

# Turntable Times

Volume XXX

Number 6

June 1998



# **Turntable Times**

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**Volume XXX      June 1998      Number 6**

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Small Rails ..... Dave Meashey  
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## **Cards and Flowers**

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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**

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The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, June 18, 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**

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Once a common sight at grade crossings, the magnetic flagman, or "wig-wag" signal has long since disappeared from the railroad. Also of note in this view are the cattle guards. The location is Salem's Mill Lane grade crossing in July of 1933. Although blurred from the train speed, a crewman can be spotted catching the cool breeze while seated on the rear platform of this westbound time freight. Norfolk and Western photo, Ken Miller collection.

## **Last Issue Mail Date**

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Last month's issue of Turntable Times was mailed on Monday, May 18th.

## **New Deadline for Turntable Times**

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The deadline for each issue of Turntable Times is now the 18th of the month instead of the 25th. Please make note if you haven't done so. The deadline for the next issue is Thursday, June 18th. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

## **Mixed Freight - June**

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by Mr. Robin Shavers

Another piece of railroading came to an end in March of this year. The former Southern Railway roundhouse located in Alexandria, Virginia was demolished during the first two weeks of March. It performed roundhouse duties between 1916 and 1971.

A few months back, I mentioned how gondolas are making a strong comeback as the nation's railroads claim a larger share of the transportation of scrap metal and finished metal products. Gondolas also play a roll in the transportation of forest products. Here in the south, woodchips are becoming a far more common cargo aboard freights. This cargo can really perfume up the environs when it passes thru. Norfolk Southern has ordered 100 high capacity woodchip gons to help it meet the needs of the growing wood fiber business. The new cars will have a capacity of 8,200 cubic feet which is 8% more than the cars NS currently owns.

By the time you read this, all the N&W style signals located at Burkeville, Virginia should be replaced by what some refer to as Union Pacific style signals.

In a previous MIXED FREIGHT I reported on CSX's program of installing signs at it's 28,000 plus grade crossings to inform the public with accurate information in the event of a stalled vehicle or malfunctioning crossing protection apparatus. The company had set a completion date for April, 1999. The program was instead completed by April of this year.

Shortline railroads are without a doubt, a very important part of America's railroad transporta-

tion network. They contribute more than most of us may realize. They currently number more than 500. They operate about 1/3 of the total route miles and generate nearly 10% of the rail industry's revenues. For the rail hobbyist, they can be a refreshing alternative to the big guys. Older locomotives that have more personality, a wide variety of paint schemes and managements that are usually more tolerant and understanding towards train enthusiast whom conduct themselves responsibly.

The last Great Scale Train Show til October will occur at the Maryland State Fairgrounds on Father's Day weekend June 20-21st. Hours will be the usual 9 a.m. til 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and 10:00 a.m. til 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. For further information please call 410-730-1036.

Like many of you, I attended the last Spring Rail Fair sponsored by The Virginia Museum of Transportation during May 2nd and 3rd. Like a number of you also I headed north to the annual model train sale sponsored by the Shenandoah Valley Model Railroad Club in conjunction with local N.R.H.S. group headquartered at Harrisonburg, VA. Before I headed north from Roanoke that beautiful Sunday morning, I observed Norfolk Southern train 195 as it crossed Campbell Avenue. It was almost 8:00 a.m., as a woman driving a red Toyota approached the train blocked crossing. After a few minutes with no end of the train in sight, her aggravation became vocal as she complained the train would keep her from making it to church on time. With my scanner in one hand and my Canon slung over my shoulder, she yells to me "What are you supposed to be doing?" I inform her that I was just out enjoying the trains. She responds with "You ought to be in church." I in turn responded to her "Mam, I already am." The expression on her face, A KODAK MOMENT.

### **Small Rails - June**

by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers did not have much of a meeting for their first May

meeting. Only the host, Eric Schaffer, was present. We may have to reduce the schedule to one meeting per month until a location can be found for the club. It's hard to keep members coming when there is no layout to work on. Hopefully, a place to meet will be confirmed by the end of summer.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators will meet Saturday May 23rd at the Blue Ridge Live Steamers' site in Burnt Chimney. I will tell how things went next month in Turntable Times.

### **Book Review**

by John Austen

American Steam Locomotive, by Brian Solomon; published by MBI Publishing Company, PO Box 1, 729 Prospect Avenue, Osceola WI 54020; 10 " x 10", 1998; Hardcover; 160pp.; illus. (color); \$29.95

American Steam Locomotive is a very nicely done survey of the subject, including developmental history, evolution, and preservation. This is no mere coffee table book; it is a cogent analysis of the development of the steam locomotive in America, and its constant evolution in response to many factors. The narrative (c. 60,000 words) flows well and is complemented by 200 photographs, three fourths of which are in color. Photographic reproduction is excellent throughout, facilitated by the coated paper used for this slightly over-sized book (10" square: larger than 8-1/2" x 11").

The Acknowledgments page shows contributions by John Hankey, Ed King, Steve Bogan, and many other noted historians. Chapter 1, "Steam Pioneers", recounts all the early developments and early railroads, from the English antecedents to the beginnings of the American railroads. An excellent sidebar (one and a half pages) describes and illustrates (with a color cut-away) how a steam engine works.

Chapter 2, "The Formative Years", describes the development of the American type locomotive in the mid-nineteenth century, and it's elab-

oration into other forms such as the ten-wheeler, Mogul, and Consolidation. A full-page sidebar considers Mason's Janus, a double-ended steam locomotive.

Chapter 3, "The Locomotive Grows", introduces the later nineteenth century developments allowed by advancing technology (air brakes, steel frames, heavier rail, etc.) culminating in the Mikado, Pacific, and Mountain types. A sidebar explains the Whyte system of classification. Chapter 4 examines the various types of articulated locomotives and delves into the technical considerations influencing the development of the Mallet.

Chapter 5, "Superpower and Streamliners", continues the story through the twentieth century and includes sidebars on N&W class J, the New York Central Niagra type, and Timken's "Four Aces" demonstrator locomotive to promote the use of tapered roller bearings. Chapter 6 examines the wide variety of special service engines, from the Forney to the various geared locomotives so popular with the narrow gauge railroads. Tank engines and special locomotives for urban transit lines and suburban service are also considered.

Chapter 7, "Diesel Debut", considers the impact of electric and diesel locomotives on the evolution of the steam locomotive. In Chapter 8, "Steam Technology in the Diesel Age", the heroic efforts of N&W, Pennsy and others to save steam (by use of innovative new designs such as steam turbines) are reviewed.

The narrative concludes with Chapter 9, "American Steam Today", which provides a rather thorough survey of surviving (or revived) mainline steam excursions and tourist steam railroads. The index (a single page) is minimal, but does manage to locate the locomotives illustrated, as well as citing most of the other important points not immediately obvious from the table of contents. The bibliography shows judicious research based on a wide range of books and periodicals.

American Steam Locomotive is a thorough introduction to the subject. There is enough here that most readers will find information that

is new to them. The book is worth the price for the color photos alone. The narrative is a well thought out analysis of the development and evolution of the steam locomotive in America.

## **The Alexandria Roundhouse**

by John Fuller

(The following with the above title and author is from The Timetable, Washington D.C. Chapter, May, 98).

The Southern Railway roundhouse on Holland Lane in Alexandria, Va. was erected by L.W. Hancock around 1917. The adjoining shops were built at the same time by John P. Pettyjohn Co. The 20-bay roundhouse was part of the Southern's huge, historic Alexandria yard that once included another roundhouse which dated from the Civil War era. That roundhouse, built by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, and located in the vicinity of Duke and Henry Streets, was a complete circle. Unfortunately, it burned down in 1973.

The smaller roundhouse was served by a 100-foot diameter turntable until 1953 when it was filled in and replaced by a wye. Since the late 1950s/early 1960s the roundhouse was leased by the railroad to the Curtis Lumber Company.

During the 1980s, Norfolk Southern made the decision to develop the yard commercially. The tracks were removed in 1990, and construction of the mixed-use Carlyle project was started. In October, 1990, Norfolk Southern obtained a rezoning of the yard to permit development of the acreage, including the land on which the roundhouse stood. After it was determined the remaining roundhouse had no historical or architectural significance (per the "Standards of Historic Preservation" of the Secretary of the Interior), its fate was sealed. The city's Archaeology Department documented the roundhouse inn 1993-1994 with drawings and photographs.

Early last year, Norfolk Southern demolished another section of their yard complex, the still-active test facility on S. Henry Street, and began construction of townhouses. One new street

within the complex located has been given the name "Roundhouse Lane."

Curtis Lumber Company was also served notice last year that it had to move from the 20-bay roundhouse. By the end of the year the roundhouse stood empty. Demolition occurred on March 13, 1998.

### **First Military Railroad Built in Virginia**

by Larry Duffee

(The following with the above title and author is from The Mail Pouch, Rappahannock Chapter, April, 98).

**A**fter the Confederate victory at First Manassas in mid-July of 1861, a large body of Southern troops were left in place in earthworks in the Centreville area of Northern Virginia. The problem of supplying these troops led to the construction of the first railroad in history built specifically for a military purpose. Angus J. Johnston II in his book "Virginia Railroads in the Civil War" (published by the Virginia Historical Society, 1961) provides the following information about this little known line.

From the railroad historian's viewpoint the most unusual development during the long lull in the fighting in Northern Virginia after First Manassas was the building of the world's first military railroad. The necessity for a line between Manassas Junction and Centreville came about by virtue of two circumstances. The first was that the Confederate Army of the Potomac, as it was then called, wintered in entrenchments at Centreville some six and one-half miles from the railroad at Manassas Junction. All supplies for Centreville had, therefore, to be hauled in by wagon. This, of course, suggests the second reason for a railroad - the wretched condition of the red-clay roads in the wet fall and winter seasons. Inasmuch as the six-mule teams ate almost as much as they could haul through mud which was generally two feet deep, it soon became apparent that either a railroad spur must be built or the men and animals at Centreville would have a choice of withdraw-

ing or slowly starving to death.

The earliest mention that the Manassas - Centreville line was being considered appeared in the 1861 annual report of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad. The report laconically stated that the directors, on November 7, disapproved of the possible use, on the spur to Centreville, of rails torn up by the military from the line of the Orange & Alexandria east of Manassas Junction. The general public, however, first learned of the proposed railroad when a Richmond newspaper announced, on November 30, that the quartermaster's office was hiring laborers for the immediate construction of the line. Two months, it was estimated, would be required for the completion of the road.

Apparently sufficient labor was secured (most in the form of slaves rented from their owners - ed.) to permit the start of construction in December. According to a deserter from the Sixth Louisiana regiment who left Centreville on January 7, 1862, a force of about 600 men was engaged in the project. Although little is known about the labor force, it is no mystery that the iron for the track came from the South's one unfailing source of supply in 1861, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Throughout the summer and fall, Thomas Sharp (a railroad expert from Richmond working for the Confederates - ed.), as has been seen, was busy supervising the removal of rolling stock and track (from the B&O). Early in November, "Stonewall" Jackson returned to the (Shenandoah) Valley and devoted his energies to uprooting track west of Martinsburg. In fact, Jackson and Sharp were such capable procurement officers that they not only supplied the rails for the Manassas - Centreville line, but they were also able to deliver 3,000 tons of B&O rails to the Winchester & Potomac Railroad in December, 1861.

Presumably the spur was finished sometime in February (1862). Rolling stock of the Orange & Alexandria was immediately pressed into service shuttling supplies to the front. The completed track ran northward in a "lazy s" curve a

short distance west of the Manassas- Centreville highway, ending abruptly in a field a mile below Centreville in the acute angle formed by the highway and the Warrenton turnpike. For a few weeks the little five and one-half mile line was kept busy hauling supplies for the shivering and hungry troops in the earthworks around Centreville. Its life, though a busy one, was destined to be brief. Soon the road was called upon to perform its final service by helping to evacuate the stores it had so recently labored to collect. The end of its usefulness came on March 9, 1862, when General Joseph Johnston ordered a general withdrawal to new positions below the Rappahannock River.

When the Federals occupied the area deserted by the Confederates, they decided to tear up Joe Johnston's railroad and use the slightly worn rails for repairs elsewhere in Virginia. This decision had just been reached when President Garrett of the B&O notified the government that the rails rightly belonged to his railroad. Next day the War Department granted Garrett's wish and before long the much-traveled rails were back on the line they had originally served. Once its rails were removed virtually all traces of the world's first military railroad were speedily obliterated by undergrowth. For all but a very few its brief existence was soon forgotten. Johnston later writes about the Confederate evacuation of the Manassas area in March of 1862. Unable to remove all the supplies they had accumulated, millions of pounds of supplies were either burned or left to rot. He states "several boxcars and additional quantities of supplies were burned at Centreville, terminus of the military railroad."

Johnston also writes about going in search of any trace of the road with Maj. Joseph Hanson. Hanson was the first superintendent of the present Manassas National Battlefield Park and was one of those primarily responsible for the Park's creation. Johnston writes: "It was my pleasure to spend an afternoon with Hanson, in July 1954, tramping through the woods and fields between Manassas and Centreville in search of traces of the railroad's existence. Thanks to his

experience eye, it was possible to find where the railroad had passed Confederate breastworks at its crossing of Bull Run at a point between Mitchell's Ford and Cub Run. We also found places where blasting had been done to clear a path for the track through a rocky area north of Bull Run.

Rob Mesite (Editor of the Mail Pouch) has mentioned that a Virginia historical marker was recently placed near the intersection of Braddock Road and Centreville Road (Route 28) in Centreville to recall the construction of this railroad.

## **A Tale of Two Railroads**

by Mason Y. Cooper

(The following with the above title and author is from the Winchester Chapter newsletter, "High Iron").

Some of the best times I've had while a member of the Winchester Chapter is with the fellow now serving as your Editor. Although it seems only yesterday, several years ago we spent many pleasurable days walking the trails of railroads long abandoned here in our area.

One story we never got to was a pair of interconnected lines, the Rockbridge Alum and Goshen Railroad and the Victoria & Western Railroad. This story takes place along the C & O's Mountain Subdivision west of Staunton, Va. Here the rails leave the valley on a climb through Buffalo Gap in North Mountain to Goshen, Va. Large quantities of iron ore discovered in this area gave rise to a number of furnace operations, financed in the impoverished times following the Civil War by northern interests. Among these the firm of Chamberlain, Lee & Co. of Columbus, Ohio established a charcoal fired furnace at Victoria, Va., two miles south of Goshen. By the 1880's this operation had grown and the firm purchased a large tract further south where ore was dug from an open pit.

To serve this pit the firm constructed a narrow gauge railroad, the Rockbridge Alum & Goshen from a connection with the C & O at Goshen, operating 2 miles to the furnace at Victoria. From

this point the line struck out southward to the pit at Oreville, a total distance of eighteen miles. The line was given common carrier status to participate initially in the interline rate from the mill at Victoria. The railroad opened for business in 1890.

About that time James A. Frazier, manager of the resort at Rockbridge Alum Springs noticed the construction of the iron ore line. In conjunction with the Chamberlain, Lee & Co. operation he incorporated the Victoria & Western Railroad. The Victoria & Western ran eastward from the hotel at Rockbridge Alum Springs two miles to Springs Junction on the Rockbridge Alum & Goshen. Beginning in 1891 passenger operations began over the line to the C & O connection at Goshen. The two connecting narrow gauge lines provided a contrast in services moving passengers to the hotel and iron ore to the furnace. By 1892 the line boasted four trains each way daily, two of which were passenger runs to Rockbridge Alum Springs.

On March 1, 1892 both railroads and the smelter at Victoria were brought into common ownership as the Virginia Iron & Railway Company. As an economic depression swept the land, both passengers to the hotel and orders for iron evaporated. The firm went into receivership in 1896 and was recognized as the Victoria Furnace Company. Passenger service was leased back to Frazier on the former Victoria & Western and continued until 1905 when depleted ore supplies brought about abandonment of the narrow gauge.

Today a spur remains, albeit widened to standard gauge to serve a tie creosote plant on the south end of Goshen. Up until recent times the plant was the main source of employment for the village and a regular stop for CSXT'S "Mountain Local." While several treats, including a N&W caboose can be found here, one can only speculate what it was like to stand here 100 years ago as narrow gauge trains arrived and departed. The remaining traces of the Rockbridge Alum & Goshen and the Victoria & Western are a few scars on the mountainside.

## **Warrenton Happenings**

Plans are being developed for a park in the area of the former Southern Railway depot in Warrenton, VA. The plans include removing the remaining ties (the rails were removed in the early 1980s) and the demolition of the passenger platform. The station is still there and now houses a restaurant. (Washington D.C. Chapter newsletter The Timetable).

## **Norfolk and Western Coaches Find New Home**

A trio of Norfolk and Western Railway coaches involved in the operation of special passenger trains on the Eastern Shore have been given a new lease on life. Two of them (Nos. 1721 and 1730) have recently been purchased from the Tidewater Chapter, NRHS by the Town of Hurlock, Maryland, where they will be stored on trackage that was once a portion of the main line of the old Baltimore, Chesapeake & Atlantic Railway. There they will be safeguarded, and maintained for primary use in the annual Hurlock Fall Festivals. The third member of the trio (No. 1723) remains in the ownership of the Tidewater Chapter, but upon completion of scheduled mechanical work, will again become available to the Delmarva Chapter, NRHS for future operations. These cars, all of the same class, were part of a large order for modern light-weight, deluxe, air-conditioned, reclining-seat coaches ordered from Pullman standard by the Norfolk and Western in 1941 for service in the N&W's principal expresses operating between Norfolk and Cincinnati and Columbus. Following acquisition of the Wabash Railway by the N&W, and the concurrent reductions in passenger train service, they were downgraded from main line status and employed for many years in Chicago commuter service on a former Wabash route, finally being retired in 1980. (From the Delmarva Limited, newsletter of the Delmarva Chapter, NRHS).

## **Jim Wrinn Writing Book On Steam Program**

Jim Wrinn of the Southern Railway Historical Association is compiling material for a book, to be published by Kalmbach, on the Southern Railway - Norfolk Southern steam program. The book will cover the period 1964 to 1994. Jim is seeking photographs, especially people pictures and those with unique angles. He is also looking for people with stories to tell about their experiences with the program. Jim may be contacted at 632 Wood Street, Statesville, North Carolina 28677.

## **Chapter Activities**

by Ken Miller

Activities continue at our 9th Street Maintenance Facility. Work proceeds on completion of the interior of the N&W toolcar No. 1407. Other work has been done on coaches 512, 1827 and 537 in anticipation of their use at several locations. The mechanical crew is also doing some floor repair to the observation-

lounge No. 3305. Help is needed as always, we usually work most every Saturday and Sunday as well as some weeknights during the summer. Contact Jerry Johnson for details.

The archive facility continues to shape up as by the time this reaches you the suspended ceiling will be complete in the east end of the facility and cabinets and materials will begin to migrate upstairs. Of course, this material is not migratory on it's own, so it needs some assistance in making the climb, so contact Ken Miller for work schedules.

## **Chapter Picnic**

Our Chapter picnic will be at Shelter Number 5 at Salem's Longwood Park on August 1st beginning at 5:00 pm. It will be pot luck with the Chapter providing soft drinks and hot dogs and hamburgers. Contact Elizabeth Leedy or Karl Oehring for details and to help coordinate this fun event.

**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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