

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 flowers and can be reached at 389-5274.

Meeting Notice

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, April 16, 1998 at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

Cover Photo

The date is September 9, 1976 and Norfolk and Western train No. 53 is southbound alongside Route 220 just north of Boones Mill, Va. on the 'Punkin Vine' route to Winston-Salem, NC. Note the numerous boxcars in Train 53's consist, a view still commonplace on the 'Punkin' today. Norfolk and Western Railway Photo.

Last Issue Mail Date

Last month's issue of Turntable Times was mailed on Monday, March 16th. Some local delivery was reported as late as Saturday the 21st.

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Saturday, April 25. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

Small Rails - April

by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers had their modules ready for the March 14th & 15th toy and train show at the Salem Civic Center. The spring show drew even more people than the fall show. Trains were kept running throughout the show, although a few gremlins did present themselves from time to time. There were some derailments and odd uncouplings to deal with, but most of the time the trains kept moving.

We had a pizza and "post op" meeting the last Thursday of March to discuss how to improve things. It is hoped that we will eventually be able to keep the modules together between shows, so that we can fine tune both the operational qualities and the scenery.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators will not meet until March 28th, so I will have to cover that meeting in my next column. As an aside, I learned an interesting fact via the internet about the model used for some of the scenes in the movie Titanic. The model is 1:20 scale, very close to Bachmann's Shay locomotive, which is scaled at 1:20.3. But since the HMS Titanic was 883 feet long, even at 1:20 scale, the model is about 44 feet long - about equal to the length of a city bus! It's still a bit too large for most home swimming pools.

Here and There

by Kenney Kirkman

West Virginia recently dedicated a new rails-to-trails operation which officially opened in September. The Cranberry Tri-Rivers Rail-Trail starts in downtown Richwood, WV and

follows the Cherry and Gauley Rivers for 16.5 miles to a point just south of Allingdale. Included on the trail is a long trestle over the Cranberry River and the 640-foot Sarah's Tunnel. The old roadbed was once home to the former B&O's Richwood Subdivision at WN Tower through Allingdale, Holcomb, Fenwick and into Richwood. CSX abandoned and removed the tracks in 1990 after mines in the Richwood area played out. The Tri-River committee purchased the right-of-way for \$189,000 after securing a \$69,000 grant from Georgia-Pacific Co., which operates a large mill at Richwood. Georgia-Pacific has retained the rights to operate the trail as a logging haul road during the off seasons to move cut timbers into Richwood. (The Gondola Gazette, Huntington Chapter, Jan. 98).

From Charleston, WV comes news of a new local trail group which has been formed. The Paint Creek Trail Foundation is dedicated to creating a trail on the abandoned line along Paint Creek in Kanawha and Raleigh Counties. This trail will be the most visible trail in West Virginia, as it will be in sight of the WV Turnpike (Interstate 77) almost its entire length. For more information, contact: Paint Creek Trail Foundation, c/o Mike Davenport, 1412B Quarrier St., Charleston, WV. 25301. (Trail-Tracks, Fall, 97 via The Gondola Gazette, Huntington Chapter, Feb. 98).

CSX has donated about 15 acres of land and its shops at Ridgeley, WV (ex-WM) to the MD Transit Administration for use by the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, which operates excursions out of Cumberland, MD, just across the Potomac from Ridgeley. The WMSRR has leased the shop for servicing facilities since it went into existence and intends to install a turntable there. (Automatic Block, Western Maryland Chapter).

The Regional Transit Authority in New Orleans has unveiled seven new streetcars made primarily by its own workers, the only modern municipal system in the country to build its own streetcars. The cars are replicas of 1923 Perley Thomas 900 series cars. They run on the agency's St.

Charles Line. All streetcar track widths in New Orleans are now compatible. Each car has two lifts and wide-aisle seating. RTA craftsmen built the bodies, wooden seats and hardware. The trucks were imported from the Czech Republic, with the rest of the components fabricated or assembled at the RTA Carrollton Streetcar Barn. Craftsmen working on the cars included blacksmiths, electricians, carpenters, metal workers and painters. Some have maintained the streetcars for more than 40 years. (Metro via Interchange, Baltimore Chapter, March, 98).

Amtrak has agreed to clear the way for a proposed \$5 million revitalization of its Lancaster, Pa. station, the major stop between Philadelphia and Harrisburg on the Keystone Corridor. Amtrak has pledged to spend \$2.5 million to move a large repair shop and training school off the property. The relocation will free premium space inside the station, and on the grounds, for the wide-ranging improvements being discussed. The relocation is part of a \$360 million system-wide improvement plan unveiled by Amtrak. The proposal seeks to convert the 70-year-old depot into a convenient intermodal transit hub, offering easy links between rail, local bus, intercity bus, and taxi service. (Trains on Line via Ties and Tracks, Dayton Historical Society, March, 98).

Service by Amtrak's Cardinal resumed at Ashland, Kentucky on March 11, 1998. Although Ashland was in the original plan when Amtrak began service in 1971, operations were relocated in 1975 to CSX property at what was called the 'Tri-State station, three miles west of Catlettsburg, Ky. That station will be closed effective with the restoration of service in Ashland at the former C&O building at 15th Street and the Ohio Riverfront. The Ashland facility will also serve a local bus system and Greyhound. (Ties & Tracks, Dayton Railway Historical Society, Apr. 98).

For the past several months, Congress had been debating concerns over eavesdropping, altering radio transmission and divulging com-

munications. In July, 1997, a bill, H.R. 2369, was introduced that virtually outlaws the manufacturing and use of a new generation of scanners was introduced, modifying a Communications Act of 1934. Apparently an extreme threat of restricting the use of scanners or having them in your possession was quite real at one time. However, a revision by the bill's sponsor, Rep. Billy Tauzin of Louisiana, satisfies several scanner groups, including the Bearcat Radio Club, the Amateur Radio Relay League and Uniden America Corporation. Presumably the bill now focuses of keeping people from listening in on phone conversations. The bill, which would have to pass both the House and Senate, was expected to be hammered out in January, but remains on hold. (Midwest Rail Scene Report, Midwest Rail Enthusiasts, March, 98).

And, the Shenandoah Valley Railroad Club will be holding its annual Model Train & Railroading Show at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, Harrisonburg, Va. on Sunday, May 3, 1998 from 10 am. to 4 pm. Admission is \$3.00. To reach the show, take Interstate 81 north and get off at Exit 243. Then head south on Route 11 to the fairgrounds on the right.

Realizing a Railroad Dream

by Dave Meashey

For several years I have dreamed of building a garden railway. This spring the Geneva & New Bern Railroad will move into the realm of reality. My wife, Kathy, and I will lay some track at the back of our yard to see how this temporary garden railway fares. Like so many new railroads, this will be a "no frills" operation. It's really just an experiment to see how the track will fare in our back yard during the season. Still, it will be thrilling to see the first train of the "Tall Pines Division, Geneva & New Bern Railroad" steaming down the track. I'll post progress reports from time to time with my regular column. Now, if it will just stop raining.

Mixed Freight - April

by Mr. Robin Shavers

It looks like The Mainline Of Mid America will become a major artery for a Canadian railroad. In February Canadian National Railway announced that it had acquired Illinois Central Corporation, the parent company of the Illinois Central Railroad. The \$2.4 billion transaction is a combination of stock, cash and the assumption of debts. When the merger of the 2 railroads is finalized, an entity will be a cross-border giant of nearly \$4 billion in yearly revenues. The 19,000 route miles of track will stretch from Vancouver to Nova Scotia to the Gulf of Mexico with a payroll of 26,000 employees. It will rank 5th in size for North America's railroads. The Surface Transportation Board is expected to vote in favor of the proposal. Conrail locomotives are again on some Norfolk Southern freight trains south of Hagerstown. During late February and early March I observed Conrail locomotives aboard NS freights 154, 155, 456 and 457.

Like Norfolk Southern, CSX has a major grade crossing closing program underway and making progress. 651 crossings were closed last year and the goal for 1998 is 700.

ICS Flexliner visits Winston-Salem

by Bob Loehne

Brought out by the lure of the great American train ride, thousands of North Carolinians surged upon Stratford Commons last Friday and Saturday, (Jan. 30 and 31), to see and ride the touring Danish IC3 Flexliner. The Danish IC3 Flexliner is a bi-directional train that is operated by engineers who are positioned at either end of the train in a control booth which is similar to a locomotive operating panel. Jim Fetchero (Piedmont Carolinas Chapter) says that each IC3 is a three-car trainset, diesel-hydraulic, self-propelled, low-profile 1998 version of the 50's Budd RDC.

So tempting was the high iron lure, not to mention the freebie price, that North Carolina

N&W Photo

Department of Transportation officials had to call off the show more than two hours - and an estimated two-thousand riders - early on Saturday afternoon.

With what seemed like a whole battalion of Winston-Salem police holding SOLD OUT signs at various intersections along Stratford Road (near Hanes Mall and the new I-40 interchange), the big train show was called to an early halt simply because of its own success...and that incredible love of trains!

By early Saturday morning, DOT and W-S officials saw signs portending an oversold, overwhelmed event. By ten, traffic along Stratford Road, in the Hanes Mall parking lot, and on the I-40 off ramps was bumper to bumper and getting worse. The single file maze-like line of bodies waiting for free tickets soon expanded out of the Office Max parking lot and past Chilies restaurant.

On Friday, the train had made runs as far west as Clemmonsville Road, but, with so many folks wanting to ride, Saturday's trips were shortened to a half mile each way. For railfans, this chance for rare mileage on the former Winston-Salem Southbound line turned into a ten-minute ride for a single rare mile.

Following its visit to Winston-Salem, the IC3 trainset went on to several other locations in North Carolina, including Raleigh, Spencer, Salisbury, Asheville, and Charlotte. (The Rail, Winston-Salem Chapter).

Investors Rip Up Track to 'Save' Tweetsie

(From "The Charlotte Observer, Thursday, Feb.26, 1998", via Piedmont Flyer, Piedmont Carolinas Chapter, Mar. 98).

In the latest twist to a long battle over the storied Tweetsie Railroad, an investor group has tried to outmaneuver the owners by ripping out 40 feet of the train's track in the North Carolina mountains. Owners of the steam-powered Tweetsie, named for its high-pitched whistle,

are seeking a court order to get the track rebuilt in time for the season's May start. The two sides in the nasty dispute will argue the matter in a hearing set for Monday in N.C. Superior Court in Avery County.

The confessed offenders, Young Realty Investments, admit to hiring a construction crew last week. Workers spent two hours digging up two 20-foot segments of track on a patch of land that Young Realty leases to the railroad.

"Quite frankly, the reason we did it was because it was the only way to get their attention," said Vaughn Ramsey, a Greensboro lawyer for Young Realty, also a minority shareholder in Tweetsie Railroad Inc. Tweetsie and its nearby Western-theme amusement park in Blowing Rock hold a sentimental spot in many a Carolinian's memory. The 40-year old amusement park is the state's oldest.

Despite some of the tatters of time, the attraction pulls in an estimated 200,000 visitors every year for train rides and noisy, mock gunfights. The train is a key to the tourist economy of greater Boone, said Margaret Johnson, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce.

Tweetsie is controlled by Harry Robbins, a prominent N.C. mountains real estate developer, and some members of his family. Robbins' lawyer says Tweetsie is not for sale. The railroad company got wind of the plans to dig up track and last week sued Young Realty, its partners and other potential investors. They want the court to keep Young from interfering with railroad operations.

Superior Court Judge Forrest Bridges already has issued a temporary restraining order making it illegal for Young Realty to do anything to "cut, block or otherwise disrupt" railroad operations.

His next decision will be whether to extend that order or instruct Young Realty to rebuild the tracks - or at least pay for the task. Or he could rule in Young's favor. Young's lawyers are vague about what they would do next if they win this round.

N&W Photo

But Ramsey said Young Realty' ultimate purpose is noble. "We want to save that railroad," he said. The tale of Tweetsie, at least in modern times, has as many twists and turns as a high-country mountain road. The players have varied through time.

Family feuding and a divorce jeopardized Robbins' control in the late 1980s. In 1994, a Durham developer launched an unwelcome effort to buy the company. He was rejected, but the effort encouraged a disgruntled nephew of Robbins' to try to use his land to force a sale.

The nephew, one of many landowners who leases land for track to Tweetsie, threatened to yank the lease in court. But he lost, too.

At issue in the current battle are the rights of individual property owners who lease land to the railroad for the track. Tweetsie owns some of the land but leases most of it under contracts that expire in 2006. In particular, it's the lease held by Young Realty Investments that started the latest court fight. Young Realty lawyers say the leases are year-to-year and can be overturned by property owners under certain conditions; Tweetsie lawyers say they cannot.

Brad Schrum of Young Realty said the group bought about two acres in Watauga County last summer that includes about 100 yards of track. According to court papers, Young Realty told Tweetsie of the purchase Sept. 29. The next day, Young Realty sued to overturn the lease in state court in Greensboro. According to Schrum, Tweetsie then appeared interested in negotiating a sale of the entire railroad. In exchange, he said, Young Realty agreed to drop the case and had it voluntarily dismissed Feb. 4.

Richard Rayburn, the Charlotte lawyer for Tweetsie, disputes Schrum's version. "There have never been negotiations with this buyer. The presumption they are making is that this company is for sale. It isn't. Period."

Last week, Young Realty began shopping for a demolition crew. But word travels quickly in Watauga County, and Tweetsie got wise to the plan. "We got wind of it a few days before it

happened," said Rayburn.

The Tweetsie lawyers asked the judge to issue the temporary restraining order, which he did, but they were too late. The track had already been dug up.

A Jamboree Hit

(From the Potomac Rail News, Potomac Chapter, NRHS, Mar. 98)

From July 28 to August 6, 1997, the National Boy Scout Jamboree was held at Fort A.P. Hill (near Fredericksburg). One of the highlights of the event was a Railroad Badge Pavilion, which included a large-scale mockup of a safety cab diesel containing classrooms and exhibits used to train scouts in signal technology, switching, operations, and safety. Around 50,000 Scouts and their leaders visited the site and 1,539 earned their Railroad Merit Badge. To earn the badge, Scouts visited seven stations each of which was allotted 30 minutes for instruction and testing. Station 1 was an industry overview by BNSF. Station 2 taught signaling and communications, including topics such as color aspects, track circuits, whistle signals, and emergency stops. Station 3 was freight car identification and locomotive technology. Station 4 taught about the different railroad departments and job descriptions. Station 5 was Amtrak teaching a course on how to read timetables and passenger services. Station 6 taught how to lubricate a locomotive, design a real track plan, and identify types of freight trains. Station 7 rounded out the educational experiences with Operation Lifesaver providing safety instruction. More than 70% of the Scouts who started the merit badge course completed it. The event was made possible through the donations of various organizations, including Kalmbach Publishing. (TRAINS). Hopefully, this is the start of an increasing interest by Boy Scouts in railroading and the beginning of a life-long interest in railroads.

What Date Would You Choose?

by Mr. Robin Shavers

As I've written within this publication before, I have quite a few interests besides railroading. It's really great when I can sometimes combine trains with other interests or concepts.

For as long as I can remember, I've had a thing for horror and science fiction movies. Freddy Crueger, Jason and some of the other more popular creations of that genre in modern times can't hold a candle to some of the creations from the fifties and sixties horror classics.

One of my favorites was the classic THE TIME MACHINE. It was about a guy whom created a vehicle, for lack of a better noun if you will, for time traveling. He could go back into the past as far as he desired or into the future as well.

I had just viewed this movie for the umpteenth time on a lazy Saturday afternoon. The following Sunday after church, I traveled northward to the little community of Milford, VA for an afternoon of reading and fast trains on the former RF&P Railroad.

On this day along with some 1950s issues of TRAINS magazine, I took along a 1959 copy of The Official Guide of The Railways that I had purchased at The Annual Gaithersburg Railroad Sale some months earlier. All of this old railroad reading material coupled with thoughts of THE TIME MACHINE seen the day before got my mind to thinking. Suppose I was granted an opportunity to go back in time for 24 hours to any date of my choice for the sole purpose of either watching trains, photographing them or documenting them in any way I desired.

My trip back in time would be strictly for rail-fanning only. I could not make amends with an old childhood sweetheart or eradicate that F I got in Ms. Johnson's 5th grade math class or purchase the good car instead of the lemon I chose at the time.

Upon arrival at my chosen date via the time machine, I would be furnished with a vehicle for the time period chosen with a full tank of fuel. I'd be free to travel anywhere I desired within

my 24 hour period. At the precise moment of the 24th hour, I'd be returned to the present irregardless of what I was doing.

Readers, I thought about the date I would choose long and hard. For me, there are so many. However, in my case, I'd have to execute extreme caution in choosing the date and place. As a black person, I would not have the hassle free environment in some places and eras as I do today. In today's climate I may be approached maybe twice a year by police or security personnel. I inform them what I'm up to and it usually ends with "OK, Mr. Shavers, enjoy the trains and have a safe day". This would not be the case in most instances 30 and more years ago and even in some locals today.

The first thing I decided on was time of the year. That would be summer with it's long hours of daylight and warm temperatures.

To make a long story short, I would opt for Southern Railway's CNO&TP line for my subject matter with Danville, KY as my starting point. The date would be what is considered the longest day of daylight hours here in the states. The year would be 1969 or 1972. That I could not decide on. My second choice would have been Hagerstown, MD as a starting point with the Western Maryland as my main subject. But to be perfectly honest, almost anywhere from the mid seventies on back would suit me. I gave the steam era A LOT OF THOUGHT, but taking into consideration the racial climate during that era, I decided to be content with the steam excursions I've already experienced during more tolerant times.

So I end by asking, WHAT DATE WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

Railcamp

We're looking for a few good students! The Roanoke Chapter is looking for applicants for a trip to Railcamp. The Railcamp sponsored by the National Park Service at Steamtown in Scranton, PA, July 19-25, 1998. Young people between grades 9 and 12 who have an in interest

in such a camp, modeled after the popular Spacecamp, will feature railroad preservation, railroad operations among others.

The camp is limited to 40 participants. The Roanoke Chapter is willing to sponsor a participant at the camp and is looking for nominations from our membership. The candidate does NOT have to be a member, come to the April meeting for more details or contact Bill Arnold at 389-3217.

O. Winston Link Photo Exhibit at VMT

The second exhibition of an eleven event show lasting until November 5, 2000 will open at the Virginia Museum of Transportation at a special reception(**) on April 24, 1998 and run through June 21, 1998. Seventy-nine black and white and color photos will be shown, some for the first time. Sizes range up to 20x24". The exhibition was organized by Sheldon Memorial Art Galley. University of Nebraska at Lincoln and first shown there January 7 to March 22, 1998.

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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Regular museum admissions apply.
**Contact VMT at 5440-342-5670 for more information on the opening reception.

Volunteers Needed To Staff Link Exhibition

The VMT has requested Roanoke Chapter to "host" the Link photo exhibit on Saturdays and Sundays from April 25 to June 21. Please contact Bill Arnold at 389-3217 to schedule your date.

Reminders

To help others out at the regular meetings, members are requested to wear their name tags. At times it is difficult to remember who is who.

As well, copies of correspondence generated by members on behalf of the Roanoke Chapter should be forwarded to the Secretary as they are generated to be placed on permanent file.

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