



Turntable TIMES

Volume 32, Number 5

May 2000

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





Turntable TIMES

**Volume 32, Number 5
May 2000**

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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, May 18, 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, May 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

This unusually large brick structure was the freight house at Richlands, Virginia in 1917. The reasons for a brick building and a large one at that belies the size of Richlands today.

Norfolk and Western Photo/Roanoke Chapter Archive Collection

Help Needed!

Your help is needed, we would like to have some contemporary or vintage photos for occasional use in the Turntable Times. We need good sharp prints or slides, color or black and white. Your originals will be returned. We also specifically need photos of Chapter activities. In addition, we can utilize photos with articles if you have them. If you have originals that you are concerned with letting go of and you have a scanner, we can provide specifications for scanning to appropriate size and quality levels for publication. Contact Ken Miller or Richard Shell regarding this.

Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers continue to move forward with improvements to the layout. Scenery and structures on the new modules are almost complete. Once the new modules are added to the layout, the Christmas module will be pulled out and refurbished. Its plaster snow is looking really dingy after almost a decade of use. The club is also planning to host a train show in September at the Valley Center. We hope to add to the treasury with this endeavor, so that we can find a location to lease for a permanent home for the layout.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators' first meeting was quite a disappointment. April 15 was a cold, rainy day. One other member and a prospective new member showed up. I have been the sole officer of the club for about nine years now, and I'm hoping to turn over the organizational duties to somebody else by the end of this year. We will try to rally the group again in May, and I hope my replacement will come foreword before November. I plan to step down in November whether I have a replacement or not. As the news programs say, "stay tuned."

The Timonium Show

by Dave Meashey

On the weekend of April 1st and 2nd I went with some friends to the train show in Timonium, Maryland. This is one of the biggest train shows on the East Coast. It is held at a fairgrounds among other activities, but it manages to draw a healthy crowd. Our group had to wait in

line for about twenty minutes to buy our tickets. Once inside, it truly is like being a kid in a candy store. All scales are represented, as well as railroad memorabilia. There were about six interesting HO scale layouts on display, some of which were highly detailed. Two O scale layouts were in operation. Two large scale displays were also present.

The most interesting change I noted was on a dual gauge O scale layout. The last time I saw this layout was at the Salem show. At that time it had standard gauge and On3 narrow gauge. Its present narrow gauge is On30, which is the same as HO gauge. Why the change? Bachmann's new On30 line of model railroad equipment has taken the hobby by surprise. It has become instantly popular, and the equipment sells briskly. Its popularity has caught Bachmann by surprise, and production schedules have had to be adjusted to keep up with the demand. Both large scale and HO Bachmann products have had to take a back seat to the On30 line.

There were bargains at the show and some things were probably over priced. I'm sure I paid too much for an HO scale Faverly pantograph, but I got a great deal on a 1/24 1937 Ford pickup truck model. All in all it's a great place to see trains and meet old friends in the hobby.

Mixed Freight - May

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Billboards have been an effective means of advertising products, services, concepts and agendas for years. Rolling billboards can achieve the same results and more by spreading their messages over

with at least two of the Class reaching over two million miles of service.

This volume examines the history of the N&W relating to the road's passenger motive power and trains that led to the development of the Class J. Operational details, scheduling, servicing are among the items covered. Many excellent company photos illuminate the narrative. The majority of this book focuses on the period from 1941 to the retirement of the last Class J, Number 611 in 1959.

Although the 611 ran from 1982 to 1994 in excursion service, this book is devoted to the regular service of the Class J's.

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Norfolk and Western Class J

The Finest Steam Passenger Locomotive

**Hardbound with Color Laminated Covers
144 Pages on heavy 100 lb enamel paper with
over 200 black and white and color illustrations.**

The Roanoke Chapter NRHS proudly announces the publication of its first book; **Norfolk and Western Class J, The Finest Steam Passenger Locomotive**. Historian Kenneth L. Miller has produced an in-depth volume examining the history and development of what is arguably the most famous steam passenger locomotive ever built.

The entire Class only numbered fourteen locomotives built between 1941 and 1950. They embodied the N&W's hope of a rebirth of passenger travel, and were almost immediately pressed into service

hauling the heavy war-time traffic of World War II.

The Roanoke-designed and built locomotives contained

all recent developments that made them "Modern Coal Burning Steam Locomotives. The diesel locomotive offered high-availability and ease of service as a dramatic selling point. However, the Norfolk and Western remained dedicated to steam power. With insightful design and servicing, the N&W "dieselized" with modern steam power. The railroad was dedicated to coal burning power until a management change and disappearance of steam locomotive part suppliers caused the railroad to switch to diesel power.

The Class J provided outstanding service and low cost per mile operation



great distances. Railroads have been doing this for years. To promote their corporate policy of the importance of diversity within the workforce, CSX has applied their DIVERSITY IN MOTION logos to 3 of their new CW60AC locomotives.

BNSF and CN have had their request to be exempt from the Surface Transportation Board's 15 month moratorium for future railroad mergers denied.

Here is the latest I've gotten concerning the vegetation removal project for Horseshoe Curve. It is indeed a mystery to me. Back in the fall, The Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum reported that they would pay for half of the \$40,000 project with Norfolk Southern. Now they are reporting that a means for generating their portion of the costs needs to be conceived.

For the past few months, CSX has been operating what I call double unit trains to Richmond from the west along the James River route. Two unit trains of different commodities such as coal, grain or molten sulphur with four or more locomotives on the point travel eastward to Richmond. At Fulton Yard the two commodities are separated into two trains which in turn depart for their final destinations.

Over on CSX's Piedmont Subdivision and North Mountain Subdivisions, freight train speed limit has been reduced to 25 mph and varnish to 40 mph.

Book Review

by John Austen

A Frontier Link with the World: Upson County's Railroad by David Paterson; 1998, Mercer University Press, 6316 Peake Road,

Macon GA 31210-3960; 6-1/4" x 9-1/4", 273pp.; ISBN 0-86554-585-5; \$32.95.

This book is the story of a shortline that was eventually absorbed into the Central of Georgia, one of the principal constituents of Southern Railway System. Unlike so many other rural branch lines, the volume of traffic here has been slowly increasing over the last several years; Norfolk Southern Corporation intends to continue operation of this line.

The story is presented in twenty-two chapters, grouped into three parts. Part I, "Beginnings", recounts the early history of the railroad systems in Georgia, and the struggle to get rail service for the town of Thomaston, the seat of Upson county. This is the familiar tale of local businessmen planning and creating improved transportation for their locality. Part II, "The Struggle to Survive", moves us through the war years and early Reconstruction, as well as presenting several topical chapters on such subjects as "Railroad Operations", and "Cars and Engines".

Part III, "Vindication", brings the story through the economic recovery of the late 19th century and then proceeds to consider "Some Railroad People", and "Sunday Trains and Circuses", as well as the changing situation as the railroad system is extended throughout the state. Competition from a new railroad briefly threatens the viability of the line, but the introduction of refrigerator cars late in the century brings renewed prosperity with the phenomenal expansion of fruit culture in Middle Georgia. The Central operated the Upson County Railroad for several years before actually

absorbing it. During this period the rails were re-laid several times, replacing the remaining original flange rail with second-hand "T" rail, made available when the Central re-laid it's mainline with modern steel rail. Some portions of the line had previously received upgraded "U" rail, still on wooden stringers like the flange rail. The entire line had "T" rail by 1885, in time for next year's conversion from "the Southern gauge" of five feet, to the standard gauge (here erroneously stated to be 4 feet 8 inches, one of the very few errors in the book; standard gauge is 4 feet, 8-1/2 inches). Most of the line was re-laid in 1903 with second-hand 56-pound steel rail, when the Central upgraded it's mainline to 80-pound rail.

Another "improvement" was the new turntable. Unfortunately, instead of mounting it at the end of track past the depot, as the earlier turntable had been, this one was placed on a siding short of the depot. In-bound trains performed something akin to a Dutch drop, with the engine heading into the turntable siding after uncoupling from the train on the fly, the switch then being thrown behind the engine so the train could continue on to the depot under the control of the brakeman. This resulted in at least one accident where the switch was not thrown in time, the coaches following the engine and colliding forcefully with it and causing injury to a passenger.

The book includes four appendices: a list of stockholders; statistics on one of the locomotives; shipments for the Confederate government; and a list of employees. The seven-page bibliography

shows extensive research in a full range of primary and secondary sources. The seven page index bears a ratio to the main text of about 1:34, useful if not exhaustive. There are seventeen maps and photographs scattered throughout the book. Reproduction is adequate to accompany the text, but would not be acceptable for a picture book. Several would have benefited from being larger, especially the contract for building the railroad in 1852.

This is a very well done history of an early shortline that evolved into a modern branchline of a major system. The story is in many ways typical of such lines and may be taken as a representative case study. It is well written and is a delightful read in its own right.

Mechanical Report

by Ken Miller

Work on the "Zoo Choo" has been hampered by bad weather. If not cold, then rainy, or a combination of both. However work has finally progressed and the unit was complete and returned to the zoo for the installation of her prime mover and running gear on Sunday May 7. The cars are ready for paint and will be finished shortly after that.

At the same time work on the track and grading had also been hampered by the seemingly constant rain, but with the arrival of summer-like weather at the beginning of May, the contractors have been hard at work bringing in fill and leveling out the area that was swampy. Soon new track work can go down in place.

We are certainly hoping for better weather as GP30 No. 522 is awaiting work to

begin on her cosmetic restoration. At this same time we expect arrival of our newest piece, a former Richmond Fredericksburg and Potomac E8 which had been one of the two "visible E8's" at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. We offered to take on the cosmetic restoration of this unit in exchange for ownership. The unit is expected to be cosmetically restored over time with RF&P paint with N&W lettering and on completion loaned back to the museum. Is there anyone who has information as to which specific RF&P unit this was?

Work also continues on the building as window work on the downstairs portion has really brightened things up! You can now walk in and actually see through the windows. Quite a change from years past!

Of course, your help is always invited.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

May 18, 2000

Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

June 6, 2000

Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

June 15, 2000

Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

July 4, 2000 (tentative)

Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

July 20, 2000

Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

August 1, 2000

Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

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