

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Local filmmakers have remastered the 1994 film documentary "The End of the Line - Rochester's Subway" onto a DVD format.

A piece of area history revisited

Irondequoit filmmaker James Harte is part of a team that has re-released a film about Rochester's onetime subway.

By **LINDA QUINLAN**

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When Irondequoit resident and filmmaker James P. Harte moved to Rochester in 1992, he says he couldn't imagine how there had ever been a subway here.

Longtime friend and fellow filmmaker Fred Armstrong, a Rochester native, assured him there indeed was a Rochester subway, but that it had stopped carrying passengers in 1956 and was abandoned

about a year later. The rail line had operated along a former section of the Erie Canal since 1927.

Now Harte defines his age in terms of the onetime subway. "I'm 49 years old, so I was born three months after the Rochester subway closed," he said with a smile.

It was when Harte lived on Rochester's Ravine Avenue, in the 10th Ward, that he noticed a long-vacant, narrow lot. His friend told him it had been part of the subway route.

"Why don't we make a film about the subway?" Harte remembers his friend asking.

They applied for and received a \$15,000 grant and a 45-minute film, "The End of the Line - Rochester's Subway," was the result. Each of

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the Monroe County library branches received a copy on VHS as part of the grant arrangement, and the filmmakers found that there was even a market for the film among local history and train and trolley enthusiasts.

Some 11 years later, there are fewer than 20 copies of the film left, and the filmmakers had a decision to make.

"Since VHS is a dying format, we decided to re-master the film on DVD," Harte said, "and this seemed like the right time. Things kind of came together."

Rochester's ill-fated experiment with rapid transit may be gone, but it's not forgotten, the filmmakers found.

The subway was news again this past summer as plans were announced to fill in its onetime Broad Street tunnel with dirt.

The new DVD includes not

only the original film, but also 45 minutes of new material including a restored 1956 film about the subway; a montage on Car 60, the only surviving subway passenger car; an interview with 87-year-old Don Espenmiller, one of the last men to work on the subway, and a "Phantom Run" through the abandoned Broad Street subway tunnel.

"It was another labor of love," Harte said.

He and Armstrong have arranged to "premiere" the special edition DVD with a free event in Irondequoit next week.

The presentation will be both informative about the subway as well as about local history, Harte said.

"Coincidentally, the story of the subway tells the story of Rochester in the 20th century," Harte said. "We will never get it back, but it would be a shame to fill it in and bury it. The part that's still left ought to be preserved."

"It's almost like a pulse of Rochester that's been forgotten," he added, "but it's still there, still cantankerous, and still causing trouble. It's a fascinating thing, and unique in Rochester history."



NEW MOVIES

NEW ON DVD

If you'd like to sidestep the week's new releases, film critic Jack Garner recommends a classic.

The End of the Line

Many Rochesterians, especially more recent arrivals, probably don't know that the city had a subway line from the late-'20s to the mid-'50s, (running, in part, where Interstate 490 comes into the city from the east).

You can learn all about it in this feature documentary, being released on DVD just in time for holiday giving. Originally produced in 1994 and eventually seen on PBS and The History Channel, the new DVD version includes fun extras — a "phantom run" of the abandoned subway Broad Street tunnel, a round trip on the subway as it existed in the '50s, and an interview with one of the last surviving motor-men. It's available at most local DVD outlets.

Directors: Fred Armstrong and James P. Harte

Rating: Unrated, but of "G" quality.

Jack's rating: 9

WEEKEND • DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE • DemocratandChronicle.com • THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2005

WORTH SEEING

Get a glimpse of Rochester's old subway at a screening of the 1994 award-winning documentary, *The End of the Line — Rochester's Subway*. Originally aired on PBS and The History



Provided by Animatus Studio

Channel, *The End of the Line* will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the auditorium at Irondequoit High School, 260 Cooper Road. The free showing celebrates the 45-minute film's special edition premiere on DVD. For more information, call Animatus Studios at (585) 232-1740 or go to www.animatusstudio.com. □

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ONLINE AT DemocratandChronicle.com

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2005 3F

Film on Rochester's subway will be shown at high school

IRONDEQUOIT — A feature length, re-mastered presentation of *The End of the Line — Rochester's Subway* will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Irondequoit High School, 260 Cooper Road.

Animatus Studio produced the award-winning documentary on the subway in 1994.

Tuesday's special edition DVD premiere contains 45 minutes of new materials, including a restored 1956 film about the subway; a montage on Car 60, the only surviving passenger

car; an interview with Don Esenmiller, 86, one of the last men to work on the subway; and a 2005 "phantom run" through the abandoned Broad Street tunnel.

The End of the Line has been shown several times on public television, WXXI-TV (Channel 21) and the History Channel in the 1990s.

The event is free.

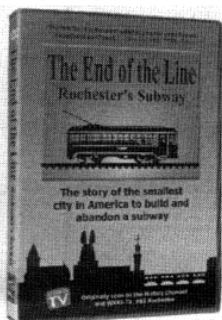
The DVD will be for sale for \$25 plus tax.

For more information, visit www.animatusstudio.com/subway/

SUBWAY NEWS

The 50th anniversary of the abandonment of passenger service on the Rochester Subway is coming up next year, and there are lots of activities set to commemorate the date. The museum will mount a photo exhibit in the gallery featuring black & white prints of the subway from early construction to final throes, and original artwork by Tom Kirm recreating scenes on the line. We'll have more to report on this exhibit in future issues of *HEADEND*.

Animatus Studios, the Rochester company that produced "The End of the Line - Rochester's Subway" in 1994, has released a special edition DVD of that documentary. The original version has been shown on the History Channel and on PBS, and has been available on VHS video in our gift shop. This 45-minute definitive history "recounts the tale of an American city's bumpy ride through the Twentieth Century, from the perspective of a little engine that could, but didn't", according to the Studio's release. The story of the smallest city in America to build and abandon a subway is told in still shots and movie sequences and with well-researched narration.



According to filmmakers Fred Armstrong and Jim Harte, the remastered DVD contains an additional 45 minutes of extra features, including over 150 still photos from the museum's Tom Kirm Collection; the complete 1956 "Steel Wheel"; and a unique "phantom run" in the subway, recreating the experience of riding one of the cars through the tunnel. Outtakes, bloopers, extended interviews with

Subway oldtimers, and many other treats await the viewer in this new version of the Subway's history.

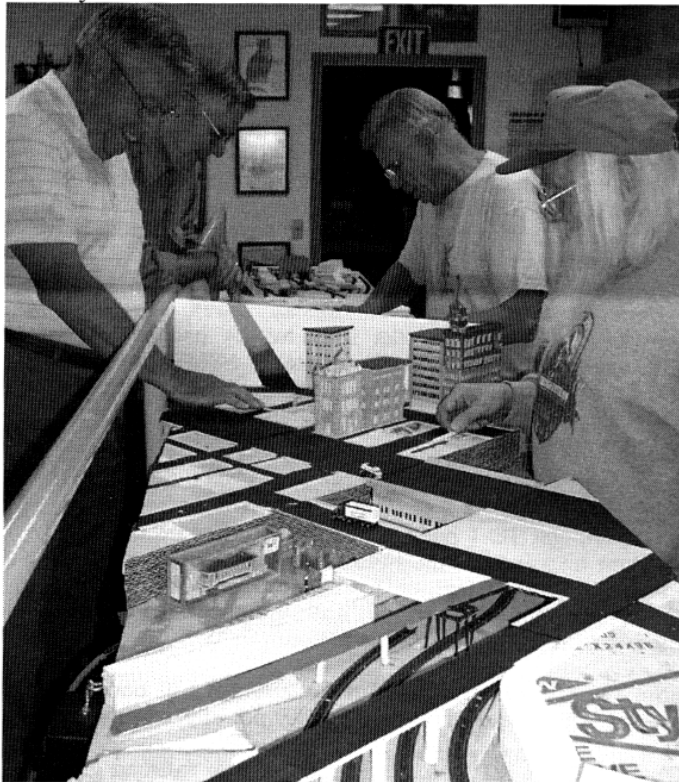
The museum has for some years had a video of the "Steel Wheel" running continuously in the gallery for visitors to enjoy. This work, by Les Edgcomb and the late Bob Messenger, was more of a filmmaking endeavor combined with an interest in preserving Rochester history, as the two were not necessarily trolley enthusiasts. Their work is truly valuable, however, as it captures all the details of a complete round trip from the carbarns in the northwest part of Rochester, down to Rowlands loop and back. Through the good use of proper filmmaking technique—mixing close-ups with long shots, covering ancillary details as well as the more typical shots of passing trolleys, telling a story rather than just collecting assorted views—Edgcomb and Messenger have given us an enjoyable, historic film. We're glad that the new "End of the Line" can now include the entire "Steel Wheel" footage. Fred and Jim were kind enough to provide us with a DVD version of the complete "Steel Wheel", including the sound track they created for the remastered production, and this new improved version is there to enjoy in our gallery.

Interestingly, back in 1950, work was done by Vitaly V. Uzoff on a film about the Subway as a Master's thesis at the Rochester Institute of Technology, but it was never completed. The Animatus people were able to find Uzoff in 1993, who graciously gave them the sound track and said he had given the original film to the City of Rochester. The film is apparently now lost, as Fred and Jim were never able to locate it. The sound track was on paper based ¼" tape, and was so decayed that as Animatus dubbed it onto modern media, the old original almost self-destructed and is no longer playable.

Even if you already have a video copy of "The End of the Line", you'll want to get the DVD version. Plan to stop out at the museum soon to enjoy the "Steel Wheel" complete with soundtrack, playing in our gallery, and be sure to visit in 2006 to see our new gallery exhibit, reflecting on the past and looking forward to the museum's future of operating trolleys.

The Rochester Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society has published a full-color calendar for 2006 featuring twelve photos of the Rochester Subway, commemorating the 50th anniversary of abandonment. They sell for \$15, and you can get ordering information from Chris Hauf at crhauf@frontiernet.net.

The model railroad crew at NYMT have been busy with some subway recreating of their own. Their N-scale model of the Rochester Subway is fully functional, and Dick Luchterhand reports that the roster of operating subway cars now numbers seven. The main focus of activity now is to build models of the various downtown buildings appropriate to the Subway era. Visitors will be able to study miniature versions of the Powers Building and other city center landmarks as the tiny Subway cars run beneath Broad Street.



City builders Bob Nesbitt, Bill Chapin, Jerry Doerr, and Dick Luchterhand say urban renewal isn't hard work...in N-scale.

HEADEND

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Subway...Gone, Never Forgotten!

It's been nearly 50 years since Rochester abandoned the Rochester Subway, its ill-fated experiment with rapid transit in 1956.

Never really forgotten, the subway made news again this summer as plans were announced to fill in the Broad Street tunnel with dirt.

In light of this, the Animatus Studio, which produced an award-winning documentary on the subway in 1994, has re-mastered "The End of the Line - Rochester's Subway" as a Special Edition DVD.

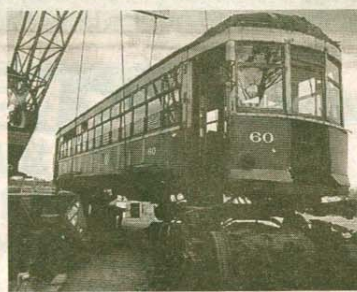
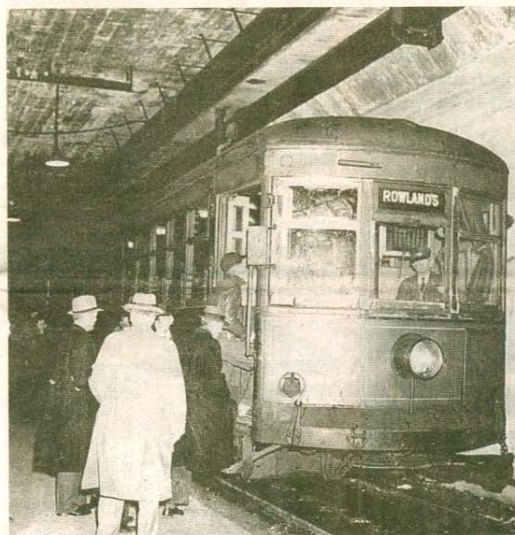
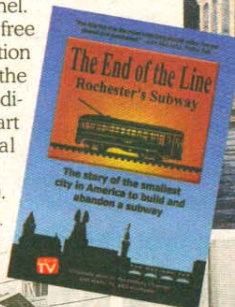
In addition to the original film, Animatus has produced 45 minutes of new material including a restored 1956 film about the subway; a montage on Car 60, the only surviving car; an interview with 87-

year-old Don Espenmiller, one of the last men to work on the subway, and a "Phantom run" through the abandoned Broad Street tunnel.

The DVD will be shown as a free and open, feature-length presentation at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 22, at the West Irondequoit High School auditorium, 260 Cooper Road, as part of the Rochester AudioVisual Association's 50th anniversary.

Further information, 232-1740.

Photos courtesy of Fred Armstrong, Animatus Studio.



www.dailymessenger.com

DAILY MESSENGER

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Neighborhood News

'Rochester Subway'
DVD premieres

IRONDEQUOIT — It's been almost 50 years since Rochester abandoned its ill-fated experiment with rapid transit, the Rochester Subway.

Gone but not forgotten, it was news again this summer as plans were announced to fill in the Broad Street tunnel with dirt. Rochester's Animatus Studio, which produced an award-winning documentary on the subway in 1994, has re-mastered "The End of the Line — Rochester's Subway" as a Special Edition DVD. In addition to the original film, Animatus has produced 45 minutes of new material including a restored 1956 film about the subway, a montage on Car 60, the only surviving passenger car, an interview with 87-year-old Don Espenmiller, one of the last men to work on the subway, and a "Phantom Run" through the abandoned Broad Street tunnel.

The DVD will be shown as a feature-length presentation at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 22, in Irondequoit High School's main auditorium as part of Rochester AudioVisual Association's 50th anniversary. The event is free and open to the public. The school is located at 260 Cooper Road. For more information, contact Fred Armstrong at Animatus Studio at (585) 232-1740 or visit <http://www.AnimatusStudio.com/subway>.