



BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

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No. 2



What does an off duty locomotive engineer do when he's not operating trains? Well, if you're Dale Diacont you're out and about taking pictures of trains! Seen above is a South Carolina Central Railroad EMD switcher going about its appointed mission in Darlington, SC. Dale will be presenting the February show for the Blue Ridge Chapter.

His program will be the year 2011 in review and will include Ektachrome slides of many subjects including a steam charter in the snow on the Wilmington & Western, Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, stuff in South Carolina, Amtrak's No. 3 & 4 in New Mexico, East Tennessee, goodbye to C&O cantilever signals, a week on KCS, Memphis trolleys and, of course, Amtrak's *Cardinal*. Y'all come!

Wednesday, February 8, 2012. 6:00 p.m. Charley's Restaurant. 707 Graves Mill Rd. Lynchburg, VA



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Lynchburg, Virginia



Blue Ridge Chapter, National Railway Historical Society Minutes of Meeting - January 11, 2012

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:40 pm and welcomed 26 members and 3 guests. Rick announced the death of former member Russ Drewry on January 9th. Russ was active in the chapter in the 1960s and early 1970s serving in several offices. Rick also mentioned that member Gene Campbell would like to attend meetings but needs a ride with someone who is able to help him in and out of the car. The minutes of the December 14 meeting were approved as amended to reflect the corrected Treasurer's report.

Under Old Business Rick again reminded members that dues were due!

Under new business, Skip Hansberry announced a presentation on the Virginia Blue Ridge RR at the Amherst Historical Museum on Sunday, January 15 and urged members to attend.

There was no report from the Vice-president but Charlie Long announced that member Gordon Watkins had 80 and 140 size Kodak Carousel trays to give away. National Director Earl Guthrow mentioned that a program about the Buckingham Branch RR would be interesting and Ed Fielding said he would check into the possibility. Virginia Rail Heritage Region Chairman Norris Deyerly read a note of thanks from Genevieve Rowland in appreciation for the chapter's memorial gift to Hurt United Methodist Church for her late husband Eddie. He passed on a message from Robin Shavers announcing that the Old Dominion Chapter's museum in Hull Street Station was now open and their webpage could be found at www.odunrhs.org. Also two train shows were scheduled: Hagerstown, MD on Feb. 11, and the C&OHS George Washington show in Clifton Forge on Feb. 18-19. There will be a convention in Baltimore for the new Railroad Station Historical Society, June 6-9 with bus tours to several stations in the area. No report from the Webmaster or Newsletter Editor.

Rick announced that Ed Fielding had the evenings program 50 Years Of Railroad Photography and Mr. Bob Flippen from the new High Bridge Trail State Park will have a special program at the January Fun Meeting featuring recently discovered photographs of the 1913-1914 bridge construction. The February meeting program will be presented by Dale Diacont, reviewing his slides for 2011. Rita Moorefield won the 50/50 and the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Tom Ledford, Secretary

SIGHTINGS

Dec. 16 - Ex-EMD Demo #GMTX #9040, Blue/White Demo Paint Scheme, NB Montview Yard, Lynchburg, Va. (Norris Deyerle)

Jan. 30 . SD70ACe demonstrator EMDX 2012 spotted on NS train 186 during crew change. Same unit spotted behind Kemper Street station in the middle of the night on an empty ethanol train a few nights earlier.

(Rick Johnson-II, G. Harper)



Feb. 4 - Amtrak heritage unit in the Phase I scheme, #156, made a round trip on the Lynchburg Regional. (G. Harper, Rick Johnson-II, Lee Hawkins)

Feb. 5 - Phase I Heritage unit #156 seen again southbound on the Crescent, train #19, at Kemper Street Station. (G. Harper)

Feb. 3 and 6 - A new train on the CSX James River SD heard and seen these two days: X129. Train is composed of empty container well cars being moved from Portsmouth, VA to a terminal in the midwest. (G. Harper)

Two nearby rails-to-trails entities, High Bridge and the VBR, are in the news this month. Read below.

Historic railroad bridge gets a facelift

By: Bill Lohmann Richmond Times Dispatch wlohmann@timesdispatch.com (804) 649-6639

Ed. note - The day is drawing closer when you'll be able to hike across the former N&W's High Bridge near Farmville. Bob Flippen presented a wonderful show about the bridge's construction at the Blue Ridge Chapter's January fun meeting. The timing could not be better!

As we approached the old railroad bridge, a structure that used to be his neighbor and is now the object of his work and affection, Bob Flippen could barely contain himself.

"I get a rush every time!" said Flippen, a park interpreter at High Bridge Trail State Park.

I can see why.

High Bridge is a monster of a bridge: 2,400 feet long, 125 feet above the Appomattox River, a giant erector set of a construction wonder that inspires awe, admiration and, if you are of a certain apprehension when it comes to standing in high places, sweaty palms.

The last regularly scheduled passenger train crossed the bridge in 1979; the final freight train in 2005. Soon, you will be able to walk, bicycle or lead your horse across it.

"It's been an ongoing question since I've been here: 'When's the bridge going to be open?' " said Eric Houglund, manager of the park, which was created by the donation of a 31-mile former railway corridor by Norfolk Southern. The park has opened segment-by-segment since 2008, attracting 86,000 visitors last year, and the bridge is the final piece. Once the bridge is open, attendance is likely to increase dramatically.

"Now," Houglund said, "I'm getting daily emails and phone calls: 'We're planning a trip, and we want to make sure the bridge is open.' "

Mark your calendars. The bridge probably will open in April, Houglund said, once its rail-to-trail transformation is complete. If you're really eager, a contest offers you the chance to be the first person to cross the bridge in a private ceremony a few days ahead of the formal opening.

The First-to-Cross contest is sponsored by Friends of High Bridge Trail State Park, a nonprofit group. Tickets are \$1 and are available in the Richmond area at the three Agee's Bicycles locations. The drawing is scheduled for March 11.

Proceeds from the contest will support the Friends group, and its top priority at the moment is to pay for the purchase of a collection of remarkable photographs of the bridge made when it was under construction in 1913-14. (The steel version of the bridge was completed in 1914, alongside the wood-and-brick-pier structure it would replace and which opened in 1854. The original bridge, billed at the time as the "largest" in the world, was the site of Civil War battles in the days leading up to the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, about 30 miles to the west, and had to be partially rebuilt afterward.)

Houglund was tipped that the photographs, actually 4-by-5-inch glass negatives, were for sale on eBay. Flippen, then an AmeriCorps volunteer for the park, investigated and found the pictures were made by Willis W. Vail, a construction engineer for the railroad, and purchased them to make sure the park didn't miss the opportunity. The photos have been turned over to the park for future educational use and exhibits, and the Friends group needs to cover the cost of reimbursing Flippen.

The photographs and information Vail provided with the glass negatives, as well as the detailed journal he kept, along with a 1914 article published in Engineering News, form a comprehensive account of the bridge's construction, an undertaking that required just 15 months - amazing, considering the era and the available technology, which included horsepower. As in, HORSE power.

"Definitely an engineering marvel," said Ian Brock, vice president and project manager for Keith Barber Construction, the firm handling the rail-to-trail rehabilitation, which has included replacement of about half of the almost 2,000 railroad ties, construction of railings running the length of the bridge and the building of three scenic overlooks on the side of the bridge. The last phase of the project, the installation of the final decking, was about to begin when I visited last week. Fun fact: Brock said his crew will use an estimated 340,000 screws in the course of its work.

I walked part of the not-quite-finished bridge with Houglund, Flippen and Jo Smith, whom Houglund and Flippen described as "caretaker of the bridge." Smith, who lived on a family farm adjacent to the bridge - and, at one time, across the tracks from Flippen - is the author of a local history of the bridge and has watched, researched and enjoyed it for more than 50 years.

"Sometimes I say I married the bridge when I moved to that farm with my husband," said Smith, who is treasurer of the Friends group.

Just walking on a bridge a half-mile in length is an experience, though I didn't quite achieve the same sensation of long-ago rail passengers that was described by Smith as "a somewhat aloft feeling of suspension since the bridge was not visible from inside the coach."

Considering you're above the treetops, the view is wonderful. As you move toward the middle of the bridge, away from the shelter of higher ground, the wind begins to whip. I'd suggest holding on to your hat.

And as much of a spectacle as the bridge is, there aren't many places where you can get a clear view of it. From the Cumberland County side of the bridge, a few miles east of Farmville, it's a mile to the nearest road and trail parking lot. From the Prince Edward County side, the nearest trail parking lot is 3 miles away.

If you want a good look, dust off your bike or break out your walking shoes.

Blue Ridge Railway Trail Chugging Along

by Katrina Koerting | Media General News Service. February 4, 2012

LOVINGSTON, VA - The third phase of the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail Project along the Piney River in Nelson and Amherst counties is under way.

Plans include obtaining and displaying a caboose; putting up 50 signs about the history of the area and the railroad along the trail; and preserving a dump car and the weigh station.

The Blue Ridge Railroad Depot on Route 151 in Piney River also will be restored, removing asbestos from the structure and providing a home for exhibits on the history of the railroad and Hurricane Camille.

Other plans include the completion of the last 300-foot segment and building a cover for the Naked Creek Bridge.

"People that were associated with the railroad are so happy that the trail kept the railroad in our hearts," said Stephen Martin, a board member of the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail Foundation.

Martin, who lives along the Amherst County part of the trail, said he and his wife miss the sound of the train whistles and are happy to help preserve the railroad. This was one of the reasons they donated land for the trail.

The first phase of the project was opened in 2003. It runs from the Piney River depot to the Naked Creek Bridge. The second phase will officially open in March or April, although the trail already is usable, Martin said.

Fred Boger, director of planning and zoning for Nelson County, agreed that the preservation efforts will help foster nostalgia for the railroad.

Applications for a consultant are being accepted now through March 9. The cost of the project and an estimated completion date will be determined once a consultant has been selected, Boger said.

He said he hopes the project will be complete by December.

The project is funded by a grant from the Federal Highway Administration.

Although this is the last planned phase of the project, Martin said the dream is to extend the trail down to the James River and up into the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Boger added, "If the first seven miles are successful and there are no major problems, then there might be more."

The path is about 10 feet wide and seven miles long, with three miles in Amherst County and four in Nelson. It runs along the old Virginia Blue Ridge Railroad route, extending from the Blue Ridge Railroad Depot in Piney River to a weigh station at Tye River Station.

The Virginia Blue Ridge Railroad was created in 1915 to transport chestnut wood, and closed in 1981, Martin said.

Maintaining the trail is a community effort with local organizations and residents trimming branches, picking up litter and helping with the landscaping. A local plant expert has created labels for some of the trees and a Boy Scout troop built and installed benches along the trail.

"It's a wonderful facility for the citizens of the counties, but, above that, it's a great tourist attraction," Martin said.

People come from all over the state to use the trail for biking, horseback riding, walking and running. The trail provides a destination for school nature walks and hosts fishing exhibits and a mini-triathlon.

Boger said he was happy with the high amount of use of the trail.

"It exceeded our expectations in such a short period of time," he said.

Discussion for the trail project began in the late 1980s, but there was not enough money to get the project rolling.

In 1996, the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail Foundation was established and applied for grants, securing financing for the project. The effort was initiated by the Blue Ridge Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Nelson Bicycling Alliance and Blue Ridge Saddle and Harness.

Boger said both Amherst and Nelson counties were eager to work on the project.

"It didn't take much arm twisting to get both counties involved," he said. "Nelson and Amherst are kind of outdoor communities."

After more than 15 years of planning and construction, Martin and Boger both said they are looking forward to the completion of the project.

"We'll be very excited when it's completed," Martin said.

**Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS 2012 Calendar of Events
54TH Anniversary of the Blue Ridge Chapter
A Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partner
Compiled By Norris Deyerle,
Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Chairman of Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partners**

Newly added events since last month printed in "Bold Italics".

Notice: The NRHS is the lead member of a new group of railway heritage groups and preservationists that list their upcoming events on their new website, RHICalendar@nrhs.com. I urge our friends with the other railway historical groups and museums to take advantage of this new NRHS service. There is no cost to subscribe to this service. This is a website that will help us all get the word out about our events!

February 2012

02-08-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Dale Diacont slide show %2011 Year in Review+

02-10 – 05-07-12: "Requiem For Steam, Photographs Of David Plowden", Info: email;

programs@linkmuseum.org, phone; {540} 982-5465, www.linkmuseum.org

02-11-12: {Saturday} "Train Lovers' Day", Fall in love with trains. Again! Visit the VMT on Train Lovers' Day to view their recently restored treasures. Free train rides, crafts, model train displays. While you're there take advantage of their 15% discount throughout the Museum Store. Fun for the entire family! 10:00 am – 5:00 pm, \$5/person. Three and under free. Info: www.vmt.org

02-18 & 19-12: {Saturday & Sunday} C&OHS "George Washington's Train Show" Sat. 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, Sun. Noon – 4:00 pm, Admission \$5.00 per person, Clifton Forge Armory, Clifton Forge, Va. Info: 540-862-2210, Note: Please visit the Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS folks at our reserved table during this show. We will be selling model trains and books at very affordable prices!

02-25 & 26-12: {Saturday & Sunday} Spring Thaw Train Show, Allentown Fairgrounds Ag Hall, Allentown, Pa. Info: www.allentowntrainmeet.com

March 2012

03-11-12: {Sunday} Virginia Train Collectors "VTC" Spring Richmond Meet, Hanover Academy, Richmond, VA., Info: Tom Riddle, email tomscatco@yahoo.com, Phone: {804} 798-3739, www.vatraincollectors.com

03-14-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Wayland Moore presentation

03-17-12: {Saturday} Harrisburg Railroad Show & Collectors Market, IW Abel Union Hall, Steelton, PA, Info: www.harristower.org

03-24-12: {Saturday} Model Train Day, The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers will display their ON3, HO and N-Scale layouts. Info: www.vmt.org

03-28-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS %Fun Meeting+, Aubrey Wiley, %Restoring A 100 Yr. Old VGN Motor Car+

03-30 & 31-12: {Friday & Saturday} C&OHS "Hawk's Nest Modelers Conference 2012", Registration info will soon be available at <http://www.sa-com.net>

April 2012

04-11-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Skip Hansberry Slide presentation

04-14-15-12: {Saturday & Sunday} The Great Scale Model Train Show, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD, Info: www.gsmts.com

04-19-21-12: {Thursday – Saturday} Train Collectors Association "TCA" York Train Meet, York, PA, Info: www.easterntca.org

04-21-12: {Saturday} Buckeye Railroadiana Show, Ohio Expo Center, Columbus, OH, Info: www.gserr.com

May 2012

05-05-12: {Saturday} C&O Railway Heritage Festival, Clifton Forge, Va., Info: www.cohs.org

05-09-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Kurt Reisweber presentation

05-12-12: {Saturday} Roanoke Rail Fest, Info: www.vmt.org

05-23-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS %Fun Meeting+

June 2012

06-13-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Steve Hutchison presentation

06-18 - 6-24-12: {Monday - Sunday} NRHS National Convention 2012, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Info: www.nrhs.org

06-21 - 6-24-11: {Thursday - Sunday}: N&WHS 2012 Convention, %Mainline To Norfolk+, Location: Lynchburg, Va. Info: conv2012@earthlink.net and www.nwhs.org, Contact: Charlie Long, H. {434} 239-3521, C. {434} 660-6989

06-23-11: {Saturday} North Carolina Railroad Show, Location: Metrolina Expo Trade Center, Charlotte, NC, Info: www.gserr.com

06-23-24-12: {Saturday & Sunday} The Great Scale Train Show, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD, Info: www.gsmts.com

July 2012

07-11-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Fred Mayer presentation

07-25-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS %Fun Meeting+

August 2012

08-08-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Dale Diacont, Green Mountain, Vermont Railroad, Mt. Washington Cog Railroad and the D&H.

08-08-12-12: {Wednesday – Sunday} C&OHS Annual Conference. Old Town Alexandria, Va., Info:

www.cohs.org

08-11-12: {Saturday} Lynchburg Rail Day 2012, BRC, NRHS

Info: www.blueridgenrhs.org

Barry Moorefield: bmopar@verizon.net {434} 821-2174

Norris Deyerle: railcow@msn.com {434} 237-4912

John Tanner: flytrains@verizon.net {434} 525-1318

September 2012

09-12-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Norris Deyerle presentation

09-16-12: {Sunday} BRC, NRHS Summer Picnic

09-26-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS %un Meeting+

October 2012

10-10-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Kurt Reisweber

10-18-21-12: {Thursday – Saturday} Train Collectors Association "TCA" York Train Meet, York, PA. Info:

www.easterntca.org

10-27-28-12: {Saturday & Sunday} The Great Scale Model Train Show, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD. Info: www.gsmts.com

November 2012

11-04-12: Railroadiana & Transport Show and Sale, Montgomery County Fairgrounds, Gaithersburg, MD, Info:

www.gserr.com

11-14-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Wayland Moore

11-21-12: No November %un Meeting+due to Thanksgiving

December 2012

12-01-12: {Saturday} BRC, NRHS Annual Christmas Banquet, Altavista, Va.

12-12-12: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Rick-2 Johnson, presentation

12-22-12: {Saturday} BRC, NRHS Kemper Street Station Christmas Gathering

Railroad Related Events Information: Visit: www.varailheritage.org, www.vmt.org, www.linkmuseum.org, www.roanokenrhs.org, www.nwhs.org, www.cohs.org, www.vatraincollectors.com, www.klnl.org, www.railroadcollectors.org, www.nhvry.org, www.norfolksouthernhs.org, www.RailServe.com, www.trains.com, www.TrainFinder.com, www.gserr.com or RHICalendar@nrhs.com.

Norfolk Southern/TVRM Steam Excursion Website: <http://www.21stcenturysteam.com>

Steam Train Events in the United States and Canada: www.diary.svsfilm.com

Steam Locomotive Locations: www.steamlocomotive.com

Railroad Historical Information And Related Photos: www.hawkinsrails.net

Danville & Western Ry. Website: Railway operated in Southwestern Virginia between Danville and Stuart.

<http://southern-railway.railfan.net/dw/>

Additional links to other NRHS Chapters, Railroad Historical Societies and Museums available at www.blueridgenrhs.org

Virginia Museum Of Transportation Rail Cam: <http://www.nwhs.org/cam/vmt>

Roanoke, Va. Rail Cam: <http://128.173.197.94:443/RRCmov>

Lynchburg Rail Day 2012 {Saturday} August 11, 2012

NW 1776 moved for restoration - Norfolk and Western's SD45

#1776 was pulled from its home at the Virginia Museum of Transportation on January 23 to begin its journey to cosmetic restoration. The VMT had begun a campaign to restore the locomotive's eye-catching bicentennial paint scheme which was applied to the unit prior to the country's 200th birthday in 1976. [Trains Magazine](http://www.TrainsMagazine.com) awarded the 1776 its prestigious annual

Preservation Award, which provides a \$10,000 grant for the locomotive's restoration. Among 120 entries submitted from across the country, the Museum's proposal is the sole recipient for 2011.

After leaving the museum the unit spent a little time at NS's Shaeffer's Crossing engine facility to prepare it for the move to the company's paint shop in Chattanooga, TN. The museum hopes to have the engine back on display in all its restored glory by July 4, 2012. NW 1776 is seen here at Rawl, WV, in revenue service in April, 1978. G. Harper photo.



Long-time Lynchburg railroad special agent dies - H. Charles Willis, Jr., long-time special agent for the Southern Ry., and then for Norfolk Southern died February 3, 2012. He would have celebrated his 88th birthday Feb. 15.

Mr. Willis was located in Lynchburg from 1951 until his retirement in 1986. His quiet, but serious, demeanor was highlighted by his intensely white hair and moustache. Many train watchers recall seeing him when the SR, then NS, steam specials were in town. Some of us had trackside encounters with him that got us removed from the property, your truly being one of them. (At Riverside Park, once in 1964 and again in 1969). He could be surprisingly accommodating, too. In May, 1982, NS coal train #142 derailed just north of Charlottesville at Gilbert, VA. Mr. Willis came by the Amtrak station in C'ville before driving up to the wreck site. On a whim I asked if I could go with him, and he said, "Sure." Here he is pictured walking amid the wreckage. When I showed him the pictures he was a little upset that I had caught him without a hard hat on. There are others, even in our own Blue Ridge Chapter, who can share similar stories of his hospitality.

Rest in peace, Mr. Willis.



Norfolk Passenger Rail Service to Begin in 2012 Will provide a one-seat trip from Norfolk to as far North as Boston

Kim Kovac, DRPT, 804-225-3748, Kimberly.kovac@drpt.virginia.gov

Richmond, Va . Governor Bob McDonnell announced January 18 that the expected start date of the Amtrak Virginia extension to/from Norfolk will begin by December 31, 2012. This moves the service to start ten months earlier than originally projected.

This service will provide immediate relief to road weary travelers between two of the state's most congested regions, said Governor McDonnell. This service is long overdue and I congratulate our partners and commend their cooperation in moving up the scheduled start date.

The Commonwealth's Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), CSX, Norfolk Southern and the City of Norfolk have been working speedily to make the necessary upgrades for the service. The round-trip train will bring intercity passenger rail service to Norfolk for the first time since 1977, and will link Norfolk with a single-seat ride to Richmond, Washington, D.C. and cities as far north as Boston.

The updated timeline comes from today's Commonwealth Transportation Board meeting where they passed a resolution outlining the new goals and start date.

There is high demand for passenger rail service in Virginia as demonstrated by considerable ridership growth throughout the Commonwealth, said Amtrak Vice President of Government Affairs and Corporate Communications Joe McHugh. We have a strong partnership with the Commonwealth and look forward to operating this expanded service to Norfolk in 2012, providing passengers the option of convenient one-seat service to Washington and Northeast Corridor destinations.

The Norfolk train marks the third service expansion launched under the Amtrak Virginia partnership, which has introduced service to Richmond and Lynchburg since October 2009. Virginia is the 15th state to partner with Amtrak for intercity passenger rail service, and the successful launch of these new services is made possible through the partnership between DRPT, Amtrak and the host railroads along the routes. Amtrak Virginia routes had sizable gains in fiscal year 2011 over fiscal year 2010 with increases of 28.5 percent on the Washington-Lynchburg route and 19.1 percent on the Washington-Newport News route.

This service is a win-win for Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia. The economies of these two regions are intertwined and getting this service operating will strengthen them both, said Thelma Drake, Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

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Lynchburg Rail Day 2012. Saturday, August 11, 2012