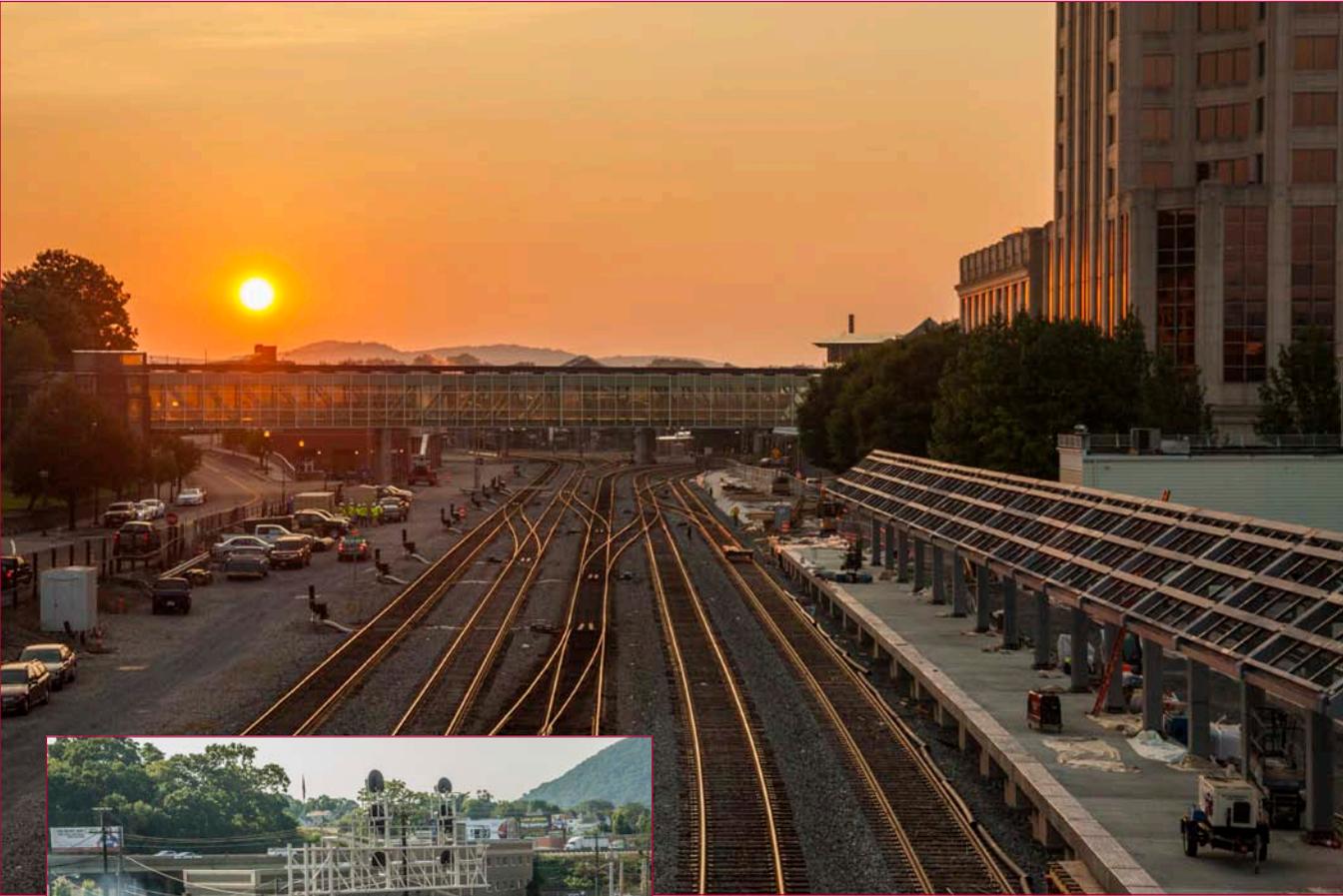




Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 49, Number 3
July-Aug-Sept. 2017





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Turntable Times is published quarterly 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 or contributors of the Turntable Times and do 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 regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, September 21st. The meeting will be held in the auditorium at the O. Winston Link Museum at 7:30 pm. Please be sure to enter at the west end of the building on the track level.

Our October meeting will be held on Thursday, October 19th and the annual meeting on Thursday, November 16th. Please be sure to check the cancellation policy below, as it does apply year round.

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 966-4809.

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Wednesday, November 22, 2017. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Editor Turntable Times, P.O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA, 24032. All parties sending newsletters to the Roanoke Chapter via email should send them to Jim Overholser: jgoverholser@verizon.net, Dorr Tucker at joandorr@cox.net and Ken Miller at klmiller@rev.net

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.

Cover Photos

Richard D. Shell captured a new day and new era dawning in Roanoke on September 5th. In the main photo the sun rises as work continues on the Amtrak platform while a bit later the same morning, another test/familiarity run arrives passing East End Shops.

For current information on the FIRE UP 611! campaign,
see www.FireUp611.org

From the Editor

Although not as hectic as a few months ago, Roanoke Chapter activities continue as you can see in this issue. Please consider "Broadening Your Horizons" and join in some different activities.

Bill Arnold has provided us information on an October 14 celebration of O. Winston Link and the Grand Opening of the restored depot in Rural Retreat. Bill and Ellen knew Mr. Link well and both are a great resource for the rest of us and the O. Winston Link Museum.

Amtrak service returns to Roanoke October 31 with the seven day a week extension of the Lynchburg Northeast Regional train. The Chapter is organizing a return charter bus from Lynchburg October 31 for those who want to ride the inaugural train that far. At press time there were close to enough passengers signed up; Chapter President Jeff Sanders will have more information as the date approaches.

Jim

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 16, 2017. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm. At this time, we will hold our annual election in which five (5) directors will be elected.

The members whose terms expire are:

Jim Cosby
Gary Gray
Carl Jensen
Skip Salmon
Jeff Sanders

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 Roanoke Chapter is soliciting nominees for Directors to be voted on at the November Annual Meeting. There are five (5) positions to be voted on. Please consider putting your name in nomination. Within the last few years the Chapter's responsibilities have greatly increased, what with the Virginian Station project, our excursions, and the Chapter's equipment. Please consider helping out. You may contact a member of the nominating committee - headed by Gary Gray and Fred Boettner.

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will elect five (5) 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 five (5) directors. If more than five (5) 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 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.

A Thank You

Thank you to the Roanoke Chapter for the card and to all for your kind thoughts during my recent medical procedure. I am appendix-less now and doing well!

Sincerely, Paul V. Howell

The Timetable

October 14 – Rural Retreat Depot and Museum Grand Opening, Rural Retreat. See more information elsewhere in this issue.

www.theruralretreatdepot.com

October 21, 22, 28 and 29 – New River Train, Huntington – Hinton, WV, Amtrak charter roundtrips sponsored by the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society. <http://www.newrivertrain.com>

October 31 – Amtrak service to Roanoke begins with the extension of the present Lynchburg Northeast Regional train. The Chapter is organizing a charter bus return from Lynchburg. www.amtrak.com

November 4 and 5 – North Carolina Transportation Museum and Watauga Valley Amtrak charter excursions, destinations to be announced, from Spencer, NC. **(Cancelled)** www.nctrans.org

November 16 – Chapter Annual Meeting and election of Directors, 7:30 PM, O. Winston Link Museum, Roanoke. See more information in this issue.

Early December – Candy Cane Express trains rides by the Chapter at VMT. Contact Gary Gray or sign up at Chapter meetings to help.

December 21 – Annual Chapter Holiday Gathering, 6 PM, Calvary Baptist Church. The Chapter provides some meats and beverages. Members bring a covered dish, salad, or dessert. Contact Bonnie Molinary or Kathy Overholser for more information.

2018 – NRHS Annual Convention in Cumberland, MD. Planned activities include

the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad with (hopefully) restored C&O steam engine 1309, Potomac Eagle excursion, and other activities.

Board Of Directors

Our Chapter Board usually meets at 7 PM the first Tuesday of each month in the Chapter's Virginian Station. Note the new location. Members are welcome to attend.

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------|
| President | ..... | Jeff Sanders |
| Vice-President | ..... | Gary Gray |
| Treasurer | ..... | Jim Cosby |
| Secretary | ..... | Lewis Foster |
| National Representative | ... | Carl Jensen |
| Fred Boettner | ..... | Director |
| Ken Miller | ..... | Director |
| Skip Salmon | ..... | Director |
| Percy Wilkins | ..... | Director |

Programs

Roanoke Chapter is always interested in programs for our monthly meetings. If you have a program in mind, please contact Program Chairman Dorr Tucker.

Emergency Notification Phone Numbers

You may use these phone numbers to report emergencies or other conditions affecting railroad operations, including trespassers, vandalism, fires, defective equipment, etc. If at a railroad/highway grade crossing try to provide the unique crossing number/DOT number posted nearby.

| | | |
|------------------|-------|--------------|
| Norfolk Southern | ..... | 800-453-2530 |
| CSX | ..... | 800-232-0144 |

Treasurers Report

Members are always welcome to review Roanoke Chapter's Treasurers Report. Please contact Treasurer Jim Cosby to receive a copy, either by email or on paper.

Membership Report

By Delta Helmer Pelgrim

This quarter we had no new members. All active members received a paper copy of the membership roster. If you think you should have received a roster and did not please contact me. Ken Miller and I are working on membership cards and they should be available soon. Watch your in-box and mail box for information regarding the 2018 membership. I am still waiting for national to let me know their details. As always do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

You can reach me at membership.rcnrhs@gmail.com or phone 703-627-7847.

Mechanical Committee Report – Summer 2017

By Lewis Foster

It has been busy (and hot) at the yard this summer, but we've been making steady progress on several projects.

We've reached the stage of the refurbishing of N&W coach No. 537 where we are putting things back together and adding finish-



The original floor has been nicely preserved and matched as closely as possible.

All: Lewis Foster Photos

ing touches. On the exterior, we've completed the sheet metal work on the bottom edge of the north side of the car. This involved replacing the bottom 2.5 inches of metal for about 60 feet of the car, where rust had built up behind the metal and caused it to bulge. There are a few more spots that need metal repairs and then we can proceed with final prep and painting the outside of the car.

On the inside, we've begun the process of reinstalling the coach seats. This is a time-consuming process, requiring that the seat frame be partially dis-



assembled to install the stainless steel kick plates on the back of the seat. This process is about 1/3 done at this point, and we hope to finish up in a couple of weeks. We've also added a few details, like the nickel-plated trim around the sink in the restroom. While not laid out as it was built, the restroom definitely feels much more original.

Our AC contractor is currently finishing up work on the car, installing compressor and making some changes to the configuration of the AC lines inside the car. Work is also going on in the electrical locker, modernizing the HVAC controls and adding a remote-start for the generator under the car.

The No. 1 (nee AEP No. 1) is getting close to being put into service. Most of the repairs and upgrades necessary for it to be blue-carded are now complete. Small items like correct FRA stencils and warning labels, installing a railroad radio, and other detail work is ongoing, but we hope to have the locomotive available sometime this fall.

There is also work going on to put the new off-road crane into service. This involves maintenance like changing filters, hydraulic fluid, and greasing all of the wear points. These steps will help ensure that the road crane provides us with many years of service at the restoration yard.

If you're interested in volunteering at the yard on the weekends, or even if you'd just like to drop by and see what we're working on, feel free to contact Gary Gray or Lewis Foster. Photos of our projects are also available on the Chapter Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/roanokenrhs

National Advisory Committee Representative Report

By Carl Jensen

RailCamp Report - The 2017 RailCamp program completed two sessions, the East Camp at Wilmington, DE with 24 campers

in late June, and the West Camp at Tacoma, WA in late July with 12 campers. These were fully subscribed with a total of 36 young person's attending. Our Jacob Owen was the Roanoke Chapter member attending at East Camp this year. He gave his report to the Chapter at the August meeting with photos and a narrative. He has already said he wants to now go to the West Camp. (He will have to apply next year and has several other past campers also interested, so we will see if he can get in. First time campers have preference at both our camps). Dates and applications for the 2018 Camps will be available January 1. We need to begin now looking for another young person to attend next year.

2017 National Convention – This years' Convention was held in Nashville, TN. Although attendance at these events has shrunk considerably from the days of 800 registrants to more like 300-350, this year's events were well attended, and the convention is expected to show a profit, just as the 2016 event did. These conventions are put on by NRHS for all the members, and it is unfortunate more people don't take advantage of them. There are always unique rail oriented trips that are essentially custom designed for NRHS. Most locations also have some excellent non-rail attractions as well. The 2018 convention is scheduled for nearby Cumberland, MD, so perhaps more people will attend, including from our Chapter.

Roanoke Chapter NRHS Grants Program Challenge – The Chapter established a fund raising effort on behalf of the National Grants program, as this NRHS program needs to increase the amount of grant money available each year. This was introduced at the Nashville Convention, with an initial donation from Roanoke of \$3,000, and a challenge to add 10% to all other donations from other chapters, organizations

or individuals through March of next year. So far, in addition to our initial contribution, we have raised a total of \$9,605 with contributions (\$3,005) made at the convention, plus donations from the George Carter Chapter (Johnson City, TN) (\$2,000) and St. Louis Chapter (\$1,000), all of which we matched with 10% additional (\$606).

There will be a new dues renewal procedure this Fall, but no increases in Dues are expected. More printed (and mailed not emailed) copies of the NRHS Bulletin and NRHS News will be provided to members in 2018. The next Board of Directors and Advisory Committee meetings will be held in Kansas City October 19-21.

Rural Retreat and O. Winston Link Celebration October 14

By Bill Arnold

In 2007, Ellen and I represented the Link Museum at "Raildays" in Rural Retreat. We had various items from the Gift Shop and were able to relate stories about Winston with the visitors at our setup. Unbeknown to us (or most of the visitors) was that they secretly planned to have a reenactment of the sounds Winston recorded during Christmas, 1957. The lady (93 years old) who played the carols was in attendance as well as the whistle sound truck. The truck approached the station, whistle blowing, as the carols played approximately 50 years later.

Now, 60 years later, another celebration is planned, and we will be there again. With the help of Link Volunteers Wayne Stanley and Art Sellers, I designed a composite CD of eleven Link photos regarding stops at stations along the way from Roanoke to Bristol of which three of the photographs will feature those December, 1957 sounds by Winston Link. This CD has been donated to the Rural Retreat Depot and will play on a repeat basis at the station. In addition, a

new poster has been produced of Winston Link's photo NW1635 "The Birmingham Special Gets the High Ball at Rural Retreat." Copies are available at the Link Museum gift shop.

The information on the October 14 celebration follows:

Rural Retreat Depot Grand Opening Celebration -- October 14, 2017

Including observance of the 60th Anniversary of O. Winston Link photos taken there in late 1957.

The public is invited to attend the Grand Opening Celebration of the Rural Retreat Depot Event Center and Museum. This historic building, first constructed in 1856 by the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, was purchased by the Foundation in 2011, with a mission to Acquire, Restore and Manage the Depot for the benefit of the community. The Event Space is available for civic meetings, reunions, receptions and other community activities, and the Museum provides displays of Depot and community history, using interactive kiosks to enrich learning opportunities.

The Grand Opening Celebration begins at 10 AM on Saturday, October 14, and will finish around Noon. The first portion of the Celebration includes remarks by the Foundation's chairman and president, the announcement of room dedications, and a ribbon-cutting conducted by Rural Retreat mayor Tim Litz. The program then shifts to observance of the 60th anniversary of O. Winston Link's famous photographs, including Link's favorite "The Birmingham Special Gets the High Ball at Rural Retreat", taken at the Depot on Christmas 1957. The program includes remarks by Conway Link and Bill Arnold, representing the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke, VA. A program highlight will be the re-creation of the sounds of church bells and a steam whistle as recorded

by Link in 1957. Following the celebration, we invite all of the many people who helped make the restoration possible, and all those attending, to join in group photos. The Depot will be open until 3 PM for photos, tours and 'meet and greet' with Foundation representatives and Mr. Link.

Registration begins at 9 AM, is free, and all registrants will receive a souvenir commemorative ribbon. Food will be available for purchase, and a variety of Depot and Link memorabilia will be available for donations. The program will be held outdoors, beside the Depot, weather permitting. Please bring a chair if you wish to be seated. Further details at www.theruralretreatdepot.com.

Restoration of the Rural Retreat Depot required extensive structural repairs, and installation of modern heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment as well as state-of-the-art audio-visual and communications capabilities. The former waiting rooms now comprise a Museum while the former freight area provides a comfortable and well-equipped meeting and event space capable of seating up to 80 people. Information on booking Museum visits and Events is provided on the website.

The Rural Retreat Depot Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity that accepts donations and support to restore and manage the historic Rural Retreat Depot. To make a donation please visit the Foundation website at www.theruralretreatdepot.com, or send your check to The Rural Retreat Depot Foundation, P.O. Box 843, Rural Retreat, VA 24368. Follow our progress on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/theruralretreatdepot> and Twitter @SaveRRDepot.

Press contact: Frank Akers Tel: 415-602-0481 Email: info@theruralretreatdepot.com

Amtrak News

Richard Anderson, a former chief executive of Delta Air Lines, has been hired as the next Amtrak President and CEO. Former Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman is serving as co-CEO through the end of 2017. When Mr. Moorman took over as Amtrak CEO in 2016 he said he would not be staying long but has agreed to stay on as an advisor after December 31.

In other Amtrak news, the extensive repair work in New York City's Penn Station was completed on time and on budget over the Labor Day weekend. However other maintenance work will need to be done to Penn Station and other parts of the Northeast Corridor in the coming years.

Amtrak also recently announced a "Refreshing" of the hundreds of Amtrak Amfleet I cars used in Northeast Regional trains. Seat cushions, lights, carpeting and other work will be done on the approximately 40-year-old Budd-built cars over the next nine months. Amtrak information says some of the work will be done in Roanoke and Lynchburg. <http://blog.amtrak.com/2017/08/amfleet-refresh/>

Amtrak Returns to Roanoke October 31

Train ticket sales from Roanoke on Amtrak's Northeast Regional that is being extended from its current terminal of Lynchburg began recently. The daily service will depart from the new, almost completed, high-level platform in downtown Roanoke. As of mid-September Saver tickets, the least expensive, were \$36 for one-way coach travel from Roanoke to Washington, for example. Saver tickets are non-refundable but can be exchanged for an e-voucher for future travel. Saver tickets must be purchased at least 14 days in advance and are limited in

number. If Saver tickets are not available the Senior fares are a good deal. The Chapter is organizing a return bus from Lynchburg on October 31 for those who want to ride the first train from Roanoke. Participants will need to purchase their own Amtrak tickets for travel going from Roanoke to Lynchburg, recently \$14, and should not wait until the last minute. Previous first day runs from Lynchburg and Norfolk were very popular and it is possible the train could sell out.

Train departure on weekdays (to Boston) is 6:19 AM and 8:40 AM on weekends and holidays (to New York City). Return times to Roanoke are around 10 PM. More information is available at www.Amtrak.com or by calling 1-800-USARAIL or visiting the Amtrak agent in Lynchburg.

VMT's Bev Fitzpatrick to Retire

By Jim Overholser

In July Virginia Museum of Transportation's Executive Director Bev Fitzpatrick announced his retirement effective at the end of this year. Bev began his tenure as the Museum's Executive Director in 2006 when VMT was basically bankrupt. Bev, with lots of help as he will say, brought the Museum back into the black and was instrumental in getting the restoration of the 611 going and operating excursions for the last three years. Bev says his reasons for retiring are personal, and like a lot of us, he would like to do things before we get too old. Bev says he will stay on to help with special projects. Don Moser will serve as interim Executive Director

I want to thank Bev for something else, too. Before he came back on board (he had been the old Roanoke Transportation Museum's Superintendent when he was 15 years old), Roanoke Chapter's excellent relationship with VMT had been shattered. For years Roanoke Chapter operated the

Museum's Gift Shop (and cooperated on other things too) until being kicked out. Chapter volunteers managed and staffed the gift shop and gave the Museum 10% of all revenue at no cost to the Museum. Grace Helmer and the Arnolds and many others devoted hours and hours of donated work and money. While it didn't work out for the Chapter to resume operation of the Gift Shop, relations with the Chapter and Chapter members that had been broken by a previous director and others were restored by Bev. For that we should all be thankful. Our support of 611 excursions and the Chapter-operated excursions at the Museum would not have happened without the good relations that Bev brought about. Good luck and happy travels in your retirement, Bev.

Challenging Trip Brings Railroad Turntable to Roanoke

The Virginia Museum of Transportation hauled some vintage equipment to Roanoke August 28, only to have it get stuck just a few blocks from its destination. It wasn't a steam engine or rail car, but a turntable the museum plans to use in a new maintenance facility in the Norwich neighborhood. The oversize load made it most of the way from Beckley, West Virginia, without a problem, but on the final approach a hydraulic line ruptured. Bev Fitzpatrick is the executive director of the Virginia Museum of Transportation.

"We're real excited that it's gotten almost home," he said "and hopefully by the end of the night it will be where it needs to be." (Editors Note: It did make it)

The maintenance facility is part of the transportation museum's plan for the old Belt Line that runs through Wasena Park. The rail line was donated by Norfolk Southern, and the museum eventually plans to run short excursions there. (WDBJ

7 via the Blue Ridge Dispatcher, Blue Ridge Chapter)

Christiansburg (Cambria) Station Needs Help

Recently there was news that the 1868 Christiansburg (Cambria) wooden station needs maintenance. There is a funding request for help with some of the following:

Replacement of some of the existing siding and trim;

Tower restoration;

Roof repair and the installation of a membrane to lengthen the life of the standing seam roof;

A new paint job (the building, because of the poplar siding, must be hand scraped, caulked, and repainted every five to seven years;

Construction of rain-gardens surrounding the depot to control stormwater damage (the depot is sandwiched between a road and the tracks);

Landscaping; and

Restoration of the loading platform, so folks can safely use it to watch the trains rumble by.

There is more information here: <http://www.historiccambria.com/Funding.htm>

Note: The Roanoke Chapter has donated \$1,000 towards this effort.

Amherst Depot Celebrates Its Grand Opening

Amherst, VA - Amherst County and the Chamber of Commerce opened the county's first Visitor Center at the historic, former Southern Railway depot, 238 Richmond Hwy, in Amherst on Saturday, August 26th.

The Amherst Depot was built in 1913 and saw passenger trains until the 1960's. Its service for freight transport and mail exchange ended in 1977. In 1985, the depot passed to the private ownership of Marshall

Mays, owner of Mays Farmers Service Co. in Amherst. The depot was moved in 2008 approximately one quarter mile from its original location on Depot Street to the current address on Richmond Hwy. After many trials and tribulations, the depot is restored and alive once again with activity and a renewed purpose to serve visitors and area residents. (Blue Ridge Dispatcher, Blue Ridge Chapter)

Braddock Inn Railcar Restoration

A passenger railcar familiar to many Roanoke Chapter members has been renovated, inside and out. The Braddock Inn lounge car is owned by the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society in West Virginia and has operated in past Roanoke Chapter excursions. Between December last year and March this year society members devoted over 900 volunteer hours to redo the interior. Then in August the CSX Huntington Locomotive Paint Shop crew painted the Braddock Inn into its as-delivered Pennsylvania Railroad Tuscan Red. Braddock Inn was built for the Pennsy by Budd as a 21-Roomette sleeping car in 1949 and converted to a coach in 1963. (Gondola Gazette, C. P. Huntington RR Historical Society) <https://www.csx.com/index.cfm/about-us/legacy-locomotives/braddock-inn-passenger-car/>

The car will be in the New River trains in October.

Old Dominion Chapter Excursions from Dillwyn

The fall dates are October 14th, 21st, and 28th. Each date will feature two 3.5 hour trips. The Santa trains are scheduled for December 2nd and 9th with six 45 minute trips each day. The Tom Mix Rangers will be with us on all fall trips.

Tickets for the trips are on sale now and some dates may be sold out. www.odcnrhs.org

Inaugural Amtrak train from Roanoke to Lynchburg with a bus return.

The Chapter is planning on having a bus available to meet us in Lynchburg for a return to Roanoke on October 31, for those who would like to ride the first Amtrak run out of Roanoke, but do not wish to ride beyond Lynchburg.

We can accommodate the first forty (40) Chapter members and guests, first come - first served, that sign up for the bus return. We can keep a waiting list after that in case of cancellations, but cannot promise a seat. We had a sign up at the last Chapter meeting which has about a dozen seats taken. We will be using a bus from Commonwealth Coach & Trolley Museum, which is more of a transit bus than an over the road bus. So, please take that into consideration if riding for an hour, or so, on a "city bus" is a problem. There will be no toilets available after we leave Lynchburg, unless we schedule a stop.

AMTRAK tickets must be purchased separately by individual passengers. It is my understanding that tickets are now available on line, or by phone, through Amtrak. Fare is about \$14.00 one way. Bus fare may vary slightly but should be in the \$15 - 25 range, depending on the number of passengers.

Please call, or email, me for a seat on the bus before purchasing your Amtrak ticket, to be certain we can accommodate you. Then, immediately, purchase your Amtrak ticket to assure you seat on the train. We suspect the train may fill up quickly.

Jeff Sanders
nsyardconductor@yahoo.com
540-520-3668

3rd Quarter Mixed Freight

By Mr. Robin R. Shavers

The major project of restoring Chesapeake & Ohio Railway No. 1309 for excursion service on the Western Maryland Scenic Railway has hit yet another snag. It was hoped, with all fingers and toes crossed, that a major event could have taken place in late September. The issue at hand was the discovery of flaws within the metals that are part of the locomotive. The flaws were discovered while the locomotive was disassembled for maintenance. WMNSR officials want and demand that everything humanly possible be done that the project is completed with safety and efficient performance being top priorities. Excursions are still being run via diesel locomotives. A sold-out Trains Magazine Photo Freight Charter had to be cancelled to the dismay of a lotta die-hard fans. Hopefully 2018 will yield a fully operational 1309.

Looking back 30 years and roughly two months by the time this article reaches the membership, the Roanoke Chapter NRHS executed one of the most memorable NRHS National Conventions ever. The feature event was the operation of two steam-powered trains westward from Roanoke to Walton. Class J No. 611 was in charge of a healthy passenger train of conventioners and A class No. 1218 had the duty of towing 50 empty coal hoppers. By today's railfan standards, these coal hoppers were classics in that they were hoppers instead of gondolas and their reporting marks were N&W, NW and SOU. The event made the national news on one of the major networks. I personally reminisced via my photo albums and numerous VHS tapes on the exact days that corresponded to the days back in early August 1987. But you know, readers, I did more than just reminisce about the excur-

sions. I looked for things that are no more railroad wise or at least in less abundance. Our beloved color position light signals were everywhere along the N&W. Pole lines were still the norm. Very few freight cars carried NS reporting marks. There were no safety cab diesels moving the freight on NS at that time. I also thought about the Roanoke Chapter members as well as other railfans who have boarded the westbound for their final journey. Don't even mention the technological changes and advancements since 1987.

I was really dismayed not to know of the passing of Ms. Grace Helmer within the pages of the last Turntable Times over three months later. When I attended the 1987 National NRHS Convention sponsored by the Roanoke Chapter, Ms. Grace was one of the first Roanoke Chapter members I met. I will never forget the morning she motioned me to come into the souvenir car. The Chapter was sponsoring an excursion to either Bluefield or Radford powered by the 1218. Brand new souvenir 1218 number plate belt buckles had just arrived that week and she wanted to make sure I was aware of them. I purchased one from her on the spot and though I rarely see these buckles being worn by others, I still do along with six other N&W related belt buckles whenever I spend time along the former N&W tracks or in Roanoke.

I have found out throughout the years that it really pays to let others know of your personal interests, railroad and otherwise. I noted in my First Quarter Mixed Freight that this year 2017 marks forty years since the Chessie Steam Special made its public appearance. A few months ago as I was getting ready to head out somewhere in the morning, there was a knock on the front door. Upon opening the door there stood Eric the maintenance tech for the apart-

ment complex with a wide smile and a framed photo of the Chessie Steam Special photographed crossing the famous Thomas Viaduct. A resident had moved out and just left it on a bedroom wall.

Those of you who spend time trackside have probably noticed an increase of standard size 50-foot boxcars with the reporting marks BKTU over the past three years. At the same time, you rarely see boxcars of this class with UP reporting marks. My understanding via the internet is that these BKTU marked cars are from a leasing outfit. I have also noticed a decrease in boxcars carrying reporting marks EEC for the East Erie Commercial Railroad located up in Erie, Pennsylvania.

CSX recently reinstated mixed freights No Q438 and Q439 that operate between Waycross, GA and Selkirk, NY. Both trains are good for normally showing up in Virginia during daylight hours. Also a southbound unit train of empty auto racks operates when needed, usually once a week. It is symbolized Q215 and runs from Feltonville, PA to Rocky Mount, NC.

Norfolk Southern recently assigned its Southern Railway heritage caboose to local freight No. V08 that operates between Richmond and Crewe Monday thru Saturday. The train is symbolized V30 on Mondays. It is indeed a welcomed sight since the previous cupola style caboose had been heavily vandalized with the darn graffiti. It was supposed to be kept in a secured area to prevent such activity. I hope management is more diligent with the parking of this bay window heritage caboose.

Another Look Back

by Ken Miller

Honestly, it is difficult to believe it has been 30 years since we hosted the 1987 National Convention in Roanoke. So much

has happened since then and so many people have gone it is hard to believe, as the memory of the event is still as strong as if it were just yesterday.

However, since Robin wrote about the convention, I'm going to step a bit further back to another major event, the return of the 611 to operation for the first time since 1959. That was 35 years ago this past August. I really find it hard to believe. It was such a thrill for me and so many of us were so excited about the 611. Several of us made a trip to Birmingham in March to see progress on the 611, then again in mid August. We headed out to Birmingham to witness the first run under steam, a short train from Birmingham to Chattanooga and return the next day on the weekend of August 14-15. It was an amazing sight to see 611 all freshly painted shiny black and the magnificent tuscan and gold strip with a haze of smoke coming out of the stack. It was really real! It was not a lot of high speed running to Chattanooga, lots of stops and starts, inspecting bearings and other things out. All of us only really had the day, we had to return to Roanoke for jobs and real life the next day. But to see her that first time under steam, just wow! I was not expecting at that point to be invited to join the trip home the next weekend.

Amazingly, on Tuesday night, I got a phone call inviting me to go, if I could. Gee,

I really couldn't go, but how do you turn down that invitation? I scrambled around and managed to get my work done, and boarded the special train at the station on Thursday afternoon headed for Birmingham.

As we bumped to a stop at the former Birmingham Terminal Station, it was still quite dark, about 5 am. I was not alone in my excitement, as several of us looked out the vestibule to see that beautiful Class J steaming quietly on the adjacent track, steam hovering around, the number boards lit. It was a bit early to get up, but I think most of us were too wired up to sleep anymore. We slowly walked down the remains of the platform to see the locomotive. The real prize of this experience was not just my own, but watching Bob Claytor walk down to see his latest accomplishment under steam for the first time. I don't think that smile on his face could have been any wider, the realization of a dream that began in at least 1959, finally to a culmination.

As dawn broke, I captured the 611 and train, is there a bad angle on the J?



Birmingham, August 20, 1982
Kenneth L. Miller Photo

The trip home was memory after memory but one of the best was sitting back with my feet propped up in the almost empty coach 533 after breakfast as we departed Salisbury early on Sunday, August 22. The early morning sunlight, the cool air provided amazing steam condensate, and the flashing of the rods in that light, it was amazing. Then washing the 611 in Lynchburg as the Roanoke section arrived to join us. 12 days later, the first public trip as we headed to Norfolk. The disappointing problem that prevented 611 from turning at Norfolk and return behind diesels, but the next morning for the trip to Alexandria, there 611 was, ready to go. The bark of the exhaust and mournful whistle as we headed over Blue Ridge once again kicked off a fall full of memories that are etched in my mind.

It was really only yesterday, wasn't it?

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

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

September 21 - General Meeting

October 3 - Board Meeting

October 19 - General Meeting

October 31 - Amtrak Returns to Roanoke

November 1 - Board Meeting

November 16 - Annual Meeting

December 5 - Board Meeting

December 21 - Holiday Gathering

January 2 - Board Meeting

January 18 - General Meeting

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