otto M. Vondrak, Museum President



[www.rgvrrm.org](http://www.rgvrrm.org)

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## R&GVRRM HEALTH & SAFETY PLAN

The first priority of the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum is the safety of its visitors, volunteers, and members. Our museum is facing a monumental challenge as we prepare to re-open this summer. We are doing everything we can to keep you safe during your visit, but we can't do it alone. Before you visit, please review the following Visitor Responsibilities that follow the latest guidance from New York State and the Centers for Disease Control. *Guests of the museum are invitees to private property, and therefore are required to follow our policies for entry.*

### Museum Health and Safety Plan

- All handrails and exhibit surfaces are cleaned multiple times throughout the day by museum volunteers.
- Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the museum grounds.
- Cashless transactions are strongly encouraged for any purchases made at the museum.
- Social distancing will be enforced on all train rides and in all exhibit areas.
- All staff interacting with the public are required to wear proper PPE.

### COVID-19 Visitor Responsibilities

- Please purchase your tickets in advance and either print them out or display on your phone for entry.
- Masks covering the nose and mouth are required for all visitors age 2 and up. Masks may be removed if you are seated to eat or drink.
- Please maintain a safe social distance of 6' from visitors.
- Please use the hand sanitizing stations conveniently located throughout the museum grounds.
- Please stay home if you are sick, prone to infection, or in a "high-risk" category.

**We look forward to your visit and  
we thank you for your support!**

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**PROGRAM CHAIRMAN**

**VACANT**

**UPCOMING  
MONTHLY PROGRAMS**

Meetings return to the 40&8 Club in downtown Rochester! Following the latest guidance and restrictions, **monthly meetings will be restricted to museum members only** until regulations are relaxed by the state.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, **September 17**, at 7:30 p.m. Museum president **Otto Vondrak** will present a slide show program of "Railroading Around Rochester" featuring CSX, Rochester & Southern, LA&L, Amtrak, and more. Face coverings will be required for entry, and members must maintain safe social distance from one another. Cash bar is available. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

We are currently seeking programs for our meetings on **October 15**, **November 19**, and **December 17**. Programs can be on any railroad-related topic. Please contact Otto Vondrak at ovondrak@yahoo.com to reserve your presentation slot.



Our August 20 members-only meeting was our final summertime gathering at Industry Depot. Members enjoyed a ride on our museum railroad and a tour of our latest projects inside the Restoration Shop. Meetings return to the 40&8 Club in downtown Rochester in September.

**LEHIGH VALLEY CABOOSE 95100  
RESTORATION UPDATE**

Sam Rosenberg, Chuck Whalen, and Joe Steimer have been making preparations for applying the first coat of primer by the end of September, and possibly the first finish coat of red paint if the weather holds out. Volunteer Charles Bell will be manning the spray guns for this project for as long as the weather cooperates.

Our goal is to complete this car in 2021, and operate it as part of a photo freight with our Lehigh Valley boxcar and LV 211. Donations in any amount can be made to this project at [rgvrrm.org/donate](http://rgvrrm.org/donate)

—Sam Rosenberg, Project Mgr.

**ERIE STILLWELL COACH  
PROJECT UPDATE**

Project manager Charles Rothbart has been working with volunteers Jackson Glozer, Jackson Klatt, and others to disassemble the last of the old masonite interior so the interior structure can be assessed for restoration. Plywood and paint has been acquired to produce new window plugs to help make the car weatherproof so work may continue through the winter months.

Built in 1926 by Standard Steel Car Co., Erie Railroad 2328 was retired in the mid-1950s, gutted, and rebuilt as a "camp car" for work trains. It was retired by Conrail and acquired by a scrap yard in Elmira. It was acquired by our museum in 1985, and had significant work done to replace the

sheet metal below the belt rail and produce new window sashes in the mid-1990s.

**BR&P CABOOSE 280**

Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh caboose 280 made its public debut hauling visitors on our museum railroad on August 23! The first piece of equipment to arrive at our museum in 1979, the caboose had been a display piece until it was one of the first projects placed inside the new Restoration Shop in 1998.

Volunteer Bill Marcotte has fabricated a new smokejack that will be mounted to the roof and connected to the coal stove chimney so we can have heat this winter. Jeremy Tuke will be installing the special signal lamp on the cupola roof sometime in the next few weeks. Rob Burz is installing new plumbing inside the caboose for the installation of the conductor's emergency air brake valve.

**JACKSON TAMPER  
REPAIR UPDATE**

Thanks to the efforts of Tim Gifford and Scott Gleason, our Jackson Tamper moved for the first time under its own power on August 29. Jim Johnson is finishing up his inspection of the wiring, while Dan Waterstraat is installing new gauges and a master starter circuit. John Redden produced new engine compartment covers, and Dave Luca cut and installed new rubber straps to support the tamper motors. We look for-

ward to turning this piece of equipment back over to the Track Dept. for use in their various projects.

**BROOKLYN NAVY YARD 12 PROJECT UPDATE**

Activity has resumed this past spring on the cosmetic restoration and re-assembly of Brooklyn Navy Yard 0-4-0 no. 12, built by Vulcan in 1918 and acquired by our museum in 1997. Recent tasks completed include the removal of air tank mounts removed from the top of the smoke box, and all associated air tank piping all removed. Engineer's and fireman's side walls of cab restored. All the old window frame pieces have been removed, and new window frames and sill structures have been installed based on the old existing mea-



*Classic Cars*  
**and Train Rides**

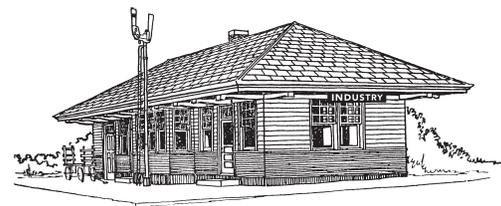
**TOP RIGHT:** The excursion train consisted of RG&E 1941, the Penn Central transfer caboose, the open-air flatcar, and BR&P 280.

**RIGHT:** A 1970 Chevy Nova SS (owned by Scott Haynes) and a 1953 DeSoto Fireflite sedan (owned by Michael Lempert) were two of the classic car exhibits brought in for the event.

**BELOW:** Visitors prepare to board the museum train in the Upper Yard.

**BELOW RIGHT:** Regional Transit Service loaned us their beautifully restored 1956 GM Transit Bus to display inside the Restoration Shop.





**LEFT:** Thanks to the efforts of Tim Gifford and Scott Gleason, our Jackson Tamper moved for the first time under its own power on August 29. Jim Johnson is finishing up his inspection of the wiring, while Dan Waterstraat is installing new gauges and a master starter circuit.

**BELOW:** Joel Shaw has resumed work on Brooklyn Navy Yard 0-4-0 no. 12., including designing a new rear window frame and making other repairs to the woodwork inside the cab.

surements. Window frames themselves fabricated with pressure treated lumber, and protected with oil-based primer. A new window frame was built to split the area above the coal bin, and new wainscoting was installed across the cab rear. Much “hidden wood” fabricated and/or replaced with pressure treated lumber.

Projects to complete include the removal of the air compressor (as-built, the locomotive was not equipped with air brakes). The front pilot wood beam and the cab back coal bin wood beam both need to be replaced. Various steel repairs include the replacement of sheet metal along the rear of the cab on the engineer’s side. The Pyle electric generator needs a fresh coat of paint. We are seeking contractor quotes for the repair, sandblasting, priming, and painting of the saddle tank. Many other small tasks, too many to list, require additional volunteer help. Please contact me if you are interested in joining the team.

—Joel R. Shaw, Project Manager

### **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS**

Charlie Marks rebuilt the southeast depot exterior door in his home workshop and re-installed it this past August. He is currently working on repairs to the northwest exterior door, and expects to have that installed by October.

Rob Burz has completed the rough electrical work so progress can continue on the restoration of the bathroom off the North Waiting Room.

Charlie Marks is pouring a new concrete threshold where the cellar door used to be to help keep water out of the basement. He



is also working on replacing the opening with a new door for improved egress.

Thanks to member David Monte Verde for covering the cost of repairing and refinishing the floors in the south waiting room and in the agent’s office.

### **GOOD ATTENDANCE FOR CLASSIC CARS & TRAIN RIDES**

Your museum hosted its first public event of 2020 including train rides on Sunday, August 23. Using the theme of classic cars, five vehicles exhibited at the event, including member Jeremy Tuke’s 1940 Buick, Rand Warner’s LaSalle, a 1953 DeSoto owned by Michael Lempert, and a 1970 Chevy Nova SS owned by Scott Haynes, and the restored 1956 GM Transit Bus loaned to us by Regional Transit Ser-

vice. Operating at 50% capacity, we hosted our maximum 250 paid visitors for the day, operating on our usual 30-minute schedule. Volunteers wiped down and sanitized handrails and seating surfaces between each run. We were excited to see many new faces and first-time visitors among our customers that day, and WHEC Channel 10 covered our event on the evening news. Our outdoor gift shop also did significant business selling snacks and souvenirs. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this event a success!

### **SALUTE TO VETERANS TRAIN RIDES SEPTEMBER 19-20**

We have scheduled our Salute to Veterans Train Rides for the weekend of September 19-20. Once again we will be work-

# Gone, but not forgotten...



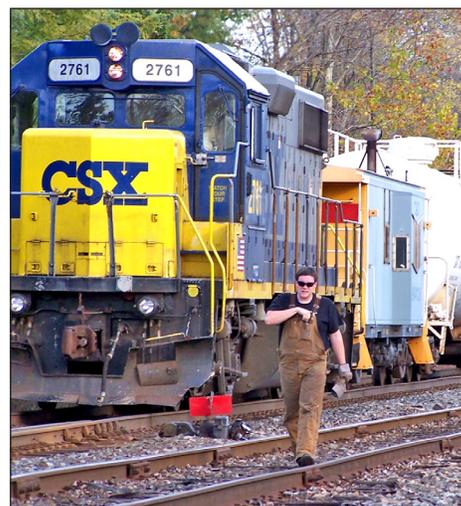
PHOTO COURTESY NYMT

## Carlos Mercado (1946-2020)

Born in the Bronx, he lived his early years in Philadelphia, attended high school in Auburn, N.Y., and graduated from Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y. He moved to Rochester in 1968 and began a career in banking starting with Lincoln Trust and later Marine Midland. To say Carlos was active in his community would be an understatement. He served as past president of the Greece Chamber of Commerce, and an active volunteer with Visit Rochester, Christ Church, South Wedge Mission, WXXI's annual auction, Reconnect Rochester, and, of course, at the New York Museum of Transportation where he served on the trolley crew as a conductor and motorman and also most recently as First Vice President and Trustee. A life-long train enthusiast, Carlos was very knowledgeable about transit and urban transportation systems across the country. He passed away after brief illness on Thursday, August 27. His friendly wit and numerous contributions will be missed.

## Samuel J. Swisher (1981-2020)

Sam Swisher was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, in 1981, and moved to Rochester with his family in 1996. He was a graduate of Edison Technical High School and Monroe Community College. Sam volunteered at RGVRM for many years, and briefly served in the U.S. Army before getting hired on with CSX Transportation. He worked in West Virginia and on the Boston & Albany as a conductor and engineer before marking up in his adopted hometown of Rochester. In 2007 he made the move to Olean and worked as an engineer on the Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad for a few years. In 2011, he moved to Ohio and later Michigan to pursue opportunities in Fire Protection and Emergency Management, and later worked with veterans services. Sam was also a Scout leader, a volunteer firefighter, and an avid radio-control racing enthusiast. He passed away unexpectedly on Friday morning, August 28. His dry sense of humor and his passion for railroading will be missed. Sam is survived by his wife Lillian and their nine children.



MIKE ROQUE PHOTO

ing with the **Black Lions 2-28 Vietnam Living History Group** to provide exhibits of World War II and Vietnam equipment and encampments. Socially-distanced train rides will depart from Industry Depot every 30 minutes from 10:00am to 3:30pm. Veterans and active military enjoy discount admission. Advance ticket purchase is required. —*O.M.V.*

### ELECTION COMMITTEE

Our 2020 Elections will be held in November at the monthly meeting. The Elections Committee is chaired by Dave Scheiderich, with trustee Dave Shields. Chris Hausler, Don Wawryzniak, and Lisa Talty have also volunteered to serve. There are several positions up for election this year, including officers and trustees. We are

always interested in welcoming new voices to the museum board of trustees. If you are interested in becoming a candidate, please contact anyone listed on this committee so we can add you to the ballot. You can email me at [boblenon@gmail.com](mailto:boblenon@gmail.com).

—*Dave Scheiderich, Chairman*

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please join me in welcoming these new members to the museum!

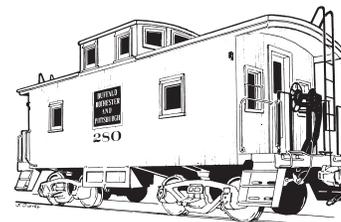
- Tom Blide Family**, Avon
- Charles Rothbart**, Rochester
- Jackson Glozer**, Rochester
- Mark Amann Family**, Rochester,
- Jacob Herendeen Family**, Rochester
- Michael Lempert Family**, Macedon

—*Sam Rosenberg, Membership Chair*

### SAFETY FIRST

Coming out to the museum? Wear a face covering, keep reasonable distance whenever possible, wash your hands, and bring your own hand sanitizer if possible. If you're feeling sick, or you are in a "high-risk" category, please STAY HOME.

**VISIT US ONLINE**  
[FACEBOOK.COM/RGVRM](https://www.facebook.com/RGVRM)  
[FLICKR.COM/RGVRM](https://www.flickr.com/photos/RGVRM/)



**BUFFALO  
ROCHESTER  
AND  
PITTSBURGH  
RY.**

**"SAFETY AND SERVICE"**



This 1918 photo shows the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh station at 320 West Main Street, current home of Nick Tahou Hots. The commercial block in the foreground is home to the original Tahou's, founded in 1918 by Alex Tahou and located at 296 West Main Street. TODD BLIDE COLLECTION

# THE NICK TAHOU CONNECTION

Just about everyone in Rochester has made the visit to Nick Tahou Texas Hots on West Main Street, home of the original "Garbage Plate" made famous by the late-night crowd looking for a large, inexpensive, and tasty meal. The current location at 320 West Main Street is the old Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway terminal, which became part of the Baltimore & Ohio system in 1932. Not many people know the important connection and long history between the railroad and the Tahou family.

The Tahou family came to America from Flambouron, Greece. Alex Tahou got his start selling hot dogs out of a cart to hungry passengers at the BR&P station before he opened his lunch counter at nearby 296 West Main Street in 1918, naming the restaurant after his son, Nicolaos ("Nick"). In the photo above from the collection of Todd Blide, a window proclaiming "TEXAS WEINERS" can be plainly seen in the foreground.

In the depths of the Great Depression, hungry patrons flocked to Tahou's for "hots n' potats" a meal which consisted of



hot dogs, baked beans, and home fries. The restaurant was able to serve large portions of the inexpensive foods, making the location quite popular for years to come. His son Nick Tahou arrived in America in 1937 and took over the family business in 1942.

After the end of B&O passenger service to Rochester in September 1953, and not needing the additional office space, the railroad put the station up for sale. It was purchased by Peter D'Ambrosio of Brighton in the spring of 1962. Construction began on the Western Expressway (today's I-490) from Mount Read Boulevard toward Chili and Churchville in 1962. Understand-

ing the state's long-term plans included connecting the expressway to the existing Inner Loop downtown, Alex Tahou knew his busy restaurant was in the path. He purchased the B&O station from D'Ambrosio in September 1963 for \$43,000. The move down the block would not take place until the original location was demolished in 1968. Today, a relocated Broad Street runs through the location of the original Tahou's restaurant. Nicolaos "Nick" Tahou passed away in 1997, and his son Alex Tahou continues to operate the restaurant to this day, though no longer operating 24/7.

After the end of passenger service, the tracks behind the station remained active for freight, used by local crews to access the sidings for the B&O freight house and Morse Lumber Co. While the freight house was torn down in the 1970s, Morse Lumber remained a steady customer. Rochester & Southern took over freight service in 1986. In 2019, the old platform areas were fenced off as Morse Lumber had acquired the property to use as storage space for their expanding business. 📍



**THE SEMAPHORE**  
ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM  
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**PLAN AHEAD:**

**Sept. 17, 2020**

933 UNIVERSITY AVE., ROCHESTER, N.Y.

**PLAN AHEAD:**

**October 15, 2020**

933 UNIVERSITY AVE., ROCHESTER, N.Y.

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Find us on Facebook! [facebook.com/rgvrrm](https://facebook.com/rgvrrm)



Our museum excursion train passes Signal 3N while conductor Joe Steimer waves from the rear platform of Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh caboose 280, making its public debut on August 23! See page 5 for details. OTTO M. VONDRAK PHOTO