



# *Turntable* TIMES

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

**Volume 33, Number 1**

**January 2001**





# Turntable TIMES

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**MIXED FREIGHT**

Robin R. Shavers

**SMALL RAILS**

Dave Meashey

**SPLINTERS**

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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, January 18, 2001 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 Thursday, January 18, 2001. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

### **Material For Turntable Times**

We are always in need of articles, photos or news items for the Turntable Times. Due to copyright restrictions, we cannot reprint articles from many newspapers; a condensed or rewritten article crediting the source is acceptable. It is your newsletter, please contribute.

## *Cover Photo*

Our recent frigid weather reminds us of this winter scene from almost 50 years ago when a rare snow scene was witnessed at the Virginian's Sewalls Point Roundhouse. Class SA 0-8-0, No. 4 is cold and stored in this previously unpublished view by the Virginian's best known photographer, H. Reid. Other steam is also stored in this rarely recorded image that was probably during a holiday time as steam was still king on this end of the VGN at this time. K.L. Miller Collection

## Meeting Cancellation Policy

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Since it's that time of year, as a reminder we have the following policy regarding inclement weather.

The meeting will be considered cancelled if any of the following conditions are met: Roanoke City Schools are closed on the day of or for the day after the meeting, or Virginia Western night classes are cancelled for the night of a meeting.

## Small Rails

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by Dave Meashey

OOPS! Minor derailment this issue. December was far busier on Tuesdays than I had thought it would be. What with Chapter board meeting, emergency handbell choir practices, last minute Christmas shopping, and the trip to Indiana for the holiday, I never made it to a single meeting of the Roanoke Valley Model Engineers. I can report that the club had plans to run trains for the public on Friday evenings and Saturdays until the Christmas season ended. But, I cannot report anything first hand until I get back to Tuesday night meetings in January.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators did not have a physical meeting in December, but we did manage a "cyber meeting." All the members now have email. When one member proposed an exhibition at one of his area's plant nurseries in May (via email), I simply forwarded his request to the rest of the membership, asking who was interested. I set a deadline of December 16th for the replies. By the deadline, most of the membership had expressed their interest, so I emailed the

originator to tell him the idea was a "go."

Email is a good tool for polling the membership of a small club like ours. It allows the club to progress on ideas and proposals at times of the year when we would not normally meet. I'm sure we will find other good uses for email in the future.

## Splinters from the Board

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by Bill Arnold

Each year, the National Railway Historical Society provides a grant to several individual NRHS Chapters for the purpose of assisting them in preserving the historical significance of a rail related item, whether it is a locomotive, a railcar, a building or document (photos, drawings, etc.). In 1997, the Roanoke Chapter received a \$1000 grant as seed money to get our archive facility under way. During the last four years, our members have transformed two dilapidated upstairs rooms of a 75 year old ex-water treatment plant (at our siding) into a controlled atmosphere showcase and storage facility for our many historical drawings, photographs, books, and artifacts relating to rail history.

Your Board agreed at their October meeting to return the \$1000 grant to National's Grant Program and included an additional \$500 in an effort to assist other NRHS chapters in getting started with a project to preserve rail history for future generations.

This \$1500 donation will be besides the amount already budgeted for the 2001 grants.

This check was presented to Greg Malloy at the BOD meeting in Dallas in October. Naturally, it was well received by the National Directors and Officers present.

## **Class J Book**

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Bill Arnold

Sales continue to do well on the Chapter's book, Norfolk and Western Class J. Total sales through the end of December topped 1600. A book review by George Kegley in the Roanoke Times December 17th helped increase the demand locally by orders for 152 from three Roanoke book stores. Many these were sold during a book signing on Saturday (12/23). Contacts have been made with two major chain book outlets. In January, we will make contacts with major retailers in surrounding cities.

## **Taking the Train Home for Christmas (Circa 1977)**

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by Dave Meashey

When we first arrived in Roanoke in October 1977, we knew very little about which roads were best for getting to the Midwest. My wife and I were accustomed to traveling to her hometown, Dublin, Indiana, for Christmas. We started asking our neighbors about the best way to get to Indiana from Roanoke. Most folks responded by telling us horror stories about the West Virginia Turnpike. It sure put a scare into us. I had visions of being stranded in snow in the middle of nowhere with my wife and our two small daughters. I knew I had to find some other way to get the family home to Grandma and Grandpa for Christmas.

Fortunately, I was working for N&W Railway at that time, so I inquired whether I was eligible for an Amtrack pass. I was relieved to find out that I was eligible for a

half-fare family pass. Even at half-fare, the trip was going to be pretty expensive, but it still seemed better than being stuck in the snow in the mountains somewhere. I bought our tickets, and we all waited for the exciting day.

We left Roanoke on the evening of December 23rd. I was somewhat bemused by the Roanoke Amtrack "station." It looked like a Greyhound, or Trailways sign would have been more appropriate over the door, but it was comfortable enough inside. Our train was the Hilltopper. This was a much maligned little train, but I believe that had more to do with the politics that kept the train in service than the train, itself. The entire train consisted of an FP40 locomotive, an AmCoach, and an AmCafe.

I can't really say anything bad about the Hilltopper myself. It was clean. It was comfortable. And it ran on time. My little girls were very excited about their trip. Julie could not sleep. She chatted with the lady passenger behind us for almost the whole trip. The lady was very gracious, and said she did not mind Julie's company or enthusiasm one bit. She was glad to have Julie help her keep awake so she did not miss her own station. We bid our new friend goodbye one stop before our terminal point, Tri-State station at Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

We were supposed to connect with the Cardinal at Tri-State, but there was some time between our arrival and the Cardinal's scheduled departure. When you have two small children in tow and very little to entertain them with. Well that time can seem like an eternity. Then neither my

wife nor I realized what a strain holiday traffic could put on a reasonably popular train's schedule. The Cardinal was about three hours late when it left Tri-State, and the train had burgeoned to 22 cars!

Then there was another long stop in Cincinnati, Ohio to service the cars. By now my wife and I had visions of her parents waiting at the Amtrack station in Richmond, Indiana, wondering what had become of us. Still, there was very little we could do about that. Fortunately, my father-in-law had the good sense to call Amtrack information and inquire whether the Cardinal was running late. When we did arrive in Richmond, they told us that they only had to wait half an hour.

Our trip home went more smoothly. No problems with connections. We still talk about the trip from time to time. Our daughters barely remember it, except for what we have told them, but I believe they still like the idea of a nice train ride.

## **Mixed Freight - January**

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by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

While some parts of America's rail empire are experiencing reductions or closings, others are growing. For the past few weeks, Amtrak's Auto Train has been carrying three Road Railers behind the auto carriers. I do not know whether this will be permanent or just temporary to handle the upsurge due to Christmas related cargo. Other Amtrak trains that serve Richmond I've noticed have an increase of Road Railers and material handling cars.

Most of us are familiar with official state highway maps. Virginia also has an official state railroad map too. I don't know how

long these maps have been in existence. The maps show both major rail carriers and shortlines too. The railroads are identified by their reporting marks such as the mark of the former carrier such as VGN for our beloved Virginian Railway. Like the highway edition, the railroad edition features detailed squares for major metropolitan areas of Virginia. Highways shown are U.S., a few state and highways of the Interstate System. The maps are free to the public. For your own personal copy, write to: Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation, Railroad Division, 1401 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219.

After a day of railfanning, most of us look forward to a good meal to bring up the rear of a day of activity. One of my favorite places USED to be the C&O YMCA Restaurant in Clifton Forge, VA. Back in the days as the expression goes, it had a large menu with a great variety of entrees to choose from. This has all been scaled down tremendously. At least it is still open to the public unlike my next subject. After a hearty day of RAIL DAYS at the North Carolina Museum of Transportation I would always have dinner with other railfans at THE TRACKS END restaurant. The place was operated by Southern Railway then Norfolk Southern for the benefit of the railroad employees of which many work in and out of the Linwood-Salisbury area. For some reason, the establishment is now off limits to the public. NS Railway employees only. I miss the waitresses as much as the good and plentiful meals. They were cheerful and seemed to have a fondness for railfans and our love of trains.

If you have any 1990 calendars in stor-

age, go get them. 1990 corresponds to the Year 2001.

Going back to eating for a moment, simple hot and cold meals are now available trackside at The Curve as a new and very welcomed feature to The Horseshoe Curve National Historic Landmark site. An enterprising person by the name of John Heverly provides a reasonable menu of hot items, desserts and beverages at reasonable prices. This feature will be available April thru October.

I need to make a correction to something I reported several months ago. The old bridge spanning the NS tracks at Gallitzin will not receive a chainlink fence on it's sidewalk side as I previously reported. Locals informed me that the very old structure is to be replaced by a new structure to better handle today's heavier motor vehicles. The new bridge is to have a chain link fence on it's sidewalk side. Whether it will be photographer friendly is not yet known.

The next Great Scale Train Show is scheduled for January 27th & 28th, 2001 at The Maryland State Fairgrounds at Timonium, Maryland on Padonia Road off of Interstate 83. Hours are 9:00 a.m. til 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. til 4:00 p.m. For more information, phone 410-730-1036 or via [www.GSMTS.com](http://www.GSMTS.com)

## Here and There

by Kenney Kirkman

As part of a study undertaken by the US Department of Transportation to examine ways of making commuter and light rail stations handicapped accessible, approximately 3,500 photos of train stations from around the country have recently been

placed at the National Archives. The photos are in the custody of the Still Pictures Reference Team, Special Media Archives Services Division at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. The photos are in the records of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, Department of Transportation (Record Group 408). (The Mail Pouch, Sept. 2000).

If you're interested in information on the upcoming St. Louis National Convention - June 19-23, 2000 - their website is: <http://www.stlouisnrhs.org/nrhs2001/home.htm>

After years of planning, negotiations, and pleas for funding to get trains rolling again through Main Street Station, city, state and Federal officials gathered underneath the station's clock tower at 17th and Main Streets in Richmond, Virginia to break ground on renovations to turn the former passenger station into a regional transportation center. Trains are expected to begin stopping at the station by February 2002. The first will be northbound trains from Newport News. More trains, including those from Florida and the Carolinas, and Northern cities will be added in 2003. By 2005 Main Street Station is expected to be the center for rail, bus, taxi and airport shuttles in the region. (Richmond Times Dispatch via Potomac Rail News, November 2000).

Amtrak will team up with NASCAR as an official sponsor of Rusty Wallace's racing team. The partnership will begin with the Pennzoil 400 in Florida. Amtrak will have their logo applied to Wallace's car and team jacket. Special contests and Amtrak commercials will be shown through the 2000-

2001 NASCAR racing season. (Colorado Midland Rails, November 2000).

Union Pacific has announced plans to build a new headquarters building in Omaha, Nebraska. The new 25-story building will be located across the street from the present 12-story building that has served the railroad since 1915. Once completed the new building will house all 4000 UP employees that now work at 18 different sites located around Omaha. The new building will be completed during mid-2004. (Colorado Midland Rails, November 2000).

Voters in West Virginia turned down a proposal that would have allowed gambling at CSX's historic Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs. Greenbrier County residents voted 7065 to 5109 to reject the gambling plan, which had been proposed by CSX. (The Orderboard, December, 2000. And, the Alaska Railroad ran the longest passenger train in its history on October 1 when 1600 passengers rode a 32-car train from Anchorage south down Turnagain Arm to Indian and return. The passengers were from a convention of household goods forwarders. (The Orderboard, November 2000).

## **Piney River Depot To Be Restored**

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The purchase and restoration of the old Piney River depot is the next step in the development of the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail. The project, a proposed seven-mile multipurpose trail that will follow a former railroad line along the Amherst and Nelson County borders,

recently received a financial boost in the form of a \$204,000 grant, this in addition to a \$100,000 grant from the Commonwealth Transportation Board that was issued in 1999.

Amherst attorney Steve Martin and his wife, Popie, initiated the project in 1987 when they bought the land. The railroad covered. The original Blue Ridge Railway operated along the proposed rail trail route from 1915-1981. (Story from Nelson County Times by staff writer Jim Cox, submitted to The Rivanna Rail, newsletter of the Rivanna Chapter, NRHS by Nick Page, November/December 2000 issue).

## **Two Cents A Mile**

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Back in the days before air brakes when brakemen were paid two cents a mile and conductors three cents a mile, a farmer hired out as a brakeman on a road that had a very long and steep grade. This man rode the train near the smokey end and was "decorating" (walking the boxcar tops) when his train started down the long grade. The speed became terrific. Both the rear brakeman and the conductor were setting brakes as fast as they could get over the top. All this time the student clung to a running board without trying to help. After a while the skipper worked his way over to the new man and asked, "Why ain't you setting brakes? Don't you know we're running away?" Me set brakes? I should say not," indignantly replied the student. "Two cents a mile! Why, I never made money this fast before in all my life!" (From the Blackhawk Spike and Tie via Cinders from the Smokestack, December 2000).

## **Annual Banquet**

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by Dave Meashey

The Chapter's Annual Banquet will be held Saturday, March 31st, 2001 at the Hotel Roanoke. The member's cost is \$23.00 per person (this rate includes spouse or significant other). The non-member price will be announced later. A cash bar will be available from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The meal will begin at 7:30 p.m. The meal will be buffet style in the room. The menu follows:

### SALAD:

Fruit Salad

Medley of Greens with Assorted Dressings  
Oriental Spinach Salad  
with Sesame Dressing

### ENTREES:

Roasted Prime Rib of Beef with au jus  
Breast of Chicken with Champignon Sauce  
Chesapeake Bay Pasta with Shrimp and  
Scallops in a Smithfield Ham Cream

### ACCOMPANIED BY:

Chef's Selection of Suitable Potato,  
Pasta, or Rice  
Chef's Selection of Fresh Vegetable  
Chef's Selection of Bread and Butter

### DESSERTS:

Plain Cheesecake with Fruit Sauce  
Apple Dumplings with Caramel Sauce  
Chocolate Fudge Cake

### BEVERAGES TO INCLUDE:

Freshly Brewed Coffee, Tea, and  
Decaffeinated Coffee

PLEASE REMEMBER! It is now Chapter policy that if you make a reservation for the Annual Banquet, you are obligated to pay the Chapter for your ticket(s) whether you actually can attend or not.

## **Amtrak Excursion**

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by Paul Howell and Ken Miller

The Chapter has received and agreed to terms with Amtrak for the operation of a special Roanoke Chapter excursion weekend on May 5 and 6, 2001. This operation is planned to be a Roanoke-Bluefield roundtrip on Saturday, and a Roanoke-Abingdon Roundtrip on Sunday. These trips now await the approval and confirmation from Norfolk Southern.

We will keep you updated and present a flyer and ticket information as soon as Amtrak has received and confirmed with NS these special operations.

The trains will be limited capacity, if readers are interested, please send us a stamped self addressed business sized envelope to Amtrak Excursion, Roanoke Chapter NRHS, P. O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA 24032-1322 and we will mail you information as soon as it is ready. Remember, these trips are still subject to Norfolk Southern approval which may take time!

## **2001 Activities**

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by Ken Miller

The beginning of the year, a new slate, what will this organization do during 2001? The answer is difficult to predict, but there is one thing for certain, it is up to the membership to make things happen, while the board can provide direction, the indi-

vidual members can make things happen!

Is there an outing the membership would be interested in? If so, please bring your ideas to the January meeting. Suggestions are great, however, it still requires a person to make it happen. Outings are very enjoyable, but requires a leader. The board cannot always lead these operations; a well-thought out plan and some simple telephone follow-up by an individual member can make a great simple outing.

Excursion trains are great, but we live in an era where that activity is limited, in turn other things must be organized.

If you would like to see another activity, volunteer to lead such a project, produce a plan of action and the board will carefully consider any ideas that require funding, and if deemed worthy of expenditure, will offer financing of such a project.

Modern day constraints or time, family and other commitments factor into Chapter activities, we all realize that, but making the effort to organize an activity, can consume only as much time as you will allow. It is your organization, and can only be as much as the membership contributes. So come on out with your ideas and enthusiasm, you're likely to find a receptive audience.

## **Newsletter Guidelines**

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by Ken Miller

**W**e have been lucky in the past several months to have had a variety of articles submitted to the Turntable Times, a reminder of some of the guidelines for article submission.

First, we cannot reprint articles directly from newspapers or magazines due to

copyright restrictions. If the publication states that reprinting is permitted with proper credit that is acceptable, but most require written permission to reprint an article or photo. Rewriting the material taking a new angle on the story and citing the source is acceptable as long as the material is considered as news material.

We encourage electronic submissions, either via disk or email. For email submission, copy and paste the article into your email, or in several emails if a long article, this allows less chance of text being corrupted when traveling over the wire. If you cannot do this, or do not understand how to, please feel free to contact me for details.

You can send the article as an attachment to email, but it needs to be formatted correctly so that special characters are not in your file. The file needs to be saved as a (name).txt file, this will eliminate all special formatting that generally do not translate to readable text. A recent file was submitted as a word perfect (.wpd) file which could not be read in an older version of word perfect. The file had to be transferred to another computer, then a floppy disk then a third computer where it was opened in MS Word, saved back as a text file to the floppy disc, loaded back on the second computer, then transferred back to the first computer. All this exercise took about an hour, when a simple "save as" text format would have taken about five minutes. We appreciate contributions, but please help us out in making the files so that it does not take an excessive amount of time to translate. For photographs, we need files that are 300 dpi resolution, saved as either jpeg

or tif files. If saved as a jpeg, keep the image quality level as best. Photos that look good on screen may not successfully print.

Please keep the material coming, it is YOUR newsletter and can only be as good as the material provided.

## **This could be any railroad**

Shipper: You say you have fast freight and slow freight from this town. You charge twice as much for fast freight as slow freight, and yet I find that you have only one train a day. How do you explain that?

Freight Agent: We put the fast freight at the front of the train and the slow freight at the back, and so the fast freight gets there first. Our motto is to please the public.

From The Brass Switchkey

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

January 18, 2001  
General Meeting, 7:30 pm

February 6, 2001  
Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

February 15, 2001  
General Meeting, 7:30 pm

Annual Banquet, Hotel Roanoke  
March 31, 2001

April 3, 2001  
Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

April 19, 2001  
General Meeting, 7:30 pm

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