



Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 37, Number 4
April 2005

Witnessed by... testimony to...
Occurred Sat. March 6, 1965

N&W Trains Collide At Montvale; 3 Hurt

By FRANK GILMORE
Times Staff Writer

MONTVALE—A runaway Norfolk & Western Railway freight train crashed head-on into another N&W freight Saturday morning, injuring three crewmen,

one man being treated at Lewis-Gale Hospital early Sunday morning, a spokesman said their train was heading down the mountain at about 50 miles per hour.

"But I wasn't on it when they hit," said Cook. He said he didn't see the train before the collision.

The wreck occurred at a point where the double track line merges into a single track headed toward Montvale.





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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 regular meeting on Thursday, March 17, 2005 at 7:30 pm. PLEASE NOTE: Our meeting location will be at the Link Museum, please be sure to read the article elsewhere about this exciting opportunity.

Please be sure to note our weather cancellation policy below., please note, this policy also applies to Board Meetings.

Our April program will be a video presentation on O. Winston Link, this is the regular program at the Link Museum, and if you have not seen it, you will not want to miss this.

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 Monday, April 18, 2005. 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

It was 40 years ago on March 6, 1965 when one of the more memorable and dramatic wrecks of modern times in the Roanoke area occurred. This view and the accompanying newspaper article barely reflect the damage. See the story and other photos inside. Both: J.L. Sanders Collection

Important Changes

by Ken Miller

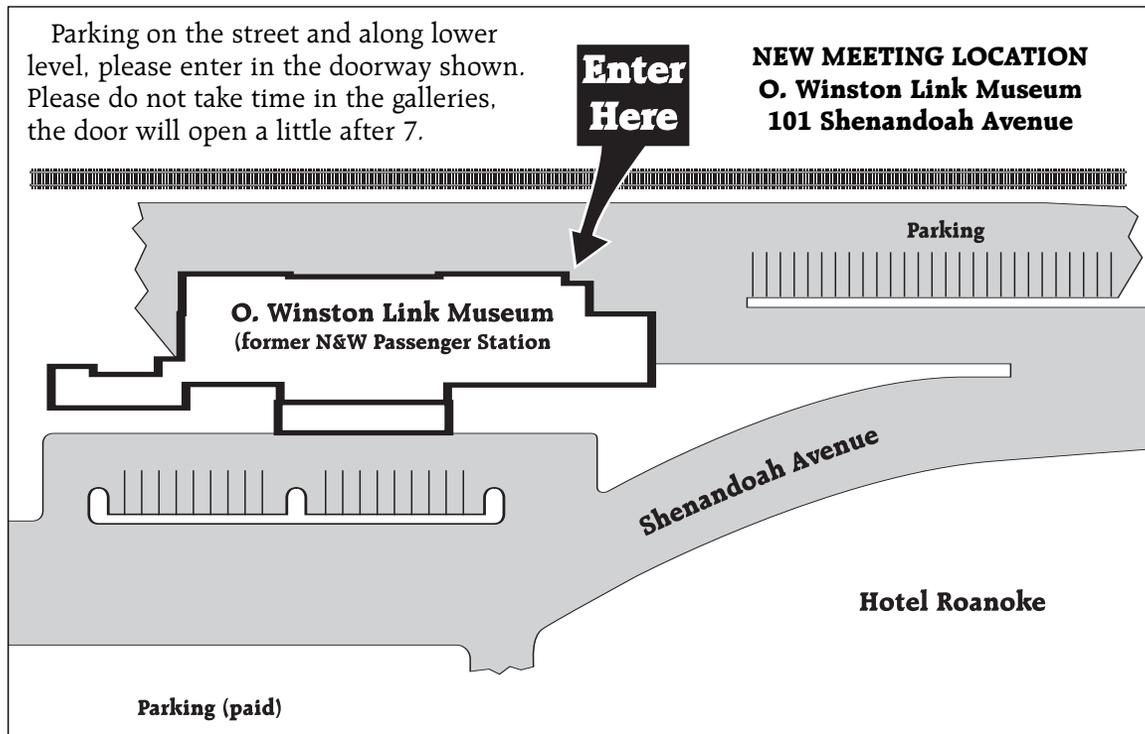
As related in last month's issue, the Roanoke Chapter is due for some changes in the next few months, we begin with a step towards the future this month. This will occur with our monthly meeting, as announced at the March meeting, we have been offered the opportunity to move our month meetings to the auditorium at the O. Winston Link Museum. We are excited by this opportunity and it will offer us a chance to have our meeting in the excellent auditorium at the finest Museum in town! If some of our members have not been to this Museum located in the former N&W passenger station, you have truly missed a treat! You can be immersed in the world of the steam era N&W in a truly professional set-

ting. The huge mural of the S1 almost gives you the impression of a full size locomotive through a window. We will enter through the lower level entrance, not the lobby, see the diagram for specifics.

We appreciate the offer of the Link Museum to host our meetings and welcome us to their place. We have been supporters of the Museum from the beginning and will continue to do so. We have already been working with OWLM on the outing to Spencer on April 30, and look forward to future ventures.

There will also be a special announcement at this meeting, it is important that everybody attend.

As reported in the last issue, our gift shop at the Transportation Museum has closed with that the phone number there has been



disconnected, if you need to get in touch with the Chapter, you can call and leave a message at our 9th Street maintenance facility, or check the webpage and email us via the contact page. You can also sign up as a member with your email address on the page. This is not a regular membership, but will allow us to contact you in that method. The page is updated on a fairly frequent basis now that some technical problems have been resolved. In addition, we have also discontinued our fax number at 9th Street, you can still fax us, but it will need to be arranged in advance. Stay tuned, more changes to come!

Small Rails-April

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators were running trains on Saturday, March 26th for the Roanoke Valley Model Engineers Model Train Show and Sale at the Salem Civic Center. Saturday morning was cool and damp, a kind of dreary day. Not a time to think about garden railroading. But the club persevered and set up a fine display. One corner of the Community Room was supplied with six tables of pictures, brochures and operating large scale trains.

Brad Dobbins, Dave Meashey, and John Singleton put together a very nice exhibit for all to enjoy. Newcomer Andy Haas gave occasional help and kept the main exhibitors supplied with food and beverages. (Thanks Andy!) In fact, with a few minor exceptions, it was the only real demonstration of trains at the show. We had a picture exhibit of indoor and outdoor trains along with brochures for model railroading, garden railroading, and BLBTO club information. The train exhibit included an approximately 30 foot oval track setup. We

had over 10 different locomotives, 30 pieces of rolling stock, a couple of buildings and some live plants to accent the exhibit. The locomotives represented four different scales as well as diesel, steam, American and European styles. The rolling stock showed a similar representation. John brought one of his Bachman Shays with sound to run on a stationary platform. Getting a chance to watch the Shay's pistons and drive shafts got big reviews from old and young alike. Rick, from Rick's Hobby Shop, brought a Climax with sound for us to run as well.

We had a great time demonstrating trains, talking about Large Scale, Indoor and Garden railroading to many people. There were several persons interested in our club with the prospects of joining us. We even had a young engineer (about 5 years old) helping to run a couple of trains. There were smiles on faces of all ages, and we had lots of folks talking to us. It was a great way to start the new season.

Mixed Freight-April

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Last month I reported that the Federal Railroad Administration has mandated that all freight cars and locomotives operating on U.S. railroads have white or yellow reflectors applied to their sides within a specified time limit. Believe it or not, a few model freight car manufacturers have begun including reflectors on the sides of their products already.

When I first reported on the Buckingham Branche's Richmond & Alleghany subdivision a few months ago, I mentioned that the R & A would be a Monday thru Friday operation working weekend days only when necessary. Since February, the railroad has operated a few Saturdays and Sundays to take

care of it's customers. Things are going pretty well for the R & A according to an employee and personal railfan associate I spoke with on a windy and sunny Sunday afternoon in March. The main issue plaguing the company is keeping the locomotives running. If its not one thing, its something else. A GP9 is now stationed at Charlottesville. Trains now have schedules out of Doswell. Eastward trains try to depart by 7 a.m. and westward trains by 10:00 p.m.

Railroad freight traffic continues to grow. As of late February intermodal traffic rose 22.8% compared to last year which by the way was a big gain compared to 2003. That translates to 222,937 trailers and containers. Freight car loads increased by 4.9% or 350,225.

There has been much discussion about the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad's future. The WMSR is not going out of business. If you are interested in riding from Cumberland to Frostburg, 2005 will be your last year to ride to Frostburg. After 2005, a different endpoint will be established. The tourist line is dealing with financial concerns which includes the loss of it's state subsidy for maintenance for fiscal 2006.

As many of you can tell by my writings, I'm very nostalgic for railroading's past. I would not walk across the street to photograph anything painted Norfolk Southern, CSX or a widecab but would not think twice at pursuing a lashup of locomotives wearing the schemes of the predecessor railroads that make up the above mentioned companies. Even with escalating fuel prices, pursuing and photographing such lashups for hundreds of miles would definitely make my day. When I strolled in to a local hobby shop back in February, I was elated to see

the March 2005 issue of Trains magazine devoted to railroading back in the seventies. Regardless of how you personally felt about that decade, that issue of Trains is definitely worth checking out. As I read my copy, the thought "If I had known then what I know now" kept me constant company.

In the past 25 plus years of attending monthly NRHS meetings at numerous chapters within the Old Dominion, I must say the presentation presented by Mr. Louis M. Newton at the Blue Ridge Chapter's March meeting on the 9th was without a doubt one of the most informative and down right interesting. The subject was Norfolk and Western's Jawn Henry, that railroad's only attempt at rescuing coal fueled locomotion via steam turbine-electric technology. Those of you whom missed Mr. Newton's program indeed missed a good one.

A few months ago, I noted that November 2004 marked 10 years since Norfolk Southern terminated it's Steam Excursion Program. Here are a few more "Has it been that long since that event took place" notations. 2005 marks 10 years since Santa Fe Railway and Burlington Northern joined couples in marriage to create Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. This coming July 4th weekend will mark 10 years since Steamtown's Grand Reopening. Closer to home May 10th will mark 20 years since N&W 1218 was pulled from Wasena Park in Roanoke for the journey to Birmingham for a almost 2 year restoration project. I'll never forget that day. Weatherwise it was perfect. I took numerous photos only to have the photo lab lose the roll of film. Remember how angry Mr. T was with Rocky Balboa in the movie Rocky 3? The City of Richmond came close to sending me to Bellevue and I

do not mean Ohio for NKP therapy.

Keep these 2 dates in mind. The B&O Railroad Museum will have it's official Grand Reopening on May 30th Memorial Day. For further details phone 410-752-2490 or log on to www.borail.org

The Manassas Railway Festival will be held on Saturday June 4th. Keep in mind folks, this is always a one day event.

FREIGHT CAR GRAFFITI: EDUCATION EQUALS ELEVATION. This was seen on a heavily marked NS boxcar on southbound CSX freight Q413 back in February.

Forty Years Ago-1965 Montvale Wreck

By Jeff Sanders

On March 6, 1965, a collision occurred between two Norfolk and Western Railway freight trains at the east end of double track, 1.7 miles east of Montvale, VA. Extra 696 West, a freight consisting of four units, 223 cars, and cabooses, was entering the westbound track at Montvale, at about 10:20pm, on a good signal indication. At the same time Extra 1011 East with five units, 86 cars, and cabooses was approaching the east end of the double track on the eastbound main. Extra 1011 East was running away and out of control. It passed the Stop signal and ran into the side of Extra 696 West, hitting the 57th car of that train, derailling all five units and the head 12 cars of his own train. The engineer, fireman, and head brakeman were injured. There were no fatalities. Forty-two cars of the westbound were derailed, of which 16 were destroyed. One unit and five cars of the eastbound were destroyed.

So, what happened? The story is long and rather complex. I will try to simplify by say-

ing that a succession of errors were made from the time the locomotive consist was assembled until the train left Roanoke. The train crew and air brake inspectors mistakenly thought that a proper test of the air brakes had been made. In actuality, the angle cock between the fourth and fifth engines was inadvertently closed, and the brake valve cut-out cock (or, double-heading cock) was left in the open position on the fifth unit, thereby supplying the train line with air from the trailing unit. This mistake was apparently made because the fifth unit was a former Wabash engine, No. 3473, which had a different type of brake, that is, 6-BLM, which was converted by the Wabash before it's merger with the N&W. The system was converted to work with the 24-RL and 26-L equipment of the other units in the consist. But, because of the N&W men's unfamiliarity with this set-up, mistakes were made which left the train line fully charged, but leaving the engineer no way to make a brake application from the lead unit.

On the downgrade leaving Roanoke, braking was easily handled by the dynamic brakes on the four leading units (nos. 1011, 774, 819, 368 and 3473). And the climb up Blue Ridge grade required no braking. After cresting the grade and beginning the descent toward Montvale, and as the speed began to increase, the engineer applied the dynamic brakes and made successive brake reductions to the train line. He noted an unusually short air exhaust and the speed of the train continued to increase. Realizing that the brakes were inoperative, the engineer made an emergency application and applied the independent (locomotive) brake fully. Looking back along the train, he could see sparks coming from the first four units,





the head end of Extra 696 West, whose head end had entered the double track running about 40 MPH. Extra 696 also had in it's consist nos. 713, 885 and 797. Realizing that a collision was forthcoming, the brakeman jumped from the train, which had slowed to about 25 MPH.

When the engineer

but none from the rear unit, or the cars. The train was running away.

As the train passed an Approach signal about two miles from the end of double track, indicating that they would have a Stop signal at the latter point, the brakeman decided to see if he could separate the air hoses between the rear unit and the first car of the train. As he went

through the units, he opened the emergency valves in the second and third units, to no avail. By this time the train had reached 60 MPH. Quickly approaching the Stop and Stay signal at the end of double track, the brakeman managed to reach the rear unit and there separated the air hoses between the rear unit and the train, thereby putting the 3473 and train in emergency. At this time they passed

saw the westbound train, he and the fireman made their way to the cab of the third unit, where they rode out the collision. The accompanying photos attest to the severity of the damage done to the equipment of both trains.

The above information has been gleaned from the Interstate Commerce





All photos: J. L. Sanders Collection

Commission's Railroad Accident Investigation Report No. 4051. The photos, from an unknown source, are in my private collection.

Virginian Station Update-April

by Ken Miller

Despite the outward appearance of a lack of progress on the Virginian Station project, there has actually been a lot going on since our last update. As soon as barrels are available for a construction fence, that fence will be erected around the station. A press conference and signage announcing the project is to be scheduled in the near future. As reported earlier, Representative Bob Goodlatte has included funding on a Federal level, broken down over three years as follows: FY 2005 - \$80,000, FY 2006 - \$82,500, FY 2007 -

\$87,500, total \$250,000. That bill has passed the House, and awaits Senate approval before going to the President for signature.

Tentatively, VDOT has announced their TEA-21 awards for FY 2006. The Virginian Station is one of only two in Roanoke that has been approved, awarding the station \$85,000 of the requested \$213,600. If this is finalized, it is a major accomplishment. Inclusion in the program provides a huge advantage for the funding of the next session. This has been a battle for several years, and is the direct result of Alison Blanton, of the Roanoke Preservation Foundation, and myself meeting with Dana Martin, local VDOT Commissioner, and discussing the project and what we needed to do to get this project in the program. We met with Mr. Martin in October last year

and spent about an hour and a half with him. He was quite helpful and offered many suggestions. In December, Alison and myself met, on request, with the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Downtown Roanoke. It was an informational meeting for these folks, who are business leaders in Roanoke. They had many good questions, and offered many excellent suggestions. In early March, Alison and I met with Mayor Nelson Harris, who spent the better part of an hour with us and was very interested in the project. He offered a number of suggestions and information as to how we should proceed to get the City as a partner in this venture, much like the Grandin Theatre project. He also suggested that we talk with Brian Townsend, acting Economic Director for the City of Roanoke. That meeting occurred on March 24th and was quite positive. Mr. Townsend was quite helpful in offering to be sure the station was included in a new Zoning area "D" for Downtown, which will allow very flexible usage of the completed project as opposed to its present "LM" or Light Manufacturing Zoning. This will be much easier for him to do now rather than later. He also offered to meet with us, and City Building Inspector Carl Cooler, regarding the flood zone regulations. Also, he offered suggestions as to who to talk to in the City to make some of these things easier.

As a result of all these meetings, we now have important contacts that we did not have before. One item that has been strongly suggested is that we need to develop a business plan for the property. We had determined that the idea of a Museum and meeting place, while a very nice goal, was

not going to be economically feasible, either for the long term survival of the Chapter or the station. Our first goal, of course, is to preserve the building, but for the long term, it is felt that the overall project needed to be self-sustaining. This idea was further advanced by Dr. Ed Murphy, head of Carilion, in our meeting with him last summer. We are now looking at creating a business plan and studying options on this project. There will be a presentation about the station at the April Meeting.

Book Review

by John Austen

Travel by Pullman: A Century of Service
by Joe Welsh and Bill Howes,

MBI Publishing Company;

2004; 10-3/8" x 10-3/8", 156pp.; \$34.95.

Available from MBI's Classic Motorbooks Catalog, toll free (800) 826-6600, the MBI website www.motorbooks.com, and your favorite bookstore.

This oversized all-color tome is more than just a coffee-table book; it is a delightful and useful sampling of Pullman history and operations. It covers the history chronologically, except for one chapter devoted to a typical experience of Pullman travel, from ticketing (with full details of how the booking was handled in the pre-computer era) to a wide sampling of travel options. It covers everything from set-out sleeper service to long-distance mainline travel in a section or in a room, and even lounge and dining offerings from Pullman. This "you are there" format is especially effective in giving the feel of the traveling experience.

The streamline era is covered in two chapters: pre-war and post-war. There are many interesting details of train operations in

here, including the network of shops, commissaries and laundries. Other chapters cover the early history, the heavyweight era, and "Where Are They Now?". The NRHS Washington D.C. Chapter restored Pullman Dover Harbor gets a couple of mentions, and there is a very useful interior view of a wartime troop sleeper.

Each chapter starts with a full-bleed (right to the edge of the paper) photo that covers a full page and part of the adjacent page. Over two hundred images are in the book. Most of these are photographs (apparently never published before); several are from ephemera (from several collectors). These magazine advertisements, pamphlets and brochures provide color views of the cars and accommodations in the era before color photography, as well as clearer views and cutaways.

The format will be familiar to owners of other Motorbooks offerings. The narrative unifies the subjects, and is interspersed liberally with color (and some black and white) photos and images, with extensive captions. Several sidebars are also presented: the one on the Pullman Conductor and Porter occupies two whole pages. The gems just keep coming, from the conductor's report of air conditioning failure, to the Complete List of Sleeping Cars operating via the Union Pacific Railroad (revised to June 1, 1962). It serves as an appetizer, causing one to wish for a complete archive of such data.

My only major disappointment with the book came when I noticed the dedication to Peter Tilp, among others. Tilp has yet to deliver on his long-promised book: Pennsylvania Railroad: Classic Heavyweight Pullmans, for which he accepted advance payments from some of us back in 1991. If

any of the readers have heard of Peter Tilp or his alleged book lately this reviewer would be glad to hear from you.

The narrative (c. 50,000 words) is informative and smooth flowing, with few typos. An extensive caption accompanies each photograph, expanding on the text and identifying the source. This lovely large hardback book (with dust jacket) is worth the price; you could not buy the ephemera for that price even at a flea market, even if you could find these classics. Combined with helpful captions and insightful narrative these photos and excerpts constitute a useful survey of Pullman history and a real feel of the Pullman experience.

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar, June 25th will be an event to mark the 100th Anniversary of Roanoke's N&W Passenger Station. The station first opened on June 29, 1905.

The Chapter will be working with the O. Winston Link Museum to put together an event to mark the anniversary, among the events will be a special dinner in the diner fundraiser, advance reservations will be required, details to follow. Special displays about the station's history, the NS Lawmen will perform, there will be model train displays with operating trains and live steam operations in the parking lot.

Link Museum 2005 Spring Program Series
Wednesdays at 3:30 PM and 6:30 PM

April 20 - Rail Historian, Louis Newton
"The Development of N&W Motive Power" Mr. Newton will explain the importance of Norfolk and Western Railway's "Modern Coal-Burning Steam Locomotives."

May 18 -Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Educator, Jeffrey Allison

"The New Document: Transitions in Photography 1955 - 1965" Mr. Allison will discuss the technical and social changes that altered documentary photography after World War II. He will use well-known images to define the era, and O. Winston Link's photographs to compare and contrast with others working within the documentary realm at the time. Mr. Allison is from Richmond's Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

June 15 - Vesuvius Community Association Members

"The Legacy of O. Winston Link in our Community" Join us for this very special panel discussion and presentation as residents from Vesuvius, Virginia share their memories of working with O. Winston Link and the N&W Railway in the 1950s.

Call 540-982-LINK (5465) for details.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

April 21 - Regular Meeting

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The April Meeting Location will be at the O. Winston Link Museum. See Inside for More Details

April 30 - Chapter Outing to Rail Days, Spencer NC, Call Paul Howell for availability 774-2619, payment due 4-21-05

May 3 - Board Meeting

May 19 - Regular Meeting

June 7 - Board Meeting

June 16 - Regular Meeting

July 5 - Board Meeting

<http://community.roanoke.com/RoanokeChapterNationalRailwayHistoricalSociety>

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