

BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

Vol. 27

December 2020

No. 12



Last month marked the 35th anniversary of the Great Election Day Flood of 1985. Chapter member Garland Harper will share with us images he captured on November 5, the day of the flood, and a few days following. A few images not connected with the flood will be shared as a preview to the main attraction. Hope you can make it to the December meeting. CDC guidelines prevail.

Pictured above: rising floodwaters begin to overwhelm the CSX right-of-way, Hydro Street and the APCO Reusens transformer yard.

Wednesday, December 9, 2020. 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, NRHS Minutes of Meeting November 11, 2020

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm at Charley's Restaurant and welcomed eight members. The October minutes were approved as distributed. Rick welcomed Fred Mayer back after being in the hospital recently. Fred shared with everyone a magazine article that featured him and his model railroad in the Fall 2020 issue of *The Mainstreeter!* Congratulations Fred!

Skip Hansberry was not present due to eye surgery earlier today, but passed along the Treasurer's Report which Rick presented.

Under old business, Rick asked for a volunteer to serve on the nominating committee for our upcoming officer elections which have been delayed until the December meeting. Fred Mayer volunteered to serve. Rick informed everyone that all the current officers, with the exception of Bob Leslie whom he has not spoken with, have volunteered to run again. Fred stated he would check with Bob. Rick also extended an invitation to all chapter members, if they would like to run for any officer position to let Fred know.

Under new business, our webmaster, Tim Witt, stated that he had updated our website with the November newsletter but, so far, he hadn't been able to accomplish everything that he planned to do when he took on the site. He asked that if anyone was willing to become webmaster, he would graciously pass along the position! Rick thanked Garland for getting our November newsletter out. Garland had planned to provide the program for the November meeting featuring images of the "1985 Election Day Flood (35th Anniversary)" but due to some "unforeseen" circumstances, Garland could not attend and rescheduled his program for the December meeting. The business meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Due to Garland's absence, Rick provided a program that he had previously shown several years ago featuring "C&O Structures in Virginia".

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Johnson, acting Secretary

Notes from the Chapter President

- 2021 BRC annual Dues are \$13.00 and are due. Make checks payable to BRC and mail to P.O. Box 11731 Lynchburg, VA. 24506. There are also eleven 2019 members that have not paid their 2020 dues. As screwed up as this year has been and missing four months of meetings, I'm sure those eleven members probably had no idea they hadn't paid. So, if you did not remit your 2020 dues, and would like to do so, along with your 2021 dues, just double your check and support the Blue Ridge Chapter! Our Chapter Vice-President Gale McKinley has details regarding renewing national NRHS dues in this issue of the BRD.
- Just a reminder to "Stop the Spread"! Please wear a mask when attending meetings. We can, and will, only continue to have our meetings if everyone plays it safe.
- 2021 Election of Officers will be held at the December meeting!
- There will be no Christmas Banquet or Kemper Street Christmas Party this year.

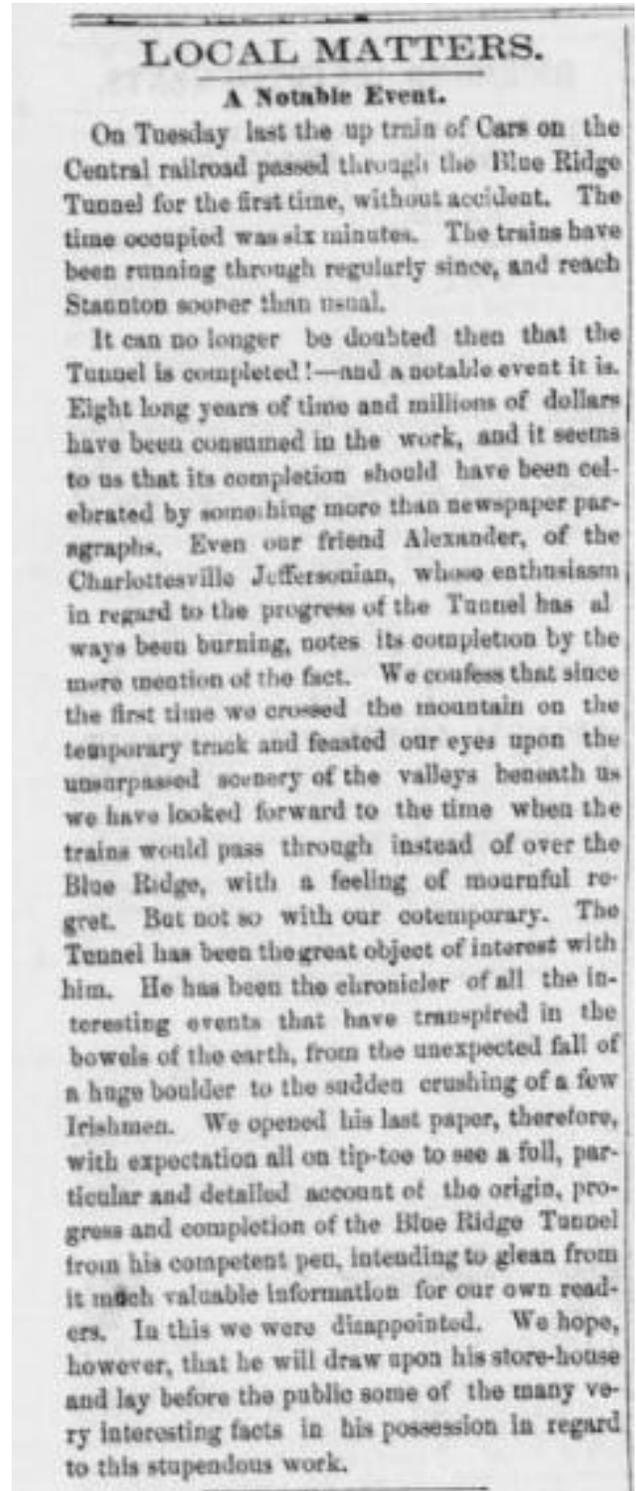
Nelson County Parks and Recreation Announces the Opening of the Blue Ridge Tunnel

Nelson County Parks and Recreation announced today the opening of the Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail system. Over 700 feet below the Blue Ridge Mountains at Rockfish Gap in Afton lies the 4,273-foot abandoned train tunnel in the heart of the Crozet Tunnel Greenway. The tunnel was constructed between 1850 and 1858 by Claudius Crozet, designer and chief engineer on the project and Irish immigrant laborers. The Blue Ridge Tunnel opened to railroad traffic on April 13, 1858. (The article to the right comes from the April 21, 1858, edition of the Staunton Spectator. Courtesy of the Library of Virginia.) At the time, it was the longest railroad tunnel in North America. In 1944, the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway replaced the 86-year-old Blue Ridge Tunnel with an adjacent tunnel that could accommodate larger locomotives. Somewhat parallel to the old passage, the newer tunnel is still in daily operation; the old Blue Ridge Tunnel has not hosted rail traffic since then.

Nearly 20 years in the making, Nelson County's tunnel restoration efforts date to 2001. In 2007, CSX Transportation generously donated the tunnel to Nelson County. Recognizing the regional value and scope of the project, the County established the nonprofit, Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation, in 2012. The group includes public officials from the counties of Nelson, Albemarle, and Augusta and the City of Waynesboro. The mission of the Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation is to support the restoration, reuse, and historical interpretation of the Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel as a community landmark and outstanding recreational and educational resource. The majority of the funding came from federal and state transportation grants and sources .

The tunnel project incorporates an access trail through the restored tunnel, including new trailheads on both sides of the Blue Ridge providing access for trail hikers, walkers, bicyclists, and other visitors. Ultimately, this project will link existing local trails, long-distance trail systems and the historic communities on both sides of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The tunnel is also strategically located at the convergence of the southern entrance of Shenandoah National Park's Skyline Drive, the northern entrance of the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Appalachian Trail, and U. S. Bicycle Route 76, boasting more than 6 million travelers annually. Both Interstate 64 and U. S. 250 cross over the tunnel at Rockfish Gap.

The Blue Ridge Tunnel trail system offers two access points to the tunnel. The east trail is fully accessible, primarily flat and offers views of the active railroad line. The 12-spot parking lot can be found at 215 Afton Depot Lane. The western trailhead is situated just east of Waynesboro at 483 Three Notched Mountain Highway and has 25 spaces and 2 oversized areas for small buses. The steep grade of the western trailhead may limit access to people with limited mobility. At just over 2.25 miles one way, the crushed stone path offers the explorer a chance to travel back in time to touch the original pin scars from the 1850's. Today, the tunnel is more cave-like and holds year-round temperatures of 50 degrees. Traveling through the long, dark tunnel will be a stirring experience for a variety of visitors from across the Commonwealth and beyond: hikers and cyclists of every level, wildlife watchers, history enthusiasts, railroad buffs, heritage tourists, school children on field trips, and nearby residents. Visitors can discover bats, the elusive long-tailed salamander, ancient hand molded bricks and secret waterfalls. Currently there are no plans to light the tunnel, so walkers and bikers are urged to bring headlamps and/or flashlights to aid their vision.



Norfolk Southern line near Glenvar, VA, reopens. Chapter member Norris Deyerle received this photo taken by Skip Salmon of the N&WHS on November 21 of the new bridge that spans the Roanoke River. The coal train derailment that completely destroyed the original c. 1909, Virginian-built bridge occurred late in the evening on October 30. Looks like the railroad here is in good shape for the next 100 years.



Amtrak posts \$801 million operating loss in FY2020. Just prior to the pandemic hitting the United States in March, [Amtrak](#) was on track to break even financially for the first time in its history and achieve record ridership in fiscal-year 2020. Instead, facing unprecedented challenges related to the pandemic, [Amtrak posted a fiscal-year 2020 operating loss of \\$801 million](#) on total operating revenue of \$2.3 billion, down 32 percent compared with FY2019 revenue. Read the entire article via the link below. Source: Progressive Railroading

[Rail News - Amtrak posts \\$801 million operating loss in FY2020. For Railroad Career Professionals \(progressiverailroading.com\)](#)

Dues renewal - Our Chapter Vice-President Gale McKinley reminds us about renewing our NRHS national dues. It can be done on-line or by mail.

To renew on-line log on to NRHS.com. Click "membership" from the menu at the top of the screen, select "membership renewal form" from the drop down menu. Select your membership level, fill out your information, then click "check out with PayPal". (DO NOT BE ALARMED! You do not have to have a PayPal account to continue. Other options will appear later in the process.) Then click "pay with PayPal". After this you'll be given the option to "pay with debit or credit card".

Or, you can mail your renewal to National if you wish. Mail your check and dues invoice which you should have already received if you're a current NRHS member to:

National Railway Historical Society, PO Box 31074, St. Louis MO 63131-0074

Thank you for supporting the national NRHS. See President Rick's comments about remitting your local, Blue Ridge Chapter dues.

Speaking of our Vice-President, our congratulations are directed her way for her prize-winning photos she entered in the Gulf Coast Chapter's recent contest. You'll appreciate the local flavor of her images. Way to go, Gale!



Contemporary Steam Railroading - Color First Place
N&W J 611 working Christiansburg Mountain west of Roanoke, May 28, 2017 on
former N&W track
Photographer: Gale McKinley



Contemporary Miscellaneous Railroad Subjects - Color Runner Up
CSX GP40-2 No. 6110 parked under historic coal dock
at Lynchburg' Sandy Hook Yard, Oct. 6, 2020
Photographer: Gale McKinley

CSX to Acquire Pan Am Railways in New England

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – November 30, 2020 - CSX Corp. (NASDAQ: CSX) today announced that it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire New England's Pan Am Railways, Inc. ("Pan Am"), whose rail carrier subsidiaries comprise North America's largest regional railroad.

Headquartered in North Billerica, Massachusetts, Pan Am owns and operates a highly integrated, nearly 1,200-mile rail network and has a partial interest in the more than 600-mile Pan Am Southern system. Pan Am's network across New England has access to multiple ports and large-scale commodity producers. The transaction will expand CSX's reach in Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts while adding Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine to its existing 23-state network.

The transaction will provide significant benefits to shippers and local communities as CSX integrates Pan Am into its best-in-class network. CSX made nearly \$1.5 billion in infrastructure capital expenditures in its network in 2019, supporting economic growth and ensuring the safety and efficiency of the supply chain.

Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. The transaction is subject to regulatory review and approval by the Surface Transportation Board.

Blue Ridge Chapter Member Bradley Dobbins Requests Your Prayers

On Monday November 30, 2020, Norris Deyerle received an email from his friend and Blue Ridge Chapter Member Bradley Dobbins. A paraphrase follows:

I wanted to let you know that I have developed further cancer and have been home in bed for most of November. This came about as lower back pain caused by tumor growth. This tumor evidently has no connection with the prostate cancer I had earlier and am still being treated for. I have already had some tests with more to come. I'm not sure what will happen but radiation seems the likely outcome. Just wanted you and my friends in the Blue Ridge and Roanoke, NRHS Chapters to know what was going on. Will continue in prayer and hope for healing if this is Our Father's plan and purpose. God bless, Bradley

Norris notes. Over the years I have had discussions with many of you about the number one benefit of being a member of groups of people such as the Blue Ridge Chapter and the Roanoke Chapter, NRHS. That number one benefit is the friends that we have made along the way. I asked Brad if I could ask my wife to have his name along with his wife Jocelyn's name added to our church Prayer List for friends and family members that are fighting illnesses. He said that would be fine since his feelings are that you can't have enough prayer. Brad gave me permission to let his friends have their mailing address and phone number. Their mailing address is:

2015 Craig Valley Drive
New Castle, Virginia 24127

Land Line: (540) 864-8432. Brad's Cell: (540) 798-5843

Feel free to contact Brad and Jocelyn. Brad called me the other afternoon to thank me for having my wife add his and Jocelyn's name to our church's Prayer List. After he and I discussed our health (something we old men do) we started talking about one of our favorite railroads. That being the East Broad Top Railroad. Almost instantly you could tell that both of us forgot about our health issues and were having fun recalling our experiences on the EBT. Give a friend a call. I promise you that you will feel better for doing so and your friend will also!

May the Lord be with you and your families,
Norris Deyerle

OFFICERS AND STAFF

President	Rick Johnson, 104 Mowry Ln. Lynchburg, VA 24502 434-660-1113 notch8@aol.com
Vice President	Gale McKinley, 1186 James View Dr. Lynchburg, VA 24503 434-907-1886 mckingc@yahoo.com
Secretary	VACANT
Treasurer	H. L. Hansberry, III, 467 Sunset Dr. Amherst, VA 24521 434-946-2443 hansberry2006@comcast.net
National Representative	Bob Leslie 3844 Peakland Pl. Lynchburg, VA 24503 434-384-9062 lckawanna@aol.com
Editor	Garland R. Harper, 3920 Harbor St. Lynchburg, VA 24503 434-384-7210 GRHarper@aol.com
Historian	Rick Johnson, 104 Mowry Ln. Lynchburg, VA 24502 434-660-1113 notch8@aol.com
Webmaster	Tim Witt, 115 Mountwood Dr. Huddleston, VA 24101 434-426-5418 timwitt3402@yahoo.com
BRC Chairman. VA Rail Heritage Region Partners	E. Norris Deyerle, Jr. 744 Chinook Pl. Lynchburg, VA 24502 434-851-0151 railcow@msn.com
Rail Day Chairman	Rick Johnson, 104 Mowry Ln. Lynchburg, VA 24502 434-660-1113 notch8@aol.com

The BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER is published by the Blue Ridge Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. Opinions expressed are those of the editor and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Blue Ridge Chapter or the National Railway Historical Society unless otherwise stated.

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS
P. O. Box 11731
Lynchburg, VA 24506-1731
www.blueridgenrhs.org