

OFFICIAL BALLOT INSIDE

VOL. 68, NO. 5 • NOVEMBER 2025

# THE SEMAPHORE

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM

**NEXT MEETING:**  
**November 20**  
*Member Slide Night!*



Photo by Otto Vondrak

# ELECTION EDITION

## INSIDE:

<i>Restoration Project Updates.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Program Update.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Rochester Community Foundation Grant.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>US Army 1843.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Leadership Changes.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Pumpkin Patch Trains.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Cooperstown Trip.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Upcoming Events.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Election 2025 Information.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Election 2025: Meet the Candidates.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Ballot.....</i>	<i>9</i>

Just as we go to the polls in our communities in the month of November, our museum will be holding its annual elections at this month's membership meeting. You'll find your official ballot on Page 10. Detach it from this newsletter, cast your vote, and mail it in before November 13. Or, you can bring your ballot in person to the monthly meeting on November 20. Please take the time to cast your vote and make your voice heard.

I would like to thank everyone for their efforts so far this year. We have just finished up a very successful month of Pumpkin Patch Trains, and our three weekends of Santa Trains are already Sold Out! As we look forward to a successful remainder of the year, I would like to take a moment to look back at the year behind us, and all that we have accomplished.

This has been a difficult year for our museum, with deaths, resignations, washouts, and more. Collectively, we rose to meet these challenges. We replaced over a hundred bolts on our railroad, surfaced track, and rebuilt culverts. We ran a strong events season, ending with more income from ticket sales than in 2024.

We passed the first balanced budget in half a decade, and with that budget we are on track to make a profit and begin replenishing funds that have been steadily depleted since 2022. And, of course, countless hours of work brought several restorations closer to completion. This year has laid a strong foundation, and I look forward to an even more successful year in 2026!

—Charles Rothbart, President



## Museum Officers

### President

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Jackson Glozer

### Treasurer

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### Recording Secretary

Emilia Connelly

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# Restoration Project Updates



RGE 8's new windows

**RGE 8:** The locomotive has been painted GE Demonstrator Red by Chuck Bell, and new windows have been installed! Mary Strodl is completing tune ups to the air compressors, and Michael Guglielmo along with Jim Johnson are wiring the emergency fuel shutoffs and radio.

**LV 211:** The first radiator section is close to being removed from the locomotive. Once removed, it will be

delivered to Empire Radiator for evaluation. Completion by December 31, 2025. The battery boxes have been cleaned and will be coated with POR-15 before the weather gets too cold.

**Car 60:** The north truck has been rolled out from underneath the car. Jim Johnson and Michael Guglielmo have been inspecting, cleaning, and repairing the electrical systems on the truck. Bill Marcotte and Kyle Loveland have fabricated and installed a replacement main crossbeam to strengthen the car. The Car has received A \$10k grant from the Rochester Community Foundation, and it will be put towards completing repairs on the north end of the car, along with other work.

**USA 1843:** A successful start-up occurred on September 27th and some road testing was performed. The locomotive is in pretty good shape overall, but will need some minor repairs and adjustments. We hope to operate this locomotive next summer for a members meeting or public event!

—Joe Nugent, Mechanical Dept. Supt.



The new crossbeam on Car 60

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## Program Update

Our monthly meetings for the cold season are located at the 40&8 Club, 933 University Ave., Rochester, NY (across from Gleason Works). Doors open at 7:00pm, and the meeting begins at 7:30. Cash bar available. The evening program begins after a brief business meeting.

**Fall Meeting Schedule:**

November 20: Member Slide Night  
December 18: Leanin' Tree Greeting Cards

Please note that most meetings are streamed on Zoom. Make certain your email is in the members list to receive links for each month's meeting.

—Dave Drury, Program Committee Chairman

# Rochester Community Foundation Grant

The Rochester Area Community Foundation has awarded a Historic Preservation Grant in the amount of \$10,000 to the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum! This funding will assist with the structural restoration to the only remaining car from the Rochester Subway, Rochester Subway Car 60. This award is part of an ongoing restoration project for Car 60, with the goal of a full cosmetic restoration and possible return to operation at the Museum. This will allow the car to be displayed for Museum visitors and to be safely moved around the Museum's exhibit areas. The Museum is seeking further funding for this project, which has a projected cost of over \$100,000. Much of this restoration is being undertaken in-house by Museum volunteers, with some work being provided by outside resources, including the Sheet Metal Workers Union Local 46 apprentice program. The Museum and its volunteers would like to express their gratitude for this award from the Rochester Area Community Foundation, and are looking forward to the continued work that this donation will support.

## US Army 1843

The Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad museum's Fairbanks-Morse H12-44 was built in 1953 and celebrated its 72nd birthday in 2025. Before being purchased as surplus by museum members in 1993, she served at the Seneca Army Depot in Romulus NY. The USA (United States Army) 1843 is a 1,200 horsepower yard switcher with a unique opposed piston engine design. The diesel prime mover at idle is relatively quiet with little vibration compared to our ALCO 539's. The 1843 has received several electrical repairs and upgrades over the last several years which include replacement of the original electro-mechanical Westinghouse UVA Vibrating Voltage Regulator with a GE BX/BN card solid state regulator, a rebuilt RC time delay circuit panel used for enabling propulsion in FM's greater than 1000 hp locomotives, new auxiliary generator brushes and a replacement brush holder, and replacement of about 25 lbs of complex pre-power semiconductor era reverse current contactors and relays with a single silicon semiconductor power rectifier and heat sink. In addition, repairs were made to a corroded air line in the radiator room and the conductor's door that was damaged by vandals. The vandalized door had severe corrosion and was painstakingly rebuilt by Joel Poplawski.

Over the spring of 2025, Mary Strodl with help from Kyle Loveland and Jeffrey Condell cleaned, inspected, and re-lubed all 8 brake cylinder pistons. Unlike with some of our ALCOs

removing the brake pistons from these duplex cylinders located under the running boards is a time consuming and sometimes frustrating process. Mary and her team also removed all the air brake valves so that they could be sent out for servicing, re-installing them several months later upon their return.

There are a small number of other operating H12-44's in the US and we have had communications and information sharing with David Althaus of the Southern California Railroad Museum (SCRM) where they have done a beautiful restoration job on their AT&SF 560. We may also visit with RGVRRM member Chris Hauf who volunteers at the Niles Canyon Railway in Sunol, CA to assist with a startup of their USA 1856 H12-44.

The last Saturday of September, we pre-lubed and started up the 1843 for the first time in 2025 to check out the serviced air brake system and perform some road testing to verify the reliability of the propulsion circuits. There are a few minor issues to address such as fine adjusting the idle speed. Idle is currently running about 281 rpm which is a little below FM's specification of 300. Increasing the idle speed about 7% to get to FM's specification will give the auxiliary generator a better margin for maintaining voltage regulation, especially when the headlamps are illuminated.

In the spring of 2026, we plan to perform additional road testing and a 90 day inspection. A goal is to have the 1843 be the power for our first or second 2026 summer Member's



evenings at Industry. This would be the first time in a number of years where the 1843 pulled a train for one of our summer meetings. In addition, the 1843 can hopefully be available as power for heavy switching activities, sharing these responsibilities with RS-1 LAL 20. If we're really feeling comfortable and confident with its electrical and mechanical fitness, she could potentially be power for a public event.

The 1843 is a unique locomotive and one of only a few remaining operating H12-44's left. We hope to be able to keep it operable for many years to come!

—Sam Rosenberg, Mechanical Department

## Leadership changes

RGVRRM is an all-volunteer organization, and the health and wellness of our volunteers and their families should always be their first priority. We thank all of the volunteers who have served at the museum in any capacity, and we acknowledge that it is natural for the leadership for an all-volunteer organization to change over time. In the last few months, RGVRRM has undergone quite a few important changes, and it can be a lot to keep track of (no pun intended). Here is a summary of said changes, in chronological order, for those who might be wondering, *Wait, who's doing what, now?*

- March 6, 2025 – Rob Burz appointed to Trustee position for the remainder of 2025, replacing the late Dave Kaiser
- Spring 2025 – Editor of *The Semaphore* resigns (hence the low number of issues this year – thank you for your patience, everyone)
- Summer 2025 – Vice President Jackson Glozer takes over the responsibility of putting together *The Semaphore*, assisted by friend of the museum Madi Murphy

- August 31, 2025 – Events and Marketing Superintendent Otto Vondrak steps down
- September 19, 2025 – RGVRRM President Mark Bowen steps down
- October 2, 2025 – RGVRRM Board appoints Recording Secretary Charles Rothbart to serve as President for the remainder of 2025
- October 2, 2025 – Trustee Justin Carmona appointed as Recording Secretary for the remainder of 2025
- October 2, 2025 – David Peet appointed to Trustee position for the remainder of 2025
- October 13, 2025 – Recording Secretary Justin Carmona steps down
- October 23, 2025 – Emilia Connelly appointed as Recording Secretary for the remainder of 2025

These changes have been a lot to contend with for our Board, but with the help of our volunteers, we are finishing up a successful season. With the upcoming elections, we may have more changes to leadership, but we will keep you updated!

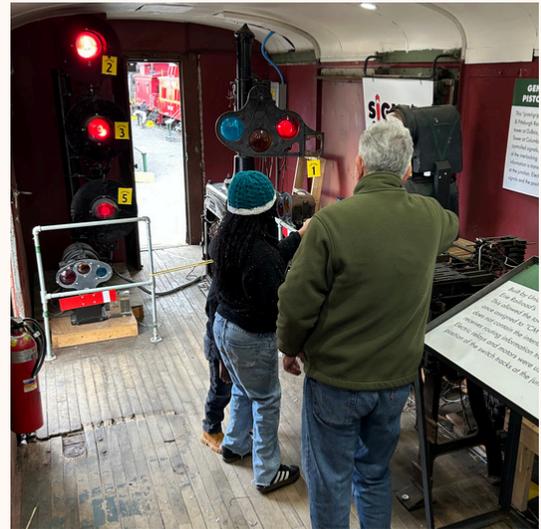
# Pumpkin Patch Trains: A Big Hit

Pumpkin Patch Train Rides drew over 3,000 visitors to the museum as of this writing. We would like to thank all of our wonderful volunteers who coordinated the event, sold tickets, greeted visitors, served refreshments, ran the train, and helped with set-up and clean-up. We could not have done it without you!

We were fortunate to have a petting zoo for two of our weekends. Visitors were able to interact with two alpacas, several sheep and goats, and the most beautiful baby cow on the Earth. Thanks to Niagara Downunder Zoo for fitting us into your busy fall schedule! The animals brought joy for kids and adults alike.



*An alpaca a day*  
RGVRRM President Charles Rothbart and former President Otto Vondrak make a friend



*Paying it forward*  
Volunteer John Guglielmo helps some young visitors in the signal display car



*Some serious side-eye*  
A museum visitor attempts to befriend a skittish alpaca



*"Pull the lever, Kronk!"*  
RGVRRM President Charles Rothbart helps a young visitor in the signal display car

# Cooperstown Day Trip

On Saturday, September 6, twenty members enjoyed a trip to Milford, N.Y. and a day at the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad.

While the highlight of the trip was the scenic ride through the countryside on a chartered train, visitors also toured the railroad's unique collection and experienced a train robbery (staged, not real!).

Despite the rain, the group was also able to experience the 'miniature' railroad that runs through the adjacent town park, hauled by a unique battery-driven locomotive.

The day was capped by dinner at Brooks House of BBQ in nearby Oneonta and a late evening return to Rochester.

Plans are in the works for unique trips in 2026 – we hope many will be able to enjoy this benefit of the museum!

–Dave Drury



Top: A group photo at the depot  
 Above: Members survive a harrowing encounter with train robbers!  
 Left: Members enjoying the charm of the "miniature railroad"

## Upcoming Events

**Santa Trains: SOLD OUT!**

November 29-30, December 6-7, December 13-14

**Holiday Party: December 11**

# ELECTION 2025

As you may have heard, Election Season is upon us. These elections will determine who will lead the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum for the foreseeable future. All members are encouraged to vote so that their voices can be heard. All individuals in a household with a Family Membership or above are eligible to vote, but please indicate the name of the primary membership holder on your ballot to ensure your vote can be counted. Copies of the ballot may be made if needed, or they may be printed from the digital copy of the Semaphore. Please take this opportunity to shape the future of your museum!

## How To Vote In-Person

1. **Attend** the membership meeting on November 20, located at the 40&8 Club, 933 University Ave., Rochester, NY (across from Gleason Works). Doors open at 7:00pm, and the meeting begins at 7:30.
2. **Ballots will be provided** at the meeting for anyone who wishes to vote in-person.

## How To Vote by Mail

1. **Remove** your ballot from this month's copy of *The Semaphore*.
2. **Fill out** your ballot by checking off your desired candidates. Be sure to vote for the correct number of candidates for each position (some positions allow for multiple candidates to be chosen).
3. Be sure to **write your name and sign the bottom** of your ballot. Your votes will be private, but signing the bottom ensures that only Museum members are voting, and that everyone is only voting once. Ballots without a name and signature cannot be counted.
4. **Fold** your ballot and tape it shut so that it is the shape of a standard envelope, with your votes on the inside.
5. Add your return address and a **stamp**, and drop it in the mail! Be sure to mail your ballot by **November 13**.

# Recording Secretary: Meet the Candidates

## Otto Vondrak

My name is Otto Vondrak, and I'm running for Recording Secretary of the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum. I've been proud to volunteer for nearly 30 years, ever since discovering RGV as a freshman at RIT. My friends and I first joined because we believed in what this place could become, and it's been exciting to contribute to our transformation into New York State's largest operating railroad museum. Over the years, I've also served as Trustee, past Recording Secretary, Superintendent of Marketing & Events, and most recently as President. This past year has been one of transition and challenge. Communication has faltered, officers have resigned, and at times it feels like our members and volunteers have been left out of the conversation. If elected, I'll make sure decisions are documented, shared, and explained so everyone feels informed and included. My experience in strategic planning and long-term development, as well as collaboration across other museums and tourist railroads, gives me the perspective to help contribute to the board's efforts to guide our museum into the future. My goal is simple: to help the museum not only survive, but thrive, as we plan for future growth and expansion together. Please consider me for your vote.

## Emilia Connelly

Hello all — my name is Emilia Connelly. I was appointed Recording Secretary on October 16th of this year, and am now running for election to that position. Before coming to Rochester, I spent two years as a switchman, conductor, and dispatcher on the Grand Canyon Railway. I sought out the museum because I missed railroading, and became a member in summer 2023. I have been highly active in operations for most of that time. As to the Secretary's core responsibility: I am well-used to keeping a meticulous record of events. I have done this in a variety of roles - from maintaining train sheets as a dispatcher, to being the "forever note-taker" in a tabletop game, to tracking engineering changes in industrial control panels. The RGV is not my first railroad, but it has brought me as much joy as the GCR ever could. This museum has helped me get through some extremely challenging times, and I hope to be able to return the favor. I look forward to working with the membership and board to help make our museum a better place. I hope you will allow me to continue serving as your Recording Secretary.

# RGVRRM President: Meet the Candidates

## David Scheiderich



My name is David Scheiderich, though most of you know me simply as “Super Dave.” I’m running for President of the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum. For more than 20 years, I’ve been proud to serve this museum in many roles — from track donkey and Museum Manager to Superintendent of Operations and past president. Along the way, I’ve seen what makes RG&V so special: our people. Together, we’ve transformed a worn-out depot into the largest operating railroad museum in New York State — a place built entirely by volunteers with passion and heart.

This past year has tested us in many ways. Unfortunately, a lack of communication, collaboration, and transparency from our current leadership has led to division and frustration among our members. I believe we can do better to serve our members, volunteers, visitors, and other supporters whom we rely on. If elected, I will work to improve communication, restore trust, and make sure every member’s voice is heard. We all share a love for this museum, and by working together, we can continue to grow, welcome new volunteers, and make RG&V an even better place for everyone.

## Charles Rothbart



Hello all, my name is Charles Rothbart. I have been a member of the museum for 5 years, and on the board since the beginning of this year. I, like many members of this year’s board, stepped into a very tumultuous situation. I am immensely proud of everything that we have

accomplished so far, but I am keenly aware that there is still much work to be done.

After Mark Bowen’s resignation this September, I volunteered to fill his role and continue with the work we started. I have only been President for a short period of time, but I have worked to restore communication and transparency, to improve organization, and to help set the museum on a positive path.

With the help of the board, our committees, and all of our members, I hope to continue this work to make our museum the best it can be. I want to empower people to not just be heard, but to be involved, and to have a say in where our museum is going. I want to make this a place where all our volunteers feel welcome. I want to refocus our efforts on what is most important, which is the preservation of railroad equipment and the education of the public on railroad history. I think we have an amazing group of volunteers, and I think our museum has a bright future ahead of it. I hope you will support me, and join me, in moving us forward.



# OFFICIAL 2025 BALLOT



ROCHESTER & GENESEE VALLEY RAILROAD MUSEUM

In accordance with Articles III and IV of the RGVRM By-Laws, the Elections Committee has nominated candidates for election to fill the expiring terms. The names of those selected by the committee are listed below. Vote for candidates by placing an "X" in the appropriate box [ ].

**1. President** One-Year Remainder Term (Vote for ONE candidate)

[ ] Charles Rothbart [ ] Write-In: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] David Scheiderich

**2. Treasurer** One-Year Remainder Term (Vote for ONE candidate)

[ ] Charlie Marks [ ] Write-In: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Recording Secretary** One-Year Remainder Term (Vote for ONE candidate)

[ ] Emilia Connelly [ ] Write-In: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Otto Vondrak

**4. Trustee** Three-Year Term (Vote for TWO candidates)

[ ] Joe Nugent [ ] Write-In: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Michael Guglielmo [ ] Write-In: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Trustee** One-Year Remainder Term (Vote for TWO candidates)

[ ] Rob Burz [ ] Write-In: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] David Buckner [ ] Write-In: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE** (For membership verification only, ballot will NOT be counted without name and signature)

Elections will take place at the November 20, 2025, membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. located at 933 University Avenue, Rochester, NY. Please bring your ballot with you, or mail your ballot to:  
RGVRRM Ballot, P.O. Box 23326, Rochester, NY 14692

**MAIL YOUR BALLOT BY NOVEMBER 13**

RGVRRM BALLOT  
P.O. BOX 23326  
ROCHESTER, NY 14692-3326

PLEASE  
PLACE  
POSTAGE  
HERE

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See other side for official 2025 ballot. Please bring your completed ballot to the November 20 meeting or mail your ballot by November 13 to make sure your vote is counted!



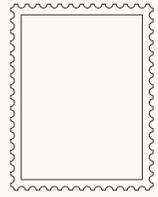


**THE SEMAPHORE**

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