

Turntable Times

Volume XXX

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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, November 19, 1998 at 7:30 pm. This meeting is also the annual meeting with election of directors. Please make every effort to attend. The meeting will be at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

Cover Photo

Holiday seasons bring to mind travel. By the mid 1950s, railroad passenger traffic had begun its decline from just a few years before. Travel was still an event at the time of this March 15, 1954 scene. The Sunday best dress was rule of the day for these posed "passengers" at the Roanoke station. They could hardly have guessed what a radically different railroad would be there only six years later. Norfolk and Western Photo.

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Wednesday, November 18th, 1998. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of Crystal Spring and McClanahan Street on Thursday, November 19, 1998. 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.

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will be electing five (5) directors. Election will be by secret ballot. Any member may vote by absentee ballot. The nominees will be included in the November Turntable Times, and announced at the October meeting.

Please Note: if you are interested in running, or know of another chapter member who is, please contact the nominating committee as soon as possible.

To vote by absentee ballot, one must:

1 - Request an absentee ballot from the Secretary or a member of the nominating committee. Members of the nominating committee are Chairman Walt Alexander, Al Carroll and Jim Molinary. 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 mailing envelope and mail to;

Roanoke Chapter, N.R.H.S.

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.

Candidates for Chapter Elections

The candidates for the five positions on the Chapter board are listed below. Nominees for the November election are as follows:

Joe Fagin*

Paul M. Howell*

Bill Mason

Dave Meashey

Ken Miller*

Karl Oehring

Richard D. Shell*

Wanda Troutman*

* Indicates incumbent

Chapter Banquet

Mark your calendars now, Saturday night December 12th beginning at 6:30 pm is our annual banquet at the Hotel Roanoke.

We offer a choice of two different entrees, a chicken or beef, all will include the famous Hotel Roanoke Peanut Soup and vegetables and a dessert. The cost of this is \$25 per person, contact Dave Helmer at 366-2169 for reservations. Please reserve early to help us make this a special event. Sign up will also be available at the November meeting.

Small Rails - November

by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers held their October meeting at The Rail Yard hobby store. Members made plans for the show at the Salem Civic Center. This show will be a toy, doll, and train show on October 24th and 25th. While other layouts have been exhibited at the show, our club is the only local group present.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators met Sunday, September 27th at the home of Bill and Nancy Hughes in Roanoke. The track on the Hughes' garden railway was completed this summer. Bill made a beautiful wood bridge for the curve closest to their deck. The family's dog has fully tested the bridge, as she delights in running beneath it and bumping it with her tail. Compared to that stress test, the trains should cause no problems for the bridge.

The Suburban Tanks

by Dave Meashey

When someone mentions a tank locomotive, most of us are inclined to picture small switching and industrial locomotives. Sometimes we may think of locomotives designed for logging or mining railroads, but few railroad enthusiasts would envision a locomotive designed for passenger service. And yet, some tank locomotives were designed for passenger service, specifically for conveying people to and from work in our cities.

Most of these locomotives were built during the early part of this century, before the electric commuter lines became popular. Unlike their switching, slow freight, and industrial brethren, the suburban tanks had relatively high drive wheels. Of the examples I have dimensions for: a New York Central 2-4-4T had 57 inch diameter

drivers; a Chicago and Northwestern Indiana 2-6-2T had 63 inch diameter drivers; a Reading 2-6-4T had 61 inch diameter drivers; and a hefty Boston and Albany 4-6-6T had 63 inch diameter drivers.

These mid-sized drive wheels allowed the suburban tank locomotives to have good tractive effort while starting a train, but still run at a respectable speed once they had the train started. The lack of a tender allowed the locomotives to run around their trains at the end of the line without having to be turned. The short suburban runs kept the locomotives from getting too thirsty even though their water supply was more limited than on a tender locomotive.

While most suburban tank locomotives were fairly light and leggy in appearance, the Reading locomotive's Wootten firebox and substantial coal and water bunker give it a bulky look. But the real champ for heft is the Boston and Albany 4-6-6t. This locomotive looks like some hot rod shop took a Boston and Albany Hudson and cut and welded it into a 4-6-6T. The locomotive weighed in at 352,000 pounds! That's 176 tons, folks. A respectable weight for any steam locomotive.

The suburban tanks soon lost out to electrified commuter lines, but they must have been quite a spectacle with a train in their heyday.

Washington Chapter Offers Pullman China

Pullman China Indian Tree Pattern! One of the most recognized, beautiful, and sought after of all railroad china patterns. Now you can have it. The

Chapter is proud to announce the public sales of new reproduction Pullman Indian Tree Pattern China. The Chapter is offering the china for sale in three groupings, - a basic place setting, a full

place setting, and individual coffee mugs. The china uses the same pattern above and is produced by the manufacturer of the original Pullman Indian Tree Pattern China.

This is fine, heavy, durable, dishwasher safe china suitable for use in your home, on your own rail car, or in a restaurant or other location, especially those with a train motif. The china is being sold on a subscription basis. Orders will be shipped via UPS in Spring, 1999. Your china will be professionally packed for shipment; see shipping table for charges. Items broken in shipment will be replaced at no charge upon return. Maryland residents must add 5% sales tax.

BASIC PLACE SETTING

Oatmeal Bowl, Large Platter, Coffee Cup, Coffee Saucer and Tea Plate. \$79.00

FULL PLACE SETTING

All pieces in the Basic Place Setting plus Breakfast and Bread & Butter Plates. ... \$109.00

COFFEE MUG

A modern coffee mug which is an adaptation of the Pullman Indian Tree design. \$8.95
Shipping, Handling, and Insurance Charges

Shipping Charge First Place Setting ... \$18.00

Each Additional Place Setting \$10.00

First Mug \$6.50

Each Additional Mug \$4.00

For more information, call 301-292-9592 or e-mail pullmanhb@erols.com.

Washington, D. C. Chapter NRHS

c/o Henry Bielstein

13425 Reid Circle

Ft. Washington, MD 20744-6522

301-292-9592

Salt Track Shifter-Internet Excerpts

Edited by Harold Castleman

This may become a regular feature of the Turntable Times as items that may be of interest to Roanoke Chapter members are culled from various bulletin boards and message boards on the internet. These items may not always be totally accurate, hence the name Salt Track Shifter, since each item should be "taken with a grain of salt."

The Norfolk and Western Railway "officially" became a fallen flag on Aug. 31, having existed as a "paper railroad" since its merger with the Southern Railway into Norfolk Southern Corp. Likewise, Conrail may continue to exist at, sort of, half staff for sometime to come.

It all starts with the federal government. In order to avoid tax consequences of actual physical absorption of their respective portions of Conrail, NS and CSX have elected to maintain the Conrail corporate structure intact. Thus, they don't pay capital gains tax on the difference between what they paid for CR and its actual value.

The Conrail board of directors will be half CSX and half NS with annual rotating chairmanship. CSX and NS, in turn, have created dummy corporations that will lease from Conrail their respective portions. These will be NYC and PRR corporations, respectively.

Restenciling of equipment becomes important because after the "split date" (the actual day when CR is split up) it will be impossible to tell which cars lettered CR accrue revenue to CSX and which to NS. Therefore, ALL "NYC" cars will be restenciled before split date, while PRR cars may be done at a slower rate, or not at all.

After split date, any car with CR, PRR, RDG, LV, EL, etc. reporting marks will automatically be an NS car for computer tracking and waybillings purposes. Since CSX gets 48 per cent of the

fleet, it is simpler to restencil the smaller number of cars right away.

Casting Call

It's not too unusual to find replicas of sailing ships or historic buildings. But locomotive replicas are much rarer. During the past 70 some years, only three have been built in the United States, but thanks to industrialist Stanley Gentry, of Hibbing, Minn., there will be a replica of Virginia & Truckee Railroad's first locomotive, the "Lyon".

The original engine was built by the Union Iron Works of San Francisco in 1869. It was a small 2-6-0 freight engine weighing only about 20 tons, but its drivers wheels provided enough power to overcome the steep grades of the V&T in Nevada. The line hauled silver from the mines around Virginia City to mills on the Carson River for stamping.

Eventually the silver ore gave out, but the railroad ran on until 1950, its ancient equipment, romantic past, and Wild West setting making it a favorite among railway enthusiasts. Gentry is one V&T enthusiast who can afford to take his hobby beyond the matchbook level.

Creation of the replica locomotive has fallen to the renown shops of the Strasburg Rail Road. Work on the engine is done between regular repairs of Strasburg equipment and time-critical outside jobs.

To date, the drivers, frame, cylinder saddle and deck plate have been completed. The cylinders are under way, but quite a bit remains to be done, so steam-up is still several years away.

In early March word was the first cylinder casting was defective, but came as no surprise to David Reisig, a veteran patternmaker with 49 years' experience in the business. The cylinder

continued on page 7



From the ARCHIVES

by Ken Miller

This will be an occasional column included in the Turntable Times featuring some items from our Archive facility, hopefully that will be of interest to everyone. Comments and questions will be gladly taken at the post office box.

Negative Number 9855-A.

It was a nice afternoon in mid-April of 1927 when the Norfolk and Western photographer aimed his 8 x10" view camera off of a downtown Roanoke roof towards the railroad's facilities. Not a lot of activity is seen her only a few

people can be seen crosses the Jefferson Street crossing. Only a few automobiles are moving here, Roanokers did not have many cars as the trolleys were still good enough for most everyone.

Hotel Roanoke still had its genteel old English Inn appearance with ivy covered walls, advertising its setting "on a ten acre park in the city", room prices were advertised as between \$2.50 and \$4.50 per day, quite a price considering that you could buy a quality candy bar for only a nickel and a good car for about \$400. It would only be a few years before the Hotel would undergo the first of many facelifts.

Mid afternoon finds almost no activity in the passenger station, a chance for the workers to



catch up from the morning rush, it would be at least another 2 hours before train 23 arrived for a brief stop before heading west for its overnight ride to Columbus.

Passengers on this train suffered from lots of switching. A stop at Lynchburg saw a 12-1 sleeper from Durham added, then the short top in Roanoke saw a parlor car removed and a diner added. Finally at Bluefield, a 16 section sleeper was added. Undoubtedly this was to handle the many coal company employees headed west on business. Finally, just after most everyone got to sleep, the diner would be set out at Williamson, only to return east on Number 24 a few hours later.

Also of interest in our view is the “arcade”

connecting the station with a hotel and Salem Avenue. This would last until the late 1940s when the station was remodeled to more of its present condition. The arcade by then was apparently becoming pretty seedy and not considered an important connection to the area from downtown.

The city auditorium stands just behind the station in this view and was the home of many mass meetings of the N&W family over the years.



9855-A

of a steam locomotive has a complicated network of hollow interior passageways, or ports. Positioning the cores used to create these passageways, and correctly packing sand to support them, is a critical part of the foundryman's job.

Typically the first few castings will be failures when done even by the most experienced men, if the job is a complex or unusual one. And they don't come much more difficult than cylinders needed for an 1869 steamer. In this case one core shifted, making the wall thickness too great at the bottom of one side and too thin at the top. To make matters worse, the core failed and the passageway filled with iron.

On the right side the molten iron mixed with the sand to form a spongy fill inside the steam ports. So the molders tried again. They packed the sand more tightly against the cores. They placed the mold right side up rather than upside down, to put less pressure on the steam port side of the cylinder. And they poured the molten metal at a lower temperature.

The metal is common gray iron, a favorite material for machinery fabrication because it is easy to cast and machine. It is strong in compression but less so in tension, where it tends to crack or break. While cast iron is abundant and cheap, the cost of patternmaking and casting has made it less competitive with steel plate fabrication in modern times.

The foreman at the Fairmount Foundry in Hamburg, Pa. has promised his men will produce two perfect cylinder castings no matter what it takes. Strasburg chief mechanical officer Linn Moedinger is determined to have the engine on its wheels by December this year. That will leave the big job of the boiler and a great number of other minor pieces to be done.

No Virtual Rail Tour!

An interesting train was observed on the

morning of Sept.29 heading west (compass North) on the former Southern Pacific Coast Line in Chatsworth (Northwest Los Angeles) about to enter Tunnels 26, 27 and 28.

The train had been chartered by mega-millionaire Bill Gates of Microsoft fame for a western tour. The crew was reporting problems with the lead unit and the train was crawling up the grade approaching the 7000-foot Santa Susana Tunnel so the dispatcher was putting the BNSF train in the hole for two eastbound Metrolink commuter trains.

The special passed through Sacramento around 6:30 p.m. and headed up toward Roseville. It changed crews at the Amtrak Depot and departed Roseville just after 7 up toward Donner Pass where it triggered the hot box detector. The crew inspected the train but a short time later the same two offending axles triggered the next detector. The crew was under the impression the dome car would have to be set out but passenger cars are exempt unless the journal is hot to the touch.

The consist included:

BNSF 1039

Wisconsin Southern 10C & 10A (E8s)

Wisconsin Southern "Northern Pass" (maroon and silver baggage car)

Wisconsin Southern "Northern Plains" (maroon and silver)

"Missouri River" (green)

Wisconsin Southern "Northern Nites" (maroon and silver)

Wisconsin Southern "Northern Sky" (maroon and silver "Dome Car")

BNSF "Deschutes River" (silver)

BNSF "Mississippi River" (silver)

Wisconsin Southern "Northern View" (maroon and silver "Dome Business Car")

C&O 614 Test Run, Excursions

Ross Rowland's Iron Horse Enterprises with the cooperation and support of NJ Transit, was slated to operate a 614 test trip Saturday, Oct. 3 from Hoboken, N.J. to Port Jervis, N.Y. in preparation for the former C&O Greenbrier's set of excursions Oct. 10-11, 17-18 and Oct. 31-Nov. 1 over that route.

The consist was to include the tool car "New Hope", one of the reserved open-window coaches, and the four first-class cars that are used in the Iron Horse Ramble consist.

The primary purpose of the trip is to thoroughly test the new cab signal and speed control systems recently installed on the 614 at NJ Transit's Meadowlands Maintenance Center (MMC, nicknamed Mickey Mouse Club) and to check the new piston rings and other improvements made to the engine by the Iron Horse (New Hope & Ivyland) locomotive crew.

Only invited members of the press, Iron Horse crew members, mechanics from NJ Transit and Union Switch and Signal personnel were to be allowed on board.

Electrification in the Works for Caltrain?

With dreams of a downtown San Francisco connection deferred indefinitely, Caltrain has set its sights on another grand vision - electrifying the rail system. The Peninsula rail is releasing a study outlining an ambitious 10-15-year modernization program that would include electrifying the rail line and overhauling its trains and stations.

Combined, modernization and electrification of the system would cut travel time between San Francisco and San Jose by 20 minutes, to about an hour - faster than driving during commute times.

But there is disagreement on which of the two projects should be Caltrain's priority.

Caltrain commissioned the report, called the Rapid Rail Study, after its longtime dream of a

downtown station was shelved about a year ago because of the high projected cost and opposition from the city of San Francisco.

Transit officials hoped to find ways to use funds previously earmarked for the aborted project. The study evaluated projects totaling more than \$1.7 billion. However, the Caltrain staff has identified only about \$600 million in available funding, mainly from state, local and federal sources.

Most of the \$600 million is money the agency expected to use for the downtown project. The debate over whether to electrify or to rehabilitate the system could have far-reaching implications for Caltrain.

The rail line's ridership has risen during the past five years from 22,000 average weekday riders in 1993 to 27,000 today. But some transit advocates and officials worry that the line, with its aging tracks and structures, needs a major overhaul. They say that ridership could be threatened by BART's coming extension to San Francisco International Airport and Millbrae.

Mechanical Report

by Ken Miller

On November 5th our Alco T-6 No. 41 finally left our 9th Street Maintenance Facility after nearly two weeks of phone calls to Norfolk Southern. Why it is so hard to move a simple working locomotive is beyond us. Especially since we had paid for the movement almost four weeks before. It went to Shaffers Crossing Engine Facility for a quick check over and was supposed to leave on a train headed north that night. However, as of Saturday the 7th, she was still parked almost adjacent to the hump looking like a locomotive should in its recently painted black with yellow gold lettering. The 41 is headed to Bealington, West Virginia for service on the new West Virginia

Central. She is expected to act as backup power in freight service and primary motive power for our excursion operations in 1999.

It has been no easy task preparing her for service as she has to be fully FRA compliant. The biggest portion of this was updating of the brake system since it had been over ten years since the unit was last serviced. She will be inspected by a CSX inspector at Grafton and "blue carded" for service. The 41 essentially went through her Federal Inspection here, by the book, but as none of us are qualified as Federal Inspectors, we could not legally sign off on the blue card.

Other work continues at the facility completion of the interior renovations on Tool Car No. 1407 is close at hand. Interior work on dinette-dormitory No. 1148 is beginning and the other coaches 537 and 1827 should have been making their way back from Spencer by now. 512 is still in service in Georgia but expected to return shortly.

Archive Report

by Ken Miller

Our Archival Facility at the 9th Street Facility continues to improve with additional work. Most of the heavy work is now done as far as construction goes and the carrying of the heavy materials is now over.

The majority of the work remaining is now to sort, catalogue and protect materials. A new computer should soon be in hand to enter the catalogue data for an electronic data base.

We now have a fax number for general use in contacting the Chapter (540) 927-4501. Archival requests, gift shop orders can be requested at this number. It is a 24 hour a day line. A cover sheet should be included directing the fax to the proper channel. The machine will be checked several times a week and faxes for-

warded to the parties on a timely basis.

Copies of archival materials will be available at standard rates which will be published at a later date. We have a large assortment of materials yet to sort however and your request may take some time to fill. Remember, this is all volunteer and time availability is limited.

We recently received a very nice donation of a number of rail history books from Jim and Kathy Overholser, we do indeed appreciate them.

We also received a variety of EMD sales materials and a nice 1938 Virginian employee timetable from Bill Mason.

Donation of any materials is appreciated and documented, feel free to contact me regarding anything you would care to offer.

Regular cataloging work sessions are hoped to commence in the near future. At the November meeting will be a sign up to express your interest in schedules for these sessions, please help out. There is a lot of interesting materials available and more will be out as time permits.

Planned for the December or January issue will be offers of some reproduction drawings and materials.

One of the items to be offered in the near future will be a reproduction of a Virginian Railway Standards Book. I personally have been involved in collecting Virginian and N&W for over 30 years, this is the very first one of these books I have ever seen! After asking former VGN employees about such an item over the years, not one of them could remember ever seeing a standards book. This is perhaps understandable since the Virginian was a smaller road with somewhat limited branches and other facilities.

The book will be edited, eliminating drawings of track and materials of little interest, nothing significant will be removed and for those truly interested a photocopy packet of everything

eliminated will also be available. The condition of all the drawings is excellent and the book had more than a few drawings that are real eye-openers. Look for its availability sometime around springtime. It will be a modelers favorite.

Custom Design License Plates

In an article on specialized license plates in the Friday November 6th issue of USA Today, it was mentioned that the state of Pennsylvania would be issuing a plate commemorating the Pennsylvania Railroad. It will feature the painting "When the Broadway meets the Dawn."

The article reports that you can choose one of 50 different custom designs in Virginia.

So Virginia, how about a plate that features the famous N&W photo of the 607 and Powhatan Arrow along the New River? Seems about time, since the N&W is technically no more. No specifically Virginia related railroad image comes to mind any better than this one.

General Office Building Tour

by Ken Miller

On Friday, October 9 a group of chapter members arrived in front of the old N&W office buildings for a guided tour of the former facilities. Lead by Mark McConnel of the Echols•Sparger architectural firm we spent an interesting hour seeing the buildings from top to bottom.

Most members had never actually been inside the offices while still in service, and the ones who had worked there offered their insights during the tour. After leaving the office, we proceeded to the passenger station where for many it was the first time inside since 1971.

The buildings are in generally good shape and are fortunately slated for preservation and adaptive reuse.

We offer our thanks to Mr. McConnel and Downtown Roanoke in their cooperation of this tour.

Our nearby members were mailed postal cards regarding the tour, since it came about on a rather short notice. Our thanks to Kathy Overholser who organized this outing.

Book Review

by John Austen

The Outer Station, by Benjamin L. Bernhart;
The Outer Station Project, PO Box 13972
Reading PA 19612; 1998. 116pp. + viii; 8-1/2" x 11" hardcover; \$25.00 (plus \$2.00 shipping per order)

This is a revised and expanded new edition of the author's 1991 history of the outer station at Reading Pennsylvania. This is a complete history of the station, from its construction in 1874 to the fire that destroyed it in 1978. That fire took with it much of the documentary history of the station. Other records were consigned to portable incinerators when the company was absorbed into CONRAIL. But even in the face of such great loss (which the author compares to the burning of the library at Alexandria in ancient times) Mr. Bernhart's patient research and solid scholarship have prevailed.

The Outer Station housed the offices of the superintendent of the Reading Division, along with dispatchers, division engineer, and other staff, including the division staffs of two subsidiary branch lines. It included a restaurant and all the usual accommodations (baggage, express, newsstand,

telegraph office, etc.). But one of the most interesting features is its situation in a wye, with trainsheds and platforms for all three divisions. This makes for an interesting assortment of bridges (nicely covered in text and illustrations),

including a suspension bridge by the Roebling company of Brooklyn bridge fame, and a masonry skew arch bridge akin to one on the Allegheny Portage Railroad.

There are nearly twice as many photographs as in the original edition, including a new full color section. The book is well illustrated with over 140 carefully chosen photographs from many sources, including some two dozen from the company magazine. Other documents, figures and tables are also presented, including a list of all daily trains calling at the station (c. 1930) showing platform location and departure time.

Photo reproduction is good. This hardback edition is printed on coated paper. Layout, editing and proofreading are first rate. Clearly this book was inspired with the pride and loving attention to detail shown by the company in its heyday. The railroad retained a florist on the payroll: each June he and the gardener would

transplant 14,000 flowers from the railroad hot-house to the grounds of the station, replicating the company logo and other designs. This is nicely illustrated in a full-color photograph on the dust jacket.

This book should appeal to a wide audience. There are enough personal glimpses to delight a social historian as well as the general reader. There are enough plans, photos, and drawings to satisfy the modelers along with the architects and engineers. Railroad organization and operations shine fourth in the narrative.

This expanded hardcover edition is a "must have" volume for any railroad station historian or Reading railroad fan. We should all be inspired by the solid scholarship of this useful addition to the literature of railroad history, for, as the author says in the preface: "Saving local history begins with one person."

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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