

# SHORT LINES

NEWSLETTER OF THE FORT WAYNE RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY | **SPRING 2025**



Garrett Monnin

**IN THIS ISSUE**

**Meet the Mohawk • Inheriting a Pullman Legacy • New President, Executive Director Appointed**

# SHORT LINES

Nickel Plate Road No. 358 catches a ride on the rear of the Tri-State Scenic excursion. 2024 saw the restored locomotive operate for the first time in over 15 years.  
Reed Hamilton



## Charting growth and sustainability beyond the numbers

We are blessed with an interesting problem: every year since 2022 has been our busiest yet. It seems the old saying is true: “It takes years to be an overnight success.”

Success for us is more than numbers, though the numbers are impressive. Together with our achievements, they tell a fascinating story of service and growth.

Last year, we hosted over 18,000 passengers—4,000 more than our initial estimates — bringing our total number of passengers served to over 50,000 since 2022.

Several highlights from 2024 propel us into the new year: Our second season of the Indiana Railroad Camp introduced another three dozen young adults to the world of railroading. We operated three days of Autumn Limited excursions, including our first-ever weekday events of the same kind. We hosted the first-of-its-kind Rolling Victory World War II Weekend, which welcomed over 2,000 visitors to Pleasant Lake for a living history experience, complete with a big band orchestra and a 1940s dance. We also began restoring Pleasant Lake’s

depot—it’s truly remarkable what some paint and the original signage can do for a 143-year-old building. There are, of course, other noteworthy achievements covered further in this newsletter. Somewhere in the mix, we also found the time to acquire another steam locomotive.

One of our most significant collaborations last year was with Cameron Memorial Community Hospital in Angola, Indiana. Together, we operated the Cameron Christmas Train. Their support allowed us to run a decorated holiday train through Northwest Ohio, Northeast Indiana, and Southeastern Michigan over three nights, with planned stops in each community along the route. Santa Claus and his helpers visited each stop, distributing over 12,000 gifts—including hats, mittens, and toys. We’ve come a long way from offering a single caboose ride with Santa Claus at our shop in New Haven, though we’ve made sure to continue that tradition as well.

This era of growth began on our 50th anniversary in 2022. It followed years of being largely a traveling roadshow that

created happenings in nearly every town except our own. It came after a decade of championing our cultural relevance in the region, suggesting that maybe—just maybe—a regional attraction could be developed around trains.

This era did not happen by accident. For decades, our volunteers have been quietly, carefully, and tirelessly at work, doing one thing and doing it well: preserving and operating an icon of American railroad history. It has been heartening not only to create an ecosystem of rail preservation and community enrichment but also to establish a foundation for the organization's future. Diversifying our revenue streams, investing in passenger equipment, and expanding our programs have all been realized through the Indiana Rail Experience.

Now, we walk the fine line between growth and sustainability. How can we reasonably expand capacity, events, and operating days while remaining sustainable?

We have also created a handful of new “mouths to feed.” You will know them by their surnames—Budd and Pullman—or their proper names: *Silver Diner*, *Collinsville Inn*, and so forth, including two new open-air cars we also recently constructed and placed into service this year. Given the importance of these passenger cars, their ability to generate revenue and provide reliable service has driven us to create the Passenger Car Maintenance & Investment Fund. This

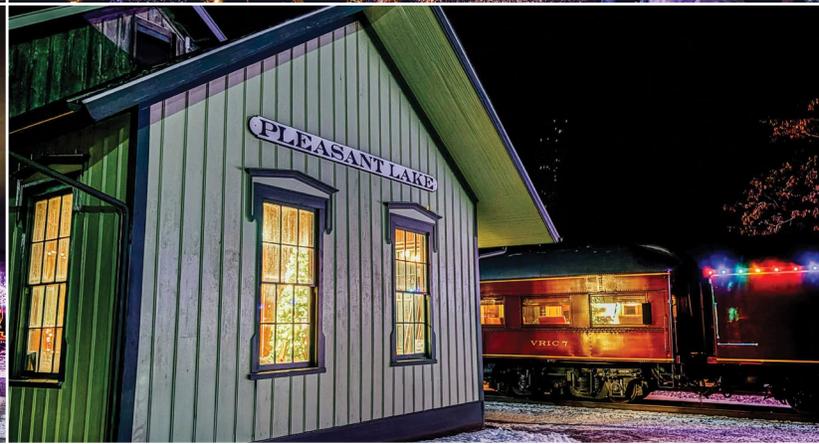
fund was created with starting balance of \$214,000 to underwrite improvements, maintenance, and labor associated with caring for our fleet. Beyond capital investments, this fund will also be used to enhance the on board passenger experience. It is a major investment not only in our collection but also in our long-term sustainability. We can't afford to let a car go down in the line of duty.

While it can be too easy for organizations like ours to focus just on the nuts and bolts. We know our machines are meaningless without people. We've seen a record number of people sign up for safety training and orientation this year and we are actively recruiting new volunteers as fast as we can because we can only grow and expand our events and operations as far as our people can support them. Knowing how much work has gone into the last few years, we are taking time to celebrate our members and volunteers during a Member's Weekend event on July 25th and 26th. An invitation is enclosed with this newsletter.

With last year's accomplishments fresh in mind, we are challenged to meet and exceed our benchmarks once again—carefully and responsibly. This new era requires more from all of us and highlights just how critical our members are in supporting the daily, monthly, and administrative aspects of the organization. As you look through these pages, remember your role in making each image, memory, and moment happen.

It's more than just numbers.

**MAGIC SLEIGH RIDE:** The first Cameron Christmas Train delivered over 12,000 gifts in three states, New York Central coach No. 2568 and the Pleasant Lake depot welcomed the holiday season looking better than they have in a half century amid their restorations.





## ***American Locomotive Project Announced to Underwrite New York Central Steam Locomotive Restoration Effort***

In England, the term “linear heritage railroad” is often used to describe a number of historic railroad settings where the route, locomotives, rolling stock, and structures are largely unchanged from their original states – almost as if 80 years of history have not passed in between. The details that make the place are large and small – there are signposts, semaphores, interlocking towers, and baggage carts. Some are frozen in time; others are reenactments, brought back from the brink. Moreover, the fabric that binds these settings together is cohesive and logical.

These places, like any good novel, are telling a story from start to finish. In the United States, the rail preservation story has not always benefited from such a cohesive approach, borne of valiant attempts to get out in front of the scrapper’s torch instead of a more calculated, professorial approach, let alone national lottery funding efforts throughout the decades.

As a result, there are very few railroad museums and tourist railroads where the majority of the collection consists of original locomotives,

stations, and rolling stock co-existing as they did in their heyday. Special exceptions, like the Nevada Northern Railway, exist, where the original locomotives continue to ply their trade daily in tourist train service. In these cases, the only enduring railroads like this have been or remain isolated from the general railroad system, like in Nevada, or are narrow-gauge railroads, like the White Pass & Yukon.

As our operating presence on the Indiana Northeastern Railroad has grown and our passenger car fleet has expanded to include the New York Central, the history of the territory has become a centerpiece of our planning. The majority of the 100-mile system is former New York Central and includes the original Old Road route between Toledo and Chicago. Of course, the railroad’s famous Water Level Route crossed, and the land speed record of 183 MPH was set by the Central less than 30 miles away. Suffice to say, as an organization whose mission statement includes reflecting the history of Northeast Indiana railroad history, the New York Central was once

underrepresented in our collection and our efforts. That has dramatically changed.

Three years ago, we approached the City of Elkhart with a proposal to take on the custodianship of another mainline steam locomotive in Northeast Indiana: New York Central No. 3001. The inquiry had been spurred by a recent survey that had been performed to assess the locomotive's mechanical condition and candidacy for restoration. The study provided valuable insight and showed meaningful interest from potential supporters.

Named after the largest tributary of the Hudson River, this Mohawk-type locomotive had appeared in Elkhart in 1985 and had been the catalyst for the start of what eventually became the national New York Central Railroad Museum. It was briefly queued for a restoration attempt and envisioned to operate for Conrail, but plans never materialized. Its frozen, stately visage has watched the comings and goings of freight and passenger trains ever since. When it was initially retired, the 3001 had been spared to replace a vandalized locomotive that had been on display in Texas, but in its initial service life, the Mohawk made its way throughout the railroad's entire system, bounding from Elkhart to Albany, Boston to Indianapolis, and likely ending its career outside Cincinnati.

No. 3001 is one of two remaining mainline New York Central steam locomotives left in the world – a handful of switchers and smaller engines remain in derelict states, including

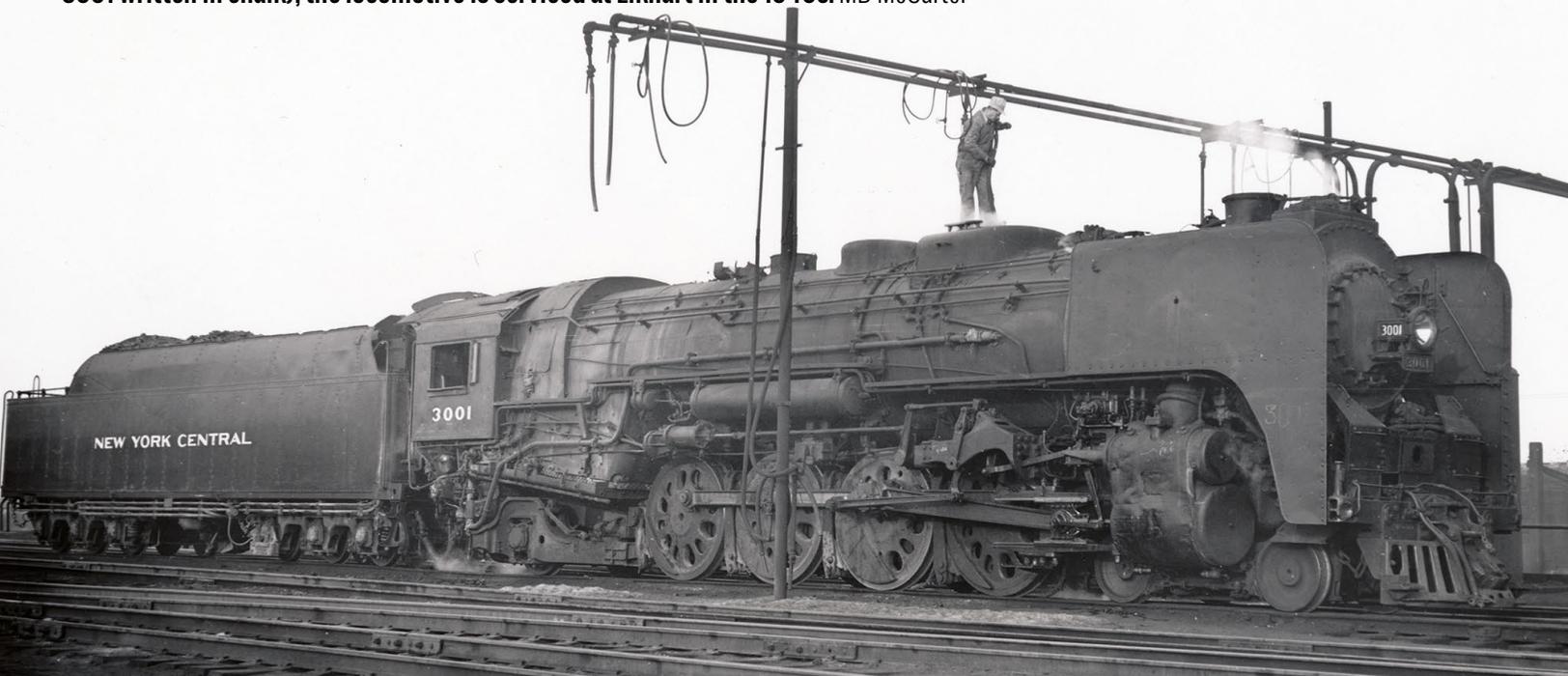
the original Empire State Express's No. 999 in Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry. Fine-tuned for high-speed passenger train service, but constructed with enough horsepower to handle any freight train, the Mohawks were the beating heart of the Great Lakes region. They were fast, economical, handsomely designed, and closely resembled the railroad's famous Hudson-type engines. The Mohawk design was so popular that the railroad employed 600 of them on their roster, making them the most frequently observed iron horse on the mainline until the end of the steam era. One look at the map of the New York Central System in Indiana shows an incredible web of access – totaling over 5,500 miles – throughout the state.

After countless meetings and a series of negotiations with Elkhart and the Museum of the American Railroad (the 3001's true owner), we quietly acquired the 3001 over a year ago and officially announced it last fall. The timing for the initial acquisition was charmed – it came only days after we announced that we had purchased seven former New York Central passenger cars. Elkhart knew it did not have the resources to look after the 3001 any longer and was eager to seek help to decide how to care for the remainder of its collection and redevelop the museum as a community asset.

By now, you may understand the vision. The opportunity on the Indiana Northeastern is to

MOHAWK > continued on page 11

**SAND FOR ELEPHANTS:** With its characteristic “elephant ears” newly affixed (note the 3001 written in chalk), the locomotive is serviced at Elkhart in the 1940s. MD McCarter



# A PIECE OF PULLMAN LEGACY RIDES HOME



Adam Matthews

## Nickel Plate Pullman *Kitchi Gammi Club* joins fleet

We have emphasized the need to develop a sustainable passenger car fleet to support our organization’s long-term business plan. For all the magnificence of the 765, its appeal does little to pay the bills without passenger cars to pull behind and people to ride aboard them. The number of seats matters as much as the variety of cars and the experiences they provide.

The heritage of the cars is important, too. We have been fortunate to curate quite the collection, with rolling stock connected to railroad history in Northeast Indiana, fulfilling our mission, or equipment that exemplifies the Golden Age of Railroading, fulfilling our vision. This careful yet quick effort has been blessed by timing, donations, and strategic relationships. The result has been the creation of what is largely a 100% matching stainless steel passenger train set that can host well over 300 guests.

For those new to our organization, it is important to recall that in January 2022, we had zero serviceable passenger cars on our roster. By the end of that year, we owned four. Today, we have seven. Here is the story of the seventh.

While purchasing and acquisition could only be enabled through donations and grants, we cast a wide net searching for available passenger cars to lease in 2022, and one particular Pullman was high on our list. Nickel Plate passenger equipment is rare, with only two dozen examples remaining in various states throughout the country. Only one has been completely restored and could regularly be found on the back of various Amtrak trains in private charter service: *Kitchi Gammi Club*, otherwise known as Nickel Plate Road No. 7, one of six surviving business cars from the railroad.

A few private discussions ensued regarding long-term leases and even a lease-to-purchase agreement, but ultimately, the acquisition was not a feasible pursuit. The conversation quickly faded.

“Pullman” is a term as synonymous with railroading as the steam locomotive. It conjures images of luxury rail travel as well as the rise of workers’ rights, as the Pullman Strike of 1894 led to a nationwide shutdown that invited federal intervention and skirmishes with federal troops. The contrast of first-class travel before private jets, the advancement of labor amid the Second

Industrial Revolution, and the rise of the Pullman porter means that each car's unique setting, history, and flourishes represent an opportunity to preserve a special piece of railroading culture. The Pullman car was a place to find refined elegance, a fresh breakfast, a sumptuous dinner, or simply quiet respite.

In one of life's great ironies, the property adjoining our restoration facility in New Haven was once used by the United States Army to store surplus passenger cars—including dozens of decommissioned Pullmans—in case they were needed during a national emergency. In the 1960s, they could be purchased for scrap value, roughly \$5,000. By the time our organization came along, they had been scattered to the wind.

Acquiring a Pullman has been high on our list, but opportunities to do so have been infrequent or impractical. Until April 2024. In effect, an inquiry was made: “Are you still interested in the *Kitchi Gammi Club*?”

Originally built as *Mountain View* in 1923, this Pullman was part of a pool of cars that traveled between the Monon, Pennsylvania, Santa Fe, and Baltimore & Ohio railroads. In 1937, its observation deck was replaced with its distinctive solarium lounge, and it was completely remodeled. It was given its new name—after a social club in Duluth, Minnesota—and permanently assigned to the Nickel Plate Road, where it was commonly found on trains operating between Cleveland and St. Louis. In 1953, the Nickel Plate acquired it, and it became Business Car No. 7, serving managers of the railroad on passenger and freight trains until

the mid-1960s. Its life as a distinguished dwelling was over—for now.

Any passenger car downgraded to wreck train service easily morphs into what can only be gently described as a jalopy. Sections were removed, furnishings plundered, and lounge areas converted into wash bins, bathing, and eating areas. Polished brass, varnish, and fresh linens gave way to wooden booths and grease stains.

For 21 years, it sheltered hard-working maintenance and wreck train crews, answering calls at all hours of the day and night for the Norfolk & Western until it was finally retired in 1988.

In 1989, Chuck Jensen and Chuck Akers took possession of the car through their company, Virginia Investment Corp. They stripped it, sandblasted it, and found the car body to be in excellent condition. From there, a multi-year, four-phase restoration began to return *Kitchi Gammi Club* to its original splendor.

Pullman and the Nickel Plate had left a special pattern to follow. In fact, *Kitchi Gammi*'s floor plan was unique to only it and one other car—the *Carlton Club*, Nickel Plate No. 6.

In addition to restoring the unique berths and original solarium lounge, the car was significantly upgraded with new kitchens, restrooms, air conditioning, electrical systems, water pressure systems, replacement trucks, tight lock couplers, new air brakes, a new generator, and new carpet, upholstery, and furniture inspired by its Pullman origins but meant to cater to modern audiences on long-distance train travel.

**CARRYING THE MARKERS:** Nickel Plate No. 7 carries railroad officials on the rear of Nickel Plate freight train. Willis McCaleb





Chuck Jensen



Chuck Akers



Though the car would eventually spend most of its career riding on Amtrak trains, its initial revival in the 1990s was spent as part of the Norfolk Southern steam program's passenger train consist, earning cinders from a variety of locomotives throughout the years, though it eluded a trip behind 765. *Kitchi Gammi's* career in private service has seen it operate throughout the United States and Canada, racking up thousands of miles for families, businesses, filmmakers, tour groups, and distinguished guests alike.

As private car logistics, limitations, and costs for private car owners have increased, opportunities to operate the car have persisted, but not without challenges. In recent years, many private cars have seen fewer trips, entered service on regional railroads, changed hands, or a combination of the above.

Since 2022, our ability to acquire "new" passenger equipment has been made possible largely through strategic relationships. On

**KITCHI, COME HOME: 1988** saw *Kitchi Gammi* escape the scrapper's torch in Chicago, and its solarium lounge is spotted mid-restoration several years later (middle, left). 36 years later, the Pullman was spotted on its most recent trip into Chicago en-route to Indiana – and to us – last September.



Garrett Monnin

the heels of the inquiry regarding our interest in the car and a follow-up phone call, we were able to immediately connect with a donor. While there had been a prior commitment to support a different project, the timeline and opportunity with *Kitchi Gammi* was more pressing. We had a once-in-a-lifetime chance to own not only a Pullman but a Nickel Plate Pullman—one that had certainly traveled around the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad system behind steam and diesel locomotives like our own and had assuredly passed through our namesake town hundreds of times.

This Pullman checked all of the boxes, and also represented a significant business investment. A first-class car like this can represent a six-figure return once it enters service. *Kitchi Gammi* also represented one of the more serious asks from not just one donor, but several, as we also had to underwrite not just its acquisition, but its eventual transportation over 1,000 miles from New York City to Chicago, and ultimately, Indiana.

Over a period of several weeks, a series of commitments were secured. We raised over \$15,000 to cover shipping and would break up the acquisition over two installments, pending a final agreement in 2025. Our donors understood the opportunity before us. Acquiring a passenger car is very much like adding a wing to an existing

building, capable of increasing capacity and programs – and *Kitchi Gammi* was a very special program.

As September neared, so did our plan to bring *Kitchi Gammi* home. Though we've worked with Amtrak previously to plan and operate excursions, this would be our first time planning our very own private car move. The route would take the vintage car from beneath Penn Station in New York City to Union Station in Chicago, crossing within miles of Pleasant Lake through Waterloo, Indiana. From Chicago, it would hop another Amtrak train to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where it would then ride in freight service to Elkhart, and ultimately Fort Wayne, and interchange with the Indiana Northeastern Railroad in Montpelier, Ohio. On a map, the route would look like the number "4." Along for the ride would be Pacific Island, a 1950s sleeper/lounge car built by Budd Manufacturing Corp that would provide additional sleeping space for passengers and crew during the Amtrak trip, and eventually more capacity for our guests at the Indiana Rail Experience.

Along the way, *Kitchi Gammi* traveled over 90 miles an hour along the Hudson River, passengers enjoyed dinner and breakfast prepared on board, and we picked up and dropped off scheduled guests along the way. One of them transferred themselves from their Amtrak sleeper to join us for breakfast

**FREE WHEELING:** Far from the skyscrapers of Chicago, Nickel Plate No. 7 visits the Appalachian hills of Warrenton, Ohio on an inspection trip over the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway just prior to the Nickel Plate's acquisition. Interestingly, both No. 7 and No. 5, the wooden business car ahead of it, still exist today. JJ Young



on the trip into Chicago. Another was a railroad conductor who treated himself and his mother to an evening ride to Grand Rapids.

Minding the logistics was a constant task to ensure the cars wound up where they needed to be without issue. Due to platform length and the new style of Amtrak passenger cars in use in Grand Rapids, the Pullman and Budd had to travel separately on the last leg of the trip, meaning a day of back-and-forth travel for our crew to shepherd them responsibly before handing them off to Grand Elk Railroad and Norfolk Southern.

By October, as clouds of vapor enveloped the steel sides of the car and colorful leaves rained down, passengers were enjoying a freshly cooked, gourmet breakfast in the Pullman while riding behind our steam locomotive, just as passengers did 75 years prior. Like our locomotives, this Pullman will become a time machine.

Kitchi Gammi has quite the legacy, to say nothing of the 35 years the car has spent in the care of Mr. Jensen and Mr. Akers. We deeply appreciate their trust in preserving the *Kitchi Gammi* for the future.

Our immediate work concerns light repairs to the car body and interior improvements ahead of our 2025 season and eventually return the car to its original Pullman green and gold leaf lettering, which it has not worn since the 1960s. We are also seeking original Nickel Plate and Pullman furnishings, decor, and china, and are contemplating additional interior improvements in the spirit of the car's 1937 updates. Donations of any kind are welcome.

The acquisition of the *Kitchi Gammi Club* was made possible in part by the Olive B. Cole Foundation, Mac & Pat Parker Foundation, Howard P. Arnold Foundation, and the ME Raker Foundation.

For their significant roles in helping acquire and ship the car, the master Bedroom will be named the Morel Family Foundation Suite, and the Journal Gazette Foundation will be recognized with a permanent display of newspapers archives showcasing the history of the Elevate the Nickel Plate Campaign through downtown Fort Wayne. Without this support, none of this would have been possible. With continued help from donors, guests, and members, we intend to use the car for every bit of the time capsule that it is. We look forward to seeing you for breakfast.



**PRESERVING (AND TASTING) RAILROAD HISTORY:** A complete French toast breakfast was served aboard the *Kitchi Gammi* during the Fall Colors excursion (top), as guests enjoyed the foliage (middle.) In September, *Kitchi Gammi* was reunited with a genuine Nickel Plate engine for the first time in 50 years.

create something that does not exist anywhere else in the country – an immersive 1:1 recreation of one of the most prolific railroads in the 20th century, just as it was in the 1940s. Instead of simply allowing the steam locomotive itself to be the time machine, the entire experience is intended to be moving, enriching, and educational. This kind of curated, engaging living history offering not only boosts our mission but sustains ridership and patronage by offering something special and compelling for visitors year after year, in addition to all of the traditional tourist railroad offerings.

The educational component also goes beyond the excursions and events inherent in having our very own linear heritage railway experience, but in the restoration of the 3001 itself. The 765 has been the teacher for two generations of Fort Wayne railroaders, and now the 3001 stands to become the instructor for a new generation. The cost of this work is estimated at over \$4 million, which puts it in the neighborhood of recent rebuilds, while also including a percentage for contingency and inflation. For perspective, we have been able to raise over \$2 million for various programs and initiatives since 2022, but a single locomotive rebuild will be a monumental effort in terms of both fundraising and scope. The 765's \$1.2 million rebuild between 2001-2006 was largely funded by transportation enhancement grants, to which there is no equivalent today. This leaves us with only champions, donors, and supporters who understand the value of bringing a dinosaur like this back to life.

Speaking of which, the 765's boiler time is not due to expire until 2031. Given its extensive reworking two decades ago, and our current long-term locomotive fund, we do not anticipate any major expenses in keeping it ready for operation, though we do anticipate adapting it from coal to liquid fuel in the future to reduce costs and simplify logistics – an effort that will likely cost upwards of \$250,000.

The 3001 also represents a new opportunity for us after a half-century of existence: reinvention. Already, we've observed that news of the 3001 has caught the attention of many who did not fully comprehend what we are building in the Midwest, or who had considered the 765 to be everything that was worth knowing about us. We anticipate

that the 3001 will be our gateway to brand-new audiences.

As of this writing, we are fast approaching \$300,000 of our \$500,000 kick-off goal with a well timed \$100,000 pledge. The first half-million will be used to underwrite initial relocation and restoration efforts. The 3001 has a lot yet left to tell us about what it needs, but we know she is a tired machine that requires at least \$1 million in new staybolts alone. It can be easy to take an operational engine like the 765 for granted!

There have been inquiries as to why our beloved little Wabash steam engine wasn't the recipient of this kind of attention, but we hope by now the logic is clear. While a segment of the Indiana Northeastern is former Wabash Railroad (indeed, a segment used to be run by a sister engine) and the rebuild tag for No. 534 is estimated at \$1.4 million, we know the 534 is not well equipped to operate our shorter trains, let alone our longer trips. Without an auxiliary water tank or major investment in watering facilities in Pleasant Lake, the 534 is destined to wait in the wings a little longer.

We've been using the term "curated" quite often – and that's really what this effort is all about from stack to railhead. We are crafting an experience – from the design of the ticket, the paint on the station and its interior decoration, the food served aboard, the entertainment, the open vestibules and windows, the echo of the whistle, the collection of families nestled into suites or dining car tables, the memories being made and passed on.

Eventually, our Pleasant Lake campus, passenger stations, restored cars, and the locomotive will all work together in harmony to welcome guests into our world, entrancing all of them with an appreciation and affection for our shared American railroad history. It's part of the reason we decided to call the 3001's campaign the *American Locomotive Project* – as both a nod to its builders in the American Locomotive Company and to its appeal to a greater audience. You can learn more about this goal at [americanloco.org](http://americanloco.org).

If the 765 is the queen of the fleet, the Mohawk may very well be her heiress – but not her replacement.

There's plenty of room at the top.

# Kelly Lynch named organization's first-ever Executive Director



Having your life shaped by a locomotive might seem unusual, but for many of us in this organization, it's a defining experience. We'll never know how our lives might have unfolded without that fateful machine in our path. We wouldn't prefer it any other way.

At just a few months shy of 40 years old, my railroad journey began coincidentally 39 years before I was born. My dad's earliest memories were of visiting his father at the roundhouse where he worked. The smell of coal smoke, the rhythmic panting of air pumps, the charge of a locomotive under steam, the nickel Coke machine and the crisp denims of the roundhouse workers became indelible tokens of his childhood. These sensory gifts were passed down to me through spoken-word stories as I grew up.

Dan Lynch became involved with the original effort to restore the 765 not long after it left Lawton Park and was so inspired that he restored a 1920s CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY open-window passenger car to operate behind it for nearly a decade. Somewhere in the middle, I came along. Naturally, one of my earliest memories was visiting the 765 alongside him. It became a hallmark of our relationship and a shared passion that continued as I came of age. By then, the 765 had been dormant and undergoing its most extensive restoration yet, but it had already become a symbol. It was a connection to family, to railroad history, and to the legacy of this organization, where both intertwine.

Not long after I graduated high school—coinciding with the locomotive's long-awaited return — I realized the world needed to know about the 765's comeback in a big way. I wanted people to love this engine as much as I did. After its test runs in 2006, we were like a horse without a wagon. The excursion industry had withered. Host railroads were scarce. Opportunities fleeting. And yet, we had one of the world's most fascinating

animals hidden away in a barn — an attraction of undeniable cultural and historical significance.

Visitors who walked through our shop doors often said, "We never knew you were out here." That paradox lit a fire in me. We could no longer be satisfied with being hidden away on Edgerton Road. We needed to take control of our fate. We needed to minimize the variables outside our control. We needed to play every card, float every trial balloon, and make our presence known. At the same time, our region was beginning to embrace its authenticity as a resource for development. We belonged in that conversation. We were just as relevant as the EMBASSY THEATRE, THE AUBURN CORD DUESENBERG MUSEUM, or even the local zoo — all widely known and highly regarded attractions in our hometown that had broad, sweeping appeal. That chase to demonstrate this set the stage for our future success — and prepared us to seize the opportunity when the INDIANA NORTHEASTERN came calling.

While the 765 has guided my life, it was this period that shaped my understanding of what our nonprofit needed not just to survive, but to thrive. Deep in my toolkit has always been a secret weapon: discontent with the status quo. It's a practical trait for any organization battling entropy. We see something broken, and we fix it. That's the story of how we came to be: a group of people with no money, no shop, no tools, burgeoning expertise, and no guarantee that we'd ever have a place to run a steam locomotive — but a powerful vision that propelled us forward. Once upon a time, we did the impossible for sport. Now, we've made it our business. That's an incredible legacy to inherit and an amazing gift to share with others.

There is a vast difference between surviving and thriving. Survival can be measured in bleak terms—paying the bills, keeping the lights on. Thriving, however, is about growth, impact, and legacy. I wanted to candidly share what has propelled my work as a volunteer for 20 years because as your first paid employee, my assignment is the same as our collective charge was in Lawton Park in 1972: to ensure that what we've built doesn't just endure — but flourishes, too. — *Kelly Lynch*

# Meet Chuck Young: 2025 Society President



I was recently appointed by the Board of Directors to serve as President for the 2025-2027 term. It's an honor to return to the board after several years away and I appreciate picking up the reins from former President Joe Knapke, who remains with us as a director. Regardless of my leadership status, I have

remained a dedicated crew member throughout.

My love for steam engines began in 1977, at age 14, during my first train ride behind 2101 on the Chessie Steam Special. Spending the day by the Dutch door, listening to that powerful locomotive working its way to Hinton and back, had me hooked. From that moment on, I immersed myself in steam engine history, building a technical library along the way.

At 15, I joined the Collis P. Huntington Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, operators of the famous New River Trains. For over 25 years, I played an active role in planning trips, maintaining passenger equipment, and eventually serving as coach supervisor. It was here I met many of the first-generation members of the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society, including Liz and Tom Stephems and Glenn Brendel, when the 765 operated on the New River.

In the early 1980s, I volunteered on the Chessie Safety Express, leading to opportunities as a part-time steam contractor while earning a

degree in Business Administration with a minor in Economics. In 1985, I joined the ACE 3000 project, running Chesapeake & Ohio No. 614(T) on coal trains. This experience led to a paid position rebuilding 614 in Hagerstown, MD, in 1986-87, where I formed lifelong friendships with steam contractors Robert Franzen and Gary Bensman.

By the late '90s, I scaled back my railroad involvement to focus on family and building successful small businesses. Once my children were older, I rekindled my passion for railroading, working on projects such as the cosmetic restoration of the Union Pacific Big Boy at Steamtown. I also practiced steam locomotive maintenance nationwide, serving as project manager for the restoration of Chesapeake & Ohio No. 1309 at the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad.

Today, I continue running my businesses while taking on preservation projects as opportunities arise. I'm honored to represent the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society.

I firmly believe that the heart and soul of this organization lie in the dedicated volunteers who generously give their time and talents.

With that in mind, I was also pleased to serve on the Personnel Committee during our thoughtful discussions last year about hiring our first paid employee, and I continue to advise on personnel matters. We are fortunate to have a great hybrid of volunteers, contractors, and now employees, all working together during this period of growth and potential that we could have only dreamed of in the early days.

I hope you all take pride in how far this organization has evolved over five decades.

– Chuck Young

## New Board Members Elected: Bill Martz, Chris Lantz

Bill Martz, who supervised passenger car servicing and maintenance during the 2022-2024 seasons of the Indiana Rail Experience, and Chris Lantz, who helped shepherd Project 358 and now oversees our Freight Car restoration department, were elected to the board of directors for 2025-2027 terms.

Departing the board are Rich Brinkely, who served as secretary from 2011 to 2024 and Brian Christophel, who had recently stepped down as treasurer, after serving in that capacity for a decade. Both will continue to stay involved with the organization and we appreciate their lengthy dedication in their respective roles.

**PLEASANT EVENING:** October, 1957. A member of the engine crew and station agent compare notes – be they baseball scores, railroad paperwork, or otherwise – on a cool night autumn night. Blending into the backdrop and just outside the window is one the freshest sets of wheels on the railroad: Nickel Plate Road no. 358. This night, this particular crew has a plum job: take the railroad’s newest “Cadillac” out for a spin to do some switching. Its spartan paint, clean cab, and idling motor are a far cry from the cinder packed maelstrom of the Berkshire-type locomotives it was built to replace. But steam is not yet a memory on the Nickel Plate. No. 358 is lying in wait on the siding for Train No. 51 – the Flying Saucer. There’s a reason they call it the Flying Saucer. And as quickly as the station agent hears Train No. 51 enter the block, the light above his desk will start to swing, the glass will rattle, the clanging crossing gates will activate, and the railroad’s signature steam-power will make its raucous, otherworldly presence be known – passing by with such fury that the company poster on the wall will flutter in the breeze. On it reads the railroad’s tag line: *Speed your freight, ship Nickel Plate*. Indeed. The diesel crew may have the cushy job, but the steam crew? Well, they have the *fast* job.



**IN REALITY:** After concluding photos with the locomotives outdoors, the Nickel Plate Historical & Technical Society has moved inside the Pleasant Lake depot where our props and atmosphere team have posed volunteers Glenn Holland (seated) and Brian Smith.



## Freight Car Department Powered by GATX and CSX

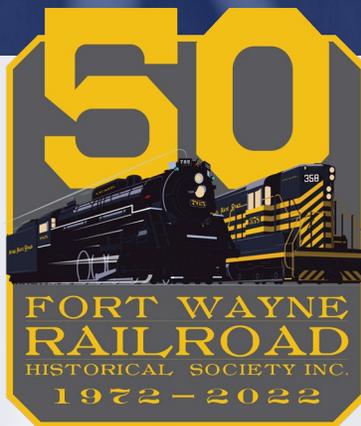
For all the attention our stainless steel passenger equipment and impressive locomotives receive, it's easy to overlook the freight car. Like their modern-day counterparts, they were the real breadwinners for the railroads in their long service life.

While the traditional boxcar and refrigerated car are largely obsolete, their unique liveries, histories, uses, and logos all lend a certain charm and usefulness. Many museums and tourist railroads have adapted their cars into dual service as educational exhibits and props for photo freight service, where the historic artifacts look just as they did in service and help recreate scenes straight out of the 1940s and '50s. We have similar intentions.

Last year, CSX helped grow our freight car fleet with the contribution of a 1941 Atlantic Coast Line boxcar (lower left) that had been used by their maintenance-of-way crews in Wapakoneta, Ohio, for over 30 years. We'll be able to eventually populate the Pleasant Lake campus or Hillsdale railyard with a historically accurate and aesthetically pleasing 20th-century freight train that will complement our vision for the linear heritage railroad. Even a freight car has the power to transport us to a special time and place. The rehabilitation of our refrigerated cars (the same kind that would have once traveled behind the 765 in freight service) has been greatly supported by an initial \$15,000 grant from GATX — the cars' original builder. They understand the power of the freight car, too. If you'd like to help, reach out to Chris Lantz at [lantz@fwrhs.org](mailto:lantz@fwrhs.org). You can also support our freight cars specifically at [fwrhs.org/donate](http://fwrhs.org/donate).

### 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](http://railvolunteers.org). Be sure to check your inbox for our monthly membership email updates from [members@fwrhs.org](mailto:members@fwrhs.org) and [ticketagent@fwrhs.org](mailto:ticketagent@fwrhs.org).



### SUPPORT

Donations, estate gifts, and in-kind contributions help power our preservation and outreach efforts. To support our work or to give to a specific cause, visit [fwrhs.org/donate](http://fwrhs.org/donate)

To begin working as a crew member, visit [fwrhs.org/volunteer](http://fwrhs.org/volunteer)

### THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS



#### RESTORATION SHOP

15808 Edgerton Road  
New Haven, Indiana 46774  
260-493-0765

#### EDITOR

Photos and text by Kelly Lynch unless otherwise noted  
[lynch@fwrhs.org](mailto:lynch@fwrhs.org)

#### MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

[members@fwrhs.org](mailto:members@fwrhs.org)

#### MAIL

PO Box 11017  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46855  
[contact@fwrhs.org](mailto:contact@fwrhs.org)

Garrett Monnin



Adam Matthews



Adam Matthews



**HIGHLIGHT REEL:** A few memorable moments from last year included the 765 marching through a canyon of orange and yellow leaves en-route to Hillsdale, Michigan and our expanded World War II event "Rolling Victory" which featured a big band orchestra, 1940s dance, battle re-enactments and our very own Rosie the Riveter (volunteer Starr Meloche). These events, like all others, were sell outs. In the midst of the season, our second class of Indiana Railroad Camo attendees pose after completing their diesel locomotive course with the freshly operational 358. For young adults like these, it's their first time in an operating railroad environment.