



Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 36, Number 11

November 2004





Turntable TIMES

**Volume 36, Number 11
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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, November 18, 2004 at 7:30 pm.

This meeting will be the annual meeting with the election of directors for 2005. This is a very important meeting to help determine the future direction of the organization and everyone is encouraged to attend.

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, November 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

President Roosevelt's Special train arrives in Roanoke at 3:30 pm on October 19, 1934. The six car special had left Washington D.C. that morning bringing the President to Roanoke for the dedication of the new Veteran's Hospital. See the related story inside. N&W Photo/K.L. Miller Collection.

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 18, 2004. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm. At this time we will hold our annual election in which three (3) directors will be elected.

Due to the decline in membership totals, the board voted last year to reduce the size of the board from nine back to seven. The board had been increased from seven in the mid 1980s due to the increased activities.

Our nominating committee is headed up by Carl Jensen. The nominees are as follows, with incumbents denoted with an *.

Walt Alexander

Brian Crosier

Bill Mason*

Ken Miller*

Wanda Troutman*

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting, please be sure you have that persons consent before making a nomination. The committee is searching for nominees for these five positions

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will be electing three (3) 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 Carl Jensen. You will receive (a) one ballot; (b) one "ballot" envelope; and (c)

one mailing envelope.

2 - Mark the ballot (vote for not more than five (5) directors. If more than five (5) 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 ballot 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 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.

Small Rails-November

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their October meeting on Sunday, October

17th at the home of Otto and Imtraut Hartenstein in Blacksburg. Although the weekend was cool, the sun came out during the meeting and warmed things nicely. Otto uses digital command control on his garden railroad, and two trains were running on each mainline for part of the meeting.

Otto chose LGB's digital command control system. The system does allow one locomotive to run in "native" mode. During the afternoon, several other members had an opportunity to run equipment they had brought along, thanks to the "native" mode feature.

Otto's garden railroad is built on a bank in the Hartenstein's back yard. The ruling grade is about 4%. The severity of the grade is evident when one observes a train progressing up grade while standing at the lowest level. The club plans to meet once more in November to attend to administrative business.

Fond Memories - The Series

My First Real Attempt At A Railroad Career

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

It is probably safe to say that everyone reading this publication whom considers his or herself a railroad enthusiast has at least thought about working for the railroad. Even non-railfans have entertained the vision of being in the engineer's seat of a long freight or first class varnish. When most people discover my intense enthusiasm for railroading, they often ask "With your knowledge and enthusiasm for railroading, why aren't you working for a railroad?" When I completed college back in the seventies, putting forth an effort to achieve railroad employment was a priority. Resume's were mailed, contacts were con-

tacted and a positive gungho attitude prevailed. All I received in the mail were those typical corporate "Thanks for your interest in our company we will contact you if we need you". I never landed a job with a railroad but I did with the federal government many years later.

My first REAL attempt at trying to get on a railroad payroll started in my church on a Sunday morning. Just about everybody in church knew about my fascination for trains. When the horn of a freight train from the nearby Carolina & Northwestern on it's way to Eden or Spray N.C. would briefly interrupt the sermon of The Reverend Howard Ferguson, Sr., on a Sunday morning in summer when the church windows would be open prior to air conditioning, numerous faces in the congregation would look in my direction.

One Sunday morning shortly after Sunday School and just before the main service, I was tapped on the shoulder by the late Mr. Alfred Lanier. Mr. Lanier was a foreman for Southern Railway's maintenance of way crews based out of Danville. He informed me that Southern would be taking applications and giving test on the upcoming Tuesday for five brakeman positions. He encouraged me to apply and discouraged me from expressing my interest in railroading as a hobby. I didn't understand why but I took his advice to be on the safe side.

The application and testing process were to take place at the Danville office of The Virginia Employment Commission starting at 8:00 a.m sharp. Taking Mr. Lanier's advice, I arrived shortly before 7:30 a.m. I was glad I did. A long line awaited me and was growing by the minute. I knew everyone was not going to get in. The V.E.C. building door was unlocked and opened at 8:00 a.m. and we were directed to a large

room that needed to be larger. Tables and chairs filled the room. The first order of business was filling out a basic employment application. The person in charge was a young African-American gentleman whom was a personnel official for Southern Railway based out of Washington D.C. He was very businesslike and professional in his double vested brown suit. After the applications were filled, there was a lecture on what we could expect from Southern Railway and what Southern Railway would expect from us. He counted 253 applications and held them high above his head. Folks came from as far away as Fredericksburg to the north, Raleigh to the south, Martinsville to the west. The gentleman firmly stated the number of applications within the room would probably diminish by two thirds by the time he went thru all the requirements and expectations.

There were some things he said that etched in my mind like The Ten Commandments etched in stone. "The Southern Railway is the Marine Corps of the railroad industry. If you can work for us, you can work for anybody. On the Southern Railway it is always sunny and seventy degrees. We move freight 24 hours a day 365 days a year." As he spoke, the silence from the audience was immaculate. With each requirement, a number of people would exit the room. I was surprised at the huge number that left when he mentioned that we would be expected to work in all kinds of weather. Having a criminal record subtracted another large group from the room. Having human body shortcomings such as being color blind or missing part of an entire finger dismissed a number of applicants too.

After the lecture and a 15 minute break, we took a series of test. I called them "head test" just to see where your mental state of mind was or wasn't. One thing I should

mention is that the five people selected for employment would be on what the railroad refers to as "the extra board". Basically you would fill in for workers whom marked off for illness, vacation, etc. If more brakemen were needed simply for more work to be done, you'd be called.

After the testing, we were free to leave which was after 2:00 p.m. We were told that if were to be hired, we would be contacted by phone before Thursday. Those whom wanted their test results could receive their results via U.S. Mail. I passed with flying colors but was not called. Mr. Lanier informed me a few weeks later that he had learned that five guys whom had been laid off from the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway had been hired. I was not pissed at Southern for choosing people already trained as railroaders. The experience of experiencing first hand of what you can expect working for a major carrier was worthwhile and there would be other chances for possible railroad employment down the road.

I still enjoy railroading as a hobby and things have changed so much on the railroad that I wonder if I would enjoy it as a career now as I would have back in the seventies as hew hire. Most railroaders I know encourage me to stay with my federal job and just enjoy railroading from a hobbyist position. I don't have to compete with 253 applicants or laid off railroaders to be a hobbyist.

Congratulations!

Our Chapter's sincere best wishes to our friend Jim Wrinn closely associated with Spencer on his recently announced appointment as the new editor of TRAINS Magazine. It sure will be cold in Milwaukee, Jim!

Roosevelt visits Roanoke 70 Years Ago

by Kenneth L. Miller

It was a sunny day in Roanoke in the crisp October of 1934. There was big excitement in the city as The President of the United States was coming for a visit. In the long distant past, the President commanded respect and his visits were considered a truly special event in any case. Today, the Chief Executive travels by modern jet and rarely does more than pause at the airport, is quickly hustled into a limo or heavily armored SUV and ferried off to his appointment, then back to the airport and off into the sky once again with several of these stops occurring during the day.

In 1934, life was a much slower pace, a Presidential visit was an all-day affair with travel time consuming a good portion of the day. The visit of President Roosevelt was a big day for the Norfolk and Western as well as the Presidential special would be handed over from the Southern at Monroe, Virginia. It was "Precision Transportation" in action. Under cloudy skies, the six car special left Washington D.C.'s

Union Station promptly at 9:30 am.

The special train consisted of (from rear end forward) Presidential office car "Robert Peary" lead by a 6 compartment, 3 drawing room car, N&W Diner No. 1016, a 10 compartment car a 12 section, drawing room car and a Southern combine trailing the green and gold Pacific.

Just like today, a number of radio and newspaper men traveled with the President, as well as railroad representatives, and other Presidential staff. The Special traveled over the Southern mainline with only one stop enroute to Monroe, at Wayburn for a water stop. For the crowds of spectators in Manassas, Calverton, Orange and Charlottesville, the train slowed to allow a look. The coeds at Sweet Briar College also lined the tracks to welcome the President before lunch was served. The special operated on time with 1:45 pm arrival in Monroe, where two N&W E3 Class Pacifics, Nos. 503 and 504, both freshly shopped and polished awaited the arrival. Engineer on the lead locomotive was J. H. Richardson, R.T Leonard piloted the 504. Both men were veterans of the N&W, Richardson was a particular favorite of Roosevelt and always request-

President Roosevelt awaits the departure of the motorcade at the Roanoke Station.

N&W Photo/K. L. Miller Collection



ed by the President. Richardson's house still stands on Lafayette Boulevard in Roanoke, far worse for the wear.

A quick locomotive change was done and the Special departed for Lynchburg and Roanoke. A quick stop was made in Lynchburg and Virginia Governor George C. Peery, Senator Harry F. Byrd, and Congressman Clifton A. Woodrum climbed aboard the train. This stop was made at Kemper Street where a crowd had gathered, Roosevelt made an appearance on the platform of the "Robert Peary" to greet the well-wishers.

Naturally, a special movement of the President takes priority over all other trains, and special precautions in that world long before we ever heard the term "terrorist" section men were on duty at every crossing, bridge and underpass, as well as an advance motorcar to inspect the track just ahead of the special.

At Bedford, the entire population of the Elks Home was out on the front lawn waving flags and cheering. Other groups of people were along the entire route just hoping for a glimpse of the President. "Precision Transportation" was the byword of the day as the train arrived precisely in Roanoke at 3:30 pm. Of course, a huge crowd was on hand, employees filled virtually every window of the General Offices all to see the President. The Secret Service had their hands full in those days before radios, and other modern communications, but the threats were not as intense either. After the train stopped with the rear car positioned barely past the Jefferson Street Crossing, the Presidential automobiles were positioned for the Presidential party to board.

Before Roosevelt made his appearance, he



President Roosevelt greets Brigadier-General Frank T. Hines, administrator of veterans affairs.

N&W Photo/K. L. Miller Collection

had sent word to have the engine crews come back to his private car where he personally greeted and thanked them for the fine ride through the beautiful countryside. Shortly after, the President emerged on the platform to loud cheers. Waving to the crowds who covered almost every rooftop, window and bit of sidewalk, Roosevelt struggled down to his vehicle for a motorcade through the streets. It is well known today that Roosevelt was crippled from polio, but period photos almost never depicted him in his wheelchair or on crutches, the media respected him and his affliction, quite a change from today!

The motorcade proceeded through the streets of Roanoke and onto the Lee Highway (Route 11) before heading into Salem and back towards the Veterans Hospital. Again crowds lined the streets throughout the city and Salem. The entire reason for Roosevelt's trip to the area was the dedication of the new Veterans Hospital located between Roanoke and Salem. The

President Roosevelt with Virginia Governor George Peery and Congressman Clifton A. Woodrum exchange pleasantries with Col. Marion C. Battle, in charge of traffic arrangements for the dedication ceremony. This scene is at the Salem station, just before departure at 6:00 pm.

N&W Photo/K. L. Miller Collection



445 acre site featured (at the time) 16 buildings, all newly constructed, dedicated to the assistance of disabled veterans.

During the dedication, the railroad was busy, as soon as the Presidential party had departed from Jefferson Street, the two locomotives were uncoupled, and taken to the Roanoke Shops turntable where they were turned, watered and coaled. Meanwhile a yard locomotive had taken the 6 car train and turned it on the Campbell Avenue wye so that it face east. The train was spotted back in the station where inspectors and servicing people swarmed over them, watering and icing the cars while the locomotives were serviced. One locomotive headed west and coupled to the rear of the train while the other took its place on the headend. Talk about "Precision Transportation" this entire move, plus backing the train to the

Salem passenger station took less than one and one half hours. At Salem, the rear locomotive was uncoupled, and run around the train to take its place in the lead.

After the dedication was complete, the Presidential party loaded up in their Packards and headed back to the Salem passenger station where more photos were taken and they reboarded the train. Promptly at 6:00 pm, the special departed and rolled east to Petersburg where the train was handed over to the Atlantic Coast Line for forwarding on to Williamsburg where Roosevelt spent the night.

As the marker lights flickered as the train passed into the gloom, things had gone off without a hitch on the N&W. The preparation and planning paid off, as one of Roanoke's most famous visitors left with a good impression.

Book Review

by John Austen

Central Railroad of New Jersey:

Stations, Structures, & Marine Equipment,

by Benjamin L. Bernhart

Outer Station Project, PO Box 13972,

Reading PA 19612; 2004.

164pp. 8-1/2"x11"; \$29.95.

This is Benjamin's first departure from the Reading Railroad, after several books on Reading stations and other topics. It is still about a fallen flag from anthracite country, but the CNJ had a variety of operations from the big city to rural branches, encompassing freight and passenger operations on land and water.

Benjamin mentions that by structures he means "signal and switch towers, crossing towers, water towers, coaling towers, major bridges, piers and docks, freight houses, stations, engine houses, repair facilities, etc." for the entire CNJ system from 1900 to 1930. Some of these structures will seem familiar to model railroaders: apparently Atlas, AHM and others found some of their prototypes on CNJ.

The book is primarily a photo documentary of the system. It is organized into 25 chapters: 22 on line segments and three on New York City harbor, Jersey City terminal, and marine equipment. The narrative and captions provide dates and dimensions, and other commentary. There are generally several photos on each page, mostly from the ICC valuation reports, c. 1917. There are also some from the Reading-Jersey Central Magazine and a couple of other contributors. Photo reproduction is very good on this heavy slick stock, although a few of the original photos are less than perfect. Even these are helpful in various ways; one shows the approach to the ferry slips on a misty day,

and some others have annotations penciled on. Most of the photos are very good, including one especially note-worthy interior station shot using a very long exposure; since the people were moving they do not register, so the room appears empty.

The photos provide a variety of views showing the interrelationships of many of the structures, along with closer views of most. There are just enough people and "clutter" to be of great use to modelers. All of the photos are black and white (which should not be too surprising, considering the era covered), but paint schemes can be discerned in many cases. The range of photos brings out the point that CNJ structures were made of many materials (brick, stone, wood) and not all to standard designs.

Reading this book is like going back in time for a system-wide excursion including rare mileage and behind-the-scenes tours. It would be a worthy addition to any rail library, and is a "must-have" for structure historians and anthracite railroad fans.

Whistles Across the Valley

by Gary Price

It has been ten years this month since the last Norfolk Southern steam excursion train behind the 611 pounded it's way out of Bristol and headed east never to return this way again. Those of us who sadly said goodbye to steam can still close our eyes and hear that majestic whistle as it faded into the evening sky. Now the steam whistles have been replaced by the redundant chimes of diesel horns re-vibrating off the surrounding mountains. On Saturday, October 2, 2004 that all changed.

A gathering of fifty people showed up at the fairgrounds at Rural Retreat, Virginia for a whistle blowing demonstration hosted by area organizations. On hand was Mr. Lee

Alley of Bristol, Tennessee with his one-of-a-kind self-designed and built, "whistle blowing" machine, a strange contraption on a trailer with a large air tank, compressor, and enough pipework to accommodate any size steam whistle that needed to be blown. Mr. Alley is also an avid whistle collector and had several on hand, but of most interest to us all, was that he owns the whistle from N&W M-class 4-8-0 No. 382. This is the steam locomotive that is featured in most of O. Winston Link's famous photos and recordings from his ventures to the Abingdon Branch located here in Southwest Virginia. Also on hand were several retired and active railroad employees, and a local antique tractor club brought out three steam fired tractors all steamed up for our enjoyment.

As the commentator spoke about steam whistles and their important role in railroad safety and communication, Mr. Alley would pull the chord and let loose with the beautiful sounds of No. 382. Also on hand was an old N&W Y6 "hooter" whistle, it reminded me of our excursions behind the 1218, when her "hooter" would echo off the lake and mountains. Also demonstrated were caboose whistles and small sawmill whistles.

After about an hour of blowing Mr. Alley's whistle collection, we were invited to install and blow our own whistles from our private collections. I brought along my Clinchfield whistle that came off of a 400 series steamer. It seemed odd to hear a Clinchfield whistle echo off my mountains, but boy did it sound great. Next fellow (Watauga) member Sidney Blankenbeckler installed his L&N whistle that came from an 1900 series, it had a deep sounding whistle that shook every fiber in your body. I never had the opportunity to hear any of these railroad whistles in actual operation, but for a

moment, I could close my eyes and it was almost like 1950 and I was standing in the Cumberland Gap listening to the beautiful serenade of Southwest Virginia's steam powered railroads.

(From Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS, October 2004)

Synopsis of the NRHS Board of Directors Meeting

The NRHS Board of Directors met in Utica, New York on October 24, 2004, hosted by the Utica & Mohawk Valley Chapter. Here are some highlights.

Elections were conducted for 2005. All incumbent national officers and regional vice presidents were re-elected to their current positions.

Senior Vice President Larry Eastwood reported that the 2004 RailCamp program was held at Steamtown in July. We hosted a full complement of 24 high-school-age campers, and the program operated smoothly. Because of higher pass-through charges from the National Park Service, the cost to attend RailCamp must be increased to \$825 per camper (\$725 if paid before April1), an increase of \$75 over this year's rates, but scholarships and sponsorships will continue to be available. The 2005 RailCamp will be held July 17-23.

Mr. Eastwood and Media Services Director Mitch Dakelman reported that the Society has received large and important film collections of both motion and still railroad photography. The collections have been moved to Philadelphia and we are beginning the major tasks of cataloging and restoring them so they can be made available for publication and viewing. General Counsel John Fiorilla reported that all parties involved have indicated agreement with plans to assure the future of the Alco Historic Photos

collection. AHP manager Ed Fernau thanked the Society for their leadership on this project and reported that Alco Historic Photos continues to stay open for business during the transition.

Bulletin No. 5 for 2003 has been distributed, completing the 2003 Bulletin year. The unexpected closure of a key Bulletin supplier earlier this year, the need to develop a replacement, and internal staffing constraints have continued to delay the 2004 Bulletins. The first four issues of 2004 are currently in production, however, and should be distributed in December and January.

Membership Records Director Mike Bettiol reported that dues bills were in production, and distribution to chapters will begin the week following the meeting. Although we missed the October 1 target date, the bills will be out several weeks earlier than last year. The design of the bills and membership cards has been improved since last year. Renewal packages to chapters will include all of the promised reports and forms, also in improved formats.

The 2005 budget was approved as presented. President Molloy reported that the Society will review several programs this winter to determine how we can overcome continuing schedule problems and specialized technology needs. This may require more reliance on purchased services in the future, and that may significantly impact our cost structure.

The Society is also conducting a thorough review of the NRHS Bylaws with the intention of achieving better alignment to our current business practices, providing flexibility for the future, and removing unnecessary restrictions on both chapters and the national organization.

In addition to being an operational success, the 2004 NRHS Convention in

Minneapolis was a financial success for both the host Northstar Chapter and the Society.

Pre-registration remains open through January 31 for the 2005 NRHS Convention in Portland, Oregon, hosted by Pacific Northwest Chapter. Forms are available through the national office and the convention website at www.nrhs2005.com.

The 2006 NRHS Convention will be held in New Philadelphia, Ohio during the week of July 17-23 and sponsored by the national organization. Several events are planned on the Ohio Central Railroad, and other area attractions will be included as well.

The Society is still seeking sponsors and locations for conventions in 2007 and beyond.

Roanoke Chapter Equipment, Part 4

by Ken Miller

Continuing our series describing some of the Roanoke Chapter's rolling stock collection past and present.

This month, due to space, we will present one car which had a very short history with the Chapter.

103 Diner, former Milwaukee Road 48 seat diner with full kitchen. Car was built by Milwaukee's own shops for use on North Woods Hiawatha in 1937. Car was sold in 1963 to Elgin, Joliert and Eastern for use as an executive car. Later transferred to a sister road, the Bessemer & Lake Erie and used as a diner for the Company Executives on their special trains. Sold to Glen Campbell in Pittsburgh along with locomotive 610 in 1982, purchased by Roanoke Chapter in February of 1984. Retired by Roanoke Chapter in 1985 because of non-standard trucks and requirements of major maintenance. Sold to Joe Martin of Richmond, Virginia who owned the Days Inn on Plantation Road for office and lounge space

in spring of 1987. The car was moved to the Day's Inn near interstate 81 at the Hollins exit where it remained until 2003.

At the Days Inn, Mr. Martin had the car heavily remodeled into a lounge car with a bedroom and bar. It also had a platform end added overtop the coupler on the dining end. Car was named "Cresta." Painted in standard N&W tuscan red with black roof and running gear with dulux gold lettering and striping.

After Joe Martin retired from the hotel business, he stayed in Richmond full time. Before he passed away the effort was being made to sell the car, arrangements were not complete until after the passing. The present owner in Buchanan, Virginia had the car trucked via I-81 to Buchanan where it has been refurbished to become a bed and breakfast.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

November 18 - Annual Meeting and Election of Directors

December 7 - Board Meeting

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

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

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