



Turntable TIMES

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

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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, August 16, 2007 at 7:30 pm. at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue.

Please be sure to note our weather cancellation policy below., please note, this policy also applies to Board Meetings.

This issue was much delayed in production and is being mailed with the May-June Turntable Times. We anticipate returning to regular schedule with the next issue and apologize for the delay

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 September/October 2007 issue of Turntable Times is Saturday August 18, 2007. 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

Who would have thought in 2007? Shiny F units on an east-bound Norfolk Southern business train on a flawless sunny day. Jeff Sanders caught the special at Union Street in Salem on 4:27 pm on July 20, 2007. The consist of train 951 was units 4270-7278-4271, Office Car NS5 "Maryland", NS 24 "Delaware" and NS 23 "Buena Vista".

J.L. Sanders Photo

noted factors. Despite the fact that the event was a 20th Anniversary, there was no real activity or event to honor that milestone. The main highlight for me was the all N&W passenger train featuring the newly refurbished combine No. 1506. That train looked great and the weather was perfect.

It has been a while since I have presented a general report on the Richmond Railroad Scene. All of the activity surrounding the buried C&O train within Church Hill Tunnel has been silenced for about a year. Concerns about an above ground cave in seem to have placed the entire project on indefinite hold. Other more pertinent and important projects and issues are in Richmond's spotlight.

Railfan-wise, CSX is as busy as ever. I have noticed more and steady coal and grain traffic. I should add finished steel products as well as the scrap metal that makes the finished goods possible. A railfan would be hard-pressed to be bored anywhere between Doswell to the north and Collier Yard to the south. As I have noted in these reports in the past, there are plenty of places to enjoy the action without trespassing.

Norfolk Southern has done a great job of clearing vegetation along it's trackage between Richmond and Burkeville. Some spots have not been that clear since the seventies. Richmond to Crewe Turn No. V08 travels the line Monday thru Saturday during daylight hours. It tends to arrive at Burkeville between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. It spends about an hour or less at Crewe before heading back to Richmond. The train still uses a former N&W caboose because of the required backup move between Burkeville and Crewe. Don't get excited about photographing the caboose. **THE DAMN TAGGERS HAVE HIT IT HARD.** What I'd give to hit them.

Double-Headed Tank Engine to be Featured

The New Hope Valley Railway recently announced that John C. Gramling will bring his 0-4-0T tank engine, known as Flagg Coal Company No. 75 to the New Hope Valley Railway at Bonsal, North Carolina during the month of November. Engine No. 7575 will team up with New Hope Valley Railway tank engine No. 7517, as a double-header combination, operating over two weekends. An operation like this has never been attempted before in the State of North Carolina using this type of steam locomotive, and should provide four thrilling days of railroading to the public.

Operation of the two tank engines will be held on 3, 4, 10, and 11 November with trains departing Bonsal depot on the regular schedule at 11:00 am, 12:15 pm, 1:30 pm, 2:45 pm and 4:00 pm each operating day.

The New Hope Valley Railway operates regularly the first Sunday of each month from May through November, and both Saturday and Sunday the first two weekends of December. For more information visit their website at www.nhvry.org, or call 1-919-362-5416 to speak with the yardmaster on duty. The Bonsal depot is located south of Apex, North Carolina.

(Above information courtesy of Bob Crowley)

Amtrak's New Diner/Lounge Car

Amtrak is testing a new kind of Food Service car on the Cardinal. The single level Diner-Lounge car has been completely remodeled with new booth seating, a steam table and new lighting and accents. All 25 cafe-lounge cars on the Amtrak roster will be receiving the overhaul. Passengers will eventually be able to find the cars on single level

ure of its many rollers located in huge rotating turret area. Think big. Each roller is about the size of a beer keg, kind of like the ball bearings in your roller skate wheels, but on a much bigger scale. The big shovel threw out 22 rollers out of a set of 100. Unable to turn with a scoop full of a large portion of the earth, the Silver Spade sat quietly, helpless in a pit it had dug for itself. Many factors kicked in making the cost of replacement rollers cost prohibitive. Consol Energy's huge machine was put shut down

Enter a group of fans of large coal shovels who stepped in to see whether the Spade could avoid the scrappers torch.

Members of the Harrison Coal and Reclamation Historical Park had already begun the baby steps in establishing a museum site to display various machines that were part of the once bustling coal strip mining industry. A large field had been secured, and many pieces of equipment had been donated to their cause. Now the thought of having the giant Silver Spade sitting the Park, lit up at night like a tall gantry at Cape Kennedy was a dream in the minds of many.

At last year's Convention in New Philadelphia, Ohio, I spoke with the person who led the drive to get people to pledge money to save the Silver Spade. Many of us have spent lots of love, tears and money in restoring a rail car or locomotive it easy to imagine the hopes of these people who wanted to preserve a giant. As the big shovel sat in the hot sun in 2006, emails were flying around and pledges soon came in, and the effort to save the Spade was underway. Many people returned a pledge, and the cards and money were coming in. The management at Consol Energy was thinking on what to do with such a large machine. In February 2007, a decision for the final outcome of the Silver Spade was reached and

the news was not good.

Consol Energy would dismantle and scrap the giant machine despite the hefty amounts of money coming from individuals from all over. According to Consol the price for saving the Spade was set at \$2.5 million! In a few months, friends of had raised 1/3 of the money needed. Another \$600,000 was gathered in a loan directed at saving the shovel from demolition.

Consol wanted the cash instead. The heart filled campaign was lost, and the world's largest remaining mechanical shovel would be taken apart in a matter of six months. Essentially, it died on site before it could exit the pit it had dug.

Back at the Harrison County Reclamation and Historical Park and its members cried when the news was broken. Claren Blackburn was deeply saddend at the loss of this engineering mechanical marvel. The local library in Cadiz, OH had begun an interesting collection of wall photos and studio style diorama of a busy way of life. Demolition of the Silver Spade began in January of this year, and should be all but complete as of this writing.

The huge 220 foot tall boom was exploded and fell on the wall of the pit. There, it is being reduced to smaller pieces. Think big. If the Silver Spade sat in the middle of a football field, it could take a bite out of the ground at one goal post, swing 180 degrees and deposit its load on the opposite post!

Crews are doing the demolition from the top and then downward. Lots of photos have been taken of this process, though friends of the machine find it difficult to look at them.

Consol says they will donate the operators cab, the huge bucket, and other items from the giant machine. Think big. The removal of dirt and rock in the building of the Panama Canal is reported to be 407 million

long distance trains. Trains that currently run with a Dining Car, such as the Crescent, and the Silver Meteor, will still retain that car, and the Diner-Lounge will be available at a lower-cost, more relaxed alternative. Trains like the Cardinal and Palmetto will have just the Diner-Lounge.

(From The 470, June 2007).

The Last Summer for a Giant Machine

By Gary Ballard

We here in Southwest Virginia know well of how coal is brought up from the deep—and to the surface. From living in the Roanoke Valley, we know of the big, home built Norfolk and Western steam locomotives that powered long heavy trains, loaded with coal on the way to the coast for export or to the Great Lakes region for shipment via large ships. 'Pocahontas' Coal from West Virginia made life better for lots of us. From household heating to powering electric power plants to supply electricity, modern day life can tip 'hat to ole King Coal. The N&W railway used coal as the fuel for what eventually became known by anyone who drew a paycheck on that railroad as, "The Modern Coal Burning Locomotive."

Anyone who lives in central Ohio knows well that coal is king, too. Coal from the Buckeye State lies close to the surface and not deep down. The huge dinosaur sized mechanical 'shovels' would take bites out of the earth to expose the rich coal seams. An army of smaller cranes and loaders scooped up the coal and dumped it in huge off-road trucks that carried the black diamonds to a tippie where the coal was then gravity-loaded into waiting railroad hopper cars. The railroads then hauled the coal to hungry electric generating power plants in Ohio.

Modern industry found ways to manufacture household products from Ohio coal, from mothballs to a few nice smelling fragrances all by breaking down the many properties of the coal. But, the big demand for coal is keeping the electricity on for thousands of people, and what is unique in the story of Ohio mined coal is that frequently the entire operation of digging up the coal was performed by the big electric utility companies themselves.

If in Roanoke take interest in huge steam locomotives built to handle the task of pulling heavy coal trains, then take interest in the huge machines that roamed the Ohio country side digging up the earth in search of coal in the ground. Built on site, with parts from the factory delivered in 250 railroad flat cars, a huge mechanical digger was taking shape. It was built by the Bucyrus Erie company and completed in 1966. The Hanna Coal company was the proud owner of this big machine, and the time was right as the company was celebrating. And so it was fitting for this large shovel as it was called, to be affectionately named The Silver Spade. For the next 41 years, the Spade worked the gentle rolling country side between the small central Ohio towns of Cadiz and New Athens. These towns were in an area served by the both the Baltimore & Ohio, the Pennsylvania railroads. The Spade walked on large bulldozer like treads, and the railroads benefitted by hauling what the Spade had unearthed.

Pittsburg based Consol Energy owned the Spade in recent times and operated it as late as April of 2006. This shovel dug up the dirt and rocks that make up the overburden that lies on top of two local coal seams. The Silver Spade weighed millions of pounds and crossed over public highways and through fields during

Last year; the Silver Spade suffered a fail-



Jim Shaw Photo/J.L. Sanders Collection

The 251 is sitting on the ready track at Princeton, not too many months before making Virginian history.

at a bargain price just six years before would gain its place in the history books as the last Virginian steam locomotive operating. Shuffling a few cars around the yard at Princeton, the little 0-8-0 now looked out of place, it was the only live steamer in the yards, the locals could not have realized that Saturday that they would never see this sight again. It seemed rather sudden, but now there were enough of the black and yellow diesels around to cover all the jobs, as soon as the 251 finished the first part of its shift, the gloved hand of inspector Roy Dobbins began the final process, with the fire dying out, and enough steam pressure in the boiler, the 251 waddled across the table to the dead line track, not much need to shake the fire out of her, it was not too

likely she'd be called back to service, and even if she was, she'd have to get a monthly inspection before she could be fired again.

Dobbins cracked open the blower valve allowing steam to escape slowly, the 251 was tied down on the end of the line, hand brake tightened down on the tender, and with the faint glow of coals remaining in the firebox, steam bleeding from her valves, in the late evening light, the 251 was breathing her last.

The 251 ended a era of some of the largest steam locomotives ever built, the huge 2-10-10-2 Class AE, the virtual copies of the C&O's 2-6-6-6 AGs, the beautiful 2-8-4s, also virtual copies of the C&O locomotives, all now cold and dead in the storage lines, awaiting a call to service that would never

Mixed Freight - July/August

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Ever since last November, I have tried to keep you readers abreast of when the Buckingham Branch Railroad would commence it's own dispatching. Every time I'd report a date for this accomplishment as I received it from an employee of that railroad, something would happen to push the date back. By now, those of you whom keep on top of the railroad scene, are aware that the BB commenced it's own dispatching on April 28th at one minute past midnight. They use frequency 160.455. Also of note, the employees that perform dispatching duties are referred to as rail traffic controllers, not dispatchers.

Another subject matter of interest that seems to face one issue after another is the restoration of Pennsy K4s No. 1361. The latest problem is the discovery that replacement driving box shoes and wedges had been made from cast steel instead of required brass. This mistake had been made by a previous repair crew. This mistake was discovered as workers prepared the frame for installation of the drive wheels. Steel is much harder and when used for shoes and wedges to hold the driving box in place in the frame, can cause damage from movement during operation. To correct the problem it is estimated to cost between \$10,000.00 and \$15,000.00. The entire project has been going on for over ten years and millions of dollars over the original budget.

Norfolk Southern will begin installing new dual treated crossties this year. Before being treated with traditional creosote, the ties will be pretreated with a borate solution. Pretreating with borate has several advantages over ties treated alone with creosote. It economically increases the life of the crosstie especially in southern coastal areas.

Less creosote is needed. Creosote is petroleum based and we all know how much the price of petroleum is constantly escalating. The borate also keeps wood destroying pest and fungi in check. The dual treated ties will be installed in areas of high decay and are expected to serve the railroad for more than 20 years. 325,000 ties are to be produced this year at two plants with 200,000 gallons less of creosote.

Conrail fans and former employees take note. A new online store is in place featuring Conrail logo items such as apparel, accessories, etc. The Conrail Company Store can be accessed at conrailstore.com

I attended both The Manassas Railway Festival 2007 and the 20th Anniversary Family Rail Day at The North Carolina Transportation Museum. Both events were enjoyable but not nearly as enjoyable as in past years, in my personal opinion. My main gripe with the Manassas festival was the small presence of vendors for railroad related goods. Food vendors were out in force and dieticians wonder why America is losing the Battle Of The Bulge. I was told all vendors were being charged a fee of \$55.00 just for a tableless space. In years past there was either no fee or a nominal one. Also, there were no equipment displays available from the railroad. Without a doubt, the model railroad layouts drew the largest and constant crowds as did the 35 minute excursion rides up to Clifton and back.

Down in Spencer one week later was the one day only Family Rail Day. Why it was advertised as DAYS is a mystery to me. For me the main disappointment was the event being one day instead of the entire weekend. A number of N.C.T.M. associates informed me the scale back was enacted due to low public turnout in the past on Sunday. Higher gas prices and no steam locomotives operating on the museum property were

tons. In its 41 year life, the Silver Spade dug 600 million tons of material. For more info, log onto: www.hcrhp.org

This is an amazing story of a colossal machine that cleared the earth to expose coal and how it made its way into railroad hopper cars. From there it made into power generating plants that turned on the light for all.

Last Run for a '60s TV Icon

by Gary Ballard

The mean old man named Homer Bedloe in the TV show from the 60's, Petticoat Junction, died Monday, July 9th at age 102.

Charles Lane played the part of the mean and scratchy voiced Homer Bedloe. He was a top executive of the C&FW RR on the show, and they discovered in a board of directors meeting that they owned a short line that served the towns of Hooterville and Pixley.

The railroad was proud of its vast system, with an all new diesel streamliner carrying people along its routes. The short line was a discovered embarrassment, and Homer traveled to Hooterville to shut down the line and extinguish the fires of it's steam train.

Kate Bradley (played by the great Bea Benaderet) owned the Shady Rest, a two story hotel tucked in the woods near the tracks. There were no roads serving the hotel since the hotel was built by

Kate's father who took the lumber carried by a train that jumped the tracks and decided the location was just superb for a neat little hotel.

A small wooden bench for waiting travelers and a water tower to add water to a thirsty steam train marked the stop for the Shady Rest. It was common place for Kate's three daughters to take a break from the hot summer sun and go swimming in the open topped water tower, their petticoats hanging

from the rim of the tower.

Homer Bedloe arrived in the Hooterville Valley and got on the train known as the Hooterville Cannonball. It was a steam train pulling a short wooden coach that was half baggage/half coach car.

Homer took notes of the weird stuff that went on during the train's journey. He was about to fire from the payroll a man sitting on the platform at the tiny station near to Sam Drucker's general store.

"That's one mistake you made mister, I don't work for you. I own the store over there." said Sam Drucker to a demanding Mr. Bedloe.

Sam was relaxing at the depot while Kate and her daughters hopped off the waiting train so they could shop in his store. The train came to halt at the store as if that was the actual station stop. Homer took more notes of this as it unfolded. Sam told the angry Bedloe that he knew Kate didn't have the cash to pay for her shopping bill, and that Kate wouldn't feel embarrassed if he remained a short distance away. Homer did not understand this mannerism that existed out in the rural parts of America.

Suddenly, the train departed after Kate and her daughters, carrying full bags from Sam's general store, climbed on board. The train was leaving, and Mr. Bedloe was now being left behind and he yelled, "Aren't they going to back up and pick me up?"

"Nope." said Sam, he added. "If I were you, if you wanna catch yerrrrr train, I'd start shankin it down yerrrrrr track!

Homer started to run. He made it to the rear of the departing train with Kate pulling him up onto the rear platform of the wooded coach. "The Hooterville Cannonball waits for nobody." said Kate.

Homer replied, "That's what I'll do! I'll make sure that they make cannon balls out this train! :

They stopped the train at Ben Bradley's orchard to pick apples that ended up in Kate's great apple pies that followed her country cooked dinners at the Shady Rest. After the apples were picked and Floyd the Conductor came by to collect tickets. Kate asked what the fare would be with Homer Bedloe listening to every word.

Floyd said, "For you Kate, that'll cost ya two apple pies!" Homer quickly wrote more notes in his little book.

The locomotive made a series of rapid hoots on the whistle as they approached Dead Man's Curve. Of course, it was Bobbie Joe, one of Kate's beautiful girls who was engineering the locomotive on this leg of the trip. Homer Bedloe filled his small note pad of the non-regulation actions performed on his train, all the while he kept his identity unknown to those who lived along the tracks.

Homer Bedloe was everybody's favorite man to hate. The TV show debuted on CBS in 1963. It was just a few years since this country had seen it's last steam train. It was also a time where the country

was taking notice of how fast the big cities were growing. The huge New York World's Fair would open in 1964. And appeal of Petticoat Junction's country way of life was welcomed by many TV viewers.

The show was an instant hit. Charles Lane would bring his angry and mean character back to the show in several episodes as Mr. Bedloe was convinced he'd get rid of the Hooterville Cannonball once and for good. Petticoat Junction stayed on the air for seven years.

The cast of the show never saw the real train. The train shots were filmed along the Sierra Railroad in California, where the locomotive, and the little coach car exists today. The Hoyt Axton hotel in Portland Oregon owned a wooden replica of Denver & Rio

Grande locomotive. That engine was similar in looks to ole No. 3 of Petticoat Junction.

The producers of PT got use of the wood-ed replica which was inside studios where the cast of PT would play out their scenes. Actual footage of the real train along with studio shots were mixed in. The results are very good, with acting doubles on the real train in distant shots where the viewer couldn't tell the difference.

Only the actress who played Bobbie Joe saw the real train. In later years, she traveled to the Sierra Railroad and visited the engine she so loved on the TV show.

Sierra RR old No. 3 was the locomotive used in the hit movie "Back To The Future, 3." The engine and train was seen on Little House on the Prairie. There is a long list of movies and TV series that this locomotive appeared in. By the way, the steam engine in TV's "The Wild Wild West" is also found at the Sierra Railroad.

The memory of a mean railroad executive will live on forever. Mr. Charles Lane was cast in several movies, and I seem to recall seeing him in a black & white western. He lived to be 102 years old.

I hope the TV entertainment shows (E.T.) picked up on Hollywood's loss. It would be nice if TV Land did a retrospect on Homer Bedloe.

It was 50 Years Ago

by Ken Miller

Another Virginian anniversary has passed by, this past June 1. It was little noted at the time, and has since faded into obscurity.

At Princeton Yard that early summer day, a inconsequential little steam locomotive did something no other Virginian steam locomotive would or could do. Ex Chesapeake & Ohio 0-8-0 No. 251, purchased

come. Nearby, one of the AGs No. 906 sat, fresh paint shiny, just out of an overhaul, but never fired when the orders came down that no more steam was to be repaired. Only keeping them running until enough diesels were on hand to cover the work. That day had arrived, June 1, 1957. Just a few miles away, at Bluefield, one could still hear the sound of steam and steam whistles on the Norfolk and Western and would for just a bit over two and a half years. The steam era was ending rapidly, on some roads, it had already occurred. Little could anyone have guessed on that Saturday evening, that all the stored Virginian steam power would be rapidly dispatched on one last trip just weeks after the merger with N&W, not a revenue trip, well not exactly, but to the scrapper for return to raw metal, probably to make new diesels or automobiles.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

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

August 16 - General Meeting
September 4 - Board Meeting
September 20 - General Meeting
October 2 - Board Meeting
October 18 - General Meeting
November 6 - Board Meeting
November 15 - Annual Meeting
December 4 - Board Meeting
January 8 - Board Meeting
January 17 - General Meeting
February 5 - Board Meeting
February 21 - General Meeting

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

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