



Turntable
TIMES

Volume 33, Number 11

November 2001

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





Turntable TIMES

Volume 33, Number 11
November 2001

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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.

Meeting Notice

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its Annual meeting on Thursday, November 15, 2001 at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

Our program will be "Bringing buildings back to life" a presentation by Mark MacConnel of Spectrum Design who is involved in the restoration of the former N&W General Office Buildings, and the N&W Passenger Station in Roanoke.

From The Head End

Cards and Flowers

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, lost a loved one or has a new birth in the family, please contact Bonnie Molinary. Bonnie is responsible for Chapter cards and flowers and can be reached at 362-0273.

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Monday, November 19, 2001. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

Material For Turntable Times

We are always in need of articles, photos or news items for the Turntable Times. Due to copyright restrictions, we cannot reprint articles from many newspapers; a condensed or rewritten article crediting the source is acceptable.

Cover Photo

This image was made almost 63 years to the date of printing, November 7, 1938. The "New" General Office Building, completed in May 1931 still looks much like it did from this side, but now is completely rehabilitated and in use once again.

Norfolk and Western Photo/K.L. Miller Collection

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 15, 2001. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm. At this time we will hold our annual election in which four (4) directors will be elected.

The Nominating Committee submitted the following nominees for the four positions as follows:

Brain Crosier*
Lawanda Ely
Carl Jensen*
Dave Meashey
Mike Valentine
S. R. Winegard

*indicates incumbent

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will be electing four (4) directors. Election will be by secret ballot. Any member may vote by absentee ballot. The nominees as listed above will be included in the November issue of Turntable Times.

To vote by absentee ballot, one must:

1 - Request an absentee ballot from the Secretary or a member of the nominating committee. You will receive (a) one ballot; (b) one "ballot" envelope; and (c) one mailing envelope.

2 - Mark the ballot (vote for not more than four (4) directors. If more than four (4) 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.

Mixed Freight - November

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

It's official. The Surface Transportation Board has given it's approval for Canadian National Railway to acquire The Wisconsin Central. I sincerely hope that Canadian National will be slow in repainting Wisconsin Central's boxcar fleet. Those wine red cars are a real pleasure to be seen among today's current freight car fleet. The same holds true for the W.C. locomotives too.

The coal trains most of you see on Norfolk Southern rolling thru Virginia have a relatively short trip per se'. Most of them are headed for Lamberts Point Terminal in Norfolk or coal fired power plants in Virginia, North Carolina and the northeast. Norfolk Southern recently participated in the movement of two long distance coal trains from Montana's Powder River Basin. In a joint effort that included Union Pacific, Canadian Pacific and Guilford Rail System, one coal train with 100 cars was moved from the Peabody Group's North Antelope/Rochelle complex to the Mount Tom power plant of Northeast Utilities in Massachusetts. Norfolk Southern handled the segment from Chicago, IL to Binghamton, N.Y. The second 100 car train

originated at The Spring Creek Mine and traveled 2,350 miles through nine states to the Public Service Company of New Hampshire located in Merrimack, N.H. The second train traveled the rails of Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Canadian Pacific, Norfolk Southern and Guilford Rail System. The power plants were testing the low sulfur coal to reduce sulfur emissions. Coal mined in the eastern U.S. is not as available as it once was.

That runaway CSX freight train back in May got a lot of attention from the media, so did the CSX employees whom brought it to a halt without harm to human life or damage to property. The event occurred on May 15th. On May 16th, the White House contacted CSX Transportation to tell them that President George W. Bush wanted to meet the men whom stopped the runaway. The three men, trainmaster Jon Hosfeld, engineer Jess Knowlton and conductor Terry Forson along with their wives met President Bush at Cleveland, Ohio airport. While waiting for Air Force One to arrive, Ohio Governor Bob Taft presented each man with a proclamation commending their heroic action. President Bush spent time with each man praising them as national heroes and informing them that he was personally very grateful for what they accomplished.

Since the Attack on America on September 11th, patriotism in the form of showing the American flag has made a presence with a vengeance. The Boy Scouts of America in Gretna, Virginia did a great job of decorating the freshly painted Southern Railway caboose with numerous flags and other patriotic trinkets. The caboose is number X388 and is located in

Gretna next to the former Southern main-line.

While not adorned in patriotic flair, the Virginian caboose located on the northern end of the former Southern Railway passenger depot in Altavista appears to have received a fresh coat of paint. It really looks great.

Moving northward, the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum hopes to have K4s # 1361 in operating condition by July 2002.

The Horseshoe Curve Scenic View Shed Project is finally in gear. Actual vegetation trimming will not commence until winter after a local resident, the Indiana Bat, goes into hibernation. The project consists of three phases. Phase 1 will involve cutting down the trees on the inside banks of the park area. Phase 2 will constitute clearing two "windows" on each side of The Curve and Phase 3 will involve topping the remaining trees between the "windows" and the trackside viewing area. Funds continue to be collected for the project. The more funding the project receives, the more the project can accomplish.

If you did not attend Railfest 2001, you missed a great event, especially if you are a fan of EMD covered wagons. Fully restored to their original appearance Pennsylvania E8s # 5711 and 5809 looked and sounded great as they pulled a ten car excursion consist between Altoona and Gallitzin on the first weekend of October. Both days were a challenge for we photographers as the sun played hide and seek on Saturday and we had to deal with freights and light pushers both days. Murphy was definitely among us.

Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

I visited the Roanoke Valley Model Engineers at their Crossroads Mall location in October. The framework for the new portable layout was complete. A proposed track plan was being discussed. The new layout will feature a gorge plunging almost to floor level with several bridges crossing it. It should be quite spectacular.

October 21st was a perfect day for a garden railway club meeting; the air was warm, the sky was clear, and the fall colors were at full beauty on the way to Blacksburg. The Big Lick Big Train Operators met at the home of Otto and Irmtraut Hartenstein. What a garden railway! Otto's roundhouse and turntable area covers more ground than most N scale layouts. I'm sure my British OO scale layout was not as big as this engine facility. The layout winds up grades, through tunnels, over spectacular trestles, and past villages and a town. There are farms, mines, a sawmill, a gristmill, and a large rail yard. Otto has chosen the Aristo-Craft's Train Engineer for control. This system uses track power, but allows an engineer to walk with his or her train. Club members had a grand time watching and running trains.

The author of *Getting Started in Garden Railroading*, Allan W. Millar, was also at our meeting. Allan has been a member of the Tidewater BTO club for several years. Allen moved to Blacksburg in September to start a new position at Virginia Tech. We are hoping Allan will become a member of the Big Lick BTOs as well.

A Dismal Fate

by Dave Meashey

At my favorite web site steam enthusiasts jokingly refer to diesel locomotives

as dismals. I usually use the same nomenclature, but I saw something the other night that really made me sad. It was an SD40-2 trundling along with a local switching job. I never thought I'd feel sad to see a dismal on it's way out, but I guess there has to be a first time for everything.

When I first started working for N&W in 1977, the SD40-2 was THE LOCOMOTIVE. They got all the best trains. They were the maids of all work. They were the most dependable power on the railroad. I thought they would be around forever.

Well, forever is over. They are being phased out. It's still hard for me to believe, even though my rational mind knows it's the way things work. If I had to pick a favorite dismal, it would definitely be the SD40-2. I just plain like them, even though as a dyed-in-the-wool steam lover I know I shouldn't. I sure hope at least one gets preserved in black livery with that joined N&W.

Chapter Excursion, Part II

by Jim Overholser

On September 24, 2001, seven chapter members made a beautiful trip on the Cass Scenic Railroad and the West Virginia Central on a "Train Ride Into History." Some had arrived in the Cass area the day before while others came up just for the day. Sponsored by the Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association and the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, it was a spectacular trip. Although still September, fall colors were showing.

We got to see some of the restoration work at Whitaker that the non-profit, historical group MSR&LHA is doing with a tour of the logging camp equipment. The four car train, powered by Shay number 11, proceeded to the site of the town of Spruce and onto the former Western Maryland

Railroad. This is an extremely remote area and we reached an elevation over 4,000 feet. All in all it was a great trip and while it did rain this didn't affect our day - except to make us really appreciate the great beef stew in the box lunches that were provided!

On The Road Again - 29 Day Round Trip To British Columbia

by Dave Helmer

A couple years ago, my son Chris Helmer and Bill Pinkerton began dreaming about how nice it would be to operate their Fairmont A-5 railway motor cars on an extended motor car excursion over BC Rail in Canada. However, the time requirements to both transport and operate this equipment over 3,000 miles from Roanoke were a significant constraint to these plans. Once I retired from Norfolk Southern in 2000, this provided an opportunity to implement these grandiose plans. "Dad and Mom (Grace) could drive the m/w cars to and from Canada, and the rest of the group could fly," said Chris over coffee at a family Sunday breakfast. And so, began a journey (VACATION) that covered about 7,500 miles driving across the USA and Canada in a 26' Ryder truck, 1,300 miles of motor car operation in western Canada and 1,000 miles on VIA, Canada's passenger rail operator. Below is an outline of this trip during August/September 2001.

DAY ONE - AUGUST 25TH, Roanoke, VA - Batesville, IN (I-81, US 460, I-64, US 52, I-74)

On the day before, using a local wrecker company's rollback, we loaded two A-5 motor cars (weighting 3,500 pounds each) into a large rented Ryder truck at Pinkerton Chevrolet. The Ryder truck was also packed with plenty of spare motor car parts and

luggage for six Roanoke Chapter members: David and Grace Helmer, Chris and Jamie Helmer, and Bill and Joann Pinkerton. The general daily operating procedure during the truck driving portion of this 29 day journey, was to leave early in the morning, drive 400 - 450 miles, eat sandwiches for lunch at a rest area, fill-up with diesel at a truck stop (hopefully one where you can fill both fuel tanks at the same time) and find a convenient place at a motel each evening by 6 p.m. to park "the beast" (Grace's description for the Ryder truck). Grace and I shared equally the driving duties each day. Usually, I began driving the first shift and Grace drove the last segment, so I could navigate to the motel - which AAA had prearranged.

This was the first time either of us had driven such a large truck, or one equipped with air brakes. We were cautious at first, trying to learn the nature of the truck we were driving, especially over the mountain grades near Blacksburg, VA and on the West Virginia Turnpike. We noticed two things quickly: 1) the lack of shock absorbers on the truck and 2) the poor quality of interstate roads in some states. We were slow going up steep grades (25-30 m.p.h.) and had to "gear down" going downhill. Train watching was a little slow - a few NS trains between Kenova, WV and Portsmouth, OH. Traffic was light around Cincinnati, OH since we were traveling on a Saturday. We got to our motel in time for a dinner at a nearby Wendy's and watched Oklahoma University on TV kick off the football season.

DAY TWO - AUGUST 26TH, Batesville, IN - Coralville, IA (I-74, I-474, I-80)

This day was largely spent driving along the cornfields in three mid-western states. Two quick side trips were made: 1) to the Galesburg, IL railway museum (small, but a

lot of BNSF trains operating in the area) and 2) West Branch, IA to see Herbert Hoover's birthplace. The bridge over the Mississippi River on I-74 was narrow - Grace did not like that part of the trip.

DAY THREE - AUGUST 27TH, Coralville, IA - Sioux Falls, SD (I-80, I-680, I-29)

Again corn fields were the order of the day (a number of communities had corn mazes). We stopped in Sioux City, IA at a unique tugboat museum on the Missouri River and learned about the street railways which used to operate in that city.

DAY FOUR - AUGUST 28TH, Sioux Falls, SD - Bismarck, ND (I-29, I-94)

This route's terrain is flat and the roads are rough as the devil. At Fargo, ND, we began following BNSF's secondary route (ex-Northern Pacific) to Seattle. I was disappointed in the lack of traffic density on this line. At Jamestown, ND, we stopped to visit a museum on the American bison. They did have a restored Mid-Continent Railway depot on the grounds, without any railway books inside - just artists. Bison burgers were the choice that evening for dinner.

DAY FIVE - AUGUST 29TH, Bismarck, ND - Laurel, MT (I-94, I-90)

West of Bismarck, the "West" begins - as the terrain becomes more barren. A quick stop was made at Theodore Roosevelt's Badlands National Park to view the scenery and the bison. At the weigh station on the ND/MT border, we backed over a semi-hid spike resulting in two blown rear tires and a three-hour delay. At Laurel, we stayed at the Best Western - Locomotive Inn, with a trackside view of the BNSF/Montana Rail Link action during the evening.

DAY SIX - AUGUST 30TH, Laurel, MT - Wallace, ID (I-90)

This day's journey included driving over three serious mountain grades and fre-

quent views of the abandoned former Milwaukee Road's west coast line, which was the last great transcontinental route built in the USA. We made a short stop at the Livingston Depot Center in Livingston, MT. This is a very nice museum in the ex-Northern Pacific depot that has been beautifully restored. After topping the continental divide at the 6,375' summit over Homestake Pass, we made a steep drop into the visitor's center of Butte, MT. With grades like this, you can understand why BNSF chose to abandon their nearby mainline. However, the best was yet to come! The scenery along the Clark Fork of the Columbia was beautiful and typical of the Rockies - mountains on both sides, with a railroad or two, river and highway in the narrow valley. The worst grade we incurred was at the Montana/Idaho border as you really drop sharply down Lookout Pass into Wallace, ID, an old silver mining town - turned tourist village. The town's former Northern Pacific depot/museum has been pleasantly restored and is also the picture on the label of a fine Idaho wine. Interesting fact -the last stoplight on the route of I-90 used to be at Wallace, ID. Highway engineers had a difficult time trying to figure out a way to get through this town, without destroying either the town or the Bitterroot Mountains.

Next Month: Part 2

N&W Trivia Question

by Ken Miller

Interestingly enough, only one person commented about, and knew the answer on the trivia question about the shortest, segment of mainline, ie. least amount of mileposts and what numbers are they on an actual original mainline N&W track, that

was posted in last month's Turntable Times.
So, we will let it go for one more month!

Condolences

The Chapter offers its thoughts and prayers to Paul Howell and family on the passing of his mother Sadie on October 30, 2001. Sadie was a frequent visitor at Chapter functions over the years, and was less than two months from her 102nd birthday on her passing.

November Program

Please be sure to come out to the November meeting for a special program by architect Mark MacConnel on "Bringing Buildings Back to Life" featuring the N&W General Office Buildings and the Roanoke N&W Passenger Station.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

November 15, 2001
Annual Meeting

December 4, 2001
Board Meeting

Christmas Gathering
December 14, 2001
Everyone is invited!

January 8, 2002
Board Meeting

January 17, 2002
Regular Meeting

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