

THE SEMAPHORE

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM

VOL. 64 NO. 12
DECEMBER 2021

NEXT MEETING:
December 16
Member Holiday Party



The Santa Train to the North Pole, consisting of RGV 54 and ex-New York Central "Empire State Express" coach 2571 boards passengers at Industry on December 10, 2021. The four days of special trips to the North Pole were a sold-out success! See page 3 and 6. OTTO M. VONDRAK PHOTO

Season's Greetings

INSIDE

Depot History 2

Make Tracks 4

Year-End Giving. 7

As we close out this year, we can look back on another great period of accomplishments by our volunteers. Not only were we able to recover a significant amount of attendance and revenue, we also completed a number of projects as we celebrated our museum's 50th anniversary. While the spectre of the pandemic continues to hang over our heads and affect our daily lives, it seems we've been able to mitigate the worst effects while keeping our visitors and volunteers safe and healthy.

One of the themes that came up continuously over this past year was that of renewal. For instance, our Erie caboose that has been in service for a solid 25-plus years since its restoration went into the shop for some repairs and refreshing. Our Penn Central caboose will be next, coming in for its 20-year check-up. Storage tracks are being

rebuilt or extended to give us more flexibility in how we display our collection. The station signs on our depot were replaced with ones more accurate for the time period when it was built. A large section of broken platform north of the depot was replaced with new concrete. Both bathrooms became functional inside the depot for the first time since we bought it! The list goes on and on. As we head into our 50th year, there are most likely more long-standing issues to be addressed, not only with rolling stock, but with our buildings and grounds as well. How do we put our best foot forward? Where do we go next?

Your ideas for our museum's future are always welcome. Please email me at ovondrak@yahoo.com or call me at (585) 820-2341.

—Otto M. Vondrak, Museum President



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The official publication of
the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum

Volume 64, No. 12

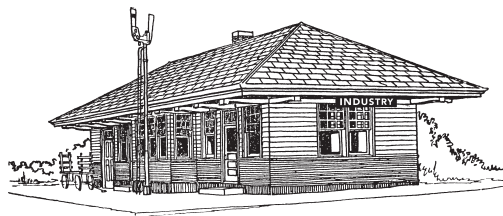
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PRINTING AND MAILING

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50 YEARS AT INDUSTRY 1971-2021

BY OTTO M. VONDRACK

On the occasion of our museum's 50th anniversary, please enjoy this history of Industry Depot, as compiled from various sources by the editor.

CHAPTER 2: FROM OATKA TO INDUSTRY

Early on, the Erie Railroad saw the potential of commuter traffic along this line and embarked on their first electrification project. Overhead wire was strung from Rochester south to Avon and west on the branch line to Mount Morris. Electric trains were acquired second-hand from the Philadelphia & Western Railroad. The new schedule called for 26 to 30 trains to call at Industry daily. The 34-mile electric line was put into service on June 18, 1907. The route from Rochester to Mount Morris was covered in about an hour and ten minutes, and hourly service was provided from 6:00am to 11:30pm. Freight trains—as well as any passenger trains continuing south of Avon to Corning—continued to be powered by steam locomotives.

By the 1920s, better roads built by the state and increased automobile ownership began to take away ridership from the Erie. The effects of the Great Depression meant even fewer people traveling by train, and electric service was discontinued in 1931 and the was schedule reduced to just a few trains each day. Sometime after 1930, the freight house was removed from the property at Industry.

After years of declining fortunes, the Erie Railroad entered bankruptcy proceedings in 1938. As part of their reorganization plan, all branch lines and secondary routes were analyzed for profitability. It was determined the remaining passenger trains on the segment between Rochester and Avon were losing money and should be discontinued, and a petition was made to the Public Service Commission in 1940.

Through 1941, the Rochester-Penfield Bus Company applied to the PSC for permission to start a new route between Rochester and Avon. Passengers along the line saw this as hastening the end of Erie Railroad service and protested. And so it came to pass on September 30, 1941, that the last passenger train departed Rochester

for Avon, ending almost 90 years of continuous service through the Genesee Valley. After that day, Industry station remained open as a freight office.

Once again, managers at the State Agricultural and Industrial School complained about the Erie Railroad, this time about the cancellation of service, leaving staff, visitors, and inmates without direct service to the facility. An article in the *Democrat & Chronicle* from October 9, 1941, states the nearest bus service is provided 1.5 miles to the east, and 2 miles to the west of the school. Superintendent Clinton W. Areson admitted the staff of the school used the Erie trains “infrequently,” but claimed travel was very heavy because of parents who visit their sons on designated visiting days, the first Saturday of each month.

On November 20, 1950, the Erie Railroad permanently closed Industry station, directing all inquiries to Avon. Station agent Kenneth Smith, who took over after the death of Charles Lamont, was reassigned to the Buffalo Division. After this time, the railroad continued to use the building for storage, but otherwise the facility was considered abandoned.

(To be continued in February issue.)



The name of the station was changed to Industry on October 20, 1909. When the new station was built, the old Oatka station was moved over and became the freight house. Print from a glass plate negative, J.E. Bailey, photographer, Erie Railroad. Rochester Division. Photo one, collection of Jim Hutzler.

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UPCOMING MONTHLY PROGRAMS

As long as conditions allow, in-person meetings return to the 40&8 Club (located at 933 University Ave., Rochester, NY) starting September 16. Doors open at 7:00pm, and meeting begins at 7:30. Cash bar available. The evening program will begin after the brief business meeting.

December 16 will be our annual Holiday Party at the 40&8 Club. Bring your friends and a dish to pass. Cash bar available. If you are showing symptoms or feeling at all unwell, please stay home.

We are currently seeking programs for future meetings, of any railroad-related topic of local interest. To reserve your slot, email ovondrak@yahoo.com.

SANTA TRAINS TO THE NORTH POLE

Your museum closed out the regular season by operating a successful series of Santa Train Rides to the North Pole on December 10, 11, 17, and 18. In years past we operated our Santa Trains on three consecutive Saturdays in December. We have



Someone used a BB gun to shoot out one of the windows at Midway Station, our former Rochester, Lockport & Buffalo trolley waiting room. The vandalism was discovered on December 14. There was no other damage to the building, fortunately. After the RL&B shut down in 1931, the station was moved to a farmer's field. Our museum purchased it at auction in 1996.

always avoided operating the Santa trains on Sundays since we finish up so late in the evening, so the schedule was reduced to two weekends, but adding a Friday operation, giving us a total of four days. Four trains departed each day at 2:30, 4:00, 5:30, and 7:00 p.m.

Visitors began their journey at Industry Depot, boarding one of our streamlined *Empire State Express* cars for the ride to the North Pole! Hot cocoa and cookies were served to all visitors at their seats before departure. Upon arrival at the North Pole, Santa and Mrs. Claus visited with each child before boarding the train and returning to Industry.

Your museum safely hosted more than 960 ticketed visitors over the course of four days. Every train was a sold out success, and we had just enough volunteers to cover the event. Thanks also to **C.P. Ward** for donating use of a portable light tower to keep our parking lot and boarding area lit, and to **Tim Horton's** on Calkins Road for supplying hot cocoa. —O.M.V.

PENN CENTRAL TRANSFER CABOOSE REPAIR UPDATE

Charlie Marks, Charlie Ricker, and Rick Auburn removed most of the interior wall paneling along the east side of the car through the end of November and into the beginning of December. These plywood panels had been damaged by a water leak, and will be replaced. A portion of the floor

near the doorways will also be replaced. In the planning stages is the restoration of the additional closet that contained the toilet. These parts were salvaged from a similar caboose that was scrapped at Goodman Street Yard a few years ago.

Once a spot opens up inside the Restoration Shop, the PC caboose will be moved in and repair work will continue. Built in 1969 at Despatch Shops in East Rochester, PC 18526 became Conrail property in 1976, and was donated to our museum in 1996. Repairs and restoration was completed in 2002, and the caboose has been in service on our museum railroad ever since.

—Charlie Marks, Project Mgr.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS DEPT.

As the weather turns freezing, we will be shutting down the bathroom in the North Waiting Room, but the bathroom in the South Waiting Room will remain open. **The heater will be on, and to help us save on the electric bill, please make sure the bathroom door is closed at all times!**

—Charlie Marks,
Buildings & Grounds Supt.

TRACK & RIGHT OF WAY DEPT.

Adam Lloyd and Scott Gleason positioned rails on the Track 9 South Extension behind the Restoration Shop on November 3. By November 6, the entire west rail was spiked down. Adam and his father Charles got the east rail spiked by November 13.

The last few feet were connected to the bumper on November 18, and the “golden spike” on the extension was driven on December 4. Adam spread stone ballast on the extension on December 18. Once the track is leveled and tamped, the equipment currently stored on Track 9 South will be pushed to the end of track, and then that section will be leveled before additional equipment is placed there. Thanks to Adam Lloyd for managing the construction of this 150-foot extension.

Turning our attention to the Track 5 repair at Industry, fresh relay ties were laid on November 9 on top of the stone ballast spread previously. Once regular public operations come to a close, work will resume on this project.

Volunteers are always welcome to join our efforts. Get in touch to find out how.

—Dave Kehrer, Track & ROW Supt.

MAKE TRACKS

ABOVE RIGHT: Scott Gleason and Adam Lloyd placed rail for the Track 9 South extension on November 3.

RIGHT: The west rail of the Track 9 South extension was spiked up on November 9.

BOTTOM and BOTTOM RIGHT: Jeremy Tuke, Justin Carmona, Charlie Ricker, Chuck Whalen, Rick Auburn, and Scott Gleason positioned ties for the rebuilding of Track 5 on November 9.

PHOTOS BY JEREMY TUKE





ABOVE LEFT and ABOVE: Charles and Adam Lloyd were hard at work spiking up the east rail of the Track 9 South extension on November 13.

LEFT: The bumper was connected to the Track 9 extension on November 18, and on December 4, Adam and his father Charles completed spiking the east rail.

BELOW LEFT: On December 18, Adam Lloyd spread stone ballast on the Track 9 extension. The track will be leveled and tamped before equipment is parked on it.



EMPIRE CARS TURN 80

When New York Central upgraded the *Empire State Express*, they purchased all new streamlined stainless steel trains from Budd of Philadelphia, Pa. The new trains were supposed to make their grand debut on December 7, 1941, but the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II changed those plans. The cars continued to serve into the mid-1960s, when the coaches were withdrawn and rebuilt from 56-seat luxury long-distance cars into 108-seat commuter cars. They continued to operate on the Hudson and Harlem divisions out of Grand Central Terminal until they were replaced by new coaches in 1984.

In 1987, several museum members pooled their resources to purchase six coaches from Metro-North. Former railway post office car *Alonzo B. Cornell* was purchased in 1991 and converted into a generator car. These cars were used on a series of fall foliage excursions that operated on the Ontario Midland Railroad between Sodus and Newark, N.Y., until 2004. A new siding was constructed at Industry and the





ABOVE LEFT and ABOVE: Charlie Marks, Charlie Ricker, and Rick Auburn (not shown) removed the damaged wall panels and floor boards from the inside of Penn Central caboose 18526 on December X.

RIGHT: Chuck Whalen has been hard at work applying the interior finish coat to Lehigh Valley caboose 95100.

BELOW RIGHT: Tim Gifford and Scott Gleason have been working on repairs to our heavy equipment, including our mini-excavator.

cars were relocated in 2007. A handful of excursions have been operated on the Livonia, Avon & Lakeville Railroad over the years, but this year the only movement was over our own museum railroad using coach 2571 on our Santa Trains to the North Pole. We hope to find more opportunities to use our excursion set as these historic cars enter their 80th year of service!

ELECTIONS RESULTS

Four candidates were running for three trustee positions. The results were unofficial on Thursday night due to being a close contest and a couple of questionable ballots. Those ballots have been resolved and we can now announce the winners of the elections. Congratulations to **Dave Monte Verde**, **Bill Marcotte**, and **Dana Fuelhart** on being elected as trustees. **David Scheid-erich** will be stepping down, and we would like to thank him for his many years of service to the organization through a number of roles, including past president. Thanks to everyone that voted and thanks to the





election committee of Dave Kehrer, John Redden, and Don Wawrzyniak and helping to count the votes. A vote was held at the December 16 member meeting to certify the results and destroy the ballots.

—Charlie Marks, Committee Chair

YEAR-END GIVING: PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR MUSEUM

As we wrap up a successful year and strive to return to “normal,” please consider making a gift to support the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum (EIN 11-2417326). A donation in any amount will help ensure your museum is able to continue its mission of preserving Rochester’s rich railroad heritage for future generations to enjoy. Besides gifts of cash, donations of durable goods and professional services are also appreciated. Donations to our 501c3 non-profit are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law (consult your tax professional for details). —O.M.V.



TOP LEFT: Santa and Mrs. Claus greet families at the North Pole. More than 960 ticketed visitors rode our Santa Trains this year.

LEFT: The inside of coach 2571 is decorated for the season. Hot cocoa and cookies are served on board before departure from Industry.

BELOW LEFT: Trainman David Gwilt and Conductor Charles Bell at the North Pole.

BELOW: The “North Pole Express” awaits departure from “Track 1” at Industry as the sun sets. Otto Vondrak built the gate sign based on those once found in Grand Central Terminal.

Visit [flickr.com/rgvrrm](https://www.flickr.com/photos/rgvrrm/) for more photos!





THE **SEMAPHORE**

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NEXT MEETING:

Dec. 16, 2021

933 UNIVERSITY AVE, ROCHESTER, N.Y.

PLAN AHEAD:

Jan. 20, 2022

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Find us on Facebook! facebook.com/rgvrrm



Santa Claus wishes you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! OTTO M. VONDRAK PHOTO