



Meeting Notice

Our next Zoom Meeting is on
Friday, June 18, 2021, 7:30 pm

Presenting This Month: Albert J. Churella

ERA continues to take advantage of Zoom by inviting accomplished speakers from around the country. This month's presenter is **Al Churella**, professor of history at Kennesaw State University in the Metro-Atlanta city of Kennesaw, Georgia. Churella's research focuses on transportation history and transportation policy, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the railroads and the regulatory state. His presentation, "**Escape from New York (and Philadelphia): How the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Long Island Rail Road Got Rid of Their Commuter Service**" is a fascinating pictorial retelling of the transition to new regional transit operators in the 1950s and early 1960s.

By the early 1960s, commuter rail services in northeastern cities were on the verge of collapse. Poor equipment utilization, high labor costs and highway construction transformed a profitless business into an existential threat to the railroad industry. As private corporations, the railroads provided a public service – one that was crucial to the functioning of the urban infrastructure. Yet they operated in an environment where the public sector rarely offered the assistance that was needed to maintain urban mobility. More than any other company, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) experienced the problems associated with commuter operations. Directly and through its Long Island Rail Road subsidiary, PRR served Philadelphia and New York, the two largest cities on the East Coast. In both locations, PRR and LIRR executives first attempted to reduce the cost of commuter service, then sought government subsidies to offset increasing losses, and finally endeavored to make everything the responsibility of the public rather than the private sector. That story offers a fascinating mix of militant commuters, ambitious politicians, and government officials who sought to maintain as much commuter service as possible – without making the people pay for it.

Churella has written two books: *From Steam to Diesel: Managerial Customs and Organizational Capabilities in the Twentieth-Century American Locomotive Industry* and *The Pennsylvania Railroad, Volume I, 1846-1917: Building an Empire* and has nearly finished the second and final volume of the history of the PRR, covering the years between 1917 and the Penn Central merger in 1968. Churella is also the president of the Lexington Group, Inc., an educational organization that seeks to promote a dialogue on railroad and transportation history and practice.

The Pennsylvania Railroad, Volume I, 1846-1917 is available from Amazon for \$42 at www.amazon.com/dp/081224348X.

How to Join Our Zoom Meeting

A "Zoom Login" button will be posted on our homepage about five days before Churella's presentation. Please go to ERA's website at www.erausa.org to join. You can sign in at 7:15 p.m., and the show begins at 7:30 p.m. If you have any problems, email Bob Newhouser at bnnyc1955@aol.com, or even better, on the night of the meeting text or call Bob at 917-482-4235.

Other Important Announcements: President Bob Newhouser

Brooklyn EI Book is at the Printer! *The Elevated Railways of Brooklyn and the BMT Subway, Volume 1* by Eric R. Oszustowicz is being printed. All members should receive a copy this June.

Next ERA Convention Announced! The 2022 convention will be based in San Diego, July 7-10, with trips throughout Southern California. We will have more details soon. The 2021 convention has been cancelled due to COVID-19.

It's Easy to Join the ERA! Members, feel free to share this flyer with your friends. If they enjoy our Zoom programs, they should feel free to join at www.erausa.org/join.

It's Easy to Donate! Please consider a donation this year to help ERA continue its 87-year record of traction education and entertainment. ERA is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation. Your donations are fully tax deductible and can be made using the new donation form on our website: www.erausa.org/donate.