

REGIONAL

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## Preservation Award Winner: Orchard Park Railroad Depot



Preservation Buffalo Niagara is recognizing outstanding preservation projects and those contributing to regional preservation efforts at its annual awards ceremony May 31, 11:30 AM at Kleinhans Music Hall. Buffalo Rising has been profiling this year's winners leading up to the May event.



The Orchard Park railroad depot is a former Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway station owned by the Western New York Railway Historical Society. The society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Western New York Railroad heritage and history. Members have been working at the depot complex two days a week on a regular basis for the past fifteen years.

This 100 year old complex is located on South Lincoln Avenue in the village of Orchard Park. The depot is comprised of two buildings, a passenger station and a freight house. The two buildings are 100 feet apart and are separated by a center island garden and a drive around.



The depot complex was leased by the society in 1982 and has legally belonged to the society since 1995. Rehabilitation of the depot has been and will continue to be the society's responsibility. Society members have worked on saving the depot for the past 31 years. A great deal has been done to rebuild, repair, restore and improve as much of the depot complex as possible with the limited funds on hand.

Members of the society have spent thousands of hours volunteering their time, and effort to save this precious reminder of Western New York's past. Some of the projects at the depot required expertise beyond our member capabilities. As a result, the society has hired professionals to complete such projects. Sometimes the work was donated and other times it had to be paid for.

Several projects have been crucial to the survival of the passenger station and the freight house. A flooded basement in the passenger station in the early years of restoration had to be fixed. A new concrete basement floor was part of that fix and

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was done by society members. The electrical service was completely rewired. This work was imperative both for safety concerns and functionality with the vintage electrical system in the passenger station. Plumbing had to be addressed for obvious reasons as did replacing vintage gas/electric lights with exact duplicates when the originals could not be rebuilt. Re-plastering and re-painting where important to bring back the beauty of the buildings' interior.



After many years of no heat, a new heating system was professionally installed using the original hot water registers and a gas fired modern furnace. The street side of the building had to be raised 3/4 of an inch so that restoration of both washroom facilities could be rebuilt (the lifting of the building was done by volunteers). All of the outside lighting was restored on both buildings using restored or exact copies of original equipment. The attic in the passenger station was cleaned, sprayed with foam insulation and finished with blown in insulation. The center island garden was resurrected from many years of being lost and buried below ground level.

A panel track was installed next to the freight house to accommodate our original wooden BR&P caboose and two first edition all steel B&O boxcars. One of the boxcars was gutted and turned in to an archive room and half of this boxcar is rented for storage by the Western New York Garden Railway Society.

The building is on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The Society has made every effort to keep restoration work as historically correct as possible while improving the buildings for public use. The depot has been used for weddings, parties, picnics, community events and meetings. Educational tours for students, children and others are held regularly.



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