

NEW YORK MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION

HEADEND

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November–December 2018

HOLLY TROLLEY EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Hundreds Crowd NYMT for the Three Sundays of this Annual Christmas Event

NYMT's annual Holly Trolley event has been one of our most well-attended events. What might not be apparent, though, is the extra work needed behind the scenes to make this event as magical as it has become.

Holly Trolley (so named by Jim Dierks in a burst of alliterative creativity) first ran in 2008. We stopped trains at the Remelt's Christmas tree farm to offer rides and advertise our then-new trolley operation. When Remelt's closed a few years later, the Holly Trolley event evolved into what we have today.

Running a major event in the winter requires a lot of extra volunteer effort above and beyond the normal gift shop, model train room and trolley staffing. This extra work includes decorating NYMT, making repairs to the trolleys, snow shoveling, clearing flangeways on the railroad, attending to guests in 409, staffing the parking lot and making sure Santa and Mrs. Claus can break away from the North Pole for the event.

It would be impossible to list all those who helped with this year's Holly Trolley event as practically every volunteer played a role in one way or another. In the end, though, Holly Trolley was that strong finish to the end of the season everyone was hoping to see. And the magic of the event? Well, that's easy. It's magical to see NYMT come alive when it is crowded with visitors and fulfills its objective of being educational *and* entertaining for our community.



An indoor blow-up Santa graced NYMT this year. *Photo by Doug Anderson.*

MIDTOWN MONORAIL ROLLS AGAIN

by Jim Dierks

At a Saturday, December 8 media preview, the curtain parted and the Monorail train was pushed slowly into position to the applause of invited guests. The museum's newest exhibit is now officially opened so visitors can learn another part of local transportation history and, for many, rekindle holiday memories from childhood.



With a gentle push, Midtown Monorail cars 1 (foreground) and 2 rumbled into position on December 8, 2018. Nearly eleven years had passed since the Monorail could be enjoyed by Rochesterians. With its opening, the Midtown Monorail exhibit became yet another vital part of NYMT. *Photo by Charlie Lowe.*

The Monorail was a feature attraction at Midtown Plaza beginning just in time for the 1968 Christmas season. Excepting 1998 and 1999, it delighted kids (and brought in shoppers) at the mall each November and December until its last run on Christmas Eve, 2007. The City put the entire system in storage, and in 2009 agreed with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to preserve it. Starting in late 2016 when the City issued a formal request for proposals, NYMT began to consider exhibiting the Monorail at the museum.

(See MONORAIL on page 3)



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EDITORIAL COMMENT

We have finally come to the end of a challenging year at NYMT. Through the diligent effort of its volunteers, NYMT not only weathered the setbacks but ended up attracting a very strong amount of visitation. I hope you will join me and one another in pressing ahead during 2019 for another successful year at NYMT.

Charles R. Lowe

SHOP REPORT

New York Museum of Transportation Line Car 2 — On December 15, Carlos Mercado and Charlie Lowe placed a tarp over the roof hatch to minimize leakage into the car body.

Northern Texas Traction 409 — Emergency access steps were placed at the front right door of 409 in time for Holly Trolley. Rick Holahan provided a pre-heater for use in the car. Carlos Mercado and Charlie Lowe re-tarped both trucks for the winter on December 15.



Carlos Mercado is seen next to the trucks for car 409 just after this year's tarps were applied. Photo by Charlie Lowe

Philadelphia and Western 161 — The restoration of the broken cab heater was completed in late November, and it was reinstalled on the car at the end of the month. Bob Sass and Charlie Lowe reinstalled and tested the heater; the new wiring provided by Dick Holbert worked perfectly.

One of the walk-over seats in car 161 had been crudely modified to create a storage compartment under the seat. This was done either in the car's last years in Philadelphia, or in Iowa. It was found, upon examination, that five connections were broken in the seat frame. Charlie and Carlos Mercado worked on tearing the seat frame down to the point it could be rebuilt. The next weekend, after assembling the necessary parts for the repair, Charlie and Jack Tripp spent a long Saturday immediately before the first day of Holly Trolley to make sure the seat was ready for the crowds.

The sequencer on car 161 failed at the beginning of the last day of Holly Trolley (Dec. 16), and car 168 was pressed into service. During the following week, Bob Achilles, Bob Miner and Jack Tripp examined the sequencer. After some testing and minor lubricating, all was found to be in good working order.

Philadelphia and Western 168 — Bob Sass rebuilt one snap switch for use in turning on and off cab heaters in car 168.

Rochester, Lockport and Buffalo RR 206 — Rand Warner and Charlie Lowe re-tarped the north end of this car on December 20, fully covering the car for winter.

Track — The track crew took care of the derail at Midway, making sure it was passable for RGV trains on three successive Saturday evenings for Christmas trains, and closing it after the end of the RGV event. The crew also tarped flat car 04 for the season.

Grade Crossings — Jay Consadine, using a pick with a new handle he donated to the museum, cleared flangeways at several grade crossings on December 23 to keep them clear in preparation for Winterfest.



Rand Warner is enjoying a moment of rest just after having finished tarping the front end of car 206. Photo by Charlie Lowe

Monorail — The Midtown Monorail was opened to the public with a publicity event on December 8. Further details are found elsewhere in this issue of HEADEND.

Board — On November 20, 2018, the Board decided the museum would be open on Sundays beginning in January 2019; authorized funding for snow plowing; decided not to fund a snow blower; and formalized the expensing of the monorail exhibit. At a special meeting of the Board on December 12, it was decided to open the museum to the public on December 23rd and 30th because of extensive media coverage of the Midtown Monorail. On December 18, 2018, the Board decided upon a food price of \$35 for everyone at Winterfest and provided funding for tree removal at Midway.

MONORAIL

(continued from page 1)

The City's requirements were modified during 2017, and our own vision for the Monorail went through several iterations as Jim Dierks and Charlie Lowe worked on concepts. On June 21 of that year, we wrote the City with a formal request for two of the cars, and were told we were in consideration. With no interest shown by other local museums, we learned in March 2018 that we had been selected.

Efforts through the spring and summer included finalizing a 16-page agreement with the City, obtaining City Council approval, visiting the warehouse to inventory the materials and take dimensions, settling the design, working out delivery details with a rigging company, and getting structural engineering support from Bergman Associates. The cars and structural members finally reached us on September 7, 2018. Thanks to a tip from Rand Warner, critical help was obtained from the owners of Crosby-Brownlie Company, mechanical contractors in Rochester. Executive Vice President Jason Brownlie had great memories of riding the Monorail as a boy, and he willingly made his firm available to help. C-B people cut the vertical stanchions to our dimensions, raised them into position, installed the I-beam rails, and suspended the cars just as they were in Midtown. The

work was done efficiently and completed with impressive precision on October 16.

Meanwhile, museum volunteers built a 32-foot wall, aluminum curbing was installed, a vinyl curtain was hung over the side aisle behind the exhibit, a pipe railing was constructed, track lights were put in place, walls and structure were painted, the headlight and marker lights on the front of car #1 were brought back to life, photo and text panels were ordered and mounting boxes built, carpet and toe molding were put in, a visitor pamphlet was printed, arrangements were made with Local 46 of the sheet metal workers union for event refreshments and a plaque for Mr. Brownlie, and a successful dress rehearsal for the media preview took place on the eve of the event. Credit goes to our volunteers for their skill and teamwork as they participated in decisions and put in long hours to complete the exhibit: Carter Brown, Jay Consadine, Rick Holahan, Dick Holbert, Jim Johnson, Gary Lamphron, Don Quant, Taylor Reed, John Ross, Bob Sass, and Vin Steinmann are the ones who made it all happen. Congratulations to them, and to the museum for a great new addition to our visitor experience!

WINTERFEST!

Each year, volunteers at museums which operate trolleys gather at one of these museums to share their common interests and to see what is new at the museum being visited. In 2009, just after the overhead had been completed to Midway, NYMT hosted Winterfest. Now, ten years later, it's NYMT's turn again.

Last year, at Halton County Radial Railway Museum, NYMT was approached about hosting the next Winterfest. After deliberation by those in attendance and, ultimately, approval by the NYMT Board of Trustees, Winterfest 2019 at NYMT was a "go."

Numerous volunteers have invested their time and effort to make the 2019 edition of Winterfest be successful. So, how will it all work? On Friday, February 15, volunteers will be arriving just after noon to open up the museum, get cars ready for action and take care of the last-minute problems which always arise when operating antique trolleys in the winter. By 3:00 P.M. or so, we probably will begin to operate trolleys on a half-hour schedule. A pizza dinner will be served around 5:00 to 6:00 after which several more nighttime runs of 161 will be made. The last run will conclude at 8:00 and we will close the doors around 8:30 or so.

Saturday, February 16 will start with volunteers arriving around 8:00. Between 9:00 and 9:30, a classroom session will be held in the gallery for motormen from other museums who wish to guest-operate our Strafford cars. Right after that, we will begin running both 161 and 168 on alternating 20-minutes. Our event will conclude with an off-site dinner and a slide show highlighting the Rochester Subway and some of the many cars which have survived to the present day in museum service.

Rochester Streetcars: No. 92 in a Series By Charles R. Lowe



Rochester Transit Corp. 54 Canal Society of New York,
Madden Coll. (used with permission)

Whenever I see a color photo of the Rochester Subway, my first emotion is one of sadness. All known color photos of the Subway date from after the end of the Second World War in 1945, and about 95% date from the years 1954 to 1956 after the fate of the Subway had been determined. How could we have been so careless as to discard what today could be a gem?

Oh, the could-have-been possibilities are endless. WHAT IF Rochester Transit Corporation had bought a new fleet of PCCs from Minneapolis and St. Paul, when they became available in 1953? Newark, N.J. did just this, buying 30 practically new PCC cars (NYMT's car 7 is from this group) for its 4-mile-long subway in the Morris Canal that is still running as you read this. WHAT IF a way had been found, as had been proposed in 1947, to

add the Eastern Expressway alongside the Subway by sacrificing the freight track from Clinton Avenue to Winton Road? WHAT IF bus lines had terminated at Subway stations, feeding passengers into it and freeing Rochester city streets, just as was done in Newark? WHAT IF the Subway had been extended on the north to Kodak Park and south to Monroe Avenue as was proposed in 1948? WHAT IF a coalition of public-minded citizens could have descended on the September 9, 1954 meeting of the Rochester Common Council, when the fate of the Subway was sealed, to fight yet again for the Subway but, this time, win the day? The terrible "ifs" just pile higher and higher the more you think about it.

One must recall, though, that the lure of the private automobile and that king of highways, the expressway, outweighed all else by the early 1950s. The final demise of electric traction in Rochester was a foregone conclusion, and the wonder of it all is that the Subway lasted until the advent of color film.

When I saw our current photo, it made me ponder all this. I see two young girls, waving to the motorman as he speeds past a relic from the marvel of a previous era, the Erie Canal. The Lock 65 wall seen here is still on guard along today's I-490 near Culver Road. In our photo, car 54 is on yet another westbound run, bringing passengers safely to their destinations. My personal hope for the promise of electric rail transportation has been an important factor in my volunteerism at NYMT. At NYMT, all the interlocking parts of a traction system have been laboriously assembled by volunteers so that they can be enjoyed by the community, as if to say this is what could have been with the Rochester Subway. More than that, though, NYMT is a place where a community of volunteers can flourish and, working together, make electric traction benefit Rochester far into the future.

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