

# ALL ABOARD! THE GREAT LAKES TRAIN HISTORY





Keith Famie  
Mark Salloum  
Filmmakers  
Bending River Films  
28345 Beck Road  
Wixom, MI 48393

Dear Keith & Mark --

I hope this letter finds you well. Having recently learned of your proposed project, *All Aboard! The Great Lakes Train History*, and wanted to express my enthusiastic interest in this endeavor on behalf of Detroit Public Television. Your exploration of Detroit's rich and complex history with train transportation has tremendous potential to resonate with our viewers, not only as an engaging piece of storytelling but as a deeply relevant reflection of the city's identity and evolution.

The history of trains in Detroit is not merely a tale of transportation; it is a window into the development of a city that once stood as a hub of industrial innovation and economic growth. The railways facilitated the migration of diverse populations, linking communities and fueling Detroit's rise as the Motor City. They also served as lifelines for industries shaping the economic and cultural tapestry of the region. However, the story of Detroit's trains is also one of transition—marked by shifts in industry, urban development, and social dynamics, which continue to echo in the city's narrative.

PBS viewers, particularly those in Detroit and other urban centers with their own historical ties to railways, have a profound interest in programming that bridges history, culture, and the present. A film like *All Aboard! The Great Lakes Train History* would not only celebrate the past but also provoke thought about the infrastructure, community connections, and transformations that define modern cities. The topic aligns beautifully with PBS's mission to educate, inform, and inspire audiences by uncovering stories of significance.

As you know, we are always interested in supporting independent filmmakers and always on the lookout for compelling projects to broadcast to our audience. We would be delighted to explore the possibility of including *All Aboard! The Great Lakes Train History* in our programming lineup,

Thank you for considering Detroit Public Television as a potential home for your work. We look forward to hearing more about your project and to the possibility of working together to share this important story with our viewers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred", written in a cursive style.

Fred Nahhat  
Senior VP, Production  
Detroit PBS

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We may be midway through the Space Age, with our sights set on sending humans to Mars, but back on earth, the mystique of trains is still going strong. No launchpad show has ever quite duplicated the magic of steam blasting from a smokestack, the clang of bells at a whistle stop or the creak of heavy metal as a train leaves the station to power off into history. In part that's because, unlike a rocket bound for the stars, trains have always been accessible to you and I.

Filmmakers Producer/Directors Keith Famie and Mark Salloum are proud to announce ***All Aboard! The Great Lakes Train History***, a film that captures the romance and amazement of train travel while celebrating the history of an irreplaceable artery that has moved Michigan's people and mobilized her manufacturing through three centuries.

The history of Michigan's rail system even predates statehood; in 1832—five years before Michigan was admitted to the Union—the first railroad was chartered. The following year, Michigan's first set of tracks were laid by the Erie & Kalamazoo Railroad on a route between Adrian and Toledo. By 1900, the state boasted almost 8,000 miles of tracks and proved essential to a nascent automotive industry. Always a leader in motorized innovation, Detroit has contributed many superlatives to the railroad system, including the iconic Michigan Central Depot in 1913, which at the time was the tallest railroad terminal in the world. A century later in 2013, the first intercity passenger rail service to operate at speeds of 110 mph opened on the corridor known as the Chicago–Detroit Line to accommodate Amtrak's Wolverine and Blue Water trains.

Michigan's railroads remain inseparable with our economic development. Freight railroads provide shippers with cost-effective transportation for bulk commodities and the automotive industry continues to rely on the railroads to transport materials to plants and finished automobiles to the market. Equally, Michigan agriculture depends on the railroad to transport grain, and as an ecological bonus, freight-by-rail is not only cost-effective but energy efficient as it generates less air pollution per ton-mile than trucking.

As part of this journey down the tracks, we will explore some of Michigan's iconic train collectors whose passion for elaborate train displays goes much further than a train going around a circle under a Christmas tree.

Join Keith Famie and Mark Salloum to explore Michigan's long-standing love affair with trains and see how they have offered us as much for our imaginations as for our industries.



**Bending  
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Films**

# *Michigan's Railroad History*



For almost 200 years, Michigan's railroads have played a major role in the economic development of the state.

From its beginning in the 1830s, Michigan's railroad system increased to a high of more than 9,000 route miles by the early 1900s. However, as the road system improved and use of automobiles and trucks increased, the number of miles of track began to contract. Today, Michigan's railroad system has approximately 3,600 miles of rail corridors, operated by 29 railroads. Four of the seven Class I railroads operate in Michigan. The system carries about 17 percent of all the state's freight tonnage and 21 percent of the commodities by value. This system also supports three intercity passenger-rail routes. The system is almost exclusively privately owned and financed by the railroad industry.

Railroads are primarily regulated at the federal level, including interstate commerce, train speeds, train horns, quiet zones, train signals and other railroad operations.

MDOT's Office of Rail works to ensure that Michigan's rail system meets the economic needs of the state and is safe for the motoring public, rail passengers and railroad employees.



**Bending  
River  
Films**

## **Mark Salloum Director/Producer**

Producer/Director Mark Salloum has been producing short films and video content for nearly three decades. In 1997, he formed Highway Media to fulfill his passion and has since become one of the most awarded studios in Metro Detroit, traveling to 15 states and five countries for their clients. In 2019, Mark released his first feature length documentary, ***Plymouth, Michigan – A Rich History***, which sold out 11 consecutive shows at the Penn Theatre.



By fate or chance, Mark and Keith met in 2024, to discuss their love for filmmaking and decided to collaborate their energy together. Their new studio, Bending River Films, will be the vehicle to produce documentary films which inspire, inform, and initiate their audiences like never before.



## **Keith Famie Director/Producer/Author**

Director/Producer Keith Famie was, for many years, known as a celebrity chef and a Metro Detroit restaurateur. Famie was also a finalist on the 2001 reality television series, "Survivor, the Australian Outback." Keith hosted his own Food Network series, "Keith Famie's Adventures," traveling the world documenting different cooking styles.

In 2004, Famie embarked on a new journey - documentary filmmaking. "I didn't want to be the 'Adventure Chef' guy anymore. I wanted to help people tell their stories."

Since that life-changing decision, Famie & his company, Visionalist Entertainment Productions, has been awarded twenty-three Michigan Emmys and been nominated several other times for his rich, human-interest storytelling, from a day in the life of children with Down syndrome to stories about Alzheimer's, cancer, healthy aging as well as Detroit's rich history told through documentaries such as ***Detroit: The City of Churches***, ***Detroit: The City of Chefs*** and ***Detroit: The City of Hot Rods & Muscle Cars***.