

BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

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C&O station and "G" Cabin at Gordonsville, Va. September 25, 1977. (Rick Johnson Photo)

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Rick Johnson will take us on a journey viewing railroad structures on the C&O during the 1970s and 1980s. Come on out and be a part of the meeting, following CDC protocol. Your presence is needed to nominate 2021 Chapter officers.

Wednesday, November 11, 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 - October 14, 2020

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm at Charley's Restaurant and welcomed ten members. The September minutes were approved as distributed. Several announcements followed: Garland Harper announced that Rick-2 and Tayler Johnson were the proud parents (and President Rick Johnson was the proud grandparent) of a baby boy, Parker James Johnson, born September 24th! President Johnson also informed the group that Rick-2 and family sold their Spout Spring home in July and moved into the "Johnson Estate" in Lynchburg until they build. Lee Herbert announced that he was recently married and they will live in Crozet. Kurt Reisweber announced he was in the process of moving from Williamsburg into his new home in Ashland, Va. which is only feet from, and overlooks, CSX's (former RF&P) mainline. Kurt will plan a BRC outing there once COVID restrictions are lifted!

Skip Hansberry presented the Treasurer's Report.

Under old business, Jerry Hampton, who volunteers at the Old City Cemetery, stated our plaque for the C&O Stapleton Station/Museum bench donation had been installed, just in time for those attending the upcoming Candlelight Tours to see. Photos of the bench with plaque installed were passed around.

Under new business, Rick thanked Garland for getting our October newsletter out. Garland stated that the November newsletter would carry a correction to an error in the October newsletter. Rick informed everyone that, per our bylaws, BRC officer elections were to be held tonight, however, due to very low attendance since meetings resumed in August, there was concern that a quorum (20% of paid members) may not be present to vote. The plan is to form a nominating committee at the November meeting and have elections in December. Rick stated that the 20% quorum, required eight paid BRC members in attendance, and is based on 40 paid BRC members for 2020. He pointed out that a number of previous members had not paid their dues with several of those being in attendance tonight. Garland announced that he would provide the program for the November meeting featuring images of the "1985 Election Day Flood (35th Anniversary)". The business meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm

Kurt Reisweber provided the evening's program which featured images from his recently acquired collection of Roger Whitt slides.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Johnson, acting Secretary

BRC OFFICER ELECTIONS

Per our bylaws, BRC officer elections are to be held at the October meeting, however, due to very low attendance since meetings resumed in August, there was concern that a quorum (20% of paid members) may not be present to vote. The plan is to form a nominating committee at the November meeting and hold elections in December. The 20% quorum, requires eight paid BRC members in attendance, and is based on 40 paid BRC members for 2020. If you would like to run for any officer position, please plan to attend the November meeting!

CONGRATULATIONS!



Members of the BRC would like to congratulate Rick-2 and Tayler Johnson on the birth of their son, and Avery on the arrival of her baby brother, Parker James Johnson. Parker (8 lbs, 6 oz) was born September 24th at 6:31 pm. Papa Rick likes to think Rick-2 arrived at the name "Parker" in honor of the famous rail photographer J. Parker Lamb!

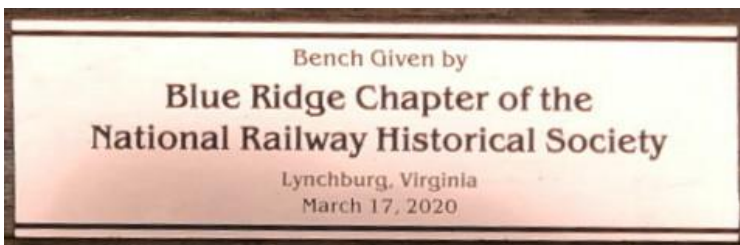
CORRECTION: It was stated in the November BRD that the photo of the last Saturday run of Amtrak #19 submitted by Lee Hawkins occurred on October 10. In reality it occurred on October 3.



Congratulations to Chapter member Lee Herbert

Lee reports to the BRD details on his recent marriage. He and Ellen Gorman were wed in Ivy, VA, on October 3rd. She retired from the Navy as a nurse at the rank of Commander. She previously lived at Smith Mountain Lake. Lucky for Lee while courting he confides that on his many of his trips from Lynchburg to her home his arrival at SML would often be delayed when he spotted an NS empty coal train in the hole at Huddleston. He certainly had to wait to see what kind of meet was lined up.

Oh! Congratulations to you, too, Ellen. You'll get accustomed to the trains.



BRC Stapleton station donation gains recognition – Several months ago the Chapter donated the bench seen in the lower photo. The plaque giving credit to the Chapter finally arrived and was attached to the bench. Thanks to Jerry Hampton for the pictures. (Note the green container on a passing train in the background.)



SIGHTING... and more



As they have done in years past Norfolk Southern operated an office car train in advance of the delayed-this-year-due-to-COVID Masters golf tournament in Augusta GA. Roy Evans caught the train as it passed through town Saturday morning November 7 and shares these images. The Wabash heritage unit was on the head end and the venerable office car Marco Polo brought up the rear. Revelations about the future of the Marco Polo made this sighting especially noteworthy.

A history of the Marco Polo is provided by Chapter friend Ken Towler. Until January 2019 one of the permanent residents of Washington's Union Station was Norfolk Southern's business car Marco Polo. The car, which sat in the station on track 7 for nearly 30 years, was built in 1927, in the twilight of the "Golden Age of Railroading," by the Pullman Company as a business car. Typical of business cars or "Varnish" luxury equipment often built by railroads and the wealthy of that time, the car has an observation lounge at the entry end which is used as a reception and sitting room, a large dining room with seating for eight, a kitchen (which has been modernized), and four bedroom and bath suites. The car is 74' 9" long.

Operated by the Pullman Company, the car carried many dignitaries, including:

- Governor of New York Franklin Delano Roosevelt,
- Madame Chaing Kai-Shek
- The Soong Sisters
- Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherland
- President Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia
- President Manual Quezon of the Philipines
- Presidents of Peru, Cuba, Bolivia, Liberia, Paraguay, Haiti
- J. H. Studebaker
- W. B. Woolworth
- Harvey Firestone
- W. L. Mellon

U. S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt used the car extensively between 1933 and 1940. The onset of WWII and associated security requirements necessitated the need to switch to an "armored" car for the President.

In 1944 the car was purchased by the Central of Georgia Railroad for use by railroad officials and its name was changed to "Savannah". The Central of Georgia was purchased by the Southern Railway. After a few years the car was leased to a hotel in Chattanooga, TN. The car was purchased by the Southern Railway in 1983, was refurbished and returned to Washington. In 1989 after the after the Southern's merger with the Norfolk & Western, the car was refitted once again in the new company's (Norfolk Southern's) shops in Roanoke, VA. It emerged with its original name.

BUT THERE'S MORE...

Norfolk Southern gifting historic Marco Polo railcar to Southeastern Railway Museum

November 9, 2020

Norfolk Southern Corporation is gifting the historic Marco Polo rail car, a car President Franklin D. Roosevelt used while in office, to the Southeastern Railway Museum in Duluth, Georgia.

The Pullman Company built the Marco Polo in 1927 as part of a small fleet of cars named for world explorers, reserving them for VIPs who chartered their own railcar. Roosevelt traveled in the car when he was governor of New York and later as president, using it on trips to and from Warm Springs, Georgia.

The car is scheduled to arrive at the museum at 11 a.m. on Nov. 14, and a brief unveiling ceremony will follow.

The museum plans to display the car on its 35-acre campus alongside the Superb, a Pullman car used by President Warren G. Harding.

"The Marco Polo is a critical piece of railroad history, and we are honored Norfolk Southern has entrusted us to help preserve the railcar and its story for future generations," said Sue Kelly, interim executive director of the Southeastern Railway Museum. "Railroads played an invaluable role in transporting presidents across the country. President Roosevelt had a unique connection to Georgia, and on his trips to Warm Springs, he regularly passed through Duluth and by what is today the museum, and we're excited to welcome the car back home."

The car also transported many dignitaries over the years, including Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the wife of China's wartime president. She used the Marco Polo during a United States tour in 1943.

"The Marco Polo holds a unique place in Norfolk Southern history, and we couldn't think of a more appropriate location for the car to be displayed than at the Southeastern Railway Museum," said John Friedmann, Norfolk Southern VP Network Planning & Optimization. "As we move our headquarters to Atlanta, forging relationships with surrounding communities like Duluth and organizations dedicated to preserving railroads like Southeastern Railway Museum will be critical to making Atlanta feel even more like home."

The Central of Georgia, a Norfolk Southern predecessor railroad, bought the car in 1944 and converted it into an office. The Southern Railway assumed ownership of the car in 1963 after it merged with the Central of Georgia.

Over the years, the railroad has displayed the car, which was later renamed the Savannah, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and at Union Station in Washington, D.C. For more than 25 years, Washington commuters have walked past the Marco Polo, most not knowing the railcar's history as a predecessor to Air Force 1.

For more information about the Southeastern Railway Museum, visit <http://www.southeasternrailwaymuseum.org/>.

About the Marco Polo

- Builder: Pullman Company
- Built: 1927
- Inside Length: 74 feet, 1 inch
- Inside Width: 8 feet, 11.5 inches
- Outside Length: 84 feet, 1.5 inches
- Outside Width: 9 feet, 10.75 inches
- Height: 9 feet, 10.75 inches
- Weight: 199,900 pounds

Spectacular NS Coal Train Pile-up Near Salem October 30

There was a serious derailment on the former Virginian near Glenvar, VA, Friday night, October 30. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

WSLS TV reported earlier:

Roanoke County officials responded to the train derailment incident in a press release Saturday night.

Officials said that a Norfolk Southern Corp. bridge collapsed in Roanoke County near Barley Drive Friday night around 10:15 p.m. The bridge collapsed while a train carrying coal was crossing the Roanoke River, and a dozen of 22 rail cars that derailed fell into the river, causing about 2000 tons of coal to fall out. Local rail historians commented that the bridge was an original 1909 Virginian (or Tidewater Ry.) steel bridge.

The Virginia Department of Emergency and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality responded to the incident and have been coordinating on removing the rail cars and coal from the river, according to the press release.

Officials said that DEQ is working with local, state and federal agencies as well as Norfolk Southern to collect samples to determine if there have been any impacts to water quality.

Out of an abundance of caution, Salem is currently withdrawing water from groundwater wells and not the Roanoke River until water samples of the river can be analyzed, according to officials.

WDBJ7 captured some great overhead drone footage of the carnage. Take a look at it at <https://www.wdbj7.com/2020/10/31/air7-flies-over-the-26-car-train-derailment-in-roanoke-co/>

Norfolk Southern released an update following the accident.

"Following the derailment on Friday, Oct. 30, in Salem, Virginia, Norfolk Southern continues to make progress on the site cleanup and recovery. Swift environmental mitigation is our priority, and, at this time, all rail cars have been removed from the Roanoke River. Our environmental team is removing coal from the river and adjacent shoreline and installing additional erosion control measures to restore the riverbank and protect against runoff.

Norfolk Southern is coordinating closely with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to implement a water monitoring plan, which has been approved by the state. We appreciate the rapid response and ongoing coordination with VDEQ, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state and county health departments, and other local, state, and federal agencies on these efforts.

Norfolk Southern's engineering team is in the preliminary stages of planning and preparing for bridge reconstruction, which will be ongoing over the next few weeks. Norfolk Southern freight traffic will continue to operate on an alternate route during this time.

The investigation into the cause of the derailment is ongoing."

It is understood bridge rebuilding is in progress.

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