



On May 5, our friends from FastSigns of Henriette installed the New York Central lettering from the old Batavia train station, as well as a new sign identifying the Restoration Shop, plus an NYC logo from the collection of John Virgilio. See page 6 for details. PHOTO BY OTTO M. VONDRAK

Expansion

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Expansion! What does it mean to you? A longer train ride? More equipment added to the collection? Additional property to explore? New exhibits added? More volunteers joining the fold? The answer in every instance is, "Yes!"

Your museum is expanding in many areas this year. Our neighbors at New York Museum of Transportation are helping us experiment with a longer train ride on June 10 using our shared museum railroad north of Midway. We are seeking options to add new relevant examples of local railroading to our collection of historic equipment.. Volunteers have been working hard to open up additional areas of our property for visitors to explore, as well as consolidating and cleaning up our non-public areas. And yes, we're even welcoming new volunteers into our ranks.

Expansion comes at a price, however. A busy schedule of public operation increases wear and tear on our vintage fleet, adding to repair costs. Expanding the roster means careful planning for future stabilization and restoration. Opening more public space means more maintenance to perform. Often times, cleaning our property results in fees for disposal and recycling. More volunteers means additional costs for insurance, training, safety gear, and so on.

Are these good "problems" to have? Absolutely. But to continue this growth, we'll need to start making more solid long-term plans for the future.

Where do we go next? Please contact me with your ideas for the future by email at ovondrak@yahoo.com or call me at (585) 820-2341.

—Otto M. Vondrak, Museum President



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2023 R&GV OPERATING SCHEDULE

Visit RochesterTrainRides.com for tickets and details

- May 13 - Mothers Day Train Rides
- May 20 - Rails & Ales
- May 21 - Members Day Spring Picnic
- June 3 – Trains & Trolleys at Twilight
- June 10 - Train Rides to the Horse Farm
- June 15 - June Meeting at Industry
- June 17 - Fathers Day Train Rides
- June 24 - Train Rides
- July 1 – Trains & Trolleys at Twilight
- July 8 - Train Rides
- July 15 - Princess & Superhero Train Rides
- July 20 - July Meeting at Industry
- July 22 - Train Rides
- August 5 – Trains & Trolleys at Twilight
- August 12 - Train Rides
- August 17 - August Meeting at Industry
- August 19 - Classic Car Show and Train Rides
- August 26 - Train Rides
- September 9-10 - Steam Train Rides
- September 16-17 - Steam Train Rides
- September 23 - Rails & Ales
- September 24 - Members Day Fall Picnic
- October 14-15 - Pumpkin Patch Train Rides
- October 21-22 - Pumpkin Patch Train Rides
- October 28-29 - Pumpkin Patch Train Rides
- December 8-9 – Santa Train Rides
- December 15-16 – Santa Train Rides

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UPCOMING MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Monthly meetings resume at the 40&8 Club, located at 933 University Ave., across from Gleason Works in Rochester. Doors open at 7:00pm, with the business meeting starting at 7:30pm, followed by an entertainment program. Cash bar available.

May 18 will be "Final Days of the Montana Rail Link" presented by members Joe Cermak, Jackson Glozer, and Charles Rothbart. Launched in 1987, Montana Rail Link was a colorful regional railroad operating on lines leased from BNSF until the lease was terminated earlier this year.

Our **June 15, July 20, and August 17** meetings will take place at Industry Depot starting at 7:00pm. After a brief meeting, we will enjoy a ride on our museum railroad and tour our latest projects.

Meetings return to the 40&8 Club starting in September. If you have ideas for future programs, please contact me by phone or email.

—Dave Drury,
Program Committee Chair



The restored New York Central railroad crossing sign was installed alongside Track 6 on May 6. Thanks to the New York Central System Historical Society for providing official blueprints that assisted in the restoration of this sign that once guarded a crossing at Cliff and White streets near High Falls.

BUFFALO DAY TRIP APRIL 29

On April 29, a group of 32 participated in a day trip to Buffalo, visiting restored depots from three different railroads and the Heritage Discovery Center.

Our first stop was the restored 1896 Lehigh Valley Depot in Williamsville, owned by the Western New York Railway Historical Society (WNYRHS). The depot was beautifully restored by volunteers. Equipment on display outside included former Lehigh Valley SW8 252 built in 1950 (and painted in 2022 by RGV member Charles Bell) along with a restored Arcade & Attica boxcar and LV caboose 95050.

The second stop was the Railroad Museum of the Niagara Frontier, operated by the Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS and located in the 1922 Erie Railroad freight house in North Tonawanda. The group also owns Tower EL2 across the street, which once guarded the crossing of the New York Central with the Erie. Thanks to an available community grant, this facility is currently undergoing extensive renovations including a new parking lot and exterior repairs to the freight house. The display tracks next to the depot are being rebuilt (with the help of RGV volunteers).

Our next stop was a visit to the Heritage Discovery Center, headquarters of the WNYRHS, which has numerous railroad artifacts as well as an extensive research library devoted to railroad history and genealogical research. Exhibits on the main

floor include great examples of local railroad history and artifacts, as well as a separate exhibit operated by The Steel Plant Museum dedicated to Buffalo's steelmaking heritage. After enjoying a box lunch, we explored the many exhibits housed inside and outside (including some freight cars that were previously on display at the Hamburg Fairgrounds).

The final stop of the day was at the 1911 Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh depot in Orchard Park, also owned by WNYRHS. This beautifully restored depot was used in the 2017 film *Marshall* starring Chadwick Boseman. Recent donations allowed the rebuilding of the brick platforms, new concrete curbs, and paving of the parking lot. The adjacent freight house is getting a new wooden loading dock, and will house additional exhibits inside.

Our thanks to both WNYRHS and the Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS for their hospitality. Thanks also to Dave Shields for his help in organizing the trip. We're looking at potential destinations for future day trips for later this year, so stay tuned!

—David Drury,
Trips Committee Chairman

MOTHER'S DAY TRAIN RIDES MAY 13

Your museum hosted its first ever Mother's Day event, offering complimentary coffee, tea, and pastries for all moms. Beautiful weather helped encourage walk-up sales. The only hiccup came at the end



BUFFALO DAY TRIP

LEFT: Among the pieces on display at the Lehigh Valley depot in Williamsville is LV SW8 252, painted by RGV member Charles Bell.

BELOW LEFT: The Railroad Museum of the Niagara Frontier is housed in the 1922 Erie Railroad freight house in North Tonawanda. RGV volunteers have assisted in rebuilding the equipment display tracks outside.

BOTTOM LEFT: The Heritage Discovery Center off Lee Street in Buffalo is home to the Western New York Railway Historical Society, as well as several other organizations dedicated to the history of the region.

BELOW: RGV members posed outside the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh depot in Orchard Park. Opened in 1912, it was acquired by WNYRHS in 1983.



of the day when a mechanical failure on RGV 54 forced us to annul the last train of the day, refund tickets, and escort the visitors left in the Upper Yard down the access road. Clogged fuel filters was determined to be the cause, quickly remedied by Sam Rosenberg and others. Despite the difficulties, we look forward to hosting this event again next year. —O.M.V.

RAILS & ALES TRAIN RIDES MAY 20

Enjoy complimentary tastings from more than a dozen local craft breweries on Saturday, May 20, from 12:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Ride the train to visit all of the tasting stations! Train rides depart every 30 minutes so you can ride between the two tasting stations as often as you like. Ticket purchase

includes museum admission and free souvenir tasting glass. Refreshments available for purchase. Free soft drinks for Designated Drivers. Tickets on sale on our website at www.RochesterTrainRides.com.

MEMBERS PICNIC - MAY 21

Come and enjoy a fun day at our museum on Sunday, May 21. First train departs at 9:30 for a special photo shoot posed with the NYMT trolley at the Loop Switch. Additional photo opportunities will follow. A cookout lunch consisting of hot dogs, hamburgers, salads, and sides will be served at noon at Industry Depot. Additional photo opportunities planned for the afternoon. Tickets are \$10.00 per person to cover the cost of food. All are welcome! Purchase tickets at rgvrrm.org/members-picnic.

TRAINS & TROLLEYS AT TWILIGHT JUNE 3

Take a trip back in time and experience an old fashioned “Trolley Park” just 20 minutes south of downtown Rochester! Your journey begins at the historic Industry Depot on Route 251 where you board a vintage freight train for a ride through the bucolic countryside. Transfer to an authentic electric trolley at Midway that will transport you to our Trolley Park where you will enjoy complimentary ice cream and a free jazz concert. Bring a lawn chair! After your visit, board the trolley and train for the return trip home, enjoying all the sights and sounds of the rail at dusk! Presented by the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum and New York Museum of Transportation. Tickets on sale now.

MECHANICAL DEPT. UPDATE

RG&E 41: Currently operable; a 92-day inspection will be performed this month.

LA&L 20: The locomotive has been moved back outside for the operating season. A work session will be held on Saturday, May 6, to add cooling water, pre-lube the engine, perform a 92-day inspection,



and prepare for operation.

R&GV 54: The replacement air brake valves have returned from Multi Service Supply. Sam Rosenberg is working with Dick Holbert to replace the radio antenna on the cab roof, as the existing antenna has failed.

RG&E 8: Chuck Whalen continues to clean and paint the underside of the locomotive. Sam Rosenberg has also gathered tools and materials to replace the traction motor suspension bolts on two combo units. Jim Johnson is working on cleaning up some electrical components for the locomotive.

USA 1843: Sam Rosenberg is working on installing a new reverse current rectifier for this locomotive. Work has also begun to clean and paint the cab roof, as the paint has started to wear thin.



BNY 12: The locomotive is awaiting pick-up from Scott Symans.

DSI 5: Awaiting completion of site work to allow movement to the driveway where the engine can be rolled up onto Syman's trailer.

BR&P 280 Caboose: The caboose was put back into service last month after minor mechanical repairs.

PC 18526 Caboose: The caboose was put back into service last month after extensive interior repairs.

B&O C2493 Caboose: The caboose has been moved inside the restoration shop for cleaning and evaluation. The roof and the missing windows will need to be addressed first. Seeking volunteers to lead the clean-out and organization of parts inside the car.

RTC Car 60: Rand Warner is leading an effort to piece together the rear vestibule of the car. His team is also working on restoring the car's air compressor.

EK 52 Tank: John Redden continues to lead the restoration work on the car. John has gathered materials to replace the pipe that goes between the air valve pipe bracket and the emergency reservoir. Charlie Marks is working on installing new wooden saddles that support the ends of the tank.

Erie 2103 Stillwell Coach: We have secured a grant from the Emery Rail Heritage Trust to cover the cost of vestibule step fabrication. A plan is being put together for additional work to take place this year.

—Joe Nugent, Mechanical Dept. Supt.

Mother's Day Train Rides

TOP LEFT: Visitors waiting to board at Industry.

LEFT: Conductor David Kehrre talks the train in to a safe stop at Industry.

LEFT: Complimentary coffee, tea, pastries were offered to all moms on this special day.

BELOW: Jerry Tusch was our engineer at the throttle of RG 54 this day.



RIGHT: Lackawanna 2628 has been moved to the Morristown & Erie Railroad shop in Morristown, N.J., for restoration. In this view, the car has been completely stripped down and sandblasted as the first step towards making cosmetic repairs. Built in 1930 by Pullman, the car served commuters in New Jersey until 1984. It was acquired by the museum in 1985, and transferred to Tri-State Chapter NRHS in 2022. When complete, the car will be on display at the new Lackawanna Plaza development, the old DL&W Montclair Terminal.

PHOTO BY GREG DODD, M&E CMO

BELOW RIGHT: The area around the Railway Post Office car has been cleared out and graded, and new fences and gates installed. When complete, this will give our visitors more area to explore, and help define which areas are open to the public.

LACKAWANNA 2628 RESTORATION UPDATE

Our former Delaware, Lackawanna & Western electric multiple-unit car 2628 departed last April to return home to New Jersey, where it will be restored and placed on display inside the renovated Montclair Terminal (also known as “Lackawanna Plaza”). Fully funded by the developer, the restoration is taking place at the Morristown & Erie Railroad shops in Morristown, N.J. Recent photos shared by Mike Del Vecchio shows 2628 stripped down, sandblasted, and wearing a fresh coat of primer. The original rattan seats have been removed from the interior for repair and replacement, and repair work has begun on the roof.

ARCHIVES UPDATE

Through the month of April, the Archives Committee completed several tasks. First, we were able to consolidate our holdings into a smaller room, which will result in considerable savings on rent.

Archival boxes and sleeves have been purchased to help organize unsorted materials in the collection. In particular, the collection related to the history of the Kodak Park Railroad was organized, integrating additional material donated by Mike Byrne.

Organization will continue in May. Our outside contractor should have the scanning of the Woodbury negatives completed soon, and those will be uploaded to a new online account for public viewing.

Your feedback is important as we move forward with this process. Interested members should contact John Stewart by email at johnrstewart3@gmail.com.

—John Stewart,
Archive Committee Chair



ROBERT L. FITCH (1929-2023)

Bob Fitch was a long-time member of our organization who passed away in April at age 94. He held the distinction of being our oldest living member. Bob grew up on the east side of Rochester on Landing Road, with the New York Central main line to the north, and the Rochester, Syracuse & Eastern interurban to the south. His life-long interest in trains and transportation led to his joining the Rochester Chapter NRHS and taking part in many of our outings and trips. For many years he was active with the Asbury First United Methodist Church, serving many years at the Asbury Dining & Caring Center for the hungry and homeless. He was always cheerful, willing to help, and fun to be around. His contributions and his friendship will be missed. Memorial

will held Saturday, June 15, at Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Avenue, Rochester, N.Y.

—Rand Warner

UPPER YARD EXHIBIT AREA

Throughout the end of April and the beginning of May, Buildings & Grounds and Construction departments have been busy expanding our “Railfan Overlook” area. The perimeter fence has been extended alongside the Railway Post Office car, with a new gate at the south end of the fence. A new gate across the driveway has also been installed. This will help keep our visitors contained without the extra hassle of setting up chains and other temporary lines, while giving visitors more room to explore.

Our friends from FastSigns of Henrietta

arrived on May 5 to install the New York Central lettering, as well as a new sign identifying the Restoration Shop. The letters came from the replacement NYC station that opened in Batavia in 1957. Member Lynn Heintz was able to save the letters from the dumpster when they were removed from the station in 2004, and they have remained in storage ever since. FastSigns not only repaired the old letters, but fabricated the missing ones. They also installed the NYC oval logo sign that we acquired from the estate of John Virgilio. This project was entirely funded by donations and helps us preserve another important part of our local railroad history.

On May 6, the New York Central railroad crossing sign restored by Ernie Cole, Mark Bowen, Rick Auburn, and others, was installed in its new display location along Track 6 at the crossing. The sign originally protected a crossing at the corner of Cliff and White streets near High Falls.

The two storage trailers were relocated from their long time home alongside the east side of the Restoration Shop so that repurposed storage containers could be installed in their place. The area was graded and a bed of gravel put down for drainage. The new containers were delivered May 16, the contents of the trailers will be transferred, and the trailers will be scrapped.

The MDT refrigerator car exhibit received another upgrade in May with the 1940s footage of Despatch Shops transferred to digital media, allowing us to retire the old DVD player set to loop. Now one switch turns on the entire exhibit, including lights, video monitors, and media players!

EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS EXCURSION TRAIN SET SOLD TO MIDWESTERN NON-PROFIT

Late last year, your board of trustees completed the sale of our New York Central *Empire State Express* cars to a new owner. The entire train, consisting of six coaches and one Railway Post Office car housing an electric generator, will be departing the property this summer. More details will follow soon, but rest assured the cars will be fully rehabilitated and see regular operation on a new tourist railroad in the Midwest.

Built in 1941 by Budd for NYC's *Empire State Express* as 56-seat long-distance coaches, they were rebuilt in 1966 as 108-seat commuter cars. They served through Penn Central, Conrail, and Metro-North until 1985. Several museum members banded together to purchase six coaches from a broker in 1987. The RPO *Alonzo B. Cornell* was purchased from another broker in 1991.

The decision to sell these cars was not taken lightly. For many years, they were our primary source of income when we operated an intense fall foliage excursion schedule on the Ontario Midland Railroad in Sodus. When that operation came to an end in 2004, your museum spent a significant amount of money to build a new siding and move the cars from Sodus to Industry in 2007, and place them on the siding in 2012. Thanks to the generosity of the Livonia, Avon & Lakeville Railroad for donating the use of locomotives and crew, we were able to operate one-day excursions in 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2019. We also made our coaches available free of charge to the LA&L to use for their own private

charters. In 2018 and 2019, we were able to use a single coach on our museum railroad for our popular Santa Trains.

While operating the train out of Industry still generated a net profit, the amount of work needed to get the cars ready each year was a severe drain on our volunteer and financial resources. In the last several years, the museum itself has become a profit center, with increasing attendance generating more revenue each year. While we all have a strong emotional attachment to the *Empire* cars, we simply could not afford to keep up with the rigorous maintenance required on air brakes, toilers, and air conditioning to keep 80-year-old passenger cars in service for a once-a-year trip. Your museum searched for alternatives and exhausted all options, including finding another local short line to host excursions, or leasing the cars out to another operator. None of these options panned out. Without commitments to operate in 2022, we elected not to spend money to put the cars in service.

Our board was contacted out of the blue last spring by a non-profit organization inquiring if the *Empire* cars were available for inspection and possible purchase. After much discussion and debate, the board of trustees came to the unanimous decision to sell the cars. While coming to terms with the decision to sell was painful, we are confident you will agree the cars have a bright future with their new owners. More details will be revealed soon, and we hope you will celebrate with us as we ensure this special train is preserved and continues to see regular service for many years to come. 5

—Otto M. Vondrak, Museum President





THE **SEMAPHORE**

ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM

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NEXT MEETING:

May 18, 2023

933 UNIVERSITY AVE., ROCHESTER, N.Y.

PLAN AHEAD:

June 15, 2023

282 RUSH-SCOTTSVILLE RD., RUSH N.Y.

Find us on Facebook! facebook.com/rgvrrm



The Conrail caboose donated by CSX to the Village of Fairport earlier this year has been professionally repainted by a contractor. Class N-21 caboose 21290 was built by Fruit Growers Express in 1978, and retired by CSX in 2022. It makes a nice addition to "Fairport Junction" off Liftbridge Lane.