

NICKEL RATE ROAD

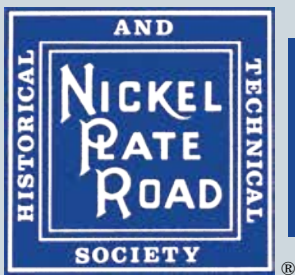
Fall 2015
\$9.95

*Magazine*TM

Nickel Plate in...

... the
“Erie Triangle”

A steam locomotive pulling a long train of nickel plate cars through a rural landscape, emitting a large plume of black smoke. The train is moving away from the viewer on a set of tracks that curve to the right. The surrounding area is green with trees and grass. In the background, there are other tracks and a small building.



Welcome aboard the...

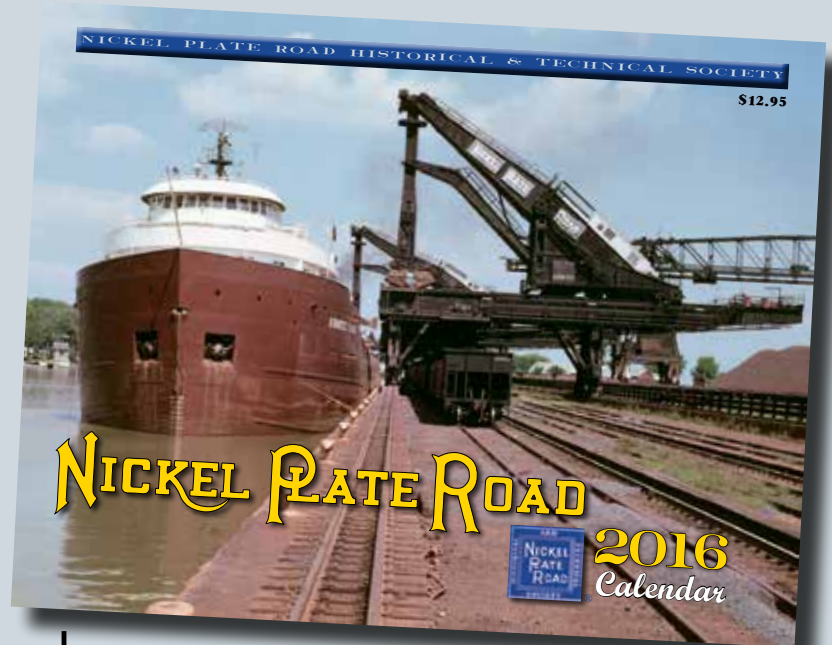
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- Descriptive captions by William Powers
- Edited and produced by Thos. Gascoigne with the assistance of White River Junction Productions
- 100-pound offset enamel-finish paper



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NICKEL PLATE ROAD

Magazine™



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WEBSITE: <http://nkphts.org>

STAFF

Publisher: Thos. Gascoigne

Editor/Art Director: Mike Schafer
whiteriverschaf@earthlink.net

Managing Editor: John T. Slater, D.E.
nkphts433L@aol.com

Associate Editor: Christopher C. Manthey

Modeling Editor: William C. Quick
wqknkp661@verizon.net

Purchasing Agent: Robert C. Albert

Production: Bill Navigato, Tom Hooper

Submit editorial and illustrative items for the magazine to:

NKPM/Mike Schafer
P.O. Box 129
Lee, IL 60530

E-mail: nkpmeditor@earthlink.net

General correspondence to NKPHTS officers should go to the Society's corporate address at:

NKPHTS
P.O. Box 9
North Hampton, OH 45349-0009

E-mail: contact@nkphts.org

Membership-related correspondence, including new memberships and renewals, should go to Dan Hansen, Membership Services Administrator:

NKPHTS Membership
P.O. Box 138
Bucklin, MO 64631

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Features

An all-issue special feature:

Nickel Plate in the "Erie Triangle"4

Departments

Car 83130



The *NICKEL PLATE ROAD MAGAZINE* is published by the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society for its members and historians interested in the former New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad and its predecessor companies. Articles, manuscripts, photographs, and other historical data, as well as items of a contemporary nature relating to the Nickel Plate Road, are solicited for publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced for commercial use without the permission of the Publications Director and the contributor of the material involved. *The NKPHTS logo and the name NICKEL PLATE ROAD* are registered trademarks of the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society, Inc.

FRONT AND BACK COVERS: With reefers in tow, westbound Nickel Plate Berkshire 770 appears to be winning a race with a New York Central freight in this sunny day scene near Erie, Pa., in the 1950s. Yes, in the big picture of late 20th Century railroading, those NYC F-units and their ilk will win their own "race" as dieselization finishes its sweep through North America, but for now these two scenes on both covers of this issue will recall an era of steam-powered high-speed freight. *BOTH PHOTOS, JIM SHEA*

ABOVE RIGHT: At the same location near Erie where the front and back cover photos were recorded, NKP Alco S-4 No. 74 scoots along with a yard job while the crew cools off on the walkway. *JIM SHEA*



As much time as I've spent in the "chimney" of Pennsylvania—that little triangular section in the northwesternmost part of the Keystone State that reaches up to Lake Erie—I've never heard of that area referenced as the "Erie Triangle." That was, until *NKPM* Managing Editor John Slater delivered a remarkable piece of work by co-authors Jerry D'Aurora and Jerry Skrypzak for this issue.

The Erie reference does not pertain to the railroad of that name, but to Erie, Pa. As the port on Lake Erie for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Erie became a strategic target for Pennsylvania-centric railroads—especially the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad, which ultimately claimed title to having the most extensive port facilities in the Triangle. But late-comer Nickel Plate had its own role in the Triangle, and Messrs. D'Aurora and Skrypzak have shown us how the NKP fit into the Triangle puzzle, along with the likes of the New York Central and Bessemer & Lake Erie.

I love articles like this that put a favored carrier into the context of the lands, people, and commerce it served, even if our beloved NKP wasn't necessarily the big kid on Triangle block. In this case, it was of special interest to me because I'm also a Pennsy aficionado as well as a devotee of the Erie/Erie Lackawanna.

In closing, I would like to wish heartfelt thanks to *NKPM* Managing Editor John Slater. John is retiring from this position when this issue goes to press. On behalf of NKPHTS Publications, I'm thanking John for his determination in providing the magazine with the best material available. It's been a great six-year run, John, with you as Managing Editor.—*M.S.*

NICKEL PLATE in the

Bluebird 189 and mate cruise over the Pennsylvania Railroad's OD (Outer Depot) Yard at Erie, Pa., with train 6, the eastbound *City of Cleveland*. The NKP's original crossing of this Pennsy facility was on wooden trestlework. Erie was the terminus of PRR's old Philadelphia & Erie line and a critical port for the Pennsy on the Great Lakes. JIM SHEA



ABOVE: Vineyards were and still are an important agricultural venue along the southeast shores of Lake Erie, and grape traffic played an important role during railway development in and around Erie, Pa. JOHN SLATER COLLECTION

RIGHT: A colorized postcard of the Nickel Plate depot and old Eating House at Erie circa 1910. The view looks north-northeast. JERRY D' AURORA COLLECTION



In the heart of the Grape Belt along the southeastern shore of Lake Erie, the City of Erie was the hub of railroading in Pennsylvania's "chimney", with the Nickel Plate in the thick of it.



“Erie Triangle”



BY JERRY D'AURORA AND JERRY SKRYPZAK

Introduction

If one examines a map of Pennsylvania, it is quite noticeable how the northern border with New York State takes a 90-degree turn to the north as it approaches Lake Erie. Often referred to as Pennsylvania's “chimney,” the section is nonetheless historically referred to as the Erie Triangle.

Although not part of Pennsylvania's colonial tract, this 202,187-acre addition to its land mass was of great interest to members of the Pennsylvania Assembly, as it would include Presque Isle Bay and its natural harbor, thus providing the commonwealth with a “window on Lake Erie.”

Since Presque Isle was the only sig-

nificant harbor between the mouth of the Cuyahoga River in the Northwest Territory and present-day Dunkirk, N.Y.—a distance of 150 miles—if Pennsylvania was to have lake access, it would have to be at that location.

Claimed by New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, based on colonial boundaries, it took a half-decade of negotiations between officials of Pennsylvania and the administration of George Washington and the Congress to facilitate the purchase. Although the original intent of acquiring the tract of land was to use the Lake Erie access to draw lumber and furs from the upper Great Lakes region, the decision would result in tremendous opportunities for the growth of

commerce and industry in northwestern Pennsylvania over the next two centuries. Supporting that growth were five railroads that subsequently served the Erie Triangle: the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern, the Pennsylvania, the Bessemer & Lake Erie, the East Erie Commercial, and the Nickel Plate Road.

Born of conflict

Indigenous peoples had lived in the Great Lakes region for thousands of years, with the Erie, or Eriez, among several Iroquoian-speaking nations that inhabited the south shore of Lake Erie at the time when Europeans first began encountering the historic native tribes in the 16th and 17th centuries. The lucrative fur trade with the French and Dutch escalated competition and violence among the tribes.

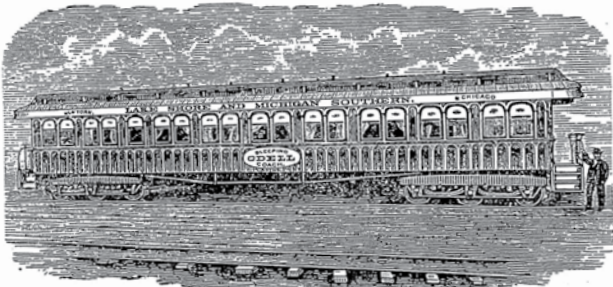
The Erie encroached on the territory of other tribes and further angered their neighbors from the Iroquois Confederation to the east when they accepted refugees from Huron villages destroyed by the Iroquois. According to the Jesuit relation report of 1656, it was during a short war in 1654 when the Seneca inflicted devastating losses on the Erie and there is little, if any, further documented reference to that tribe's existence in the region.

In the summer of 1753, the French constructed Fort Presque Isle—also known as Fort de la Presqu'Île du Lac Erie—on the west bank of the mouth of Mill Creek at Presque Isle Bay in Lake Erie. This was one of three forts built to protect the Venango Path—the Native American portage that stretched from Lake Erie to French Creek with access to the Allegheny and Ohio rivers. It was abandoned and burned in July 1759 during the French & Indian War. Rebuilt by the British in 1760, it was in turn burned by Ottawa war chief Pontiac.

During the American Revolution, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was drawn into conflicts with other colonies over boundaries. Between 1782 and

Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway GREAT DOUBLE TRACK ROUTE.

ALL
TRAINS
Connect
with
N. Y.
Central R. R.
AT
BUFFALO.



ALL
TRAINS
Connect
with
ERIE
RAILWAY
VIA
BUFFALO.

...Connect & Release Connections through between New York & Chicago on this Line.



ABOVE: The pioneering railroads of the "Erie Triangle" included powerhouse Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and the Erie & North East Railroad (both components of the future New York Central System) and the Erie & Pittsburgh, of which the Pennsylvania Railroad was lessee. LS&MS AND E&P PAPERS, JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION; E&NE CERTIFICATE, JOHN SLATER COLLECTION

1786, its northeastern and southwestern boundaries and the lands originally claimed by Connecticut and Virginia, were finally resolved.

However, the northwestern border continued to be a point of contention with neighboring New York. The economic significance of the region became apparent when the Pennsylvania legislature sent General William Irvine to explore the area and he recommended that construction of a trading post on Lake Erie could benefit the Common-

wealth by raising revenue.

New York, however, disputed Pennsylvania's claim, which included the small triangle of land along the south shore of Lake Erie between its western border and the eastern border of the so-called Connecticut Western Reserve. In 1785, a commission was appointed by the legislatures of New York and Pennsylvania to survey the disputed lands and purchase them from the Seneca inhabitants.

Subsequent to negotiation between the commissioners, surveyors Andrew Ellicott

of Pennsylvania and Frederick Saxton of New York were able to fix the western boundary of New York at 20 miles east of Presque Isle. This left a triangular tract, not included in the charter of either state, which became federal lands.

On Sept. 4, 1788, Congress ratified the sale of the so-called Erie Triangle to Pennsylvania and on April 18, 1791, the Pennsylvania Legislature authorized the purchase of the Triangle for \$151,640.25. The following year, Seneca Chief Cornplanter agreed to sell Indian claims to the lands to Pennsylvania for \$5,000 in exchange for an inland tract of land, granted to them in perpetuity under the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794.

Not all of the Senecas left the Erie Triangle, and when Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Mifflin prepared an expedition by state militia to take control of the area, President George Washington interceded, persuading Mifflin to refrain from any action pending the negotiation a new treaty.

After the Battle of Fallen Timbers on Aug. 29, 1794, the remaining Native Americans, led by Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant, finally ceded their lands to Pennsylvania. The first white settlers soon began arriving that same year, and what would eventually become the city of Erie was founded in 1795.

With the outbreak of the War of 1812, the British took control of Lake Erie and conflict would once again visit the Erie Triangle. At the recommendation of long-time American lake mariner, Daniel Dobbins, Presque Isle bay became the American naval base on Lake Erie. In 1813, it became the headquarters for Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry and his small fleet of U.S. warships—six of which had been built in Presque Isle—including the brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara*.

Perry's victory in the Battle of Lake Erie on Sept. 10, 1813, proved to be one of the most resounding triumphs of the War of 1812, as it secured control of the lake. That, coupled with the subsequent American victory at the Battle of the Thames on Oct. 5, 1813, ensured that the states of Ohio and Michigan would remain sovereign territory of the United States.

A canal system in Northwestern Pennsylvania had been an idea supported by Benjamin Franklin in the late 1700s, but the initiative would not gain traction until 1827, when the Leg-

islatore approved two million dollars to fund the project.

The 1825 opening of the Erie Canal between Albany and Buffalo, N.Y., had intensified the competitive need for a viable Pennsylvania canal system. By 1834, an interlocking system of canals, railways, and inclined planes—collectively known as the Main Line of Public Works—was moving passengers and freight between Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh.

However, routing of a canal system extension west of Pittsburgh became subject to heated arguments and debates raging over whether the canal should end at Elk Creek or Erie. The western route was finally selected, with Erie as its terminus.

The Beaver & Erie Canal—also known as the Erie Extension Canal—would run 136 miles from what is today Beaver, Pa., 20 miles downstream from Pittsburgh on the Ohio River at the confluence of the Beaver River, to its northern terminus on Lake Erie. This completed a transportation network through northwestern Pennsylvania. It connected Lake Erie with the Ohio River; the MLoFPW; and the Erie Canal by way of Lake Erie between Erie and Buffalo.

Construction of the Erie Extension Canal began from the south in 1831 and reached Greenville, Pa., in 1836 before the funding for the project was exhausted. When the Legislature refused to approve additional money, businessmen Rufus S. Reed of Erie and William Fruit of Sharon formed the Erie Canal Company to complete the project with private funds.

Rufus Reed, whose father, Colonel Seth Reed, was the first settler in Erie and whose son, Charles M. Reed, would become the largest owner of steamboats on the Great Lakes, was one of Erie's first and most successful capitalists.

Ground was broken for the final stretch of canal in Erie on July 4, 1838, with a celebratory parade that featured

Reed's friend Captain Daniel Dobbins, who led the procession. The first boat to reach Erie via the Erie Extension Canal was the *R. S. Reed*, a vessel owned by Rufus S. Reed. Hauling 26 tons of coal from Sharon, it reach Erie on Dec. 5, 1844, and was met with another celebration.

Over the next few years, the Erie Extension Canal proved to be a financial bonanza for the Reed family, whose maritime shipping enterprises would make them the most prosperous merchants in the region. Canal boats brought bituminous coal from the mines of Pennsylvania to power the Reeds' growing fleet of lake steamers. Others carrying up to 80 tons of iron ore off-loaded at Presque Isle enabled western Pennsylvania and

& North East Railroad Company.

Perhaps the most notorious example of conflict in the Erie Triangle was the Erie Railroad Gauge War—not to be confused with the Erie Railroad War Cornelius Vanderbilt waged with Jay Gould and Jim Fisk over control of the Erie Railroad. The Gauge War had a profound effect on the relationship between the citizens of the Erie Triangle and the early railroads that served it and impacted the future political structure of the city of Erie. Only the advent of the American Civil War diluted the rancor it created.

When the New York & Erie Railroad reached Dunkirk, N.Y., in 1851, there was not yet a railroad connection to the west. The Cleveland, Painesville &

Ashtabula Railroad began operation between Cleveland and Painesville, Ohio, in November 1851 but would not reach the Pennsylvania state line until a year later. Although the 50 miles across the Erie Triangle would undoubtedly prove to be an important link in an east-west railroad chain, construction of the E&NE languished until it became apparent that the NY&E might provide a connection to the east.

With that assurance in hand, the E&NE opened to the public on Jan. 19, 1852, operating 18.5 miles of six-foot-gauge trackage between Erie and the New York state line at a point then known as Northville. The roster included ten locomotives, 30 passenger cars, and 375 pieces of freight equipment.

The NY&E recognized the importance of a connection across the Erie Triangle, so the Dunkirk & State Line Railroad was organized to construct a six-foot gauge line from the Erie's Dunkirk terminus to the Pennsylvania State Line.

However, the Central-controlled Buffalo & State Line Railroad, chartered in 1849 to build a line between Buffalo and



The Lake Shore & Michigan Southern was destined to become the principal railroad through Erie, which it remains today under CSX auspices. A colorized postcard view looking eastward shows a fully enclosed, 360-degree roundhouse facility. The view appears to be from a vantage point near State Street; the French Street underpass is in the foreground. JERRY D' AURORA COLLECTION

eastern Ohio to develop their iron and steel industries. Foreseeing the advantages of steam navigation, Charles M. Reed became the largest owner of steamboats on the Great Lakes.

The canal helped Erie grow as an industrial center, but railways would soon be seen as more efficient. Cheaper to build and with tracks that could be laid almost anywhere, America's newest form of transportation would eventually doom the Erie Extension Canal—and most others. Ironically, it was Charles M. Reed who, on April 12, 1842, along with John A. Tracy and John H. Walker, obtained a charter for the first railroad company in the Erie Triangle—the Erie

the Pennsylvania line by way of Fredonia, took great exception to the Erie's plan. By early 1851, it had harassed the Erie into a compromise whereby the B&SL would reroute its line via Dunkirk, adopt the neutral 4-foot 10-inch Ohio gauge, and provide the Erie with a connection. In exchange, the Erie would abandon the construction of its connecting line and would subscribe \$250,000 to the stock of the Buffalo & State Line Railroad to aid in its construction.

In the meantime, the Pennsylvania Legislature had authorized the Franklin Canal Company to repair the Franklin Division of the Pennsylvania Canal and granted it a charter to build a railroad between Erie and Pittsburgh. Instead, the canal company built an Ohio-gauge railroad between Erie and the Ohio state line, connecting with the CP&A.

With the B&SL approaching the Erie Triangle from the east and the Franklin Canal Company line operating to the west of Erie, the officials of the E&NE quickly recognized the necessity of operating over compatible Ohio-gauge trackage.

Influenced by the powerful Pennsylvania Railroad Company, the Pennsylvania Legislature passed a law on March 11, 1851, establishing the legal gauge for all railroads west of Erie to the Ohio line at 4 feet, 10 inches and prohibiting any railroad from laying track east of the Borough of Erie except in 4-foot

8½-inch- or 6-foot gauge.

There is little doubt that the PRR wasn't about to allow New York rail interests to establish the last link in a Buffalo–Cleveland rail line, but it set the table for a conflict that would span three years. Erie's politicians saw an opportunity to enhance commerce by forcing passengers and freight to change trains in their community.

The E&NE officials refused to comply with the law and began laying track at the neutral, or Ohio, gauge through the Borough of Erie. On Dec. 7, 1853, civil disobedience broke out and the railroad's tracks were torn up. The mantra of infuriated citizens was "Break gauge at Erie, or no railroad at all."

Exacerbated by a series of resolutions passed by the Erie Borough Council and signed by the mayor, the civil disobedience escalated to rioting and spread east to nearby Harborcreek Township where citizens also tore up tracks and damaged railroad property.

Undaunted, the E&NE abandoned its original route through Erie and attempted to build over a different right-of-way, but rioters tore up those tracks and destroyed the bridges as fast as crews could construct them. Despite injunctions and intervention by Pennsylvania and U.S. courts and U.S. marshals, the riots became fierce and bloody.

Between late 1853 and early 1855, the War of the Gauges was waged by the

people of Erie and tacitly supported by the state government and politicians in defiance of the courts. Passengers and freight had to be transferred by stage-coach or wagon from a point east of Harborcreek to west of Erie borough in what became called "Crossing the Isthmus."

In 1855, the State of Pennsylvania repealed the charter of the E&NE, confiscated the railroad, and put it under the control of state agents. Under a resulting compromise, the Pennsylvania-gauge law was repealed. In exchange, the E&NE charter rights were restored, the railroad allowed to build its line into Erie and to the harbor, but had to subscribe to \$400,000 in stock of the new Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad.

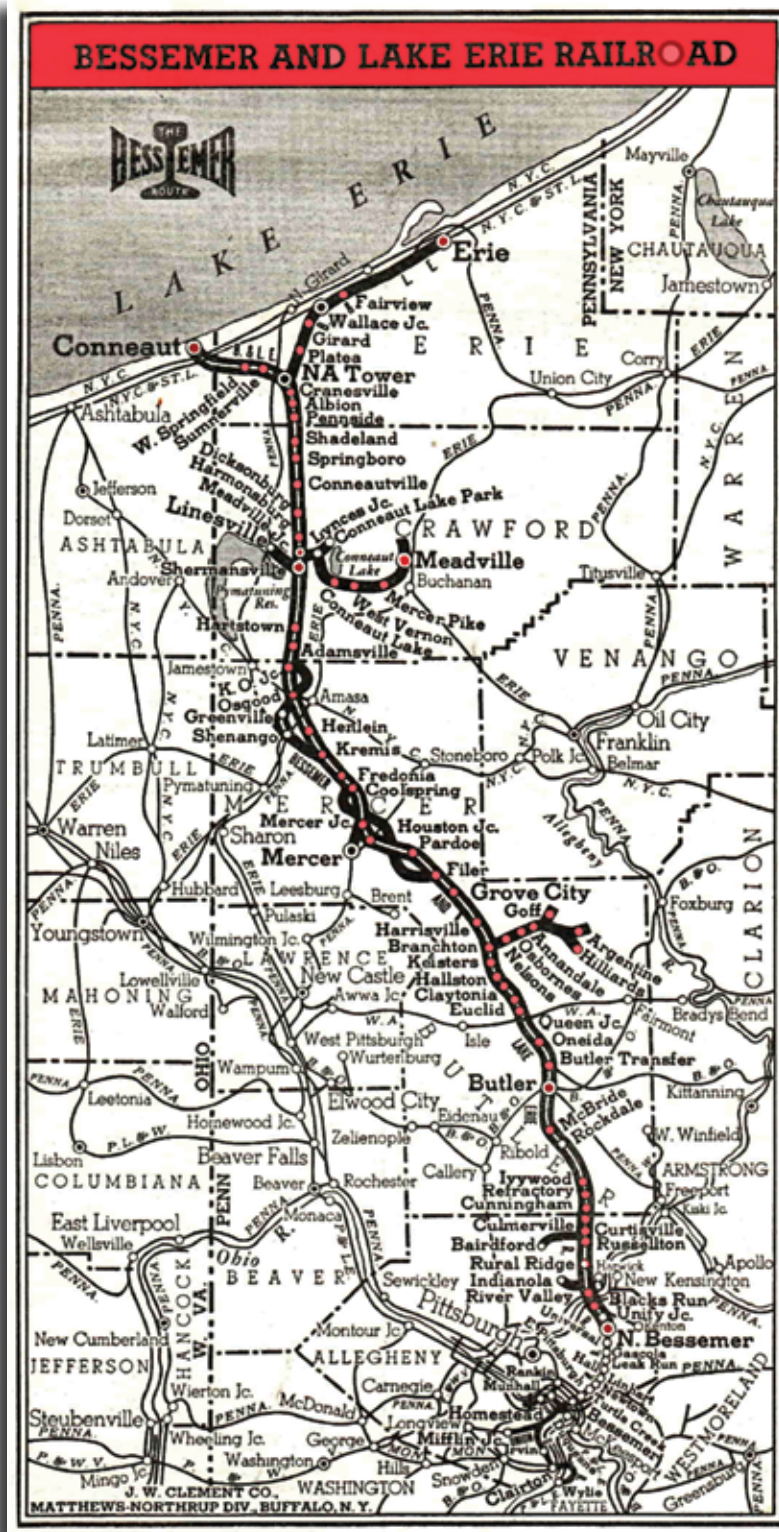
Under the settlement, the B&SL was required to subscribe a like amount while the CP&A—which had purchased the Franklin Canal Company on June 20, 1854—subscribed \$500,000 to the stock of the new Sunbury & Erie Railroad.

With the end of the Gauge War, the New York railroad interests would have their line between Buffalo and Cleveland, but they paid a steep financial price. Erie received two railroads that would serve the growing commercial and industrial interests associated with the harbor at Presque Isle, and the PRR would ultimately assume control of the E&P and the S&E, providing its intended objective of access to the upper Great Lakes.

From a broader perspective, the Erie

RIGHT: Erie Union Station is shown shortly after it opened in 1865. Originally served only by the Erie & North East, the two-story, Victorian facility later also became home for LS&MS and Pennsylvania passenger trains. The NKP always had its own facility for its modest passenger-train offerings. JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION





LEFT: Usurping the Erie Extension Canal, the Bessemer & Lake Erie would prove to be a strong connection between Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, with much ore traffic moving to and from Conneaut, Ohio, and agricultural products and merchandise moving on the Erie branch. ABOVE: The B&LE entered the NKP on trackage rights at Wallace Junction near Girard, Pa., to reach east to this modest stub-end facility in Erie. B&LE MAP, JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION; B&LE DEPOT, JIM SHEA

Gauge War brought into focus the importance of a standardized gauge for the efficient operation of America's railroads, something that was finally codified in the Pacific Railway Act of March 3, 1863, which specified that the federally funded transcontinental railroad would utilize standard gauge. By June 1886, all major railroads in North America would be using ap-

proximately the same gauge.

The announcement of a new railroad coming to Erie was met with enthusiasm and optimism. The dominance of the LS&MS and the lack of east-west competition was seen to be limiting Erie's growth, and it was believed that a second railroad operating between Buffalo and Chicago by way of Erie would reduce both passenger and freight rates.

By January 1881, engineers were surveying a right-of-way between Ashtabula, Ohio, and Brocton, N.Y. Most who saw the team of ten engineers and surveyors that appeared at the western limits of Erie thought they were working on behalf of the Buffalo, Cleveland & Chicago—a venture chartered by Clark, Post & Martin in November 1880. When the announcement was made in early February that a new trunk line called the New York, Chicago & St. Louis was involved, local interest began to peak.

Within three weeks, three proposed routes through Erie were mapped and another was surveyed. With construction now assured, the headquarters office of the Erie Division, which extended from Cleveland to Buffalo, was opened in room 17 on the third floor of the Dime Savings Bank building at South Park Row and State Street, across from Perry Square.

Local industrialists and businessmen, as well as the Erie newspapers, strongly supported a route into Erie along West 19th Street. Unfortunately, property owners along that route actively opposed the idea. When the City Council finally passed the 19th Street Bill on the evening of May 20, 1881, the disgruntled property owners obtained an injunction against the Nickel Plate, delaying the start of construction until a settlement was reached out of court. Agents purchasing property for the proposed right-of-way were forced to pay premiums to meet the demands of farmers where the route went through their orchards.

An investigation later disclosed that opposition to the Nickel Plate had been fostered by the manager of the Philadelphia & Erie Railroad with the support of three members of the Erie City Council



ABOVE: Dock facilities at Erie were dominated by the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad interests, as is evident in this scene from early in the 20th Century. The Anchor Line boat docks are at upper left, but everything else is PRR in this photo. Prominent is a coal-unloading facility in which loaded hoppers were hoisted by cables up an incline track—with safety backstops much like the chain-lift storage of a roller coaster’s first hill—and onto the dump tracks for transfer of coal to lake boats. At right, ore is being transferred from lake boats to temporary storage piles for later transfer to hoppers or gons destined for steel mills in Pittsburgh. FACING PAGE, TOP: A closer look at the same docks reveals “whirleys” unloading ore from lake boats and into gons or the storage piles. The whirley nickname stems from the ability of the steam-powered cranes to rotate on spot to transfer ore from boat to gons or piles. BOTH PHOTOS, JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION

BELOW: The Erie & Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania Railroad) docks at Erie are shown in 1904. E&P 2-8-0s stand by for their next tasks. The E&P docks were the farthest west of the railroad docks at Erie. Note the three-truck gons on the trestle. JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION





who were officials of the P&E.

By the spring of 1882, construction crews, under the direction of General J. S. Casement, were poised to begin laying tracks into the City of Erie. With other property owners preparing to obtain another injunction on Monday morning, Casement formulated a daring plan. At 2AM on Sunday April 2, 1882, a large force went to work laying tracks down the middle of 19th Street.

By the time they reached the Erie cemetery there was a large crowd on hand to watch them. The ties and rails

were laid and spiked in the block between Chestnut and Myrtle in 19 minutes. By 6PM, the tracks were laid half way across the State Street bridge. By working at breakneck speed when city offices and the courts were closed, Casement's men laid the nearly two miles of track down the middle of 19th Street before the city officials could react.

When the almighty PRR, which had leased the P&E—originally the S&E—in 1870, refused to allow the NKP to cross its Erie yard at grade, Casement's crews constructed a 3,230-foot-long

wooden trestle over the Pennsy's tracks. Once the line was finally completed, the first train moved over the new route on Aug. 31, 1882. The road was formally opened on Oct. 10, 1882, but not before more than its share of issues were encountered and resolved.

The railroads

Prior to the construction of the parallel NKP through the Erie Triangle, the only east-west railroad was the LS&MS. The product of an 1869 consolidation of four railroads, the 50 miles of trackage in Pennsylvania between the New York and Ohio state lines included the CP&A and the B&E—the latter resulting from a May 15, 1867, consolidation of the E&NE and B&SL.

By 1877, the LS&MS was controlled by Cornelius Vanderbilt and his New York Central & Hudson River Railroad, and the 540-mile main line of the



LEFT: A 1909 photo looking north into PRR's Warfel Yard shows, in the distance, the only known photo of the NKP's wooden trestle across the yard. The trestle was replaced by a combination of fill work and girder bridges as shown on the opening spread of this feature. Note how the semaphore signal has been mounted onto the roadway bridge. JERRY D' AURORA COLLECTION



ABOVE: Nickel Plate's Girard, Pa., depot as it appeared in January 1976. The building today is privately owned and serves in part as a museum for PRR, B&O, and other railroad artifacts and historical documents. NKPHTS COLLECTION



ABOVE: An early view at Fairview, Pa., between Girard Junction and Erie, shows the NKP's ornate frame depot at Fairview. BELOW: This turn-of-the-century overview that looks westward at Fairview shows the proximity of the NKP depot (left in photo) to the LS&MS/NYC main line. It was an era when railroads were young and their properties pristine. BOTH PHOTOS, JERRY D'AURORA COLLECTION



LS&MS served an area that extended from Buffalo to Chicago that included Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio, and Elkhart, Ind.

John A. Tracy, one of Erie's early railroad entrepreneurs who had supervised the construction of the E&NE and served as the president of the B&E, served as a director of the LS&MS. It was no surprise, therefore, when the LS&MS established a large roundhouse and yard facility in the vicinity of 14th and Holland streets and a freighthouse at 14th and Sassafrass. Erie's first Union Station, constructed in 1865 to serve the E&NE—later the B&E, CP&A, P&E, and E&P—would become home to the LS&MS in 1869 and the PRR in 1870.

On Dec. 22, 1914, the NYC&HR merged with the LS&MS to form the New York Central Railroad. Two major projects would be of significance to Erie: The roundhouse and engine service facilities were moved to Wesleyville, Pa.—just east of the City of Erie—in 1922.

As part of a project to eliminate grade crossings through the city, a new Erie Union Station was constructed on the newly-elevated NYC main line in 1927. A 350-foot-long platform had four canopies. The NYC occupied tracks 1 through 4, while the PRR utilized tracks 5 and 6. There was also an express track adjacent to the station that served the Railway Express Agency. At its peak, EUS handled 52 passenger trains per day.

Editor's note: The original 1869 LS&MS wood passenger/freight station in North East, Pa., and the subsequent brick-and-stone passenger depot built in 1899 is home to the Lake Shore Railway Museum which features numerous

locomotives, passenger cars, and rolling stock, including former NKP coach No. 103.

With the resolution of the Erie Gauge War, two new north-south rail lines serving the growing harbor facilities in

Erie would begin operation. The first of those was the S&E. Chartered in 1837, financial problems delayed construction until 1853, after enabling legislation had been passed to reduce tax assessments.

While the line between Sunbury and Williamsport, Pa., went into operation in 1855, construction of the 66 miles between Erie and Warren, Pennsylvania, did not begin until Oct. 27 of that year. Although Struthers, Curtis & Co. of Warren completed the section in 1859, concerns over the American Civil War delayed further construction.

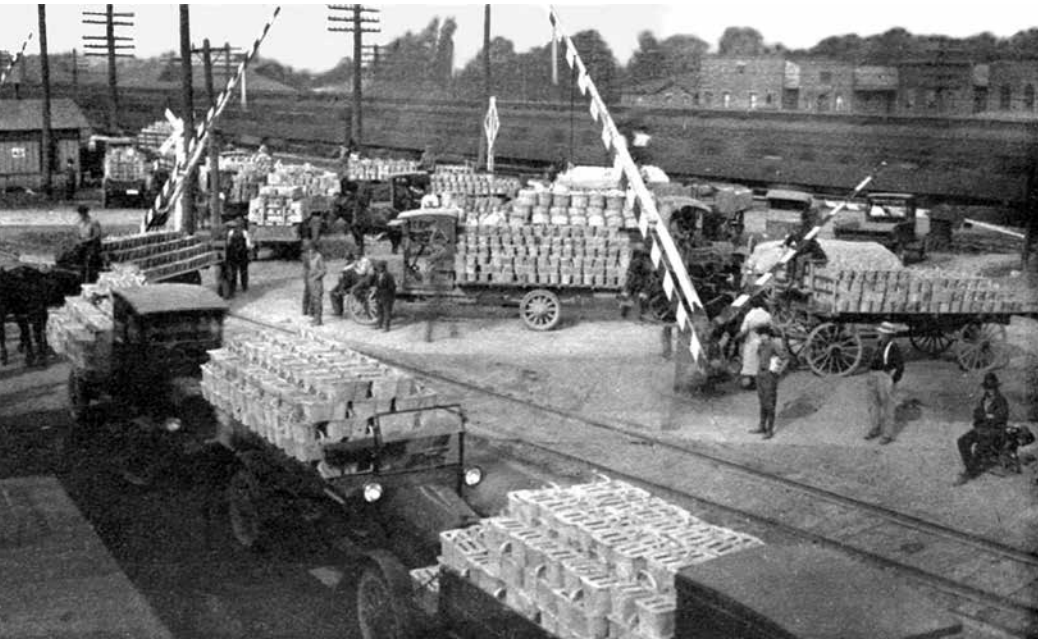
Additional legislation passed by the Pennsylvania General Assembly strengthened the company's financial condition enough to facilitate a reorganization into the P&E.

Although leased to the PRR in 1862 for 999 years, the war delayed completion of the entire 287.56-mile main line until 1864. On Oct. 6 of that year, the first passenger train from Philadelphia arrived in Erie with 300 passengers and was met with a great local celebration.

The E&P established its original passenger and freight stations at the foot of State Street but moved passenger operations to the new EUS when it opened in 1865. With the transfer of 150 waterfront lots by the City of Erie for dock facilities, the E&P began operation of a major coal-transfer facility in 1866 and expanded its Erie pier operations a year later.

Under control of the PRR, "OD" became the major yard and engine facility, supplemented by Warfel and Riblet yards. Freight operations were moved to a new freight house at 15th and Parade streets in 1880. What would become known as the Anchor Line Docks handled lake passengers, freight, grain pulpwood, coal, and iron ore. Unfortunately serious competition coupled with numerous setbacks and operational accidents kept the P&E from reaching its expected potential and the road's facilities were formally merged with the PRR in May 1907.

Editor's note: Many major railroads



ABOVE: Truckloads of grapes await transfer to the NKP at North East as soon as boxcars become available. Meanwhile, an NYC passenger train breezes through town. JOHN SLATER COLLECTION



ABOVE: A rake of iced reefers await imminent grape traffic at Harborcreek, Pa., in 1896. HARBORCREEK HISTORICAL SOCIETY. **RIGHT:** Grapes being loaded at Moorheads, Pa. JOHN T. SLATER COLLECTION





ABOVE: A panorama view of Erie taken in 1912 looks northward at the center of the photo along State Street. To the left (west) is Erie Union Station while at the opposite end looking eastward we see a portion of the old LS&MS roundhouse. Fourteenth Street parallels the NYC main line a half block north. NKPHTS COLLECTION

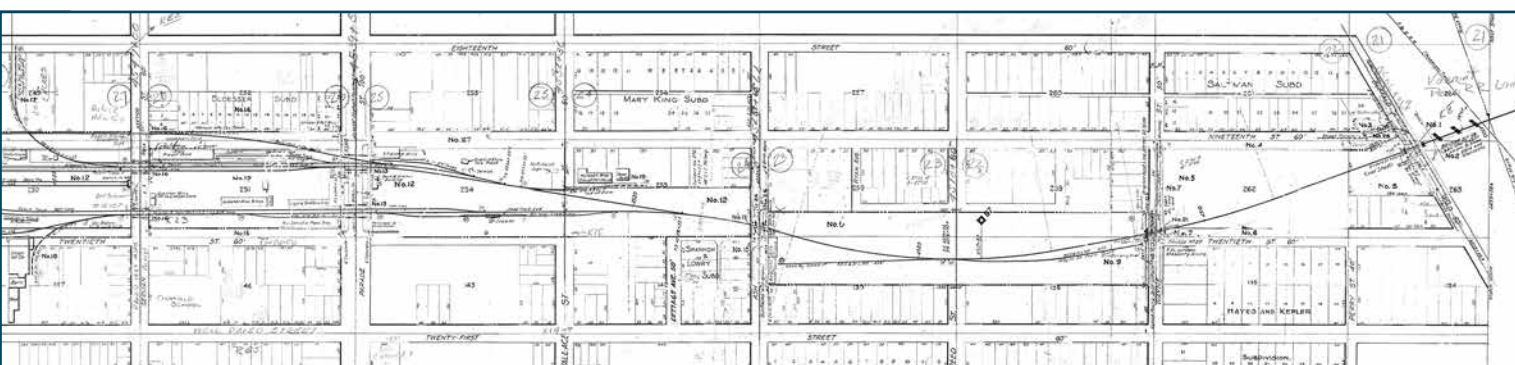


ABOVE: The Nickel Plate passenger depot and, adjacent, old eating house at Erie are shown in this view that looks northward in the 1930s. At right far in the distance is the NKP freight station. JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION. RIGHT: A closeup of the two-story freight depot circa 1955. FACING PAGE UPPER: A view of the station grounds looking eastward from the water plug west of the passenger depot in the 1950s. FACING PAGE LOWER: Down to a single baggage car, single coach, and single sleeper, the eastbound City of Cleveland calls at Erie early in the 1960s. The coach and sleeper are spotted in front of the passenger depot while GP9 480 is in front of what was known as the old eating house, dating from an era when trains routinely made food stops. Presumably, in later years the structure served as an express depot. THREE PHOTOS, JIM SHEA





BELOW: Plats of NKP properties in Erie about five blocks south of the NYC main line show NKP's street-running on 19th Street, plus freighthouse, passenger depot, and other facilities to the east. (NOTE: Plat does not line up exactly with above photo). NKPHTS COLLECTION



established their own Great Lakes steamboat lines to complement their rail services carrying passengers and goods. One such example was formed by the PRR in 1865 to connect its terminal at Buffalo to those of the Northern Pacific Railroad at Duluth, Minn.

Owned by the Erie & Western Transportation Company, it became the well-known Anchor Line. The fleet consisted of seventeen propellers, one tug (the Erie), and three schooners. Operating out of the Port of Erie at the foot of Holland Street, the company owned about 40 acres of the finest dock property on the Great Lakes, with two spacious, first-class grain elevators and two large freight warehouses.

The second railroad to access the harbor at Presque Isle Bay was the E&P. Like the S&P, its construction was prompted by the Pennsylvania General Assembly to settle the Erie Gauge War. However, instead of Philadelphia, the intended route would terminate in Pittsburgh.

As early as 1835, a group from Mercer County had met to develop a plan to construct a railroad that would connect the harbor at Erie with the Beaver Division of the Pennsylvania Canal at New Castle. Chartered in 1845, the P&E barely began initial grading before it ran into financial problems, and the

Text continued on page 20





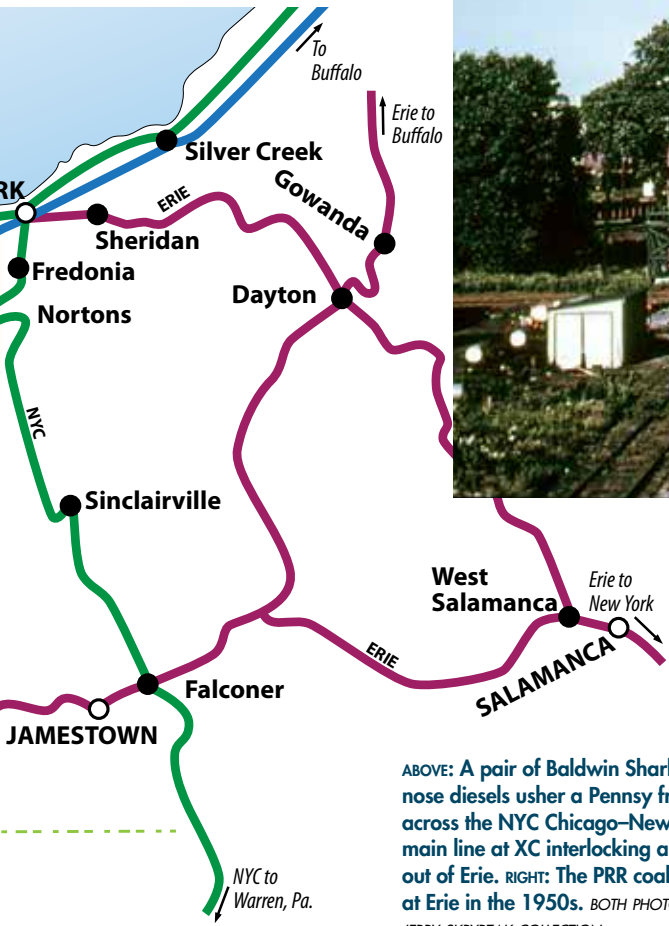
Loading Grapes, North East, Pa.

ABOVE: Day-to-day life in late summer in North East meant a rush to get grapes to market. JOHN SLATER COLLECTION



RIGHT: Class S-4 Berkshire 810 makes a setout at Dean Siding along the New York Central main line on the east side of Erie in the 1950s. JERRY D'AURORA COLLECTION

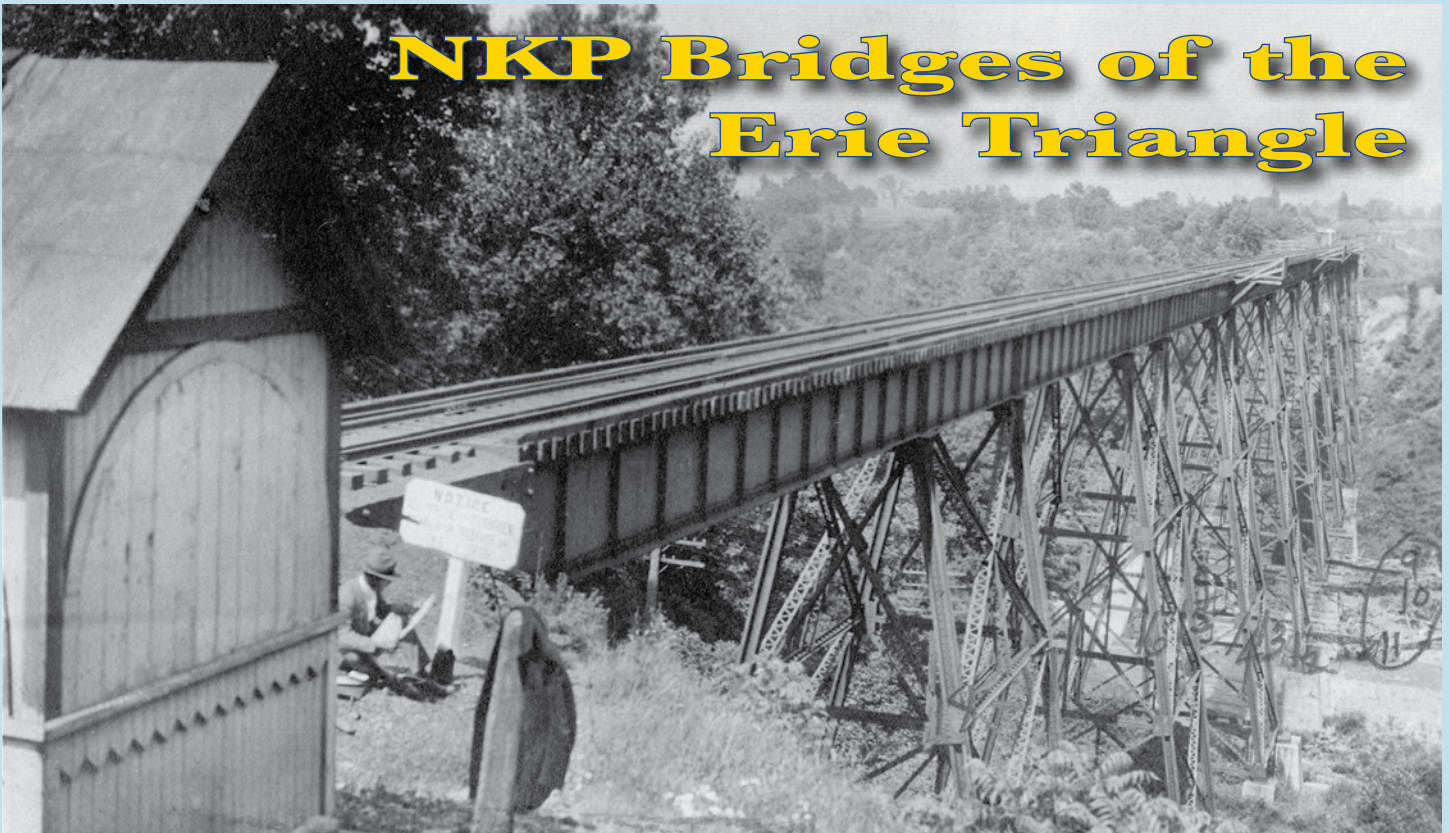
MAP: WHITE RIVER PRODUCTIONS: MIKE SCHAFER, TOM HOOPER



ABOVE: A pair of Baldwin Shark-nose diesels usher a Pennsy freight across the NYC Chicago–New York main line at XC interlocking and out of Erie. RIGHT: The PRR coal dock at Erie in the 1950s. BOTH PHOTOS, JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION



NKP Bridges of the Erie Triangle



ABOVE: The Swanville, Pa., bridge—Bridge No. 62 just west of Erie—over Walnut Creek is shown in June 1918. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

JOHN T. SLATER

Instead of the stone arches and culverts used by the predecessors of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern when the line through Pennsylvania was built in the 1850s, bridge technology had advanced to a point where the contractor for the New York, Chicago & St. Louis spanned the gullies and ravines of lake shore creeks with iron viaducts. Of the NKP's seven original Buffalo Division high bridges, four were located in the Erie Triangle. They were:

	Length	Height	Cost
State Line (New York and Pennsylvania)			
—Twenty Mile Creek	712 feet	98.6 feet	\$27,236
Swanville, Pa.—Walnut Creek	870 feet	70 feet	30,067
Girard, Pa.—Elk Creek	1,470 feet	84.8 feet	53,341
East Springfield, Pa.—Crooked Creek	690 feet	68.4 feet	21,021

Although the shortest in both length and height of the four, the East Springfield viaduct over Crooked Creek had been deemed by Nickel Plate management to be unsafe and a project was begun in May 1901 to span the gully with a fill and remove the iron structure. Shortly after 10AM on July 11, the Conneaut east-end local arrived at the construction site with three cars of stone to be unloaded into the ravine for the masons working on the large stone abutments.

With engineer William Griffith of Buffalo and conductor Phil A. Moore of Conneaut in charge, the work of unloading the cars had hardly begun when, without warning, the bridge structure collapsed. Along with the loaded cars and several workmen, it crashed to the floor of the valley below. Nine men, including conductor Moore, were killed instantly and another ten were injured, some severely.

Fortunately, NKP passenger train No. 3 had just crossed the span only minutes before the collapse without mishap and many considered that a miracle in itself. After an extensive investigation, the collapse was deemed an accident. The work of replacing the viaduct with the fill was completed, thus reducing the number of NKP high bridges in Pennsylvania to three.

The remaining three iron viaducts would be rebuilt as steel bridges between 1902 and 1903 to meet E-40 load standards. This work was

BELOW: A rare photo showing a portion of the Moorheads depot next to Bridge 52 in 1918. NATIONAL ARCHIVES



contracted with the Keystone Branch of the American Bridge Works. It was part of a larger bridge rebuilding program on the Buffalo Division that included the Buffalo Creek and Cattaraugus Creek crossings—both erected by the King Bridge Company of Cleveland in conjunction with the PRR.

The NKP bridge over Walnut Creek had its towers strengthened in 1933, while the towers of the Elk Creek bridge were strengthened in 1934. Both had their girders upgraded in 1943 to meet E-60 standards. The State Line Bridge was rebuilt to E-70 standards in 1936.

[Editor's note: Cooper's Conventional System of Wheel Concentrations was introduced into American bridge practice in the early 1890s. At that time, the heaviest loads being provided for were represented by Cooper's E-40 loading, consisting of two Consolidation locomotives with 40,000 pounds on each driving axle, followed by a uniform train load of 4,000 pounds per linear foot. Subsequently, there was a rapid and continuous increase in locomotive and train weights. To provide for this increase, the



LEFT: A 1902 photo showing the reconstruction of the trestle over 20 Mile Creek near the Pennsylvania/New York border. This was an era when positive news about railways was still a popular topic for local newspapers. The Sunday Dec. 13, 1902, *North East Sun* went so far as to explain how this bridge was rebuilt: "A gang of men are now active engaged in rebuilding the Nickel Plate bridge at the gulf about four miles east of North East. The method of operation is as follows: A wooden span or section is built up from the bottom of the gulf to within some twenty feet of the top. The top of the old iron span is then taken off and the top of the new span or section placed in position, supported on the wooden support. The track and ties are then laid and the trains can pass over the bridge. The men then go to work and build the bottom of the work when the wood-work is removed to another supporting column, where the same method of construction is adopted. In this way the new bridge will be built without interfering with the running of trains to any great extent."—NORTH EAST HISTORICAL SOCIETY



ABOVE, BOTH PHOTOS: Springfield bridge disaster caused loss of life and destroyed a bridge that was already planned for demolition, but another catastrophe involving a Nickel Plate bridge had a far more tragic effect. For centuries, Mill Creek, named for the first mill established in the Erie Triangle, had flowed gently from Millcreek Township and emptied into Presque Isle Bay. It had overflowed its banks in 1893, but on Tuesday Aug. 3, 1915, a series of natural occurrences brought devastation to a large part of Erie, including the NKP's bridge across the creek. A series of storms had brought 5.77 inches of rain to the Erie area between 3PM and 9PM, four inches of it falling in just three hours. All of the water from the Mill Creek watershed flowed through Erie. As the water rose, Mill Creek overflowed its banks, which subsequently collapsed, sending trees, buildings, and other debris into the raging creek. With debris collecting near a culvert at 26th and State streets, a reservoir formed that extended north for several blocks. Attempts to clear the dam were unsuccessful, and about 8:45PM the culvert broke. A wall of water estimated as high as 25 feet tore through the City of Erie on its way to Presque Isle Bay, leaving a path of destruction nearly three miles long and between four and six blocks wide. A final death toll was never released, but fatalities were estimated between 36 and 40. The flood waters destroyed approximately 250 homes and damaged an additional 300 buildings. The NKP's bridge over Mill Creek sustained serious damage, but was rebuilt. However, with the completion of the Mill Creek Tube—a 22-foot-wide, 19-foot-high concrete water-control system extending from West 30th Street to the bay—the NKP was no longer required to maintain a bridge across Mill Creek. BOTH PHOTOS, ROBERT ALBERT COLLECTION

ABOVE: NKP Bridge 60 1/2 crossed State Street in Erie. It is shown looking north in June 1918. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

BELOW: Bridge 49 over Sixteen Mile Creek near North East, Pa., in 1918. The NYC's older, stone-block arch bridge is beyond. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

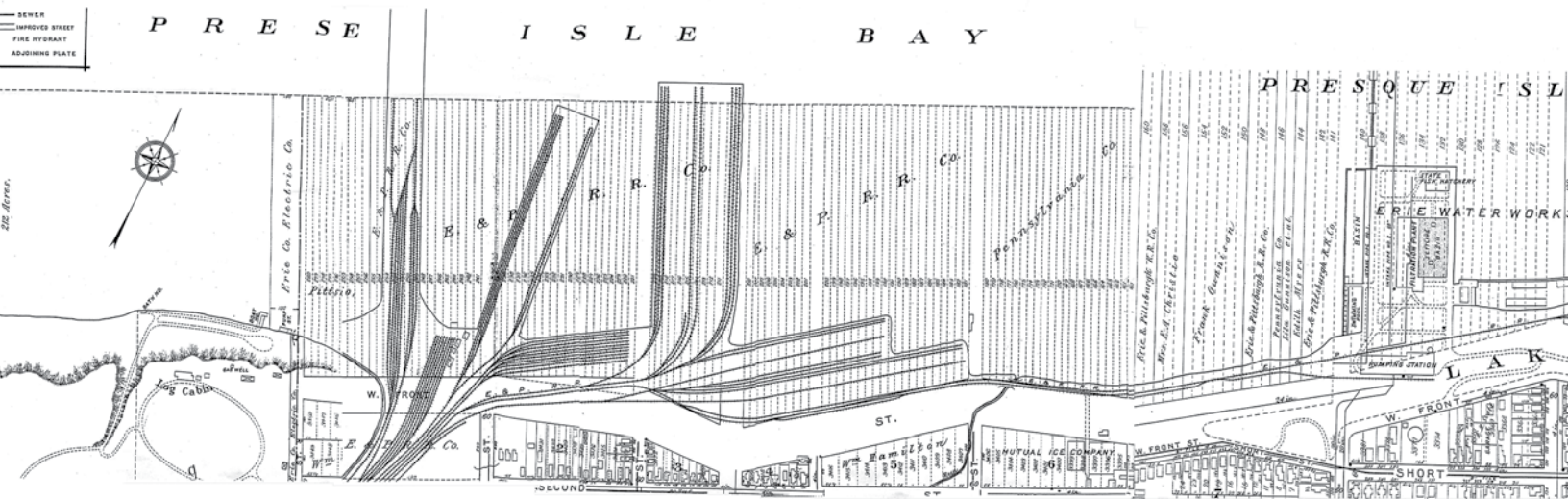


original Cooper's E-40 loading was raised in successive specifications to values of E-60 and E-70 by applying fixed multiplying factors to the original loading diagram.)

Although the NKP's high and long viaducts and subsequent steel bridges were quite spectacular, there was one other important bridge on its main line through the Erie Triangle—that being the wooden trestle that crossed the south end of the Philadelphia & Erie's (PRR) OD Yard.

With a length of 3,230 feet and a height of 30 feet above ground level, this would be the longest bridge on the NKP. It was eventually replaced by a six-span deck girder bridge in 1916 and upgraded to a three-span version with a solid floor in 1926—the latter being rated at E-70.

A favorite spot for photographers, this bridge was emblazoned with Nickel Plate Road—perhaps to remind the PRR that the NKP was still crossing the south end of its OD Yard. It and the three high bridges would continue in uninterrupted service until the 1964 merger.

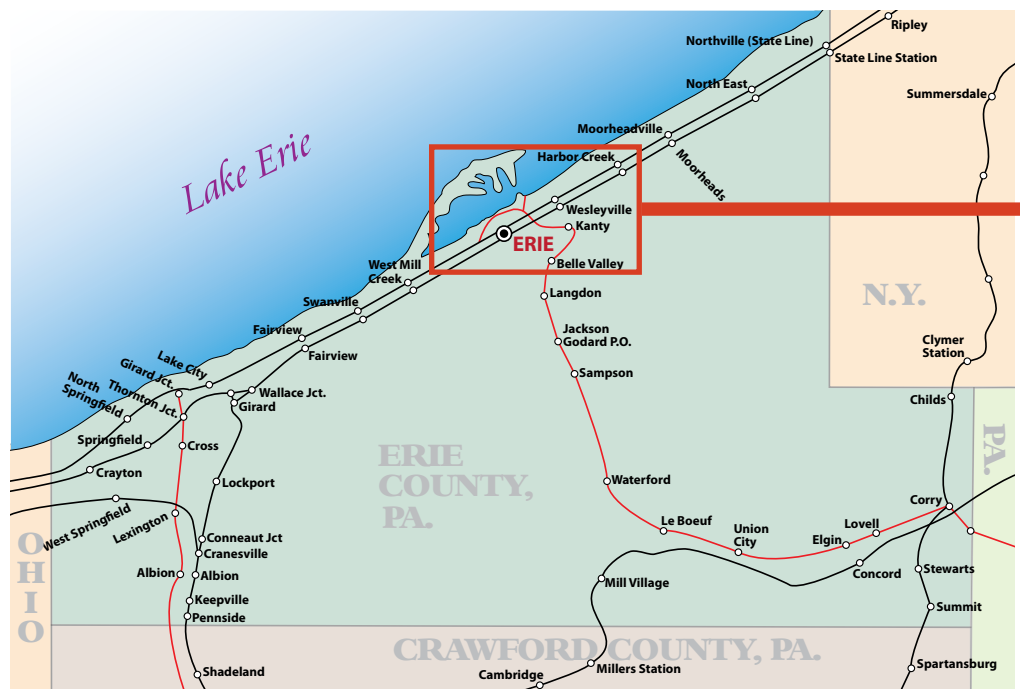


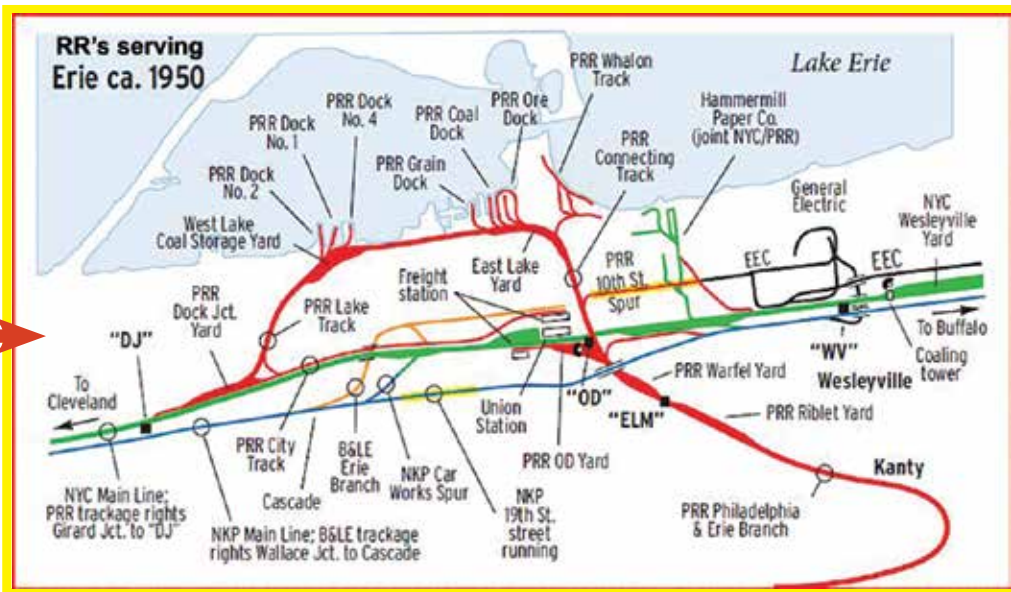
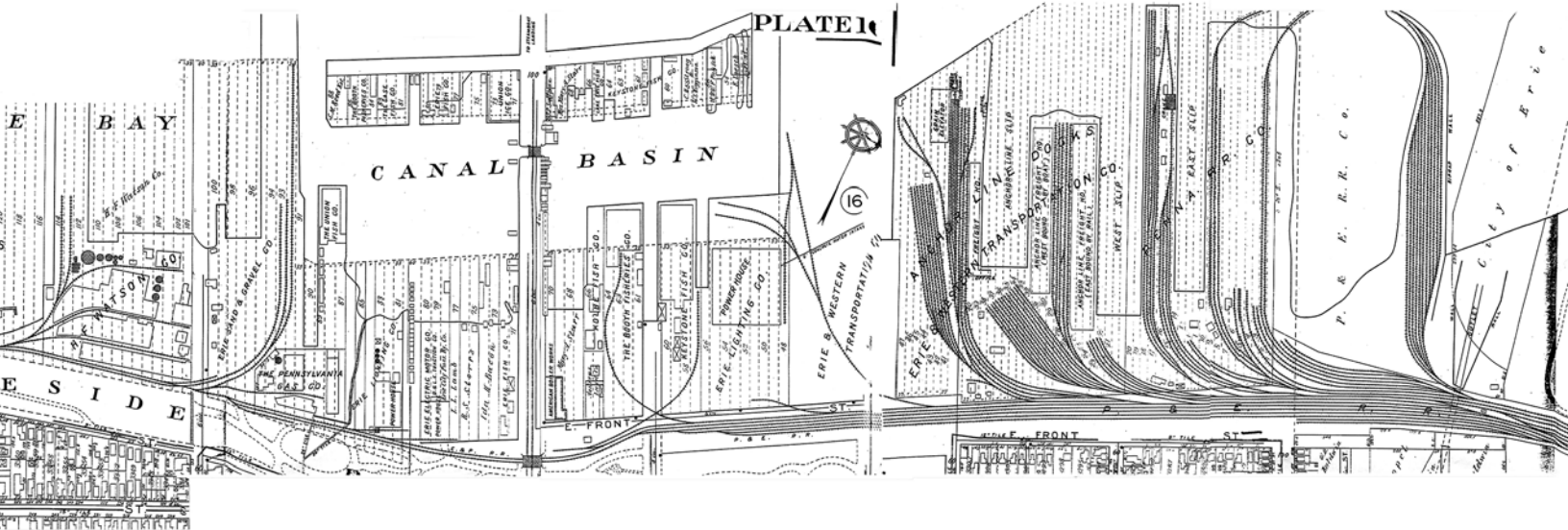
construction was halted.

The E&P was subsequently incorporated in Pennsylvania under provisions of a special act of April 1, 1858, for the purpose of completing the rail line between Girard Junction and Jamestown, Pa., under construction by the E&NE under the terms of the April 22, 1856, settlement act. Under the act of incorporation, the E&P was also authorized to extend the line from Jamestown to New Castle, Pa., and from Girard Junction to Erie within a period of five years.

The E&P began operations in March 1860 with the opening of the 50 miles of trackage between Girard Junction and Jamestown. Construction of the 39.56-mile section between Jamestown and New Castle was completed in 1864. With the completion of the final 3.43-mile connection between Dock Junction and the docks in 1865 and trackage rights over the CP&A guaranteed by the settlement agreement, the E&P began operation between Erie and New Castle.

TOP, ACROSS BOTH PAGES: A composite of plats shows the general trackage arrangements of the docks that once lined Erie's harborfront on Presque Isle Bay. Though the plat is undated, heritage railroad names suggest the plat was drawn up around the turn of the 20th Century. ABOVE, ACROSS BOTH PAGES: a colorized panoramic view of the dock facilities early in the 20th Century bring the plat to life. JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION





ABOVE: This color-coded diagram of Erie unravels the somewhat complex nature of the area's trackage circa the mid-20th Century. Green: New York Central System; red: Pennsylvania Railroad; orange: Bessemer & Lake Erie; blue: Nickel Plate; black: East Erie Commercial Railroad; yellow shaded trackage indicates street-running. It is clear from this diagram that the PRR had a stronghold on dock operations at Erie. The B&LE's stronghold on Lake Erie was at nearby Conneaut, Ohio, on a different branch of the railroad, while NKP's were at Huron, Ohio. FACING PAGE MAP: WHITE RIVER PRODUCTIONS/TOM HOOPER, BILL NAVIGATO

The company was operated jointly with the B&SL from an indeterminate date until February 1870, in fulfillment of the latter's commitment, along with the E&NE, to complete track construction.

The company's first president was John A. Tracey, who had also supervised the construction of the E&NE and served as president of the B&E. He was the father-in-law of William L. Scott, another Erie capitalist who was heavily involved in the coal business and, in 1864, constructed the Perry's Landing middle pier for shipping coal at Erie harbor.

Scott's influence would be instrumental in the development of the E&P facilities at the Erie harbor, west of those of the P&E. These included the construction of the west pier for coal handling in 1868, the construction of the east pier for ore handling in 1870–71, the conversion of the middle pier to iron ore in 1880, and the installation of the first Brown hoists on the Great lakes.



ABOVE: Central's eastbound *Chicagoan* leaving Erie is about to hit the PRR diamonds at XC interlocking. JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION

In 1891, the east pier was extended to 1,300 feet and became known as the Carnegie Dock. Twelve Brown hoists were added to this facility in 1898. When the government shut down the E&P's coal- and ore-handling operations after World War I, the facilities were converted to storage yards for the PRR's east harbor operations.

In 1900, Andrew Carnegie realized his vision of transporting iron ore from his boats on the Great Lakes to his Pittsburgh steel mills when he took control of several railroad companies in the region north of Pittsburgh. The Besse-

mer & Lake Erie Railroad connected the Lake Erie ports of Erie and Conneaut, Ohio, with North Bessemer, Pa., near Pittsburgh.

Early predecessors to the B&LE included the Bear Creek Railroad Company which began operations between Shenango, Pa., and the coal mines near Grove City, Pa. in 1869. It was renamed the Shenango & Allegheny Railroad when it expanded south into Butler, Pa. After that line went into receivership, it was reorganized as the Pittsburgh, Shenango & Lake Erie.

Farther north, the communities

along the route of the old Erie Extension Canal were left without the easy shipment of goods after it closed in 1872. Around 1878, a committee was formed to attract a railroad to use the canal as a railroad right-of-way. The Ohio River & Lake Erie Railroad was chartered in 1881 to build on the canal path, but the property rights and franchises were sold in 1886 to satisfy its creditors.

Miss Sarah Reed of Erie—whose brother William L. Reed was well-known as the former president of the E&P and for his financial interests in the canal right-of-way—purchased the assets. The company was reorganized as the Erie, Shenango & Pittsburgh Railway in 1887.

The line between Greenville, Pa., and Wallace Junction was completed in 1891. Trackage to the road's stations at West 12th and Peach streets was completed on May 29, 1893. The original B&LE frame station was replaced by a brick and stone structure in 1898 which lasted until 1957. A small engine facility was located at West 12th and Cranberry streets and featured a five-stall roundhouse, turntable, and water tower.

The PS&LE's intent was to extend the line from Greenville to Lake Erie,

BELOW: The NKP train-order station at Cascade Junction on the west side of Erie. JERRY D'AURORA COLLECTION



and it accomplished this by consolidating with the ES&P. The North-Eastern Ohio railroad was organized to run from the port at Conneaut to a connection with this new railroad near Albion, Pa., and the two roads were consolidated as the PS&LE in 1888.

In 1891, the PS&LE gained trackage rights over the NKP between Wallace Junction and Cascade, Pa., two miles west of Erie. Without a franchise to operate in the City of Erie, the Erie Terminal Railroad was formed and leased by

the PS&LE, opening on June 15, 1891. A similar arrangement was made by forming and leasing the Conneaut Terminal Railroad Company in Ohio, and both were consolidated into the PS&LE in 1893.

Seeking to integrate the connections between his Pittsburgh steel mills and the ports at Lake Erie via rail, Andrew Carnegie viewed the PS&LE as an obvious answer, so he financed the Butler & Pittsburgh Railroad Company to connect his Union

Railroad to the southern terminus of the PS&LE at Butler, Pa.

Even before the line was completed, the PS&LE and B&P were merged to form the Pittsburgh, Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad under Carnegie's control. In 1900, a new company—the Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad under the control of Carnegie Steel—was formed to lease and operate the railroad for 999 years and the Erie Triangle would have its third north-south railroad.

Although exceedingly small in comparison to the other railroads that operated in the Erie Triangle, the East Erie Commercial Railroad was, nonetheless, a very important component in the area's railroad infrastructure. Incorporated on Oct. 17, 1907, for the purpose of constructing, maintaining, and operating a railroad for public use, its main purpose was to serve the new Erie Works of the General Electric Company, although the supplemental charter of Jan. 25, 1910, provided for interchange with other railroads.

For most of the 20th Century, GE was one of the largest employers in the Erie Triangle. The result of the 1892 merger of Edison General Electric of



LEFT: Berkshire 773 drifts into North East for a water stop as the crew on an unidentified 2-8-0 inspects the incoming freight. JIM SHAUGHNESSY, NKPHTS COLLECTION

BELOW: Streetwise S-2 No. 744 marches along 19th Street at Liberty Avenue on April 28, 1957, with general freight. DAVID ENGMAN COLLECTION





ABOVE: An A-B-A set of Baldwin Sharks maneuver about PRR's OD Yard in a view that looks northwest toward downtown Erie. Nickel Plate's bridge over the yard stands just beyond the locomotives; PRR's engine-servicing facilities are beyond. BELOW: PRR's coal-transfer docks in the 1950s. BOTH PHOTOS, JIM SHEA





ABOVE: The 1865 vintage Union Station at Erie was replaced in 1927 by the new structure at right after the NYC and PRR tracks were raised in the downtown area. In this 1948 scene, what appears to be a PRR charter move at left is about to depart town as Central's Chicago–New York *Chicagooan* makes its daily late-morning call at Erie. JIM SHEA



Schenectady, N.Y., and the Thomson-Houston Company of Lynn, Mass, the two merged companies became the major supplier of electrified railway equipment in the U.S.

By 1906, both of the company's facilities had reached their full production capacity. Rather than expand the existing plants, the GE board of directors authorized a search for a new location closer to emerging Midwestern markets. Francis C. Pratt, assistant to vice president of engineering and manufacturing, E. W. Rice, was assigned the task of conducting a search for a suitable location in the Buffalo–Cleveland region.

On his trip, Pratt stopped in Erie to

visit his friend and former Yale University classmate, Matthew Griswold Jr. Griswold—the son of the co-founder of Griswold Manufacturing and then president of that firm—was also actively involved with the Erie Board of Trade.

Pointing out Erie's growing manufacturing base, its geographic location half way between Buffalo and Cleveland, access to water for steam-power generation, and the availability of a large tract of farmland with rail access to the LS&MS and NKP, Griswold apparently impressed Pratt. His report to E. W. Rice favored Erie and, despite complications, a formal local announcement was made on Aug. 7, 1907, that Erie would be the

BELOW: The East Erie Commercial Railroad was incorporated in 1907 to serve east-side industrial concerns in Erie, but principally the General Electric Company and later its locomotive-building facility. EEC 70-tonner No. 18—a GE product, of course—shuttles along 10th Street near Tacoma Avenue on PRR trackage.

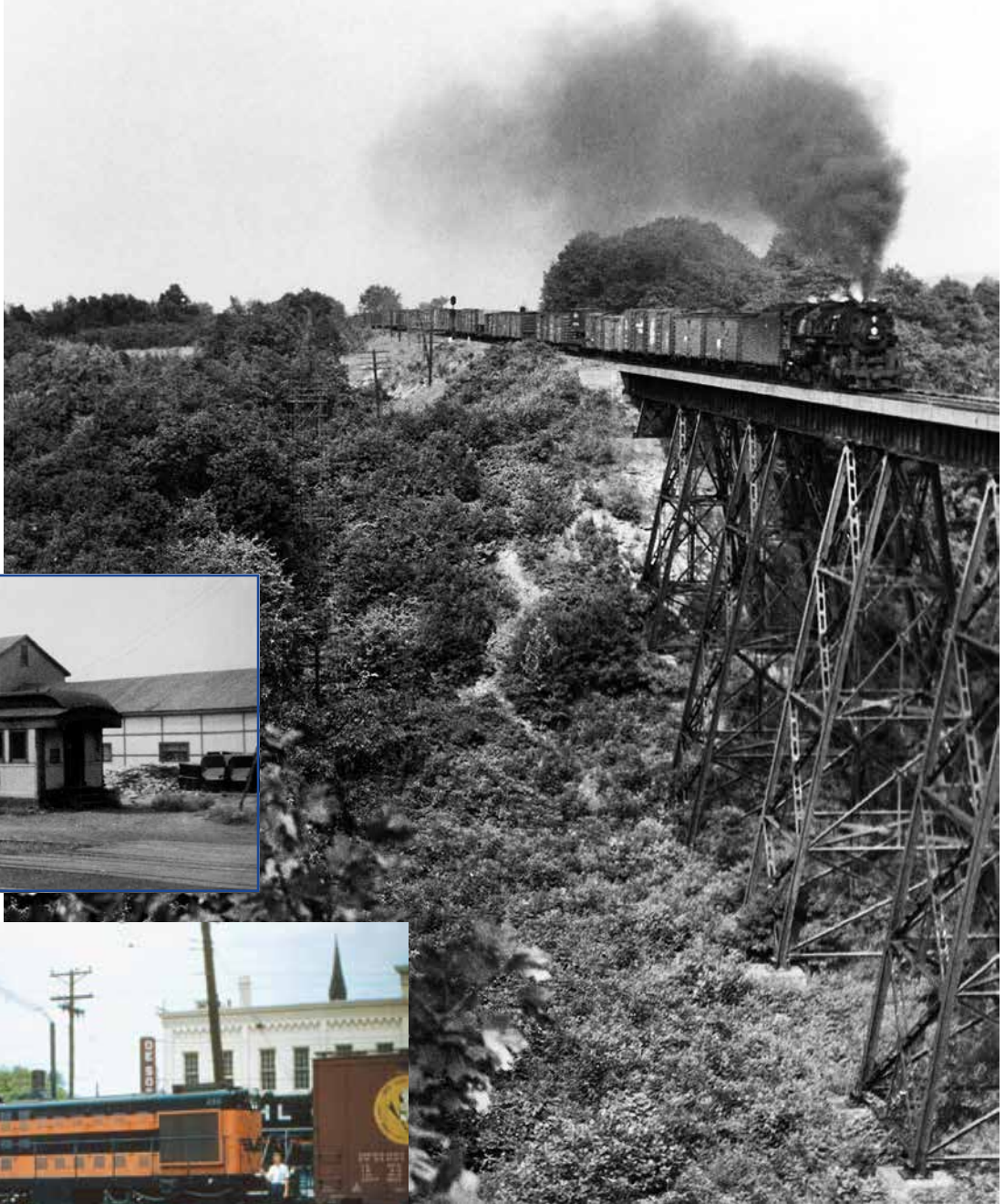
JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION



RIGHT: An unidentified Berkshire hustles a westbound merchandise freight across the bridge spanning Twenty Mile Creek near the Pennsylvania/New York border. The structure was 98.6 feet high and, at 712 feet across, the longest in the region. *JIM SHEA*

BELOW: Railroads were great at adaptive reuse and the Plate was no exception. Here at Erie in October 1950, a wooden passenger car has been reincarnated as the NKP's yard office. *JIM SHEA*

BOTTOM: Bessemer Alco S-4 292 at work in Erie in the 1950s. *JERRY SKRYPZAK COLLECTION*



location of the new GE plant.

Occupying close to 900 acres located just east of the Erie city limits on Lake Road, construction of the gigantic Erie Works began in the spring of 1910. In 1914, the company's entire carbuiding operation moved from Schenectady, N.Y., to Erie.

The initial phase of the East Erie Commercial Railroad began on Oct. 22, 1907, with the construction of a line that completely encircled the GE facility. The "Loop" was built on behalf of the railroad by GE in connection with the building of its manufacturing complex. The rail-

road was put into commercial operation in 1911. However, construction of the 4.15-mile "test track" portion, extending from Franklin Avenue to Harborcreek Township on a 60-foot-wide right-of-way adjacent to and just north of the NYC main line was not begun until July 1915. An additional 3.6 miles of yard tracks and sidings with a modern track scale, plus the construction of a four-stall engine house and Building 60 that housed the GE testing operations completed the railroad's Eastern Division facilities adjacent to the GE Erie Works. In the aggregate, the EECRR operated

approximately 12 miles of trackage with direct interchange with the NYC, PRR, and NKP.

Although the road operated steam locomotives for a short period, they were replaced by combination trolley-battery locomotives. By the mid-1930s, diesel-electric locomotives were found to be well-adapted to the railroad's switching needs, both for its work switching new GE locomotives between the shop floor and Building 60, or switching cars for interchange service. By 1954, Interchange between the NKP and the EEC would account for 5,524 cars delivered and 5,430 received. Much of that traffic was from the GE Works, which accounted for as many as 50 cars a day in appliance shipments during the years following World War II.



ABOVE: Alco S-4 No. 74 is roosting on the pass outside the Nickel Plate's Erie passenger depot in the late 1950s. The view looks eastward, with NKP's two-story freight station in the distance beyond the switcher. JIM SHEA

Although the primary operational purpose of the EEC was to provide switching and testing for the huge GE Erie Works, it was a common carrier. However, several other major industrial companies in Erie had privately owned railroads that operated exclusively on their property. Among them were Hammermill Paper, Bucyrus Erie, Erie City Iron Works, Erie Forge & Steel, Liberty Iron & Metal, Perry Iron Works, and the Pennsylvania Electric Company.

The impact of the railroads on the development of the Erie Triangle is well-documented, but streetcar and interurban service also played a major role during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The major carriers of the period were the Erie City Passenger Railway Company, Conneaut & Erie Traction Company, and Buffalo & Lake Erie Traction Company.

The electric interurban lines that crossed the Triangle were part of a vast network so extensive that a passenger could ride easily and inexpensively from Erie to Chicago, Buffalo, or Louisville.

By 1926, however, the automobile had marked the decline of Erie County's

regional interurban system and the area's first suburban bus line—the West Ridge Transportation Company—had established regional service. By 1935, the Erie Railway Company, primarily serving the City of Erie, had completely replaced its streetcars with buses.

NKP operations

As a result of the purchase of the NKP by the Vanderbilts, control of the fledgling railroad went to the LS&MS as a result of a \$6.5 million securities swap. The plan was devised at a secret meeting held in Erie on Nov. 29, 1882, with William K. Vanderbilt, his three sons, Vanderbilt confidants General John H. Devereaux and Judge Stevenson Burke, and Erie's own Charles M. Reed among those in attendance. Arriving by special train made up of Vanderbilt's private cars, the group was in Erie for less than six hours. However, since those in attendance represented a quorum of the LS&MS Board, the purpose became apparent: to devise a plan where the NKP could be managed in the best interest of the Vanderbilts and, at the same time, not negatively impact the value of the LS&MS.

With William K. Vanderbilt serving as president of the NKP, General Darius W. Caldwell was put in charge of operations. Confronted with a limited amount of on-line business, Caldwell relied heavily on the expedited shipment of livestock and refrigerated dressed meat between Chicago and Buffalo. With the LS&MS and the PRR dominating shipments in and out of Erie, little, if any, on-line traffic of value was accessible by the new railroad in town.

One bright spot in the NKP's search for on-line business was the emerging fresh table-grape business of the Eastern Lake Erie Grape Belt. The Concord grape growers who owned the Grape Belt vineyards between Harborcreek, Pa., and Silver Creek, N.Y., had been limited in their ability to ship their product due to disinterest on the part of the LS&MS and the Erie. While the Western New York & Pennsylvania (predecessor to the PRR) had opened a shipping route between Brocton, N.Y., and Philadelphia, their carload rates severely limited grower profits.

Under Caldwell's direction, the NKP began soliciting carload shipments, even

going so far as to pioneer the construction of special “grape sidings” for the use of large shippers like the Moorhead family of Moorheadville, Pa. By 1897, more than two dozen dedicated grape sidings had been installed across the Chautauqua-Erie Grape Belt and a total of 4,444 carloads of fresh Concord table grapes were being shipped to locations all along the Eastern Seaboard and as far west as Chicago and Minneapolis, Minn.

Much of this grape traffic was handled on the NKP. In the Erie Triangle, three major shipping points emerged: Harborcreek, Moorheads (the NKP station designation), and North East accounted for close to 30 percent of the total.

In 1909, when William Walker decided to construct the world’s largest grape juice processing plant in the North East, he purchased property adjacent to the Nickel Plate, just to the west of the grape siding used to load fresh table grapes during the harvest season. The rail siding he had installed, and subsequently used by Welch’s after purchasing the Walker grape juice plant in 1911, still serves the Welch Food’s facility in North East.

When the table-grape trade hit its all-time high water mark in 1914, North East and Harborcreek were major contributors to the 8,386 carloads shipped from the grape belt. When considering

that the grape harvest season only lasts about six weeks and everything from picking, sorting, packing, hauling, and loading was done without mechanized equipment, the enormity of grape season on the NKP quickly comes into perspective.

Relieved of the constraints of LS&MS control during the Van Sweringen era, the NKP began a concerted effort to build its commercial and industrial customer base in the Erie Triangle. Under the leadership of President John J. Bernet—who had personal connections to Harborcreek Township—local industries were solicited and new industries were invited to build facilities with access to the NKP. By the early 1950s, the NKP served over 90 businesses and industries in the Erie Triangle.

Along the line in the Erie Triangle

Since the NKP established its mileposts beginning in Buffalo and moving westward, this segment will begin at the New York/Pennsylvania State Line and move west showing the appropriate milepost designations for each location.

State line (New York & Pennsylvania, milepost 69.7)

- This is the location of the first of three high-bridge steel viaducts located in the Erie Triangle.

North East (milepost 73.9)

- Eastbound controlled passing siding

ing with a capacity of 126 cars.

- Westbound controlled passing siding with a capacity of 122 cars.

- Water station with two 50,000 gallon wood tanks, one of which is on a steel tower.

- Interchange with the NYC in 1953—delivered 31 and received 45.

- Lake Street grade separation completed in 1941.

- Bridge at milepost 74.31 over Sixteen Mile Creek is a 65-foot deck girder with ballast deck, erected in 1947.

- Bridge at milepost 76.84 is a 30-foot deck girder with ballast deck, erected in 1947.

Moorheads (milepost 77.7)

- Controlled passing siding with a capacity of 106 cars.

Harbor Creek (milepost 80.5)



ABOVE: NKP Alco RS-11 No. 567 has a westbound local in tow at the east end of Cascade siding on the west side of Erie. The spur heads northwest toward the Marx Toy Company’s Erie facility. Now we know what inspired Marx to do a Nickel Plate freight train set. DAVID CHRISTOPH



LEFT: An eastbound NKP piggyback behind a GP9 and two Alco road-switchers is making time with a piggyback train circa 1965 as a NYC eastbound freight (background) with no less than a half dozen GE U-boats attempts to keeps pace. JIM SHEA

RIGHT: North East in the 1970s. The Nickel Plate is history, but the show goes on in the Erie Triangle under Norfolk & Western auspices. JIM SHEA

- Controlled passing siding with a capacity of 105 cars.

- U.S. Route 20 (Buffalo Road)-Depot Road grade separation completed in 1922.

- Bridge at milepost 80.72 is a 30-foot deck girder with ballast deck, erected in 1947.

- Bridge at milepost 84.12 is a 65-foot deck girder with ballast deck, erected in 1947.

Dean (milepost 85.5)

- Controlled passing siding with a capacity of 150 cars.

Erie (milepost 87.6)

- Three-span, deck-girder bridge with solid floor over PRR Erie-Corry (Pa.) line erected in 1926.

- Diesel-fueling facility put in service in 1953.

- Water station with a 50,000-gallon wood tank on steel tower.

- 150-ton-capacity track scale.

- Interchange in 1953: B&LE delivered 260 and received 1,226; EEC: delivered 5,524 and received 5,430; PRR: delivered 2,506 and received 5,430; NYC: delivered 738, received 676.

Cascade (milepost 89.4)

- Eastbound controlled passing siding with a capacity of 95 cars.

- Westbound controlled passing siding with a capacity of 95 cars.

- Note: The B&LE used Nickel Plate tracks from Green Garden Boulevard on the west side of the City of Erie to Wallace Junction, a distance of 12 miles.

Swanville (milepost 96.2)

- Controlled passing siding with a capacity of 159 cars.

- Milepost 96.7 steel viaduct over Walnut Creek originally built in 1903. Towers were strengthened in 1933 and girders in 1943.

- Fairview (milepost 98.8)

- Controlled passing siding with a capacity of 109 cars.

Wallace Junction (milepost 102.1)

- B&LE connection with its Erie-Jamestown, Pa., line.

- Interchange with B&LE in 1953: delivered 5,616 and received 13,629

Girard (milepost 102.8)

- Westbound controlled passing siding with a capacity of 136 cars.

- Eastbound controlled passing siding with a capacity of 75 cars.

- Rice Avenue overhead bridge grade separation completed in 1948.

Elk Creek (milepost 103.9)

- Steel viaduct built in 1903. Towers strengthened in 1934 and girders in 1943.

Thornton Junction (milepost 105.6)

- Interlocked crossing with the PRR line from Girard to Linesville to New Castle. Electric interlocking plant converted in 1948.

- Interchange with the PRR in 1953: delivered 732 and received 307.

Note: This is the east end of double track between Thornton Junction and Conneaut, a distance of 9.28 miles. It is also the west end of Brocton to Thornton Junction. Centralized traffic control, a distance of 56.2 miles.

The legacy

Although the Nickel Plate didn't arrive in the Erie Triangle until decades after the LS&MS and the PRR and had to endure 34 years of control by the parallel LS&MS, time and patience allowed the NKP to access the industrial and commercial base and to establish itself as a solid competitor in the Triangle's east-west corridor. While meat trains and manifest freights moved merchandise through the Erie Triangle typical of its high speed service slogan, the NKP provided exceptional service to its customers right up until the merger.

With Erie's demise as an industrial center, the harbor and waterfront are no longer the home to coal and ore unloaders, most of the active rail yards are gone, as are the major railroads that operated them.

The NKP's historic street-running down the middle of 19th Street in Erie was eliminated in 2001—as was the historic bridge over the PRR's OD yard—but the old NYC&StL main line still runs through the Erie Triangle, carrying Norfolk Southern trains operating between points east and west. Every train still runs over the three classic NKP high bridges that once carried everything from 4-4-0s to super power 2-8-4 Berkshires trailing bright red cabooses emblazoned with NICKEL PLATE HIGH SPEED SERVICE. The legacy of the NKP still lives on in the Erie Triangle. One just has to know where to look.





Last Runs

David B. Allen Jr., 1951–2015



CHRIS KHOUREY PHOTO

For the first time in the Society's long history, a sitting National Director has passed away while in office. Dave Allen's two-and-a-half year battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) came to an end on July 31, 2015.

Dave was already an active railfan while attending the College of Wooster, and as soon as he joined the NKPHTS, he began dreaming of someday becoming its leader. That dream was fulfilled in 2013 when he was elected National Director. Dave became active in society affairs in the mid-1980s and had served on the committees for three NKPHTS conventions, as Special Projects Director and, most recently, as National Secretary.

As Special Projects Director, he expanded the society's product lines beyond the traditional sales of magazine back issues and annual calendars. His first major achievement as National Director was the passage of the dues restructuring passed by the membership in attendance at the 2013 Indianapolis convention.

As a member of the Board's Special Strategic Planning Committee, he was instrumental in providing input during

the development of the new Strategic Plan approved in 2014 and subsequently supported the changes in the Constitution & By-laws that led to the restructuring of the Board on the 2015 ballot to ensure the future of the NKPHTS.

Dave was an active member of the Niagara Frontier Chapter-NRHS for many years, enjoyed railroad history, visiting rail museums, and model railroading. Although his idea for a narrow-gauge layout will go unfulfilled, his modeling activities made him many friends in the Buffalo area. As secretary of the NKPHTS Buffalo Division Chapter, he was a driving force in its formation and freely volunteered his time to work the various shows supported by the Division.

Dave Allen's dedication to the society, despite the ravages of the disease that took his life, was an inspiration to everyone who knew him. May he rest in peace.

Richard P. Yager, 1949–2015



MIKE SCHAFER PHOTO

It is with great sadness that we also announce the passing of another longtime society member, Richard P.

Yager, on Aug. 25, 2015. One of Dick's most memorable contributions to the NKPHTS was as a member of the "Ft. Wayne Four" that brought the society's magazine back into production in 1971. He was also a member of the committee that initiated the society's incorporation as a non-profit, which ultimately led to its IRS status as a 501(c)(3).

Dick served the NKPHTS as Assistant National Director in the early 1970s and General Chairman for the 1971 NKPHTS Ft. Wayne convention. He was a major and pro-active supporter of the move of ex-NKP Berkshire 765 from its location in Ft. Wayne's Lawton Park and was actively involved with that locomotive's original restoration. After closing Sycamore Hollow Hobbies in Ft. Wayne and moving to the West Coast, Dick owned and operated Oregon Rail Supply, part of which was his "Nickel Plate Hobby Shop" that supplied NKP fans with the latest models related to the Nickel Plate Road. Well-known in NMRA circles as well as respected in the railfan and railroad restoration communities, Dick was always active and highly regarded for his skills and enthusiasm.

Over the years, Dick retained his passion for the Nickel Plate and his dedication to the society. He had been a fixture at NKPHTS conventions until the past few years when he was unable to attend. In recent years, Dick built a following on Yahoo forums as the "Iron Duke," a nickname he thoroughly enjoyed. His infectious sense of humor and outgoing personality will be greatly missed by his numerous friends in the Society, in the model hobby, and in the railfan community. Our sincere condolences go out to his family.

EDITOR'S NOTE: With the passing of Dave Allen and Dick Yager, the society has lost a total of five former officials since the 2014 convention in Canton, Ohio. The others include George Berghoff, John Tomhafe, and Don Daily. The 2015 Convention Committee, therefore, dedicated the 50th Annual Meeting/

Convention in Buffalo to the memory of these five men whose extraordinary contributions were so important to the ongoing success of the NKPHTS.

Morning Report



Ex-W&LE Caboose 0222 Moved

Nearly six years after being purchased, caboose 0222 from the original Wheeling & Lake Erie finally rolled into its new home at the Age of Steam Roundhouse in Sugarcreek, Ohio, on Aug. 4, 2015. The 0222 was completed on May 28, 1949, as one of W&LE's new—and only—steel cabooses numbered 0200–0260 and constructed in its own Ironville (Toledo) car shop. Six months later, the NKP leased the W&LE and, at Ironville, continued construction to the same blueprint of an additional 36 steel cabooses numbered 761–784.

Auctioned during 2009 to Jerry Jacobson by the defunct Silver Throttle Engine And Museum (S.T.E.A.M.) tourist-train operators located in Minerva, movement of the 66-year veteran of original W&LE, NKP, and N&W was delayed because 0222 (and other AoSRH-owned rail equipment) was buried among dozens of stored railcars. It was not economical to switch-out specific AoSRH cars in order to move them out of town via the current W&LE's old Carrollton Branch, so everything just sat in-place for several years until the other stored equipment could be moved away little-by-little. Just as this log-jam of stored cars was being broken, an expensive derailment by current W&LE of dead-heading, privately-owned passenger cars soured W&LE management against its continued movement of passenger equipment, old freight cars and steam locomotives, so caboose 0222 continued being landlocked on Ohi-Rail tracks in Minerva.

During 2014–15 a decrepit, former NYC rail line running south from

Minerva was rebuilt by short line Ohi-Rail, thus providing Genesee & Wyoming—via its ex-PRR Panhandle line—a connection to become the town's newest railroad outlet. To celebrate the re-opening of this new rail line, AoSRH diesels and passenger cars from the roundhouse in Sugarcreek were used on a special Ohi-Rail train, and its dead-head movements to and from Minerva provided an alternate routing to finally get “old” W&LE 0222 to its new home at the Age of Steam Roundhouse.—Submitted by John B. Corns

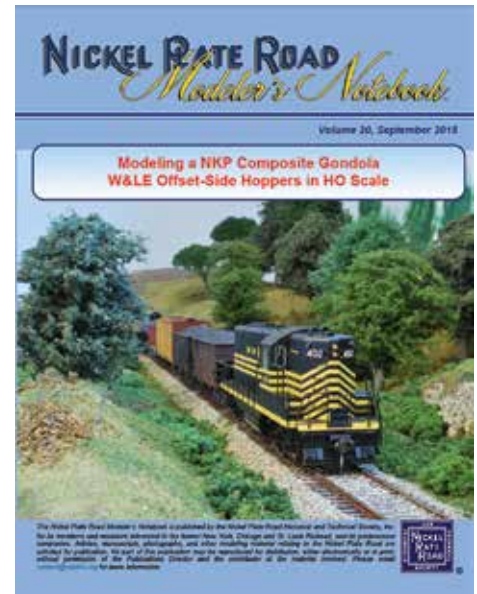
Lost and Found

This Nickel Plate switch lock was found near Bellevue, Ohio, with the aid of a metal detector. All things considered, it survived the ages well and today resides in the Lyme Village (Ohio) museum.—Submitted by Jim Semon



NKPHTS Modeler's Notebook

The latest issue (September 2015) of the Society's online *Modeler's Notebook* is now available. This eZine is an outstanding resource for those who model the NKP and/or predecessor



road sor railroads. Edited by NKP modeler Ray Breyer, each issue is packed with helpful modeling information. Non-modelers will also find it of value, as the modeling projects are all based on NKP prototypes: locomotives; passenger, freight, and non-revenue rolling stock: structures; and locations. This issue contains 36 pages of information, data, and photos, and includes articles on W&LE offset-side hoppers and NKP 7000-series gondolas. Please visit the Society's website, nkphts.org, for a link to this excellent source of information.—Tony Koester, NKPHTS Modeling Coordinator



The recent Buffalo convention was another confirmation of the society's sense of family, when more than 80 members and guests enjoyed a weekend of programs and socialization. This photo, taken at the 2007 Ft. Wayne convention illustrates the camaraderie that has sustained the NKPHTS for almost a half century. Included in the photo were current and former society officials and members from many parts of the country. Sadly, this photo also includes Don Daily (in the cab of 765), John Tomhafe (below the 7 in the road number), and Dick Yager (center of photo), all of whom passed away since the 2014 convention in Canton. As a society, we mourn our loss both publicly and privately, but find joy in the fact that the NKPHTS family remains more than 900 strong.

