

CHESTER ERIE STATION



1915-2015
100
YEARS

The restored and preserved 1915 Erie Railroad Station in Chester, New York continues to play a significant role in our community.

True, no trains are expected anytime soon. The Station is now a museum where we continue to tell and retell the history of the railroad, our village, and our town.

This year we are celebrating 100 years of the “New Station”.

To mark this anniversary, we assembled a fabulous exhibit about the history of the Erie Railroad and the Station, and we have hosted numerous programs about the history of the railroad in Orange County. It was a busy year and saw many members of our community attending these events. All of this is thanks to the work of a committed group of people who work effortlessly to make sure the public has every opportunity to come inside and experience the Station and all we have to offer.

From 1915 until the early 1980’s this train station was a key destination for many travelers. Today, with the Heritage Trail right outside our door, we are still a place for a traveler to come inside and rest for a minute or two. Many a runner or biker would say the Erie Depot is a nice stop!

Thank you to the Chester Historical Society for all the work you do and to the Chester community for supporting us.

Debby-Lu Vadala-Adams, **President**
Chester Historical Society

Chester's 1915 Erie Railroad Station 100th Anniversary Sponsors

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Train Memories

*The following stories are excerpts of personal memories from local residents.
For full versions please see our website, www.chesterhistorical.com*

Arthur Joseph “Joe” Burns”

I lived in the Board/Johnson house. I’m the last living member of the family. Mom was Louise Johnson, daughter of Joseph Johnson and Josephine Board Johnson. Capt. Joe Fairbanks Johnson was my grandfather—he was a captain in the Merchant Marines.

All I had to do was trot down the path to the station. And I probably went to the movies in Goshen hundreds of times and to Middletown’s Paramount Theater.

My grandmother would go out and wave to the engineers and people on the train especially during the Second World War when it was military.

On December 23, 1937, I was a little over 3 years old and we got over a foot of snow. I informed my grandmother I was going to the American House to shovel snow for them. I was shoveling snow and I suddenly realized there was a big man next to me. He congratulated me and asked if he could have my snow shovel. And I said, “No, it belongs to me

actually my grandmother and we then went out to the street near the Roe’s feed store and I pointed to Feldner’s store for him to get a shovel. I figured he needed help. He then gave me something. I don’t know what it was. Hopefully I thanked him and I ran like the devil back up the hill and my grandmother took it from me.

About 10 yrs. later we were playing baseball out in the yard and the ball went missing; either under the railroad tracks or up on the barn. I turned around and said, “I know where there’s a baseball, I’ll get it.” So I ran in the house and came out with a baseball signed by Babe Ruth. It had “Dec. 23, 1937 Jos. Burns” written on it by a family member.

When I went in the army I got out in 1957. I asked my mom for the ball, and finally she said, “Don’t ask anymore.” I said, “Did your husband Al sell it for beer? And she didn’t answer me.



The Erie RR came to Chester in 1841, resulting in the development of the downtown.

Built in 1915, the new Erie RR Station was lovingly restored by the Chester Historical Society, and reopened in 1999 as our local history museum!



It has been a momentous 100 years!

Congratulations!

from Clifton Patrick, Town of Chester Historian.



www.chester-ny.gov

Mrs. Gloria Hicks

I was born December the 27th, 1927 in the village of Chester.

My earliest childhood memory was waking up, hearing the train whistle blow. We called it the first train in Chester, the engineer would blow the whistle on the train three times and in those days, if you didn't wake up, you had to be hard of hearing. So, it woke the whole village up and that is the way people traveled, by train. And it's too bad it was ever taken away. The train was our transportation to, especially us children, to the movies in Goshen. It was 5 cents to ride to Goshen and 10 cents to Middletown. Everything was 5 or 10 cents.

The train station was where they brought the steers in cattle cars and you could hear them mooing all night, before they were taken up to the Chester slaughterhouse the next morning. The mail also came by train. There was a man from the post office, Lou Holbert who would catch the mail when they threw it off the train. He pulled it in a wooden wagon behind him.

We played games; roller-skating, we would roller-skate all summer long, and we would start by the railroad station, but inside, Mr. Casey, the agent was on the

telegraph. When we rode over, ...it's still there--the grating in the sidewalk, with our roller-skates, he was a kind man; he would just politely come out and say, "Children, please don't roller-skate over the grating. I cannot hear the Morse code."



Well, the railroad station had two sides; one side the women and children stayed on and the bathroom said, "Women," and on the other side, the men seemed to stay there and smoke. In those days, there was what they had on the floor, called spittoons, and the men stayed on that side, smoking their cigars and pipes.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE
CHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
100 YEARS AT THE STATION

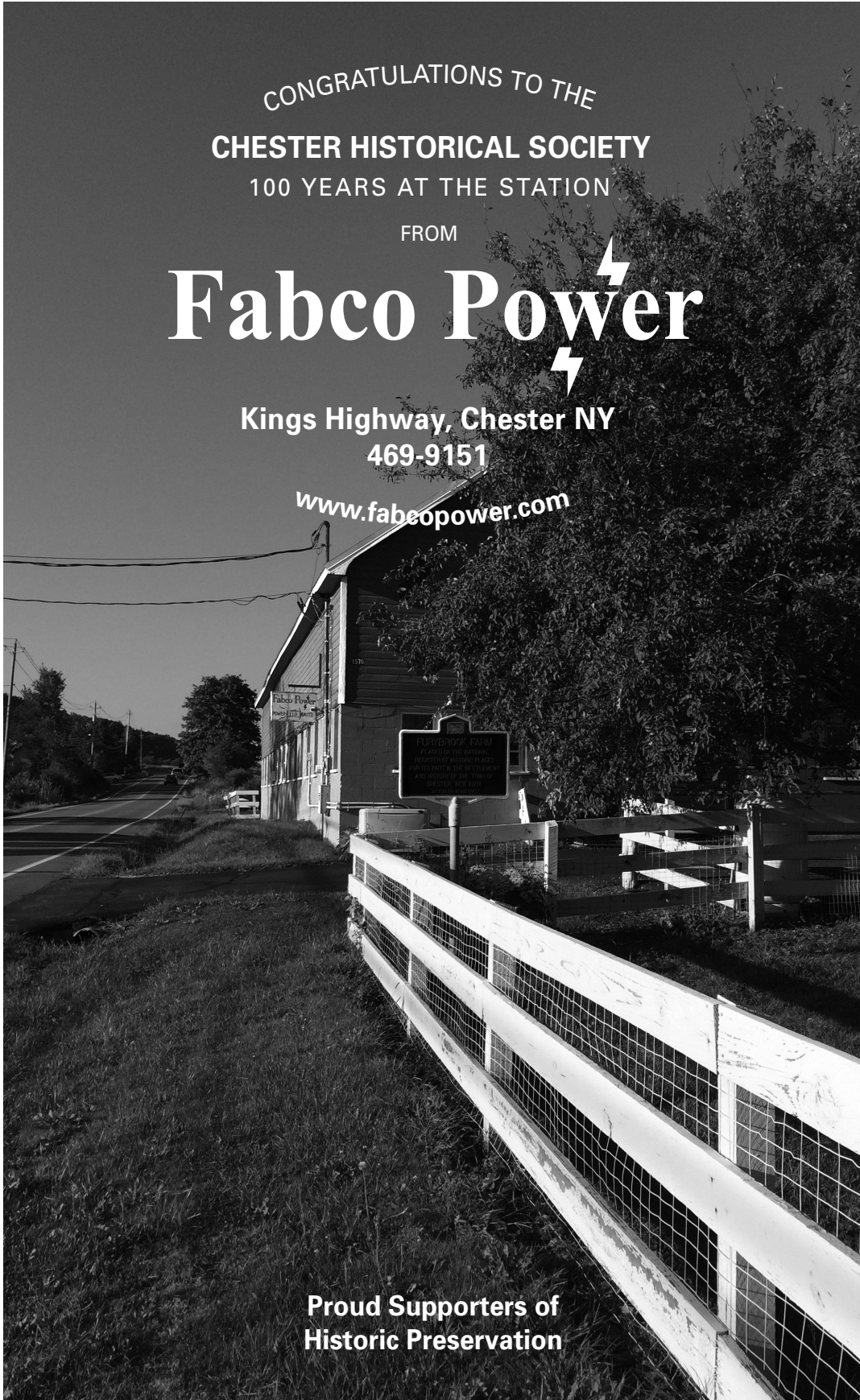
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Debby Lu Vadala-Adams

This is a scary memory. I was about 10-11 years old and it was in the summer and I was friends with Rita Becker, who lived on Hudson Street in a very nice house, and Agnes Conklin who lived down on Greycourt Ave, right next to the train tracks; the train tracks ran behind her house. So that summer the three of us were really tight friends and we were all in the same grade. So, we pal'd around all summer and my mother always told us, "Don't walk those railroad tracks. Because to get to Agnes's, it was very quick; just get on the track and just go down to Greycourt. As opposed to going on the road, down the hill...if we took the track, it was much faster. Mom always said, and Rita's mother used to say, "Don't walk those tracks; you will never hear a train coming." And I was like, "How dumb are you—that I will not hear a train! I will hear it." And so, one summer afternoon, we were walking the tracks, and for whatever reason, Agnes turned around and she said, "There's a train!" and we all turned around and it was like

*"Deb, get off the track,
Deb, get off the track!"*

on top of us, really. And so the girls ran off the track, and Debbie, she just turned around and watched the train coming. I remember Rita screaming, "Deb, get off the track, Deb, get off the track!" But I couldn't move and I couldn't scream. I was frozen. And the train was coming and coming, and it was so close to me. And the next thing I know, Rita came from way the other side of the track and she came and she literally tackled me—like a football player—tackled me off the track and she hugged me, when she tackled me, and put her arms around me and just threw herself on top of me. And we were in the bushes, hugging the bushes and each other because the train was going by and we were so close, it was trying to suck us in. I don't think the engineer ever saw us, because the train was high, and we were low. When I ride my bicycle down the track, I always remember it. It was very scary, and Rita saved my life...The words I always say, are "Rita came back for me." She

Continued on page 10

So much of our future
lies in preserving our past.

- Peter Westbrook



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Vadala-Adams continued from page 8

just couldn't stand there and watch me get hit.”

It was horrifying and I'll never forget it. And when I describe the story, my heart starts palpitating. I can still see that train so close to me, and when I tell you close, I mean very, very close...I don't dream about it any longer, but I used to. It always gave me a special feeling about Rita. She knew enough that “I have to tackle her--I can't just pull her off these tracks. Because if I don't, we're both gonna die now.” I just remember me holding her and her holding me and my hand holding the bushes. I tell you, I never walked the tracks again.



My next memory is a happier one. It was probably the next summer. My father saw that the train was getting ready to go by the wayside-going to end. So myself and my sisters, he would bring us down and my mom would drop us off in the car. My dad would get on the train with all of us little girls and we would either go to Goshen or to Harriman, and my mother would pick us up there, and then we would go for ice cream afterwards. In Monroe it was Three Bears. And at Clover Knolls in Goshen...it was an ice cream stand and a small petting zoo...The ice cream used to be homemade; it was fun. And so I remember taking the train with my dad and then mom would pick us up and we'd get ice cream.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL
THE VOLINTEERES
PAST AND PRESENT WHO HAVE
HELPED TO MAINTAIN THIS
BEAUTIFUL BUILDING!

DEBBY-LU VADALA-ADAMS
CHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT



Congratulations to the Chester Historical Society on the 1915 Erie RR

Station's first
One Hundred Years!
The Chester Rotary, a service club
that seeks to do humanitarian service.

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programs by different speakers and the opportunity
to give back to the community.

[www.facebook.com/Chester-Sunrise-Rotar Club](http://www.facebook.com/Chester-Sunrise-Rotar-Club)
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Joe Verbet

My earliest memory is when we used to go to Goshen on a Sunday afternoon. We used to pick up the train here at one o'clock. It cost us ten cents to go to Goshen movies and after the movie, there'd be a train coming back, going south around five o'clock. Same thing—it cost us 10 cents to go home.

What my strongest memory of the Erie railroad—In the 1940s, they started killing what they called 'Western Beef' at the Chester slaughterhouse (now the site of Lowe's) and one of the owners of the slaughterhouse would go to Chicago. He'd be in Chicago Monday morning, buy the cattle at Chicago's stockyards and then they would be shipped to Chester on the Erie railroad. They would come in here usually on a Wednesday or Thursday. I remember there used to be two lines—railroad spurs—here, and sometimes they had cattle on both spurs. They could have anywhere from 10-20 carloads of cattle. They used to put 20 head of cattle on a car.

Peter Otterstedt (Ed's brother) was the driver for the slaughter-

house; he had a small tractor trailer. He'd be going up and down all day long because he could only put 10 cattle on the trailer at a time. This was a very busy station; Erie worked backwards to help get the cattle out of Chester on time. It was very interesting, I thought.

Most of the cattle that came into Chester were what they called prime beef, the very top quality.

"Having the railroad was just natural for us."

Around here we didn't have beef/feed cattle; it was milking cows around

Orange County, so it was quite an operation that they had. They employed a lot of people.

It was quite a commuter train from Chester, too, because we had guys who had moved into Chester still worked in New York City. And they had a train that I think used to leave here about 6:30 in the morning. And then they would come home. It used to have a dining car on it.

Having the railroad was just natural for us. We didn't think anything of it. Today, I believe it was a shame that they did away with these tracks. I still think that it

continued on next page

Engineer

Sandy & David Nagler

Passengers

Don Roth

Bruce Horn

Conductor

EJ Szulwach

Anniversary Banners by

MacMedia, Chester, NY

Brave Agent Saves Miss Ball's Life

Choir Singer is Knocked Down by Engine at Chester Tossed To Safety
Charles Crist Pulls Her from Danger to Platform and Narrowly Escapes Being Struck by Eastbound Train, Tuesday.

Chester, Dec. 13. (Special)-Charles G. Crist, baggage agent at the Erie station at Chester, proved himself a real hero to-day, Miss Mae Ball, the eighteen year old daughter of George W. Ball, a real estate operator of Chester, was struck by the cowcatcher of the engine drawing train 22, due at Chester at 1:20 p. m. to-day.



Miss Mae Ball,
Class Photo 1913

Miss Ball was waiting for train 23, due at 1:17 p. m., on which she was going to Middletown. As there is only three minutes difference in the time of the two trains at Chester, they both arrive at about the same time nearly every day.

Miss Ball was watching train 23, which she was to take, drawing into the station, not realizing she was nearly standing on the east bound track. Train 22 was very slowly drawing into the station at the same time from the opposite direction. The noise of the west bound train prevented her from hearing the approach of the other train, and also the warning shouts of the waiting passengers.

The cowcatcher on train 22's engine struck Miss Ball, throwing her to the tracks. Charles G. Crist had noted Miss Ball's danger and rushed to her rescue as she was thrown down. At the risk of his own life, he caught her up and tossed her to the station platform. He then sprang to the other side of the rails to save himself.

Miss Ball, who was unconscious, was carried to the station's waiting room, where she was attended by Dr. Smith, who had been called by Station Agent Marvin. After a quick examination, he pronounced no bones broken, but could not give a complete report of her condition until she recovered somewhat from the shock.

Miss Ball is one of the most popular young ladies of Chester. She enjoys a large circle of friends, who are very anxious to hear of her recovery. She is a member of the choir of the late E. H. Harriman's Church, at Arden, N. Y., and of the M. El. Church at Chester.

Mr. Crist, whose bravery undoubtedly, according to witnesses, saved Miss Ball's life, is a modest, unassuming young man, who has been at the Chester station for a number of years. He is very reticent about the accident, and will not talk of it.

Happy Anniversary Erie Station! Here's to another 100 years!



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**Congratulations on the 100th Anniversary
of the Erie RR Station at Chester!**



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Chester Halts Business

Chester Halts Business During Rite for Marvin

**Almost Unprecedented Honors
Paid Veteran Erie Man Who
Died in Florida**

CHESTER—This village paid almost unprecedented honor yesterday to Robert Marvin, who died Sunday at Titusville, Fla. For almost fifty years Chester folk bought their Erie railroad tickets from Mr. Marvin, and so highly did they regard him that every store and business place in the village, including the Postoffice, was closed from one to three p. m. yesterday while virtually every resident attended his funeral in the Presbyterian church. Streets were deserted, and the church was crowded to capacity for the rites conducted by the Rev. George McAllister of Monroe and members of Standard Lodge, F. & A. M., of Monroe, to which Mr. Marvin belonged. The body was taken to Highland Mills for interment.

The assemblage at the church included several Erie railroad officials, neighboring station agents and members of the Chester Fire Department in a group.

May first, 1931, marked Mr. Marvin's fiftieth anniversary in the Erie railroad service, all except two brief periods at Monroe, his former home, was spent as station agent at Chester. Many years ago popular demand caused his return to Chester by the railroad soon after he had been transferred to Monroe.

**Entire Village
Attends Funeral**



ROBERT MARVIN

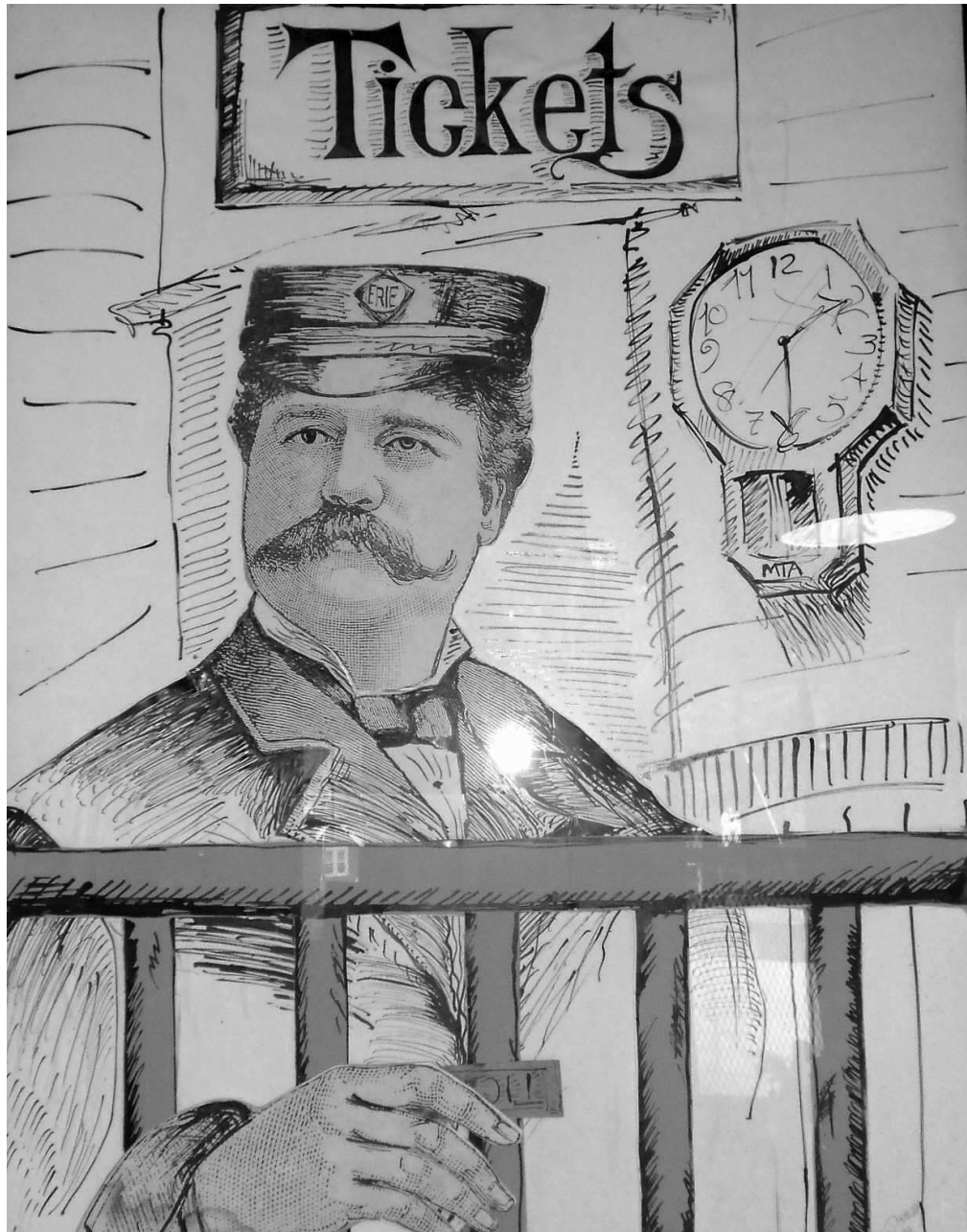
In tribute to whom, as last mark of respect and affection, Chester suspended business during funeral period.

conducted by the Rev. Dr. O. C. Nelson. Pall-bearers were Adam All-

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would have done a lot for transportation.

My children, they never got to ride on the train that much. My daughter, MaryAnn, we were talking about it last night on the phone. The only time she rode on a train it went from here down to Suffern, and they had a turntable down there. And it would turn and come back up. It was probably one of the last runs the Erie was going to make and together we rode it.



Nathaniel C. Roe

I don't remember a station like the one in Chester in Oxford. I think it was just a stop.

My memory is that the store was near the railroad and did everything for the train; it was post office for the mail train and general store. That's my memory of the 1920s. They were all one building...Oxford Depot was a mail train stop. You couldn't buy tickets.

My family had a farm down



toward Monroe on Lazy Hill Road--it was Lazy Hill Farm. It got the name Lazy Hill because of the fox hunters who would sit and wait for the foxes on the hill.

And my dad shipped all the milk from their dairy farm from Oxford Depot. We had a model-T Ford pickup truck and we

would load the milk in the back and go down the steep hill and across the valley a mile to the Oxford depot...

As far as the railroad is concerned, trains came to Oxford Depot in 1845 and that's when my family began to ship fresh milk in cans to New York City. They were dairy farmers. And it was distributed by horse and wagon and sold out of the cans. They held 10 gallons--40 quarts.

And they delivered the milk to the houses in the city by the quart and sent the cans back unwashed. My family had to wash the cans with well water to clean them; the cans were owned by each of the families

that shipped milk; they had the names on them in copper...

We were 1 mile from Oxford Depot. My bedroom window was open and I could hear trains all night long, and in daytime, we could see the steam and smoke from the coal-burning trains.

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THE CHESTER
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When I was a youth, we delivered milk every day to Oxford Depot. There were several creameries there and my dad sold to an Italian cheese maker. I remember watching them make the cheese. There were two cheese factories there. And each one had a tall brick smokestack and had the name on them in different colored brick. The only one I remember is "DeStefano."

My great-grandfather on my mother's side Delaplaine Gaunt had a shop at Oxford Depot where he made wagons and he had to do ironwork, smithing, putting the rims on the wheels that he made, so he also did some blacksmithing in connection with the wagons.

I have a very fine memory of the first time my dad took me to New York City. We went to Monroe, then on to Hoboken

and took the subway under the river and ended up in Penn Station. There were more commuter trains that went to New York City from Monroe than Chester...

I remember going to Greycourt. We would order limes in bags that would come in a freight car. We would take a Chevy truck from a cousin at Seely farm nearby and we would spread them on the field to make the alfalfa grow better.

The hamlet of Greycourt was interesting because there were several railroads there. I used to admire the conductors and engineers. They did such a great job of handling such a massive piece of equipment; thousands of tons being pulled by a steam engine. And it was fascinating how they made the track and replaced it.

William "Bill" R. Miller
(nickname *Footsie*)

There used to be a railroad siding, just south of the station, to Frank O. Roe's feed store. They had a feed store and a lumber yard. In the fall of 1948, another Chesterite, Ross Vero, and I commuted daily from Chester to Jersey City. We were both students at Fordham University School of Business at 302 Broadway in New York City. To get there we had to go to Jersey City and take a ferry across to Manhattan and walk to school. The two of us commuted from the fall of 1948 ... until we graduated in 1950. ...My father used to drive me to the station at half past 6 a.m. And we'd wait for the train to stop at Chester. There were quite a few of us commuting to New York City. There was always a baggage car on the train, which many mornings had milk cans on them which they were taking down to New York City. The train always went to Jersey City. We'd go to Fordham and study after classes, go down and ride the ferry all afternoon back and forth until it was time to go back to Chester...

Of course, going to New York on the train in the summer time, we didn't have any air condition-

ing, but you could open the windows on the passenger cars and the soot would come in. The minute the soot started to come in you'd close the window.

They only other thing I can remember, coming from Jersey City back to Chester one day... The conductor on the train signaled stop at Chester. We went through Chester about 60 miles an hour and never stopped. The conductor pulled the cord and the train stopped way up north to a railroad crossing near the Tuthill farm. So the conductor pointed to the road for me to get off and walk into town and I told him I wasn't going to walk into town. So he pulled his cord again and signaled the engineer and the engineer backed the train all the way to the Chester station and let me off.

My earliest memory...was a station wagon from the Glenmere Hotel [which] would be at the station [to collect those] who had reserved rooms for the weekend. I knew Peter Goelet very well; he started the first radio station (station WGNY on the grounds of the mansion in 1930) in Orange

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County and he used to date my sister. I also knew Glenmere before it was a hotel, when it was still a private residence.

There used to be a guy in Chester by the name of Buck Rhodes and he was a fireman on the train at one time. There was another man in Chester who worked for the railroad by the name of Roxy Kane- -I think he was at one time a conductor or fireman 'cause he lived in downtown Chester. On a Saturday night he would be hanging out on the street

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Miller continued from previous page

and have his beautiful coveralls on and his gold watch hanging down. He hung out down around across from Cullen's newspaper store, near Feldner's ice cream store.

The old station was used as freight storage; it was nondescript.

I was always fascinated by the trains.

Greycourt was a hub or terminal for several different railroads: Leigh & Hudson, Erie, and a branch to Maybrook. I ...can recall people telling me there was a parlour car attached to the train that went from Jersey City to Port Jervis, carrying high-powered executives from Tuxedo. And at the back end there was a parlour car dropped off at Greycourt and taken to Cornwall by another train.

When you had a hub like that, there were a lot of hobos

around. As of matter of fact, I can remember during the day a hobo coming to our back door frequently and my mother would make poached eggs and bacon and give it to him. He would never come inside, but would stay outside and eat it and go to the Lehigh and Hudson Railroad and hop on an empty freight car. A lot of us were told to stay away from Greycourt because of all the hobos around.

And of course, in Greycourt there used to be the Greycourt Inn run by John Diffily; he even became postmaster in Chester. We would always go down to the Greycourt Inn. He had an ice cream parlor there and he'd give you a double dip of ice cream for a nickel...Greycourt was a bigger station than the one in Chester. There was a turntable, trains would come on the Erie from Jersey City, switch, some straight through; some to the Lehigh and Hudson. The O&W, I believe, ran from Haverstraw to Middletown. It was magnificent... Well, there were a few houses down there that people lived in. There was a tremendous amount of history with that Greycourt Station. In addition to passenger trains, they also had freight trains.



Edward J. Szulwach, born April 25, 1929.

During the last 50 + years many people know me as E.J. My early days, the 1940s, my summers were busy working on a vegetable farm with my father and mother. The farm land was black dirt located near the Erie railroad track. We were very dependent on the railroad not necessarily on transportation, but rather on their train schedule. We got up early and promptly went into the fields before having breakfast. When the 7:20 a.m. (I'm not exactly sure of the time, certainly the railroad had a to-the-minute schedule) arrived at the Chester station it was a signal for Mom to leave the fields to go home to make breakfast. It was a similar routine to depend on the 11:40 a.m. and the 5:20 p.m. trains to arrive to prompt the preparation on the noon lunch and then supper. On some occasions I was given a quarter on Friday so I could meet up with a few friends from the village at the railroad station to board the train to Goshen.

*“We were poor, we worked hard.
We enjoyed what we had!”*



A round trip ticket purchase on the train cost 10 cents, the movie ticket another 10 cents leaving 5 cents for a sizable candy bar. The return trip dropped us movie goers home at 10:45 pm. The quarter gave the opportunity for an enjoyable evening, especially if the feature movie of the double attraction was entertaining. Sometimes we left the movie house early to play tag near the Goshen railroad station. Thank you ERIE Railroad for many pleasant childhood memories.

Excerpts from an article on the 'new' 1915 Erie Railroad Station in Chester in The Independent Republican, 1915

“Recently through cooperation with the Erie Railway Company, an attractive railroad station, said to be one of the most artistic on the Erie lines, has just been completed.

“The building is of cement stucco finish, green tile roof, with an extensive concrete platform, a porte-cochère with rustic stone arch and pillar, and with a stone window box under the arch for growing plants. It has two waiting rooms each with toilet accommodations, a large office and baggage room, concrete floors, the floors in the waiting room being finished in red color and laid out in one-foot squares with a diamond effect. The building is steam heated and is lighted with electricity. The former station was moved about a hundred feet



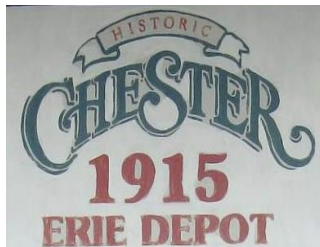


east and has been remodeled for a freight depot.

“The dangerous Meadow Avenue grade crossing was eliminated by the construction of an under-grade crossing about 100 feet east of the old highway. The switch yard has been rearranged, with a new crossing approach to the station from Greycourt Avenue.

“In all these improvements the Village acknowledges with appreciation the interest and influence of Richard Delafield, owner of Brook Farm, through whose association with President Underwood of the Erie largely, they were accomplished.”

**CONGRATULATIONS
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CELEBRATING THE CENTENNIAL
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CHESTER ERIE STATION**



**THE KIWANIS CLUB OF CHESTER
THANKS YOU
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A brief history of the railroad in Chester

1834: Jeremiah Pierson, mine owner, persuades the New York Legislature to authorize construction of the New York and Erie Railroad. Construction begins at Piermont on the Hudson with the final destination point as Dunkirk on Lake Erie.

1841: First official station on the line built in Chester. The village eventually grew around it. It is the first station, along with Goshen, to have full time agents. On Sept. 23, 1841, the first Erie passenger train stopped at Chester.

1842: Farmer Philo Gregory made the first shipment of 240 quarts of milk, at the urging of the station agent, Thaddeus Selleck. It traveled by rail to Piermont and then by boat to New York City. Other farmers followed suit and by 1843, 4,000,000 quarts of milk were shipped to the city and a new industry was introduced.



1851: Ceremonial train ride to celebrate completion of the line. Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State, sat in an open chair on a flatcar, as he explained, to have a better view of the countryside.

1915: Largely through the efforts of Richard Delafield, a new, architecturally pleasing station was built. The old station building was moved east and used as a freight depot.

1964: The Chester Historical Society was formed to preserve the history of Chester.

1983: The final commuter train passed through the Village of Chester.

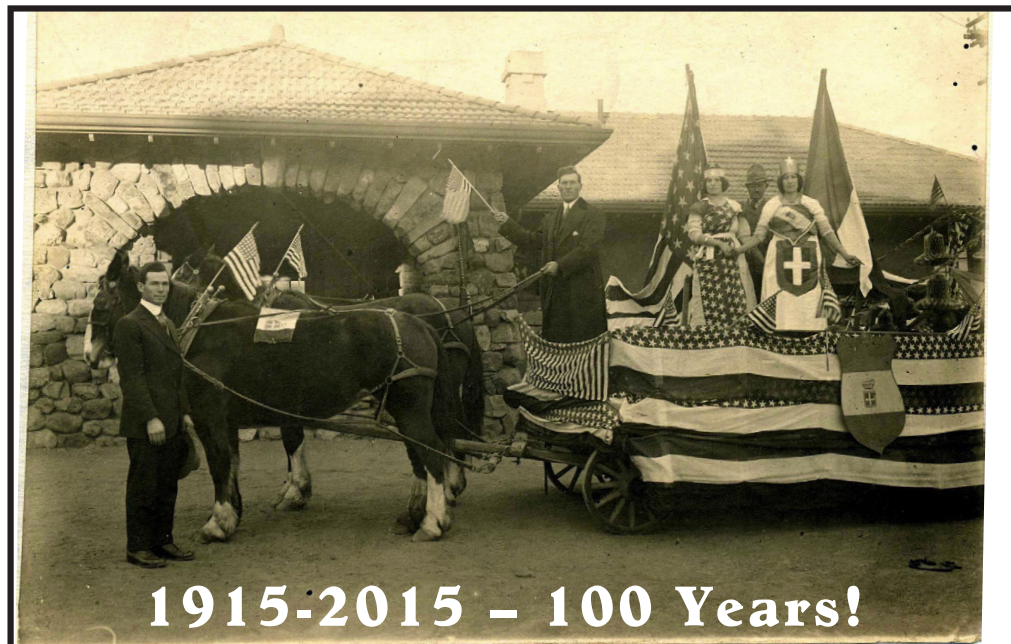
1984: The tracks were taken up and the station more or less abandoned.

1991: Orange County officially leased the station to the Chester Historical Society.

1999: After eight years of fund-raising, cleanup and restoration, the station, now the headquarters of the Chester Historical Society, was opened to the public.

1994: Construction begins on The Heritage Trail, used by walkers, runners and bicyclists, where the railroad track had been.

2015: The Historical Society celebrates the 100th anniversary of the 'new' 1915 Erie Railroad Station in Chester.



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Congratulations

We join with the
Chester Historical Society
in the 100th Anniversary Celebration of
Chester's Erie Station

From The
Officers and Members of the
Chester Fire Department



Robert Favara, Chief Stephen Zoutman, President