

NEW YORK MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION

HEADEND

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May–August 2019

THURSDAY CREW PICKS UP THE SLACK

MANY JOBS AWAIT VOLUNTEERS

Regular Day of Work Popular With Volunteers

One day in late 1990, Don Quant stopped by NYMT. It was an exciting era at the museum as restoration work was starting up again after a period of inactivity. Rochester and Eastern car 157, for example, was receiving a full external restoration on its left side at the hands of master craftsman Eric Norden. Don decided he would like to join all the activity. Thursday afternoons were convenient for Don to be at the museum, and Jim Dierks decided that he, too, could come out then. Don became a volunteer early in 1991, and from there the “Thursday Crew” was on its way.

Over the years, the Thursday Crew has tackled all manner of jobs, some small and several large beyond imagination. Two large jobs stand out. Starting in 1997, car 161’s roof, ceiling and side windows were rebuilt. This job took nine long years. Genesee and Wyoming caboose 8 was next to see the crew’s attentions. It had been moved outside to allow for work on 161, but by 2007 its fragile wood body was failing. Again, it was the Thursday crew to the rescue. Over the past decade, the Thursday crew revitalized the caboose body by rebuilding siding and windows, applying a new roof, and authentically repainting the entire outside of the car.

The Thursday crew has masterminded many small jobs so numerous that none can be mentioned here. To join in the fun, contact Jim Dierks or any one of the crew to see how you can lend a hand.



RICHARD J. FISCHPERA (1953-2019)

It is with great sadness that the passing of Rich Fischpera is noted. He is seen here in December 2017. As one of the very early NYMT volunteers, Rich made an impact on the museum in the 1970s and 1980s. Returning to NYMT in 2011, Rich took care of the museum’s railroad track, was an excellent motorman, and served for several years on the Board of Trustees. Rich worked especially hard with the track crew on the restoration of the east leg of the loop track. Soon, overhead wire will be installed, bringing this section into use for trolleys.



RAND’S STEAM ENGINE WHISTLE

Rand Warner noted the sweet sound of the whistle on 0-4-0ST Viscose 6 on August 25 during its visit to NYMT track during RGV’s steam engine event. The whistle, which Rand had last blown as a teenager in 1947 during a cab ride on Fonda, Johnstown and Gloversville 4-4-0 No. 9, had been in Rand’s possession since 1950 when the locomotive was scrapped. Silent for decades, the whistle was mounted on Viscose 6 this year. It sounded the sweetest, of course, when Rand was given a cab ride on Viscose 6 and again masterfully tooted his whistle to great effect. As Rand mentioned just before climbing aboard Viscose 6, it was great to hear that whistle “once every 72 years whether you need it or not.”





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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Our all-important season of operations at NYMT is now well underway. Please consider lending a hand in keeping our visitor operations running. Areas in need of volunteerism include the gift shop, the trolley crew and the model train room. Contact the museum at info@nymtmuseum.org if you would like to volunteer your time to help keep NYMT running smoothly.

Charles R. Lowe

SHOP REPORT

New York Museum of Transportation 2 — Work has begun on the repainting of line car 2. The loose bottom edges of the tongue-and-groove siding boards have all been re-nailed, and small holes here have been patched and primed. Priming the side facing East River

Road began in late July, and a test area was painted in historically-correct light green in August. A location on the east side of the car with a patch that had failed was rebuilt in late August using tongue-and-groove boards salvaged years ago from RGV's sweeper C-147.

New Jersey Transit 7 — Bob Sass has been at work on our PCC car. Four 8-volt batteries were obtained, charged, and installed in the car. Dick Holbert made a special charger for this 32-volt system. The batteries will permit testing the 32-volt appliances on the car. Many of these, including doorway lights, door openers, the bell and the horn, have been successfully test operated. Work has also begun on building the trolley boards for the front trolley pole.

Philadelphia and Western 161 and 168 — Jay Consadine oiled both cars in early June.

Overhead — Bob Achilles, Dick Holbert, Charlie Lowe and Bob Sass have been working on the overhead system. Two pull-ups, for the mainline and for track 1, were installed using the bucket truck. Once this job was finished, it was noticed that the bucket truck's boom had a leak in its hydraulic system. Ted Strang and Dick removed the failed cylinder, and Ted repaired and re-installed the unit.

The overhead crew cleared overgrown tree branches from the proximity of the overhead as well as any low-level brush that would strike a passing trolley car. Tower car 020 and TC-1 were used on two Saturdays for this work. The crew also installed two new pullovers at the section insulator at BOCES using the repaired bucket truck. This places the section insulator on a short section of tangent within the larger curve. Our section insulator was designed to be on a tangent, but it had tipped over since it was being used on a curve. Now, it is vertical and it should no longer be subject to excessive wear.

In late July, the overhead crew installed the last backbone and its downguy for the east leg of the loop track. On August 17 and 18, the crew installed a span wire and its two downguys on the loop track. The crew also cleaned up the overhead after RGV's steam event.

Track — The track crew purchased weed spray and treated the railroad to keep brush growth at a minimum. In August, Mike Giambatista and his crew installed twenty-five new 6-in. by 8-in. ties and five 7-in. by 9-in. ties which were in storage at NYMT. The 6-in. by 8-in. ties were installed as follows: four ties on track 1 in front of the trolley barn; twenty ties on the mainline between Giles Crossing and the Loop Switch; and one tie on the East Leg of the Loop Track. The 7-in. by 9-in. ties were used in switches, with four replacing ties in the Loop Switch and one replacing a tie in the track 21 switch. The Giambatista crew also corrected a narrow-gauge problem at the Loop Switch. Museum volunteers supporting this job included Bob Achilles, Rick Holahan, Charlie Lowe and Taylor Reed. Among the duties provided by these volunteers were operating TC-1 and the Mitsubishi tractor, providing tools and parts, and making engineering decisions.

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Trolley Barn — When the trolley barn was extended, it was decided to replace the metal siding on the critical north end of the barn with unpainted T-111 wood siding to ensure electrical safety. To improve the appearance of the barn and to protect the new siding from the elements, a project was developed to paint the north end of the barn and its doors. Jay Consadine was placed in charge of this job, with Doug Anderson as crew member. Jay and Doug primed the wood doors and siding with oil-based primer and later applied two coats of alkyd-fortified latex paint. Jay then caulked the seams between the T-111 panels to complete the job. Bob Achilles provided the necessary lock-out-tag-out for the substation since much of the work was near the overhead wire.

Trolley Crew — Annual training was completed in mid-June, with 17 persons being qualified in at least one role of trolley operation.

Facility — Among his many duties, Dave Coon led the charge to repair our two John Deere lawn tractors. By August, both were up and running. Dave, Rand Warner, Taylor Reed and Rick Holahan have made major efforts in keeping the lawns and fields mowed.

Board — At its May 19, 2019 meeting, the Board considered a proposal by Doug Anderson for a photo contest but tabled the motion pending delivery of further information. The Board approved a project to have 25 ties replaced on the railroad. The Board also determined the terms of an agreement with RGV for its August steam train event; this agreement was later approved by the RGV Board.

At its June 18, 2019 meeting, the Board approved Doug Anderson's proposal for a photo contest. The Board also approved spending the funds necessary for full repairs to one of the John Deere lawn tractors.

At its July 31 meeting, the Board decided to increase the funding for the upcoming railroad project to include 30 tie replacements and two days of work. There was no Board meeting in August.

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS AT NYMT

NYMT's Special Events have been a great success so far this season, and a few more remain this year:

Sundays, Sept. 15 to Oct. 27: Fall Foliage
Sunday, Sept. 29, 2019: Subway Presentation
Saturday, October 19: Halloween Trolley Express
Sat. & Sun., Dec. 7, 8, 14 & 15: Holly Trolley

These special events are especially vital to the museum as attendance is always heavy on these days. An extra volunteer is always welcome in the model train room, the gift shop or on the trolley. If you are qualified for these areas, please consider offering your services on these dates by contacting Doug Anderson for gift shop duty, Kevin Griffith for the model train room or Bob Sass for the trolley.



The upper photo shows the exterior rear of 409 that visitors see as they enter the car via the steps at left. The lower photo shows the rear interior compartment of the car with "Spaghetti Warehouse" tables and seats intact. Both photos by C. Lowe.

Rochester Streetcars: No. 95 in a Series By Charles R. Lowe

[ROCHESTER STREETCARS, in resisting the temptation to consider extant but non-native streetcars in the Rochester area, has left an unfortunate gap in our understanding of electric railway cars which once, or may soon, roam electric rails in the Rochester area. Correcting this oversight will become the new focus of this column until all have been covered and a happy return may safely be made to historic but now (mostly) lost indigenous cars.]

Rochester's long-lamented Spaghetti Warehouse at 444 Central Avenue once hosted a full-size interurban car from Texas. Diners would vie for a seat inside the interurban car while others had to be content with general seating amid a decor that Old Spaghetti Warehouse, Inc. founder Robert B. Hawk took pleasure in calling "early Halloween." The experience of dining inside the interurban car, of which ROCHESTER STREETCARS partook on several occasions, was fantastic.

This was not destined to last. The company had over-expanded and was forced to close its restaurants in Rochester and Buffalo (but not in Syracuse, which remains in operation at this writing), and others, in 1996.

All the furnishings, which included statuary, old signs, a barber chair, a buggy reputedly ridden in by Mary Todd Lincoln, a porcelain sign depicting Genesee Brewery's 12-horse team and the interurban car, had to be sold or scrapped.

The interurban car caught the attention of several volunteers at NYMT. Charlie Robinson came to believe that the car just had to become part of the collection at NYMT. Part of this had to do with the fact that the car, numbered 409, was once operated on the Northern Texas Traction's 35-mile line between Dallas and Fort Worth in its famous Crimson Limited service, and Charlie had grown up in Texas. (Charlie was too late to see the car in operation, as it was withdrawn from service in 1932. The line was abandoned in 1934.) The car body, which was used as a building for some 65 years, was in good condition but lacked, in 1990, all manner of components such as trucks, motors, controls and brakes. Why, though, was a Texas interurban car installed inside a restaurant in faraway New York State? Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that Spaghetti Warehouse Restaurant is based in Dallas, Texas.

To save the car in 1996 meant going through the same agony which had gotten it placed inside the building in 1990. A stone wall separated the car from the street. Working with NYMT volunteer Jim Dierks, an arrangement was made whereby apprentice masons took down the wall for the car removal and then replaced the wall as soon as the car was outside. All these arrangements had to be made quickly as the car was

seemingly just a few days away from being cut up with chain saws.

In the end, all went well. A crane was used to hoist the car and place it on a trailer, and the car showed up at NYMT late in 1996. It was an exciting time. Just as 409 appeared at NYMT, the first overhead poles were being erected and the two Strafford cars were arriving. It was practically a three-ring circus of trolley activity.

Car 409 was covered with a tarp for the winter, it being far too late in the season for the next step. During the summer of 1997, part of the hay barn wall was removed, and Matthews Building Movers carefully inched 409 inside on rollers and then lifted it so it could be supported on blocking at approximately its correct height above the floor. A mini-restoration soon followed, with a general cleanup, rehabilitation of interior lighting, fabrication of steps leading into the car and the acquisition of a complete set of running gear for the car. Perhaps most interesting was the restoration of the car's drumhead sign.

The car's installation at NYMT in 1997 was celebrated with a spaghetti dinner. Over the two decades since it has been on display at NYMT, car 409 has hosted birthday parties, photo shoots and meetings of all kinds. In early September of this year, a mini-celebration was held for the car's 100th birthday. Car 409 often is a critical component of group tours and events since its Spaghetti Warehouse seating has been maintained over the years. In many ways, it has been a most successful trolley car acquisition for NYMT.

[For further reading, see also *Texas Electric Railway* by Johnnie J. Myers, published by Central Electric Railfans' Association as its Bulletin 121 in 1982. An entire chapter is devoted to Northern Texas Traction.]

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