



# *Turntable* TIMES

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

**Volume 40, Number 1**  
**March-April 2008**





# Turntable TIMES

**Volume 40, Number 2**  
**March-April, 2008**

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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, April 17th 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.

## *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 March/April 2008 issue of Turntable Times is Monday, March 26, 2008. 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**

Hopefully, the Virginian station will begin to look better than it does in the near future as an architect has been selected for the design services. Skip Salmon caught four loaded trains ready to head east and/or south in the former Virginian yard on February 10, 2007. The lead unit on the second track from left is a BNSF unit. Skip Salmon Photo.

## Outings Planned!

by Brian Crosier

Please place the following dates on your calendars: On Saturday April 26th, the Virginia Railway Heritage Coalition will be hosting a bus tour of some of Roanoke's lost railroads. Two trips will be provided with departures at am and 2pm. each tour will last approximately 4 hours. Departure will be from the O. Winston Link museum and will follow the Norfolk and Western West with locations such as the original round-house and current locomotive facilities being seen. A ride along the Hanging Rock branch all the way to the original end on the mountain near Macafees Gap with a short detour to a small segment of the Valley railroad. Travel near the Virginian Railway and see locations of the original narrow Gauge RR that hauled ore north from Roarer Mine between Roanoke and Mill Mountain downtown to a transloading facility near 13th St.. See portions of the Roanoke Belt line and the Roanoke and Southern RR (now the Pumpkin Vine/ Winston- Salem mainline). See the Virginian Station, Roanoke Railway & Electric car barn and office building, Current Norfolk Southern office building and many other heritage locations all from the comfort of a restored bus provided by Commonwealth Coach and Trolley. More information and pricing will be posted on our websites this month.

On September 20th a bus trip to Cass Scenic Railway will be hosted by the Virginia Railway Heritage Coalition. Two tickets will be available; Open class tickets will be for the open cars and Closed class will be for reserved seating in an enclosed car for the ride up to Bald Knob. Both tickets include the price of the bus trip and will include a box lunch. (Vegetarian meals will be avail-

able upon request if told at time ticket is purchased and at least thirty days before trip.) Tickets will be available shortly through the O. Winston Link Museum. Departure will be from the West gravel parking lot at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. Please no parking in front of the museum as this is reserved for the daily patrons of the museum. This will be a one day trip leaving Saturday morning and returning Saturday night. Open cars are not guaranteed seating, they are a combination of standing and seats on a first come basis. Pricing will be \$70.00 for open car and \$75.00 for closed car. Closed car capacity is 44 passenger's and will be taken on a first paid for basis. We have two Abbott busses reserved for this trip and will be opening ticket sales to the general public in April so please reserve your seats now if you plan on attending. No refunds will be given after August 10th as we can not cancel reservations after this date.

For tickets contact the O. Winston Link museum at 540-982-5465 after March 1st.

The Virginia Railway Heritage Coalition is an umbrella organization made of the Virginia Museum of Transportation, O. Winston Link Museum, Norfolk and Western Historical Society, Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society and the Blue Ridge and Roanoke Chapter's of the National Railway Historical Society.

## Architects Selected for Virginian Railway Station Restoration

by Jim Cosby

Architectural and engineering firms have been selected to commence the restoration of the Virginian Railway passenger station buildings which were severely damaged by a fire in January 2001.

A committee of the Roanoke Chapter of

the National Railway Historical Society and the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation announced today that Barry A. Rakes of Fincastle has been selected as principal architect for Phase I of their project to restore the Virginian Railway passenger station and adjacent baggage and express buildings at the intersection of Williamson Road and South Jefferson Street in Roanoke. Teamed with Rakes will be Alison Blanton, architectural historian, Hill Studio, master plan and landscape, and Spectrum Design, engineering.

The committee has worked for seven years to seek funding and restore the structure which is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The station was built in 1909 and donated to the Historical Society by Norfolk Southern Corporation in 2005. The total cost of the project is anticipated to be \$2.3 million according to James Cosby, contracting officer for the restoration partners. Federal and state grants of more than a half-million dollars will make commencement of the project possible with a goal of completion by late 2009 in time for the 100th anniversary of the station's opening. A capital campaign to support construction costs will be undertaken in 2008.

The renovation partners plan to restore the historic structure for a combination of public and private use. The passenger station building will be leased to a non-profit agency or commercial tenant to provide an income stream to cover future building operations and costs, according to Brian Crosier, president of the Historical Society.

The smaller baggage and express building will be used by the Society for displays to explain the role of the Virginian Railway in the development of the Roanoke Valley and the railroad industry in Virginia. This probably will be an access point for the Chapter's

archives according to Kenneth Miller, chapter historian. The museum will help promote Roanoke as a National Railway Heritage District and a destination for research in railroad history. The restored building will also serve as a comfort station on the Mill Mountain Greenway and as a gateway to the Riverside Centre for Research and Technology.

The depot, one of a handful of Virginian buildings remaining, operated until Virginian Railway passenger service ended in January 1956. It was the only original construction brick station built by the Virginian, Miller said. He said the building is significant for its utilitarian design as a railroad station, for its contribution to the rail industry and its facilitation of transport to and from Roanoke. The two buildings have architectural importance with their unique visual characteristics and construction used for only a brief period and only by railroads, Miller said.

Contributions or pledges for the restoration may be sent to the chapter at P.O. Box 13222, Roanoke 24032-3222. Additional information about the campaign is available at the chapter's website: [www.roanokenrhs.org](http://www.roanokenrhs.org).

## **Chapter Assists with Merit Badge**

by Walter Alexander

**O**n February 3rd, 2008, Roanoke Chapter members assisted 14 Boy Scouts of Troop No. 584 working toward their Railroading Merit Badge. These scouts from Bonsack United Methodist Church came to the Chapter's 9th Street siding and received instruction on how a diesel locomotive works. The visit had been arranged by Ron Davis, Charter Coordinator for the troop and

President of the Norfolk & Western Historical Society.

Using the Chapter's former N&W GP-30 No. 522, which was built in 1962 and was the first GP-30 purchased by N&W, members Bill Mason and Gary Gray explained the parts of the locomotive and their function. The hood covers were opened revealing the diesel engine so the scouts could see the prime mover. Dividing into smaller groups, the scouts were taken into the loco's cab. Mason explained the various controls and how an engineer operated the unit. Each scout took the opportunity to sit in the engineer's seat.

The scouts and their adult leaders then boarded the Chapter's N&W caboose for a roundtrip ride over the full length (0.36 miles) of the industrial siding powered by Chapter's former N&W T-6 No. 41, built in 1959. Scout Master Curtis Altice said that half of the boys had never ridden a train

before! Serving on the train crew in addition to Mason and Gray were Tom McCrary, Brian Crosier, Eddie Mooneyham, Steve Smith, Rick Rader, Percy Wilkins, and Walter Alexander.

The scout committee chairman, Russell Dickerson, is a dispatcher for NS. He observed that the Roanoke Chapter's operation was the only way in Roanoke

that a ride could have been organized for the boys.

The scouts were invited to attend the Chapter's monthly meetings and to join the work sessions at the siding. They were also told about NRHS Rail Camps in Scranton and Ely. Several of the older scouts asked if it would be possible for them to do a project at the siding in order to earn Eagle Scout, and were told they would be welcome to do that.

Prior to coming to the siding, the scouts toured the hump tower and locomotive facility at Shaffer's Crossing, the NWHS Archives, the VMT, the Rail Walk, and the NS Virginia Division Dispatch Center. The Chapter has received a note from Ron Davis saying "Thanks for hosting Boy Scout Troop 584 Saturday. It was the perfect ending to a great day!"

Photo by Walt Alexander



## Lynchburg Rail Days-2008

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This year marks the 30th Anniversary of Lynchburg Rail Day! 2008 also is the 50th Anniversary of our Friends at Blue Ridge Chapter.

Mark you calendars now, Saturday, August 9. for Lynchburg Rail Day 2008 30th Anniversary Train Show! For train show information or table rental please contact Norris Deyerle, LRD 2008 Train Show Coordinator at 434-237-4912 or at rail-cow@msn.com.

## Turntable Times-Book Report

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by Dorr Tucker

Today's all color "slide show" rail fan books cover a wide range of subjects from almost every corner of the US & Canada and beyond. One could spend thousands each year simply keeping up with the latest editions. Then too many publishers today use "same old/same old" material that we all have seen before.

I was attracted to "Trackside In The Mid-Atlantic States 1946-1959" by some really different shots. For example, how about M No. 404 pulling two head end cars between Jefferson St. Crossing and the Express House? Or K1 No. 114 working a delivery job with a cut of 3 box cars at the same location. (remember folks this was 1948 and the railway kept "protection" power handy for required second sections, double heading and white flag movements) In another 1948 shot PA No. 213 is running light in front of the Virginian freight station heading for an early morning rendezvous with No. 4 heading to Norfolk. Up at White Sulphur Springs on the C&O Road old H-4 mallet No. 1414 works the Pullman tracks at the depot in June 1951.

The photography in this book can be cred-

ited to two members of The New York Railroad Enthusiasts, Vincent A Purn (1915/2004) and John A. Knauff (1899/1963). Through the efforts of Al Roberts of the New York group the material was realised for publication in 2007.

Unfortunately, the book has several caption errors: For example a magnificent full page color shot of streamlined K No. 119 is heading train No. 33 to Winston -Salem west by the Express House. Try No. 23 folks.

Another downside to this book is that 61 out of 128 pages are focus on the Lackawana, Reading, Lehigh & New England, Jersey Central, East Broad Top, and Pennsy. Also included are 4 pages on the B&O, 2 on Ma&Pa plus some PCC cars at Union Station in Washington.

Needless to say I bought the book and am saving up for another such edition next year.

## Newletters?

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by Ken Miller

What is the story with the long delayed newsletter? It seems to have been forever.

There are two newsletters coming out here very close together, and I hope we can get back on the correct schedule with the next issue. Work and family life has drastically depleted my time for doing jobs like this. As I pointed out in an article about this time last year, putting together the Turntable Times is a labor of love, and requires a considerable amount of time. Time is one item that you can virtually not buy, making a living seems to come first more and more often. We don't feel that reporting national news stories in the Turntable Times is a valuable use of space, as most of you will have read or seen something about those stories long before an issue goes to press. What we need in the Turntable

Times, is local information, unusual movements, odd motive power, Chapter activities and such, these things are seldom recorded elsewhere, and it is our duty to record this for future generations who may find interest in the fact that a certain building was torn down on such and such a date, that motive power was an odd appearance and such.

As we have emphasized time and again, it is YOUR newsletter, if you want to make it a good newsletter, submit materials, what you may not feel is interesting, might be to someone else. Please, help us out.

## **Making Railroad History**

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From Norfolk and Western Magazine,  
page 14, January 1, 1968

N&W's Operation of 500-Car Coal Train  
Was a Big Event of 1967

One of the most widely publicized stories about the Norfolk and Western in 1967 was the operation on November 15 of the longest and heaviest freight train in railroad history. The facts are quickly stated, but even more interesting for the general reader are background data and sidelights of the train's run between Jaeger, W. Va. and Portsmouth, Ohio.

Briefly the facts are that the N&W operated a coal train of 500 cars, four miles in length and weighing 48,170 tons, for a distance of 159 miles—a record. Power was furnished by six 3,600 h. p. diesel locomotives—three on the head end and three radio-controlled slave units 300 cars from the lead units.

As Vice President-operations R. F. Dunlap noted after earlier runs of 420 to 450-car trains last fall, the operations were experiments designed to gain experience in moving maximum-tonnage trains.

The 500-car train was designed to show, among other things, whether the slave loco-

motives could be operated as far as 300 cars from the head end. This phase of the run was considered a success with "continuity" between lead and slave units interrupted on one or two brief intervals when the train was passing through tunnels.

The train was composed of the usual assortment of coal-carrying cars—hoppers and gondolas of various capacity, Both N&W and foreign. No special arrangements were made to assemble new cars or those of any one type.

Operation of brakes along the four-mile train was closely observed by N&W personnel along the right-of-way. Using two-way radios, these men reported the condition of the train as it passed.

The only hitch in operation of the long train occurred at Williamson when a knuckle broke on a 70-ton hopper 150 cars from the rear. This mishap, which can occur on any trains was repaired immediately.

One observer, taking his first ride on a freight train, was amazed to observe that the head end of the long train moved ahead at the start for more than two minutes before the cab reported the rear of the train in motion.

The train had 12 car-lengths of slack, which took that long to work itself out.

Aboard the train were a number of N&W occurs and supervisors as well as representatives of the Public Relations Department with men from Railway Age and the Roanoke World-News. Included were: M. E. Bowman, general manager, Pocahontas Region; J. F. Litz, general road foreman of engines, who operated the locomotives from Williamson to Portsmouth; W. O. Tracy, Jr., superintendent, Pocahontas Division, and C. H. Hale, superintendent Scioto Division; C. H. Hale, Pocahontas Division road foreman of engines, who operated the locomotives from Jaeger to Williamson; John Marcroft, general air brake inspector; Don Mayberry,

gang foreman, Shaffers Crossing Shop, who checked the remote control system; Edward Donlon, of Railway Age. Tom White, of the Roanoke World-News, and E. F. Striplin, N&W public relations representative.

The train and engine crewmen from Iaeger to Williamson were Conductor E. T. Hagy, Engineer R. E. Bailey, and Brakemen B. H. Curry and P. L. Pigman. Crewmen from Williamson to Portsmouth were Conductor B. L. Thornton, Engineer J. W. Marcum, Fireman D. W. Clark and Brakemen P. H. Dupuy and R. G. Sutherland.

Particularly impressive was the teamwork and cooperation which made the run a success. As officers making the run noted, "The employees right down the line took great pride and interest in this train. They were determined to make it a success and they are due a lot of credit and recognition."

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

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

April 17 - General Meeting

April 26 - Bus Trip to local rail heritage sites, see article for details

May 6 - Board Meeting

May 15 - General Meeting

June 2 - Board Meeting

June 19 - General Meeting

July 1 - Board Meeting

July 17 - General Meeting

August 5 - Board Meeting

August 21 - General Meeting

Sept. 20 - Cass Outing (see article)

**New Website: [www.RoanokeNRHS.org](http://www.RoanokeNRHS.org)**

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