

The Bulletin

The Railroad Station Historical Society

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STATIONS AND OTHER STRUCTURES of the LEHIGH VALLEY RR

Part 9 Buffalo area and Niagara Falls branch to Suspension Bridge

At Buffalo, NY the Lehigh Valley Railroad constructed a line from Depew west and to the south circling in a clockwise direction out to the much earlier acquired lake frontage at Tift Farm where it had extensive freight yards. The passenger main headed west into the downtown area and served not only the passenger station but also a robust express business. The railroad also constructed a bypass around Buffalo to the north to gain access to Canadian traffic at Suspension Bridge, north of Niagara Falls. This subsidiary, the Depew & Tonawanda, was double track, and opened to traffic November 15, 1896. The route to Suspension Bridge used a combination of new construction and trackage rights on New York Central's former Canandaigua & Niagara Falls (aka "The Peanut") from Tonawanda Junction, thence on Central's Niagara branch through North Tonawanda and beyond to Niagara Falls and Suspension Bridge. At Suspension Bridge, the railroad leased yard space and maintained a freight terminal as well as locomotive servicing facilities. *John C. Dahl, April 2022*



It is July 1942 and the United States has been involved in the Second World War for some six months since the attack on Pearl Harbor. The LVRR terminal at Buffalo is seeing its busiest days for passenger services. Military "main" trains ran to near Geneva, NY and the U.S. Naval training center at Sampson. RRSHS Collection.



One of Lehigh Valley's great 4-8-4 Wyoming locomotives rests near the Buffalo, NY roundhouse. Undated but circa 1940. Brian Angevine collection.



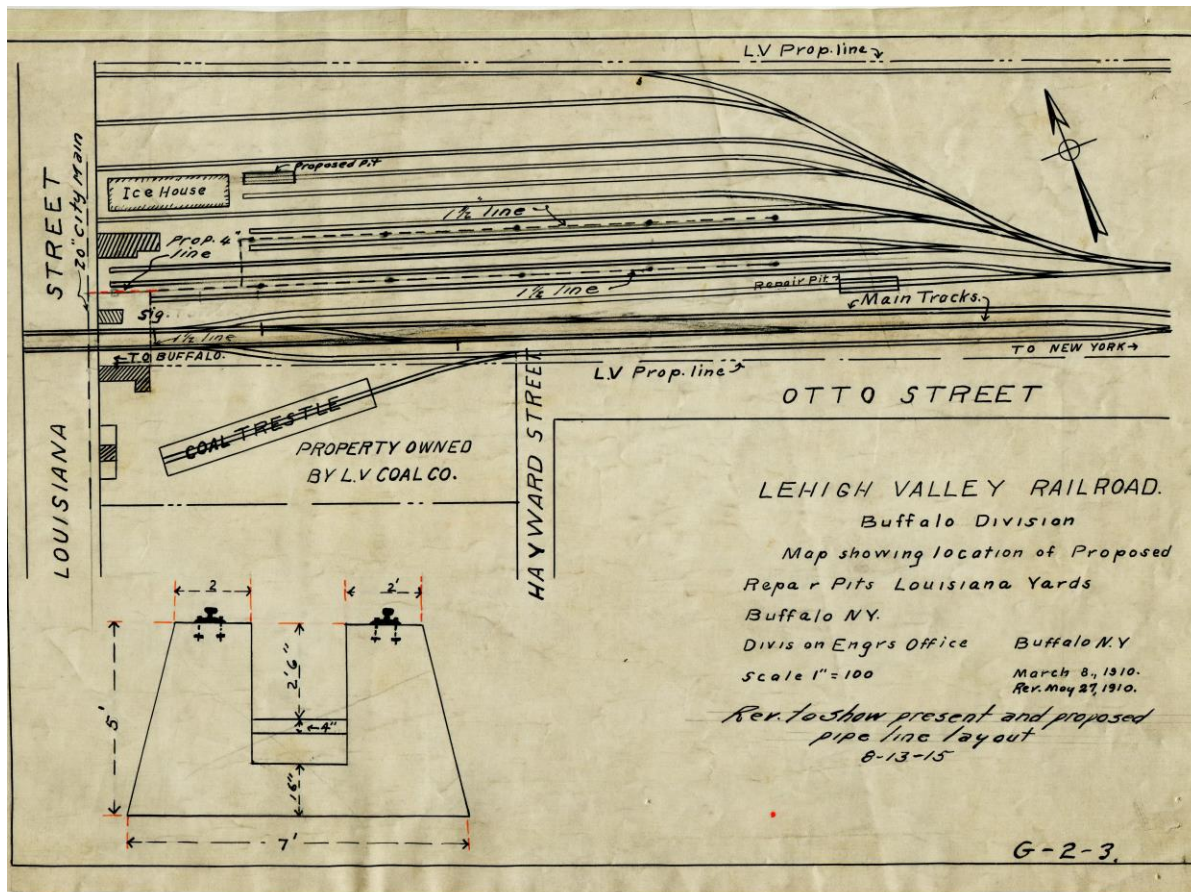
Looking east on Scott Street in the heart of downtown Buffalo is a corner of the Lehigh Valley passenger station concourse and train shed stretching out behind it. Photo dated March 21, 1917. Brian Angevine Collection.



Buffalo, NY – The train concourse and shed have already been demolished in this late 1950's view with new construction on the site in progress. The head house building's days are numbered before it too will sadly fall to the wreckers. Private collection.



Buffalo, NY – near the throat of LV's downtown passenger station and adjacent express handling stood the modern Chicago Street tower. Brian Angevine collection



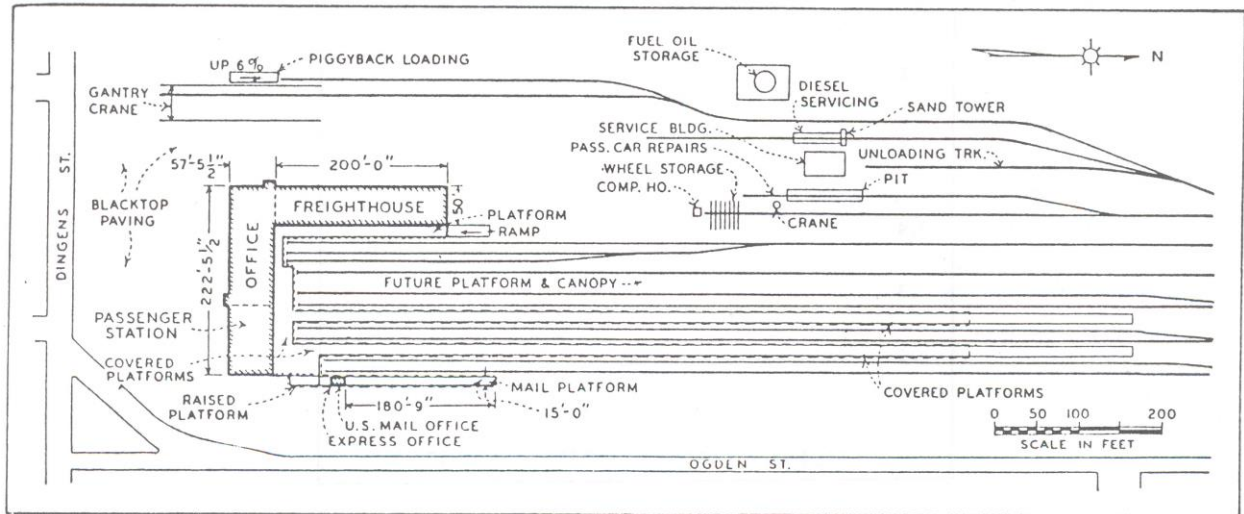
Buffalo, NY – LV had a small yard at Louisiana Street east of the passenger station. Map dated 1910. Brian Angevine collection. Note the “Main Tracks” which continued west towards the multiple track train shed and bumper posts of the passenger terminal.

This issue of The Bulletin was prepared by assistant Editor, John Dahl, with the assistance of Ted Xakellis. PDF copies of the Bulletin are available by contacting Jim Dent.

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Buffalo, NY – Downtown railway ticket offices for the convenience of businessmen and other travelers were often found in the early 20th Century, and in Buffalo for the Lehigh Valley it was the Iroquois Hotel, located at Main and Eagle Street several blocks north of LV's station. During the Pan American Exposition of 1901 this hotel was one of the premier establishments in the city. LV's ticket office occupies the strategic street level corner location. Undated photo, Brian Angevine collection.



In 1955 the LV vacated the downtown facility and moved to a newly constructed combination office, passenger station and express freight handling facility near the city line at Dingens and Ogden streets. John C. Dahl collection.



Buffalo, NY - The Dingens Street building was designed in the then contemporary modern architectural style. The waiting room featured large picture windows and was an attractive facility if somewhat spartan for the few patrons still riding LV trains. Sadly it would be only used for a few years before the railroad was forced to end its mainline passenger service. John C. Dahl collection.

Niagara Falls branch



Williamsville, NY on the Niagara Falls branch featured one of the railroad's standard design structures. The tracks, built by the Depew & Tonawanda subsidiary company, have been removed since Conrail assumed control of the property and part of the right of way is now a walking trail through the village. The station was built in 1897. Jon Rothenmeyer photo, December 1976.



Near sunset, on a cold and snowy January 8, 2022. The now restored-as-a-museum Williamsville, NY LVRR depot is in its original location. A classic steel LV caboose, boxcar and early LVRR EMD diesel switcher are also on display. John C. Dahl photo.



Williamsville, NY – A LV 2-8-2 Mike is crossing Vogel Songer Road off of Main Street, circa late 1940s. The road is today known as Park Club Lane. The construction of Interstate 290 radically altered the location of the road just beyond the crossing. Brian Angevine Collection.



Tonawanda Junction – Looking west, LV's Niagara Falls branch joined New York Central here, utilizing trackage rights to Niagara Falls. This tower was gone by 1920 according to valuation maps. The Central's 'Peanut branch' is behind the tower. Kocsis Family collection.



Tonawanda Junction – Looking east, Is that the operator on the stairs? NYC was here first, so it was LV's responsibility to build the control tower. NYC ran gas-electric cars on its branch for a short while in the early 1920's as traffic gradually dwindled on the Peanut. Kocsis Family collection.



Tonawanda Junction – After the two level tower was removed about 1920, a set of crossovers on the joint NYC-LV trackage was controlled by levers in this ground interlocking a few hundred feet west of where the tower had been. The switch to the old NYC Peanut was just behind this photo's camera position. Remarkably, the switch shanty still stands in its original location, although all track has long been removed. It now functions as a garden shed. A few telegraph poles still hold on nearby as well. June 24, 2022 photo, John C. Dahl.



Henry Wilhelm Photo/WestConn Chapter-NRHS Collection Sep. 1930

Tonawanda, NY – A September 1930 view crossing the Erie Railroad’s Niagara Falls branch and track also used by the electrified International Railway (via a lease arrangement). Note the trolley wire on the Erie’s single track at the tower itself. A LV passenger train is eastbound heading for Tonawanda Jct. At left, the tender and baggage car of a NYC train is waiting for the LV to clear the junction switch at the train’s rear. On the Erie, this location was called Erie 3 (later EL3). Henry Wilhelm photo, West Connecticut Chapter NRHS.



Tonawanda, NY – To cross the enlarged New York State Erie Barge Canal, New York Central constructed a new bridge combining its Niagara branch and Batavia (Peanut) branch (on which LV had trackage rights) into one route during a massive track relocation project from 1917 to 1922. View looks north, the control tower for the bridge at left is on the North Tonawanda side of the canal. Local lore says the bridge was only lifted twice. Author’s collection.



NYC DEPOT NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y. 1954

Niagara Falls, NY - LV passenger trains utilized New York Central's downtown station on Falls and 2nd Street and NYC tracks beyond to Suspension Bridge. The 2nd street crossing is at extreme right in this trackside view from a postcard dated 1954. Author's collection.



NEW YORK CENTRAL R. R. STATION NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y. FALLS

Niagara Falls, NY - NYC depot which LV also shared, from a postcard of the street side view. This building was destroyed in 1964. The Central had ended all rail passenger service to Niagara, including its RDC 'Beeliner' cars. Urban 'removal' cleared the 'blight' and today this part of downtown Niagara Falls has only started to finally see some new construction. But no convenient rail service right to downtown exists as it once was. Author's collection.



Niagara Falls, NY - The LV built a new Falls freight station off Hyde Park Blvd. when the NYC relocated its mainline out of downtown. Jon Rothenmeyer photo, July 4, 1977.



Niagara Falls, NY - The modern facility also housed offices and later was repurposed as the Amtrak station for Niagara Falls, NY. Its industrial no-man's land location was always a deterrent to service, but it lasted in use for some 40 years until the new Amtrak station opened in 2019. Jon Rothenmeyer photo, July 4, 1977.



Niagara Falls, NY (Suspension Bridge) – shared with New York Central, this was a large depot at the international border with Ontario, Canada. A restaurant was included. US Customs had its own building, still standing at the border and converted to museum usage telling the story of the ‘Underground Railroad’, the pre-Civil War movement to help escaped slaves from the South reach freedom in Canada. That building is now adjacent to the new Amtrak station complex with revived Empire Service trains again serving Upstate New York. Photo from the Sirman Collection.



A LVRR passenger train, has just arrived at Suspension Bridge. The station had tracks on both sides so it is not clear to the author if this train is west or east bound. LVRR leased the former Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg yards at Suspension Bridge. NYC acquired RW&O in 1891, and perhaps the yards were then surplus property. Undated photo, circa 1920. Photo from the Sirman Collection.

Depew - Niagara Junction



Depew, NY - Niagara Junction – Conrail has taken over, and the waning days of the LVRR in western New York are at hand. We see a yard structure here, perhaps the old scale house. Niagara Junction was just east of the Buffalo city line, and was the location where the Niagara Falls branch, the line to Tift Farm and the old main to the downtown station diverged. Jon Rothenmeyer photo, March 11, 1977.



Depew, NY – Niagara Junction – the block operator shack is seen, within the old wye where once a two story wooden control tower stood. Jon Rothenmeyer photo, March 13, 1977.

Correction: In the March-April 2022 Bulletin, the date of destruction of Rochester Junction's LVRR station was incorrectly listed. The correct date is Easter Sunday, April 22, 1973. Thank you to Mr. Richard Palmer for catching that error.

We will conclude our look at the LVRR in New York State in a future Bulletin issue which will examine the several branch lines that made up the Auburn Division of the railroad. A surprising number of stations still exist today along what was the "Route of the Black Diamond".

SHORT NEWS ITEMS

Buffalo, NY – DL&W Terminal and Buffalo Central Terminal

Money seems to be flowing for historic railroad station re-use projects. An article in the May 2, 2022 Buffalo News details plans for the old Delaware, Lackawanna & Western train shed still standing on the waterfront in Buffalo, NY. There has been talk for over 30 years about redevelopment of the second level of the former trainshed. The lower level was made over years ago to house shops and repair facilities for Buffalo's light rail system. The upper level once covered the tracks for the stub end station. The limited's and express trains of the Lackawanna, Nickel Plate & B&O left its platforms including the most famous of all, the 1949 streamlined Phoebe Snow. Abandoned by merged Erie-Lackawanna in 1962, the station and its adjoining train shed stood subject to Buffalo weather and worse, extreme vandalism which effectively destroyed the once beautiful Beaux Art interior of the station. Although restorable and still structurally solid, that portion was demolished in 1980.

The new state budget provides \$30 million in funding which will allow a developer to create an interior space beneath the old Bush style train sheds. A public market, restaurants, art displays, music venue are all mentioned as possible uses for the structure, which is in a heavily trafficked, revitalized waterfront area.

In another article in the Buffalo News of June 1, 2022, Central Terminal will receive a whopping \$61 million in grant dollars. This largest investment since 1979 will go towards fixing up the tower, concourse and grounds. The building and complex when opened in 1929 was the largest wholly owned station structure on the New York Central Railroad. Designed in an Art Deco style, it saw over 200 trains per day and for some fifty years was Buffalo's major railway station. The Pennsylvania Railroad also shared its facilities, as did the Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo although both PRR and TH&B were very minor players in Buffalo passenger service.

The grant money will go a long way towards immediate needs of restoration, while estimates topping \$296 million have been published to accomplish full restoration. While much of the decorative interior was stripped by salvagers and scavengers when the building was closed, enough remains and some much-needed infrastructure improvements of fixing the leaky roofs over the concourse are already under construction now. Masonry repairs, asbestos remediation, new windows and repair of the interior Guastavino tile should be done. In addition, new plumbing, electrical and heating systems will be installed making it the first time in decades the building can be used in the colder months. A former restaurant area will have a catering kitchen installed so that events can be better handled. – Submitted by John Dahl

Ruins of New York Central's Lockport, NY Station



New York Central's Falls Road was once an important secondary route between Rochester and Niagara Falls. Double track, it served the communities directly west of Rochester and essentially paralleled the Erie Canal. The line traverses a rich fruit growing region, and a brisk business was once handled carrying apples, peaches, cherries and other agricultural products. Many of the small towns along the way had well developed industrial installations that made it a major originator of merchandise traffic. The Romanesque style Lockport station dates to 1889 and was unique and at one time quite beautiful. It had been made over into a restaurant in the early 1970's but tragically a devastating fire destroyed the building. Crumbling brick walls are now all that remain. Restoration efforts have so far failed to get anywhere. Both photos June 24, 2022, John C. Dahl.

