



Turntable TIMES

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

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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 meeting on Thursday, August 21, 2003 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.

Program for September will be the Roanoke Chapter's sponsored Railcamper! He should have some interesting things to show and tell on this excellent National program.

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, September 18, 2003. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, 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

In the era before the auto rack cars, automobiles were still shipped via rail, however, it was much more time and labor intensive project. Take a look at these three views of brand new Studebakers being loaded at the South Bend, Indiana plant into Nickel Plate autoboxes, much the same manner dating to the 1920s, Scenes like this were vanishing rapidly when this was made in 1961. Auto rack cars were already in place, and more appearing rapidly. Nickel Plate Road Photos/K. L. Miller Collection

Mixed Freight - September

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Two days after I wrote by Mixed Freight for August in which I included an update on the restoration of the N&W wooden caboose located in Carson, Virginia, I spent Sunday July 20th railfanning the former Seaboard Coast Line high iron between Richmond and Rocky Mount, N.C. Naturally I stopped in Carson to catch a freight roaring thru and to check on the progress of the caboose. It had only been two weeks since my previous visit. The car now bears the name and logo of it's former owner. Caboose No. 583286 looks great. How accurate it is I cannot say. The roof and underframe were painted black. The N&W hamburger style logo, the name NORFOLK & WESTERN, and the number 583286 were painted onto plywood that was painted red. All lettering is white. The plywood pieces were then screwed to the sides of the car. The N&W logo is centered beneath the cupola. The spelled out company name is below the logo and the number below that. Both sides of the caboose were done. There is no black square giving essential data such as month and year built, date packed, etc. The caboose looks great as I stated earlier. Too bad it isn't located next to former N&W trackage, but I'm glad it is located where it is versus other possible alternatives.

Many years ago the former N&W old main line via Farmville, VA was threatened to be abandoned by Norfolk Southern. The line was not abandoned and the sound of trains, mostly westbounds, continued to permeate the northern part of the Prince Edward County countryside. Well it looks like the line is being threatened with abandonment again; this time around abandonment may

be imminent. For the uninformed, train traffic has been handled exclusively by the former N&W belt line since last December. Only a local or occasional movement has disrupted the coat of rust that forms on a railhead because of a lack of continued activity on the Farmville line. If the line is abandoned, it stands to be a strong candidate for the Rails To Trails program. This in turn could be a real asset to Civil War enthusiast, naturalist, hikers and cyclist. High Bridge would most likely be kept intact with safety features enhanced and added.

Abandonment takes at least a year once the process is commenced. It would be great if a tourist excursion train service could be operated on the entire line or a segment of it.

Moving from a possible line abandonment to a possible line restoration, enter Southeast High Speed Rail. On Tuesday afternoon of August 5th, I journeyed down to Petersburg, Virginia to attend a public workshop on S.H.S.R. which started at 4:00 pm. The workshop took place in the former Petersburg High School auditorium and attracted about 25 people for the first session. Each session was about an hour long, depending on the number of questions presented by the audience. The workshop was scheduled to end at 7:30 pm. In the hallway just outside the auditorium were detailed maps of the proposed route. The route is supposed to use the former Seaboard Air Line from Collier Yard to Norlina, North Carolina where the track is still in place and in use to Raleigh. It was emphasized on the maps that alterations will have to be made in order for the high speed trains to travel 110 mph without slowing down. The lecture part lasted about 30 minutes followed by a question and answer session. Afterwards folks were free to mingle and discuss the proposed project. I asked a representative

where the largest turnout had occurred and that honor went to Norlina with an attendance of over 300. People there are really excited about having passenger trains returning to their town. For those of you interested in keeping abreast of the progress being made and more public workshops, contact: Southeast High Speed Rail, c/o NCDOT-Rail Division, Attn: Mr. David Foster, PE, MSC 1553, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1553. Phone is 1-877-749-7245. Email is: www.sehsr.org

LESS THAN CARLOAD: Norfolk Southern's 21,500 mile system connects with 241 short-line railroads. The combined mileage of these shortlines totals 19,000. Just over 1,200 people attended the coming home and 60th birthday of Class A No. 1218 on June 14 at The Virginia Museum of Transportation. That was a record. The City of Danville, Virginia will be celebrating The Wreck of Ole 97 anniversary style September 26-28. It should be one of the largest events to hit my hometown in a while. There will be a lot to offer railfans, historians and the public in general. Activities will center around the former Southern Railway passenger depot on Craighead Street. Similar activities are to be held at the North Carolina Transportation Museum at Spencer the same weekend.

Our friends and neighbors of the Blue Ridge Chapter over in Lynchburg have changed location for their FUN MEETING night. FUN MEETINGS are held the fourth Wednesday night of every odd number month, such as September. The new location is the former Southern Railway now Amtrak Kemper Street Station located on Kemper Street in Lynchburg. The bimonthly get together commences at 7:30 pm., and now videos are presented as well as slides. These events are pretty enjoyable but be

forewarned, high boots are recommended, it usually gets VERY DEEP. Everyone is encouraged to bring slides.

LCL

by Jim Overholser

Roanoke Chapter has organized a Long Range Planning Committee. We invite any and all comments on the direction our Chapter should be taking over the next five to ten years. Feel free to contact any of the members: Chairman Shirldon Winegard, members Doug André, Alan Easome, Jim Overholser, Dorr Tucker, and ex-officio member Ken Miller.

Saturday, September 27, 2003, is the 100th anniversary of The Wreck of the Old 97 (the song came later). On that day Danville, Virginia, is hosting an all-day celebration with events including tours of the wreck site, train exhibits, book signing, children's activities, music, and more. Call 434-773-8160 for more information.

Internet web sites of interest:

O. Winston Link Museum
www.linkmuseum.org

Virginia Museum of Transportation
www.vmt.org

National Railway Historical Society
www.nrhs.com

Norfolk and Western Historical Society
www.nwhs.org

Virginia DMV, 611 License Plate
<http://www.dmv.state.va.us/exec/vehicle/splates/info.asp?idnm=JLOC>

Old Station News

by Gary Ballard

For those of you in the Roanoke and Lynchburg areas, there are some interesting improvements to see regarding passenger train stations, that are not too far to drive to and see.

North Carolina has spruced up its train stations, and the end result is something that warrants a day trip in the car and take a few pictures. Although these building renovations have been around for the past couple of years, their present condition will surprise you for years to come.

Weldon, NC is just a short drive south of Emporia, VA. The depot in Weldon sits on the old Seaboard and Atlantic Coast Line railroad routes. The site has been made into a painting that can be purchased from those raifan nostalgia magazines that show up in the mail often. The two famous railroads that go through Weldon, fly over each other where the station is located. Many years ago the ACL purple and silver locomotives ran along the steel bridge over the tracks where one could see the SCL citrus colored locomotives. Today, the ground level tracks are gone, and the busy trains of CSX and Amtrak roll by on the overhead steel bridge. Bring your camera, the local people in Weldon have seen to it, to keep the depot in its original tan and brown colors, the building is in top shape, and the lawn is kept in frequent mowed condition. Behind the station, a mowed grass path is kept so one can see



Weldon, NC
all photos: Gary Ballard

where the old railroad right of way once was.

Those interested in preserving the ex-Virginian station in Roanoke, would do good to venture on down to Weldon to get a few ideas on restoring a great, well known building to something that is pleasing to see. Then add, some pictures from the depot's heyday, to pictures of its present day restored condition is something that this chapter of the NRHS clearly has the resources to pull off!

Other great stations in North Carolina that have been brought back to life and are worth seeing include: Rocky Mount, Wilson, Selma, Raleigh and Fayetteville. Venture further to South Carolina and you'll marvel at the well kept depots in Dillon and Florence. A day trip that follows old U.S. 301 takes you to all of these great old stations. Amtrak schedules are handy at each one.

Selma, NC is where the the depot sits at the Norfolk Southern and CSX diamond. Amtrak's Florida trains go north and south through here. Amtrak's Carolinian switches off the CSX main, and swings onto the east-west tracks of NS that allows traffic to continue on to Raleigh and Charlotte. The station is open to the public and a scanner will



Rocky Mount, NC

keep up with CSX and NS movements. Old signals are present on the CSX tracks, but they are to be replaced soon. The NS route to Raleigh is dark, it has no signals. This is

Selma, NC



where Amtrak trains stop and obtain track warrants over the NS radio to venture beyond the curve at Selma for the trip to Raleigh.

As assistant Conductor for Amtrak, I worked in this region for three months last year. It's interesting to listen to the radio as the dispatcher gives the Conductor the verbal permission to get onto the NS track at Selma. Not only did I have to get qualified to work in this territory, but I had to go up into the locomotive to copy down the track warrant for rest of the trip to Raleigh. Under Amtrak rules the engineer is not allowed to copy the warrant onto the NS paper form. The Conductor writes down the track warrant as the dispatcher talks out the conditions over the radio. The Conductor reads back the track warrant over the radio, with the engineer sitting nearby. As this almost ends, the dispatcher reads out something called the "okay" time. Unless the Conductor gets the "okay" time for the track warrant, he or she can forget any of this ever happened.

With the verbal permission granted, the train swings to the right and steps onto the westward tracks that go to Raleigh. This can

Dillon, SC



be some interesting train watching fun at the Selma depot. As the train travels west from Selma, little of the North Carolina country side has changed. Passengers going to Raleigh still will see another station that has been spruced up. It is clear that when the state got involved with commuter trains, that the stations got a much needed face lift. The norm from years ago of a drab and dirty station interior is far removed these days. I am not sure of who was in charge of seeing that so many of North Carolina's stations look as nice as they do. Someone over saw that project, and a lot of people have done tremendous work.

A Titanic of a building is the Rocky Mount, NC station. This is a small town, but many years ago this was the place where lots of people used the train as transportation. This building has been completely gone over and today it is a marvel to walk into. There is the lobby where inbound travelers first took the biggest of luggage to the baggage claim counter. One could glance up and see the sky through a large sky light that forms a triangle pointing upward. Through the rear wall of the lobby, gained entry to the waiting room of the station. Reproductions of huge globe lights that hang from the ceiling, light up the room. One end of this rectangle area has the old ticket counter. Today an agent still sells tickets here.

Outside the Rocky Mount station, the track side awning runs long enough to protect a ten car train from the elements.

Fayetteville, NC





Beautiful tile makes up the roof of this structure. Along the spine of the A-frame shelter, run a series of pointed sharks-tooth slate pieces that give the shelter an added flare. Certainly a lot of hours went into this restoration. Inside and out, this station is something to see right down to the red brick exterior that was cleaned throughout.

As you end your day trip of visiting these fine old stations in the Carolinas, perhaps save some film for a shot or two of other great stations and depots closer to home. Don't forget to visit the Kemper Street station in Lynchburg. Many in the Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS played a big part in saving the building from a certain death. Along the N&W, the stations in Bedford, Rocky Mount, Roanoke and Salem survive today through the efforts of many people.

Let's end this story on train stations with a word on safety around railroad tracks. Every issue of the Turntable Times could run something on safety and it wouldn't be over doing it. We all get caught in the moment and forget what's behind us or what's to the side of us. Sure, there is lots out there to record on film and video. Remember, use your head when venturing near the limits of railroad property.

Many railroad officials have knowledge of railfans and the hobby of photographing things. When confronted, don't sit there and argue with the man, he has a job to do. In these trying times we all want to know what a stranger is up to with something on a tri-

pod and aiming it at the tracks. Yes, I work for a major railroad and I carry my photo I.D. with me on such outings, but that doesn't stop an official from asking me what I'm doing. Don't do stupid things on railroad property! Standing in the gauge of the track for the photo of a lifetime can result in painful handcuffs and a trip downtown. Don't laugh when you hear of how often a railfan gets his elbow hit by a passing train, all because his tripod was too close to the tracks. There is plenty of history out there to see. Today about as many restorations are going on as there is demolitions. So get it before it's gone! And be safe!

Small Rails-August

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their August meeting at the home of Brad Dobbins on Saturday, August 20th. Brad's basement layout is being built on a European theme. Brad has several interesting European railroad structures. Brad's structures also include houses and businesses based on European prototypes. Brad has quite a collection of LGB locomotives and cars, many of which were in operation for the club's enjoyment.

Membership Renewal

Membership Chairperson Lawanda Ely has recently mailed out your renewal notices. This is part of the change over of the NRHS National system to have memberships run over the calendar year, and not be still accepting renewals by the end of February. Please send your renewal in as quickly as possible, it will simplify her job immensely!

Chapter Outing-October 11

by Paul Howell

This year we have a single day out and back trip on Saturday October 11 to ride the Buckingham Branch railroad. We'll be leaving town via the Abbott bus, about 8 am, headed for Lynchburg. We'll put some box lunches onboard and head east for our train ride on the Buckingham Branch railroad. After the trip, we turn homeward stopping somewhere along the way to eat and socialize. We arrive in Roanoke about 9 pm. Specific instructions will be given at the September meeting.

Our trip is almost 75% sold out at this writing, so if you want to go, call Paul Howell at 774-2619 and bring your money to the September. Only \$40 per person, everything but your evening meal included!

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

September 18, 2003 – General Meeting

October 7, 2003 – Board Meeting

October 11, 2003 - Chapter Outing

October 16, 2003 – General Meeting

November 4, 2003 – Board Meeting

November 20, 2003 – Annual Meeting

December 2, 2003 – Board Meeting

Holiday Gathering - Stay Tuned!

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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