



Turntable TIMES

Volume 33, Number 10

October 2001

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



The Turntable Times staff offers its thoughts and prayers to the victims and all those who suffered losses during the September 11 terrorist attacks on America.



Turntable TIMES

**Volume 33, Number 10
October 2001**

EDITOR

Kenney Kirkman

MIXED FREIGHT

Robin R. Shavers

SMALL RAILS

Dave Meashey

SPLINTERS

Bill Arnold

HISTORIAN

Kenneth L. Miller

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

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.

Meeting Notice

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, October 18, 2001 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.

Our program will be a team effort. Kyle Tubman will make a presentation about his experiences at Railcamp at Steamtown, and Dutch Tubman will present video highlights on an Alco tribute weekend at Scranton in August.

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 next issue of Turntable Times is Thursday, October, 18, 2001. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

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 many newspapers; a condensed or rewritten article crediting the source is acceptable.

Cover Photo

What else can be said about September 11, 2001? It will surely go down in history as another "date which will live in infamy."

We are sure that no one could have visualized the trade towers collapsing when ex-C&O 4-8-4 No. 614 was parked before running a series of trips in the fall of 1998. Brian Crosier Photo.

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of Crystal Spring and McClanahan Street on Thursday, November 16, 2001. 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.

The Nominating Committee submitted the following nominees for the four positions as follows:

Brain Crosier*

Lawanda Ely

Carl Jensen*

Dave Meashey

Mike Valentine

S. R. Winegard

*indicates incumbent

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will be electing four (4) directors. Election will be by secret ballot. Any member may vote by absentee ballot. The nominees as listed above will be included in the November issue of Turntable Times.

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, N.R.H.S.

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.

Mixed Freight - October

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

I regret to report that the shortline/recreational railroad known as the Northern Central Railway shut down on September 2nd, 2001. The little railroad operated an excursion, and dinner train known as The Liberty Limited. It was headquartered in New Freedom, PA which is not far from Harrisburg. A downturn in ticket sales and bureaucratic issues was cited for the shut-down. I had the pleasure of riding The Liberty Limited a few autumns ago. It was a nice leisurely paced excursion thru rural Pennsylvania and the little communities along the line. The power that day was push-pull. Northward we were pulled by an Alco road switcher painted in Western Maryland fireball scheme. Southward we were pulled back to New Freedom with an Alco PA or FA painted in Baltimore & Ohio blue, black and gold stripe.

I was happy to read about the extremely good prospects for a museum in honor of Mr. O. Winston Link. As a lot of us whom are actively involved with the various forms of railway history preservation are well aware of, politics and personal innu-

endos can really throw a derail into the works. For and to all involved with this up and coming project, PLEASE KEEP FOCUSED on the project and most of all, the individual for which the project is devoted to. If things go as planned, the community will have a lot to gain. If politics and personals intervene, the loss will be immeasurable and possibly permanent.

The Blue Ridge Liver Steamers enjoyed an active and laidback weekend run during the weekend of August 24th thru 26th. We had quite a few retired Norfolk and Western Railway railroaders pay us a visit as well as folks from the immediate community. The sweatbees were out in force too. Our next and final run weekend for 2001 will be October 27th and 28th.

The acts of terrorism that hit the World Trade Center and The Pentagon on September 11th have really generated much fuel for talk shows nationwide and worldwide. On the morning of September 18th, the subject of beefed up airline and security really had listeners calling in to voice their comments on a local Richmond FM station. A female caller suggested that people may want to consider using rail and bus as an alternative to the increased hassle of airline travel. They focused on travel by train. The DJ harked on how inferior American train travel is compared to European. Even Acela was attacked as being inferior. I was happy that the woman caller stuck with her feelings about America's rail passenger network. No, America's Amtrak is not up to snuff with Europe or Japan, but it is better than nothing at all and we can always strive for something better. The choice is ours.

The Pocahontas Chapter of the NRHS will have its 13th Railfest Model Train Show the weekend of November 10th and 11th. The event will take place at The Bluefield Youth Centre located on 1780 Stadium Drive in Bluefield, West Virginia from 9:00 am, til 5:00 pm on Saturday and on Sunday from 12 noon til 5:00 pm. Admission is \$3.00 per person or \$6.00 per family. For more information, you may call 304-431-2593 or 304-327-0026.

Later in November, the 24th to be exact, the Hagerstown Model Railroad Museum will hold its Fall 2001 Trainfest at the Washington County Agricultural Educational Center located in Fairplay, Maryland. Time is 9:00 am til 3:00 pm. Admission is \$3.00 for adults and folks under 12 years of age are free. This event is about model railroad merchandise and prototype railroading too. For more information, especially directions, contact Mr. Frank Schaller at 301-824-2239.

There is a lot of model railroad and prototype railroading events going on within reasonable driving distance from your homes during October and November. Get out there and show your support.

Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

I have been unable to visit the Roanoke Valley Model Engineers for over a month. I do know that the club is hosting a model railroad show on September 22nd. The show will feature model train and railroad memorabilia dealers. There should also be some model railroad exhibits as well

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their September meeting at the home of

Karen and Tom Harris in Wytheville on Sunday, September 16th. We ran trains on Karen's garden railway and did some switching chores on Tom's extensive HO layout. The club was pleased to welcome new members from Blacksburg, the Hartensteins. Otto and Irmtraut Hartenstein have already asked to host October's meeting, and the rest of us are looking forward to seeing their garden railway. #

Going Back To Ground Zero

by Gary Ballard

Many of us will carry with us forever, the events that happened on September 11, 2001. The unfriendly scenes on TV that no-one thought would ever happen. Friends phoning us to turn the TV on. I will also remember September 12th, the day I went back to New York City.

On Monday, September 10th, my two-day run to Boston, Mass., on Amtrak's Acela high-speed train had me returning to my home crew base in Washington, D.C. On that train (no. 2175) we took time to gaze out the windows and notice how pretty the New York skyline was. The air was dry, no haze, and the sights from the big Hell Gate bridge were so clear. We were coming in from the north on the old ex-New Haven tracks at 9:05pm. The train was late, due to a drawbridge in Connecticut that wouldn't close properly after letting boat traffic through. No one was complaining of the slight delay of which the train should have been at New York's Penn Station at 8:40pm. The Empire State Building was standing in a shower of bright white lights. Many colors bathe this building each night, and on

this evening, the white spot lights made the tall building stand out even more so among the rest.

Down to the lower side of Manhattan one could make out the tall twin towers of the World Trade Center. I commented that I just hosted a bachelor-party on the train last week. The guys were all in their twenties. After arriving in the Big Apple, they were to wine and dine at Windows on the World, the famous restaurant that sits high atop one of the huge towers. The twin towers were never illuminated like their as-tall cousin, but one could make them out against the early evening sky. We commented on how the night's view must be from the top. "Must be pretty neat" a passenger said on the train. Soon, we rushed by Amtrak's huge yard in the area known as Queens. In a few seconds the Acela train was in the maze of tunnels that take all trains under the United Nations building, and eventually to the underground confines of New York Penn Station. I never knew that I had just seen the World Trade Center for the last time.

The next day would be one that changed everything forever. It was my day off work. The phone rang at 9:15am...the rest is history. The TV gave us pictures not imaginable. In the Baltimore area of which most of my family lives, the news hit close. In fact Washington, D.C. is only 28 miles to the south. The Pentagon was hit. We didn't know what to think. Interstates 83 and 95 were being shut down, blocking vehicular traffic through Maryland. Was the Military planning for massive ground movements? Planes from nearby Andrews Air Force Base were in the air. These were planes ready

for combat. No one knew what to think.

Wednesday was my back to work day. What would tomorrow bring? I asked myself. As night came, many of us learned that Amtrak would operate the next day. The entire area around Union Station and the few blocks over to the Capital was vacated by everyone on Tuesday. With this in mind, I got ready for bed, to get lots of rest for what would be a big day. The apprehension I felt was fulfilled that evening as I lie in bed. The sound of a high flying fighter jet was heard at 8pm, 9pm and 11pm. Beyond midnight the sound was repeated at 2am and 7am. Usually, many commercial flights make their way over my house, on their way to BWI airport which is just minutes away. On Tuesday evening, with all flights cancelled nationwide, the night sky over my home was quiet. That roar of a U.S. fighter jet was a reminder that things were serious.

On September 12th, life was returning to Washington, D.C. as much to normal as it could be. My Acela train to Boston is No. 2170. It departs Washington Union Station at 3pm. The on-board crew report time is 1pm. I decide to not drive in on this day. After all, the U.S. Capital sits right behind the train station...what's next, I keep asking myself. I take the train in from BWI rail-station. I arrive for work early, at 11:05am. It's good that I did, thing are busy with activity at the train station. Uniform police are making their presence known. Most all my co-workers are wearing their picture I.D. badges out in clear sight. In the crew base building everybody is saying "good morning" in a soft tone

On this day, Acela train No. 2170 is

reported to be full to capacity. The 44 seat first-class car that I will work is sold out. On this trip I will be one of two waiters offering complimentary drinks and complete meals to the passengers. The third employee making up our crew is called the "in-charge" person. Known as the E.I.C. they prepare the meals in the galley and are in charge of the entire car. I've held this position on other Acela trains, a lot is riding on this person under normal circumstances. No doubt, there is added pressure on all of us today, no matter the job title.

My fellow waiter is Robert, an Amtrak employee who once served on the high-profile Auto Train for several years. He also spent some time doing the same type of work with the airlines. His experience will come in handy today. Robert and I soon go over the other paper work regarding our trip. The number of meals ordered for a car is one short of a full order. Ruth, our in-charge person has yet to show up. While we wait for her, Robert and I go over to the commissary behind the crew base, and order additional meals. The menu today offers Lamb, Halibut and Salmon. I order 5 extra of each selection. The clerk says "No problem." I sign the necessary paperwork.

Back to the crew base, to gather our belongings before heading out to the train. Inside we see those conductors and fellow on-board personnel such as myself who has just returned from New York City. The word is out that all trains are full since no planes are flying so far. In the break-room where the soda and candy machines are, everybody hugs everyone else. Robert and I are told "Have a safe trip." That has never left my mind since I left the house.

Out on track 20, sits Acela No. 2170. On track 19, is the duplicate of our sleek machine, train No. 2168 is waiting to leave at 2pm. Crews for both trains meet on the platform along with various managers and supervisors. Last minute checks are made to make sure both trains have everything they need. In plain view are uniformed policemen and members of the Secret Service decked out in the best of dark suits. They constantly raise their arm to their face and talk into what seems to be their wristwatch. In minutes, Ruth, our in-charge person shows up straight from the employee's parking lot.

An impromptu crew briefing is held with us and the managers. We discuss that we may be carrying passengers who lost someone in the World Trade Center attacks. I mention that I already back-ordered extra food. We don't need to be short of a soft drink or a meal today. All agree. Ruth smiles at me and says "Thanks." It's off to the train.

At 2:40pm, the usher at Union Station allows the passengers to go to the train. We depart at 3pm, right on time. As Robert and I began to serve drinks and take dinner orders, we notice that approximately 25% of those on our manifest are not on the train. Along with Ruth, we realize that perhaps some people decided to stay home, to "wait-out" things before traveling again. Then I realized something else. As I shared it with Ruth and Robert, their mouth dropped...it's possible that some of the names on our manifest, could be those who died in New York City. After all, a good percentage of first-class people is bankers and financial staff members. Not

all commute early in the morning to the financial district. Some come to Washington to take care of matters and return to New York later in the day. It was soon apparent that one or two of the faces we've served coffee to are no longer with us. The weight of this day became a little heavier.

Up the northeast corridor we went. Acela trains hug the curves along the mainline at 125mph. Never missing a beat, the train made stops at BWI airport station, Baltimore, MD, Wilmington, DE, Philadelphia, PA and Metropark, NJ. At Metropark, we became anxious, for in 15 minutes we'll arrive in Newark, NJ. Newark is where one can see the skyline of New York City. The sky above is the deepest of blues. Not a jet aircraft in sight. Soon, we slow down for the train shed at Newark. It's 5:30pm, right on time.

As the train picks up speed and pulls out from the covered station we can see the view of New York. The buildings are basking in the bright sunlight. People in every car are looking out the right side of the train. Those in the left side seats are standing up to catch a glimpse, too. A faded black cloud of smoke rises, and as soon as we see this, things really hit hard. In a few seconds everyone has found it, the spot where the towers of the World Trade Center once stood. The smaller buildings that always stood in front of the towers are there, so is the Hudson River that runs in front of them. Behind the smaller buildings one can make out the empty spaces that mark the location of tragedy. Someone says, "There it is." No one else says a word. There is utter silence in our car.

We stare at the smoke rising. I begin to replay the video of yesterday's unthinkable events. I'm actually looking at the spot where two large planes went through two buildings that I thought would always be there. On some beautiful mornings, it was normal for a conductor to say over the PA system, "Ladies and Gentlemen to the right is the magnificent skyline of Manhattan." The announcement was usually accompanied with a remark made to the tall towers of the World Trade Center. At this location along the railroad, the New Jersey Turnpike runs north as well, but to the left of the train. I couldn't help to think people had to see the attack unfolding right before their eyes, from a car, bus or a seat on a train. What was that like?

In minutes Acela no. 2170 entered the tunnel that takes rail traffic to the underground confines of the huge New York Penn Station. Our train makes a 15 minute stop. Where the trains arrive and depart is three levels below the city streets. I've made this stop hundreds of times before, but tonight I'm nervous at this location. If I were a betting man, I'd say everyone else felt the same way.

Acela No. 2170 departs the basement of Penn Station at 6:01pm, one minute late. Our arrival in downtown Boston, Mass of 9:31pm couldn't have come any sooner. A night of rest at the Ramada and tomorrow we go home on Acela No. 2175. We'll go through the big city of New York again. I enter through the door of my motel room at 10:20pm and turn on the TV to see what I've missed.

Better Service Results from Roanoke Yard Improvements

from the Norfolk and Western Magazine
September 1961

The Norfolk and Western's enlarged and modernized yard facilities at North Roanoke, recently placed in operation, are yielding faster and greatly improved transportation service.

The yard improvements are in two phases, which are located some distance apart but are complementary. Phase 1 is a new seven-track classification and forwarding yard between our 12th Street terminal office and Shaffers Crossing for the handling of commercial coal trains and westbound time freight trains, and to permit simultaneous switching of two freight trains over our Shaffers Crossing hump. Phase 2 included the extension of eight tracks in the westbound empty yard to accommodate 200-car trains, and the construction of two pull-in tracks serving the eastbound receiving yard to permit 200-car coal trains to be pulled into the clear, incident to yarding.

The new classification yard, which is served by the existing Shaffers Crossing hump, is a highly useful and efficient operation. Its outstanding feature is a modern switching and speed control setup, which makes it possible to move cars into the classification yard at speeds which not only insure completion of desired couplings, but



reduce to a minimum overspeed impacts, with resulting prevention of damage to freight.

The apparatus which controls the switching and car movement includes a control panel governing the car retarder and the eight switches leading to the yard tracks. By pushing buttons, the operator sets in motion the relays which govern the operation of the switches, which are electro-pneumatic. With these push-buttons, he can operate one switch at a time, or as many as four in succession by pushing four buttons.*

Then as the car approaches the retarder, he also operates levers which cause the car to leave the retarder at the exact speed which the operator considers desirable. He determines the speed lever setting after consulting the switch list, which indicates whether the car is loaded or empty, and from the experience he has gained in operating the controls.

On the ground, the speed control apparatus operates on the same principle as highway police speed detection units. A radar scanning unit is located at each end of the retarder and as the car approaches the retarder the movement of the car causes the radar beams to change in frequency and communicate the speed the car is traveling to electrical equipment in the control tower. This equipment then operates the two sections of the retarder to apply the correct pressure to the car wheels in order to reduce the speed of the car to the prede-

*The control tower is also equipped for completely automatic switching by means of a tape, which is the method of switching used in our westbound coal classification yard at Portsmouth, Ohio,



Car retarder Operator W. L. Bentley operates the remote controls governing the movement of loaded coal cars into the new classification yard.

N&W Photo/K.L. Miller Collection

termined rate set by the operator's control lever.

Designed primarily to expedite the handling of commercial coal moving from Bluefield and Elmore through Roanoke—that is, coal for electric utilities, industries and domestic dealers—and to enable Roanoke Terminal to make up and forward 200-car trains for operation over the former Virginian low-grade line east of Roanoke, the new yard soon demonstrated opportunities for improved and expedited handling of merchandise freight trains as well as coal trains.** These opportunities were explored further and the results were so satisfactory that it was decided to make steady use of the new yard for the classification, makeup and forwarding of west-

**when the movement of commercial coal is heavy, 200-car commercial coal trains are made up in and dispatched from the new yard, and between the dispatchment of these trains commercial coal east of the hump is moved currently in other merchandise freight trains.



The new classification and forwarding yard between 10th Street and Shaffers Crossing. Looking west towards the hump. August 1961.
Norfolk and Western Photo/K.L. Miller Collection

bound time freight trains. (Formerly, west-bound time freight trains were yarded, switched and dispatched from the 16th Street Yard, which entailed considerable cross-yard movement to transfer cars from the east to trains moving north and south and cars from the north and south to trains moving east with some delay to cars in making connections. Now, however, with time freight switching concentrated in the vicinity of the hump, and with merchandise trains from the east, north and south moving into the former Radford Division

receiving yard west of the hump, the cross-yard transfers have been eliminated and the movement of this traffic has been expedited.

Supervisory and clerical personnel from the 16th Street Yard Office has been moved to the hump, and headquarters for yardmasters and yard personnel have been set up on both sides of the apex. The new yard enables the terminal forces to switch a coal train and a merchandise train simultaneously-which was not practical prior to the improvement because of insufficient track-

age. There are 23 miles of track in the new classification yard alone, with 20.8 miles in the new westbound empty yard and the new pull-in tracks at the west end.

Simultaneous switching makes it possible to substantially advance the makeup of trains and expedite car movement. With the new facilities, cars moving in six different directions- east, west to Bluefield, southwest to Bristol, north, south, and to the former Virginian line east of Roanoke- can be classified at the same time.

The improvement at the west end of the terminal also makes possible substantial betterment of service, particularly in the handling of our coal traffic. Now, a complete 200-car coal train may pull into the yard and then be moved over the hump without preliminary switching to clear the pull-in tracks for other train movement. At the same time, there is sufficient room for 200-car empty trains from Norfolk to move into the empty yard without blocking other tracks, thus, necessitating cutting off and moving excess cars. Before the improvements, it was frequently necessary for westbound 200-car empty trains to wait outside the terminal east of Roanoke until scheduled freight and passenger trains had departed in order to prevent tying up their operation. This is no longer necessary. The overall result of the west end improvements, then, is speedier handling of both the loaded and empty trains so that the coal reaches its destinations earlier and empty cars return to the mines earlier for reloading thus insuring an abundant supply of empties for our coal shippers at all times.

Although the operation of our North Roanoke Yard has been greatly simplified

and expedited as the result of the Virginian merger and the transfer to South Roanoke Yard of the majority of our tidewater coal trains, North Roanoke Yard is still a busy place. It is the concentration point for all except two of the 30 merchandise freight trains which operate into and out of Roanoke daily, and for an average of four coal trains daily. It is estimated that North Roanoke handles daily a total of about 4,000 cars, and of this number about 20% are weighed as they move across the hump.

The Roanoke Yard project was a big construction job, and its completion reflects credit on our Operating, Engineering, Signal and Communications and Maintenance of Way people, and those of other departments who worked together so smoothly as to complete the job in about a year's time. The work involved the excavation of almost half a million cubic yards of rock and earth, moving the channel of Roanoke River southward for a length of almost two-thirds of a mile, building new fill for yard tracks, and the installation of modern and highly-developed electrical equipment. But with effective teamwork of all concerned, the entire project was carried through without interruption to train movement and with credit to the departments named above and to the contractors, the Ralph E. Mills Co., Inc. and Wiley N. Jackson Company, who did the grading work.

Roanoke Terminal now has the facilities to insure the production of better service to our railroad's customers- the better service which will enable the N. & W. to keep the traffic it has, and get more. And more business means more jobs. Obviously,

then, it is to the best interests of all of us to use the new equipment the railway provides to the best of our ability.

N&W Trivia Question

by Ken Miller

Mileposts on the original N&W were generally, numbered from the main division point, or Norfolk, i.e N263. Usually, these numbers run to 100 or more, the mainline is seldom shorter than five miles. What is the shortest, segment of mainline, ie. least amount of mileposts and what numbers are they on an actual mainline N&W track? By mainline, let us define that as trackage once regularly traversed by steam such as Y6s, Js or As. This is also considered as the original mainline; i.e before merger with Virginian, Nickel Plate and Wabash. Watch for the answer next month.

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Editor, Turntable Times
Roanoke Chapter NRHS
P.O. Box 13222
Roanoke, VA 24032-1322

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

October 18, 2001
General Meeting

November 6, 2001
Board Meeting

November 15, 2001
Annual Meeting

December 4, 2001
Board Meeting

Christmas Gathering
December 14, 2001
Everyone is invited!

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