



Turntable TIMES

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

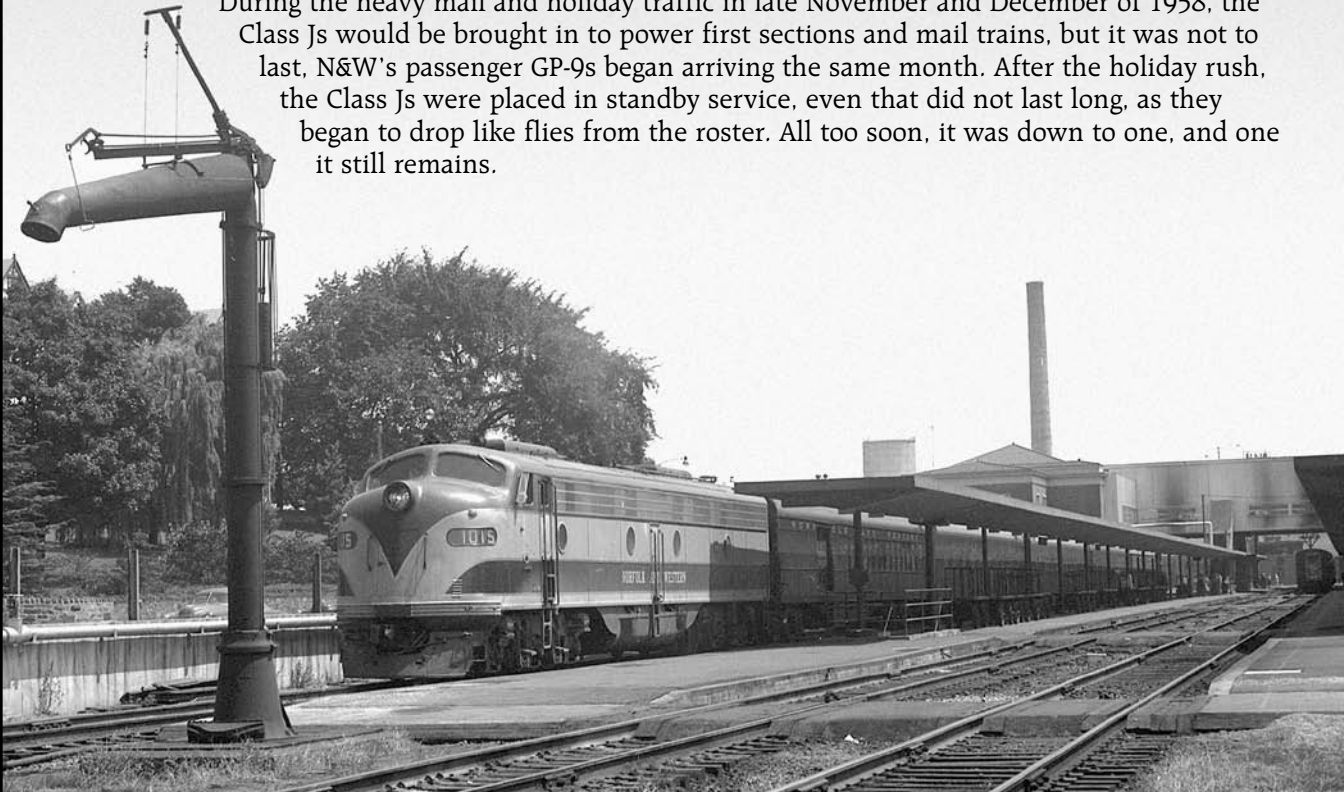
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July 2004

August 10, 1958, almost 46 years ago, leased RF&P No. 1015 has a five car Powhatan Arrow awaiting departure from Roanoke's passenger station. Less than a month previous, hardly anyone in Roanoke would have thought such a sight was possible as the Class J locomotives ruled the roost. Things were changing on this steamy August day, the water plug stands silent sentinel as the product from LaGrange, Illinois was passing by without a thought. Roanoke's finest, built almost within sight of this were disappearing, all too quickly.

The eastbound Pocahontas, running late has just departed, headed also by a leased unit. Most rail-fans were so "shell-shocked" by this rapid change, few recorded this common scene, we are indebted to member Bill Cecil who faithfully stood by with his precious film and snapped the shutter that hot afternoon. The water column continued to serve as the station switchers were not replaced for some time yet, and, indeed, even the Class Js would still need to take some water as there were still not enough diesels on hand to cover every train and when one broke down, a J would return to the glory.

During the heavy mail and holiday traffic in late November and December of 1958, the Class Js would be brought in to power first sections and mail trains, but it was not to last, N&W's passenger GP-9s began arriving the same month. After the holiday rush, the Class Js were placed in standby service, even that did not last long, as they began to drop like flies from the roster. All too soon, it was down to one, and one it still remains.





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**Volume 36, Number 7
July 2004**

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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, July 15, 2004 at 7:30 pm. This meeting will be a special dinner meeting with very little business to be addressed.

We will be having a dinner meeting for July at the Western Sizzlin' at Crossroads Mall. Come early at 6:15 or so and enjoy dinner and fellowship then stay for the meeting.

Our program: A special slide show from Dorr Tucker that will feature a look at the C&O in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It will be a wonderful show with large variety of equipment and structures.

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, July 19th, 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

See the front cover for the extended caption. We are in need of good quality photos for the newsletter, please see Ken Miller or Kenney Kirkman if you have something available.

Mixed Freight - July 2004

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

I recently reported that Norfolk Southern was operating a new eastbound intermodal train thru Roanoke symbolized 23G. At that writing I was not sure of 23G's origin. 23G originates in Louisville, Kentucky and terminates in Norfolk. It usually passes thru Roanoke between 4 and 6 p.m. daily.

Due to an increase in traffic, Norfolk Southern recently added two new trains between Lynchburg and Hagerstown. The Hagerstown to Lynchburg train is 35Q. The Lynchburg to Hagerstown train is 36Q. Both are mixed freight. Intermodal traffic is up too and second sections symbolized 113 and 112 are quite common. These trains operate between Atlanta, Georgia and Kearny, New Jersey.

On May 21st and 22nd, Norfolk Southern operated a business car special for The Virginia Historical Society. The special traveled from Roanoke to Richmond on the 21st and back to Roanoke on the 22nd. The train stopped and posed for photos on High Bridge during its return journey. Norfolk Southern Chief Executive Officer David Goode was on board too.

While Norfolk Southern is adding trains to handle increased traffic, CSX plans to terminate intermodal trains 175 and 176 in late June. Traffic that 175 and 176 handled will now be forwarded via 171, 172, 173 and 174. All of these trains have a 'Q' prefix.

It's funny and at times disappointing how things turn out. I mentioned last month and other times that 2004 marks the 150th birthday of Horseshoe Curve. I recently pulled out every magazine I own with special articles about The Curve and the railroad operations between Altoona and Pittsburgh during the Pennsy, Penn Central and Conrail days. While browsing thru the pages of

Trains magazine of January, 1985, I noticed the following quote on page 21 "If we are fortunate enough to have Conrail become the third partner of our Norfolk Southern corporate family, I pledge to you that 4-8-4 No. 611 will be seen on Horseshoe Curve." That statement was spoken during Robert B. Claytor's speech before an audience of the National Railway Historical Society in Cincinnati, Ohio during the annual convention on August 31, 1984. Yes, part of Conrail did become part of the NS corporate family 5 years ago. Whether 611 is ever seen on Horseshoe Curve still remains to be experienced.

Speaking of 611 visiting Horseshoe Curve, another steam locomotive more indigenous to that area, K4 No. 1361 will not be ready in time for July 4th celebrations or the upcoming RAILFEST in early October. Officials and staff members are hoping for the locomotive's return to Altoona alive and well in 2005.

As is traditional for me every Memorial Day weekend is to spend the 4 day weekend enjoying the heavy freight traffic between Altoona and Conway Pennsylvania. Despite escalating fuel prices, I made my pilgrimage. Norfolk Southern moved a lot of trains over The Mountain during my visit.

Observations: Like last year, the number of fans out enjoying the action was down from years past. There are now three pairs of pusher sets that are solid Norfolk Southern. About 2 or 3 are one each of NS and CR blue. The balance of the SD40-2 pusher sets are still Conrail dress blue. I saw more Conrail units in road freight service than I did last year. The DD box at milepost 238.4 now has a female voice. I logged over 120 freights during my 3 day visit. The most impressive was an eastbound unit train consisting of close to 100 flatcars carrying Case farm equipment for the first half and

John Deere for the balance. There were two pieces of farm equipment per flatcar. It was obvious the flats were loaded by the customer on BNSF as every car was either Santa Fe, Burlington Northern, BNSF or Trailer Train. I mentioned the train to a local railfan whom is a volunteer at The Horseshoe Curve Historic Site and expert on the train operations for the area. He reported that all of that farm equipment was on it's way to China. Other unit trains of farm equipment had passed thru the area during prior weeks. The equipment heads for China via a port on the east coast.

Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their June meeting on Saturday, June 26th at my house in the Roanoke County/Cave Spring area. My railroad was suffering from two years of neglect. It took me about three and a half days to get things ready to host the club meeting.

About two years' worth of pine needles had to be removed from the track and the area within the loop. These pine needles filled ten lawn and leaf bags. Tree branches and forsythia bushes had to be trimmed to allow headroom for the guests and to clear the track so trains could run. Track needed reballasting and cleaning. Structures and figures needed some minor cleaning and touch-up with the appropriate paints.

Everything was ready in time for the arrival of the other club members. The track still undulates - (There was no time for grading corrections.) - so trains were run with care. It was observed that the shorter, narrow gauge equipment negotiated the track better, as the narrow gauge prototypes frequently had to deal with indifferent track.

My 1/29 scale Budd RDC car was also run

during the afternoon. It required the most careful attention to the throttle. Like its prototype, the car could handle the undulating track, but the model's length (34 inches over the pilots) made it susceptible to derailments.

The operating champion was my Hartland Locomotive Works Mack switcher and its short quarry train. The little locomotive and its cars bobbed up and down the track undulations, looking for the world like a kiddie ride at an old-fashioned amusement park. I have modified the locomotive to resemble the plant switcher that served the Allentown Mack Trucks Assembly Plant 5C for many years.

It was good to see our friends and to have the railroad in operation again, and we did it all again on Sunday for friends in our Sunday school class and our choir. I'm still dreaming of the day when I can build the garden railroad in a raised bed. At least for now my aching back manages to heal within a couple of days.

Mixed and Miscellaneous

by Kenney Kirkman

Mount Washington Cog Railway News

Another first was added to the lore and legend of Mount Washington, New Hampshire when about 60 skiers and snowboarders chugged up on the Mt. Washington Cog Railway to ski down the mountain. The era of the ski train returned to New Hampshire as the 135-year old steam-powered, hardworking relic inched up the western side of the windy mighty mountain in rain and fog during a preview of what will be offered next season.

Plans call for the railway to open on a year-round basis with skiers and riders able to schuss down both sides of the rail line on groomed trails beginning next season.

Two or three trains, capable of carrying 70 people each, will ferry tourists, skiers and snowboarders from the base station to the wooden tank, making one stop in between for beginners. A full day of skiing will run \$59, while a single ride is priced at \$25. Technological challenges had to be overcome first as the old trains needed to be adapted to modern times with recently installed automatic hydraulic switches, heated coaches and new braking systems. Other improvements will also lead to the conversion of the locomotives from coal to oil in the near future. The trails are on land owned by the company, bordering White Mountain National Forest. The right-of-way is about 100 feet across, making each trail less than 50 feet across from the track to trees. The trestle near the base station will be rebuilt, allowing skiers to cross from one trail to the other.

(From Conway Daily Sun, Marty Basch via The 470 and Interchange).

Protecting the Bears

On April 20th, 29 cars of a Burlington Northern Santa Fe grain train derailed near Essex, Montana, spilling 2,800 tons of corn. The area is used by grizzly bears moving in and out of Glacier National Park. BNSF had an earlier spill in the same area in the late 1980's which was not adequately cleaned up, and passing trains killed 8 bears.

As a result, BNSF is doing everything possible this time around to remove every kernel to protect the bears. After the derailed cars were removed, rail-mounted vacuum machines were brought in, but the effort was expected to take until mid-May due to the volume of grain involved. The railroad also contracted with the Wind River Bear Institute to patrol the spill area every night from 7pm until 7am. Portable generators were brought in to power lighting systems that illuminate the spill area at night. A

propane cannon sounds off every 15 minutes as a noise deterrent for bears. In the fringe areas of the spill, "critter getters" have been set up. These are devices that transmit loud noises if they are activated by motion sensors. Finally, BNSF plans to remove the ballast under the rails in the spill area in July to completely remove any corn that may have gotten buried under the tracks and ties during track repair. The cause of the derailment is under investigation. (Daily Inter Lake via Potomac Rail News).

Station Moved

On May 12th, the late 1800's station in Lexington, Virginia was moved 140 feet across the street. The red-brick building, which is owned by Washington and Lee University, was moved so that the University can expand. The station last served passenger traffic in 1954. The University had been using the former train station for storage. The depot was built in 1883 and is 144 feet long and about 20 feet wide. Parking is planned for one side of the station at its new location with possibly a section of rail being placed on the other. (Richmond Times Dispatch via Potomac Rail News).

Amtrak Trains Ready For Their Closeup

Whether it's a sleek Acela Express running wind sprints on the Northeast Corridor or a majestic Superliner winding its way through a mountain pass, Amtrak trains are ready for their close-up! For the second year, the railroad is encouraging passengers and rail fans to take their best shot at winning Amtrak's wall calendar photo contest, called "Picture Our Train".

A panel of judges will carefully review each entry and select one to be featured on

the railroad's 2005 wall calendar, which is distributed widely throughout the Amtrak system and available for purchase online. In addition to bragging rights and a photo credit on the calendar, the first-prize winner will receive an Amtrak travel voucher valued at \$1000. Four runners-up will receive vouchers of lesser amounts.

To enter, mail an original 8"x10" color photograph featuring an Amtrak train with the current Amtrak logo and livery (paint scheme) clearly visible to: Amtrak 2005 Wall Calendar Contest, 60 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Suite 4E-315, Washington, DC 20002. Digital photographs will be considered, providing the resolution permits enlargements to poster size. All entries must be post-marked no later than July 30, 2004.

The contest is open to U.S. residents, 18 years of age or older, including most Amtrak employees. Detailed entry rules and photo specifications are available online at www.amtrak.com/calendarcontest.html.

Amtrak reminds the public and especially those who may photograph a train to stay out of danger. It is very important to stay away from tracks, moving trains, yards, railroad structures (such as bridges, trestles, towers and wires) and the railroad right-of-way. Photographers must not trespass on railroad property or on private property adjacent to the railroad. Instead, stay in public access areas, such as stations, sidewalks or parking lots. All participants agree to assume the risk of harm and release Amtrak from all liability for personal injury and loss of property. Photographers are reminded that railroad tracks, trestles, yards and equipment are private property and that trespassers are subject to arrest and fines. Some stations served by Amtrak trains require advance permission for photography. Always obey all local rules and laws.

(submitted by Mr. Robin R. Shavers).

Carter County Rail Authority

The East Tennessee Railway is no longer operating to Elizabethton, Tennessee, the last train operating out of Elizabethton in September 2003. ETY has plans to abandon the line in September 2005. (Requirement of two years to abandon a line).

Elizabethton/Carter County is studying a plan to save the railroad line, help with economic growth and promote tourism through excursion service.

Officials are studying grants and other options to save the railroad and continuing negotiations with the East Tennessee Railway. The Watauga Valley Chapter has been asked to submit a excursion plan between Johnson City and Elizabethton using chapter equipment and personnel.

(From Watauga Chapter newsletter, 'Whistle Stop', June 2004).

Last Train to Bristol

by Mike and Betty Jackson

On April 30, 1971, the Norfolk & Western Railway ran its last two passenger trains on the line between Bristol and Roanoke, Virginia. Train 17 (New York to Bristol) and train 18 (Bristol to New York) were the last two trains that operated on the Bristol line that once boasted such trains as the 'Tennessean', 'The Pelican', and 'The Birmingham Special.' We had been married one month when the nation's passenger trains were either absorbed into the new Amtrak system or discontinued on May 1, 1971. Unfortunately, N&W's 17 and 18 were among the trains that were discontinued. So, we decided to see the last two passenger trains operate on the Bristol line, and on that day we made our first of many railfan experiences that we've shared for over 33 years.

Accordingly, we drove to Marion, Va. the morning of Friday, April 30, 1971, and photographed N&W train 18 as it arrived at Marion at 8:07 a.m., and departed five minutes later. N&W diesel number 518, a GP9 painted blue with gold lettering, pulled a Southern baggage car and two Southern coaches on the final run from Bristol that the Bristol Herald-Courier reported the next day carried 209 passengers to Roanoke, Va. Later that night, we drove back to Bristol from our apartment in Kingsport and welcomed N&W train 17 that arrived around 12:25 a.m. Saturday morning, May 1, 1971, which was day one of the Amtrak era. That train was scheduled to pull into Bristol at 12:15 a.m. About a dozen people stepped off the train that had a Southern baggage car, a Southern streamlined coach, and an older N&W coach. We heard the conductor remark, "That's all, boys. No more passenger trains in Bristol!"

We took some pictures of the last train to arrive in Bristol. In our scrapbook of this event, we have pictures of the conductor and trainman of train 17, the interior of the Southern streamlined coach, and a casket that was unloaded from the baggage car and placed into a hearse parked near the rear of the station. We still have the photos, two timetables from that historic day (one stamped by the Abingdon, Va. agent, several newspaper clippings from the Bristol and Roanoke papers, and, of course, our memories of that sad event. One headline in the Roanoke, Va. Times stated it best the next day: "A day without Passenger Trains is Like a Day without Sunshine".

(From the Whistle Stop newsletter via the Interchange, Baltimore Chapter newsletter, June/July 2004).

The Brakeman's Tale

Back during the War, the railroads were all short of help and almost anyone could get a job as a brakeman. The Pennsylvania Railroad hired lots of new fellows, including one kid from Maysville, Pa., named Larry. The Division Superintendent gave him his own copy of the Book of Rules and the Employee Timetable and instructed him, "Now take these and study them. Keep them with you at all times on the railroad, because any situation that might come up is covered in the Book of Rules." So the kid takes his books, says "Thank you, Sir, I sure will!" and goes home to study.

That night he gets a call to work on Train No. 575, the less-than-premier sleeper train from Washington to Buffalo. He gets on the train at Harrisburg, and the conductor tells him to go back to the rear platform and make sure that the lanterns are all lighted and ready to go.

The train pulls out past Harris Tower while he's walking back through the cars, and up around West Ferry he's walking through one sleeping car when he sees a woman's bare posterior exposed through the curtains of an upper berth. "Hmmmm. How do I handle this? Oh, yeah, the Book of Rules!"

So Larry gets out the Pennsy's version of the "Good Book", and studies it. Then he races to the rear of the train, grabs a lit red lantern, returns and hangs it on the berth. After that, he continues on through the rest of the train.

Later that evening, a traveling salesman walks through that same sleeping car, sees the parted curtains and the red light, and gets the entirely wrong idea. Needless to say, there was a major disturbance when the word got back to the Superintendent the following day. The new kid had a message

waiting for him upon his return to report to the Superintendent's Office IMMEDIATELY!

He walks in, and the "Old Man" inquires politely, "Son, what in the world were you thinking of when you hung that red lamp on that poor woman's behind on Monday night?"

"Well, Sir, you yourself told me that no matter what situation that could arise on the railroad, I could find the solution in the Book of Rules."

"Yes, I did, but where in the heck did you find a rule to cover that one?" "Right here, boss. It says, 'The rear end of a sleeper, exposed by night, must be protected by a red light.'"

Next day, the kid was a Trainmaster then Assistant General Superintendent.
(Story from 'The Delmarva Limited', newsletter of the Delmarva Chapter, NRHS).

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

July 15, 2004 - Regular Meeting

August 3, 2004 - Board Meeting

August 7-8 - Chapter Outing, Potomac Eagle and Western Maryland Scenic

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

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

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