



# *Turntable* TIMES

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

**Volume 34, Number 2**

**February 2002**





# Turntable TIMES

**Volume 34, Number 2  
February 2002**

## **EDITOR**

Kenney Kirkman

## **MIXED FREIGHT**

Robin R. Shavers

## **SMALL RAILS**

Dave Meashey

## **SPLINTERS**

Bill Arnold

## **HISTORIAN**

Kenneth L. Miller

All materials should be sent directly to the Editor:  
Kenney Kirkman  
590 Murphy Road  
Collinsville, VA  
24078-2128

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 regular meeting on Thursday, February 21, 2002 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.

Our program for January was a video tape provided by Joe Austin on our Independence Limited '92. However we still need volunteers for programs during the year.

## *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 Monday, February 18, 2002. 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.

## *Cover Photo*

A contemporary view? Yes and no, hard to believe but now nine years ago, this N&W GE C-30-7 No. 8024 leads a Lone Star Shifter past the former Hollins station site, Hollins, Va. January, 1993.

Bill Mason Photo

## **Meeting Cancellation Policy**

---

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.

## **Membership Renewal Time!**

---

A number of folks still have not renewed their membership for 2002. To remain current, they need to be returned to Lawanda Ely, our membership chairperson by the February meeting.

## **Annual Banquet, March 23, 2002**

---

by Dave Meashey

The Chapter's Annual Banquet will be held at the Hotel Roanoke on Saturday, March 23rd. A cash bar happy hour will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the meal will begin at 7:30 p.m. The meal is buffet style; the entrees are: Sliced Roast Beef with Sauce Robert and Breast of Chicken with Champignon Sauce. The cost is \$23.00 for members (which includes spouse or significant other, plus immediate family members) and \$30.00 for non-members.

Please sign up by the February membership meeting. Telephone reservations may be placed with Bill Arnold at 540-389-3217. The deadline for reservations and payment is March 18th.

Our featured guest is NRHS National President, Greg Malloy, who will be presenting a program of one of his travel trips

to railroads far afield. Greg's program (subject to change) is a review of a 1998 trip through southern South America - Chile, Argentina, and Paraguay. It has a little of everything - trains, scenery and stories. Steam power is both US and European built; broad, standard and narrow gauge; coal, oil, and wood fired, plus US-built diesels, plus mainline electrics. I will probably "tighten up" the existing program a little to create some room for a short news update on some of the other Latin America steam programs.

## **Mixed Freight - February 2002**

---

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

A few days after the tragic attacks on The World Trade Center and The Pentagon, Amtrak reported that a projection of 17 percent boost in ridership based on tickets sold occurred after September 11th. In reality ridership was down 6% in September and down 1% in October. A lot of people whom had purchased tickets before September 11th cancelled their travel plans or traded in their tickets.

Unlike humans and their enterprises, accidents and other tragic events do not observe holidays. On Christmas Eve 2001 Ms. Vanhla Yoder of Harrisonburg, Virginia was killed in the line of duty as she released the handbrakes on Norfolk Southern northbound coal train # 896. The 31 year old was struck and killed by southbound freight # 457 not far from Amtrak's Lynchburg Kemper Street station. (Editor's Note: See Garland Harper's article elsewhere in this issue for more details.)

Those of us whom have an affection for railroad interlocking towers have lost yet

track. Part of the process of "tying down" a train is to apply the hand brakes to the engines and a certain number of trailing cars to make sure the train makes no movement on its own while unattended. It is common practice for trains to be parked on No. 2 track behind Kemper Street Station if there is not a crew immediately available to take it north. 896's head end was right behind the station. I remember thinking to myself how sorry I was I did not have a camera with me that night. I have taken several night shots of trains behind Kemper St. before. Tonight's train would not be one of them.

Several hours later the relief crew showed up to take the train on to Alexandria. I was in the agent's office out of sight of the tracks and was not paying the activity going on outside much mind. I remember hearing the detector go off after 457 passed Rivermont. I heard 457 as it roared past the station. My lack of interest in just another train passing by immediately came to an end when I heard the ensuing radio conversations. There was no doubt that a grave situation now existed right behind the station. 896's conductor had been struck as she (I assume) was knocking off the hand brakes on the cars behind the engines

Company vehicles began arriving. One of the clerks at Montview Yard came inside and we spoke. I asked if he wanted me to call 911 again, which I did. Rescue personnel had already been called, but I got the impression that the need to come to the lower level of Kemper St. was information that the 911 dispatcher welcomed. The heavy rescue trucks and several police cars

began to arrive. The rescue trucks did not remain on the scene long because it became clear that "rescue" was no longer a possibility. About 5:30 a.m. or so, a white, unmarked, minivan arrived and pulled past the station and stopped at the edge of the pavement on the south end of the platform. A few moments later I saw the stretcher bearing the remains of 896's conductor being loaded onto the van. It was a very, very sad to see.

Both trains remained motionless for hours. People from all different departments on the railroad were carrying out what they needed to do to complete their investigations. Amtrak No. 20, which had left Greensboro fifteen minutes late, about the same time this situation began to unfold, was held at Montview until 457 was released from the accident scene. No. 20 departed Lynchburg at 12:09pm, over 6 hours late.

There were about six people waiting to board No. 20 at Lynchburg. They were very patient and I thanked them for that. They were aware of the situation outside and knew there was nothing to do but wait for NS to finish up their investigating. Fortunately, Mary Jane's Cafe opened for business upstairs about 8:30 a.m. and my people were able to get something to eat. The instant coffee that I had offered wasn't quite enough to satisfy everybody's hunger.

I finally left the station at 1:00 p.m., exhausted after having been there for fifteen hours. I was not complaining, however. I got home seven hours late. Others that morning did not make it home at all.

This article was originally published in the Blue Ridge Chapter Newsletter, and is

class gondola that was built in Roanoke's own East End Shops. The N&W car was purchased by means of a donation from Loraine J. Cuthbertson. Her donation will also supply the funds for paint for the car. These two cars have not been delivered at the time of this writing but should be delivered soon.

## 611 rolls again

In a special move for the Virginia Museum of Transportation, Norfolk Southern has moved Nine diesels, the Ex Vgn trainmaster slug and the R.F.&P boxcar behind East End Shops for storage. The movement also relocated Class J No. 611, the Dynamometer car (in fresh Tuscan red), The Railway Post office, the Lake Pearl, and the Safety Instruction Car. Out from under the shed at the museum to make way for the expansion of the "Claytor Pavilion" shed to cover the museums collection. The move was to take place on Monday January 14, 2002 but Norfolk Southern's Two GP38-2 diesels could not pull the cut out of the museum and up the grade. On Wednesday the 16th two SD40-2's came to the assistance of the first two units and the four units (approximately 11,600 Horsepower) pulled the cut out with no problem. Also during the move, the VGN Class SA, No 4 0-



Brian Crosier Photo

8-0 switcher, N&W class G1 2-8-0 and Nickel Plate Road 2-

8-4 were moved to the west end of the museums yard to make room for the construction crews. 611 was coupled to the rear of NKP 763 making for quite an impressive lash-up of steam technology.

Norfolk Southern is providing extra security for the units stored at East End Shops to deter in any wrench turning by souvenir hunters.

## Chapter Donates Books

by Bill Arnold

The Chapter recently donated copies of our book "Norfolk and Western Class J, The Finest Steam Passenger Locomotive" to several local libraries as we felt appropriate.

Former National Director Bill Arnold handled the donation of copies to Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Salem, Vinton, Radford, Pulaski, the Pulaski Station Museum and Christiansburg. We have received several nice letters of thanks and articles in the Salem Times Register and the Southwest Times.



Photo Courtesy of Southwest Times

## Chapter Plans Spring Outing.

by Richard D. Shell

Mark your calendars for the weekend of April 27th and 28th as we plan to board an Abbott bus and head for wild and wonderful West Virginia for a two day weekend of train riding.

We are in the planning stages of this outing to the West Virginia Central to ride the New Tygart Flyer. Plans also include The Salamander and The Durbin Rocket. Steam power is planned for The Durbin Rocket.

This year's operation will include a climb up out of the Tygart Valley, through a long, mysterious tunnel, and down along the Cheat River, traveling into the heart of the 900,000 acre Monongahela National Forest. This new mileage, in addition to the portion of the line through the spectacular gorge of the Tygart Valley River comprising the current route of the Flyer, enables the West Virginia Central to offer round trip packages ranging up to 86 miles.

More details will follow as we firm up prices and schedules. For more information, please call Richard D. Shell at 540-992-3611

## UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

February 21, 2002

Regular Meeting

March 5, 2002

Board Meeting

March 21, 2002

Regular Meeting

March 23, 2002

Annual Banquet

April 2, 2002

Board Meeting

April 18, 2002

Regular Meeting

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.

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

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Roanoke, VA  
Permit No. 89

**Dated Material**  
**Please do not delay**

another structure. The old tower located at Sand Patch, Pennsylvania was demolished on December 21st, 2001. The 87 year old SA Tower served the great Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and today's CSX. It was a real draw for railfans whom visited legendary Sand Patch Grade.

The following is not related to railroading as such but it does remind us to be careful as we pursue this hobby and life in general. A railfan associate that I have known for over 20 years stopped by The James Centre in downtown Richmond to view our huge HO scale model railroad layout which we operate for two weeks during the Christmas season. The James Centre is where CSX corporate headquarters are located. It was New Years Eve and the guy parked his vehicle in the parking lot on the westside of the building. He was approached by what he thought was the parking lot attendant. My friend handed out a requested \$3.00 plus his car keys "in case the car needed to be moved". After viewing our layout and chatting with us for about thirty minutes or so, he parted for home. Returning to the parking he discovered his vehicle was nowhere to be seen. That's right folks **STOLEN** by a fake parking lot attendant. His car was found two weeks later about 3:00 a.m. when Richmond police pulled a motorist driving erratically. There was about \$1,300 worth of damage to the front end.

## **Small Rails-February**

---

by Dave Meashey

**I**visited the Roanoke Valley Model Engineers at their Crossroads Mall location early in January. The club's new

portable layout is coming along nicely. The framing is complete and the sub-roadbed is 90% complete. One section of the layout will feature a spectacular gorge with multiple bridges and trestles spanning it.

Club members were allowing visitors to run their own HO trains on the layout. Judging from the number of folks participating, I'd say the idea was a hit. The club will also offer clinics for layout and scenery building.

Like bulbs in a flower bed, the Big Lick Big Train Operators are now dormant for the winter. Some members do have winter operations, but the club does not hold meetings due to travel difficulties for some of its members. The club will most likely hold it's first 2002 meeting in April, 2002.

## **Tragedy behind the station**

---

by Garland Harper

**T**he Christmas Eve death in Lynchburg of an on-the-job Norfolk Southern conductor put a real damper on the spirit of the season for the railroad community around here. The conductor, Vanhla Yoder, 31, of Harrisonburg, VA, was killed in the vicinity of the Park Avenue tunnel a few yards south of Kemper St. Station by southbound train #457 as she was knocking off the handbrakes on her train, a northbound coal train, No. 896.

Your editor was on duty at Kemper Street at the time of the accident. It is one thing to read about such tragedies that occur hundreds of miles away. It is another thing to have it happen within sight of your front door!

No. 896 had arrived from Roanoke about 1:00 a.m. and was tied down on No. 2

reprinted here with permission. It is a reminder to all that an accident can happen so quickly, safety is the first order of business. Since the story received no mention in the Roanoke paper, it was thought that Roanoke Chapter members would appreciate the first hand account of the terrible accident.

Editors Note: How times change, in the distant past the railroad would never consider delaying their own passenger train that long. On February 27, 1942, two sisters, Ella May and Betty Jane Smith, aged 12 and 10, were struck and killed near Lafayette on a bridge by the westbound Tennessean. Another horrible tragedy, but the key line in newspaper story is "the streamliner was delayed for fifteen minutes by the accident."

## Mechanical Report

by Brian Crosier

Mechanical Department report for last few months- the last few months have seen some changes for the better at the Ninth Street maintenance yard. Chad Jordan, a new member to the chapter whom drives in each weekend from Altavista, has been rewiring the shop and installing lights in each of the chapter's boxcars and baggage car. The shop now has light switches at the doors and new lights inside that illuminate key work areas and storage shelves. Even the downstairs storage room now has lights. A telephone was added in the workshop so that we do not have to go outside and down to the storage room as we did before. The boxcars are having outlets added so they can receive power from the building. This will

provide light while we take things in and out of the cars. A pallet jack has been purchased to assist in moving large items in and out and placing them under the shelving we are installing in each car. Our hope is to bring everything that currently is stored outside into the boxcars to improve our organization, to better preserve the parts, and to improve the appearance of the area. A picnic table has been long term loaned to the chapter for use at Ninth Street, so that any visitors or volunteers can take a lunch break or just have an outdoor seat among the trains.

In the up coming month we will begin to work on the track again with a tool that we have made to assist in the spiking of the track. We obtained by donation an old Fairmont spike puller that Alan Easome, Chad Jordan, and Brian Crosier have converted to a spike driver. The unit is on rail wheels and has a mobile arm with an air hammer that allows it to drive spikes on both sides of both rails.

The Chapter has also purchased to more historic freight cars. The first is a Virginian Railway gondola that was one of six converted to wheel cars by the VGN in 1938. The second is a Norfolk and Western G-1



Brian Crosier Photo