



Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 35, Number 11
November 2003





Turntable TIMES

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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 Annual meeting on Thursday, November 20, 2003 at 7:30 pm. This will be the election of directors, please see the notice and information on the facing page. The meeting will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke. As per usual, we will not have a regular December meeting, see the holiday gathering information elsewhere.

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, November 18, 2003. Please send all articles, information and 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 most newspapers; a condensed rewritten article crediting the source, however, is acceptable.

We love having articles of news, of a historical nature, the staff will be glad to assist in finding information or illustrations if you do not have any available.

Cover Photo

At one time, the depot was the center of all activities in a smaller town. Arrivals, departures, news and gossip all happened here. With the arrival of automobiles and more modern communications, depots like Vinton slowly began to decline in importance and one by one, closed and usually torn down. Vinton survived longer than many, but it too eventually met the bulldozer. N&W Photo/K.L. Miller Collection, Negative No. 2167.

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of Crystal Spring and McClanahan Street on Thursday, November 20, 2003. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm. At this time we will hold our annual election in which four (4) directors will be elected.

The nominees (in alphabetical order) at this writing are as follows:

Brian Crosier*
Lawand Ely*
Gary Gray
Grace Helmer
Carl Jensen*
Dave Meashey*

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting, please be sure you have that persons consent before making a nomination.

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will be electing four (4) directors. Election will be by secret ballot. Any member in good standing may vote by absentee ballot.

Please Note: if you are interested in running, or know of another Chapter member who is, please contact the nominating committee as soon as possible.

To vote by absentee ballot, one must:

1 - Request an absentee ballot from the Secretary or a member of the nominating committee. The nominating committee is chaired by Chad Jordan. You will receive (a) one ballot; (b) one "ballot" envelope; and (c) one mailing envelope.

2 - Mark the ballot (vote for not more than four (4) directors. If more than four (4) votes are cast, the ballot will be discarded).

3 - Place the ballot in the "ballot" envelope and seal. Do not put your name on the bal-

lot or "ballot" envelope.

4 - Place "ballot" envelope in the mailing envelope. Write your name and return address on the mailing envelope and mail to;

Roanoke Chapter, N.R.H.S.
P. O.Box 13222
Roanoke, VA 24032-1322

or the envelope may be hand delivered to the Secretary anytime before the election at the annual meeting.

Holiday Gathering

by Bonnie Molinary

Bring your family and join us once again this year for an evening of food and fun at our regular meeting location at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke on our regular meeting night, Thursday, December 18 beginning at 7:00 pm. You can enjoy a wide variety of finger foods, desserts and beverages.

There will be plenty of time to socialize with no business to be conducted except for the installation of officers and directors for 2003. Come and enjoy! For details and/or to volunteer to help, contact Bonnie Molinary, Kathy Overholser or Wanda Troutman.

Small Rails-November

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their October meeting at the home of Otto and Imtraut Hartenstein on Sunday, October 12th. I was unable to attend the meeting, but Otto's garden railway is excellent. I hope that someday it will be a feature layout article in Garden Railways magazine.

There was a fine American Flyer layout at the September 27th train show in the Salem

Civic Center. The operators had even found a smoke fluid that smelled just like the original American Flyer smoke. Oh, how I love the smell of that smoke. Lionel may have been the first toy trains on the market with smoke, but - to me at least - the American Flyers always smelled better.

The layout had several operating accessories that could be brought to life by observers. Standard doorbell switches were mounted at the edge of the layout, each labeled for the appropriate accessory. This was a nice way to allow spectators to participate in the toy train action.

Those accessories made me think of some of the non-standard (read bad boy) things I used to do with my American Flyer accessories and trains. The Operating Stock Yard had brown and black beef cattle. The brown cow rotated around their pen in the opposite direction that the black cows went. They were supposed to stay in separate pens, so that they would go out the gate to the loading ramp when it was opened. I liked to put both colors together in the same pen. They looked more realistic bumping into each other and milling around in a clump.

Then there was the Animated Passenger Station. The people for it were nice and light. I would put one of these passengers on top of the electric uncoupler. I would wait until a locomotive was almost on top of the uncoupler, then press the uncoupler button. WHEEEEE! The hapless little figure would fly into air just like he had been hit by the train. (Eleven-year-old boys are so cruel.)

I had the two-throttle transformer with the "Dead Man's Switch" throttle handles. Raise the throttle handle and the train stops. This was supposed to be used for emergency stops. It was also great for spin-

ning the wheels on locomotives without the "Pullmore Power" traction tires. Raise the throttle handle, set the power knob to 100%, and slap the throttle handle home. The locomotive would spin its wheels like crazy, then take off like the Looney Toons Roadrunner!

Considering that I was probably not the only kid with toy trains who thought up new ways to torture my toy trains, it's a wonder that so many of them survived to become the prized possessions of toy train collectors

Mixed Freight - November

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

CSX has decided not to stop operating empty coal and grain trains via its Piedmont and Mountain Subdivisions. So for the time being trains continue to operate over that nice piece of historic railroad.

Most of us have at least seen a movie or at some time heard of train robbers from the earlier times of this country. It still goes on but in a more sophisticated, high tech and most of all, out of public view. The combined efforts and resources of Norfolk Southern, CSX and the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice a few months ago put the brakes on a theft ring known as The Conrail Boys. The ring operated in Northern New Jersey and had been in business long before the break up of Conrail. They stole millions in dollars of goods from trains and railroad yards. According to officials, the Boys was one of the largest criminal outfits to target America's railroad enterprise. Stolen railroad radios and knowledge gained on train movements were used to prey on stopped or slow moving trains, mainly intermodals. Like an organized company, the gang was very organized with levels of personnel. Every member had a function to per-

form. The two year investigation netted the arrest of 24 theft ring members. The gang was smart enough to work around sophisticated security systems and increased policing.

I attended the Saturday September 27th activities in remembrance of the 100th Anniversary of The Wreck of Ole 97 in my hometown of Danville, VA. Personally I was not very impressed with what was offered. Without a doubt the tours offered at what is left of the wreck site was what I enjoyed most and got the most out of. I was joined by three of my Roanoke Chapter brethren, Brian Crosier, Jim Overholser and S.R. Winegard for most of my stay. Other activities included model N gauge and HO gauge layouts, the burying of an Ole 97 time capsule, a self guided tour of Norfolk Southern's Exhibit Car, the every Saturday flea market that included a few vendors of model railroad merchandise and railroadiana for that Saturday only and of course freight trains rolling by on the former Southern Railway high iron adjacent to the festival grounds.

The Altoona Railfest was again enjoyable this past October. Due to the passing of a relative in Danville, I was only able to enjoy the Railfest 2003 on Sunday only. Because of the intense rains on Saturday, the gala opening parade was cancelled and so was the Horseshoe Curve aerial balloon. The Pennsy E8s powered the ten car excursion trains on both days. The first excursion on Saturday did stall on the curve at AR Tower due to the curvature and wet rails. Weatherwise, Sunday was perfect. The festival was well attended and folks seemed to enjoy themselves. A live steamers group has laid an oval shape track on the property of The Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum and were operating quite a few steam locomo-

tives. Festival attendees were their manifest for the weekend. Norfolk Southern freights were constantly rolling by most of the day.

The following Sunday, October 12th, I attended the 2003 East Broad Top Autumn Spectacular. It was not as spectacular as past editions due to the fact that only one steam locomotive, No. 14, was operating. It pulled a seven car passenger train while the center cab diesel pulled a seven car train of open cars and closed coaches. Hopefully, No. 14 will be joined by one of her sisters next year. There was a good sized crowd on hand and the weather perfect. This year I spent more time riding the trolleys of the adjacent Rockhill Furnace Trolley Museum. They have added some trackage since my last visit in 2000. They now offer a 3 mile round trip on single track with a siding for real meets.

Speaking of trolleys, a September 28th fire destroyed eight items of trolley and related vehicles at The National Capital Museum. The museum is located in Montgomery County, Maryland. The blaze did an estimated \$8 million in damages and is still under investigation.

Book Review

by John Austen

Operation CUT, The first 30 years
by Jack Grasso;

RAE Publishing Company; 2003; 8-1/2" x 11",
76pp.; \$18.95.

Distributed through Railroad Avenue
Enterprises, P.O. Box 114 Flanders NJ
07836-0114

The subtitle tells you what to expect: "The story of rail operations out of Cleveland Union Terminal in Railroading's Golden Age". The emphasis is on rail operations, not the terminal building (which the author mentions will be covered in another

work by another publisher).

This volume delivers plenty of trackside action in a sweeping review of the years from 1930 to 1960. It is very well illustrated with black and white photos, along with several track plans for the station and approaches. One particularly interesting drawing is a cross section view of the station tracks showing the connections for air, stream and water. Many of the 90 illustrations are photos by Herb Harwood; as Jack Grasso says, the first need when writing a book is the collaboration of an expert. Jack and Herb (and others) also relate some of their experiences riding trains out of CUT, and working there. Herb was a reservation clerk for a while; Ben Anthony contributes some interesting details of his experience as an operator and leverman.

Cleveland had one of the most sophisticated rail operations in the world, with all classes of rail passenger service from mainline trains to interurban electrics and rapid transit. In the era addressed here we see streamlined limiteds hauled by steam and first generation diesels, and the giant electric locomotives owned by the terminal company, as well as transit cars and PCC trolleys. As Jack says: "If you are a fan of the B&O, the Erie, the Nickel Plate, or the New York Central, you will love how these railroads blended into a first class operation that set a standard for the rest of the country. Interurban trolley and rapid transit movement put the icing on the cake. If there was ever a demonstration of how excellent rail passenger service could be, it was here in Cleveland".

The terminal was owned by the New York Central (93%) and Nickel Plate (7%), with Erie and B&O as tenants later. From the 1930 opening to 1953 the terminal was served by 22 heavy electric locomotives

(similar to ones used by New York Central in New York City, which they joined upon retirement from Cleveland). One of the chapters covers this later life of the CUT heavy electrics, including their conversion for service in New York. Another chapter covers the survival of local electric service in Cleveland (Shaker Heights Rapid Transit), largely alongside Nickel Plate/Norfolk & Western lines.

An appendix provides specifications for the P-1a electric locomotives (including renumbering for NYC service), and a review of rapid transit and interurban electrics in the Cleveland area. The book concludes with a one-page bibliography.

Operation CUT is a good value for the money. Photo reproduction is excellent, and there is a good balance between narrative and illustrations. It includes some interesting personal recollections casting light on terminal operations. With the focus on rail operations it serves to remind us that a terminal is not just the station building; the trackside action behind it can be just as interesting.

Chapter Outing On Buckingham Branch

by Dorr Tucker

On Saturday, October 11, forty Chapter members and friends headed east via Abbott Motor Coach to enjoy the sights and sounds of the Buckingham Branch Railroad out of Dilwyn Virginia.

The first stop following the 8AM departure was at the restored 1912 vintage Kemper St. Station in downtown Lynchburg. Amtrak agent, Garland Harper was so kind to open the facility for our inspection. Blue Ridge Chapter President (and Roanoke Chapter Member as well), Norris Deyerle escorted our coach down the narrow lane

leading to the restored former C&O Stapleton Station, reconstructed deep within the confines of the Lynchburg City Cemetery. After a brief stop Norris then escorted us thru downtown to the industrial area along the riverbank where old N&W,SR and C&O lines intersect. After a brief delay at a road crossing near the old coaling tower at C&O's Tyree Yard we headed onward to Dilwyn pausing briefly at Appomattox Battlefield.

We arrived in Dilwyn (about 90 highway miles east of Roanoke) around 12:15 with an hour to eat our box lunch in the autumn chill.

Our train consisted of Old Dominion Chapter owned ex-RF&P GP-7 No.101,ex-RF&P wide window heavyweight coach, 701, ex-SR heavyweight coach, 1006, a modern bay window cab, two open air cars converted from pulpwood cars by the Buckingham Branch and a rather crude, but appropriate, ex boxcar commissary well staffed by Old Dominion Chapter folks, selling hamburgers, hot dogs, various soft drinks and south side genuine pork barbeque. The cool haze of the day changed to warm brilliant sun as we headed down the 17 mile line at 15 mph.

The highlight of the ride was the unannounced skirmish between Confederate and Union troops at a remote location near the metropolis of Slate Hill. The next road crossing found the soldiers pickups parked near the tracks. Good Show!

Our destination was high above the James River near Bremono where we paused momentarily before backing up the entire miles to downtown Dilwyn where we reboarded the bus in the late afternoon sunlight and proceeded westward once again.

The final event of the day was our last stop and excellent dinner at old Liberty

Station Restaurant in downtown Bedford. Even though the N&W is the only railroad to have severed this depot, a D&RGW narrow gauge steam locomotive is featured on the cover of their menu! In addition, some other foreign road images are on the walls. Despite those small errors, the food was well prepared and quickly handled, and thanks to the careful planning of trip chairman Paul M. Howell we arrived back in Roanoke precisely on time at 9 o'clock.

Membership Renewal

Membership Chairperson Lawanda Ely has gotten a number of renewals back in, is yours among them? Please send your renewal in as quickly as possible, it will simplify her job immensely!

O. Winston Link Museum

by Jay Saunders

The O. Winston Link Museum NEEDS YOUR HELP!!

We need many volunteers to help us make the O. Winston Link Museum work. Please help us to preserve the work of this great photographer by giving us some of your time! We will need people to help:

GIVE TOURS

WORK IN THE GIFT SHOP

SELL ADMISSION TICKETS

ASSIST WITH ARCHIVES

And other FUN opportunities!!

We will be open seven days a week, so ANY time you may have to offer the OWLM will be greatly appreciated. And we will gladly work around your schedule! Please check out the "How to Help" section of our website; <http://www.linkmuseum.org> or call the History Museum of Western Virginia (342-5770) and say: "I want to volunteer for LINK!"

Facts About our Railroad

From the April 1954 N&W Magazine

The Norfolk and Western's terminal at Norfolk has more tracks (main line, sidings and yard tracks) than has the entire State of Rhode Island in line mileage. Norfolk Terminal has 197.2 miles of track as compared with trackage totaling 183 line miles in Rhode Island.

The American railroads operate every day about 25,000 trains a total distance of nearly two and one-third million miles. These trains carry more than a million passengers on journeys totaling nearly 90 million miles a day, and move every day more than 10 tons of freight one mile for each person in America.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

November 20, 2003 – Annual Meeting
December 2, 2003 – Board Meeting
Holiday Gathering - December 18, 2003
January 6, 2004 - Board Meeting
January 15, 2004 - General Meeting
February 3, 2004 - Board Meeting
February 19, 2004 - General Meeting
March 2, 2004 - Board Meeting

Your dues are due no later than December 31, 2003, otherwise you will be dropped as a member.

<http://community.roanoke.com/RoanokeChapterNationalRailwayHistoricalSociety>

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P.O. Box 13222
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