

Turntable Times

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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 Elizabeth Leedy. Elizabeth is responsible for Chapter cards and can be reached at 389-5274.

Cover Photos

Business is brisk at the Norfolk and Western Passenger Station in Roanoke on August 20, 1932. It is the summer season from all the white outfits on the ladies. The depression does not seem to have affected the travel plans thus far as plenty of folks are crowding the platform for the train on track No. 1. A little study of period timetables shows that the trains in this scene are believed to be train No. 25, "The Memphis Special" at left, while train No. 4 "The Pocahontas" is waiting on track 3 for departure. Norfolk and Western Railway Photo.

Back Cover : Tropicana Unit Train Crossing at Plant City, Florida Union Station. Train on former SAL crossing former ACL. The date is November 22, 1997. Photo by Ray Myers.

Meeting Notice

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, January 15, 1998 at 7:30

pm. The meeting will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

Meeting Cancellation Policy

Since it's that time of year, as a reminder we have the following policy regarding inclement weather.

The meeting will be considered cancelled if any of the following conditions are met: 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.

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Monday, January 26. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

1998 Dues Now Due

A reminder: your dues renewal notice should have appeared in your mail box in the past few weeks, please help us out and send your renewal in early. If you did not get a notice, please contact membership chairman Karl Oehring.

To our newsletter subscribers, your subscription is now due, if you have not renewed in the past few months, you will be dropped from the mailing list after the next issue.

It was 30 Years Ago...

In January of 1968, today's version of the Roanoke Chapter officially was in the process of reactivating. After the original chapter went dormant in 1960-61, it took a variety of people, many of which are still involved today to bring this organization back off the ground.

Granted, we have had a few set-backs the past few years but we still have lots to do, and

we need your help!

Coming up in March, we will be hosting the National Directors of the NRHS at their spring meeting here in Ronaoke, you'll be hearing more about this at our regular meetings.

After a number of difficulties, Brian Crosier has finally arranged to get our former Railway Express Agency truck to Ronaoke, it is, pardon the pun, been a difficult road, but the truck is now in hand, and we hope to get the restoration work underway soon.

We are always in need of volunteers to help staff the gift shop in the Virginia Museum of Transportation. The gift shop is a year-round committment and needs our support as it is our only on-going source of income.

Work still remians to be done at our 9th Street Maintenance Facility, even though the cars no longer grace excursion trains, maintenance is required to preserve them in best possible condition for the future, our small but dedicated crew is there most weekends, come on out and we'll find things to keep you busy.

Work is continuing on our archive facility, but may actually be complete within a short time of your reading this. Of course that only means the construction work is done, now the organization, filing and cataloging the material which must be moved in. Many folks are needed for this process.

Small Rails - January

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Boomers held a business meeting for the early December meeting. The club decided whether they would prepare a display on model railroading to present at the new Barns & Noble book store. Members also discussed whether they could give a presentation at the Homestead resort. On Saturday, December 13th, four members presented an exhibit on model railroading at the Barns & Noble book store, and discussed various aspects of the hobby with store patrons.

At the second monthly meeting, members

suggested ways the store and our club could improve the hobby exhibit. Two members were also going to exhibit some operating modules at the Homestead during the week after Christmas. The remainder of the meeting concentrated on the improvements required to ready the modules for the March train and toy show.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators did not meet in December, but several members did their part at local activities. Karen Harris had an operating train display for the local model railroad show in Grundy during the Thanksgiving weekend. Bill and Stephen Hughes and Dave Meashey had large scale trains running for Cave Spring United Methodist Church's Christmas crafts workshop on November 30th. Steve King has been pretty active helping folks with hints and suggestions on the Large Scale on Line Web page. The Club will gather again on January 31st.

ET Railroad Hurt by North American Layoffs

The layoff of more than 200 workers at North American Fibers, Inc., will have a direct impact on the East Tennessee Railway, which runs 11 miles between Elizabethton and Johnson City.

The East Tennessee Railway, formerly known as East Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad, was once the primary means of transportation and shipping in this area. The railroad was chartered in 1866 for the purpose of

building a railroad from Johnson City through Elizabethton to Cranberry Iron Works near the North Carolina line.

The railroad company, which became known as the "Tweetsie," hauled timber, iron ore and other goods, as well as passengers, along 34 miles of rail from the foothills of East Tennessee to the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina.

After World War II, business declined and the line from Elizabethton to Cranberry was abandoned in 1950.

In 1983, the name was changed to East

Tennessee Railroad and the company came under the Management Consulting Corp., Panama City Beach, Fla.

The railroad is down from 15 customers to a total of six, and Keith Holley, manager of the East Tennessee Railway, says some of those six are opting for trucking over rail transportation for their goods.

Despite the decline in business, Holley said he hopes to keep the trains running for as long as possible.

(Whistle Stop, Watauga Chapter, NRHS).

Another Fallen Flag

“Bye-bye, Westinghouse; hello to CBS. Westinghouse Electric Corp. dropped its 11-year-old name to become CBS Corp. and moved its headquarters from Pittsburgh to New York City as part of its transformation into a media and entertainment company. The company, founded as a maker of air brakes for trains, took on the name of the broadcast TV network it bought two years ago for \$5.4 billion. Since then, it has spent more than \$9 billion to acquire cable-TV channels and more radio stations. CBS plans to sell the last of its industrial businesses by mid-1998. It will focus on its radio business, which is the nation’s largest and most profitable division; the CBS television network; 14 television stations; and cable-TV networks.” (The Philadelphia Inquirer, Dec. 2, 1997 via NRHS NEWS, Dec. 97).

1998 Train Tours

Trains Unlimited Tours is offering several train tours for 1998 including: GREAT CENTRAL AMERICAN RAIL ADVENTURE February 7-12 in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador; SAN DIEGO & ARIZONA EASTERN SPECTACULAR, March 21; RUSSIAN TRAIN TOURS in April, June, July, August and September; McCLOUD RAILFAN DAY May 17 out of McCloud, California; STEAM IN THE ANDES August 8-16 in Ecuador; WHITE PASS & YUKON SPECTACULAR September 17-20 out of Skagway, Alaska; BEST

OF SOUTH AMERICAN TRAINS 98 October 17-November 8 in Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia; NORTH AMERICAN RAILFAN SPECTACULAR September 26- October 10 in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada and California; CUMBRES FALL COLORS SPECTACULAR September 28-29 in Colorado and New Mexico on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad; and NEVADA NORTHERN SPECTACULAR October 3-4 out of Ely, Nevada.

A brand new promotional videotape is available that gives a great preview of the tours running in 1998, with the main emphasis on South America, Central America and North America. For more information, write for a 24-page full-color brochure: Trains Unlimited Tours, P.O. Box 1997, Portola, CA. 96122, or call: 1-800-359-4870 or (530) 836-1745 or FAX (530) 836-1748.

About That Photo!

by Ken Miller

The December issue featured a mysterious photo on the back cover, and space failed to allow the caption that goes with it. No, it was not forgotten, simply no room for it, so for the curious, here it goes.

Last year, Dave Meashey mentioned something about the toy train displays that used to grace store windows around Christmas time, after a bit of a search, this negative was found. Although it is not truly a Christmas scene, it is an interesting glimpse into the



past around Roanoke.

The negative was dated November 1, 1952 and was part of series of five shots, captioned "Window displays for 100th anniversary celebration of first train in Big Lick (Roanoke). The other shots featured a variety of Roanoke stores at the time, including Heironimus, Roanoke Book and Stationary, and Glenn-Minnich. Each window display featured N&W photos, some memori-

abilia and a centennial poster for the celebration. As was fairly typical of the caption data on N&W photos, details were scarce, usually it was felt that anyone who was to use the photo would be at the time, not some 45 years down the road, and who need where and which places were shown.

So, when Dave brought out the toy train display, suggestion, I found the shot, saved it until



this year and thought it might bring back a few memories for folks. Heavily featured of course is Lionel, and some HO gauge.

This photo was probably never previously published because of the terrible reflections in the store window, but it began to raise some questions to me, which store was it and where, none of the other reflections were familiar (no, I'm not that old, but I have studied a number of other photos and the history of Roanoke quite a bit). After some detective work it was deduced that the store was the Jennings-Shepard store, which should bring back some memories for long time Roanokers, since that was THE place to get toys, and trains in Roanoke at the time.

The location was on the south side of Church Avenue, across from today's location of Ewald-Clark. Other items of interest in the store was a small rowboat, dolls, little girls dresses, the sign offering S&H Green Stamps and what was a fair rarity in Roanoke at the time; a television set. Local television was truly in it's infancy, Channel 10 was to go on the air in about a month, channel 7 was not to appear until October 1955, almost 3 years later, the local paper offered schedules of television from Richmond, Greensboro and Winston-Salem, since there was little other choice! A lot of information to be gathered from a simple little quick photo, that was probably forgotten a few days after it had been shot, but what a little time capsule!

Hope this might bring back some memories or intrigue you to look closer at some of these old photos, you don't know what you might find.

Norfolk and Western photo, Ken Miller collection.

Rail Excursion Marks Passenger Days Past

(Editor's Note: The following article with the above title is by Tammy D. Tupper of the Bluefield Register-Herald newspaper. It is contributed by Rebecca R. Tinnell).

Almost three years after railway passenger service ended for Bluefield, Saturday (October 25)

marked its return with great enthusiasm.

Until October 28, 1994, Norfolk Southern ran an excursion through Bluefield. Steam engine 611 would stop overnight on its route to Chicago.

Seven hundred people from the Roanoke Valley area made the three-hour trip along the New River on a comfortable, double-decker Amtrak Superliner. The one-time journey was organized by the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. The visitors were greeted by a festival type atmosphere with entertainment at Chicory Square, a flea market, and many arts and crafts displays.

Paul Howell made the original inquiry concerning another excursion last November (1996). That phone call led to the combined efforts of Norfolk Southern and Amtrak to arrange the charter trip.

"The trip was sold out in three weeks. We could have sold out again," Howell said. "The organizers are glad we could do it. Bluefield is glad."

Passengers of all ages filled the train. Judy Gillespi was given a ticket by her children for her 58th birthday.

"I loved it," she said. "It was the first time I ever rode a train. I have really enjoyed it."

Gillespi is hoping for another chance next year (1998) to bring her children along, especially her 5-year-old-grandson Charles.

"He wanted to come, with me," she said. "Next year I'll bring him. He loves all things mechanical. He would love this."

Orpha Nisbeth and Georgia Wall were traveling together. It was Nesbith's only trip to Bluefield. Wall was a passenger on the 611 years ago. She is hoping Amtrak will move back to Roanoke so she can take more trips. Both ladies stated that all the people involved had been most helpful and friendly.

Two-year-old Forest Walters answered with a resounding "Yes!" when asked if he enjoyed his first train ride. He was traveling with his grandparents, Sonny and Shirley Fairtrace of Smith

Mountain Lake.

Ticket holders weren't the only ones who appreciated the opportunity to make the journey to Bluefield. The many volunteers who accompanied them were smiling too.

Rebecca Tinnell served as a food service volunteer handing out snacks. Tinnell used to work on the 611.

"We used to have full meals," she said. "This is different. The ride is smooth, but you have to stand very carefully."

She said she had missed coming to Bluefield and this was a treat.

The train was brought in from California. It carried 10 air-conditioned coaches. One was opened as a souvenir coach for the viewing public. Seating was indeed spacious and every seat had a view.

Its average speed Saturday was 50 mph. On trips out west it can go as high as 100 mph depending on track conditions.

Organizers are considering another excursion next year (1998) due to the popularity of this one.

Tropicana Orange Juice Unit Train by Ray Myers

On June 7, 1970 the nation's first unit train of fresh-squeezed super-chilled orange juice began operating from Bradenton, FL to Kearney, NJ (1300 miles) on a once per week 45 hour schedule. At that time it was SCL to Richmond, RF&P to Alexandria and then Penn Central to its destination.

In the way of background, shipment was initially by truck with the trucks giving way to the tanker ship SS Tropicana that operated from Cape Kennedy to Long Island, NY. Juice was trucked across Florida to the ship terminal. A new method of processing the juice made shipping by rail a more viable and thus the Tropicana Unit Train came into being. Within a short time three 65075 car trains were operating weekly.

Initially the fleet (TPIX reporting letters) consisted of insulated boxcars, however over time

they were converted to mechanical refrigeration. The cars were built by Fruit Growers Express to the shippers specifications. The trains were initially known as the GREAT WHITE TRAIN as all cars were white and proclaiming TROPICANA PURE ORANGE JUICE in four-foot high green, black and orange letters. The color scheme was changed in 1982 to orange with TROPICANA in large light green letters shaded in white. To the right of the name there is a circular emblem with a female face with a fruit basket on the head. The fleet numbered 317 cars in 1995. Empty cars return at random on the first train out.

During mid-1997 two trains began operating to Cincinnati thus making five weekly trains. With this change the five trains have 45-50 cars behind two six axle units that run through. The trains to Cincinnati divert at Folkston, GA (41 miles north of Jacksonville) to Waycross, Georgia thence over the former Atlanta, Birmingham and Coast to Atlanta and on to Cincinnati over the former L&N via Etowah and Knoxville. The current routes are all CSX except north of Philadelphia.

In each of these trains of 57-foot reefer cars there is about one million gallons of orange juice. Perhaps this amount would increase if all railroad buffs would drink nothing but orange juice from TROPICANA PRODUCTS.....

What do You Want on Your Tombstone?

A lady recently contacted NRHS President Greg Molloy with an unusual request. Her late husband, a former chapter national director, lived and breathed trains and was a strong supporter of the NRHS. Her request was to include the NRHS logo on his tombstone. Permission granted! (NRHS NEWS).

February Meeting Notice

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, February 19, 1998 at 7:30 pm. at the usual location.



Turntable Times is published monthly 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. Items of interest should be sent to Editor Kenny Kirkman, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, VA 24078-2128.

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