

THE

SEMAPHORE

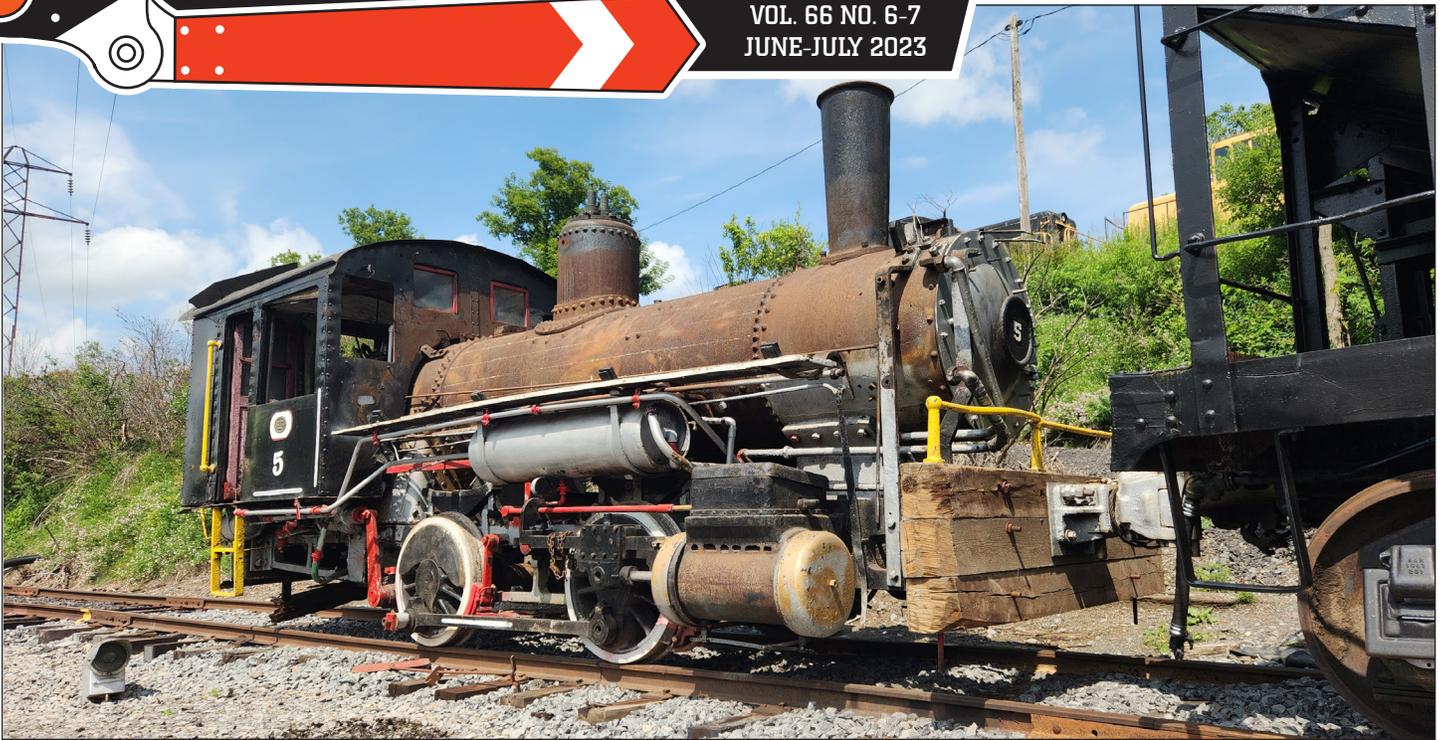
NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM

VOL. 66 NO. 6-7
JUNE-JULY 2023

NEXT MEETING:

July 20

*Enjoy a ride on
your museum railroad!*



THE EAGLE HAS LANDED: Despatch Shops 0-4-0T No. 5 was safely delivered to Industry on July 7, after several months of preparation and planning by several dedicated volunteers. We are excited to be the new permanent home for this important local artifact. The saddle tank was removed at the end of last year to facilitate asbestos abatement, and was delivered separately. See page 7 for details. PHOTO BY OTTO M. VONDRAK

Home At Last

INSIDE

2023 Schedule	2
Upcoming Events.	4
Mechanical Update	4
Archive Update	5
Despatch Shops No. 5. . 7	

The summer season has been busy for all of us, myself included. So busy, in fact, we had to combine our June and July issues to make up for lost time.

Of course, we are most excited to announce the safe arrival of Despatch Shops No. 5! After months of preparation, it was exciting to see No. 5 roll off the trailer and touch R&GV rails for the first time. This tank engine worked its entire career at Despatch Shops in East Rochester from 1924 until its retirement in 1954. Sold for scrap, it was rescued by John Virgilio of Henrietta in 1965. Aware of the preserved locomotive, we reached out several years ago to express our interest should No. 5 ever need a new home. Those efforts came to fruition on July 7.

Progress continues on rebuilding the rear vestibule of Rochester Subway Car 60,

cleaning out Baltimore & Ohio caboose C2493, and repairing and repainting New York Central caboose 19877. Add this in with our continued clean-up and repair efforts around the property, and you can see why we've been so busy. Oh, and don't forget we've been open to the public every Saturday in June and July!

There's so many exciting things going on, it's impossible to share them all in a single newsletter, or even post them all online. Why not visit your museum this season? Volunteers can usually be found working every Tuesday, or stop by one Saturday for a ride on your museum railroad.

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



www.rgvrrm.org

R&GV Railroad Museum
P.O. Box 23326
Rochester, NY 14692-3326

President

Otto M. Vondrak
(585) 820-2341
ovondrak@yahoo.com

Vice President

Peter Gores

Treasurer

Dave Peet

Recording Secretary

David Kehrer

Corresponding Secretary

Jeremy Tuke

Trustees

David Kaiser
Dana Fuellhart
Bill Marcotte
Charlie Marks
David Monte Verde
Joe Nugent
David Shields



The official publication of
the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum

Volume 66, No. 6-7

EDITOR

Otto M. Vondrak

PRINTING AND MAILING

Dave Peet

©2023 Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum. The Semaphore is published monthly by the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum. Electronic distribution by e-mail is free. First-Class mailing is available for \$20.00 a year. Non-member mailed subscriptions are \$25.00 and run from January 1 to Dec. 31. Member meetings are held the third Thursday of each month, and the Board of Trustees meets the first Thursday of each month. Any items related to the activities of the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, and regional railroad history and current events are gladly accepted for publication.



On July 6, we operated a special train for Livonia, Avon & Lakeville general manager Corey Zeh and new president Robert Babcock. The train consisted of ex-LA&L Alco RS-1 20 (donated in 2016) and LA&L caboose 2603 on temporary loan from the railroad.

2023 R&GV OPERATING SCHEDULE

Visit RochesterTrainRides.com for tickets and details

- 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

MUSEUM CONTACT INFO

MUSEUM PRESIDENT

Otto Vondrak
(585) 820-2341 ovondrak@yahoo.com

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS SUPT.

Charlie Marks
(585) 637-4271 cmarks@frontiernet.net

MECHANICAL SUPT.

Joe Nugent
(585) 944-1047 joe.r.nugent@gmail.com

INTERIM OPERATIONS SUPT.

David Scheiderich
(585) 301-1019 boblenon@gmail.com

TRACK AND RIGHT-OF-WAY SUPT.

David Kehrer
(585) 576-3843 dkehrer1@gmail.com

CONSTRUCTION SUPT.

Jeremy Tuke
(585) 350-9524 jktuke@gmail.com

EVENTS SUPT.

Otto Vondrak
(585) 820-2341 ovondrak@yahoo.com

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Sam Rosenberg
ALC0251@frontiernet.net

**PROGRAM COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
TRIPS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

Dave Drury
(585) 943-1520 ddrury2@rochester.rr.com

**UPCOMING
MONTHLY PROGRAMS**

Our monthly meetings on **June 15, July 20,** and **August 17** 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. These events are FREE and open to the public, so bring a friend!

Meetings return to the 40&8 Club starting **September 21**. If you have ideas for future railroad-related programs, please contact me by phone or email.

—Dave Drury,
Program Committee Chair

**RAILS & ALES TRAIN RIDES
MAY 20**

Rails & Ales was well-attended, despite the rainy weather on May 20. More than 258 visitors enjoyed complimentary tastings from more than a dozen craft breweries, and enjoyed diesel train rides between the two tasting areas. Catering was provided by **Z Best Foodz**. Of note was a special beer “Brass Lantern Amber Ale” created



Volunteer Chuck Whalen has completed putting a new coat of paint on the roof of our Fairbanks Morse H12-44 1843. Sam Rosenberg has been working on updating the electrical systems inside to make operation more reliable in the future.

by **Stoneyard Brewing** of Brockport as a fundraiser for the museum, featuring label artwork designed by our museum president Otto Vondrak. As of this writing, Brass Lantern is available in four-packs at Rochester-area beer stores. The next edition of RAILS & ALES will be held on September 23.

MEMBERS PICNIC - MAY 21

Our Spring Members Picnic on Sunday, May 21, was very well attended, with more than 45 members and their friends and families joining us! The first train, consisting of RGV 54 and the Erie caboose, departed at 9:30am to pose with the New York Museum of Transportation’s trolley at their Loop Switch. This move was made in coordination with their trolley crew training, and allowed for a unique photo of train and trolley posed side by side in morning light. An additional photo stop was made at Giles Crossing before returning to Industry.

Dave Peet manned the grill and cooked hamburgs, hots, and sausages for everyone in attendance. Following lunch, we ran a second train consisting of ex-LA&L 20, the open-air flatcar, and a rare appearance by Lehigh Valley caboose 95100. This train went up the line for a photo stop splitting the signals at MP.0.3, and then brought visitors to the Upper Yard for a tour of some of our restoration projects in the Shop.

A fun time was had by all, and we look forward to our next member’s party to be held on Sunday, September 24. —O.M.V.

TRAINS & TROLLEYS AT TWILIGHT

Our first installment of Trains & Trolleys at Twilight took place on Saturday, June 3, a special joint event operated by New York Museum of Transportation. Visitors boarded at Industry Depot for a diesel ride to Midway, transferring to trolley for the ride to the “Trolley Park” on the lawn in front of NYMT. Evening entertainment included a live outdoor jazz performance, lawn games, and complimentary ice cream provided by **Creamcredible**. More than 175 paid visitors were in attendance, with trains departing Industry Depot every 30 minutes from 4pm to 7pm.

Our second edition took place on July 1, with either the threat of rain or light rain coming and going throughout the evening. More than 165 paid visitors were in attendance for the special event.

The final edition of Trains & Trolley at Twilight takes place August 5, and tickets are on sale now. —O.M.V.

**TRAIN RIDES TO A HORSE’S FRIEND
JUNE 10**

Trying something new this year, we reached out to **A Horse’s Friend**, occupying a portion of the old BOCES property and barns adjacent to NYMT. Since its foundation in 2004, A Horse’s Friend, Inc., has touched the lives of more than 5,000 such youth, disadvantaged, and otherwise underprivileged children. AHF is an outreach program designed to expose youth from the inner city and underserved



Member's Day Picnic

LEFT: On May 21, we had 45 museum members and friends join us for our Member's Day Picnic! Special activities were held throughout the day, starting with a special morning photo opportunity coordinated with New York Museum of Transportation at the Loop Switch (see back cover).

RAILS & ALES

BELOW: More than 258 visitors enjoyed complimentary samples from more than a dozen local craft breweries at our Rails & Ales event on May 20. Our next beer tasting event will be held on September 23.

populations to the world of horses. Coordinating with NYMT for use of the track beyond Midway, we came up with an event to give visitors a longer ride up to BOCES Crossing utilizing two trains controlled by a dispatcher. The first train consisted of RG&E 41 and the open-air flatcar, while the second was RGV 54 pulling the Erie and Penn Central cabooses. The system was able to provide half-hour service departing from Industry, BOCES Crossing, and the Upper Yard. AHF borrowed a haywagon from Howlett Farms to bring visitors from BOCES Crossing to the barns for a tour of the stables and activities for the kids. Thanks to Operations Supt. David Scheiderich, Dispatcher Justin Carmona, and Signal Maintainer Charles Rothbart for managing the two-train operation, and to our volunteer crews who kept everything running smoothly. We look forward to operating this unique event again in August.

ALSTOM PRIVATE TOUR

A group of 25 employees from Alstom came to the museum for a private tour on June 8. The corporate successor to Rochester's **General Railway Signal**, the group from Alstom enjoyed a catered dinner at Industr Depot before boarding our train for a tour of our facilities. Many were interested in our fabrication capabilities in the Restoration Shop, and of course our progress with rebuilding our signal system along our museum railroad.

Founded in France in 1928, Alstom is a world-wide leader in the design and deployment of signal systems, as well as the design and manufacturing of rolling stock



and locomotives. General Railway Signal became part of Alstom in 1998, opening new offices on East River Road in the old Kodak Riverwood facility in 2022.

TRACK & RIGHT OF WAY

Adam Lloyd completed the installation of our Pennsylvania Railroad position light signal at Switch 6 on July 4. The components came from original hardware donated by Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad several years ago. Rehab included installing a new base, mast, and maintenance ladder. Thanks to Scott Gleason, Charles Lloyd, and others for their hard work.

On July 11, the Track Dockneys addressed a wide gauge issue in the Hill Block, replaced the point protector at Switch 6, and applied grease to appropriate areas of track.

PRINCESS & SUPERHEROES JULY 15

Children come dressed as their favorite princess or superhero and enjoy fun vintage train rides that depart every 30 minutes from 10am to 3pm. Kids will enjoy our bounce house and other activities as you tour our museum grounds. You never know what famous costumed characters may join us! Costumed performers provided by **Enchanted Princess Parties of Rochester**. Tickets on sale now.

MECHANICAL DEPT.

RG&E 41: A 92-day inspection was performed in June and the locomotive was used for the "A Horse's Friend" event. Unfortunately, an issue has developed with the PT pump on one of the engines.

LA&L 20: A work session was held on May 6 to get the locomotive running for the season. Sam Rosenberg made several minor repairs in order to complete the 92-day inspection. In June, Sam Rosenberg replaced both fuel strainers, as well as the spin-on fuel filters. The locomotive has been used for several events with no issues. Sam also worked with Dick Holbert to make repairs to the cab radio.

R&GV 54: The locomotive developed plugged fuel filters during the Mother's Day event on May 13. This has been known to happen after the fuel tank is topped off with diesel since sediment and algae at the bottom of the tank gets disturbed and floats in suspension. The fuel filters were replaced and the locomotive began performing normally. Sam Rosenberg is working with Dick

Holbert to replace the magnetic radio antenna on the cab roof, as the existing antenna has failed. New start switches have also been ordered to replace the worn originals.

RG&E 8: Chuck Whalen continues to clean and paint different areas 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. Chuck Whalen finished painting the top of the engine cowl and the cab roof to prevent further rust. In June, Sam Rosenberg and Mark Bowen installed a new reverse current rectifier in this loco-

motive. The locomotive was also pre-lubed and started for the first time this year.

BNY 12: The locomotive was picked up by Scott Symans on July 7.

DSI 5: Scott Symans delivered the locomotive on July 7.

B&O C2493 Caboose: The caboose has been moved inside the Restoration Shop for cleaning and evaluation. Justin Carmona is leading the effort to clean out the car to prepare for window repairs, exterior sandblasting, and priming.

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.

NYC Caboose: The car is currently in the building for repairs. Charlie Marks is leading the project, which includes window repairs and repainting the sides. Bernie Beikirch has been helping with removing old paint.

Erie 2103 Stillwell Coach: Bill Marcotte is pricing out the cost of materials to make repairs to the vestibules in anticipation of receiving new steps being fabricated by PKG Equipment. The estimate will be used to request funds from the Stillwell Family Foundation.

—Joe Nugent, Mechanical Dept. Supt.

ARCHIVES UPDATE

Thanks to a grant from the Rochester Area Community Foundation, most of the John Woodbury Collection — which consists of more than 3,000 black and white photographic negatives — has been digitized, with highlights uploaded to our ac-



LEFT: May 16 we landed two 40 ft. containers purchased second-hand from Viola Storage. These containers will replace the two trailers previously used for storage.

BELOW LEFT: We operated special trains to BOCES Crossing on June 10 so visitors could tour the stables at A Horse's Friend.

BELOW: On June 10, visitors could tour the AHF stables and meet the friendly horses.



RIGHT: Charlie Marks fits in a new windowsill while Bernie Biekrich uses a sander to remove old paint from the sides of New York Central caboose 19877. This car is currently in the shop for windows repairs and a new coat of paint, with an eye towards returning to active service for October train rides.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Jackson Glozer, John Redden, Sam Rosenberg, and Mark Bowen (not pictured) pre-lubed the ex-U.S. Army Fairbanks-Morse diesel and got her fired up for the first time this year on July 3.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Dave Luca works on the rear frame of Rochester Subway Car 60. A team of volunteers including Rand Warner, John Redden, Dale Hartnett, and Bill Marcotte are working to reconstruct the rear vestibule. Car 60 was stored outside for 30 years, with its rear exposed to the weather. Shortly after delivery to RGVRM, the rear had deteriorated so much it was removed.



count at [flickr.com/rgvrrm](https://www.flickr.com/photos/rgvrrm/). Examples include more than 100 images of Rochester streetcars, as well as dozens of pictures of local railroad action in the steam and early diesel era. In the “Albums” listing, look for “Woodbury Collection.”

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

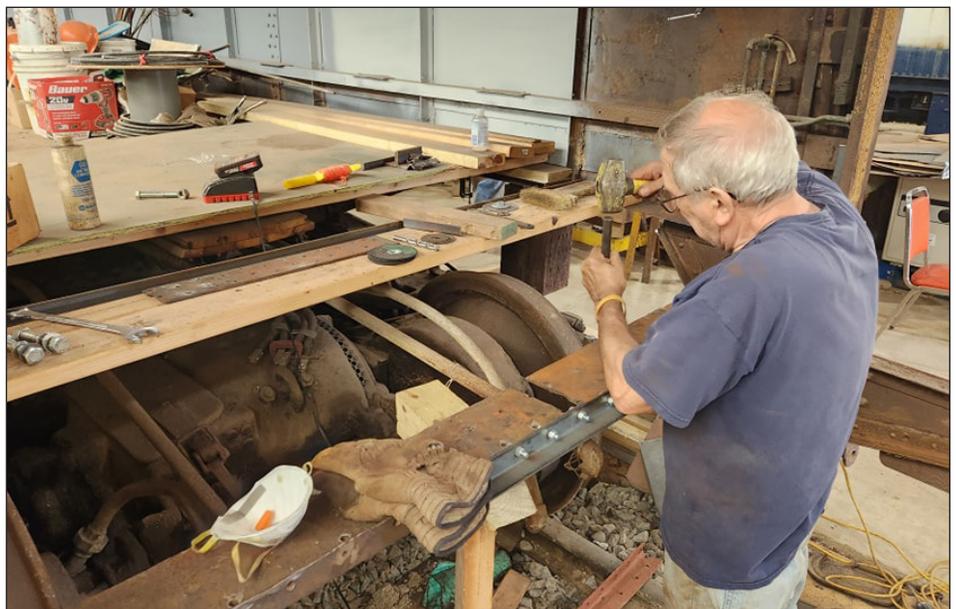
—John Stewart,
Archive Committee Chair

UPPER YARD AND SHOP AREA

On May 16, we landed two 40 ft. storage containers on the east side of the Restoration Shop. These new weather-tight containers will be used for organized storage for Motive Power Dept., as well as CS&P (Communications, Signals & Power) Dept. Contents are being transferred from the two storage trailers temporarily sitting in our volunteer parking area, and when emptied, they will be moved to the Construction Yard for disposition. Jim Johnson and Mike Guglielmo have installed efficient new LED lighting inside the containers.

SAFETY FIRST

As our museum continues to grow and we see more volunteer activity around the property, we must stay vigilant to prevent accidents. In future editions of The Semaphore we will discuss various topics related to safety as a reminder to all of us as we go about our tasks. Help keep your museum injury free in 2023! 🛑



Despatch Shops No. 5 Comes Home



STEAM LOCOMOTIVES were once the backbone of American railroads, until they were replaced by more efficient diesels in the 1950s. Steam quickly disappeared from the American landscape, with thousands of engines meeting their demise in scrap yards across the country. Only a few escaped the cutting torch, thanks to the dedication of those wishing to preserve the “golden age” of railroading for future generations to enjoy. One of those examples is Despatch Shops No. 5, a small switching locomotive that spent its entire career working at the Despatch Shops in East Rochester until the mid-1950s.

Built in 1924 by the Vulcan Works in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., it was purchased by Merchants Despatch Transportation Corp. (MDT) for exclusive use at its freight car manufacturing and repair shop in East Rochester known as “Despatch Shops.” Classified as an “0-4-0” (no leading wheels, four powered driving wheels, and no trailing wheels), this style of switcher carried its water supply on a saddle tank slung over the boiler, and burned coal carried in a compartment behind the cab where the controls are located. The vast East Rochester car shops turned out dozens of freight cars a day, and “tank engines” like these were used to move new cars to the yards for outbound delivery, bring in old cars to be repaired, and generally help move materials around the plant.

Merchants Despatch was a subsidiary of the mighty New York Central Railroad, one of the largest railroads in America connect-

ing New York and Boston with Chicago and the Midwest. Steam operations came to an end in 1954, and No. 5 was set aside for retirement. The engine received a fresh paint job and was briefly displayed outside the Despatch Shops main offices before it was sold to scrap metal dealer Rochester Iron & Metal. For many years it was displayed outside the scrap yard’s office on St. Paul Blvd. (now the location of High Falls Terrace Park).

It was around this time John Virgilio took an interest in the engine. Following the tradition of his father, John enjoyed a brief career on the New York Central as a fireman and brakeman from 1949 until 1954 when diesels replaced steam. His family had been collecting railroad artifacts at their farm in Henrietta for some time, with the hopes of someday opening a museum where children could learn about the “golden age” of railroading that was rapidly disappearing. Virgilio made inquiries, but the engine was priced just beyond his reach at \$3,500.

In 1964, RI&M was closing down its operation on St. Paul Blvd., and considered lowering their asking price for the engine to just \$1,250. Virgilio was working as a custodian for the Rush-Henrietta school district at the time, and launched an intense fundraising effort to cover the cost of purchasing the engine. Reaching an agreement with RI&M, No. 5 was moved to Henrietta by truck on June 17, 1965.

John Virgilio formed the Mortimer Railroad Historical Society, named after the

junction of the New York Central, Erie, and Lehigh Valley railroads located behind his home in Henrietta. Virgilio’s small private museum opened on June 11, 1966, with many school groups and tour buses paying a visit over the years. A shed was built around the steam engine in 1972 to protect it from the weather and possible vandalism. After complaints from his neighbors and concerns about the security of the collection, public viewing came to an end, and the little steam engine was tucked away and nearly forgotten.

The Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum in Rush began cultivating a relationship with the Virgilio family in 2017. When John Virgilio passed away in 2021 at age 91, his son Barry reached out to us about finding a possible home for his father’s legacy. After touring the museum, Barry and his mother Phyllis agreed that RGVRM would be the perfect new home for No. 5 in May 2022.

The locomotive was safely delivered to Industry on July 7, 2023, where it is on temporary display. The museum’s long-term plans include cosmetic restoration and putting the engine on permanent display so visitors can walk through the cab, sit in the engineer’s seat, and feel what it was like to be at the throttle of a steam locomotive.

“As the largest operating railroad museum in New York State, we feel a great responsibility to preserve the legacy of Rochester’s rich railroading heritage for future generations to enjoy,” said RGVRM President Otto Vondrak, “With only a handful of New York Central steam locomotives preserved across the country, we owe a debt of gratitude to John Virgilio for saving such an important part of our local history.” Despite being stored indoors for 50 years, considerable restoration work will need to take place before the locomotive is ready for tours. Museum volunteers will be working to stabilize No. 5 and perform a full evaluation to determine the best course for restoration.

Thanks to all the volunteers who worked over the past year to prep DSI 5 for abatement work and movement to the museum, and those who coordinated efforts on the day of the big move, and to Scott Symans for proving expert transportation.

—Otto M. Vondrak



THE SEMAPHORE
 ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM
 P.O. BOX 23326
 ROCHESTER, NY 14692-3326



NEXT MEETING:
July 20, 2023
 282 RUSH-SCOTTSVILLE RD., RUSH N.Y.

PLAN AHEAD:
Aug. 17, 2023
 282 RUSH-SCOTTSVILLE RD., RUSH N.Y.

Find us on Facebook! facebook.com/rgvrrm



MEET ME AT THE SWITCH: A special photo opportunity was set up with New York Museum of Transportation during our Member Picnic on May 21, with our diesel train posed with the trolley at NYMT's Loop Switch. See page 3 for details. PHOTO BY OTTO M. VONDRAK