

# Turntable Times

Volume XXXI

Number 7

July 1999



With the recent miserably hot weather, who can say they have not given at least a thought to a cooler environment? Obviously the advertising department of the Norfolk and Western was ahead of the moment in May of 1948 when they created this window display to go into the Cincinnati ticket office. Does anyone actually know where these displays were constructed? Personally, in my opinion, the carpenter shop in the basement of the General Office building was the site, but I would be interested in information either confirming this or otherwise.

Negative 505729, May 8, 1949.

Norfolk and Western Photo, Roanoke Chapter NRHS Archives Collection.

# Turntable Times

**Volume XXXI      July 1999      Number 7**

Editor ..... Kenney Kirkman  
Mixed Freight ..... Robin Shavers  
Small Rails ..... Dave Meashey  
Splinters ..... Bill Arnold  
Publisher ..... Richard D. Shell  
Publisher ..... Kenneth L. Miller

**All materials should be sent directly to**

**Editor Kenney Kirkman**

**590 Murphy Road**

**Collinsville, VA 24078-2128**

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## Cards and Flowers

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, lost a loved one or has a new birth in the family, please contact Elizabeth Leedy. Elizabeth is responsible for Chapter cards and flowers and can be reached at 389-5274.

## Meeting Notice

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, July 15, 1999 at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

## Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Monday, July 19, 1999. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

## Where the #@\$% is my Newsletter?

by Ken Miller

As you may have noticed, this issue and the June issue of the Turntable Times is quite late. So what is the problem? It is a very simple answer, this is a volunteer effort, no one gets paid for this, so it falls to spare time to get produced. Now before anyone jumps the gun,

Kenney Kirkman is quite faithful, he gets the material typed and on a disc to me in plenty of time to get it out before the meeting. The problem is this file needs to be translated to a format that can be set up as you see it now. This portion of the job usually takes an hour or so. Then the material must be made to fit the issue, this usually involves either writing material, or cutting things to make it fit an existing number of pages, usually it is adding material to fit.

Next up is scanning the photos for reproduction and retouching the scans, then importing the text and photos into a page layout program (we use Quark Xpress) and making it work for output at the print shop. There are a lot of details involved here as well as knowing exactly what you are doing. Now we are up to a 2-3 hours more involved.

Now a lot of you might say "so 3 to 4 hours a month, big deal!" Exactly right, however, this is the job that I get paid for, and paying work comes long before the freebies, bills seem to come every month regardless. In addition, this comes in addition to the other work I do for the Chapter.

Now if there is a volunteer out there who would like to take on this task, we'll be more than happy to talk with them and even provide formats, and guidelines for production, it is not that big a task, but certain rules need to be followed to make it work. I'll be glad to work with anyone who can do it. The production can be done on a Macintosh or IBM compatible, but must be done in Quark Xpress or Pagemaker, preferably current versions. We cannot use Microsoft Publisher or any of the other non-standard programs. This job with photos included, will usually be a 5-8 MB file, we can handle media from Zip cartridges, CDs, 3.5 floppies or probably even a Syquest cartridge. We will be glad to do the scans if someone else can do the layout work. We can even take the layout as an electronic file via email, there are several details with that that will be critical to make it work.

We need volunteers, not just for this, but for all areas within the Chapter. We have activities of all sorts that need more hands, if we do not get

volunteers, some things may begin to stop being done. We have already no volunteer to head up the refreshments at our monthly meetings, so in turn we have no refreshments. What will be next? Come on and volunteer! It can be fun.

## **Small Rails - July**

by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers continue to upgrade the track and scenery on their layout modules. The standard 9 inch sections of splice track were attached to their plywood bases and ballasted at the most recent June work night. Another feature being implemented is the use of half inch dowels to help align the modules when they are assembled. The holes for the dowels require very careful drilling, as the dowels must be perfectly straight and horizontal.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their June meeting at Bill Hughes' home on June 6th. Bill was having some electrical difficulty with his garden railway, so only a few trains ran. Club members enjoyed each others company and talked about trains and other outdoor projects. The club also discussed having a Christmas display at a Roanoke church during the church's Christmas and crafts sale.

## **A PERSONAL FAREWELL TO CONRAIL**

by Mr. Robin Shavers

I really do not have much to report this month for my usual MIXED FREIGHT column. Most of us whom are active trackside and behind the scenes are busy learning what's going on now that the Conrail takeover date has come and gone. You'll be reading and hearing about the progress and changes for months and years to come.

One thing I will mention about an annual local event concerning RAIL DAY sponsored by Trains Unlimited in Lynchburg. Since the beginning it has traditionally been held on the second Saturday of August. This year because of a family obligation of Train's Unlimited's owner, RAIL

DAY will be held on the first Saturday of August, August 7th. Make a note on your calendar so you won't miss the event by a week.

Now to get on with the subject matter as suggested by the title above. For the past fifteen years or so, spending Memorial Day weekend watching and photographing the trains of Conrail as they do their part in moving commerce between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, PA's has indeed been an enjoyable and rewarding tradition for me. Memorial Day Weekend 99 was likewise but with a bittersweet twist. It would be the last weekend of a railroad that I have enjoyed spending time with as a railroad enthusiast. Sure Conrail locomotives will be around for years to come and the Conrail aura even longer. The aura of Conrail predecessors still can be felt in some locales if your spirit is sensitive enough to pick up them.

Departing Richmond Thursday night May 27th and arriving in Altoona trackside at 5:06 a.m. after spending 4' hours trackside at Hancock, MD on the former B&O Railroad for some shut-eye. The first train seen in Altoona shortly after 6:00 a.m. was a coal train of 100% Norfolk Southern Top Gons led by two Conrail SD60Ms. As the train rolled slowly by, I thought about an article I recently read in the May 1999 issue of TRAINS magazine entitled "Get Used to It". The next three trains would have NS locomotives within their consist, none were leading.

Naturally this article is not going to be a very detailed account of my 4' day visit so I'll just generalize and mention the highlights.

The weather during that weekend was decent though cloud clusters made a daily visit for about an hour. More railfans than usual, as expected, were present. Train traffic was in my opinion, normal. I was only able to spend one night at the famous Station Inn at Cresson. The establishment was booked solid months in advance.

I met fellow fans from Virginia, Michigan, Ohio, New England and a guy from Iowa whom was doing a 3 week Conrail odyssey. Of course the locals were out in force too. Most of my

time was spent between Altoona and Conemaugh with a brief jaunt to Conway Yard with railfan associate Vic Stone from Charlottesville on Memorial Day. I hooked up with Vic in Altoona early Memorial Day morning. He proved to be a real asset as he knew the first trick operator at Alto Tower. We paid him a visit before our jaunt to Conway Yard. It was my first visit inside Alto Tower and the operator's last tour of duty. He was a pleasant easy going fellow whom enjoyed his profession very much.

The buzz word out was that Conrail would be shut down in a sense of speaking as NS and CSX made the necessary moves for their respective take overs. The time lengths ranged from 14 to 24 hours. As normal for Memorial Day, few trains were operated. The few trains we saw were solid trains of gondolas and intermodals. We did see one rail train entering Conway Yard from the east. We spent roughly 3 hours at Conway before heading back to Altoona where we would monitor the scanner trackside as May 31st became June 1st. We heard absolutely nothing between 11:52 p.m. and 12:16 a.m. I normally would have been homeward bound at this time but decided to stay for part of Tuesday June 1st to witness any changes from an operations standpoint. A rumor was out that an NS unit would be on the point of all trains departing major terminals. At Conway Yard we saw a total of 12 NS widecabs with 6 facing west and six facing east. The few trains we saw on June first has all Conrail power. The words Norfolk Southern replaced Conrail over the airwaves.

The real focus of attention for those of us in Altoona was the westbound Barnum & Bailey Train Red Team. It was powered by a pair of Conrail SD-40-2s and departed with an added pair of like helper units on the point to help the long heavy train ascend the mountain ahead. The train was in Altoona for about 2 hours to water and feed the animals. The train drew a huge crowd of townfolk, railfans and media personnel. I took a nice shot of the train departing Altoona and again at Cassandra some 19 miles west of Altoona.

My journey back home to Richmond began at

1:20 p.m. I had taken three rolls of film, saw and heard a lot of trains, met numerous people, traveled 898 miles and of course the spiritual gratification is not measurable. Like past Memorial Day weekends, it was time well spent. Like other fallen flags, Conrail will be remembered via memories, photos and videos. At least pieces of it will still exist thanks to The Shared Asset Operations.

## **'Old 97' Museum**

Developers plan to convert the site of the famous wreck of 'Old 97' in Danville, Va. and surrounding property into a showpiece of commercial and residential space. An integral part of the development will be a museum commemorating the wreck of the Old 97, a 1903 train crash that has become the most celebrated train wreck in America. The crash was immortalized in the song, "The Wreck of Old 97."

The plans mean the site of the wreck will be accessible to the public for the first time.

Local preservationists went into action after Dan River Inc., announced in 1998 that it would demolish 13 buildings constructed between the 1880s and 1920 and taking up about 800,000 square feet on 29 acres. Recently, Dan River donated the property to the Danville Historical Society, which, in turn, entered into a long-term lease with Riverside Mills Redevelopment Group LLC.

Riverside Mills Redevelopment officials envision a series of museums and a walkway to the train wreck site, where interpretive materials will be located. Only a historical marker alongside Highway 58 denotes the spot now. Just recently, a section of former railroad right-of-way which begins at the Danville train station on Craighead Street and crosses the Dan River via a large metal trestle was opened for biking and hiking purposes.

## **The Saltville Shifter Rolls Again**

by Chris Helmer

In conjunction with the Town of Saltville, the Roanoke Valley Central Railway, and the Southwest Virginia Railroad Museum begun on

Memorial Day weekend, a summer schedule of passenger excursions through the scenic Holston River Valley will operate every other weekend until Labor Day. The train rides, a round trip of almost four miles, are being operated on the interchange track of the former Norfolk and Western and the Olin Railroad, pulled by the Town's historic diesel locomotive.

The passenger trains will depart downtown Saltville, near the post office, Saturday's on the hour starting at 11 AM with the last regular train departing at 4 PM. On Sundays, the trains will run hourly from 12 PM until the last regular train leaves at 3 PM. Weather permitting, an evening "moonlight train" will depart at 8:30 PM on Saturday evenings to travel under the stars. Tickets can be purchased from the trackside conductor the day of the ride for all train trips.

Operating schedule for the remainder of 1999 will be: July 17-18; July 30-August 1; August 14-15; August 28-29; September 4-6.

Train rides are \$2.50 per person on the regular daily runs and \$5.00 for the moonlight ride. Engineer classes are \$25.00 per person, including a photo in the engineer seat and official engineer hat. Other railroad items, including memorabilia and souvenirs, will be available for sale.

In July, the railroad will be hosting an "engineer training" course where people can learn the fundamentals of railroad operation and actually operate the locomotive! These classes will be offered on Saturday afternoons. The training classes will be held in the Town's 1900's caboose! Any profit from these events will be used for rebuilding the railroad - including the restoration of a 1900's former Norfolk and Western steam locomotive.

Volunteers are needed for this exciting project. For more information, contact Chris Helmer by phone at (540) 562-1337 or by e-mail at helmer@roanoke.infi.net or stop by the Saltville Tourism Department in the Saltville Town Hall. While in Saltville, visit the restored Salt Works, the Museum of the Middle Appalachians, the Saltville Historical Society Museum and the other street merchants in downtown.

## Here and There

by Kenney Kirkman

Norfolk Southern has a new company slogan... "We're All On the Same Track Now."

On May 19th, the \$46 million project to restore the narrow-gauge East Broad Top Railroad moved a little closer to its goal when officials announced a \$1 million grant to stabilize the maintenance shop complex at EBT headquarters in Rockhill, PA, plus the extension of a state heritage park to include the 33-mile long rail line. The plan calls for rehabilitating the tracks and for refurbishing the shops, locomotives and rolling stock to allow for excursions along the entire line. (Altoona Mirror via Potomac Rail News).

Thanks to U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, the City of Martinsburg, West Virginia has received a \$300,000 grant to restore the historic 1866 B&O roundhouse there. Berkeley County officials had voted to purchase the Martinsburg structure from CSX Reality for \$150,000. Possible uses include a Civil War history museum or a center for new businesses. (Hagerstown Herald-Mail via Potomac Rail News).

Amtrak is rebuilding their remaining older dining cars at Beech Grove, Indiana for use on the Silver Service trains, the Crescent, and the Lake Shore Limited. The new designs will feature table dining at one end, a lounge area at the other, and diner-style counter seating in between. This would provide continuous service, more flexible menu options, and more efficient facilities with better passenger accommodations. The first cars should be coming out by the end of 1999. (The Switchlist via the Piedmont Flyer).

Burlington, North Carolina now has a new passenger train station. The new depot, located on East Webb Avenue, features a 25-passenger waiting room, restroom facilities, and outdoor pay phone and remote controlled public address system to announce train arrivals. Burlington is served by two daily passenger trains, the Piedmont and Carolinian.

And last December, Pennsylvania unveiled a special license plate featuring Grif Teller's famous 1928 painting When the Broad Way

Meets the Dawn. The painting depicts the Pennsylvania Railroad's Broadway Limited on its Chicago-New York run as the first light of day breaks along the Juniata River in central Pennsylvania. A portion of the proceeds from the sale will underwrite educational and exhibit programs sponsored by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The plates cost \$35 and are available for use only on cars licensed in Pennsylvania. (The Timetable).

(Turntable Times Editor's Thought.....Virginia has so many different scenes on license plates now, but none depict any railroading that we know of. Wouldn't a nice view on your license plate of 611 or 1218 be a great way to show your interest in railroading, particularly when it comes to steam engines? The City of Danville a couple of years ago featured a photo of that community's train station on its city decal for motor vehicles, so why not the idea of a railroad picture of some kind on Virginia license plates? It's often hard now to get personalized plates that show individual interests in railroading since so many engine numbers, letterings, etc., are already taken. But with a picture of say 611 or 1218, countless more railfans living in Virginia could show the world along the highway so to speak their interest in railroading. How about it, Virginia legislators and politicians? It certainly would make for an interesting topic to introduce in the Virginia General Assembly the next time you folks get together in Richmond).

## **Splinters From The Board**

by Bill Arnold

**H**elp Needed at the Gift Shop—For the month of May, 18 individuals signed up to volunteer at the Roanoke Chapter's Gift Shop at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. Of those 18, one person signed up for six days, and another for 4 days. Those who volunteer do because they enjoy their time spent at the shop. While it does not pay monetarily, it is gratifying to these individuals because of the contacts they make with the customers (and browsers alike). They are given the opportunity to talk

about railroad history, particularly how it relates to the N&W and the surrounding area. Can you spare a day? How about a half day (two halves make a whole)? If you've worked before and can spare the time, we'd love to have you back. If you've never worked before, we'll be glad to train you. It is easy! Give it a try—you'll be glad you did, it is very rewarding! Call Ellen Arnold at 389-3217, Grace Helmer at 366-2169 or Paul Howell at 774-2619 for more information or to sign up.

## **What is new at the Gift Shop**

**F**rom time to time, we'll run an article her to inform you of new additions to the Roanoke Chapter's Gift Shop in the Transportation Museum. Our first feature is our railroad books, at last count we had over 100 different titles. Our recent additions include:

Seaboard Air Line by William E. Griffin

Lehigh Valley Railroad by Robert F. Archer

Southern Railroad in Color, Volume Two  
by Alton Lanier

American Train Depots and Roundhouses  
by Hans and April Halberstadt

Virginia Railway Depots by Donald R. Traser

Railroad Stations by Brian Solomon

Southern Railway's Spencer Shops

by Duane Galloway and Jim Wrinn

When Steam Ran The Clinchfield

by James A. Goforth

Classic American Railroads by Mike Shafer

Railroad Timetables, Travel Brochures and

Posters by Brad S. Lomazzi

Rails Remembered Volume 3

by Louis M. Newton

We also have a large selection of Norfolk Southern (with Thoroughbred logo) white golf shirts with a variety of collar colors. Sizes available are Medium, large and extra large and a small quantity of XX large. Price is \$32.95 plus the S/H for mail order and tax for Virginia residents.

From our archives, our first offering are blue-line reprints of N&W drawings of the Roanoke



The best-dressed(?) hobos on the Abbot Tours hobo trip on the West Virginia Central on June 12, 1999.

Both: Bill Arnold

Terminal from 1930. These drawings are quite detailed and to scale and were originally drawn and reproduced as to show available industrial sites in and around Roanoke from Tinker Creek at the east to just west of Shaffers Crossing. The set is ten sheets plus a legend or title sheet for \$10 plus S/H. each sheet measures 25 x 18 inches and are clean reprints from the original linen drawings. Sheets are available on an individual basis as well at \$2.50 per sheet plus S/H. Sheets are as follows:

- 3 ....East End Shops Car Roundhouse including the Shenandoah Division connection
- 4 ....East End Locomotive Roundhouse
- 5 ....Passenger Station, General Office Building and Hotel Roanoke
- 6 ....Freight Station (now VMT)
- 8 ....12th Street Roundhouses (two)
- 10 ..Shaffers Crossing area including locomotive Roundhouse.

We do mail orders on any gift shop item by phone (540-982-3595) during Gift Shop hours with VISA or Mastercard (book price plus S&H and sales tax for Virginia residents) or stop by our new shop in the Transportation Museum at 303 Norfolk Avenue in Roanoke.

## West Virginia Central

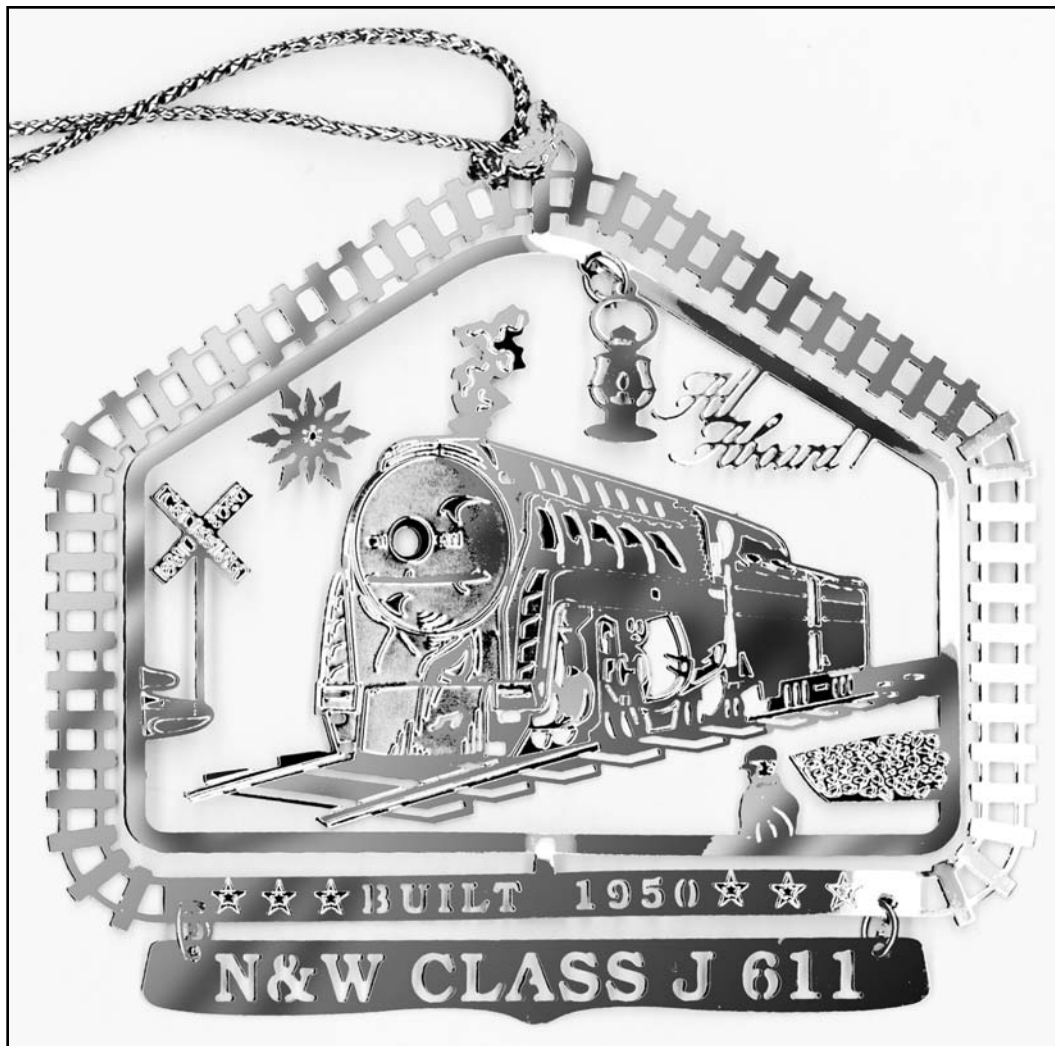
by Bill Arnold

Hoboes were the first paying customers to ride our excursion train at Belington, West Virginia. Their ride, inside the train, was part of Abbott Tours of Roanoke's Annual Hobo Tour wherein passengers are encouraged to don hobo garb for a day and ride a passenger train. For some it was their first train ride. They were provided a hobo lunch wrapped inside a bandana and prizes were awarded for the best hobos. Two buses brought 94 hobos for this fun day of riding. If you know of a group that would like to charter the train or a car for a similar event or special event please get in touch with us, we will try to work with you on dates and your ideas.

## Attention Chapter Members!

Pictured below (rather poorly) is our brand new N&W 611 50th Anniversary Commemorative Ornament, now available in the gift shop. Price is only \$7.95 per, this is an exclusive Roanoke Chapter design in 3D! The actual ornament is made of highly polished brass and is quite attractive, we had no time to actually photograph this before going to press, so we have had to make do with a scan of the item.

Chapter members can purchase this unique 611 item for their personal use at the August Chapter meeting (August 19) at a very special one time only price, After that, normal Chapter purchases policy will apply.

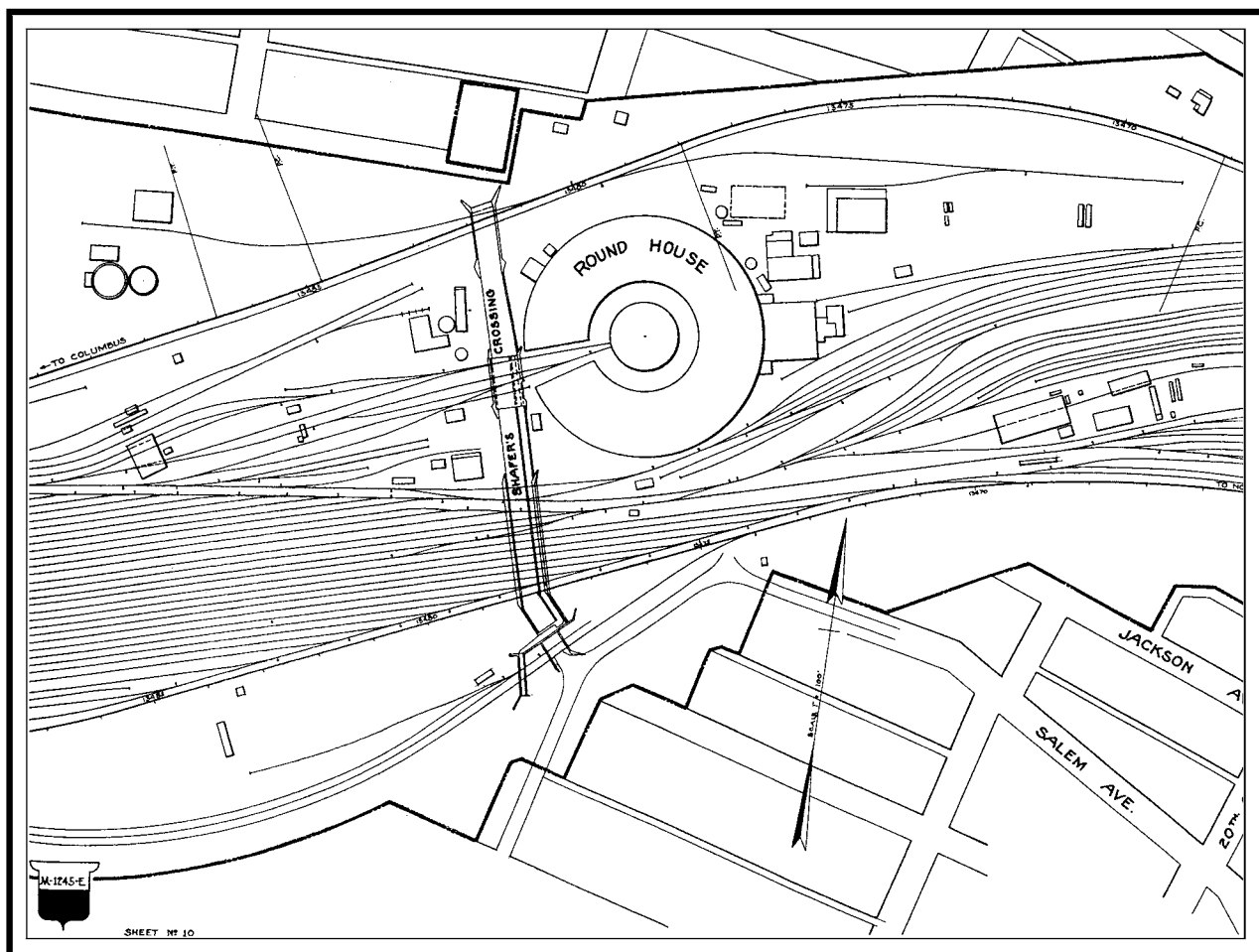


## Roanoke Terminal Maps Available

As referred to elsewhere in the newsletter a sample of the 1930 Roanoke Terminal drawings from our archival collection. Ten drawings are available in a bound package that are 25" x 18", six of the drawings are available as individual sheets, and we have now added a composite drawing of all ten sheets that measures 96" (8 feet!) by 18". See the information in the body of the newsletter to order by mail or visit the gift shop.

These maps are quite detailed, but have no dimensions for any structures, but they are drawn to scale and excellent. A much reduced sample of the portion showing Shafers Crossing is depicted below. These are clean original prints from the excellent linen master drawings.

There are also similar sets available for Portsmouth, Ohio and Winston-Salem, NC for the same dates and there may be several other locations as well. These can be priced on request, write or call and we will get the information for you.



## News Items

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by Ken Miller

So why do we not have any details regarding the local impact of the biggest rail news story of the year; the split-up of Conrail?

It is very simple, no one has bothered to write anything on it for the newsletter. Years ago, Richard Shell and myself both wrote a lot about current news and events happening locally, unfortunately we both are far busier in both our personal and professional lives as well as the time we devote to Chapter activities. In turn that considerably limits the time we have to be out and see events, while we would like to cover this news and as a historical organization, we should be recording history for the future, we seldom have the available time.

Again we are asking for someone's help here, if you are out and about or have information regarding the present operations, how about sharing this in our newsletter? We'd love to have it in almost any form, it can be provided to Kenney Kirkman in most any form and we will

get it in the newsletter.

Over the past several months we have had a good variety of stories from Harold Castleman and book reviews from John Austen, but we still need more material.

Unfortunately, I had a major hard disk crash in May and lost a variety of things including my email addresses, so John Austen if you still have copies of the material we have not published on hand, please drop me a note, I would love to have copies again and be glad to publish it.

In other news the Chapter has an article adapted from the May issue of the Turntable Times on the vandalism to our cars in the current (September) issue of Railfan.

We hope to have coverage of the West Virginia Central operations in the newsletter, but those heavily involved (myself included) have had little or no time to write the details up for publication. We also have few photos, since we rarely take a camera along, since we concentrate on the safety of the operation, not playing railfan.

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**Turntable Times** is published monthly as the newsletter of the Roanoke Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc. Opinions and points of view expressed herein are those of the staff members of the **Turntable Times** and not necessarily reflect those of the members, officers or directors of the Chapter. Items of interest should be sent to Editor Kenny Kirkman, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, VA 24078-2128.

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**Editor, Turntable Times**  
**Roanoke Chapter NRHS**  
**P.O. Box 13222**  
**Roanoke, VA 24032-1322**

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