



# *Turntable* TIMES

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

**Volume 36, Number 12**  
**December 2004**





# 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 next regular meeting on Thursday, January 20, 2005 at 7:30 pm.

We WILL have a holiday gathering on our regular meeting night rather than a business meeting, see the details on the opposite page.

## *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 Saturday, December 18, 2004. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

### **Meeting Cancellation Policy**

Any Chapter meeting will be considered cancelled if any of the following conditions are due to weather: 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.

### **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**

It is Monday, October 27, 1952 and the beginning of "N&W Week" in Roanoke. The week culminated with the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the arrival of the railroad in Roanoke. One of the features was this model railroad featuring a model of the Roanoke passenger station. The track, station and coal tipple and community were built by R. H. Poff, Planing Mill Carpenter and C. D. Hash, Advertising Assistant, Magazine and Advertising Department. It was estimated that 15,000 people saw the layout while it was on display. N&W Photo/O. Winston Link Museum Collection.

## **Holiday Gathering**

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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 16 beginning at 6:30 pm. You can enjoy a wide variety of finger foods, desserts and beverages. If past years is any indication, more than enough food will be on hand! So come hungry.

There will be plenty of time to socialize with no business to be conducted except for the installation of officers and directors for 2005. Come and enjoy! For details and/or to volunteer to help, contact Bonnie Molinary, Kathy Overholser or Wanda Troutman.

## **Holidays Arrive by Rail at the O. Winston Link Museum**

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Join us for the following holiday activities at the Link Museum in the month of December.

Historic Model Layout - December 1-31

Returning to the Passenger Station after many years! The original N&W model train layout on display in the station lobby

Tiny Trains - December 4 - 5

Children and adults will delight at the Lynchburg N-Scalers' tiny train model layout set up in the station lobby

Santa Arrives by Rail  
December 5, 1-3 pm

Santa arrives by train at the Passenger Station for the first time in more years than we can remember at 1 p.m.! Visit with Santa inside the O. Winston Link Museum from 1

p.m. to 3 p.m. Cookie Decorating, Goodie Bag with Class J 611 Coloring Book and Tiny Trains model in lobby.

For more information, email [programs@linkmuseum.org](mailto:programs@linkmuseum.org), visit the website [www.linkmuseum.org](http://www.linkmuseum.org), or call 540-982-5465.

## **Small Rails-December**

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by Dave Meashey

Well, an old proverb says, "No news is good news." So, this month I have good news. The Big Lick Big Train Operators have had to postpone their business meeting. The club still hopes to meet again before year's end.

One of the best new holiday movies is the animated version of The Polar Express. The Brio version of this train is already available. A Lionel O gauge version of the train should be in stores before Christmas. This is a very nice train set, which includes: a Berkshire steam locomotive and tender with smoke and whistle, two lighted coaches, a lighted observation car, track, and transformer. The price tag of just under \$250.00 is rather nice too!

## **Mixed Freight - December**

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by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

One thing I try to remember to do in this column is to update you readers on subject matter that was presented months or years ago. I will start at Crewe, Virginia and work westward to Pamplin, Virginia. The Crewe Railroad Park is doing well and is considering enlarging it's building space to accommodate more and more railroad artifacts being donated by railfans, retired railroaders and family members of deceased railroaders. The museum is also interested in acquiring a steam locomotive for static

display.

The town of Crewe now owns the former Norfolk & Western Railway headquarters building. This building also housed dispatchers for the Norfolk Division. The town now has the task of having the asbestos removed before it can advance to having the building used for a community center and other functions.

Next up the line is Burkeville with its former Southern Railway passenger depot that was moved from its former location between the high irons of the Southern and Norfolk and Western Railways to a location a few blocks away overlooking the baseball diamond. The station looks great at its new location now that the foundation has been shored up and landscaping completed. As of this writing, I'm not sure whether the roof is red or silver. When I saw it a few weeks ago, it was half of both colors. When fully completed, it will be a community and historical center. When the station was moved nearly three years ago, it made front page news with a huge color photo for The Richmond Times Dispatch.

By now most of you are aware that Norfolk Southern has filed papers with the proper authorities to abandon the Farmville line from Burkeville to Pamplin, a distance of about 36 miles. NS filed the papers on September 30. The railroad operated a 2 locomotive 5 car special passenger special from Crewe to Farmville on Tuesday October 26th. The train carried local officials, representatives of state agencies and local residents whom remembered the days when N&W passenger trains served most of the small communities it operated thru on a daily basis. The train spent 45 minutes on High Bridge. If the abandonment is approved, the right of way may become a linear state park or a Rails To Trails entity.

From Farmville and on to Prospect. About

three years ago I reported that the N&W depot at Prospect was severely damaged by a vandal started fire. No one was ever arrested and charged with the arson. Local residents expressed an interest in having the station repaired and restored for community use. Nothing has happened in the stations behalf. It is still in rumble as it was when the fire was finally doused.

Moving westward to Pamplin, the large N&W station and freight house is nearing completion of its restoration. It has been a long project and the fruits of the reward are about to be reaped. I am not sure what the station will be used for.

A few issues back, I mentioned that I attended for one day The Capitol Limited 2004 N Scalpers convention at Chantilly, VA. Here are some more details about the record breaking modular layout that I commented you would have to experience it for yourself to fully appreciate. The 525 modules came from 31 states and six foreign countries. Scale miles it translated to 70 miles and covered an area the size of a football field. To negotiate this entire setup required a train one hour to complete it if did not stop. Like the real railroads, the layout was dispatcher controlled.

On Wednesday night November 10th around 10:30 p.m., eastbound Norfolk Southern time freight # 111 derailed 2 box-cars and 12 super tankers of Coors beer at Chilhowie, Virginia. Chilhowie is 34 miles east of Bristol. The cause of the derailment was attributed to the breaking of the center sill of the car in front of the Coors block of cars. There were no injuries and the single track was open for traffic within 24 hours. A few of the tankcars did rupture and spill beer.

## **Buckingham Branch Railroad Company News Release**

By Robert E. Bryant, President.  
Wednesday, November 3, 2004

**B**uckingham Branch Railroad (BB) trackage (17 miles) currently serves the following stations in Buckingham and Fluvanna Counties: Dillwyn, Apha, Johnson, Penlan, Arvonias, Bridgeport, New Canton, Bremond and Strathmore, VA. The joint BB-CSXT application filed with the Surface Transportation Board May 26, 2004, is currently under consideration and a decision is expected soon. If the twenty-year lease arrangement is approved, BB and CSXT will compete lease negotiations and plan for transition of operating rights December 20-21, 2004, and serve the following additional stations on the Richmond & Alleghany Division of BB, which consists of the Piedmont, Washington and North Mountain Subdivisions:

STATION LIST of the Buckingham Branch Railroad, Richmond & Alleghany Division, all of which are located in Virginia: Ruffin, Ellerson, Atlee, Bear Island, Doswell, North Doswell, Verdon, Hewlett, Beaver Dam, Frederick Hall, Pendleton, Louisa, Trivillian, Gordonsville, Madison Run, South Orange, Orange, Keswick, Shadwell, Charlottesville, Farmington, Mechu's River, Crozet, Waynesboro, Fishersville, Peyton, Staunton, Goshen, JD Cabin, and Clifton Forge, VA.

The 200-mile Richmond & Alleghany Division has 145 bridges and four tunnels. There are numerous public and private road crossings. BB's focus will be service to the shippers and receivers of freight.

A number of inquiries have been received by BB concerning the possibility of operating passenger excursions on the planned Richmond & Alleghany Division. The BB cur-

rently operates an excursion program for a sponsor on its rail line extending from Dillwyn to New Canton, VA on the James River. The railroad considers this program to have been beneficial in the areas of community relations, public education about railroads and their benefits to society, and in marketing of railroad transportation services.

With the possible inclusion of the new division there are many challenges to be addressed. The maintenance of current freight revenues is mandatory and the development of new freight customers is critical. A great deal of work is needed in the area of tunnel, bridge and track maintenance. Operating plans, after being implemented, will require close monitoring and adjustment to produce optimum results in all areas. Sponsored excursions on the new division may be considered at some point. However, with the challenges ahead, as outlined above, excursions cannot be operated in the near future as BB will focus on Amtrak needs and freight customer service.

Current activities include developing an operating plan, adoption of operating rules, interviewing numerous job candidates, hiring approximately 24 additional associates, development of orientation and training classes, purchasing three additional GP 40 locomotives with dynamic brakes, upgrading the existing two locomotives with running lights, painting existing locomotives and track equipment, purchasing three additional track inspection hi-rail trucks as well as two additional hi-rail-track-crew repair heavy duty trucks.

The new venture is exciting, demanding and time-consuming and all of these will continue. We cannot forget, however, the importance of the original base railroad, the Buckingham Division of the BB. We are currently reporting a decline in freight carload

traffic as a result of the Solite Corp plant at Bridgeport, VA being sold by Giant Cement to another group who are not shipping via rail. Since the sale has been in progress, the Solite open top hopper car lease has been cancelled and the cars were shipped empty to the Midwest. BB is currently attempting to learn how it can regain, at least, some of this revenue lost.

The good news is, however, progress continues on the proposed Mead Westvaco Gold Hill wood processing facility near Alpha. Efforts are underway to locate about 100 open top 7,000 cube chip hopper cars to meet the need to haul 3,000 carloads per year. The first cars are expected to be shipped mid-April of 2005 and BB will increase train service from two or three days per week to five-day-per-week service.

BB continues to receive very favorable comments on the ODC/NRHS excursion program and we are grateful for it. BB is appreciative for the dedicated and lengthy-durable-long-suffering volunteers who have been so important to this successful story. Giles Scott and Bob Dickinson have been from the beginning and are our primary "go to" people and we are especially appreciative for their dedication and cooperative spirit.

NOTE: Since this article was written by Bob Bryant, the deal with CSX has been approved.

(Above from Old Dominion Chapter, NRHS newsletter 'Highball', November, 2004).

## Behind The Scenes

by Ken Miller

For those members who just attend the monthly meetings, you don't know what you are missing! There are so many activities going on that are just never visible at the monthly meetings. I thought I might just introduce you to a few of them, and perhaps you'd like to join the fun. Some of

these are quite obvious, but there are many other jobs that are rarely visible, frequently almost invisible. First we'll start with the more visible things being done.

First, all the Board Members attend a separate monthly meeting (and sometimes more!) to guide the Chapter. These meetings take place the first Tuesday of the month at the same church where our monthly meetings are. Members are welcome at such meetings, and in fact, encouraged to attend. Upon occasion, however a meeting or portion thereof may be closed for a confidential matter discussion by the board. Nothing is being hidden from the membership, but from time to time, there is a matter that may not be ready for any public discussion for a variety of reasons. However, members are encouraged to get involved and learn how the organization works. Each Board member also takes on other activities in relation to their position. Unlike a number of other organizations, our board is a working board, not a figurehead or a position just to look good in someone's obituary.

Another on-going operation is our staffing and management of the Gift Shop at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. Our souvenir folks have done a fantastic job at this since the Museum was first organized from a City Park in 1976. Staffing the shop is a day-in, day-out job and needs to be covered every hour the Museum is open. The hours involved in this operation add up to an amazing total over the years, and there is honestly no way to calculate how many hours are devoted to it. We'll be covering this more in depth in the early spring. But your help is always needed. Staffing the shop can be quite fascinating, you'll meet people from all over the place, answer questions or help find answers, and maybe even learn something new yourself. It is challenging, entertaining and not that difficult.

Our mechanical forces have done some amazing work, complete restorations to operating condition of badly neglected equipment. While we focused strongly on the operating passenger equipment for many years, we have branched out to freight cars, locomotives and cabooses. Restoration work can be hard, almost always dirty, but the friendship and pleasure of accomplishment can be quite rewarding. There is always work to be done, as well, there is work for almost everyone. You do not have to be a mechanic to help, we need people who can clean, pick up trash, cut weeds, etc. etc. Consider coming out to one of the scheduled work sessions.

Now, for some of the more invisible things that are truly "behind the scenes" and rarely, if ever seen by the general membership.

First let us examine some of the subcommittees of the organization. An example is the Virginian Station project. While it may appear that nothing is happening as the building looks unchanged. However there is a small committee working or attempting to gain funding for this huge project and make it happen. Now this committee meets on at least a monthly basis, and is frequently dealing with matters via email or phone. This is not a closed session, we are working closely with the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation on this, but other people can help make this job easier and less complicated. We need all types of talents on this committee, and welcome volunteers, don't be afraid to speak up at the next meeting and volunteer. This is a worthy project, but needs YOUR participation to be a success.

As has become far more obvious, the Chapter's involvement with the Link Museum has grown over the past year or so. Our volunteers have been quite active in staffing the desk, galleries and gift shop.

There has also involvement in other areas such as archives, outside activities and many other aspects.

One of those other activities that is almost unseen, is representing our organization and/or the Link Museum to other groups both near and far. I'll use one recent example just to show you how it may work. On November 15th, Bill Arnold and myself made our way to the Shenandoah Valley Railroad Club dinner meeting near Mt. Crawford. I spoke of some of the Chapter's activities and introduced Bill, who gave his slide presentation on O. Winston Link of course promoting the Museum as well. Of course, Bill also promoted the gift shop after the show.

Dave and Grace Helmer made a trip to Bluefield for the Pocahontas Chapter NRHS's annual train show where they represented the Chapter very nicely.

We have frequently had requests for Chapter presence at events, or to send out someone with a presentation on the Chapter or some rail history aspect. These can be fascinating opportunities as many people love to talk about railroads but never have someone there to talk with. The only problem with this is we have always had more requests than we can fill, as we don't have enough volunteers to go out and speak! Bill has done his Link program five times in ten days in November. Now that is some track record, so to speak, but Bill and the handful of other people cannot do it all. It really is not all that tough to get up in front of a group, especially if you are talking about a subject you love. Sure the first few times are a bit tough, but it really is fun and interesting to talk to folks out in the community. We always had interesting folks out to chat at book signing, it is amazing, there must have been 10,000 people who either built the 611, rode it first run in 1950, this

from all the folks who love to talk about this subject. Of course, not everyone did these things, as there were 13 other Class Js, but that is the memory and who wants to discredit it? It is still fun to talk to those folks and hear their stories.

The point is, get out and get involved with the Chapter, don't just sit back on your hands at each meeting never saying anything. The Roanoke Chapter can be far more than that, you need to make a step forward and say, I want to be involved, you'll be amazed how rewarding it can be.

*The Turntable Times Staff  
Sends Everyone  
The Most Joyous Wishes for a  
Safe Holiday Season.*

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

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**Dated Material  
Please do not delay**

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

December 16 - New Time: 6:30 pm  
Holiday Gathering, Regular meeting  
night and location.

December 31, Your renewal is due.

January 4 - Board Meeting

January 20 - Regular Meeting

February 1 - Board Meeting

February 17 - Regular Meeting

March 1 - Board Meeting

March 17 - Regular Meeting

April 5 - Board Meeting

April 21 - Regular Meeting

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