



Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 40, Number 6
November-December 2008





Turntable TIMES

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Nov. - Dec. 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 annual meeting on Thursday, November 20th at 7:30 pm. at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue. There is no regular December meeting, but we will have a holiday gathering on December 18th at Calvary Baptist Church beginning at

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 January/February 2009 issue of Turntable Times is Monday, December 22 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

Norfolk Southern No. 9751 heads south on the "Punkin Vine" just south of Starkey, Virginia after participating in the production of a safety film at South Yard. The complete story and photo special is in this issue. Photo by Richard D. Shell

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held at the O. Winston Link Museum on Thursday, November 20, 2008. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm. At this time, we will hold our annual election in which four (4) directors will be elected.

Board members whose terms are expiring are as follows:

Landon Gregory
Eddie Mooneyham*
Bill Mason*
Ken Miller*
Rick Rader

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

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will elect four (4) directors 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 promptly.

If there are no more candidates than positions, a motion to elect by acclaim will be accepted.

To vote by absentee ballot, one must:

1 - Request an absentee ballot from the Secretary or a member of the nominating committee. You will receive (a) one ballot; (b) one "ballot" envelope; and (c) one mailing envelope.

2 - Mark the ballot (vote for not more than four (4) directors. If more than four (4) 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, NRHS
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.

Here and There

by Kenney Kirkman

Bristol's historic train station recently reopened after a 10-year renovation. Some of the first events held in the facility included a wedding reception, a high school reunion and a private party. The depot is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the renovation was completed under the direction of a non-profit foundation that bought the building in 1999. (Excerpted from a September 12, 2008 Bristol Herald Courier article via the October 2008 'Whistle Stop', newsletter of the Watauga Chapter, NRHS).

The Gulf & Ohio (G&O) Railway has purchased the former Southern Railway 2-8-0 No. 154 that had been on display for 55 years in Chilhowee Park in Knoxville. The G&O plans to restore the engine. The Gulf & Ohio Railway already has another steam locomotive, the former Washington & Lincolnton's 2-8-0 No. 203, which will be pulling Christmas trains this year in late November and December from the Knoxville riverfront area on the Knoxville & Holston River Railroad. (Contributed by Chris Starnes to the October, 2008 'Whistle Stop',

Watauga Chapter newsletter).

The 66th annual run of the CSXT Santa Claus train on the former Clinchfield Railroad will feature Country singer Kathy Mattea as special guest. The train will run Saturday November 22 and make 15 stops in Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee and distribute 15 tons of toys and gifts to thousands in the area. The train will arrive in Kingsport shortly before the city's annual Christmas parade begins. (From October, 2008 'Whistle Stop', Watauga Chapter newsletter).

Winston-Salem's Union Station may soon see trains again under a plan by developer Bill Cannon to turn the historic depot building into a transport hub hosting rail, bus and streetcar service. Davis Garage has been located in the building for over 30 years, and the last passenger train pulled out of the station some 40 years ago. The Winston-Salem station opened in the spring of 1926, and served the Norfolk and Western, the Southern, and the Winston-Salem Southbound Railways. (Excerpted from an article in the Greensboro News & Record by Robert C. Lopez, Sunday, September 28, 2008).

Norfolk Southern is continuing work on raising 28 tunnels between Norfolk, VA and Columbus, Ohio. When complete, the new route will eliminate 233 miles and more than a day's transit time. In Virginia, Eggleston Tunnels 1 and 2 have had track lowered and realigned with work complete. Track has also been lowered and realigned with work complete on the Pembroke Tunnels. At Cowan Tunnel, west of Walton, about 70% of the roof demolition and associated rock bolting and shotcreting work has been completed. (From NS Newsbreak, August, 2008).

2008 Chapter Christmas Party

Just another reminder that the Roanoke Chapter Christmas Party for 2008 will be held at Calvary Baptist Church on Thursday evening, December 18th. This is our regular meeting night, but begins at 6:00 pm. Hope to see you there!

A Wednesday On A Bridge

by Richard D. Shell

A rainy day off is better than a sunny day at work. Fortunately for me, I was both off and it was sunny and crystal clear on Wednesday October 22nd. The alarm woke me at my usual time and I headed out in search of breakfast and photographic opportunities.

I checked the signals at Troutville and they were all red. I knew I had just missed a southbound but at that time the light wasn't good yet. When I arrived at South Yard a couple of locomotives caught my attention, No. 8009 and 8000. My brain which sometimes gets stuck in the past said that these locomotive numbers should be a GE C36-7 and a U-30-C before I realized that they were brand new GE ES44AC locomotives. The light still wasn't perfect but I shot them anyway. There is a new road to the Virginia Tech Carilion parking garage that parallels part of South Yard so you can take photos without being on Norfolk Southern's property.

As I passed back by the Virginian Station I noticed a group of photographers setting up along the track at the diamond. It was about 9:15 am. I wasn't planning to stop until I saw what looked like a bright green beach umbrella and my curiosity got the better of me. The beach umbrella turned out to be a green background similar to what television stations use to electronical-

ly drop a different background in a scene. Norfolk Southern's safety department was setting up to shoot for a safety video. The fellow in charge of the project, Jeff Dodd, walked up, took the cigar out of his mouth, smiled and said, "If you get in my shot I will hunt you down for the rest of your life..." I assured him I would stay out of his way! He told me they would be filming with a multitude of cameras both on the ground and from the Walnut Avenue bridge. I decided to watch the shoot from the bridge - safely behind all of their cameras.

Like most plans things don't always go the way they are supposed to. There were three photographers on the ground and another on the bridge working two cameras. They had four locomotives and the area around the diamond at their disposal. The only thing missing was a hostler to make the moves. The hostler was tied up in a few other places and didn't arrive until almost 12:30.

There was eastbound coal train with NS D9-40CW No. 9351 on the point sitting next to the Virginian station and a bright orange Burro crane pulled up just short of the derail on track three. The coal train pulled at 10:12 am and the photo crew took their first footage of the day. About 10:20 I notice another unmarked white Suburban had pulled up next to the film crew. Three men roll out of the Suburban and one of them begins to set up a PVC pipe frame over the track with a banner that said "stop obstruction". These banners are set up across the track to test train crews that are supposed to be operating at restricted speed. The train crews are supposed to be able to stop short of the "obstruction." The only operating train at South Yard now was the Burro crane so it was summoned to go east and its operator passed the test with

no problem. The Burro crane continued east across the diamond, then headed south on the connecting track. The crane then turned 180 degrees on its base so the boom was over it's flat car and headed south down the "punkin vine" at 10:51.

The Hostler arrived at 12:24 with five more locomotives destined for a southbound coal train. The locomotives crossed the diamond and then reversed eastward thru the connecting track and waited as another southbound train lead by NS No. 7115 and two additional locomotives crossed the diamond and headed south with a short train. After this train cleared the block the hostler brought the five locomotives south thru the connecting track and then reversed back on the main for several photo passes. At 1:30 I heard Mr. Dodd say, "That's a wrap!" and they began packing up all the gear.

The hostler and train crew then separated the five locomotives into two sets of locomotives. Three locomotives were parked on the southbound main while the other two locomotives made yet another trip across the connecting track eastward then reversed into South Yard to pick up their train. These two locomotives then pulled their loaded hoppers east clearing the connecting track. The three remaining locomotives then reversed thru the connecting track and coupled to the south end of the train. Next I heard them on my scanner call the dispatcher that they were ready to go south. I headed just south of Starkey where I took our cover photo for this issue. After shooting a few more locations I took my last photos at Boones Mill before heading home to download my photos and review my enjoyable day off.

The photos on the next page are a sampling of that "Wednesday on a bridge..."





An Amen Corner in A Railroad Yard

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers, August 30, 1994

Remembering the First Time

I Met Graham Claytor.

When a friend called me Sunday morning, May 15th, telling me of Graham Claytor, Jr.'s passing, I took it hard.

I thought back to the time I first met this gentleman. It was March 3, 1979, the location was Alexandria, VA Union Station. The occasion was the inaugural run of Royal Hudson No. 2839 on the Southern Railway, a ferry trip from Alexandria to Atlanta. I planned to ride only as far as Monroe, Virginia.

As is the case with steam excursions, the depot was a beehive. I spotted Graham Claytor in the crowd from a distance, easily recognizing him from photographs I had seen of him in Southern's TIES magazine and other railroad publications. With the Southern Railway being my favorite railroad, I just HAD to meet the man who had been at its helm until 1976, and who now was an important member of President Jimmy Carter's cabinet. I simply walked over to him and introduced myself.

We immediately started discussing trains and the Southern Railway steam excursions in particular. I thanked him for making the steam program a reality, because it was (and still is) an important part of my life. Mr. Claytor was warm and personable. He was obviously as much at home among the fans with his movie camera as he was in the corporate community.

When it was time to board the train, Mr. Claytor opted to ride in the tape recording section of the first passenger car, the "Man of War," just like many of us who thirsted for the sounds of a working steam locomotive. When we arrived at Manassas, Mr.

Claytor detrained, walked ahead, and climbed aboard the 2839. Like me, he too would be traveling only as far as Monroe on that beautiful Saturday.

As we pulled into Monroe, a northbound freight train was idling on track No. 1 and it was obvious that it was ready to depart for Potomac Yard at Alexandria. When the steam train stopped, those of us who had to detrain, did so. Mr. Claytor climbed down from the fireman's side of 2839 and held a brief conversation with Bill Purdie and the crew. Despite the fact that 2839 was a novelty on the Southern, Mr. Claytor commanded a lot of attention, too. Throughout the crowd comments were heard like, "That's the man responsible for the steam excursions." or "that's Graham Claytor, the top man of Southern Railway." Even then he was legendary, especially among the faithful.

After Mr. Claytor's conversation ended, he walked over to the front locomotive of an adjacent freight train and climbed up the fireman's side of SD45 No. 3128. Shortly thereafter, the freight train departed, with Mr. Claytor waving and smiling to fans and workers alike. I stood in awe. I was at once happy and envious. I couldn't resist shouting, "Now THAT'S my idea of traveling first class."

To my surprise, numerous "amens" emanated from the crowd - there in the Amen Corner of Monroe Yard.

(The above article was written and submitted by Mr. Robin R. Shavers to the Southern Railway Historical Association TIES magazine back in the summer of 1994).

Cass Railroad Barber

Practically all of you who read the Turntable Times have probably been at least one time in your life to the Cass Scenic Railroad at Cass, West Virginia.

But did you know that Mr. Lyle "Lefty" Meeks has been cutting hair in the town of Cass for 60 years?

Lefty never operated a steam engine at Cass or worked in the lumber mill. Still, Meeks is considered by lots of folks to be as much a part of the town of Cass as the trains.

Meeks was born in Stony Bottom, West Virginia December 25, 1919. After serving in World War II, Meeks came back to West Virginia before he began working at a Chemical Plant in Akron, Ohio.

Meeks worked in Ohio for a year before coming back to Cass, where he started work as an apprentice barber under Clyde Wymouth. He then went to work at Durbin for a year before returning to Cass where he has been ever since.

When Meeks came to Cass in 1948, the Mower Lumber Company was going full blast and often 10 to 12 men would line up at his barber shop for a haircut. At that time Lefty would sometimes cut hair until 11 p.m. at night!

In 1985, Meeks lost a house he had purchased in East Cass to the flood that destroyed numerous homes and businesses in the area and also washed out the C&O rail line between Cass and Durbin.

After the 1985 flood, Lefty and his late wife Lois Friel, rented a house on Front Street and they lived there until they bought a home in Cass. He is still living there today. Meeks' wife, Lois, passed away in 2001.

Lefty Meeks cuts hair Wednesday - Saturday from 9 a.m., til 4 p.m. No doubt he has heard much about the history of Cass during his tenure there. So stop by for a haircut or a visit with a living part of West Virginia's American history.

(Excerpted from the 'Herald Dispatch' via the 'Gondola Gazette', Huntington Chapter, June 2008).

N&W Specials Carry V.P.I. Students to 3 Football Games

(The following story is Excerpted from the December, 1956 Norfolk and Western Employee Magazine).

A long blast from a locomotive whistle broke through the cold air on Thanksgiving morning as the first of two trains arrived at the Roanoke Passenger station with cadets from Virginia Tech.

The arrival of the cadets in Roanoke is a colorful day, climaxed by the V.P.I. - Virginia Military Institute Game held in Victory Stadium before 25,000 cheering fans.

The Thanksgiving Day trip this year was the third time in the 1956 football season that the Norfolk and Western had the pleasure of moving the cadets.

The first train trip made by the Virginia Tech students was in 1877. They walked from Blacksburg to Christiansburg where they boarded coaches for the journey to Richmond to attend the State Fair. The Cadets were first carried by train from the Blacksburg station to Roanoke for the Thanksgiving game in 1913 - one year after the N&W officially began operating the Blacksburg Branch. The annual Virginia Tech - V.M.I. football games began in 1894.

Norfolk and Western trains carried the Virginia Tech students on two other occasions during the 1956 football season.

Some 1,500 members of the Cadet Corps joined the University of Richmond homecoming parade through Richmond on October 20 prior to the football game between the Spiders and Tech in City Stadium.

The second train trip for the Corps took them to Roanoke on October 27 when Virginia Tech met the University of Virginia at Victory Stadium. The football team defeated the Cavaliers by a 14 to 7 score.

The N&W has enjoyed serving its good friends on the Blacksburg Branch, especially the students and faculty at Virginia Tech. On behalf of the Norfolk and Western Family, the Magazine congratulates the fine football team and salutes Virginia Tech, a highly outstanding college.

Virginian Station News

by Skip Salmon

On the Virginian station project, things are proceeding well. During the summer, Roanoke City crews stopped cutting the grass at the station, and Chapter volunteers had to step in, especially after the City cited the Chapter

about the weeds. Since then, former Virginian operator Landon Gregory and his wife Sondra have been tirelessly mowing the grass and keeping the place looking decent. It also keeps us from getting a summons from Roanoke City! Our thanks to these dedicated volunteers!



Photos by Skip Salmon

On another area, we now have the beautiful Virginian Station fundraising flyer by Ken Miller in hand, some 1400 were shipped to be included with the Norfolk and Western Historical Society's next magazine. I

have also placed the flyers at various places around town, including a box at the station itself. We hope a number of folks will help us out with this worthwhile project.

Chapter Website

by Ken Miller

For some months now, the Chapter's new website has been up and running. This web presence is important in this day and age. The Chapter has an official web address: www.roanokechapterNRHS.org.

This site has been up and running since late last year and still has a lot of material to add. If there are things you'd like to see, read or find on line, please send the webmaster an email with your suggestions.

We are also looking for details and suggestions of events for the calendar of events. These things do take time, we are all volunteer and only have so many hours available to do these jobs, so don't necessarily expect to see things happen instantly.

If you are thinking that you saw this article in the last issue, you are correct. I am still waiting on suggestions, additions and contributions to the website, to date, I am waiting to hear from any members.

Annual October Gathering of Virginian Brethren in Victoria

by Skip Salmon

On the 25th of October, 55 former Virginian Railway Employees and Friends of the Virginian Railway gathered at the Victoria Restaurant for their annual last-Saturday-in-October meeting. Each year fewer and fewer former Virginian Brethren are able to attend.

Master of Ceremonies Ryland Marston, former VGN brakeman, opened with his usual quote of Stuart Saunders of 1959.

Saunders said "in 10 years, all of the former Virginian employees will be gone."

Marston said, "Stuart, we're still here, 49 years later."

He then read the names of those "who have taken the west-bound since last year":

Tommy Wright, Stanley Harris, Jimmy Whittaker, J. T. Jones, Russell "Slick" Inge, Jake Roop, Walter Grigg, E. G. "Hoot" Gibson, Marvin Clark, and G. C. Shepherd.

Ronald Mattox, who has a Virginian Railway Museum at his home on Route 49 north of downtown, told of several Virginian men who were on the sick list. He also had



While not a Virginian veteran, Turntable Times correspondent Robin Shavers was at Victoria to soak up the stories and atmosphere.



Photos by Skip Salmon
J. Garland "Mokie" Morton, conductor of VGN cab 307 now in Mullens. "Mokie" is on page 123 photo of H. Reid's "The Virginian Railway" last run of VGN No. 4 now in VMT. He is identified as J.G. Martin, conductor, but this is "Mokie".

the group vote to change next year's Gathering to the first Saturday in October. This coincides with Autumn Days and the 100th Anniversary of the town of Victoria.

After a buffet meal and a lot of fellowship, Greg Elam opened the town's Virginian caboose number 342 and many of

the Brethren proceeded to the Rail Park to view one of the best preserved pieces of Virginian rolling stock still around. This is the caboose that Ken Miller brought back to former VGN standards and preserved with authentic artifacts.

Attending from Roanoke were Bill Turner, Skip Salmon, Jeff Sanders and Landon and Sondra Gregory.



Photos by Jeff Sanders

W. E. (Bill) Turner, Virginian Ry veteran, hired on the Virginian's Roanoke yard, then worked for the N&W after the merger, retiring as Yard Conductor from NS; visiting with fellow veterans at Victoria's annual Virginian Reunion on October 25.

Holiday Wishes

by the Turntable Times Staff

Our best and warmest wishes to each and every reader of the Turntable Times from all of those who contribute and make this newsletter happen.

We hope to get more contributions in the new year of 2008, when the January/February issue will be headed your way around the 10th of January.

Please remember to check the Chapter website for breaking news, usually posted in a timely manner. Remember, getting a newsletter to print, folded, labeled and mailed takes time, and our thanks go out to FM Hite who takes on this job each and

every issue. Please offer your thanks to all the contributors to the newsletter, it couldn't be done without them!

*A most wonderful
Holiday Season
to All with a
Joyous New Year
for 2009*

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

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

November 20 - Annual Meeting

December 2 - Board Meeting

**December 18 - Holiday Gathering
Calvary Baptist Church 6PM**

January 6, 2009 - Board Meeting

January 15, 2009 - General Meeting

February 3, 2009 - Board Meeting

February 19, 2009 - General Meeting

March 3, 2009 - Board Meeting

March 19, 2009 - General Meeting

April 7, 2009 - Board Meeting

April 16, 2009 - General Meeting

Visit us on the web: www.RoanokeNRHS.org

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