



Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 36, Number 8

August 2004





Turntable TIMES

**Volume 36, Number 8
August 2004**

EDITOR

Kenney Kirkman
KKIRKMAN50@hotmail.com

MIXED FREIGHT

Robin R. Shavers

SMALL RAILS

Dave Meashey
kndmeashey@msn.com

HISTORIAN

Kenneth L. Miller
klmiller@rev.net

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, August 19, 2004 at 7:30 pm.

Every member is strongly encouraged to attend the August meeting, we will be discussing some issues dealing with the long term operations of the Chapter. If there is time we will have a 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 Wednesday, August 18, 2004. Please send 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.

Cover Photo

Bill Cecil recorded the 610 leading the nameless Bristol Line local, train No. 10 as it pauses at Salem to load mail and express. By the time of this view in 1956, 9 and 10 had been cut back two years before from Lynchburg-Bristol to Roanoke-Bristol. The locals were hardly the choice or riders, and this day anything more than a handful would be surprising, as the train was made up of a variety of mail and express cars followed by a single coach. 9 and 10 would disappear from the rails and timetables forever by the spring of 1958. They were victims of increased highway competition and high operating costs. Could a passenger train make a return to the Bristol line in the future? That remains to be seen.

Mixed Freight - August 2004

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Railroad officials have already taken steps for the Buckingham Branch Railroad to lease from CSX Transportation the trackage between Richmond and Clifton Forge via Charlottesville and the short segment between Gordonsville and Orange. On May 26 a lease agreement was presented to and filed with the Surface Transportation Board. Barring any unforeseen issues, the agreement is to become effective on December 20, 2004.

It is my understanding that when the Buckingham Branch leases the line, it will become dark territory. Direct Traffic Control is employed on some of that railroad now. An inside source has stated that the track side signals may be removed period. There are quite a few old C&O style signal structures in Gordonsville. If you have a thing for these signal structures, don't hesitate.

As many of you know, locomotives, like commercial and military aircraft, are equipped with data recording apparatus. The public and media refer to it as the black box. The Federal Railroad Administration desires to have these locomotive black boxes upgraded to improve the quality thus providing investigators with more complete information following an accident. This upgrade could cost America's railroads about \$ 22 million if the ruling becomes effective.

Norfolk Southern continues to adjust it's freight schedules and routes to meet customer demands and to keep itself fluid. Trains 11R and 12R now traverse the former N&W Shenandoah Valley line between Roanoke and Hagerstown instead of the former Southern Railway to the east. The trains travel the former Virginian between Roanoke and The Hurt Connection where they continue use of the Southern to

Linwood Yard in Linwood, N.C. 11R is southbound out of Binghamton, N.Y. 12R is the northbound counterpart. These trains sometime use Canadian Pacific locomotives.

Keep in mind that The Blue Ridge Chapter NRHS over in Lynchburg still hold their Fun Nights at Kemper Street Station on Kemper Street in Lynchburg. Fun Nights are held on the fourth Wednesday of each odd numbered month such as July, September and November. Folks begin gathering around 7:30 pm. Slides and sometimes videos are presented until Amtrak train # 19, The Crescent, arrives or we run out of slides and videos. If you come please bring slides, as many as you wish. We often run out of material to show. Tis better to have too many than too little especially for folks like me whom travel a long way for the event. Vintage subject matter that you rarely or never see on today's railroad scene are especially welcomed. Of course today's modern railroading is by no means discouraged.

Small Rails-August

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their July meeting on Saturday, July 24th at the home of Karen and Tom Harris in Wytheville. Karen probably will not begin work on her new garden railroad until spring of 2005, so Tom's HO railroad was the feature of our meeting.

Tom's railroad has both digital command control and sound. A large number of trees had been added to several slopes since our last visit. About half of Tom's track is hidden from view, and a large new staging yard was taking shape in that behind the scenes area. When finished, the staging yard will hold up to 24 trains that can be sent over the main line using a computer program for random selection.

Trains were manually selected during our meeting, but about eight trains were run. Sound really does add to the enjoyment of operating trains, but it also puts extra responsibility on the engineers. Engineers must remember to blow the proper horn/whistle signals at grade crossings, station platforms, and when responding to trainmen's hand signal directions. The bell must be rung at the proper times. Of course, the ability to use the horn/whistle and the bell also adds fun to operating the train.

One train actually proved too heavy for it's motive power and had to have about a third of its cars set out on a siding for later pickup. All the guests had an opportunity to try their skills at operating a train. I was very fortunate to get to run a Broadway Limited model of 1218 on an empty coal train (just like the 1987 National Convention). The model A's "hooter" whistle sounded just like the real thing.

I was blowing a series of short and long tones on the whistle as my train approached a tunnel. Another operator asked me whether that was a tunnel signal. I had to confess that just like Bob Claytor and Frank Collins, I was blowing the whistle for the sheer joy of hearing its wonderful tone.

Tom's railroad is set in the era from 1970 to 1981, so most of the motive power are first and second generation diesels. A Bachmann Baldwin Consolidation is held in reserve as the primary locomotive for the excursion train. 1218 is Karen's locomotive and gets special treatment as a visiting locomotive from another railroad's steam program.

Because Tom's trains are prototypical in length, they are run in real time instead of fast time. The sheer size of Tom's freight yard also dictates that the railroad must be run in real time. Trains traveling at scale speed through a properly scaled landscape

almost give the illusion that one is watching the prototype from about half a mile away. As always, everyone had a wonderful time operating Tom's railroad.

CSX Line Sales Could Affect 250 Jobs

CSX has invited several short-line railroads to either bid on buying or leasing two of its rail routes in West Virginia and Maryland, a move that could affect 250 CSX jobs.

One line runs from the New Martinsville area of West Virginia eastward to Cumberland, Maryland via Clarksburg and Grafton. The other line runs from Grafton southward to Cowen, West Virginia.

CSX has set a goal of trimming 1,200 miles from its 23,000 mile system this year. Other decisions are still in the works.

CSX had asked the shortline companies to submit their bids by July 20th. A decision on the bids will be made in the next few weeks.

CSX is in the process of turning over the route between Richmond and Clifton Forge to the Buckingham Branch Railroad of Dillwyn, Virginia. Earlier this year CSX leased the former Pennsylvania Railroad line between Crestline, Ohio and Chicago to RailAmerica Inc.

(Story from Huntington Herald-Dispatch via Blue Ridge Chapter newsletter, Blue Ridge Dispatcher).

New Plant to Help Buckingham Branch R.R.

MeadWestVaco Corp. will build a \$7 million wood-processing plant on the Buckingham Branch Railroad just north of Dillwyn, headquarters for the railroad in Buckingham County, Virginia.

Currently, the railroad handles about 2,000 carloads a year on its 17-mile line in Buckingham County. The new wood-processing plant will increase that number to 5,000 a year, according to Bob Bryant, co-founder of the Buckingham Branch Railroad.

(Story based from article in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Tuesday, July 13, 2004, by Chip Jones, via the Old Dominion Chapter newsletter, The "Highball").

Condolences

The Chapter offers its condolences to member Robin Shaver who's father passed away as this newsletter was going to press. Member Fred Thompson passed away on June 9, 2004. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families.

Grassy Creek Cabooses

by Jeff Sanders

For a relaxing vacation, I would like to recommend a night or two at Grassy Creek Cabooses. Located just a stones throw off the Blue Ridge Parkway near Fancy Gap, this "motel" offers a unique accommodation for the railfan, or anyone, seeking a different kind of get-away experience.

Three cabooses, or "cabs" as we know them on NS (N&W), have been relocated to this picturesque location in the mountains. There are two former Nickel Plate Road cabs, numbers 407 and 494, and one N&W cab, number 555042. Each cab interior has been completely renovated. If you are looking for a "real" caboose experience, this is not it! There is no dirty coal dust, nor hot (or cold) air whistling in around the doors and windows. These cabs contain amenities that an old Conductor would have killed for.

Each cab has a two-person Jacuzzi, refrigerator, microwave, coffeemaker, and toaster

oven. You bathe in a private bathroom and sleep on a queen size bed. Also included is a stereo with CD player and TV and VCR. There are hundreds of videos available at the office. Outside each car is a deck with cedar rockers and a picnic table and a charcoal grill.

Nearby attractions include Mabry Mill, historic Mt. Airy, the Blue Ridge Music Center, New River, hiking, fishing, golf, as well as numerous antique shops and produce stands. The cabooses are located on 33 acres on a hillside, at an elevation of 3,000 feet.

If you would like to climb aboard a Grassy Creek Caboose for a Pullman style experience, call 276-398-1100, or go to www.grassy-creekcabosses.com. All Aboard!

Chapter Outing

by Ken Miller

Our Chapter outing to the Potomac Eagle and Western Maryland Scenic Railways on August 7-8 was an outstanding success. On-Time and Precision Transportation performance were the hallmarks of the weekend. Fifty members and guests were out in plenty of time for the early 6:30 departure from the Wal Mart at Bonsack. An easy ride up I-81 with a rest stop along the way provided an early arrival at Romney, West Virginia with the Potomac Eagle awaiting our arrival. True to form, eagles were spotted on the trip. The weather had a definite fall feel to it on this day, as the cooler temperatures and clear sky filled with white clouds gave us a mix of sunlight and shadows. Return to Romney was right on time and we boarded our Abbot Bus and headed the 25 miles or so to Cumberland. We did have a change or two in plan due to the bus clearance before arrival at the Hotel. We did pass the CSX

locomotive shops, where several of our cars had been several days before for wheel work, but they had already been returned to WMSRR for the final repairs before shipment home, hopefully in the next few weeks.

Arrival at the Hotel in Lavale, Md. was early and a slight schedule change was made for dinner. A number of the passengers enjoyed their dinner at the nearby Ponderosa Steak house, while a variety of others chose their own destination at several of the nearby restaurants or fast food places. Several of us opted for a "Bill Carson short walk" that probably ended up being several miles long before dinner. It more than increased the appetite by the time we arrived at the restaurant. One interesting item of note, was during our walk, the air raid siren sounded several times for no obvious reason after checking the sky to see if bombers were overhead, we determined that it was safe and we continued on our walk.

The Hotel was very accommodating and quite pleasant with a pool, hot tub and exercise room, the rooms seemed quite comfortable and well maintained.

Breakfast the next morning was to be a slow affair with snail like serviced in the restaurant, half-hour delays were commonplace, but we still all managed to make the bus on-time departure at 9:30.

A slight lack of information on our tickets caused some confusion, as our individual meal choices were printed on the ticket. However, we had not been informed that the tickets were so marked, and we handed them out at the bus without concern for choices until it was noticed that the tickets were indeed different. A bit of juggling was required to get all the meals in their proper place.

After wandering around the depot and

platform, the 734 and train finally pulled over from Ridgely just a few minutes before 11 am in a very nice show of steam and smoke. The train this day was nine cars with a GP30 on the rear.

The weather on Sunday was a bit more summer-like as the temperatures were in the low 80s and the sun stayed with us most of the day. Our group was seated in one of the dining cars (converted from a coach) decorated with Coca-Cola memorabilia. Again an on-time departure began our climb up the mountain towards Frostburg, about halfway up, a service stop was made for an uncooperative bearing. This allowed for those in the train to hear the 734 slip with the train on the heavy grade and work hard to gain the altitude to reach Frostburg.

The locomotive was uncoupled and pulled ahead on the turntable, a complete 360° turn was made and the locomotive parked on the table for the duration of our visit. The nine car train was too long for the runaround track there, so the GP30 would lead us back down the mountain with the 734 rolling along for the ride. A group photo was hastily organized on the turntable before our departure.

Once again, one time arrival back in Cumberland, and yet another group photo was made with the 734 at the station. We boarded our motorcoach and made our way out of town.

A quiet ride back home was accomplished with one rest and food stop at Woodstock, and we arrived back at the Wal-Mart just a little before 9 pm, capping off a wonderful weekend of scenery, fine dining on rails and steam!

Our thanks to Trip Chairman Paul Howell who more than capably organized this with the help of Dorr Tucker, Joe Austin and Wanda Troutman. I believe we had 50 folks looking forward to the next outing already!

It Was 30 Years Ago

by Ken Miller

It is hard to believe but this year and last marks the 30th Anniversary of the Chapter acquiring two cars that are still mainstays of our fleet.

In late 1973, N&W Coach No. 1827 was acquired by the Chapter. The car had been in use on the former Wabash territory and stored for a time before the Chapter acquired it. It was painted in the N&W passenger scheme of its time, the dark Pevler blue with gold lettering on its arrival.

In early 1974, a bid was made to the Burlington Northern for dinette-dormitory No. 1148 "Devils Lake." That car arrived at the Chapter's Salem facility in mid May, still in its Great Northern orange, brown and gold.

Both cars underwent work and refurbishing into standard N&W tuscan red with gold lettering Coach 1827 was renumbered to RNRH 1210 and named John M. Hancock after one of the hard working mechanical department members. The 1148 became RNRH 1220 named Carol W. Jensen.

It was suggested that some of the newer members might like to see a bit of the history of the Chapter rolling stock collection. In fact some of them may not even be aware that we own such, as it has been away from Roanoke since 1999. So follows is the brief history of each car to the best of my knowledge.

1827 Former Norfolk and Western 1827, 56 seat air conditioned coach, Coach built by Pullman-Standard in summer of 1947 for the Boston & Maine 4803 named "Blackbird", sold to the Wabash in August, 1958 and numbered 1420 and acquired and renumbered by N&W after 1964 merger. Car was used in 1968 in a Robert Kennedy Campaign Train. N&W removed the stainless steel from

the car in the late 1960s and painted it in the solid Pevler blue scheme. After the end of N&W passenger service on May 1, 1971, the car was stored on the western end of the railroad, then finally sold for scrap. Roanoke Chapter purchased the car in 1973. Restored to operating condition, it saw service in excursions trains on the Southern and N&W. Car also was leased to B&O for Commuter Service from Washington DC to Baltimore several years in late 1970's, also saw use in Chessie System steam train service. Numbered to RNRH 1210 after restoration in 1973 and named John M. Hancock, renumbered to 1827 in 1987. All operating Chapter equipment was upgraded to NS Steam Train standards in 1992-1994. Painted in standard N&W tuscan red with black roof and running gear with dulux gold lettering and striping.

1148 Former Great Northern number 1148, "Devil's Lake" a dinette/dormitory car was built in 1949 with a kitchen and lunch counter, 4 booths with seating for 16 people and sleeping berths for 18 crew member plus a bedroom for the Chief Steward. This car was built for dining car crew accommodations for long distance trains on the GN. The car shell was built by Pullman-Standard with the interior finished by Great Northern. Used from Chicago to Tacoma on the "Empire Builder" Presently in use as a food service car and dormitory space for Chapter crew. Car was purchased from the Burlington Northern in 1972 and restored by Roanoke Chapter for excursion train use. Renumbered RNRH 1220 and named Carol W. Jensen in 1974. Restored to it's Great Northern name and number in 1985. Painted in standard N&W tuscan red with black roof and running gear with dulux gold lettering and striping.

Both cars are presently at Western Maryland Scenic for repairs and wheel work

due to service in West Virginia.

If there is interest, we will continue with more of our equipment history in the coming issues. This will include equipment that has now passed on to other hands or even scrap.

NOTICE

Please make every effort to attend the August meeting on the 19th. There will be an important discussion concerning the long term operations of the Chapter. The Board would like everyone to have a say in this matter.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

August 19, 2004 - Regular Meeting

September 7, 2004 - Board Meeting

September 13, 2004 - Regular Meeting

October 5, 2004 - Board Meeting

October 21, 2004 - Regular Meeting

November 2, 2004 - Board Meeting

November 18 - Annual Meeting and Election of Directors

December 7 - Board Meeting

Holiday Gathering? Stay Tuned

January 4 - Board Meeting

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

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

Dated Material
Please do not delay

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