

NEW YORK MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION

HEADEND

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THE MUSEUM'S MODEL RAILROAD

By Vern Squire with Jim Dierks

[Our HO-gauge model railroad is an important part of the visitor experience at NYMT. Recently, long-time volunteer Vern Squire recorded the background of the layout, and we thought we would share the story with you.]

The model railroad project had its beginning when Vern was Protestant Chaplain in Monroe Community Hospital, Rochester, New York. He tells us, “My interest in model railroading became combined with the Hospital’s recreation department, and we began a small HO layout in one of the unused rooms on the 4th floor of the Friendship Building.” Shortly after that, a retiring Episcopal Priest needed a good home for his N-gauge layout, and that miniature pike joined the fun. With this deepening of Vern’s involvement in model trains, he decided to join the Rochester Model Railroad Club where he met NYMT’s Dick “Lucky” Luchterhand and then-President of the club, Bob Achilles.

It never rains but it pours. In late 1989, one of Vern’s good friends at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, on Winton Road, asked him if he’d like to buy an HO layout for \$50. It seems there was a model railroad club and layout run by employees at Gleason Works on University Avenue. The building where the layout was housed was up for sale and a new home was needed. Vern took a look and was interested, but there was no room in his home for such a large model railroad, and he couldn’t imagine how he would move it anyway.

Inspiration struck, and Vern suggested Gleason donate the layout to the hospital where his efforts at model railroading were already being enjoyed by the patients there. The hospital agreed to the proposal as long as Vern agreed in his upcoming retirement to operate and maintain the layout.

A joint effort from all sides soon started. The Gleason club members boxed up the rolling stock and related equipment, and helped break down the layout into six

large sections. Vern tackled the job of installing Jones plugs and sockets for reconnecting the numerous electrical circuits, both between the



sections and from the tracks to the controls. The hospital arranged for County trucks to provide transportation, and once everything was on site, Vern enlisted Lucky, who in turn called in Gerry Doerr and a few other members of the Rochester club, to help put things back together.

When the layout was finally in operation again, work by these volunteers included routine maintenance as well as enlarging the freight yard to a double-ended yard and removing a mountain to replace it with a village. This little community eventually included a trolley line leading to a large amusement park. Critically important was making the model railroad accessible for the hospital patients to view and operate the trains. Risers were constructed for wheelchairs and simple control boxes for each mainline were made.

See MODEL RAILROAD on page 3

UPCOMING EVENTS AT NYMT

Saturday, August 14: Trolleys and Trains at Twilight

Sunday, August 15: ROC City Scale Modelers (no trolley)

Sunday, August 22: Museum open (no trolley)

Sunday, August 29: Museum open with trolley

Sunday, September 5: Museum open (no trolley)

Sunday, September 12: Museum open with trolley

Sunday, September 19: Antique Fire Trucks with Museum open and trolley

(For details, visit NYMTmuseum.org)



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SHOP REPORT

Philadelphia and Western 161 — The initial heater frame has been received from the fabricator, and its test fits were successful. The additional 35 heater frames were soon ordered. These arrived in late July. Jim Dierks made up a nifty car card advertising the heater system.



Philadelphia and Western 168 — The original door stop for one of the bulkhead doors has been adjusted to hold the door fully open. With the side windows open, enough air blows through the car that the bulkhead doors

need to be restrained. Bob Achilles and Doug Anderson are busy replacing the darkened Plexiglas side windows with tempered glass donated by North Ridge Glass Company. Bob and Doug arranged for the donation. Years ago, North Ridge Glass donated the tempered glass used to great advantage in car 161's side windows.

Trolley Crew Training — As of the end of July, annual re-training of the trolley crew has nearly been completed. Conductor/Motormen Achilles, Consadine, Coon, Farran, Lowe, Sass and Tripp, and Conductor Fischpera are now ready for working on cars this year.

Substation — An initial substation crew has been re-trained for 2021, and new instructional materials are in the process of being written.

Events — The first two in a series of three joint events between Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad Museum and NYMT came off with sell-out crowds on June 12 and July 10. These events were Saturday evening “Trolleys and Trains at Twilight” events.

For these events, passengers entered the grounds of the two museums at RGV and took a train ride to Midway. Here, passengers transferred on foot to NYMT's trolley car 168 for a one-mile-long interurban run to the main entrance grade crossing where passengers disembarked. A short walk led passengers to the “Trolley Park” where ice cream and musical entertainment awaited. The trolley-and-train combination provided transportation on an every-half-hour schedule, creating a 90-minute experience for visitors. While neither museum was open to the public, some exhibits were available at each museum. For example, NYMT opened its bus corral and offered guided tours of the greyhound bus.

The final evening in this series is to be held on Saturday, August 14. Nancy Uffindell worked with Doug Anderson and RGV's Otto Vondrak to make this series of events happen.

Exhibits — Three Rochester Subway signs, recently donated to NYMT by John Wilkens, have been placed on display along with the museum's other Subway sign boards. The new signs are from the Winton Road, Highland Avenue and Elmwood Avenue stations. Wilkens, who recently delivered the signs to NYMT,



mentioned that he paid the Subway's scrapper a modest amount for the signs and for some signal equipment he also donated.

Board — At its meeting on May 18, the Board approved the 2021 event budget and the 2021 track use

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agreement with Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad Museum. A Thruway toll booth now in storage at Syracuse and available to NYMT was approved along with a small budget for preparing a site for its location at the museum. Officers for the museum were also re-elected on this date.

At its meeting on June 15, the Board approved a new “Thunder and Lightning” procedure for the trolley as well as funding for general operations and the gift shop.

At its meeting on June 30, the Board withdrew all COVID-era restrictions except that sanitizing stations will remain in place.

MODEL RAILROAD (continued from page 1)

After five years of successful operation of the layout, history repeated itself. The hospital needed the space for direct patient care, and the layout had to go. As County property, the layout had to be auctioned off, but in hopes of avoiding that, Vern and Lucky decided to approach



NYMT for a possible transfer from one non-profit to another. The contact was made with Jim Dierks, who imagined a four- by eight-foot table-top with a few cheap, plastic buildings. But his jaw dropped on seeing the layout, and the possibility of adding a new feature to the museum was exciting.

Arrangements were made for a “permanent loan” and

the model pike was again cut into its six parts. County trucks and personnel brought the collected items to the museum where a part of the milking parlor had been cleared to accept them. “Monumental effort” doesn’t do justice to the work that Vern, Lucky and their fellow volunteers launched into. They had to compensate for the various levels of the concrete floor before setting up the layout, followed by once again connecting the complex electrical wiring. Walls had to be built on three sides to create an enclosed room and propane heat installed. During the first winter, the warm, moist air in the room condensed on the exposed concrete roof beams with the resulting condensate dripping on the layout. So, an insulated ceiling had to be put up (as Vern notes, “while the layout was still in place!”). Lighting was installed by Vern’s friend, Jon Anderson, a licensed electrician.



The model railroad was a magnet for new volunteers as Bob Nesbitt, Bill Chapin, Roger Harnaart, Gerry Doerr and others joined forces to embellish and repair the layout during the week and operate it for the public on weekends and for group tours. Along the way, Lucky got Bob Achilles interested in NYMT too.

Rochesterian Ed Van Leer was known throughout the model railroading world for his nicely detailed engines and rolling stock. When he decided it was time to downsize into a senior community, he offered to donate all his equipment to the museum if we would help tear down his layout. Vern and the rest of the crew handled this huge job, and with a design from Jim Dierks they created a 25-foot display depicting the evolution of rail technology using Mr. Van Leer’s cars and engines. Shortly after, with a safety railing installed on the risers, the volunteers created an N gauge model of the Rochester Subway, with miniature structures representing downtown buildings and the shops at Driving Park.

[The current crew is led by Kevin Griffith, Area Manager for the model railroads, along with Bob Nesbitt, Mike Williams, Bob Polvino, Trevor Adams, Al Emens, and Vern Squire. They would be glad to have more help, especially in operating the layout on Sundays for our visitors. If you are interested, let us know at info@nymtmuseum.org.]



BOBBIE CORZINE

We are saddened by the July 4, 2021 loss of a former member of the museum’s volunteer staff, Bobbie Corzine. She and her husband John “adopted” NYMT in the early 1990’s, and they both contributed their time and talents over many years with us. Bobbie was a mainstay in the gift shop and at the ticket desk, always handling the tasks capably and with a friendly greeting to our visitors. Since their retirement and move to the South, the Corzines have generously maintained their membership in the museum, and John has suggested NYMT as recipient for donations in Bobbie’s memory.

Rochester Streetcars: No. 105 in a Series

One of the most interesting spots on the entire streetcar system in Rochester was the crossing of Lake Avenue by the outbound track near Lake Avenue Station at Kodak Park. Here, the track arrangement shifted from being in the tree lawns on each side of Lake Avenue to both tracks being on the west side of Lake Avenue.



RTC 1236

Photo by Stephen D. Maguire

In our view and the detail of the car itself, Lake Avenue Station buildings are at left and Kodak Park is at right. The motorman’s tension must have eased a bit since his car is occupying the crossing and in full sight of any nearby motorists. Keehl Street is at left, near the Texaco sign; this is just a few blocks north of Ridge Road. Car 1236 is on a northbound run, and our intrepid photographer is looking southward. We are surely indebted to Maguire. This November 1939 view seems to be the only time this fascinating scene, repeated many times daily for decades, was recorded on film.

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General Fund..... \$ _____
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 (Our operating cars need continual work
to keep in good condition, and donating
to this fund helps keep them running.)

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Thank You!