



Turntable TIMES

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

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May-June 2006





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Turntable Times is published bimonthly 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, May 18, 2006 at 7:30 pm. at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue.

The June meeting is Thursday, June 15th. Be sure to read about our mini-outing in this issue scheduled for May 27, and the next on July 30th.

From The Head End

Cards and Flowers

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, has 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 July-August 2006 issue of Turntable Times is Saturday, June 17, 2006. 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 cancelled if weather conditions cause the cancellation of classes at Roanoke City Schools are closed on the day of or the day after the meeting, or Virginia Western night classes are cancelled the night of the 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

An all Virginian train in 2006? 45 years, four months and one day after the merger with Norfolk and Western on December 1, 1959, the Virginian can live again. Former N&W GP30 No. 522 leads a former Virginian gondola, boxcar, a wheel gondola and caboose No. 322 in a posed photo freight from the 9th Street river bridge on April 2, 2006. Ten of the GP30s were bought under a Virginian equipment trust, technically making them Virginian units, despite never being painted that way. Brian Crosier Photo

Mixed Freight - May

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

There are a lot of things in today's America that really irritate the cinders out of me. As a railroad enthusiast, the tagging of railroad rolling stock and locomotives ranks very high. This includes murals and just plain general "cinders". The graffiti I sometimes feature in my Freight Car Graffiti is old school. It is always done with chalk or a magic marker and you have to be very close to the car to even read it. Railroaders have been scribbling their "monikers" on the flanks of freight cars for decades. Ole Rock, The Rambler, and Herbie monickers have been out there since the fifties and sixties.

In early March on a beautiful Sunday afternoon I was at Taylorsville on the former RF&P enjoying the action when one of my CSX special agent associates pulled up grinning from ear to ear. He, with the assistance of the Richmond police, busted two guys for tagging a number of freight cars in Richmond on the city's south side. The two college men were caught in the act on January 29th of this year. They will have to pay \$2,400 a piece for damage to a freight car, work 100 hours of community service and 100 hours to CSX cleaning up their own graffiti. Both will be allowed to graduate from college. That's part one, part two involves another felony charge for destruction of property which means damaging property to where it will cost more than \$1,000 to repair. This too involves freight car tagging. One guy's tag is "GONER" and the others is "DEREK". Even the judge expressed his personal disgust with this "art" being applied to private property.

In my last Mixed Freight, I brought out the fact that our sister NHRS Blue Ridge was seeking a suitable facility for RAIL DAY 2006.

A few weeks later after my plea, I was notified that a facility has been found and booked for this year and 2007. The facility is the Boonsboro Ruritan Club off of U.S. 501 North in Lynchburg. Lynchburg Rail Day 2006 is scheduled for Saturday August 12th and promises to be reminiscent of the RAIL DAYS many years ago back in the eighties featuring numerous clinics and contests for everyone with emphasis on enjoying the hobby both prototype and modeling.

It appears the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad will be with us for a few more years if not even longer. Folks writing, e-mailing, phone calling and ticket sales have all combined to persuade the deciding officials to rethink their position. A study of the railroad's contribution to the region was a big help too. \$217,000 plus in the bank and no liabilities is a plus in the right direction too.

Emery J. Gulash passed on February 24, of this year from complications associated with Parkinson's Disease and Alzheimer's. Mr. Gulash was a noted and well respected railfan, photographer and video recorder of America's railroad action during the fifties and sixties. His work was recorded on 16 millimeter film. A great deal of it can be found transferred to modern VHS and DVD medium.

Will it steam along the track again? That is a question that can be posed before a number of steam locomotives that are now dormant. Ross Rowland hopes that answer will be a resounding yes when it comes to his big 4-8-4 No. 614, a former C&O steamer. It will cost between \$500,000 & \$700,000 to get the big machine FRA compliant. He has been approaching the railfan fraternity and other organizations for funding. The locomotive is currently on the secured premises of the Reading & Northern Railroad at Port Clinton, PA.

There are plans for a Dillwyn Virginia Rail Day on June 3 of this year. It will be co-sponsored by the Old Dominion Chapter NRHS. For more info contact the chapter at www.odcnrhs.org or call 804-231-4324. Dillwyn is the headquarters for the Buckingham Branch Railroad.

Last and certainly not least, I was a participant of Friends Of The Virginian Railway at Milepost 2006. It was not as exciting or invigorating as the NRHS National Convention of 1977 and 1987 or steam excursions of the years past, but it was very enjoyable and spiritually gratifying in a laid back manner. I'm already looking forward to 2007's event. If you did not or could not attend this years event, you did indeed miss a worthwhile series of activities. Even if you are not a fan of the Virginian Railway, as a railfan it was great to participate in railroad related event in Roanoke within a former passenger depot and current facility and home museum of renown photographer Mr. O. Winston Link.

There were 60 paid participants. There was an additional seven former Virginian employees and guest. We had attendees from as far away as New Jersey, Ohio and Georgia. The weather was perfect for all three days. The major purpose for this celebration was to raise awareness, interest and funds for the former Virginian Railway depot located in south Roanoke. I'm not gonna write on all the details of what I experienced and the events offered. By the time most of you read this, most of you would have read or heard about the details. I enjoyed everything the weekend offered, especially the experiences told by the former VGN employees. A catered barbeque dinner track level behind the Link Museum on Saturday evening and a visit to the Roanoke Chapter's Ninth Street Yard on Sunday morning featuring a GP30 pulling a

five car freight including a caboose for attendees to see and photograph were highlights for me. I and others are already looking forward to Milepost 2007.

While in Roanoke for the Friends of the Virginian Railway at Milepost 2006, I checked out the new David R. Goode Railwalk. The plaques attached to the fence were informative and the railroad related artifacts along the railwalk are interesting. What mystified me was this. If enjoying and viewing the passing trains is one of the reasons for the railwalk, why are all the chairs facing the street instead of the tracks? A person or persons are sitting waiting to view a train. A train arrives and the person has to get up to face the tracks or twist his or her body around while sitting to view it in an area designated for such activity. What the heck is wrong with this picture?

April Passenger Train Update

by Gary Ballard

Most of the time, news of future passenger train service in Virginia concerns the northern parts of the state, making the population of the remaining areas of Virginia feel left out. That is about to change.

There is a website which has information about the latest in developing future passenger rail service in Virginia. Though at the present time, this topic is a hot political potato, I wish to direct readers to a source of information. From there, they can judge for themselves whether the trains will fly, forgiving me the mixed metaphor. Simply log onto <http://www.vhsr.com> which is the site for Virginia High Speed Rail. Once there, a side bar to the left on the main page directs you to certain to news updates and public meeting dates.

Of interest is a corridor map that shows passenger rail routes in current operation in

Potential Commuter Rail Lines:

- Harrisonburg - Winchester - Martinsburg, WV.
via Front Royal connecting to existing VRE Service in Manassas
- Christiansburg - Roanoke - Lynchburg
- Charlottesville - Orange - Culpepper - Manassas
- Richmond - Williamsburg - Newport News
- Richmond - Petersburg - Waverly - Norfolk
- Richmond - Fredericksburg - Dale City
connecting to existing VRE Service in Fredericksburg
- Washington DC - Richmond - South Hill - Raleigh - Greensboro - Charlotte
On existing Amtrak routes serving this area

the Old Dominion. There are also colored and dotted lines on the map showing what are called Potential Rail Lines. I noticed the site never mentioned the word "proposed." Instead, one will see the word "potential." For those without access to the Internet, here is a list of those potential routes:

On the VHRS website, there is mention that high speed rail south of Washington would be slower than 125 mph. Already area newspapers, TV and radio are telling of plans to expand the existing rail corridor between Washington and Richmond to to three tracks. Elected officials are quick to share with the public this news of a three track mainline to serve the ever growing population. Perhaps those other than rail historians don't remember that this corridor, once had three tracks when owned by the mighty Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad.

Certainly, the RF&P was known as a 100mph railroad back in the day. Sun lovers riding on the famous Florida bound trains of the Seaboard and of the Atlantic Coast Line travelled at high speed after leaving New York City with those trains pulled by a giant Pennsy GG-1 electric locomotive. South of Washington, DC on the tracks of the RF&P, the trains were pulled by new diesel locomotives, made by General Motors to Richmond, VA. There a dome car was added

on one train for the rest of the trip south.

In another bit of good news, progress is being made on the construction of a new rail bridge at Possum Point. This is a bottle neck area for all trains on CSX rails between Springfield and Woodbridge, VA. For too many years, this has been a one-track bridge. A wider two track water crossing is currently under construction with the allowance for a third track to be added eventually. Amtrak, VRE and CSX freight trains use this bridge along the busy ex-RF&P north - south route.

According to Washington's WTOP radio, Virginia is making funds available for Virginia Rail Express to buy 50 new cars. No word on what type of car or seat configuration has been disclosed. So far VRE's double deck coaches are used heavily by the public on both the Fredericksburg and Manassas lines.

The more recently built two deck coaches came from Kawasaki. The older double deckers, built by Pullman in the 1950s, are from Chicago's Metra system. Known as Gallery cars, these trusty dinosaurs of rail equipment still roll on. I rode in one of the Gallery cars recently and found my car rode tightly with no rattles excepting the noise made by a small metal screw that was loose inside the interior lighting glass lens.

The news from Amtrak is its simplified

dining car service. Hold on to your hat. This news may be shocking. On the Capitol Limited (trains 29 & 30) and The Cardinal (trains 50 & 51), meals will be of the pre-cooked and served on trays.. Other long haul routes will have this service added soon. Cooking complete entrees with lengthy menus will be a thing of the past. On Superliner diners, only one chef on the lower level will prepare the meals as the orders come down from the upper floor. The positions of assistant food preparer and the dishwasher will be eliminated. Meal choices have yet to be disclosed. One thing is certain, the multiple choices of steak, chicken, seafood, pasta, pork chops and lasagna will be reduced. The list of desserts will be affected also. There will be other reductions of the dining car staff, too. Upstairs in the dining area, there will be just the lead person taking in all cash sales, and one waiter instead of two. Though this will be added work for the lone waiter, the tray meal will probably already have salt and pepper and other packaged condiments on the tray, thus, ending the hundreds of trips the waiter would make to the various tables. This will also end the fine dining experience formerly given to passengers. When I first went to work for Amtrak over six years ago, the company took pride in its dining car service. My instructor distinctly told us new hires, "We are executing fine dining here! This is not Chick-fil-A®!" Perhaps the riding public will have a final word on this.

This change of service is a direct casualty of the budget woes that continue to hang over the entire Amtrak system. Already, President Bush has stated his intent to reduce Amtrak's appropriation from \$1.2 billion to \$900 million. Because of this, all food and beverage service on long haul trains must curtail losses and design ways to close the gap in lost earnings. Of the money

coming from Capitol Hill, Amtrak's F&B service cannot use those dollars to support the service while losses grow. Reportedly, Amtrak loses over a hundred million dollars a year on its food service, 60% of that loss is attributed from paying the on-board staff's wages plus benefits.

Though I work for the company, I find it hard to think that, for every dollar glass of orange juice sold during breakfast on the Capitol Limited, that 60 cents goes toward paying the employees. Pay is good on the railroad, but not that good.

The riding public has voiced its desire on the Acela trains. In response to requests, a pilot food and beverage cart program for business class patrons will be launched in March. Acela trains No. 2109 and 2122 will have the new service on a trial basis all month long.

The Cart Attendant will offer coffee, soft drinks and snacks on the early running 2109. On the later day 2122, the cart in the isle will feature alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and snacks. First-class ticketed passengers will see the return of hot meals, a much desired food choice, rather than the recently implemented sandwiches in a plastic wrapper. The sandwiches are hardly a first-class treat!

In the Acela Café car, the CNN video news tape has been dropped. Also, there is no more piped-in music at your seat. The CD players were in the café car - and they have been removed. Say goodbye to the Acela headphones, too. By the way, according to surveys done by Amtrak, Acela fares are the highest of all train fares in the country. Consequently, Amtrak surveys have found Acela passengers to be the least tolerant of any delays to their trips on the Boston to Washington line.

The snack cart idea brings back a service found on trains along the same route back

in the 1960s. The Pennsylvania Railroad had an attendant roll a silver stainless steel cart with spoked wheels down the isle. Beverages were offered along with a napkin bearing a red keystone with the slogan, "Pennsy Power," referring to the huge GG-1 locomotive pulling the train. I recall this service when my sixth grade class took a trip from Baltimore to New York in 1966. The all day adventure cost \$24.00, a large sum for any kid's trip in those days. To bad I didn't save the plastic glass. It's probably worth more than \$24.00 on Ebay these days!

Friends of the Virginian at Milepost 2006

by Ken Miller

What a weekend is all we can really say. On March 31-April 2, the Roanoke Chapter hosted a gathering of Virginian fans and friends in Roanoke. This event was based as a fund-raising effort towards our station project. In planning this event, we did not expect to raise a huge amount of money towards this massive project, but generally raise the public awareness of the station and its immediate need of help. Dave Helmer, Jeff Sanders, Skip Salmon and I began planning this event back in October. It was indeed a team effort.

Skip was a one man production man, going out and soliciting donations of things towards the goodie bags that were distributed to all attendees, door prizes and material for the silent auction.

We had 60 people registered for the event over the weekend. The weather is always a question during late March, but the VGN gods smiled on us, as we had absolutely gorgeous weather the entire weekend! Our event began with registration at the Link Museum on Friday afternoon. On Friday

afternoon, we also worked with the preservation foundation to host a design workshop at the station (see Station update). On Friday evening, we were welcomed by Roanoke Vice-Mayor Bev Fitzpatrick, then we proceeded to an in depth slide show by Kurt Reisweber, a short break was taken before noted Virginian historian Lloyd Lewis discussed his personal experiences with the Virginian.

There was no break short of a short night of sleep, then at 8:30 the group of 36 met for Saturday's tour to Virginian sites to the west of Roanoke. The first stop was for a look at the fire damaged Virginian station in Roanoke, then westward visiting many sites on board of a Commonwealth Coach and Trolley Museum bus driven by our greeter the previous evening.

After all, day of touring, with the sun stretched out in the afternoon sky, almost 70 people enjoyed an excellent barbeque dinner trackside at the Link Museum. During and after the barbeque, items for the silent auction were out for viewing and bids. Many folks provided materials for this auction, all proceeds which went towards the station project.

After the auction closed, probably the most interesting event occurred, a round-table discussion with seven former VGN employees who each told a story of their experience and brought the railroad to life for everyone. These gentlemen are all excellent story tellers and very personable. Most notable is G.W. "Slick" Inge, who turned 90 at the end of January, and is likely the oldest living VGN employee. Other employees who took part were Landon Gregory, Russell McDaniel, Greely Wyatt, Dewey Houck, and Rufus Wingfield

The stage was set after that for Aubrey Wiley who did a grand presentation on the VGN modular group forming, with display of

two of his modules representing Brookneal. Aubrey also provided a great handout for those folks who might participate in this group.

The silent auction winners collected their winning items and paid during this time as the evening was already getting long.

Another short night ensued, as the group was up and out again, this time for a shorter tour than the previous day, visiting Shaffers Crossing and the N&WHS archives and the NS Virginia Division office, before making the last stop for a surprise at the Chapter's 9th Street Maintenance Facility, where an all VGN train had been assembled.

Unfortunately, nothing was painted as Virginian as of yet, but N&W GP30 No. 522 (a group bought under a Virginian trust to

One group needs special mention, of course, the Virginian "brethren" who made the event special, as well as all those who attended! We had attendees from a wide area. Folks came from as far away as Georgia, Ohio and New Jersey. Thanks go to the Link Museum, N&W Historical Society, Commonwealth Coach and Trolley Museum and Aubrey Wiley, all of whom made the weekend complete. Special thanks go to the VGN "team," Dave Helmer, Jeff Sanders and Skip Salmon who really made this all happen, and should be credited for a very fine event. If you did not come, plan for next year!

Station Update-April, 2006

by Ken Miller

As of this writing, we are still awaiting the contract from VDOT before we can begin any work on the building. As explained in the last issue, the contract must be signed before any reimbursable monies are spent. We have had a nice influx of new members to the committee of the last few months, and are quite happy to see them.

On the afternoon of March 31, the Preservation Foundation and Chapter sponsored a design workshop at the station. We are seeking suggestions, ideas, and opinions on what the station can become to make the project self-sustaining. Before the event we had lots of good publicity, with stories in the Roanoke Times, Salem Times Register and a wonderful piece on WVTF about the project. Unfortunately, no media came out for the actual event, but a number of interested folks including chapter members did. Some of the outside folks included a representative from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, several city council members and representatives from the city's economic development office. The sugges-



Brian Crosier Photo

The special train awaits the Friends of the Virginian at Milepost 2006 on April 2, 2006.

replace the EL-C electrics), a VGN gondola, a VGN boxcar, another VGN gondola was trailed by a VGN caboose all were admired by the visitors. The big surprise was the train was moved to 9th Street, and posed for photos alongside the now cleared out and landscaped Roanoke River. This train proved that the VGN is not truly dead and exists only on paper in archives, as artifacts and memories, but can still live and breathe. Special thanks to Brian Crosier, Eddie Mooneyham, Bill Mason and Rick Rader who all worked hard to make this train happen.

tions were noted on a large pad, and folks got to vote on their favorite suggestions, naturally, the idea of a themed restaurant gathered the most votes. The sign to be posted at the station site was also shown, and should be installed before you read this. It was a hectic day all around getting the material ready for the Friends of the Virginian event and this event. It was a good day with a lot of public recognition received, bringing our project to the public's eye. There is also an extensive article (derived from the Roanoke Times article) posted on TRAINS Magazine's website under their newswire.

The website is still under development, but should be posted in the near future and announced here.

Mini Outing planned

by Brian Crosier

This mini outing is being called the Potts Valley local. We will leave Roanoke at 9:30 on Saturday, May 27 from the O Winston Link Museum and travel west to Salem. Visiting two areas of the Valley railroad, one bridge and one culvert, we will follow part of the Catawba Branch across the valley and head to Paint Bank. We will have an early lunch at the restaurant near/in the restored train station, then we will start our trip west on the Norfolk and Western. We will follow as closely as possible the branch to its current terminus and then out to the mainline. We then turn southeast and follow the mainline (N&W or Virginian) back to Roanoke. Cost will be \$30.00 per person and does not include lunch. Sign up below. We must have at least 7 people signed up by May 21st to make this trip happen. Sorry, the seating is limited to 10 persons, total. No refunds after the May 21st deadline.

The next outing is scheduled for Sunday,

July 30th. This will be the trip along the former Franklin and Pittsylvania line. This will begin with a trip down the Roanoke and Southern and a short visit along the old narrow gauge mine railroad near the 220 Wal-Mart. Return trip will be north on the Southern to Altavista and West on the Virginian. Sign up will be at the May and June membership meetings.

Condolences

On April 5, 2006, the Chapter lost a long time, dedicated member, Ruby Howell.

Ruby had fallen ill with a heart attack on the Monday after the March Chapter meeting and was hospitalized immediately. She had a number of other problems, which, sadly prevented her from recovery. Ruby served for many years on trips at the gift shop in the transportation museum and most recently at the Link museum. She will be missed by all of us, and our thoughts and prayers go to the family she left behind, husband Paul M. Howell, son Paul V. Howell, daughter in law Catherine Austin Howell and granddaughters, Sarah Cathleen Howell and Nichole Wylie Howell. Ruby would have been 75 in May and will be missed by all.

Reminders

As you now probably should have noticed, there was no newsletter for April, as we have now gone to a bi-monthly publication, this is the May-June issue, you should see the next issue, July-August sometime just before the July meeting.

Please keep the meeting dates on the back cover in mind and post on your refrigerator for convenience.

There will be a telephone directory published this year, it should be distributed at the May meeting.

Celebration at the Station

On Saturday, May 20th, join us for a day of fun and entertainment as we celebrate the Railroad Heritage of Roanoke at the

O.Winston Link Museum's
Celebration at the Station
Starts 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Admission: \$5

Bar-B-Que that night
Starts at 6:00 PM through 10:00 PM
Admission: \$10
performing Live are
the Norfolk Southern Lawmen

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

**Regular Meeting Locations are at the
O. Winston Link Museum.**

May 18 - General Meeting
May 20 - Celebrate Roanoke's Rail
Heritage at the O. Winston Link
Museum
May 27 - Mini Outing, inside for details
June 6 - Board Meeting
June 15 - General Meeting
July 4 - Board Meeting
July 20 - General Meeting
July 30 - Mini Outing, inside for details
August 1 - Board Meeting
August 17 - General Meeting

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

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