

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, May 21, 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

This late 1925 scene of the Shaffers Crossing engine facility gives a good view of the roundhouse, coal wharf and lots of vintage cars and locomotives. Norfolk and Western photo.

Last Issue Mail Date

Last month's issue of Turntable Times was mailed on Monday, April 12th.

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.

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 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.

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New Deadline for Turntable Times

Please make note the new deadline for each issue of Turntable Times is now the 18th of every month instead of the 25th. The deadline for the next issue is Monday, May 18th. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

Small Rails-May

by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers met at the home of Rick Anderson for their first April meeting. Clinics in scenery modeling were presented by Norman Washer and Rick

Anderson. The second April meeting was at Shaffers Crossing hobby store. We removed the Christmas module from the display layout and replaced it with another eight-foot module.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators met March 28th, also at the home of Rick Anderson. Members helped Rick at getting a start on his garden railway. Track will occupy a front shrubbery bed, as the previous garden railway had, but the new line will have a different track layout.

April's meeting was at the home of Steve King. Steve's track now has a complete loop. His live steamer got to run free around the new loop and show her stuff. We hope to have another meeting at Steve's when more members can attend, as this is one great little railway.

On the home front, brush has been cleared for the Tall Pines Division of the Geneva & New Bern Railroad. I'm still trying to determine the best final location for the route, and it appears that some forsythia bushes will also need to be trimmed for clearance. I put some test track down, but actual track laying will have to wait until the spring term college classes are over.

"Gift Shop On the Move"

by Grace Helmer

The Chapter's gift shop at the Virginia Museum of Transportation has moved to new quarters within the museum.

On Thursday afternoon, April 16, a group of a dozen chapter volunteers moved the gift shop inventory and fixtures to a newly constructed gift shop area immediately across the hall from the shop location we have operated in for the last ten years. Within a matter of hours, the move (which had been pre-planned for several months by Bill and Ellen Arnold and Grace Helmer) was executed with minimal problems or delays.

The Chapter gift shop was open for business on Friday morning, while souvenir committee volunteers continued the straightening and sorting of inventory in some new fixtures. Visitors will find the space, at present, slightly smaller

than the old location. However, the lighting and color is very much improved.

The move of the gift shop to the new quarters is part of a two-phase redevelopment of the interior of the Transportation Museum. The previous location of the gift shop was converted, amazingly in only eight days by museum staff, to an attractive art gallery. The first showing opened on Friday, April 24 entitled "Trains That Passed in The Night" - a photographic collection of O. Winston Link, the railroad icon, who was the guest of honor at the gala opening of the exhibit.

During the second phase of the improvements at the Virginia Museum of Transportation, the chapter's gift shop will increase in space by 30%, as the museums' entrance will be relocated and the gift shop will take over that space. Hopefully, this will be completed in early 1999.

None of the renovations could have been done without the dedicated help and direction of the Arnold's -Ellen the masterful interior decorator and Bill (which we learned was part monkey by the skill displayed in hanging various pictures, signs, etc). Working together as a unit, the Chapter successfully made this move and didn't miss a beat (well, perhaps a couple!).

The gift shop operation continues to be one of the chapter's prime sources of income as profits continue to generate on an uninterrupted basis. The chapter has successfully operated this all volunteer business at the museum, now for more than 20 years, on a year-round basis. The esprit de corp of the souvenir committee remains high and has a "can do", and "we are here to serve the public" attitude. Not a bad accomplishment for a group of Virginia "rail fans".

First Time on CD! The Fading Giant.

○ Winston Link's new CD "The Fading Giant" featuring the sounds of N&W steam locomotives is now available in the Roanoke Chapter NRHS Gift Shop in the Virginia Museum of Transportation. No excursion service is on this CD, just the sound of working steam in

day to day service. Link not only photographed, but made some amazing recordings. Virtually unavailable for the past 20 years, this classic record made in western Virginia in the late 1950s comes to life again. Newly remastered and improved, this disc along with a small book is only \$20 + \$5 S&H.

We can take your phone order via 540-982-3595 with a Visa or Master Card (10:00 am - 5:00pm), or by check mailed to: Gift Shop, Roanoke Chapter NRHS, P.O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA. 24032-1322.

A Track Note For You

by Sherry Chandler

I am selling subscriptions to "The Railway Evangelist". This is a wonderful publication of Christian articles, poems, stories and information - all related to trains and railways. The cost is only \$6.00 per year and is published bi-monthly. The last issue featured a notice about the upcoming NRHS National Convention.

If interested, please contact Sherry Chandler at P.O. Box 1863, Roanoke, VA. 24008, by phone at 540-427-0545, or see her at the May Chapter meeting when she will have a copy to look at.

Steam on the Rack

by Dave Meashey

While the title sounds like a story from the Spanish Inquisition, it's really not quite that sinister. It's about some cleverly-designed Swiss steam locomotives that could work both by normal adhesion traction, and also engage a third rack rail on steeper sections of the railroad. Other steam powered rack and cog rail locomotives have been built. Perhaps the ones we know best are the existing locomotives at the Mount Washington Cog Railway, or the steam locomotives used on the Pike's Peak Cog Railway. The Swiss locomotives are unusual because they worked like normal adhesion locomotives on the flatter sections of a railway, then engaged a second set of cylinders for rack rail working.

LGB will begin manufacturing a large scale model of this locomotive in 1998. Like its prototype, the model will have a second set of cylinders mounted above the first, that engage and start to run when the model begins traversing rack rail track. If the steam model works as well as the electric rack rail locomotive that I own, it should be quite a powerful little locomotive. When on the rack rail track, the prototype locomotives were actually working as compounds, with the rack cylinders exhausting steam to the adhesion cylinders. With two sets of crossheads and valve gear working at the same time, one set above the other, the whole locomotive looked like a threshing machine run amok.

The video tape "Relics of the Raj" by Nick Lera shows some of these locomotives in action in India. At the time of the taping the line was still in service. Because the railway climbed some steep mountain grades, it offered some unusually beautiful views. This made the line popular with Indian honeymoon couples, since it was a beautiful trip and the line terminated at a mountain resort. If you can borrow a copy of the tape, these locomotives are really something to see in action.

Tweetsie Has All Its Track Again

(From the "Charlotte Observer, Tuesday, March 1, 1998", via Piedmont Flyer, Piedmont Carolinas Chapter, April, 98).

In the April issue of Turntable Time we featured a story about Tweetsie Railroad and the removal of 40 feet of its track.

Well now the Tweetsie Railroad has those 40 feet of its track back along with renewed court protection from any more disruptions from an investor group seeking to buy the N.C. mountain tourist attraction.

A judge in Avery County prohibited Young Realty Investments from interfering with railroad operations until litigation is resolved over the validity of a land lease for part of the track. Such a trial could take one or two years.

Meanwhile, the railroad company has rebuilt

40 feet of track the investors dug out in late February and plans to start its season as usual in late May.

Lawyers in the case say Judge Forrest Bridges of N.C. Superior Court indicated it was too early to tell which side might win the lease dispute but that a temporary restraining order issued Feb. 18th should be continued in the meantime.

'Rolling hotel' tours South by Charles Slack

(From the March 22, 1998 Richmond Times Dispatch, submitted by Paul M. Howell).

The American Orient Express pulled slowly out of Washington's Union Station yesterday and into a drizzly gray morning of mists rising off the Potomac River.

The mahogany interior of the train intensified the darkness of the day. Walking the shoulder-width corridors, past rows of burnished doorways hiding sleeping berths, you half-expected to encounter Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman emerging from one of the suites, shrouded in a cloud of intrigue and Turkish tobacco.

But of course that's the charm of this private, continent-hopping rail service and its refurbished 1940s - and '50s-era railroad cars.

This is not so much train travel the way it used to be as train travel the way it would be if you took all your good memories, forgot the bed and then laid on a thick layer of rose-colored nostalgia.

Paying cruise-ship prices, the 90 passengers aboard the American Orient Express are treated to fine dining, fresh-cut flowers and impeccable service from a staff of 37.

By the early afternoon, this rolling dream, powered by Amtrak locomotives, arrived in Richmond, backed onto a spur line and did something that no train has done in 22 years; it pulled to a stop at the old Broad Street Station.

The station is now home to the Science Museum of Virginia, which has spent the past several years refurbishing the passenger canopies behind the museum, sprucing up the old boarding areas and installing a half-mile of

track to connect the museum to the spur line. The museum hopes to attract additional excursion trains, but the main purpose of the renovations is for a major transportation exhibit to be called "On the Move."

As the train pulled in yesterday under an obliging sun that burned off the rain clouds, passengers were welcomed by speeches, a couple of hundred onlookers, even a brass band.

"Today marks the return of trains to historic Broad Street Station," Dr. Walter Witschey, director of the Science Museum, told the crowd. The last passenger train pulled out of the station in 1976, as Amtrak moved to more modest digs at Staples Mill Road in Henrico County.

The American Orient Express will remain at the museum through tonight as passengers tour Richmond and Charlottesville. The train itself won't be open for public tours, but museum goers can walk around it.

For the passengers, Richmond is the first stop on a weeklong tour of the "Antebellum South" that will take them on to Charleston, S.C.: Savannah, Ga.; Mobile, Ala.; and New Orleans. Prices range from \$2,590 per person for a standard sleeper to more than \$5,000 for a Presidential Suite, a comparatively roomy berth with its own shower. Others share showers. Spaces are cramped; this is, after all, a train.

This is the first Southern journey for the train, which also runs luxury excursions cross country, across Canada, and to the National Parks of the West, among others. A reverse Southern trip, starting in New Orleans and finishing in Washington, with a stop in Richmond, will be offered April 5-11.

The American Orient Express is now in its fourth year. Henry L. Hillman Jr., an investor from Portland, Ore., who bought the company last year, was on the train yesterday with his wife, Kiki.

"This way of traveling and touring the United States is a fabulous way of doing it," said Hillman, sounding more like a passenger than the owner.

Hillman plans to add several more trains to his current fleet of one. With 7 million annual cruise passengers in the United States and 3,000 annual American Orient express passengers, he said, there's room to expand.

Hillman sat in an elegant dining car, fresh from \$1 million in renovations. It featured fine line table cloths, inlaid woodwork, mahogany wine cabinets with cut glass windows, polished rails and upholstered chairs. At night in the Rocky Mountain club car, passengers could sip cocktails under murals of the mountains and gold-flecked stars as a pianist tickled a baby grand.

"We are a five-star rolling hotel," beamed Rut Poladitmontri, director of passenger services. Passengers generally seemed to concur. Jo Agar, a resident of the Grand Cayman Islands, was making his third journey aboard the train with his wife, Yael. Sipping a glass of Dom Perignon champagne, he said: "We're learning the U.S.A. If we used the motorway, we wouldn't be going through these places."

Herb Sandwein, a retired real estate developer from Massachusetts who has traveled the original Orient Express in Europe, said the American version trumps the original comfort (air-conditioning and heating for example) if not in the opulence of the furnishings.

Diane Brooke of Cape Cod said: "I love the South. I have always wanted to see more. There's a whole atmosphere of romance about trains."

The Cliffside Railroad by John McRae

(From the North Carolina Transportation Museum's Shop Talk, Winter, 1998).

Trained chickens.

Trained, because they shared a love of railroading with the fine breed of men known as railroaders.

Four particular chickens were ardent fans of North Carolina's Cliffside Railroad, legend has it. In fact, were railfans extraordinaire!

The story of the Cliffside Railroad chickens goes back to the 1930s. The story is true, though it sounds romanticized.

One day as one of the railroad's steam locomotives approached Cliffside Junction on the 3.7 mile line, the fireman, Van McOpsom, saw a bantam hen with her three chicks on the right-of-way beside their nest.

Some folks say the chicks had already hatched. Others say they were still on the way. But in either case the train was stopped and the chickens and their nest were put on board the locomotive's tender.

The next day, McOpsum stopped the train again and gathered up the chickens for a short ride.

After repeatedly being put on the train at the sound of the whistle announcing the train's movement, the story goes that the chickens began to place themselves on the tender. And soon they learned a new trick: Whenever the train stopped or pulled into the shop between runs, chickens flapped to the ground to scratch and peck about the yards. When the whistle called, they could be seen scurrying along to get on board.

The railroaders named the mother hen Bessie, after the wife of Cliffside's Walter Haynes, and one of the community's leading ladies.

The chicks were named Charlie, for the president of the railroad, Charles Haynes; Maurice, for Maurice Hendrick, then secretary of the railroad and general manager of the mill in Cliffside; and Hollis, for Hollis Owens, the railroad's treasurer.

The railfanning family of chickens were a hit, and everyone knew that the story would live on long after the railroad might stop operations.

Later, an article in TRAINS magazine by H. Reid drew visitors and mail from around the world to see the spectacle of these trained chickens.

Alas, neither the chickens nor the Cliffside Railroad lasted.

The little line formed in 1905 to serve the textile mill there, shut down in 1992 and officially closed in the summer of 1997.

But the story of the Cliffside, even without the chickens, is fascinating.

A local business man, R.R. Haynes, started the mill in 1899. Transportation of the mill's prod-

ucts was of a great concern. The closest railroad was the Seaboard Air Line, slightly less than 4 miles away. Haynes had discussed the matter with his good friend, B. D. Heath, a prominent businessman in the Carolinas. And the two launched the railroad.

Philip White, principal of Cliffside Elementary School and the town's historian, has built a wealth of history on the road.

One of his favorites is about the train's engineer, who played a prank on the local school children.

It was usual for the train to be returning to Cliffside when the children were returning to school after eating lunch at home. Customarily, the engineer stopped the train and boarded those who lived along the right-of-way, bringing them back to the school grounds.

"All they had to do when the train stopped was jump off, run across the ballfield, and there they were at the schoolhouse," White said.

The kids apparently took the free rides for granted. To tease them, the engineer one day decided not to stop to let them off, and instead took them all the way to the scheduled stop. With a good laugh, White adds, "Of course, they were late!"

The Cliffside started out with three second-hand 15-ton Forney Type locomotives in its earliest years and three second-hand passenger cars. That service lasted until 1926 when the automobile became a dependable mode of transportation, especially for such short distances.

The line was extended to Avondale in 1916 when Haynes Mill began operations.

Raw materials as well as supplies for the community were hauled into Cliffside and Avondale, and the finished products were hauled the other direction to Cliffside Junction for shipment on the Seaboard to market. In fact, numerous sources have indicated that the railroad hauled over 50,000 tons of textiles from the factories for many years.

In later years, Cliffside Railroad locomotive 40, a beautiful 2-8-0 with a capped stack, and 110, a low-strung Prairie type, became celebrities

themselves by virtue of their longevity. Years after most other railroads had switched to diesels, the Cliffside's steamers kept going - until July 20, 1962. Two General Electric diesels took over, and one served until the line's end.

Today, No. 40, built in 1925, hauls tourists for the New Hope & Ivyland Railroad in Pennsylvania. No. 110 is on display at the Stone Mountain Scenic Railroad near Atlanta. One of the Cliffside's wooden cabooses is permanent part of the N.C. Transportation Museum Collection, parked on track No. 1 in the roundhouse.

They're there today to remind us of the colorful little railroad that once made its way through the countryside of Rutherford County, N.C. to the delight of all who had the good fortune to know the line, chickens and humans alike.

NRHS Spring BOD Meeting

by Bill Arnold

How do you select an early spring weekend two years in advance that will provide relatively mild temperatures and/or a rain (or snow) free Saturday? You just do it. The Roanoke Chapter was blessed with both during the NRHS Spring Board of Directors meeting at Roanoke on March 27-29. Everything happened as planned—from the O. Winston Link slide/audio program (by me) on Friday night, the final BOD meeting on Sunday. True, Amtrak schedules were and inconvenience to some but who can control that?

Our Saturday visits to Norfolk Southern's East End car shops and the Shaffers Crossing facility were well received by all, with lots of information provided to our guests by NS personnel. Our short train ride and tour at our 9th Street Maintenance Facility met with appreciative thanks and the lunch and VMT tour went off as planned, although the 611 "motive" power broke down a couple of times. The final Saturday event was an elegant banquet in the Crystal Ballroom at the Hotel Roanoke. Louis Newton's presentation on the "Jawn Henry" No. 2300 provided lots of little known highlights and

sidelights on this short lived locomotive giant.

Following in an excerpt from one of the letters we received congratulating the Roanoke Chapter for this undertaking. "It's very obvious that a lot of work was done by your Chapter people in preparing for this gathering, and the events you put on were highly enjoyable as well as educational. I was certainly impressed by Norfolk Southern's shop complex (made me proud to be a real small shareholder!), and I found the banquet to be a really pleasant experience."

We had a total of 135 out of town registrations (the largest Spring/Fall BOD meeting in some time) I believe they all had a great time and hopefully we exceeded their expectations. My sincere thanks to all Roanoke Chapter members who participated in another highly success-

ful Chapter sponsored event.

Our thanks also go out to our great hosts at Norfolk Southern who gave up their Saturday off to provide the tours.



Richard D. Shell Photo

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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