



Turntable
TIMES

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

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Sept. - Oct. 2008

EDITOR

Kenney Kirkman
KKIRKMAN50@hotmail.com

MIXED FREIGHT

Robin R. Shavers

SMALL RAILS

Dave Meashey
kndmeashey@msn.com

HISTORIAN

Kenneth L. Miller
klmiller@rev.net

All materials should be sent directly to the Editor:
Kenney Kirkman
590 Murphy Road
Collinsville, VA
24078-2128

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, September 18th at 7:30 pm. at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue. The October Meeting will be on Thursday October.16th

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 November/December 2008 issue of Turntable Times is Saturday October 18, 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

Richard D. Shell captured the executive F units and train headed north of Roanoke at 8:43 am on July 29, 2008.

Cass Outing Planned!

by Brian Crosier

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. Tickets are available 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 trip leaves Saturday morning and returns 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.

For tickets contact the O. Winston Link museum at 540-982-5465 for tickets.

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.

Membership Report

by Walter Alexander, E-billing Contact

National NRHS, using Fernley & Fernley, Inc. (F&F) is currently in the 2009 Dues Billing Cycle for preparing dues invoices. When the use of electronic dues reporting

by chapters was begun for the 2008 year, there were several software issues and timely response issues with F&F. These issues seemed to have now been resolved. At the end of July 2008, I was one of seven E-billing Contacts selected to evaluate the spreadsheets that National will use for 2009 dues and membership change reporting, and I have submitted my comments to F&F. In mid-August, all chapters received a copy of the information that National has in their database for members. Roanoke Chapter's member data was reviewed and updated by me and returned to F&F. That information that we now have will be used by Ken Miller to prepare a Chapter Roster. On September 15, F&F will send 2009 Dues Invoices to the printer, and these are scheduled to be mailed to you the members on October 3rd. When you receive your 2009 dues invoice, please carefully review your name, address, phone, and email. If any corrections or additions are needed, please mark up the invoice when you return it with your dues. This information will be used by Roanoke Chapter for preparing future Chapter Rosters. If you want your email address in our roster, please include it.

Your dues renewal payment must be received by December 31, 2008 to be timely. Please note that your "Start Date" (year your NRHS membership began) can NOT be changed. This information is locked by National and I am not permitted to submit any changes. There is a space on the invoice for you to "Opt-out of third party mailing lists." Default is "No", which means it is OK for National to have 3rd parties send you mail. A "Yes" or check mark means that you do NOT want 3rd parties contacting you. You can change this if you wish. It stays in the database until you again request it be

changed.

On the dues invoice will also be a choice for "Do Not Publish Donations". Each time you make a donation, if you do not want your name published for that donation, you can inform them. This applies only to that donation and does not carry over for future donations.

National membership is now just over 14,000. Roanoke Chapter membership is 151. Please make welcome our newest members, John and Iva Ferguson of Roanoke.

Railroad Cabooses

A few months ago, Mr. Robin R. Shavers mentioned within his Mixed Freight Columnne that 2008 marks 20 years since the Commonwealth of Virginia repealed it's outdated caboose law. As a tribute to folks like Robin who have a thing for cabooses and still miss seeing them on the rear of freight trains, Robin presents the following article to Turntable Times courtesy of the Buckingham Branch Railroad. The article is entitled: "Railroad Cabooses: From Mobile Office to Shoving Platform, A Brief History and Their Changing Purpose".

The railroad car that would become known as the caboose first appeared on America's railroads around the 1850s. They were originally intended to provide a mobile office for the conductor to do his required paperwork en route and a shelter for the brakeman between his duties. Automatic air brakes and automatic block signals had not been invented yet. Thus the brakeman had to apply and release the brakes on each car manually according to whistle signals from the engineer. The crew also had to walk forward or back along the track with flagging equipment whenever their train stopped to warn other trains and prevent collisions.

Since trains operated year-round in all types of weather, providing a place for the crew to rest and warm up during breaks increased efficiency and led to fewer casualties.

Another requirement of the conductor was to monitor the train for defects such as overheated wheel bearings, sticking brakes, broken couplers, or dragging equipment. With the invention of the air brake and as train lengths and speeds increased in the 1870s, the cupola started appearing on cabooses. The cupola provided the crew with a better view of their train ahead to see any defects. A brake valve located in the caboose permitted the conductor to apply the brakes should a defect be spotted and the train needs to be stopped. Buckingham Branch cabooses 223 and 224 illustrate a cupola caboose with its raised "second floor" lookout.

By the late 1920s, the increasing size of freight cars began to block the view afforded by the cupola. This led to the development of the bay window caboose which was pioneered by the Baltimore and Ohio and Milwaukee Road among others. Just like the bay window of a house, it permitted the crew of a view forward along the side of the car. Buckingham Branch caboose 222 is of the bay window design.

From almost the beginning of cabooses until the mid 1960s, most cabooses were assigned to specific crews or runs. So the same people would often stay with a caboose for extended periods. Typically crews would spend many hours or days living inside their caboose laying over between runs away from home, as lodging was not reimbursed in this period. This led to crews customizing their cabooses with curtains and other amenities. The pooling of cabooses and laws limiting layovers ended this customizing.

Working inside a caboose was not without dangers. The couplings in trains of North

America permit about 2 inches of free slack per car, and a 6000 foot long train could have as much as 50 feet of slack. This slack permits heavy trains to start easier one car at a time, but it has a dark side. By the time the end of a long train starts moving, the front can be moving at up to 8 mph, so the cabooses goes from standing still to this speed almost instantly. This acceleration could slam a crew member against a wall with enough force to kill. Modern cabooses had special grab irons, cushioned under-frames, and even seat belts to try to protect the crew.

By the mid 1980s, modern technology made the caboose obsolete on most trains. Universal use of roller bearings on cars has minimized the occurrence of overheated bearings. Equipment Defect Detectors along the railroad have heat sensors that can sense overheated wheel bearings or sticking brakes, and some have paddles that can sense dragging equipment. They inspect the train automatically and "talk" to the locomotive crew via the radio with the results of this inspection. End-Of-Train Devices (EOTs) replaced the caboose with a radio-controlled device that could monitor air brake pressure and train movement to let the engineer know if a couple had failed. Modern two-way EOTs even let the engineer apply the brakes from the rear in an emergency. These devices, coupled with the expense of maintaining cabooses, and the danger to the caboose crew from slack action in the train, resulted in most cabooses disappearing from today's railroads. Those that remain act as "shoving platforms" that provide the crew with a safe place to stand during extended back-up moves, just like here on the Buckingham Branch.

(Robert Hbler with John P. Hankey, 'Cabooses of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad' (Baltimore, Md: The Baltimore and

Ohio Railroad Historical Society, 1994).

Notes from Here And There

by Kenney Kirkman

Passenger train service has returned to the Eastern Shore, in eastern Virginia, after a 50-year absence. Bay Creek Railway believes that demand will be strong to ride in a restored 1913 "interurban parlor car". The dark-green and red car, propelled by a diesel engine, will carry about 30 passengers on two-hour Friday and Saturday night dinner trips and shorter trips without food. Cape Charles, Virginia town leaders and business- es hope the train rides will draw more tourists. (Potomac Rail News, July 2008).

Amherst County and the Friends of the Historic Amherst Station have received a \$220,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to continue the reconstruction of the old Southern Railway depot for use as a visitor's center. In December, 2007, the depot was moved several hundred feet from its original position along the railroad tracks in Amherst to its new home near the intersection of Routes 29 and 60, thanks to a previous grant from VDOT. (From the New Era Progress-Amherst, VA via the Potomac Rail News, August 2008).

At Saltville, VA, former Mathieson Chemical Corporation SW-1 No. 1 met the scrappers' torch in late March. The town council voted to sell the vintage 1947 locomotive to a local scrapper for \$6,000. The SW-1 was built new for Mathieson in 1947, and was used to shift cars from the N&W Yard in Saltville to the massive chemical complex, located just outside downtown Saltville. The locomotive was later donated to the town of Saltville, and in recent years pulled a wooden N&W caboose and several

converted excursion cars through Saltville on summer holidays. (From Gary Price via the July, 2008 Watauga Chapter newsletter 'Whistle Stop').

While railfans and others were too late in their attempt to save the SW-1 No. 1 at Saltville mentioned above, there is a much happier note regarding the wooden N&W caboose at Saltville mentioned in the above paragraph. On July 17, N&W wooden caboose 518173 was united under the shed in downtown Saltville with the two former Mathieson steam locomotives. (From Gary Price via the August, 2008 Watauga Chapter newsletter 'Whistle Stop').

Various sources indicate that efforts have been underway for some time to save the N&W train depot at Rural Retreat. The station at Rural Retreat is probably best remembered when O. Winston Link recorded the sounds of J Class steam engine No. 603 arriving and departing on Christmas Eve, 1957 with train 42, "The Pelican", while chimes from a nearby church played the song "Silent Night". Seven nights later the last steam engine ran over the Bristol line.

For what may be a victim of our economic times, the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad is said to be shutting down its Dillsboro operations and laying off 40 employees. According to a company memo of July 23, "based upon the state of local and regional economic conditions and rapidly rising diesel fuel costs, the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad has been thrust into a position where the consolidation of train services is immediate and will be based solely out of Bryson City". (From Midwest Rail Scene Report, Issue # 283, September 2008).

2008 Chapter Christmas Party

Where has time gone in 2008? Mark your calendar and makes plans to attend the

Roanoke Chapter Christmas Party that will be held at Calvary Baptist Church on Thursday evening, December 18. More details will be forth coming. Hope to see you there!

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 whos terms are expiring are as follows:

Walt Alexander
Eddie Mooneyham
Bill Mason
Ken Miller

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.

Our Condolences

The Chapter's sympathy and thoughts go out to the family of long time member Jeanette Hamill who passed away on August 22. Jeanette worked with the gift shop and husband Willard is a past president and board member. We know the family will treasure their memories of her.

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.

Blue Ridge Chapter's Rail Days

Once again this year, the Blue Ridge Chapter had a very successful event with good attendance. The event was so successful, that the Blue Ridge Chapter made a very nice donation towards our Virginian Station project.

Roanoke Chapter thanks Blue Ridge Chapter for their continuing support and friendship and offer our congratulations on reaching their milestone of 50 years in operation in August.

Facts About our Railroad

From the April 1954 N&W Magazine

One thousand new Norfolk and Western B-8 box cars are equipped with lading tie anchors, as illustrated by this picture. These anchors, 48 of which are recessed in the sides of the cars, are used for anchoring the ends of steel straps which when placed around the bulkhead help to firmly brace the load in the car.

The Norfolk and Western's terminal at Norfolk has more tracks (main line, sidings and yard tracks) than has the entire State of Rhode Island in line mileage. Norfolk Terminal has 197.2 miles of track as compared with trackage totaling 183 line miles in Rhode Island.

In 1953 our Roanoke Shops built 15 Class S-1a switching locomotives and made heavy

classified repairs to a total of 149 locomotives.

There are approximately 145,000 board feet of treated timber in the crossties in one mile of main track railroad.

In 1885 regulations provided that Virginia & Tennessee Railroad trains should pass over bridges at a speed not greater than four miles an hour.

Norfolk and Western locomotives traveled 16,505,949 miles in 1953.

Approximately 4,000,000 acres of land are used by the railroad of the U. S. for right of way, yards, shops, station grounds and other railway purposes.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

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

Sept. 2 - Board Meeting
Sept. 18 - General Meeting
Sept. 20 - Cass Outing (see article)
October 7 - Board Meeting
October 16 - General Meeting
November 4 - Board Meeting
November 20 - Annual Meeting
December 2 - Board Meeting
December 16 - Holiday Gathering
Calvary Baptist Church
January 6, 2009 - Board Meeting

Visit Us on the Web: www.RoanokeNRHS.org

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Editor, Turntable Times
Roanoke Chapter NRHS
P.O. Box 13222
Roanoke, VA 24032-3222

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