



Turntable TIMES

Volume 55, Number 1
Second Half 2023

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



Cover Photo

It was cold this morning, November 3, 2023, with temperature at departure from Goshen at about 25 degrees. It was a fine day to see the 611 running at any speed. She is making good time here running through Craigsville, Va. with a small Halloween scarecrow shaking in the breeze. Kenneth L. Miller Photo

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 me, Delta Helmer Pelgrim at membership.rcnrhs@gmail.com or 703-627-7847

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Friday, April 22, 2022. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Editor Turntable Times, P.O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA, 24032. All parties sending newsletters to the Roanoke Chapter via email should send them to Gary Ballard gtgns611@aol.com, Dorr Tucker at joandorr@cox.net and Ken Miller at klmiller@rev.net

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Turntable Times is published quarterly 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 or contributors of the Turntable Times and do not necessarily reflect those of the members, officers or directors of the Chapter.

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Meeting Cancellation Policy

Any Chapter meeting will be considered cancelled if any of the following conditions are due to weather: Roanoke City Schools are closed on the day of or for the day after the meeting, or Virginia Western night classes are cancelled for the night of a meeting.

Former Publisher's Report-November 2023

by Ken Miller

Everything old is new again.

Gee, I never really thought I'd be back here doing this one more time, yet here it is. Due to some issues of communication, I'm trying to help out with putting together Turntable Times. Tim Witt who agreed to helm the operation was off in England for a month (lucky him!) with Chuck Akers (again lucky him!) and I volunteered to try and put this thing

together. Well, obviously, it did not happen as quickly as any of us would like. Real world jobs interfere with volunteer work.

This is the issue that should have been out in the summer, but obviously did not happen. So, here in a late year edition is Turntable Times.

Notice of Annual Meeting - Dec. 21, 2023

The Board of Directors has resolved that the Annual Meeting of the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held on Thursday, December 21, 2023. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held at the Virginian station. The only business to be undertaken at the meeting is the election of directors as follows.

The members terms which expire are:

Chuck Akers

David Foster

Gary Gray

Delta Helmer Pelgrim

George Stein

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting, please be sure you have that person's consent before making a nomination.

The Roanoke Chapter is soliciting nominees for Directors to be voted on at the December Annual Meeting. There are five (5) positions to be voted on. Please consider putting your name in nomination. Please consider helping out. You may contact a member of the nominating committee - headed by Andy MacArthur with Rick Rader, and Paul VanHoosen.

Instructions for Absentee Ballot: This year we will elect five (5) directors by secret ballot. Any member in good standing may vote by absentee ballot.

Please Note: if you are interested in running, or know of another Chapter member who is, please contact the nominating committee promptly.

If there are no more candidates than positions, a motion to elect by acclaim will be accepted.

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 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 envelope and mail to:

Roanoke Chapter, NRHS
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. The ballot must be in the Post Office box prior to December 21, 2023.

Note: This event will also be our Holiday Dinner, more on that to come. You do not have to participate in the dinner to vote.

Sick List

We have nothing much to report at this time. Please notify Delta Helmer Pelgram as noted at the top of the left hand column if you are aware of any illness or other situation.

Emergency Notification Phone Numbers

You may use these phone numbers to report emergencies or other conditions affecting railroad operations, including trespassers, vandalism, fires, defective equipment, etc. If at a railroad/highway grade crossing try to provide the unique crossing number/DOT number posted nearby, usually on a small blue sign.

Norfolk Southern 800-453-2530
CSX 800-232-0144
Amtrak 800-331-0008

2022 Chapter Directors

Chuck Akers President
Lewis Foster Secretary
Gary Gray Vice President
Delta Helmer Pelgrim Treasurer
David Foster National Representative
Rick Rader. Director
Richard Shell Director
George Stein. Director
Tim Witt. Director

Our Chapter Board meets every month, usually the first Tuesday; contact a board member to find the date and location. Board meetings are generally open to the membership. The Board will take up business as necessary via email or telephone until then.

Treasurer's Report

By Delta Helmer Pelgrim

A quick thank you to all the individuals who help make my job function as Treasurer. Rick who sends me the mail; Paul who is my amazing auditor; and Chuck who comes to help me set up last minute bank accounts.

As always the Chapter's financial statements are available for review. We have approximately \$300K in our Carter accounts which are tied up with the

Virginian Station until the tax credits are unfolded, hopefully at the end of the year. We have approximately \$30K left in grant money to spend (as of 7/8/23). And in our numerous Truist accounts (Virginian Station and Chapter) we have approximately \$150K.

Amazon has discontinued its community support Amazon smile account, but Kroger continues to send us checks. Please sign up if you haven't. This earns us \$40 per quarter and it can be more if more members sign up.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Please let me know if you are interested in receiving them. I can be reached at the Treasurer email address, treasurer.rcnrhs@gmail.com or I can be reached by phone at 703-627-7847

Membership

By Delta Helmer Pelgrim

We have 133 members, family members and long-term members. All memberships have been submitted to National and everyone should have received their rosters and addendums. If you did not receive both or are having issues with communications from National please let me know at membership.rcnrhs@gmail.com. --Delta

N&W 611 Returns to Roanoke

by Gary Ballard

The last weekend in May saw operations of the Class J No. 611 steam locomotive wind up on the Strasburg Railroad in Pennsylvania. The 611 had been traveling to Strasburg since 2019 as the guest locomotive on the oldest short line railroad in the United States. This engagement allowed everyone to catch Norfolk and Western Class M No. 475 and the 611 running along the same line. The 475 is based in Strasburg and was restored to operating condition in their shops years ago. We traveled to see the 611 on Saturday May 27th.

Since 2019, several members of the Roanoke Chapter NRHS traveled there to volunteer as part of the train operations, others including Ken Miller (2019) came to take part in the outdoor "under the pavilion" activities that took place. Our own Delta Helmer was there working on the platform



providing safety assurance during train movements, doing car hosting duties and helping 611 fans go up the steps alongside the locomotive during the whistle blowing sessions. Watching Delta do what she did with the love of the job and the dedication that her mom Grace brought on countless trips in the years of the old Norfolk Southern Steam Program was really moving and brought smiles to those of us who knew Grace.

With the location of the Strasburg Railroad in the back yard, sort of speak, big cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore enables mass numbers of the public the opportunity to ride behind the 611. Though some felt that during this time the 611 should have been back home in Roanoke, Virginia her hometown. The other side of the debate was that in Roanoke there has been no place for the historic locomotive to run. One family drove in from Pittsburgh on the day we drove up to ride behind the 611. They arrived at 10 a.m. after driving 238 miles from Pittsburgh. Proof that the draw of experiencing the 611 live under steam is enough for an entire family to get in the car at 5:00 a.m. and drive over four hours one way.

The wooden coaches at the Strasburg Railroad are constantly going through upgrades and refurbishing. Open windows are found in the coaches and the First-Class car has dining service and is air conditioned with closed windows. The trip is 4.5 miles to the switch that connects with Amtrak's Keystone Line. Total roundtrip

is nine miles, about 45 minutes long from start to finish. A highlight of every trip is when the train stops to hear the "Ghost Whistle." Legend has it that the ghost of the crew on one of the trains from years past rests behind the ridge to the east. And if a train today stops to blow their whistle, the ghost crew answers back with their whistle in precisely the same sequence and same sound as the train you're riding on. It's pretty cool to hear the 611's deep steamboat whistle sound off and hear the ghost crew return the exact same thing.

Leaman Place is where steam



locomotives uncouple from the head-end of the train and run around to the rear car of the train for the return journey back to the Strasburg station. Running around the train gives everyone a good view of the 611 moving past their window for additional photo and video taking. Throughout Saturday, a young lady with blonde hair accompanied by a young man were both dressed in 1960s attire. Both standing along the tracks made one think it was a young Marilyn Monroe and a gentleman waiting for the train pulled by the 611.

After the weekend of operation, the crew of the 611 and of the Strasburg Railroad prepared the engine for her live under steam journey back to Roanoke, Virginia. Since this movement requires that the 611 be towed behind a Norfolk Southern locomotive, the 611, extra canteen tender, tool car and some coal gondola cars assigned to the 611 were moved from Leaman Place and onto Amtrak's Keystone Line to Harrisburg with 611 being live under steam for the entire trip home. This short trip was 47 miles. Here the crew overnighted in Harrisburg. The next day the movement was one that usually finds the 611's consist reversing west towards the Rockville Bridge then proceeding south continuing on the NS line that goes to Hagerstown, Maryland and onward to Shenandoah, Virginia. Sizable crowds were trackside along the route to wave. Arriving in Shenandoah with 185 miles accomplished, the crew overnighted with an early morning departure on Friday June 2nd for Roanoke, with 124 miles waiting to be counted down.

Arrival in downtown Roanoke was at 2:34 p.m. as the 611 rolled by the former N&W Passenger station, now the O. Winston Link Museum. The NS crew towed the 611 west towards Shaffer's Crossing in Roanoke where the track can be reached that goes to the Virginia



All 611 photos, unless otherwise credited: Gary Ballard

Museum of Transportation. Local TV news crews were there to cover the arrival of the iconic engine. The entire trip was handled on the tracks of Amtrak and Norfolk Southern.

One Of The 611 Volunteers

by Gary Ballard

When it comes to signing up to be a volunteer as part of the 611's train crew, a lot of us can say we've done that. Over the years, many of us have stepped up to the plate to work on the train pulled by Norfolk and Western No. 611 during the original Norfolk Southern Steam Program and following the locomotive's "rebirth" in 2015. Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Elver Ariza - Silva. How he became a member of the Ground Crew in Lynchburg, Virginia during the arrival of the 611 on her return to service in 2015 is an amazing story of long ambitions.

Elver was born in Bogota, Colombia. He never knew anything about the 611 until he met me. As a resident of Washington, D.C. he has served for several years on the AAC (Advisory Accessibility Committee) of WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority) providing insights on how to best improve services on the Washington, D.C. Metro system. This included Elver's insight into mobility devices such as electric scooter and wheelchair accessibility and easy access of how people with disabilities can enter the subway safely is something he knows firsthand because he commutes daily with an electric scooter in Washington, DC. His suggestions were taken and today the boarding and interior's accessibility of the new subway cars reflect some of his ideas.



Hotel Roanoke RailCam - West

Before the "Fire UP 611" campaign was started with the locomotive being overhauled in 2014, I would show Elver the videos that so many of us took of "The Queen of Steam" in the 1990s. This led to a trip to Roanoke to show him the 611 in person. I kept saying to him, "Someday you will be able to see this machine come back to life". He was amazed as he looked at it under the shed at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. I told him all those moving parts, the sound of the engine hissing and of it marching up a hill, the steamboat whistle, all of this is something you don't get to sense looking at it sitting still. He turned around and said in his nice Colombian accent, "Well, get me signed up for the first trip whenever that will be."

As we waited for that day to come, Elver presented me with a special invite to ride the newly opened extension of the DC Metro subway to Reston, on the Virginia side of Washington, DC. This was on July 26, 2014. A very special day with the excitement of knowing that the Metro was getting nearer to its highly anticipated station to open at Dulles International Airport, a promise that has been resonating in the ears of commuters here for a million years it seems. Standing next to me on the Silver Line subway car was former Virginia Governor, George Allen. During his time as Governor (1994 -1998) I covered his days in the news as a radio broadcaster and occasionally I was not always fully supportive of his ways. On this day, I am standing right next to him, and he mingled with the huge crowd on that train so politely and was friendly with all of us. I gained a new perspective on the man. I owed Elver for this day.

Forward to the spring of 2015. The 611 is about to finish a year long overhaul at the shops of the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, North Carolina as overseen by Scott Lindsay of Steam Operations Corporation. Thanks to the vision and affection towards steam locomotives of former Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman, steam excursions returned to the NS rails and the 611 is about to operate again. On May 30th, 2015, Norfolk & Western Class J 4-8-4 No. 611 marched triumphantly into Roanoke, Va. alive and under steam for the first time in over 20 years.

There would be the need to have a Ground Safety Crew to control waiting crowds in Lynchburg, Virginia. I received a call from Pam McGuire, former Communications Director at the VMT and was asked to get a crew assembled of 4 people. The crew included David Haring (Amtrak Engineer and Live Steamers operator), Elver Ariza - Silva (DC WMATA Accessibility Committee), Louie Santos (new member to the NRHS) and me (Amtrak Conductor and Roanoke Chapter

member). We met inside the Norfolk Southern office building on Woodall Road, which was once the N&W passenger station. Amtrak service ended here in 1979.

Waiting for the arrival of the 611 in Lynchburg was a bus load of special invited guests that included members of the Roanoke Chapter NRHS and The Virginia Museum of Transportation. With the VMT was Bev Fitzpatrick, former Executive Director. With our crew, we put David and Elver up by the front of the train to make sure the excited onlookers stayed a safe distance from the 611. Louie and I stayed at the road crossing and assisted watching the crowds while the 611 took on additional water for the final leg of this inaugural trip to Roanoke.

Watching the 611 enter the former station area was magical. I asked our little crew what they will remember from this day. David said he was amazed at the size of the crowds that came to see the locomotive. Elver said he will remember that whistle and how it sounded around every curve between Lynchburg and Roanoke and how everyone responded with joy along the way. Louie said it is amazing how Americans are so connected to their trains with so much enthusiasm. He joked and added that back home in Manila everyone is



enthusiastic that the train there stayed on the tracks. For me, I was watching an old friend coming across the bridge that spans US Route 29 and the "I'm here" presence she made with that slow chugging as the train turned onto the west-bound main track that would take the locomotive to her birthplace.

Regarding the black and white picture of Elver standing in front of the 611 at the Woodall Road station he says, "It is my favorite one! I get emotional sometimes when I see it". We all have a memory like that. A photo of the 611 and how we instantly got attached to this machine that was built to take us from point A to point B. Fourteen of these Class – J locomotives did just that in fine style with passenger acceptance and mechanical performance that puts the class above the rest. The 611 steam locomotive has a big list of friends that continues to grow. On a sunny day in May of 2015, we added another person to that list.

Mixed Freight – 3rd Quarter

By Mr. Robin R. Shavers

I must say I was really surprised to see the first quarter 2023 Turntable Times in my mailbox back in April. I really don't have much to report on but thought



I would touch on some subject matter from the last issue of our Turntable Times. For at least 10 years Ken Miller and I have been discussing off and on here and there the issue of getting more coverage of local railroad news into The Turntable Times. An idea I thought about that might help would be the encouragement of NRHS members from other nearby Chapters. Many of us hold multi memberships in other NRHS chapters as well as other railfan organizations. One of the main reasons I joined nearby chapter the Blue Ridge was because of their top of railroad news within central Virginia as well as elsewhere if we could somehow encourage that coverage into the pages of this newsletter and the chapter as well. Over the years I have periodically encouraged our readers to contribute articles and photos. As far as articles are concerned, just present it in your own words and or style. It might seem difficult but as you progress with whatever you are writing it tends to get easier like a steam locomotive gathering speed as it moves along the line. Also to add some possible more tonnage to our newsletter, folks whom are not NRHS members might want to consider presenting an article or subject matter of interest. I don't know of any editor of a hobby newsletter with so much material they can afford to turn material offers away.

Speaking of material for the newsletter, Gary Ballard's in-depth article on the late Paul M. Howell was especially interesting and a perfect example of what we can use more of, especially covering the human side of the chapter. I personally had no idea the efforts of Mr. Howell effected the final outcome being the end of the Norfolk Southern steam excursion program.

As I did during the pandemic, I have continued to patronize model railroad events in the mid-Atlantic region. Within the events patronage was high as people were anxious to get back to normalcy. It was good to see familiar faces again. The downside was that the pandemic took a toll on a lot of long-standing patrons mainly on those up in their years. Spirits were high and hopeful for the future.

On Saturday, May 20th I got a VERY late start on my long journey from Richmond to Spencer North Carolina to attend the annual Members Appreciation Day at the North Carolina Transportation Museum. This annual event has pretty much replaced what used to be known as National Train Day. It's more personal with a local feel to it. I try to attend this event at least every other year if not yearly. It is always good to see in person how my yearly contributions are invested. When I arrived around 2:00 p.m. that day things were really rolling with folks riding the museum ground trains and

taking in other activities being offered on-site. Business at the souvenir shop was very brisk to say the least. It was my first there without making a railroad related purchase mainly because I had everything from previous visits.

The weather was great although the humidity slowly rose til about dinner time. My immediate goal was to take advantage of the perks being offered to the museum members before the doors shut down for that day. I was glad I bypassed lunch earlier that day. I also managed to get in two train rides as well. One train was powered by SR FP7 No. 6133 and one GP30 No. 2601 of SR. Both water tanks on the property have been stripped of their Southern Railway logos. The logos are to be replaced and looking as good as new. Within what was once the big steam locomotive erection building on this day was the sales and operation tables of model railroading supplies and operating layouts. Activity was bustling. I must admit it was noticeably less than at past events. I was happy to see the next generations of railfans and modelers decked out in fallen flag attire from the southeast, Midwest and the north as well as other regions.

Action on the former Southern Railway high iron left much to be desired for me. Traffic was down by my observation and other knowledgeable fans expressed the same observation. I auto camped out just north of the Salisbury depot for roughly 14 hours. The Asheville line was really quiet. The few freights I did witness were heavy on Union Pacific locomotives which was fine with me with nearly 100% CSX motive power in Richmond and the environs.

Mechanical Committee Report-June 2023

by Lewis Foster

At the 9th street yard work has continued on several projects this spring. We always have more projects available than we have folks to work on them, so if you're interested in volunteering, please feel free to visit us at the yard on the weekends.

The restoration of N&W P-2 Class Coach No. 512 is continuing with work going on preparing to strip and repaint the interior and repair and re-tile the floor. A group of us have been working to



remove the remaining interior trim on the walls and along the floor and any other items that need to be removed before the interior work proceeds.

We are also proceeding with repairs to the seat frames. We have ordered replacement textured vinyl to re-cover the end panels for the seats. The existing covers have become badly worn over the past 70 plus

years and we have been able to find a suitable matching material from an automotive restoration supplier.

As time permits, we have also been continuing work on the HVAC and electrical systems of the coach. Most of this work is now reached a point where we need to complete the sill repairs before we can continue. We are also working on plans for the repairs / upgrades to the water system and holding tanks on the car.

The replacement oil cooler for N&W GP-30 No. 522 has arrived and has been installed in the locomotive. We have a few more connections to finish and then we will be able to water the engine and test the system for leaks. Once that is complete, we will be able to put the 522 back into service.

A group is continuing with analyzing N&W T-6 No. 41's electrical system. We have replaced the contact points in one of the main contactors which we hope will help with the loading issues that the engine has been having. We are also continuing to track down the intermittent ground fault that the 41 has had for quite a while and hope to be able to resolve it.

This spring, two of the bottom steps on AEP No. 1

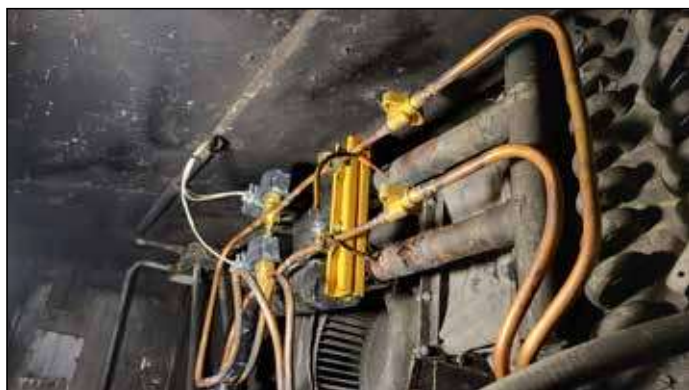


became damaged at Gerdau. A couple of our volunteers fabricated replacement step treads and installed them in the locomotive to ensure that it remains safe to operate.

We also held a sale of some surplus signal equipment that had been taking up space at the yard. We were surprised by the demand that we got for these signals and managed to sell all of the surplus that we had in a single weekend. It was interesting to meet the folks that travelled in for this, including some that drove many hours in order to see what we had available.

If you're interested in volunteering at the yard on the weekends, or even if you'd just like to drop by and see what we're working on, feel free to contact Gary Gray or Lewis Foster. Photos of our projects are also available on the Chapter Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/roanokenrhs>



All: Lewis Foster Photos
Lewis is quite dedicated in working, and documenting what goes on at the 9th Street Coach Yard. These views depict the work on the a/c system of coach No. 512.



All: Lewis Foster Photos
 Top Left: Painting the floor pan on former VGN Caboose No. 322. Top Right: New switch for "Boxcar track." Center right: 522 at VMT. Bottom Middle, burned contactors from No. 41 and tracking down the ground fault.



All: Lewis Foster Photos
Top: Changing out oil cooler in GP30 No. 522. Middle, new steps for AEP No. 1. Bottom: Signal that were sold off.



9th Street Maintenance Facility

by Ken Miller

We learned in mid-January that our 43-year home, the maintenance facility inside the Roanoke Industrial Center, would be sold to developer Ed Walker. Our folks met with Walker and associates, and the initial indications were they wanted us to stay; a few months later, that tune had changed. So, now Roanoke Chapter NRHS faces the enormous task of moving equipment, shelter, and supplies to a new, undefined location. Moving will be a huge task to get out by the deadline of August 2024. Our mechanical folks and board have been working on the situation, with Dave Foster taking the lead in negotiations for a new space.

It is too preliminary to report anything more than that we are looking at various places and the massive cost of the move. There is at least a glimmer of hope, but it is very early to say anything. Our folks will need help pulling all this together in the time frame we need. Hopefully, more as soon as we can talk about it.

Yes, there are lots of questions, most of which we do not have any answer for at this writing. Stay tuned as the old phase says!

UPCOMING 2023-24 MEETINGS/EVENTS

Regular Meeting Locations will be at the Virginian Station. Board Meetings move around, please get in touch with a board member to attend.

November 16 - Regular Meeting

December 20 - Board Meeting

December 21 - Annual Meeting/Holiday Dinner

January 17 - Board Meeting

January 18 - Regular Meeting

February 6 - Board Meeting

February 15 - Regular Meeting

March 5 - Board Meeting

March 21 - Regular Meeting

April 2 - Board Meeting

April 18 - Regular Meeting

May 7 - Board Meeting

May 16 - Regular Meeting

Visit us on the web: www.RoanokeNRHS.org

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