

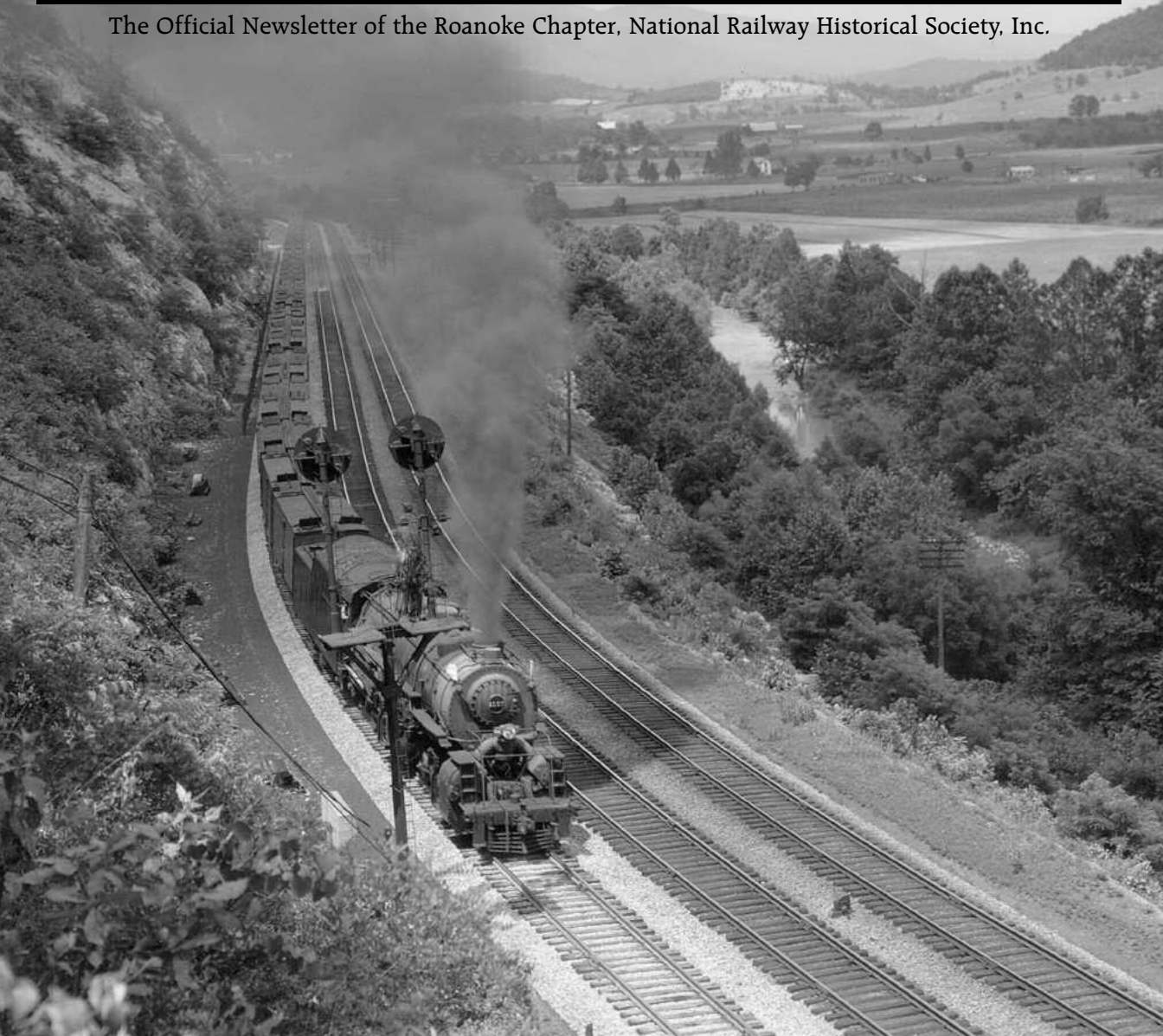


# *Turntable* TIMES

**Volume 32, Number 7**

**July 2000**

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc.





# Turntable TIMES

**Volume 32, Number 7  
July 2000**

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Dave Meashey

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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.

## *Meeting Notice*

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, July 20, 2000 at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

## *From The Head End*

### **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 Bonnie Molinary. Bonnie is responsible for Chapter cards and flowers and can be reached at 362-0273.

### **Deadline for Turntable Times**

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Tuesday, July 18, 2000. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

## *Cover Photo*

Extra 2107 west is making providing some early fireworks on July 3, 1934 while working upgrade to Shawsville Tunnel. The Y5 has what appears to be a solid string of reefers in tow. The freshly laid and manicured ballast on the westbound track tells of a well-maintained railroad despite the economic misfortune that has the country in its grips. If one looks carefully, they can spot where another photographer has been scratched out of the negative in this view. Can't see it? Look on the signal bridge near the mast for the normal eastbound track. Cropped just out of sight on the lower right corner of the photo is a shanty for the tunnel watchman, who appears to be off duty on this date. Norfolk and Western Photo, Negative Number 19679, K.L. Miller Collection

## **Class J Book**

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For all those who have ordered the Class J book from the Chapter, they have arrived and all prepublication orders have been mailed. You should receive them shortly.

For those members who have not ordered a copy, please be sure to attend the July Chapter meeting. There will be a one-time only special price offer to members only available at that meeting. Since we are using this book as a fund raising project, you are limited to purchase one copy per member at the special price. Please bring a check with you so we do not have to deal with change. The price will be announced that night.

## **Small Rails**

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by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers are continuing work on the steam service area. The roundhouse is under construction, and the turntable has been installed. New tracks are being laid in the diesel servicing area and appropriate structures should soon follow. Work continues on the scenery on several modules. One module needs extensive reworking to fit appearance of the surrounding modules. I'm currently trying to blend the colors between this new module and the ones on either side of it. After that the streambed will need attention and some structures may have to change.

On June 11th, I attended Steve King's gathering for enthusiasts of 7/8th inch scale model railroading. These cars and locomotives are just under "ride on" size. They represent Maine two-foot gauge rail-

road equipment and industrial railroad equipment. These models run on number one gauge track, but they require very wide radius curves. Most of the locomotives were battery powered and radio controlled. The only live steam locomotive was Steve King's Forney. 7/8th inch scale enthusiasts tend to use action figures found at the toy store for train crewmembers and passengers. One gas mechanical locomotive had Laura from the Tomb Raider computer games as its engineer. A Shay locomotive had a really rough looking engineer. His face made him look as if he had survived a boiler explosion. When I took a closer look, I discovered he was Freddie Kruger!

The Big Lick Big Train Operators' June meeting was held at Bill Sours home on Saturday, June 24th. Members of long standing were so glad to see former club president, Curtis Long, at this meeting. The afternoon rain cooled things down, but Bill's tracks stayed dry, since his layout is indoors. After we had a great time running trains, the club voted to go to Historic Spencer Shops for our July meeting.

## **Mixed Freight - July**

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by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

As in years past, this Memorial Day weekend for the year 2000 was spent by yours truly up in Conrail territory at Altoona and Cresson. Saturday and Sunday could be summed up in two words: trains and rain. Despite the wet weather, the railfans were out in force and despite the Norfolk Southern takeover, trains were rolling and a lotta trains at that. Pure Conrail lashups still exist but those black

beauties definitely have a strong presence which will definitely increase as time goes on. There were quite a few CR/NS pusher sets. One thing I was happy to see was the return of 2 person helper crews. Conrail had reduced the helper crews to one person several years ago.

During my 3 day visit, I only saw three foreign road locomotives. 3 CSX geeps outshopped from Juniata heading west. Usually, foreign diesels are very common.

I spoke with personnel at The Historic Horseshoe Curve Visitors Center about the vegetation removal project. In a nutshell, it will not be occurring anytime soon. The increase in vegetation resulting in the decrease of viewing of the train action is probably the biggest complaint you'll hear about while visiting the area.

On the other side of the coin, the train watchers viewing facility located between The Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum and the Conrail high iron has been completed. Weed and grass covered ground has been replaced with handlaid red brick. Park benches are available. A bridge for pedestrian traffic to and from the Amtrak depot is enclosed from the elements but has openings for viewing, photographing and videotaping the trains. The facility is handicap accessible and closed circuit cameras let the Altoona Police Department monitor people activity. There is one drawback for fans trying to videotape the train action. The bridge serves as an ideal shortcut for neighborhood kids on bicycles and skateboards between their homes and downtown Altoona. They are quite noisy doing wheelies and just being kids. There are signs prohibiting such activity but I saw no enforce-

ment whatsoever.

Heading north to south, the North Carolina Transportation Museum had it's annual RAIL DAYS event the first weekend of June. The weather was hot 'n' humid and beverage sales were brisk. Attendance was good. Trains operated included a shay powered passenger train, a second passenger train powered by 2-8-0 # 604 and a caboos train powered by the museums former FP7. A wide variety of steam and diesel locomotives were displayed at intervals at the turntable. Short cab rides aboard Southern E8 # 6900 and ACL E unit # 501 were available. This activity was a tremendous hit with the kids, young and not so young.

This time on my way to Altoona, I made a side trip to Cumberland, Maryland to ride the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. It had been at least 7 years since I had ridden the little tourist line. I knew Friday's morning run would be diesel powered. I had no idea the diesel would be a former Reading GP30 painted into Western Maryland's black with yellow trim and lettering would be doing the honors. It was the maiden trip for engine painted this way. The engine numbered 501 was painted in Hagerstown a few weeks prior. The unit had formerly been painted as a tribute to The Washington Redskins training within the Cumberland

## **The White Pass & Yukon Route**

by Dave Meashey

A high school friend recently took a vacation to Alaska and had a chance to ride the White Pass & Yukon narrow gauge railroad. My friend graciously sent me a copy

of the souvenir booklet given to passengers. When built during the Klondike gold rush, the White Pass & Yukon was yet another engineering marvel. Construction began May 28, 1898, but once the first four miles of track was complete, things really got rough.

The railroad had to climb from sea level at Skagway to 2,865 feet elevation at the summit of the White Pass. Some of the grades were as steep as 3.9%. Three-foot narrow gauge was chosen because the roadbed only had to be ten feet wide, as opposed to fifteen feet for standard gauge. This allowed an important savings when blasting a roadbed shelf on sheer granite cliffs and boring tunnels through granite mountains. At Slippery Rock, workers had to hang suspended from ropes to drill the blast holes into the cliff. At Mile 16, they had to scale a 1,000-foot cliff before they could start boring the tunnel. Progress was further hampered by the relatively weak explosives available; only black powder was used. 450 tons of it were used to blast a route to the summit. Heavy snow and temperatures of -60°F in the winter further slowed progress. Also, any rumors of a new gold strike could send track workers off to seek their fortunes.

The track crews finally did prevail, and on July 29, 1900 the golden spike was driven at Carcross. The railroad made a good living hauling gold, silver, copper, and lead ores until World War II, when it also served as chief supplier for the U. S. Army's Alaska Highway construction project. In 1982 metal prices plunged, shutting down the major mines and the railroad.

Tourism resurrected the railroad by 1988.

Today it hauls tourists, eager to enjoy Canada and Alaska's wonderful natural beauty from coaches that cling to track winding along high granite cliffs

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## **BWI Expansion**

**A**mtrak is planning to build a new BWI rail terminal that would triple the size of the existing facility.

The new facility would be located just south of the present BWI depot, and state officials hope the new facility will help turn the airport into Maryland's main transportation point.

BWI Airport owns the present station and the land on which it is located, while the depot's parking area is owned by the Mass Transit Administration, which uses the station as a stop for MARC trains.

Presently, the airport leases the depot to Amtrak, but the proposed station would be owned exclusively by Amtrak, according to airport officials. BWI has no plans for the present facility when it closes, added officials.

The existing BWI station sees some 450,000 passengers each year, making it Amtrak's 18th busiest depot, and with the coming of Amtrak's high-speed ACLEA trains to the Northeast Corridor along with the addition of faster MARC commuter trains, passenger totals are expected to increase. (From the Maryland Gazette, June 17, 2000, submitted by Gary Ballard).

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## **MARC's Parlor Cars**

**T**hinking about riding a MARC train anytime soon? If so, then how about a ride aboard a couple of parlor cars.

MTA has two parlor cars that run on the Brunswick line. Use of the parlor cars began in 1994 and they are only used on the Brunswick route because of its length in mileage.

Among the features of the parlor cars are: plush seats that swivel, rock and rotate, and which are located only on one side of the aisle; Separate folding table and electrical outlet at each seat, an ideal set of accommodations for snacks and laptop computers; fresh coffee in the morning and sodas and chips and other snacks in the evening which are placed on a counter for your convenience; and a pay phone and a restroom in each car.

A favorite passenger bonus is if the train is delayed a conductor will personally greet each passenger and try to explain the reason or reasons for the delay instead of talking over the public address system.

Ian Silverman, chief transportation officer for MARC, said passengers are drawn to parlor cars for several reasons. "They like the comfort, privacy and service. In the evening people just want to pamper themselves."

One parlor car seats 27, the other 18 but has booth tables. The parlor cars reserved seating fare is \$45 above the normal one-way monthly price, and \$80 above the normal round-trip monthly cost. A one-shot parlor car is \$5 above the regular ticket price. The parlor cars are the older "Heritage" style models, and, according to long-time conductor Jay Stonik, "these cars are dinosaur cars, but on a commuter train they give a good ride." Stonik also adds, "this is the old school railroad. Comparing them to the other cars is like comparing a

Cadillac to a Volkswagen."

(Above from Commuter Weekly, MARC-Rail's newsletter, May 15, 2000, submitted by Gary Ballard)

Gary says that he believes that these parlor cars are the old N&W sleepers that made their way to the PRR, then onto MARC.

## Lynchburg Notes

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Stapleton Station....Reconstruction of SC&O's Stapleton, VA station will soon be underway in the Old City Cemetery, which is located at Fourth and Taylor Streets in Lynchburg. The station resided in a field at Stapleton for years after being moved away from the railroad and was recently dismantled in order for it to be rebuilt in the cemetery to house displays and exhibits. The station's new home will be beside Norfolk Southern's ex-Southern Ry. main line which borders the cemetery on its west side.

Lynchburg Tunnel....Unbeknownst to most Lynchburg residents is the abandoned railroad tunnel which lies underneath Hollins Mill Road near the old health building. The Lynchburg Tunnel which was located on the N&W's Old (original) Main Line through downtown Lynchburg is now equipped with electric lights and was scheduled to become a part of the Blackwater Creek rails to trails project in time for National Trail Days on June 3.

The 508-foot, solid rock-lined tunnel was built between 1850 and 1852 by the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad as it advanced its mainline west from Lynchburg to Bristol, Virginia.

All N&W trains used the tunnel until the Lynchburg Belt Line was constructed between Phoebe and Forest in 1906 which allowed thru freight traffic to bypass downtown Lynchburg and the stiff grades coming in and out of the James River basin. By 1964, the tunnel was used only for interchange with the C&O and to switch sidings located along the Old Main Line in the downtown area and to the east. Passenger traffic on the N&W was now handled at the new passenger station on Woodall Road and freight switching was now being handled at Kinney Yard, both of which were located on the Belt Line.

With the June 1, 1982, merger of the N&W and Southern to form today's Norfolk Southern, the N&W Old Main Line trackage through the tunnel was abandoned in favor of the Southern Ry.'s tunnel-less Old Main Line into downtown Lynchburg.

(Above two stories by Rick Johnson via the Blue Ridge Dispatcher, newsletter of the Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS, Lynchburg).

## **Train Watching From Home**

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**T**RAINS Magazine is sponsoring a live-feed web camera pointed at the BNSF/UP diamonds at Rochelle, Illinois. As of May 10, the setup was still having the bugs worked out of it. To those not quite up to speed on the technology, a web camera is essentially a video camera that produces online pictures constantly. This means that you can sit at home and watch whatever is crossing over the diamonds via your personal computer as it is happening. To find the camera, go to Trains Magazine's web site at: [www.trains.com](http://www.trains.com) and click on

the "Rochellecam" link on the menu on the left side of the screen. In just a couple of minutes, live images from Rochelle will be sent directly to your home (or office if you have nothing better to do at work). It won't quite replace the excitement of being track-side, but now you'll be able to know when you missed the first run of the UP SD70M's, first hand! (From North Western Illinois Chapter newsletter North Western Limited, May, 2000).

## **9th Street Maintenance Facility**

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Work is continuing with other projects now that the "Zoo Choo" is completed and back in place on Mill Mountain. Thanks go to all who had a hand in the project.

Our crew has continued working on the track, building and are now in process of scaling and sanding on GP-30 No. 522 in preparation of new paint, hopefully, later this summer. A lot of work remains on prepping the body of the unit as well as some minor mechanical work. This is a big project, which will hopefully be a real showpiece when completed.

Volunteers are always needed, every Saturday and Sunday and some other times as well, come on down one Saturday after 10 am and we'll be glad to utilize your hands and ability.

## **Grade Crossing Safety**

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**O**n June 23, a North Platte, Nebraska jury said that the Union Pacific Railroad was not at fault in a 1995 crossing accident that left Traci Hopper paralyzed and that Traci Hopper carried the full responsibility for the accident.

Hopper, a former Western Nebraska Community College student and now residing in Boise, Idaho, requested \$6 million in the lawsuit. Hopper claimed in her suit that the railroad crossing was not properly maintained or inspected and that it was defective. The accident left her a paraplegic. The U.P. counterclaimed that Hopper was intoxicated and not in control of her vehicle that night. The jury, after hearing the arguments, deliberated 45 minutes to reach a decision in favor of the Union Pacific.

From The Brass Switchkey, June 29, 2000  
Baton Rouge Advocate

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

July 20, 2000

**Special Chapter Members Only  
Sale on Class J Book!**

Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

August 1, 2000

Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

August 17, 2000

Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

September 5, 2000

Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

September 21, 2000

Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

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