



The Semaphore

Newsletter of the Rochester NY Chapter, NRHS
P.O. Box 664, Rochester, NY 14603; Published Monthly

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Volume 41, No. 11

Meeting at Depot: July 15

It's Summertime at the Depot! *Part 2*

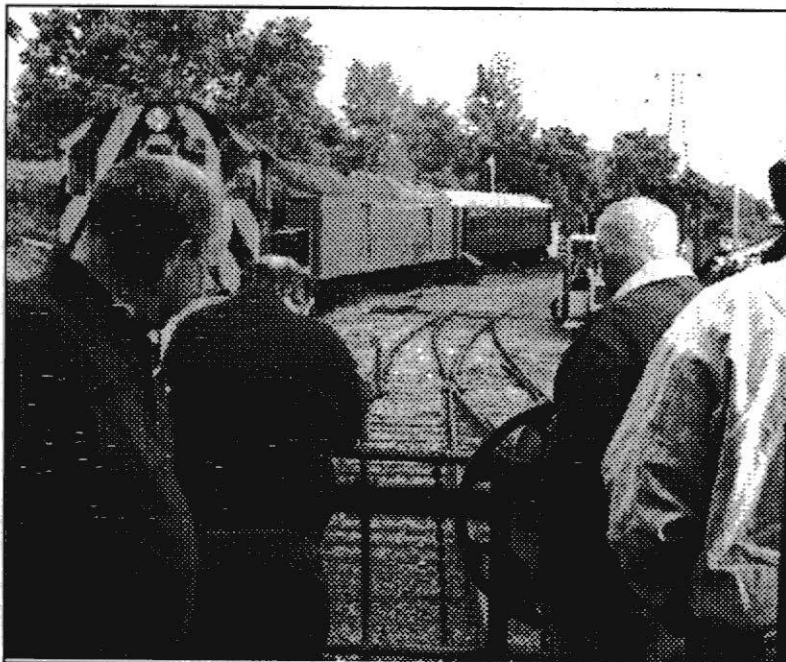
The July and the August meetings will be at the R&GVRR Museum Depot on NYS Route 251 at Industry. There is no particular time to be there, but activities should be starting around 6 PM.

Last month, we rode the PC Transfer caboose up and down the line. What will happen in July? You'll have to come and see!

June's Inspection Trip

Ira Cohen, Fred Enrich (guest) and Charles Robinson inspect the trackage as they ride the PC transfer caboose entering the yard at the June meeting.

(Gale Smith photo)



Tioga Central Trip Status

The Tioga Central Dinner Train Excursion for Saturday, July 31 is almost sold out as this is being written. A good response was obtained from the public announcement in the June 27 edition of the *Democrat & Chronicle*.

Call John Redden at (716) 388-9124 for an update on any openings for this trip. Cost is \$65 per person.

Summer Library Hours

Monday, July 19

Monday, August 22

7:30 to 9:30 PM, both days

"B&O Railroaders" Wanted

B&O *Railroader* magazines missing from our collection that the library would like to acquire:

- ☐ 1972 Vol. 1 #5 October
- ☐ 1973 Vol. 2 #1 February
- ☐ 1974 Vol. 3 #6
- ☐ 1975 Vol. 4 #1
- ☐ 1976 Vol. 5 #2 and remaining issues of 1976.
- ☐ 1977 Vol. 6 #3 and remaining issues of 1977.
- ☐ All issues after 1977.

\$3,000 Received from NRHS Heritage Grants Program

Those Rochester Chapter members who attended the National Railway Historical Society Convention last week in California brought back exciting news. Our application to the National Railway Historical Heritage Grant Program for funds to repair the exterior of the two cabooses that house our library in Webster was approved!

These monies will be used to purchase appropriate siding and platform materials plus other necessary items to repair or replace deteriorated siding, windows, roof and skirting. We are fortunate to have several able carpenter-knowledgeable members to supervise this project.

Boiler Tube Failure

The tubes in the boiler of UP's 844 let go at the Rail Fair. Since the similar tubes were also used in the Challenger, its use was greatly curtailed — much to the dismay of many visitors — including foreign who had traveled to see these two famous locomotives in action. DL

Program Committee

Jack Matsik (Chairman)	442-6269
Bill Limburg	586-9470
Dan Cosgrove	352-6931
Dave Luca (Board liaison)	288-0318

The Committee welcomes suggestions and ideas for future programs. Contact any of the Committee members.

1999 Fall Foliage Excursion Dates Announced -

Sunday, Sept. 26 (Family day)
Sundays of Oct. 3, 10, 17 & 24
Saturdays of Oct. 9 & 16

Please see Page 6 for the THIRD REQUEST for help to make these trips possible. In addition for help on getting ready and maintaining the Excursion Set and selling Excursion tickets, help will also be needed to sell concessions and store items on the train.

Depot Guides for July

Sunday, July 4:

Don Shilling, 381-3171
John Stewart, 387-9185

Sunday, July 11:

Eric Drum, 671-5954
Tom Way, 482-5787

Saturday & Sunday, July 17 & 18: (Diesel Days)

Ron Amberger
Bill Blaesi, 342-6339
DeWain Feller, 527-9619

Sunday, July 25:

Chuck Whalen, 659-8527
Ted Miller, 264-9934

Depot Guides for August

Sunday, August 1:

Jim East, 377-5389
Bill Cain, 586-9043

If an Act of God forces you to change your guide appointment, please trade with one of the guys listed above.

Membership Information

Dues for the calendar year are:

Regular \$30; Student/Retiree: \$25; Family; \$40 Other membership levels are available. Includes membership in the National Railway Historical Society.

If a member of NRHS and wish to join the Rochester Chapter, deduct \$15 from the above categories.

Make check payable to Rochester Chapter NRHS and send to: Rochester Chapter NRHS, P.O. Box 1161, Webster, NY 14580.

Membership Report

Chris Hauf, our Membership Chairman, is looking for his replacement. Chris has updated the membership records on MS Excel, so the person assuming this position should have a PC and Windows.

During his tenure, Chris has enrolled many new members and spread "the word" about our Chapter at various area functions. However, his duties as President, with committee meetings and to work on various projects, leaves little time to adequately support this function. Call Chris at: 381-8583.

In Memoriam

The Chapter extends condolences to the family of Leonard Roe, his wife Olga, and his brother and Chapter member, Raymond.

Leonard succumbed to infection as complication from a blood disease for which he was taking experimental treatments.

Leonard was a mechanical and mathematical wizard, having devised many machines and mechanisms during his professional career.

Leonard put his skills to use for the Chapter, working on various motorized projects and the famous "RoeMobile" track motor car, recovered from Spencerport.

Many of you know what a fighter and survivor Leonard was, having survived a very serious motorcycle accident when he was already eighty. The doctors told him he would never walk again, but he just went ahead and did it anyhow -- actually mowing his grass and shoveling his snow -- and of course walking and driving out to the Museum to work with us whenever he could.

Leonard was an enthusiastic and cheerful supporter of the Chapter right to the end; in fact he called us from the hospital to donate a ladder.

We will surely miss Leonard's personal presence with us, but we will never forget him absolutely undefecitable spirit.

by Rand Warner

Allan W. Bittner

Mr. Bittner, of the Lake Shore Chapter, Northeast, PA, died on June 15 at age 78. He was a dedicated worker at their museum and was publisher of *The Lake Shore Timetable*. I had the fortune to meet Allan several years ago when I stopped by. He dropped what he was doing and spent a good hour with me to investigate the ins-and-outs of the "Little Joe" electric locomotive on exhibit.

If you have not visited this museum, I do suggest that one should do so if your travels are near there. The collection of historical items displayed inside the brick depot makes a brief visit impossible!

Walter A. Schwind

by Gale Smith

This past week was the worst week of my life, bar none. My housemate, Walter Arthur Schwind, died on Friday, July 2 at Rochester General Hospital. In reality, he had died the previous Friday, June 25 after collapsing on the kitchen floor. Unknown at the time, a large piece of steak was lodged in the lower part of the wind pipe. A Heimlich maneuver was unsuccessful before he collapsed. A 911 call quickly brought the St. Paul Boulevard Fire Department and Volunteer Ambulance, who in turn called para medic team, who then transported Walt to Emergency.

The doctors were able to revive him, but informed us that there was no brain function. With prayers and hope, he was kept alive in Intensive Care Unit with a ventilator for another week. Once the ventilator was removed, he passed on.

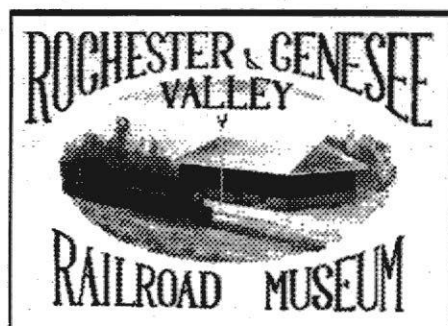
He left behind a brother and four sisters. To me, he was like a "brother" relationship wise. We each had our own activities. He liked to cook, bake (my waist line proves that!), worked in stained glass, took care of six exotic birds and had over eighty orchids.

The stress of the first night, caused my heart to misbehave, forcing me to spend a night in the hospital, hoping that medication will eventually straighten that out.

On Sunday, July 4, my nieces from Ohio arrived to pay their respects. And the bad omen still exists. Nikki, the Moluccan cockatoo, bit one niece, who also had to go to Emergency.

Now I find that I have gained ten pounds from water retention within the last week. Hopefully, all this can be corrected very soon and things will get back to normal!

Although Walter was not a Chapter member, he participated in absentia, by adjusting his schedule to allow yours truly to attend and support various Chapter activities and functions. His absence in this household will have a profound influence.



Rand Warner, Manager, 425-8587

Diesel Division

RG&E #1941 is down for rehab. Dale Hartnett and his Young Explorers are cleaning and repainting running gear. Pilot steps are removed and other areas of electrical, mechanical and brakes are, or will be, receiving needed attention.

NKP #79 is up and running for the season. Coolant is reinstalled after winter storage in plastic tank. The engine was pre-lubed prior to start up. The Alco prime mover sounds great with its unique rumble.

Army #1843 is up and running for the season. The loco was pre-lubed Saturday June 12th, and started up without a hitch.

EKC #9 will be brought down to the Depot area for several items of TLC by the roundhouse gang.

LVR #211 RS-3m will be started up next. It is currently on the head of the freight train exhibit at NYMT.

EKC #6 80-tonner, enter-cab is in active service, and has been, straight thru the winter and spring.

We have been investigating leads for a possible cab unit in runnable condition - Alco or EMD, to complement the rest of our diesel collection of industrial switchers, yard switchers, and road switchers.

Thanks to roundhouse gang: John Redden, Dick Holbert, Bob Miner, Jim Johnson, Charles Harshbarger, Dale Hartnett, Young Explorers, Bill Chapin and others.

Engineering Dept.

Scott Hemenway will be putting our site plans and interior plans for the new building on AutoCAD so we can print out different layers for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, etc.

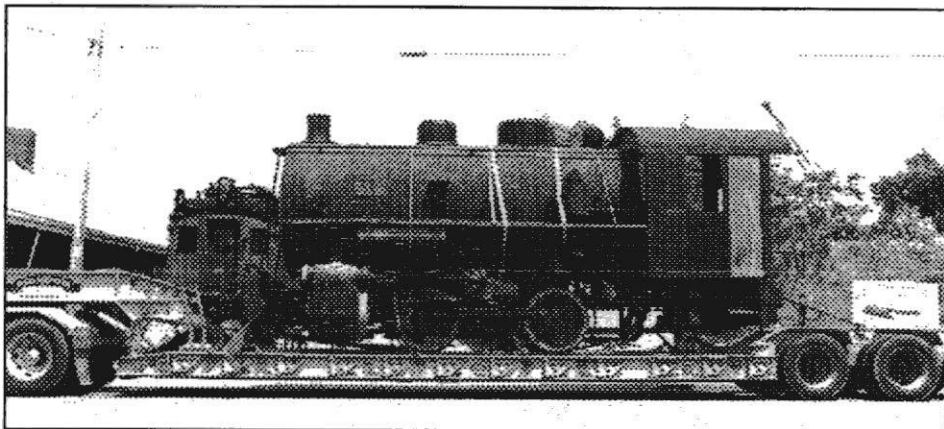
He will also be putting our track plans and the Four Quadrants Vision plans on Auto-CAD to help us with both internal and external communication, interfaces with other organizations and design of various option configurations.

Steam Program

Our 0-4-0 Fireless Heisler Loco arrived at the Museum Wednesday June 2nd via Mendon Enterprises low-boy truck. John Redden coordinated arrangements and George Knab orchestrated the loading and unloading. It was a great day and everything went smoothly.

Thanks to our crew, including Dave Luca, Chuck Whalen, Rick Israelson, Art Mummery, Bob Minter, Norm Shaddick, Rand Warner, Ron Amberger, Dick Bean, Jerry Leiderthiel and Bob Mader.

Work has already started on cleaning, prepping and painting the loco. We also have to re-install the doors for the cab. Amongst our members and the Chapter we have enough appliances to re-equip the locomotive with "jewelry."



The Heisler "fireless" 0-4-0 arrives at the RGV RR via low boy trailer on June 2nd.

(Bernie Cubitt photo)

Safety

Dave Hulings is arranging to present a First Aid course to those candidates who signed up.

Our Operation Lifesaver crew participated at Fairport Canal Days on June 4,5,6 weekend.

Our PRR/RPO car will be getting grab irons repaired and steps replaced.

Our DL&W MU power car will get new steps on northwest corner.

Grab irons will be re-installed on NYC wood caboose.

Parking brake on Fairmont track crane will be made operational.

Heavy duty hitch pins are installed on all track cars and M.O.W. equipment.

The RG&E loco will get new main reservoir and air piping, rehab of valves, and parking brake rehab or upgrade.

The Vulcan 0-4-0T continues to get priority attention in a number of areas.

John Redden, Ron Amberger and Kevin Klees continue to remove tubes with our new tube cutter. The cutter has recently been modified to clear the safe-endings of the tubes.

Rand Warner, Ron Amberger, John Redden and Jeremy Tuke have met with a boiler contractor to inspect the loco firebox, boiler and auxiliaries and to discuss options. Thickness gaging of firebox sheets and boiler wrapper was included in this effort.

We are continuing to evaluate candidate suppliers, contractors and costs for the various elements of this project. Fund raising will definitely be required to get the loco fully and safely operational.

Gas-Mechanical Division

John Redden, Art Mummery, Bob Mader and Norm Shaddick are working on the TrackMobile fleet.

Blue Army TrackMobile #1 is back in service with improved brakes and other assorted TLC.

Blue Army TrackMobile #2 is getting the engine from the RG&E TrackMobile and will return to service.

The RG&E TrackMobile will get the engine from the Blue Army #2, after rehab, and also needs a replacement transfer case, which may come from the yellow Army TrackMobile or other sources.

The Yellow Army TrackMobile has a stuck engine. It has been used as a parts source, to date, to support other projects.

Electric Division

Rochester Lockport and Buffalo interurban car body #206 is essentially ready to move.

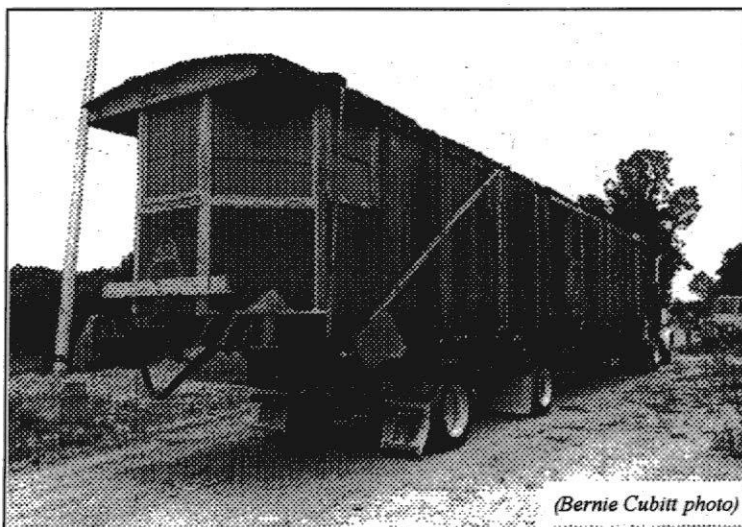
The interior has been cleaned out by Lyell Caleb and the exterior has been prepped by our volunteers.

Openings at the west end and along the north side have been closed up with plywood. The roof is tarped. The south side is being painted in prototype colors.

George Knab is planning the relocation move. He is also making arrangements to get the car body onto a tandem axle dolly and fifth wheel hitch after arrival at the Museum for future mobility.

Thanks to Bernie Cubitt, Chuck Whalen, Dee Mowers, Bill Chapin, Rand Warner, Lyell Caleb and Jerry Lederthiel.

Philadelphia Sweeper #C-147 has been donated and moved to our Museum from Thendara, NY, by Robert Barry, arriving Friday, June 4th.



(Bernie Cubitt photo)

Terry and Rand Warner, Bob Barry and personnel of Adirondack Scenic Rwy loaded the car at Thendara over Memorial Day weekend.

George Knab, Scott Gleason, Dan Waterstraat, Bob Mader, Rand Warner and others helped unload it Saturday, June 5th under direction of George Knab.

The car comes with freight trucks, complete broom drives and motors, and other spares applicable to the sister #C-130 Sweeper at NYMT.

We plan to adapt the car as an all-purpose line car/freight motor/electric express car in support of our CSP&L functions.

Work has started to clean out the car, removed plywood exterior, and begin prep work for repainting.

Rochester Subway Car #60 is getting heavy attention from volunteers from both inside and outside the Chapter.

Upper and lower window sash and window grills are removed.

Front end and rear end vestibule sheet metal has been removed, along with bumpers.

All seat cushions are now out and stacked.

Seat frames are removed from all of the west side of the aisle.

We are getting down to the basic flooring and framing so that we can begin repairs and replacement as necessary and start rebuilding from the floor up and from the frame down.

The rear vestibule area on this car will require almost a total re-creation as the vestibule floor and framing are shot. At least we have good patterns for everything needed.

The side frames, truck bolsters, and cross members of this essentially all-steel car will require considerable rework and some replacement.

Give us a call if you can help on electrical, mechanical, sheet metal, structural or other areas.

Thanks to our car barn crew of Dave Luca, Rand Warner, Bill Chapin, Jim Moore, Bernie Cubitt, Bob Van

Valkinburgh, Dave Baer, Cliff Rogers, Hiram Collette and others.

Communications, Signals, Power & Line

Scott Gleason is equipping the lockers of the new bucket truck with tools and materials for our overhead trolley wire work.

George Knab and Scott Gleason are going to make up down-guy anchors from structural steel.

Jim Johnson is running a heavier temporary lead cord to the new Restoration Facility which will quadruple the available power at the building.

Maintenance-of-way Equipment

Dick Bean and Hiram Collett have all the sheet metal repainted for the Burro crane.

John Redden and Bob Miner are working on the tie extractor. It has been relocated to our new barn.

Dick Holbart and Norm Shaddick have the Jackson tamper running.

Bob Miner is putting new plugs in the Ford hyrail dump boom truck.

Dave Luca wants to get the Chevy high rail utility truck back into service.

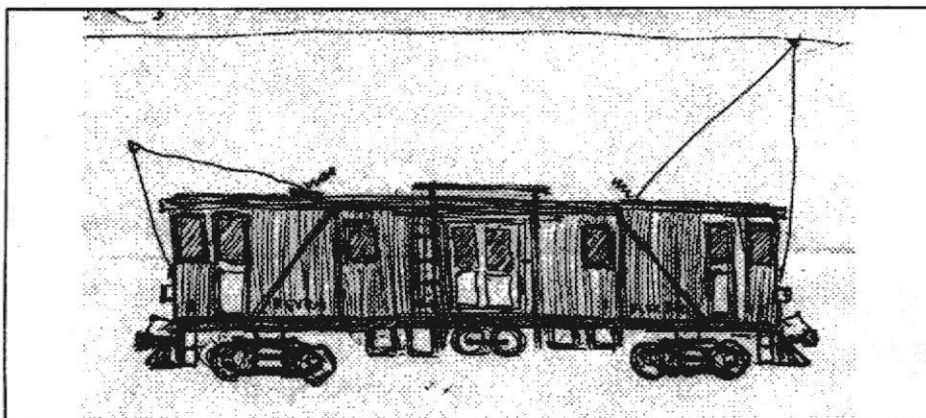
Thanks to ...

The Gunlocke Company of Wayland, NY for donation of 50-ton Heisler fireless steam loco built in 1941.

Robert Barry for donation of antique Brill trolley sweeper circa 1910, including transportation to Rochester.

George Knab for loan of large dump truck body.

Ted Strang of NYMT for loan of back blade attachment for 3-point hitch on tractor.



Sweeper converted to a Line Car? (Drawing by Rand Warner)

Caterpillar D7E Bulldozer

by Joe Scanlon

Another of the great opportunities we have been able to take advantage of through the New York State Office of Federal Surplus Property was the acquisition of this Caterpillar D7E bulldozer from Seneca Army Depot at Romulus, NY in February of 1999.

We were quite lucky to find this machine because bulldozers just are not available through this program – they get snapped up too quickly. But this one slipped through the cracks primarily because it has a bad engine. We decided to acquire it because replacing an engine with our available heavy equipment and the expertise of our members gives us an advantage over so many other organizations. In this case, a town highway department had first choice on this bulldozer, but passed on it, figuring it would be too much work. We convinced the officials at Albany that we could handle the chore, and they sold it to the Chapter at a fire sale price.

The CAT D7E has lots of bells and whistles – turbocharged engine power shift, hydraulic blade, integral ripper teeth, hydraulic winch, roll-over protection structure and all the hydraulic plumbing to connect to a hydraulic pan scraper.

Since we already have our former Rochester Asphalt Materials, Inc. D7 bulldozer in operating condition, we are in no hurry to put this one to use which means we can wait until we find the right opportunity to acquire an engine at the right price. We can also work on it at our leisure. But like everything else at our museum, sooner or later, it happens! And when it does, it give us another boost in our ability to self perform even bigger tasks!

Wanted

For trolley sweeper/line car:

Trucks, poles, retrievers, headlights, couplers, controls, pilots.

Track Materials:

Switch timbers relay grade
Ties, relay grade 7x9 or 6x8.

Tools for New Shop:

Heavy double action ratchet jacks.
Planer, Joiner, Table saw, Band saw, MIG welder, Plasma cutter.

Wood Materials

Roof sheathing for trolleys:

Tongue and groove: 3" x 7/16" thick

Side sheathing for trolleys:

Tongue & groove 2-1/2" x 3/4" thick.



(Joe Scanlon photo)

Library Report

by Charles Robinson

The library is now on a summer schedule and will be open for general use on Monday evening, July 19 between 7:30-9:30 PM. The crew is usually working at the library on every Monday night 7:30 - 9:30 PM and a visit then is welcome. However, call the library chairman Charles Robinson at 377-4245 to be certain the library is open these other Monday's. In August, the library will be open Monday evening, August 23. Please note the library is air conditioned!

Not only are the library volunteers continuing to work on our collection but now our efforts are now being directed to maintaining the building in good shape. The cabooses have been neglected for many years and there is evidence of serious deterioration in the siding and in the platforms at both ends of the cabooses. Quite frankly the library crew is not renowned for its carpentry and major building maintenance capabilities, however, we are trying to attract attention to the problem and we have been given support by the trustees. So preparations are in progress. A search has been made at local lumber yards noted for stocking odd ball stuff for suitable tongue and groove siding for the library in keeping with the caboose motif of the building. So far nothing exactly right has turned up. Perhaps some member more knowledgeable in narrow tongue and groove lumber could give us some advice on finding such boards 3-4" wide or a siding that simulates such construction. Of course if anyone wants to join the crew to remove the old siding and put on the new when we are ready, you are most cordially welcome to come out.

Gale Smith and Steve Oagley have completed a much needed clean up of the grounds around the building. They removed

the winter's debris, cut down the high grass, removed some unwanted pieces of wood, and planted flowers in the planter in front of the library. Yours truly has been up on the roof again hoping to patch up the leaks that appeared over the winter.

Inside Jerry Gillette has been industriously listing the Woodbury negatives on the computer. Gale Smith has almost all our recent donation of books cataloged and placed. Eric Drum has been attending to filing and recording the last remains of the magazines donated to the library.

Our future projects include putting new siding and skirting on the building, fixing the platforms, finishing cataloging and recording the vase and important Woodbury collection of negatives, and continuing to organize and file our timetable collection. We also have the collection of Erie railcar drawings that needs to be filed plus a collection of rail photos to be placed in protective covers and recorded.

The library volunteers continue in their efforts to organize and preserve these items of rail history for our members.

See you at the library on Monday night, July 19!

PM 1225 returns to the rails

The Lima built Pere Marquette 1225 steamer operated a two day 200-mile excursion in Michigan. This was a cooperative program presented by the Bluewater Michigan Chapter, NRHS, Michigan State Trust for Railway Preservation – Project 1225 and the Tuscola and Saginaw Bay Railway. [Bluewater Sentinel, Spring, 1999]

HELP WANTED ADS

To Maintain Operational Railroad Passenger Coaches.

- No Experience Necessary
- On Job Training
- Working towards a Team Environment

The Chapter's Ex-New York Central Coaches need a technical support person or persons to learn what makes the coaches function.

We have books and drawings to cover the coaches structural, mechanical and electrical components.

The coaches were built by the Bud Co. in 1941. They were built entirely of stainless steel spot welded together, except for the interior walls and ceiling. The air conditioning systems were built by Frigidaire in 1941. The electrical systems were built by Safety Car Heating & Lighting in 1941. The electrical system uses DC generators to generate 67 volts to charge the batteries and run the AC & lights. They use carbon pile regulators to regulate the generator output and regulate the voltage to keep the DC lights from receiving too high a voltage.

Here is your chance to study these very historic pieces of equipment.

If we do not find a person(s) to take on this responsibility we may not be able to run the Fall Foliage Train Rides -- THE MAJOR source of revenue that allows the Chapter to rehabilitate other prize artifacts.

Contact Dave Luca (288-0318) or Bob Miner (671-3589) for more information.

Gift Shop Personnel and Ticket Agents

The Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum and the New York Museum of Transportation need persons for marketing and sales.

Each Sunday requires at least two people:

One sells tickets for admission to the Museums and the popular Track Car Rides between the Museums.

The other will be in charge of The Gift Shop and sell memorabilia to our visitors.

The profits from this activity are split by both Museums and is a big source of revenue.

- On job training.
- Interact with visitors directly (no computers or ATMs interfaces!)

Please contact Marie Miner (671-3589) to sign up.

Great Memories Are Made with Calliope Music

Research: Donovan A. Shilling

A few months ago the New York Museum of Transportation received a donation of the calliope once used by Mr. Andrew Wolfe to promote his Wolfe Publications. NYMT Trustee Bob Miner, a band organ musical buff as well as an avid train fan, arranged to have the calliope play its rousing notes during the model steam engine weekend at NYMT as the track cars arrived and departed on their trips to our depot museum.

The sound was stirring. The feeling of fanfare the calliope produced had an almost magical effect on the listener. One had to be there to hear its exhilarating effect to truly appreciate the experience.

From some research into calliope history we learned that the calliope was one of the few musical instruments that originated in America. First developed in 1855, the original instrument had only eight keys, each opening valves to eight pitched pipes. A small coal or wood fired boiler produced the steam pressure behind the valves. Two people were need to run the calliope, one to stoke the fire, the other to brave the sparks and hot steam while playing the unique contraption.

Circus promoter P. T. Barnum, who had silver pipes on his calliope stated, "the circus that couldn't afford a calliope just wasn't a true circus." It was the loud, penetrating notes of the novel music-maker that drew in the crowds as it "whistled and whined" its way to the circus grounds. Railroads in the 1870's put the circus on rails. This in turn brought about larger calliopes and their enchanting sounds whistled their way into the hearts of America during the circus parades.

NYMT's calliope has 43 brass whistles and is operated by compressed air rather than steam. It can be played manually or by using one of the two dozen mechanized paper rolls similar to player pianos. The calliope, a restored Model CA-43 was mad around 1920 by the Tangle Company of Muscatine, Iowa. The on-board air compress is powered by AC power or by a gasoline-powered generator that came as part of the donation. The instrument itself is housed in a mobile vehicle designed and decorated after the old-fashioned circus wagons of the 19th century. NYMT plans to have this spectacular crowd pleaser performing on event weekends throughout the summer.

Video Tape Review:

Illinois Terminal

A videotape from Interurban Videos

Reviewed by Bill Heron

The Illinois Terminal might well be classified as a "one-of-a-kind" interurban line. It was very important passenger carrier, but in addition, its freight operation was matched by few if any other interurban line. Also, The Illinois Terminal operated not only a high speed main line, but also had a quaint, meandering branch that linked the main line with a little town named Grafton. Fortunately, while the Illinois Terminal is no longer with us, this tape acts as a time machine to help us to relive and re-experience Illinois Terminal' glory days.

The main line was a north-south route from Peoria to St. Louis. An east-west line went from Peoria to Bloomington, where a north-south line went down to Decatur. At Springfield, another east-west line ran to Danville via Decatur and Champaign-Urbana. Finally there was the Grafton branch that went west from Alton to Grafton.

Sometimes the picture quality in this tape is not as good as one might like, but it is much better than nothing at all. The coverage is quite thorough. The viewer sees plenty of footage of traditional, heavy weight, arch window interurban cars, running both on private right-of-way as well as on city streets. Similar to the North Shore, in its waning days the Illinois Terminal obtained sleek trainsets, referred to as "Streamliners".

It certainly would have been nice if the producers of this tape had given information as to which companies had produced the equipment shown. Also for the Streamliners, have any been preserved?

The Grafton branch must have been a treasure. Because patronage was light, a railbus provided service. Scenes of this unusual vehicle bring out its similarity to the famous "Galloping Geese" of Colorado.

Illinois Terminal also provided local service in a least one of the cities it served, Springfield, and used PCC cars to provide commuter service in the St. Louis area. In addition, if my memory is reliable, the Illinois Railway Museum, where one may find several preserved Illinois Terminal cars, has a sleeping car which once served on the Illinois Terminal. There is no mention of this, however, in this tape.

Among tapes that a traction fan might be tempted to own, this one is definitely a winner. It is one of the few that I have

enjoyed going back to from time to time for another look.

A Trip Report:

The Coast Starlight

By Bill Heron

A few months ago *Trains* magazine ran an article in regard to Amtrak's "Coast Starlight" train. The author described the quality of the train itself, the scenery encountered along the way from Los Angeles to Seattle, the gourmet meals in the dining car and the dedication of the crew. It sounded so good that I couldn't resist trying it for myself.

I was able to persuade Marian to go with me even though she usually is not much interested in trains. To do so I added an extension via rental car to Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia. We had heard glowing reports about these places but had not visited either.

There will be no suspense in this report. Folks, both of us very thoroughly enjoyed the Coast Starlight. The entire experience more than lived up to the high expectations that we had. Vancouver and Victoria also were great, but this is a report about a train. A train that proves that, yes, there can be a great train ride in the US.

Today's Coast Starlight covers a route which in pre-Amtrak days required three trains. The Southern Pacific served the Los Angeles-San Francisco Bay run with trains such as the famous "Daylight", the "Starlight" and the all-Pullman "Lark". Between the San Francisco Bay area and Portland, OR the SP also provided service with trains such as the "Shasta Daylight" and the "Cascade". Beyond Portland there was a choice of several connecting trains to Seattle operated over the "joint line" by Union Pacific, Northern Pacific and Great Northern.

When Amtrak took over, it became possible to ride one train all the way from Los Angeles to Seattle. At first the service was tri-weekly, but it became daily in 1973, and has remained so ever since.

The consist of our train was headed by a pair of Genesis locomotives. Next came a baggage car followed by a dorm car sleeper for the crew. After that there were three Superliner II sleeping cars, behind which was the "Pacific Parlor" car, reserved for first class passengers. The parlor car had a good selection of seats, including some overstuffed chairs. Picture windows that curved up into roof enhanced the view.

Snacks and soft drinks as well as coffee and juice were always available, included in the first class fare.

Following the parlor car was the dining car one's home away from home for excellent food. First class and coach passengers order from the same menu, for first class, however, all meals are included in the fare, whereas coach passengers pay by the meal. Both of us ate way too much, but the temptation was just too much to resist!

Beyond the dining car there was a Sightseer lounge car, furnished more sparsely than the first class parlor car, yet featuring the same kind of big windows curving up into the ceiling. Finally, the last three cars were Superliner II coaches.

Amenities abound on the Coast Starlight, including fresh flowers in each first class room. In addition there are movies, although I can't imagine watching a movie when the view out the window constantly changes from one interesting sight to another, games, a "Kiddie Kar" lounge where the little ones find stuffed animals, books, toys and coloring books and where the video is always on, and on-board entertainment. We had a real, live magician on our train. He wandered from one lounge to another and spent time with small groups of people doing card tricks and other sleight-of-hand. He was an interesting, personable and skillful entertainer who seems to have found an unusual and rewarding career.

My knowledge of the geography of the west coast was a bit scanty before this trip. Hence I was not prepared for the amount of up and down movement we would be making during the course of our journey. For example, Los Angeles has an elevation of about 300 feet. From Los Angeles almost to Simi Valley is mostly upgrade, culminating in an altitude of over 1100 feet crossing Santa Susana Pass through a series of tunnels.

Not long after that we were at Oxnard at an elevation of 45 feet. Shortly after leaving Oxnard we began a long run past some spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean (Santa Barbara Channel). The route took us through part of Vandenberg Air Force Base where we saw a Titan missile on a launch pad awaiting blast-off a few days later. At San Luis Obispo we left the ocean and began a climb that culminated at an elevation of 3600 feet. From there it was down grade again, to and through the Salinas River Valley, which offered views of mega-farms raising produce for the nation's dinner plates.

Toward day's end, particularly for those whose bodies still were on Eastern time we

reached Oakland. About this time I went to bed. The next morning when I got up, shaved, showered in my roomette and dressed, we were still in California, but getting close to Oregon. During breakfast we reached Dunsmuir, CA, elevation 2290. Now we really began a climb, going past 14,380 foot Mount Shasta in the process, and reaching an attitude over 4000 feet at Klamath Falls, Oregon. Our climb continued through tunnels and around curves until we reached the highest point on the Coast Starlight's route, Cascade Summit, 4840 feet. Along the way we saw some great scenery, mountain peaks and lots of snow. The depth of the snow remaining in the Cascade Summit area was measured in feet, not inches.

Now it was time to roll down the hill, which we did, right down to Portland at 30 feet. The weather was not very favorable at this point and we missed views of Mount St. Helens and Mount Rainier which are often enjoyed by Coast Starlight travelers. From what could be seen it was obvious as to how much the landscape had changed from southern California to the state of Washington. It happens subtly, but inexorably and provides an experience which I find both interesting and enjoyable. At last we reached Seattle, right on time. Both of us were sorry that a great trip had ended.

I suppose that excellent equipment and a varied and very scenic route are almost "can't miss" ingredients for a great train trip. And to a large extent that is true of the Coast Starlight. The thing that really sets this train apart however, is its superb crew, well-trained, (no pun intended), highly competent and, most of all, thoroughly dedicated to the complete well being of their passengers. It's a long way to the West Coast, but in our case the trip was clearly worth the trip.



Editor's Corner

As a result of situations described elsewhere, this issue is a trifle late. The temptation was to hold some articles, but with all the summer activity, there should be much to report next time.

Harold Crouch has submitted an article telling of his and George Hochaday's work for the Tioga Central.

Also have some information on Rochester's Pennsylvania Railroad.

The Semaphore

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Chapter Meeting & Program:
Fun Night: Part 2
July 15, 1999
R&GV RR Museum
NYS Route 251 at Industry



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The status of our Restoration Building Fund. Each 'car' represents \$10,000 in the fund. Surprise – the building moves rather than the train – easier to do!

