

SHORT LINES

NEWSLETTER OF THE FORT WAYNE RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY | SUMMER 2026



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SHORT LINES

Nickel Plate Road No. 358 slips past the newly installed sign along Main Street. Designed by Executive Director Kelly Lynch and constructed by Project Manager and volunteer Andrew Hershman, the sign includes a nod to the state tourism brand campaign and its steel towers are meant to mimic old signal towers.



A Proper Place to Board a Train: Building the Pleasant Lake Campus

Boarding a train in Pleasant Lake, Indiana is now not only different than it has been over the last several years since we began operating excursions, but altogether different than it has ever been in over 145 years.

For the first time in history, an impressive industrial sign welcomes guests, a brick platform awaits passengers, and a rebuilt freight deck and ramp escort visitors trackside. The depot is once again resplendent in the two-tone green paint it wore before it was shaded in a workmanlike gray. It is hard to look at photos of the station from 2023 and consider that it is not only the same structure, and to consider that it once looked remarkably similar to what it does now — albeit with improvements to enrich a modern excursion railroad.

Thanks to a grant from the Indiana Destination Development Corporation — or Visit Indiana for short — awarded in 2024, the first mighty flag of our Railyard Campus has been planted. This \$250,000 grant funded a project totaling over \$316,000 and joins more than \$120,000 in grants and donations previously spent to restore the station.

Efforts to date have re-sided the structure, rebuilt the freight house foundation, restored one original and adorned two replica station signs in their rightful places, and installed new

windows throughout the building. Only the passenger section remains, which is due for work this year. But what would a railyard be without trackage?

Rounding out the investments in Pleasant Lake is a brand-new railroad siding, built on the back of one of the New York Central's original six yard tracks in town, extending from Main Street to South Street, with over 1,500 feet of track and one stub track — room enough to store the current train set and future passenger car expansion, averaging up to 13 cars. This new siding is further facilitated by the closing of a mid-town crossing at Ozark Street in coordination with the township and county highway department, along with the creation of a three-phase head-end power connection, sorely needed in the winter months, but useful 365 days of the year to power and service the train set.

Before this year, what amounted to a \$75,000 investment greatly aided by the Steuben County Tourism Bureau and David Donoho Fund at the Central Indiana Foundation, the entire train set would be switched and scattered between one or two sidings on the Indiana Northeastern system, requiring cumbersome switching moves, extra crew time, and more resources to get trains together and ready. Now,

when a trip concludes, the train simply returns to the siding, the power car shuts down, head-end power connects, and our onboard crews can continue cleaning without watching the clock for hours of service or risking being in the way of freight traffic. Locomotives can be plugged in here, too, for cold overnights where weather previously would have threatened to freeze the water systems in the locomotive and train set. It makes the 14-month effort to link us to the power grid worth it.

All of this may sound like relatively rote railroad work, but it represents a significant shift, not just logistically, but emotionally. We're now saving an hour of running around to collect or put away the train, countless gallons of diesel fuel, and perhaps a few brain cells trying to keep the train serviced in the winter months, but the feeling of boarding a train set from a proper platform is, of itself, transformational.

With an expansive brick patio to host vintage vehicles, picnic tables, baggage carts, and check-in tents, along with a sidewalk that connects directly to Main Street, the area finally feels cohesive.

Opposite the site sign and astride the sidewalk stands a former Lake Erie & Western Railway watchman's shanty, donated by Gary Bensman two years ago. Designated as #110-13, this shanty once guarded Wayne Street in St. Marys, Ohio. Restored and painted to match our depot in traditional railroad practice, it is designated as pleasing visual anchor leading your eyeline down the platform, and will soon be populated with appropriate materials from the era, including lanterns and a coal stove.

Of note, the Lake Erie & Western once terminated in Fort Wayne, and was owned at separate times by both the New York Central and later, the Nickel Plate Road, making its inclusion here appropriate.

The parking lot, while still gravel, has been slightly regraded, and the exiting alley has likewise been significantly improved, with its wayward undulations softened. Volunteers are already remarking how clean the train is now that guests are no longer tracking an entire acre of dust aboard.

The most dramatic changes are completed, for now, but work is not yet over. The interior of the depot — and perhaps the return of the waiting room's brick chimney — are on the table, and in a unique twist of irony, a passenger car we once bid farewell will rejoin us as a static display piece in the parking lot, where it will be used for climate-controlled storage, merchandise sales, and meeting space in a shared venture with the neighboring Camp Chief Little Turtle. In a further twist of fate, funding for this relocation is coming from the City of Fort Wayne, which is underwriting the transportation of the passenger car from the former beachhead of our long-gestated efforts to establish a railroad attraction downtown. Just as those efforts pivoted north, this car itself is moving from Milepost .5 to Milepost 38 on the old Fort Wayne & Jackson Branch. I guess some things are meant to be, but not always in the way we anticipate.

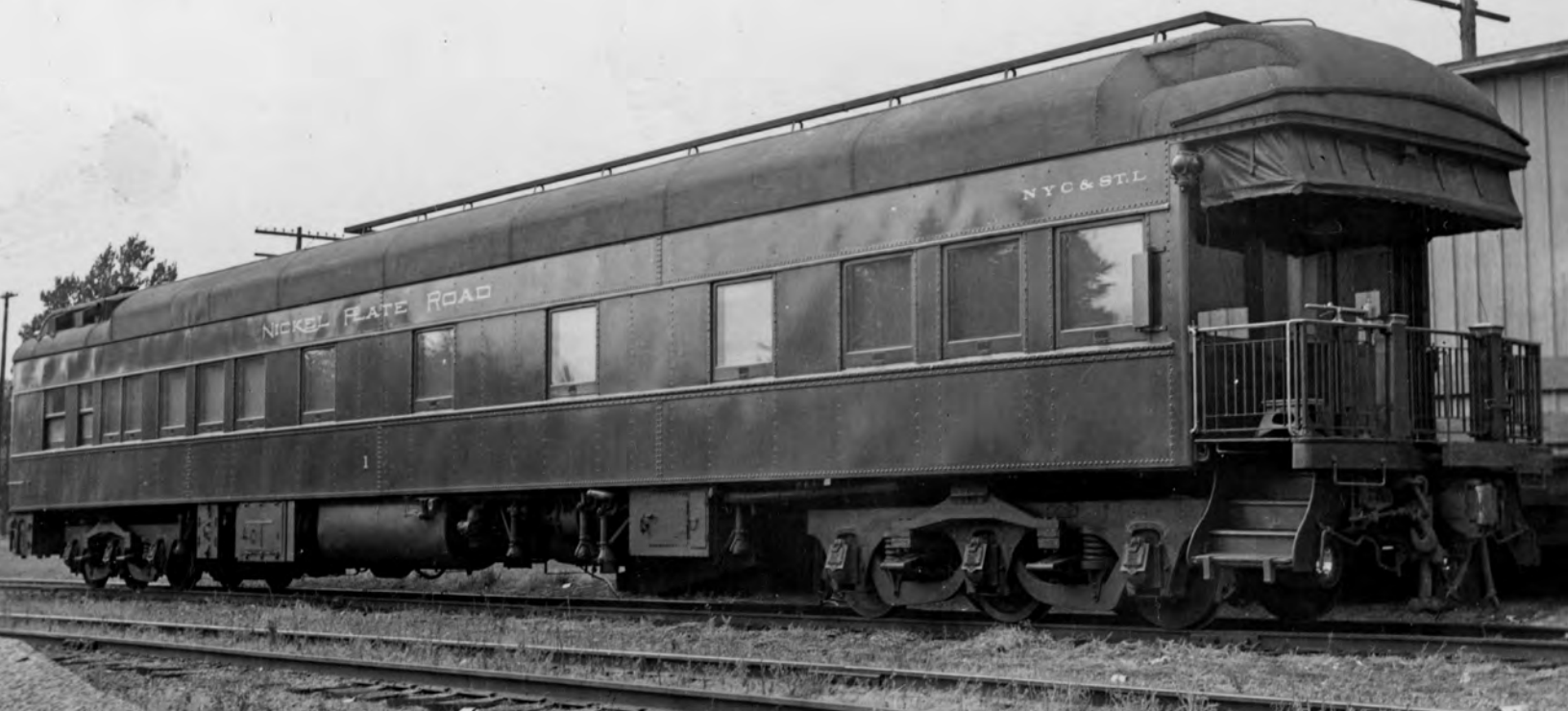
As of this writing, the platform has not yet been blessed with cinders, and the new railing and ramp are curing before their final coat of paint is applied, but passengers have already boarded the first train of the season here. While the cost savings from these investments — from the electric utility, new siding, and other improvements — will add up, the overall metamorphosis of Pleasant Lake is immeasurable.

It is an unusual thing for an organization so familiar with simply restoring or overhauling things to build something completely new. With these enhancements, Pleasant Lake now feels like a *proper place*.



NICKEL PLATE NO. 1

PULLMAN-STYLED HEADQUARTERS COMES HOME



There were passenger cars — and then there were *Pullmans*. And of the Pullmans, there were a select few from which railroads were governed.

Earlier this year, after more than a decade of inquiry, discussions, and surprises, the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society quietly signed a deal to acquire the very first Nickel Plate Pullman: NKP 1.

Together, with the 2025 acquisition of Nickel Plate Road No. 7 (also known by its one of its original Pullman names, *Kitchi Gammi Club*), these additions to our fleet represent more than elegant varnish and polished brass. They reconnect us to the very culture, leadership, and operating philosophy that shaped the Nickel Plate Road and the broader railroad industry in the early 20th Century.

While the acquisition of No. 7 represented a remarkable cross-section of 20th-century rail travel and railroad management — a car where passengers once dined and slept before later serving generations of railroad officials — the arrival of Nickel Plate Road No. 1 marks an apex. From this car, an entire railroad empire moved.

Oris and Mantis Van Sweringen — “the Vans,” as they became known — rose from modest beginnings as office boys to assemble one of the most powerful railroad empires in the United States. By the late 1920s, the brothers controlled an immense network of railroads and real estate interests stretching across the Midwest and East Coast, including the Nickel Plate Road, Chesapeake & Ohio, Erie, and Pere Marquette. Their influence reshaped not only railroading, but cities themselves, including Cleveland, where their Terminal Tower became a symbol of modern corporate America.

Yet despite their immense influence, the brothers remained famously private. Contemporary accounts described them as elusive and intensely focused, conducting business aboard their private railroad car while traveling with stenographers and secretaries across the systems they controlled. Their rolling office became a headquarters in motion — places where inspections were conducted, strategies formed, and decisions made mile after mile across America’s industrial heartland. Nickel Plate Road Business Car No. 1 was their dedicated car.

Constructed by the Pullman Company in February 1929, the car was built specifically for the Van Sweringen brothers at the height of their influence. Over time, it would continue in executive service under the Nickel Plate Road, Chesapeake & Ohio, and Norfolk & Western Railway, tracing a direct line through the consolidation of eastern railroading in the 20th century. (Indeed, NKP would go on to become C&O 1, N&W 1 and later N&W 105, giving us an even rarer piece of railroad lineage.)

But the Vans were not simply financiers. Behind the scenes, they pursued an ambitious system-wide approach to railroading through their Advisory Mechanical Committee — an internal body tasked with standardizing locomotive design, operating practices, and mechanical efficiency across the railroads they controlled. Out of that philosophy emerged one of the defining steam locomotive types of the modern era: the *Berkshire*. The Nickel Plate Road *Berkshires* embodied the Vans’ belief in speed, power, and disciplined mechanical operation — a legacy that still survives today in Nickel Plate Road No. 765. If No. 7 represents the legacy of the Pullman passenger era, No. 1 represents the boardroom of the Van



Sweringen era and together serve as a reconstruction of a complete executive-era Nickel Plate legacy. Together, the two cars tell remarkably different but complementary stories.

No. 1 survives as an extraordinarily intact executive car, retaining much of its original mechanical fabric, fixtures, and atmosphere from the railroad boardroom era. The *Kitchi Gammi Club*, meanwhile, survives as a living mainline veteran of the modern preservation movement, a car whose continued operation helped keep heavyweight Pullman travel alive into the 21st century. And now, both belong in our care.

For the last 30 years, NKP 1 had been deployed on the former Nickel Plate line between Atlanta and Noblesville, Indiana, in service at what used to be the Indiana Transportation Museum and more recently in residence at the Nickel Plate Road Heritage Railroad (aka Nickel Plate Express). It had been acquired from the Norfolk & Western in 1971 by West Virginia businessman J. Henry Kegley and all of its systems were subsequently updated and later purchased by Transportation Museum members David and Eleanor Wilcox and Steve and Mary DeVoe.

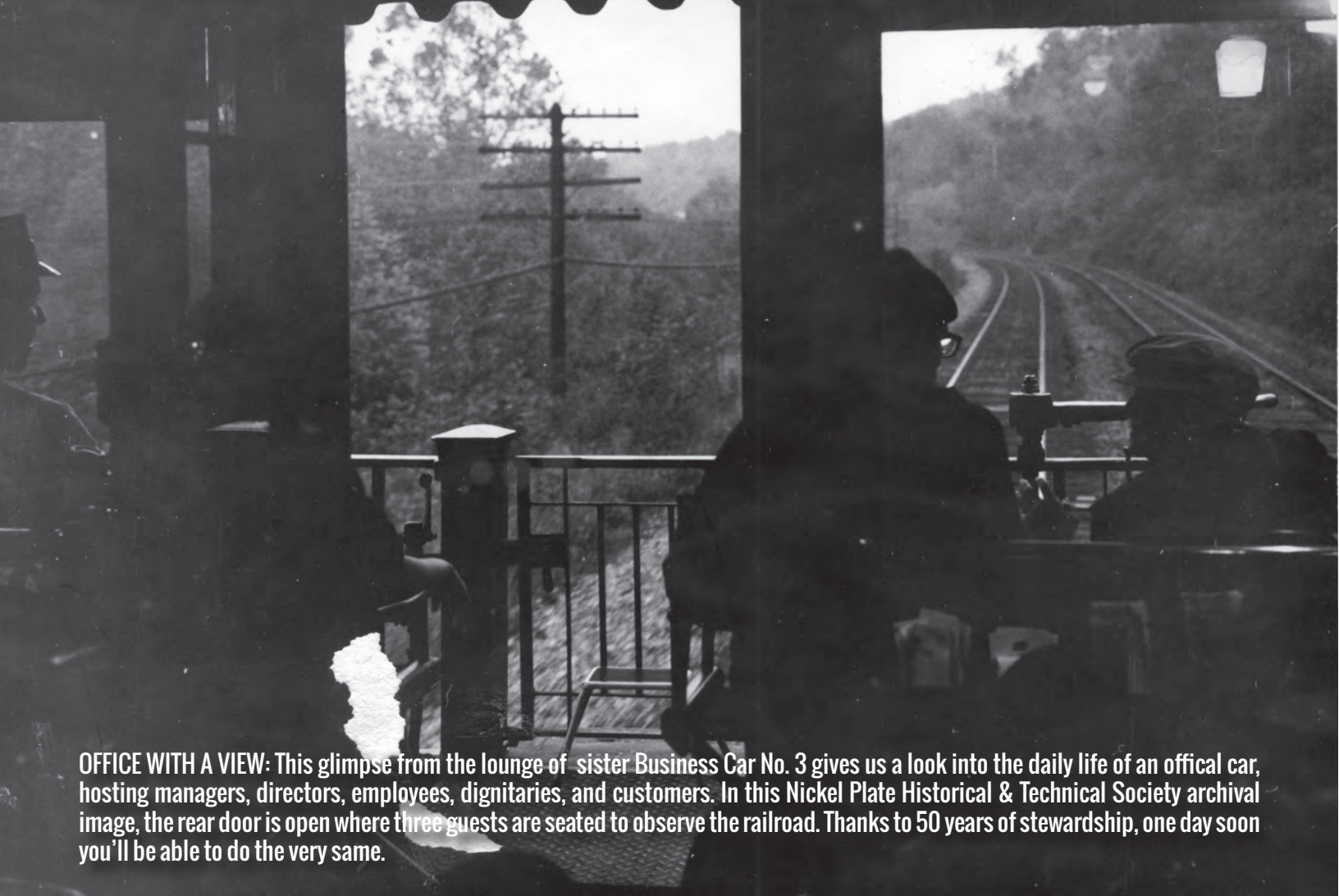
Between 2016 and 2018, the car had been offered for sale and that's when our first engagement had begun. Ultimately, changes in Amtrak's policy deterred an initial donor's support, but in 2018, amid the meltdown of the Transportation Museum, we re-engaged the broker for the car and had a deal for its purchase. Unfortunately, we were late to table. The dream died for a second time.

Throughout the intervening years, we nevertheless kept tabs on the car, owing to its special link to the 765 and our own mission and vision. In 2025, we revisited a

years-long conversation with the car's then sole owner, Powell Felix, offering that if there was ever an opportunity to host the car amid our operations, we would welcome the discussion. We had heard that alternative plans were later being made for the car, but late 2025, an email came: "We should talk about the future of NKP 1."

Within a month, a deal was finalized. In late April, work began on preparing the car for relocation, one that could only come by truck and highway due to the railroad being landlocked, making for a unique blend of costly and complex logistics, especially for a car weighing nearly 100 tons. We had endured similar logistics in our partnership with the City of Noblesville to free freight cars and locomotives from the remaining collection of the Museum several years prior. Settled in at our shop in New Haven, the car will enjoy a roof over its head for the first time in decades. (As of this writing, the car is midway through prep for relocation.) The inclusion of NKP 1 came swiftly and with assistance from the City of Noblesville and Nickel Plate Express.

Plans are underway to stabilize, restore, and interpret Business Car No. 1, including a major overhaul of its mechanical and onboard systems and a long-term effort to retain portions of the car to its 1929 appearance. The car retains its original bedroom suites, dining room, lounge, kitchen, porter's suite, and even its original coal kitchen stove. Nevertheless, the car exhibits common Pullman issues, including rot around the windows, a destabilized kitchen floor, roof leaks, and significant carpentry needs. We estimate this work and upgrades to cost over \$275,000, though the scope of the car's needs will not be fully known until careful inspection and disassembly work can begin this

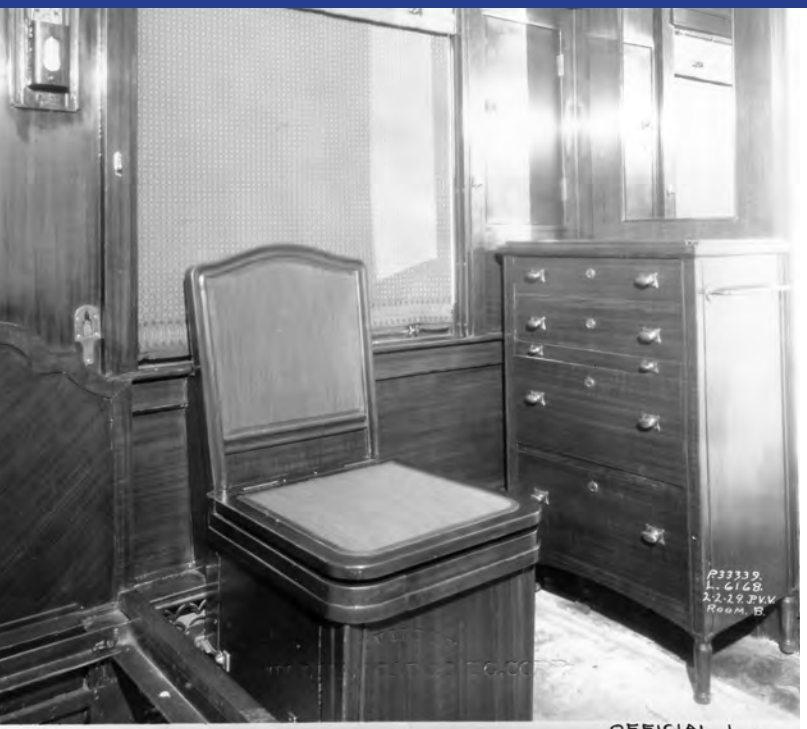


OFFICE WITH A VIEW: This glimpse from the lounge of sister Business Car No. 3 gives us a look into the daily life of an official car, hosting managers, directors, employees, dignitaries, and customers. In this Nickel Plate Historical & Technical Society archival image, the rear door is open where three guests are seated to observe the railroad. Thanks to 50 years of stewardship, one day soon you'll be able to do the very same.



CREATURE COMFORTS: In this original Pullman archives photo, the new furnishings of Bedroom B have yet to be placed in service. On the right, one notes just how little has changed in adjoining Bedroom C. From the sink, mirror, brass, and even the Pullman container remain right where Pullman put them over nearly 97 years later. Between the suites, a private shower and water closet served railroad management.

ELBOW GREASE: Consulting the Pullman archives once more, the original commode in Bedroom B still remains, but the recent photo illustrates a lingering problem facing the eastern side of the car. Moisture has wicked its way under the window frames and into the walls, rotting the wooden frames. This damage is typical of the overall weathering destined for repair on NKP 1.



year. Over \$100,000 to underwrite relocation and initial work on the car has been raised before this announcement.

If time and funding allow, it is entirely possible that in 2027, two genuine Nickel Plate Pullmans will be coupled up behind their historic motive power, reunited in a wonderfully curated cross-section of railroad continuity, and hosting hundreds of people aboard our trains in marvelous settings. It had long been the organization's dream to have its very own Pullman. Now it has two and the same organization that operates a *Berkshire* locomotive born from the Van Sweringen mechanical philosophy now stewards the very cars from which that philosophy once traveled the rails. The distance between past and present has suddenly become very small.

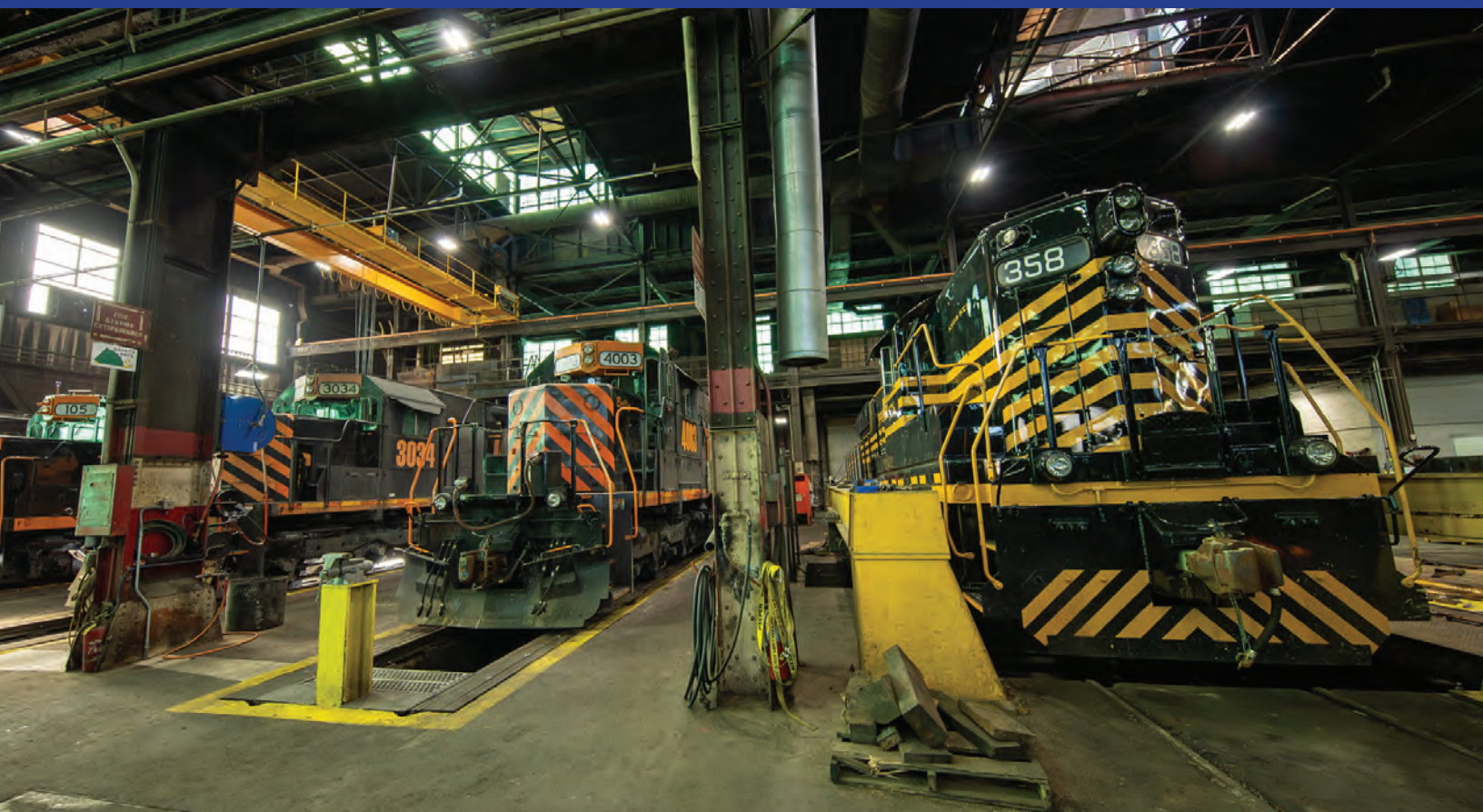
We are grateful for the past owners and their part in the car's legacy, the City of Noblesville, Nickel Plate Heritage Railroad and its Executive Director Emily Reynolds, and special thanks are owed to Roy Wullich for helping partially fund initial relocation work, and Doug and Beatty Brown for his donation of Pullman china for the Nickel Plate cars, and our new partner and car co-owner, Powell Felix for his recognition of our capabilities and interest in preserving and celebrating this car's history. If you have an interest

in helping preserve NKP 1, please get in touch. To make a donation towards these efforts, visit fwrhs.org/donate or through the post at PO Box 11017, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46855. Memo: NKP 1.





OLD STOMPING GROUNDS: A major highlight of last year's operations was our surprise return to the Wheeling & Lake Erie. Not only did the railroad join us again to help connect our ferry moves to and from the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, but Nickel Plate Road No. 358 returned to its original "home shop" in Brewster, Ohio for finishing touches and repairs to put it into service. On its way home, the 765 was featured on a series of special employee appreciation trains. The original Wheeling had been absorbed by the Nickel Plate in 1949 and 358 had spent the first quarter of its career in this territory. The business car the railroad used to inspect the Wheeling before the purchase? Our very own Nickel Plate Road no. 7. It was a tripleheader of a homecoming, and the 765 looked right at home on the turntable, too.





AROUND THE WORLD IN 60 DAYS : Clockwise from left, Ray Martin and John Minick, wearing our new first class Pullman red caps, welcome guests aboard the train, while engineer Grant Geist performs his daily inspection and drains moisture from the 765's air lines. Later in the season, Santa was joined by Little River No. 110 in Hillsdale, Michigan during our charitable Cameron Christmas Train as we delivered gifts, clothing, and toys to towns along the 100-mile route. In our first ever wintertime operations, a couple in the Centlivre Park (who were later engaged on the train) enjoy the live music aboard the Wine & Winter Cozy. These are just one of thousands of snapshots into a year of the Indiana Rail Experience.



NKP Personals



2025 Volunteer of the Year: Larry Stepek



Larry Stepek has been part of the heartbeat of our passenger car program for several years now. If you've spent any time around the shop or the cars on the Indiana Northeastern, chances are you've seen Larry there, often on a weekday, often after a long drive from

Beaverdam near Lima, simply because something needed to get done.

Larry's contributions don't stop at a single project. He has been a dependable car host for years, welcoming passengers and representing the organization with professionalism and warmth long before our current operations on the Indiana Northeastern.

Behind the scenes, Larry has also been instrumental in improving the *Pine King* dorm car, helping tackle plumbing repairs, floor upgrades, and improvements to the water system — the sort of unglamorous work that makes life easier for every volunteer who stays there.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of Larry's story is how consistently he shows up. Over the past several years, Larry was always there during the operating season, helping with something — usually for multiple days in a row — and often entirely at his own expense. When a second set of hands was needed, Larry was usually the one standing there ready to help.

He embodies what this organization means when we talk about motivation, dedication, collegiality, and volunteerism. Larry, thank you for the spirit of generosity you bring to this organization.

Bill Otter Retires from Board of Directors



Bill Otter has served this organization with distinction for many years, holding the roles of Secretary, Vice President, and most notably well over half a decade as President of the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society and one of our chief merchandise managers.

Leadership in a volunteer organization is rarely glamorous work. It requires patience, perspective, and a willingness to carry responsibility. Bill has done exactly that. Under his leadership, the organization navigated significant growth, operational change, and new opportunities while remaining grounded in the mission that has guided this railroad since 1972. Bill's steady temperament and dedication to the organization have helped keep the Society focused on its purpose, preserving and sharing railroad history with the public.

Bill's connection to the Nickel Plate Road runs deep. Growing up in Rocky River, Ohio, he spent countless hours around the Nickel Plate station near his home, where his fascination with the railroad first took root. In many ways, that childhood connection came full circle when the Society operated an excursion from Rocky River to Bellevue several years ago — a moment that brought together personal history and the mission of this organization in a truly special way. Leadership like Bill's leaves a lasting imprint on an organization.

Through his years of service, he has helped guide this railroad with commitment and a deep appreciation for the history we work to preserve.

2025 Extra Board Award Winners

This year's **Extra Board Awards** recognize volunteers whose dedication, professionalism, mentorship, and quiet determination help keep the Fort Wayne Railroad moving forward.

From the cab of the locomotive to onboard service, from track projects to late-night repairs, these individuals represent the spirit that makes the organization more than a museum or excursion operation — but a community.

Among this year's recipients is **W.D. Miller**, nominated by Tegegn Ponsler for his mentorship and encouragement. Tegegn noted that Miller "has been a great mentor to me, taking me under his wing," and credited him with helping make the railroad community a meaningful part of his life.

That spirit of mentorship came full circle as **Tegegn Ponsler** himself was recognized with an Extra Board Award after being nominated by W.D. Miller. Miller reflected on watching Tegegn grow from a shy participant in the organization's first Railroad Camp into a dedicated volunteer willing to tackle everything from track building and car hosting to firing steam locomotives and mechanical work on the SD9. "He's not afraid to jump in and learn," Miller wrote. "We can't wait to see this young man excel."

Mike Long was recognized after a nomination from Mason Liask, who praised Long's welcoming personality and positive attitude. Whether stocking the cooler in the tool car or simply showing up with a smile, Liask noted that Long consistently makes long workdays easier and more enjoyable for the crew around him.

Chris and Lori Schadd were honored for their exceptional onboard hospitality and professionalism. Nominated by Brian Smith, the pair were praised for consistently delivering the level of service passengers expect from First Class accommodations aboard the Indiana Rail Experience. Smith noted that the Schadds are frequently mentioned by name in passenger feedback and credited their "can do, will do" attitude with helping ensure repeat business and creating a positive work environment onboard.

Noah Bloom received recognition following nominations from W.D. Miller, Kelly Lynch, and Chris Homco. Described as one of the organization's "go-to" volunteers, Bloom has become known for tackling difficult mechanical work on Nickel Plate Road No. 358 while also excelling in public-facing roles aboard the train. Whether washing windows after a long operating day, assisting passengers, or stepping forward before being asked when work needs done, Bloom's professionalism, initiative, and safety-conscious mindset were repeatedly highlighted. His EMT and Fire II certifications were also noted as bringing an additional level of discipline and awareness to operations.

Ray and Claire Martin were recognized for their focus on passenger safety and onboard hospitality. Nominated by Tyler Swank and Kelly Lynch, the Martins were praised for delivering clear safety briefings and sharing the history of the equipment and railroad in a way that informs passengers without overwhelming them. Their dedication and professionalism were described as exemplary of the volunteer culture the organization strives to foster.

Troy Strane was honored following a nomination by Zach Hall, who described him as one of the "unsung heroes" behind the Indiana Rail Experience operations. Beyond his regular responsibilities with the Indiana Northeastern Railroad, Strane spends countless hours behind the scenes ensuring paperwork, logistics, and operational readiness are in place so excursions can operate successfully.

Mark Tobin also received an Extra Board Award after being nominated by Zach Hall. Hall noted Tobin's reliability and willingness to take assignments others may pass over, highlighting his "calm professionalism and quiet commitment" as qualities worthy of special recognition.

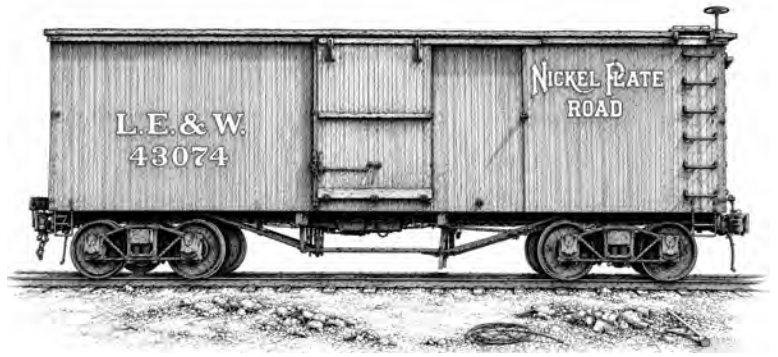
James Donohue was recognized for his determination and willingness to tackle difficult jobs without complaint. Nominated by Zach Hall and Dorothy Ruhlman, Donohue was specifically commended for his efforts during the failure of Nickel Plate Road

No. 765's stoker system, where he worked through heat, humidity, and thunderstorms to help resolve the issue and keep operations moving forward.



DOG DAYS OF STEAM: When Nickel Plate Road No. 765's stoker unexpectedly failed, a small group of crew members descended on the locomotive and spent two days unloading nearly 12 tons of coal from the tender - by hand, in the rain, heat, and heavy humidity - to reach the stoker screw and diagnose the problem. Their effort ensured the locomotive still met its scheduled event with the Little River Railroad that same weekend. Covered in grease, coal grime, and exhaustion, several Extra Board Award recipients are pictured here among the weary crew - including Jim Donohue, in pink short sleeves, and Noah Bloom in blue long sleeves - all of whom deserve our sincere thanks for keeping the Berkshire moving.

THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE BOXCAR



If you've spent any time around the Fort Wayne Railroad shop over the last twenty years, chances are you've seen it. Sitting quietly off to the side — weathered, unremarkable, and easy to overlook — was a survivor from another age. Not a polished passenger car, famous locomotive, or traditional red caboose, but an old wooden boxcar. To most people, it looked tired, unmemorable, and maybe even beyond saving.

For nearly its entire life with us, the car served as little more than a decorative garage, filled with headlights, bells, locomotive parts, paperwork, and old files. But beneath that worn exterior sat one of the oldest surviving pieces of freight equipment connected to the Nickel Plate Road system — a freight car whose history stretched all the way back to 1902 and the sprawling Haskell & Barker Car Company in Michigan City.

Originally built as Lake Erie & Western No. 43074, the car was part of a massive fleet of wooden freight cars constructed during the great age of American railroad expansion. Built at a time when Michigan City was among the nation's largest freight car manufacturing centers, the boxcar represented the kind of equipment that once filled American rail yards by the tens of thousands.

For decades, Haskell & Barker stood among the largest freight car builders in the United States and one of Indiana's largest industrial employers. Thousands of workers passed through its shops building the freight cars that carried steel, grain, automobiles, machinery, and commerce across the continent.

Unlike locomotives and passenger equipment, freight cars were rarely preserved sentimentally. They were used hard, rebuilt when practical, stripped for parts when necessary, and scrapped when they outlived their

usefulness. The few wooden cars that survived often did so only because they were downgraded into maintenance-of-way service as tool cars or storage sheds. Over the decades, the boxcar survived mergers, renumberings, rebuildings, and the collapse of the wooden freight car era itself. Steel reinforcements added during the 1920s extended its life well beyond what anyone likely imagined when it first rolled out of the Haskell & Barker shops. By the time it left Norfolk & Western ownership in 1977, it was already an anachronism — a fragile wooden freight car surviving deep into the diesel age. Society member Dick Yager purchased the boxcar from a scrap yard for \$250 around the time of the organization's inception. For the last several decades it has occupied the north track inside the shop.

After completing two caboose restorations, a locomotive overhaul, and countless other projects, a small team led by then-Society Secretary Rich Brinkley decided the boxcar restoration should finally move forward. Compared to some of the organization's larger projects, a wooden boxcar almost seemed manageable. Following a 2021 social media post showing the nearly completed carbody restoration, the old boxcar suddenly started evolving from an anonymous freight car into something much larger.

Meanwhile, back in Michigan City, another story was unfolding. Following the 1922 sale of the Haskell & Barker Car Company to the Pullman Company, Catherine Barker established the Barker Annuity Fund in 1924 using part of the \$15 million sale proceeds to provide pensions for former Haskell & Barker employees and their families who were not eligible for Pullman benefits. In 1934, the Barker Welfare Foundation was established to support charitable and nonprofit efforts.



INDIANA'S LARGEST: In 1908, Haskell & Barker Car Company was the largest employer in Indiana and operated the state's largest factory complex. Across 109 acres and 34 buildings in Michigan City, thousands of workers produced up to 15,000 freight cars a year. Almost 50 years after its merger into Pullman-Standard, the plant closed in 1970, and much of the sprawling complex was destroyed by fire in 1973. Today, shoppers park where one of America's great freight car factories once stood.





FAST FREIGHT TO FORGOTTEN RELIC: A 1930 scene in Jersey City from the collection of Ray Breyer captures a quintessential American railroad yard, crowded with wooden freight cars much like our own Haskell & Barker-built boxcar. After decades of mergers, renumberings, and railroad service, the car eventually surfaced on a siding in Muncie wearing faded Norfolk & Western Railway markings before spending many quiet years tucked inside the Fort Wayne shop awaiting restoration.

After the annuity obligations were fulfilled, the remaining funds were transferred into the Foundation, which continues to be managed by Barker family descendants today.

At the same time, the Barker Mansion and Foundation were expanding efforts to interpret the industrial and railroad history of Michigan City through the Mansion's "Legacy of Freight" initiative and future museum plans. The effort was not simply about restoring a mansion, but reconnecting modern Michigan City with the industrial world that helped build it.

A passion project for the Barker family descendants, the Mansion restoration came first. But a larger vision for interpreting the Haskell & Barker legacy was beginning to emerge. It was just missing one thing.

While photographs, drawings, and artifacts survived, the original Haskell & Barker shops themselves had long since disappeared. There was little physical evidence remaining of the company that once helped define Michigan City's industrial identity. Then came the discovery thanks to our social media post in 2021: The Fort Wayne Railroad still had an actual surviving Haskell & Barker-built freight car. Not a replica. Not a model. The real thing. A freight car physically built in Michigan City in 1902 by Haskell & Barker workers, surviving more than 120 years of railroad service,

mergers, rebuildings, and near-extinction before ultimately finding its way back home. Still, there was an important reality facing the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society.

Deaccessioning historic railroad equipment is not something preservation organizations undertake lightly — especially when the equipment in question is one of the oldest surviving artifacts of its kind. While returning the boxcar to Michigan City felt entirely justified, it also meant relinquishing an important artifact at a time when much of the organization's remaining collection still lacked long-term indoor preservation space, restoration infrastructure, and dedicated funding for future conservation work.

We obviously believed in the importance of returning the boxcar home. But also believed the moment presented an opportunity to do something larger. As conversations evolved, the Fort Wayne Railroad developed a proposal for the Barker Welfare Foundation, one that would permanently connect the preservation missions of both organizations. We proposed the following: *What if the legacy of the Haskell & Barker shops could help inspire the next generation of railroad preservation work? What if returning the boxcar could also help create a new facility dedicated to restoring and preserving historic railroad equipment for future generations?* Following a detailed presentation by the Society, the Barker family agreed.



FIRST TURN: Every restoration begins with a single movement. On September 24, 2025, founding member of the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society Wayne York placed a wrench against New York Central No. 3001 for the ceremonial “first turn” of the wrench – the first small act in what will become a very long journey back to life. Over the last several months, crews have quietly prepared the 4-8-2 for its first over-the-road move in more than thirty years. Later this summer, for the first time in 30 years, these wheels will move again – not under steam just yet, but toward the beginning of a second chance for this offspring of the American Locomotive Company. You can keep up-to-date on the 3001 and pledge your support at americanloco.org.



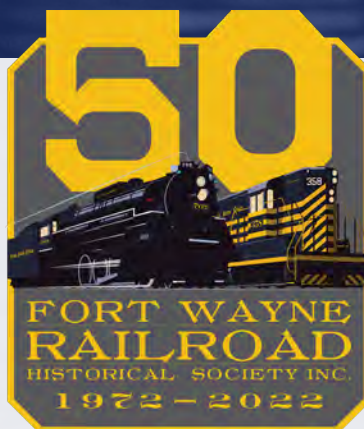
As part of the resulting preservation partnership, the Barker Welfare Foundation committed \$450,000 in seed funding toward the future construction of a new “Barker Car Shop” facility to support the Fort Wayne Railroad’s ongoing restoration, exhibition, and preservation efforts. Envisioned as both a working restoration facility and interpretive preservation space, the future shop will permanently tie together the legacy of the original Haskell & Barker shops with the continued preservation of railroad history in Indiana. This grant is intended to match roughly 50% of what a new shop would cost and be constructed using modern steel-frame methods, and is envisioned to aesthetically evoke the historic industrial architecture of the original Barker complex to some degree. While plans call for us to refine and expand our existing heavy overhaul facility at Edgerton Road, we can now begin looking at a suitable site for the Barker Car Shop, and seeking matching donors. An indoors space to service and display our operating rolling stock, let alone any one of our locomotives, would be the natural next step in the expansion of the railroad campus in Northeast Indiana.

The Barker Mansion recently celebrated the expansion of its freight heritage interpretation efforts and the ribbon cutting of the new Barker Depot, inviting Michigan City Mayor Angie Nelson Deutch and our own Executive Director, Kelly Lynch. This modest boxcar now stands as one of the most tangible surviving links to Michigan City’s industrial railroad past and as the catalyst for a new chapter of preservation work. In more ways than one, it’s been the tale of the world’s most valuable boxcar, not because of what it carried, but because of what it connected. Learn more about the Baker Mansion at barkermansion.org.



STAY IN TOUCH

SHORT LINES is a bi-annual publication, with combined Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter issues. Publishing schedule may be adjusted to accommodate news releases. We provide monthly email updates and host volunteer resources at railvolunteers.org. Be sure to check your inbox for our monthly membership email updates from members@fwrhs.org and ticketagent@fwrhs.org.



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To begin working as a crew member, visit fwrhs.org/volunteer

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS



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Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46855
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Form T 159
CONDUCTOR'S TRAIN BOOK
From JANUARY
To MARCH
S. Smith
Road 155

NEW YORK CENTRAL SYSTEM
SWIT
Yard
Train
Conductor (Others)
Track
Eng.
No.
NUMBER
Loc
E

NEW YORK CENTRAL SYSTEM
TIME RETURN AND DELAY REPORT OF ENGINE AND TRAIN EMPLOYEES
NYCS-T-67 Yard
ICC 53-2 Yrs.
Day of Week
FINALLY WENT OFF DUTY
Date
Time
FIRST WENT ON DUTY
Date
Time
Total Time on Duty
Hrs. Min.
Days or Miles
Overtime
Hrs. Min.
Other Time
Reason
L. E. Smith
958013.10
493213.20
045713.10
Rpt 9/73010
L. E. Smith