

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS

POTOMAC CHAPTER, NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 235, KENSINGTON, MARYLAND 20895-0235

AUGUST 2018



SIGHTSEEING GEORGIA. During a July 2018 trip to Georgia, Atlanta's Stone Mountain Park was visited to ride and photograph their train that runs around the 825-foot tall massive "Stone Mountain." This location is at the entrance to Cherokee Trail. The train is powered by ex-Southern Railway FP7 No. 6147. More on page 2. Photo By: Alex Mayes

PROGRAM: "2017 in Review - Part 1." A digital presentation will be shown by Alex Mayes covering several major rail events he attended plus other railfanning exploits during the first half of 2017. Details on page 2.

MEETING: August 21, 2018. 8PM. Lobby Level Auditorium of the Montgomery County Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD.

NEXT MEETING DATE: September 18, 2018

DEADLINE FOR SEPTEMBER ISSUE: August 31, 2018. Send news items to Clay Moritz, Editor, Potomac Rail News, at c.moritz@comcast.net

INFO ON CHAPTER ACTIVITIES: <http://potomacnrhs.org/>

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THE CHAPTER FAMILY

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, has lost a loved one, or has a new birth in the family, please call the Chapter on (301) 251-9461.

IN MEMORIAM. With sadness we note the passing of long-time Potomac Chapter Member Melvin C. Vineyard, who passed away on January 7, 2018. Melvin served in the United States Navy during the Vietnam War and retired from the Naval Audit Service. A Mass of Christian Burial was offered on January 19, 2018 at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Gaithersburg, MD. Burial took place afterward at the Maryland Veterans Cemetery in Crownsville, MD. We extend our Deepest Sympathy to Melvin's family and friends. Please remember Melvin in your Thoughts and Prayers.

THIS MONTH'S COVER PHOTO: The Stone Mountain Park train runs around the 825-foot tall massive quartz monzonite "Stone Mountain," which features a huge carving on its side of three prominent Civil War Confederate leaders: Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. This artwork is the largest bas-relief carving in the world.

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM: 2017 in Review - Part 1. The program begins with a snowy trip to Eastern Canada in January for some winter photography and to ride VIA Rail's Ocean between Montreal and Halifax as well as Montreal-area commuter trains. The next segment is a February trip to Norfolk Southern's ex-PRR mainline in the Altoona, PA, area for more winter photography. Scenes include trains on Horseshoe Curve, at Gallitzin Tunnel, and the Cresson area. The program concludes with scenes of April and May mainline steam excursions powered by Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 in Virginia and North Carolina.

RAIL NEWS

UPDATE ON WESTERN MARYLAND #1309. On July 13, 2018, Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and Diversified Rail Services have shared their continuing progress in the overhaul of Western Maryland 2-6-6-2 #1309. With the FRA hydro completed, the momentum is building towards a test fire of her massive boiler. The checklist of appliances and parts, including boiler fittings and key portions of the stoker/firing equipment, becomes shorter each week. Clean-up and replacement of boiler brackets continues. Over the Independence Day holidays the locomotive was jacked up to allow for removal of the trailing truck. The trailing axle has been sent for tread and journal trueing prior to reinstallation in the truck frame. The frame itself has been inspected and needed repairs attended to. As mentioned in our previous release, the cab floor, stoker elevator tube and grate shaker levers are installed. With these components aboard the locomotive, attention turned to the fabrication of 1309's all-new welded ash pan. Utilizing the original as a template, the new pan has been completed using .25" steel and joined to the original hopper bottom casting. Installation of the smoke box draft appliances has commenced and replacement grate parts are being cast.

Previously, we had suggested clever donation opportunities using locomotive numbers...so we will add another number for this release: Casting of new grate parts - \$3,985, or individual grate fingers for \$39.85!

We say an enthusiastic, "Thank you," for your sincere compliments and generous financial support. Thanks for helping us rebuild the past for your enjoyment in the future. (Western Maryland Scenic RR Blog Post; www.wmsr.com)

VIRGINIA AVENUE TUNNEL UPDATE. Both new bores at Virginia Avenue are now in service in Southeast Washington, D.C., along the present north end of CSX Transportation's RF&P subdivision. The number three track tunnel was opened to traffic on the evening of Friday, July 16th, with the first train through being the Q354-the Ashtabula, OH, - Portsmouth, VA, intermodal train (normally with some combination of single and double-stacked platforms). There is now a minimum of two tracks along the route between Riverdale/Hyattsville, MD, and Greendale, VA, except for the single track, between Tuxedo and Chesapeake, Junction (over which crosses over Tuxedo Rd.-US 50, Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, CSX's Landover Division and Metrorail's Orange Line) along the Alexandria Extension portion of CSX's Capital Subdivision.

B&O MUSEUM WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum has announced the selection of Kris Hoellen as its new Executive Director. Ms. Hoellen, a Senior Vice President at the National Aquarium, will assume her new position in September 2018. Ms. Hoellen comes aboard at a pivotal time as the Museum is poised to adopt a new master plan to grow its impact on the west side of Baltimore, and to prepare for the 200th Anniversary of American Railroading. Beyond her experience at the National Aquarium, Ms. Hoellen has a background in transportation having worked at the Transportation Research Board of the National Academy of Sciences as well as at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Additionally, she has devoted much of her career to working with communities throughout the United States on becoming economically and environmentally healthy while a senior executive at The Conservation Fund.

Ms. Hoellen replaces Mr. Courtney Wilson, Executive Director of the Museum for the past 20 years, who announced his departure earlier this year. The September 2018 issue of Trains Magazine includes an interview with Courtney Wilson that indicates he expects to step down sometime in November after his successor has a firm hand on the throttle and goes on to state that an ambitious master plan for Museum expansion has been drawn up that aims for completion in time for the B&O's Bicentennial in 2027. (B&O Museum press release and September 2018 Trains Magazine)

NTSB INVESTIGATION OF AMTRAK'S DEADLY DERAILMENT IN DUPONT, WA. The engineer of the Amtrak train that derailed near DuPont, Washington had no experience operating the train's new charger locomotive, according to Federal officials at a July 10th investigative hearing into the crash. On December 18, 2017, the Amtrak engineer making his first solo trip over a new route had only 60 seconds to orient himself to the controls of a brand new locomotive before pulling his train out of King Street Station. On board were 83 passengers and crew. Then as the train was about to cross over I-5 near the town of DuPont, Amtrak train #501 left the tracks while hitting a curve at more than twice the speed limit, killing three passengers and injuring 62.

On July 10th, the National Transportation Safety Board held the first of a two-day hearing in Washington, D.C. in its attempt to find the root cause, or causes, of the accident. On Day 2, the Board heard from experts on how rail safety on American railroads compares to other industries and other nations. Statistically, flying is far safer than taking the train.

Sound Transit owns the line and had oversight over the line's safety and security. The line received new track and road bed. The speed limit on straighter sections was increased to 79 mph. But the curve at the scene of the wreck at milepost 19.8 was not singled out as particularly risky, other than the posting of speed limit signs lowered to 30 mph. Amtrak #501 hit the curve going 78 miles per hour.

"In this case, the curve was problematic," said NTSB Member Earl Weener.

"Who had the responsibility to point out or determine, or take a first crack at 80 miles per hour into a 30 mile per hour curve?" His question was followed by a long silence from a panel of agencies including Sound Transit, Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), which also helps fund and plan the region's passenger train travel. "That's what I was afraid of," said Weener, followed by more silence. "So nobody's responsible for the mitigation? The potential mitigation of that curve being as problematic as it turned out to be." Finally, WSDOT's Ronald Pate, Director of the Agency's Rails, Freight, and Ports Division, spoke up, citing the fact the curve was studied and signed-off by an engineering firm that oversaw the upgrade to the line. But crew training, or lack of it, was also a major area for questioning. Amtrak's Mike DeCataldo noted the Federally-owned railroad company is upgrading its training to include at least four orientation trips behind the controls for engineers new to that line. The 55-year-old engineer of train 501 was qualified with just two round-trips.

Citing interviews with the engineer, NTSB Chairman Sumwalt said the engineer was well aware of the curve, but somehow missed the black and yellow warning sign two miles ahead of the curve warning that a slow zone was coming up.

As for the sixty seconds in the cab of the brand new Seimen's Charger Locomotive, Sumwalt asked Amtrak's representative: "Is that a normal expectation for an Amtrak engineer?" DeCataldo responded: "That is not a normal expectation." Amtrak says while on the first run over new territory, a road foreman of engines would normally be on board, but not this time. The only other person in the cab was a conductor taking an orientation ride and all conversation was focused on operation of the train.

Even the lightweight, articulated Talgo train sets came under scrutiny. New rules adopted by the FRA in 1999 called for tougher passenger car standards for North American passenger operations in the event of a high-speed accident. The European designed cars did not qualify, but were grandfathered in after strengthening and other upgrades. After the December crash in DuPont, officials said trains would not return to the route until positive train control (PTC) was implemented. As of June, trackside PTC equipment is in place and operational and onboard equipment is undergoing final testing, and back-office servers are in place. Crews will test the entire system on the rail line this summer, according to the Washington State Department of Transportation. Trains could return to the Point Defiance Bypass route by this fall, according to WSDOT.

The new route, which is part of a \$180.7 million project, was designed to speed-up service by removing passenger trains from a route along Puget Sound that is bogged down by curves, single-track tunnels, and freight traffic. The new route was expected to save 10 minutes from the old route. (King Channel 5 News, Seattle, Washington; www.king5.com)

DURANGO & SILVERTON PREPARES FOR WEATHERING DRY YEARS. Al Harper, owner of the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, says if all goes according to plan the railroad will not have another disastrous summer like this year's. In June and July, the railroad did not run for more than 40 days, after the massive 416 Fire broke out June 1. Extreme drought gave rise to extreme fire danger, prompting La Plata County to enact restrictions that ban coal-fired engines.

As the fire burned in the San Juan National Forest, Harper's fleet of six coal-fired steam engines sat idle in a rail yard, unable to infuse thousands of dollars into the Durango and Silverton economies. The losses were so great that Harper had no choice but to adapt to ensure his company could operate during extreme droughts. So the railroad is now spending as much as \$6 million on oil- and diesel-powered engines that will stand in for the train's traditional coal-fired engines that are infamous for sending off cinders and sparking fires. In

the future, the D&SNG plans to consult with the U.S. Forest Service, local fire districts, and La Plata County to determine if weather conditions pose too high a fire risk to run coal-fired engines.

"This is a momentous task," Harper said. "But we will never be shut down again for fires." Harper, who has owned the railroad since 1998, is investing the money to make good on this bold proclamation. "It will be no different than a car driving on a gravel road through the forest," Harper said of the decreased risk offered by oil and diesel engines. Eliminating the risk that cinders pose, the railroad suspended service to Silverton on June 1 after the start of the 416 Fire that has so far burned more than 54,000 acres of the San Juan National Forest northwest of Durango and cost more than \$31 million to fight.

As of August 3rd, the cause of the fire was listed as "unknown." But witness accounts that the fire started along the railroad's tracks right after a morning train passed by, have fueled speculation that the coal-fired locomotive is at fault. Harper, for his part, has acknowledged the possibility that one of his trains started the 416 Fire, now Colorado's sixth largest wildfire, and said the train would take full responsibility. But, he has asked for patience as the investigation proceeds.

The railroad's move to convert one of its coal-fired engines to run on oil, as well as the purchase of two diesel engines, is what many in the community called for in the days after the 416 Fire broke out. Randy Babcock, the mechanical foreman who is leading the oil conversion, said these plans had been in place for the past few years but the fire sped-up the process. "That's why we've been able to pull the trigger so quickly," Babcock said. "A lot of the legwork was already done." Babcock and his team have a self-imposed deadline to convert the 1902 boiler made for coal to be able to burn oil by May 1, 2019, the start of the next operating season.

When operating coal-fired locomotives, the frequency with which hot cinders are thrown out, fall to the ground, and start small burns has caused the railroad to operate with their own firefighting tactics, such as having pop cars with water tankers follow a train to extinguish small fires and a helicopter to tackle fires from the air.

Locomotives that run on oil and diesel, however, burn liquid that vaporizes when ignited, so there is no solid material to send-off sparks. But it has been difficult to find oil and diesel engine options for the railroad's narrow gauge track.

Right now, train crews are working in the downtown depot to convert an old coal-fired engine that last ran in the 1960s to run on oil. It is likely, also, that the railroad will add one or two more oil engines to its fleet over the next few years. The cost to convert just one engine is about \$1 million.

Beyond conversion efforts, the railroad just announced the purchase of two custom-built diesel locomotives: one to be called the "550" in reference to the highway that connects Durango and Silverton, and the other "416" in recognition of the wildfire. The purchase of the two locomotives will cost more than \$3 million and will require the company to build a new \$500,000 facility to be able to work on diesel engines, a first for the historic railroad. (The railroad currently owns two smaller diesel engines that are not powerful enough to make the steep mountainous trek from Durango to Silverton.) When done, Harper said the railroad will have a viable alternative when the danger of fire is too high to risk running coal-fired engines. The new diesel locomotives will have the same appearance as coal locomotives.

On a typical day, the D&SNG carries about 1,000 people on 30 to 40 train cars to Silverton. The new oil and diesel engines will be able to haul 28 cars. Trip times will be nearly identical, Harper said. Oil and diesel engines require much less maintenance and are significantly cheaper to run than coal engines, but

Harper said the railroad will always prefer to stick to its roots and use coal. The D&SNG has exclusively used coal-fired steam engines throughout its 137-year history. The railroad, though built to serve as a lifeline for mining operations in Silverton, has also catered to tourists since as early as 1882.

The railroad's closure has had reverberating effects on the economy in Southwest Colorado, the full extent of which is not yet known. It's a situation that Harper hopes to never run into again. "After this, we will be prepared for the future, and never have to shut down," he said. (The Durango Herald)

JUDGE ORDERS TRAIN MUSEUM TO VACATE ITS LOCATION. A Hamilton County judge has ordered the Indiana Transportation Museum (ITM) to move out of Forest Park in Noblesville by July 12, 2018, putting an apparent end to a simmering dispute. Circuit Court Judge Paul Felix dismissed ITM's lawsuit against Noblesville alleging defamation and slander, restraint of trade and tortuous interference when the City refused to renew terms of a lease agreement to stay at its longtime 10-acre home.

Felix also denied ITM's request to delay its eviction by 18 to 36 months so it could safely remove its trains and other equipment. "It is not ITM's right to demand to remain on the premises until they can return the premises to the City in a clean and sightly manner," Felix wrote in his order. "There is no basis in law for this argument. "The ITM suit sought to delay its eviction by Noblesville and the Hoosier Heritage Port Authority, which operates the tracks. The ITM also wants to use HPPA's train tracks to move its fleet because it would be cheaper and faster than using trucks. But Felix said the difference in cost was not enough to merit the delay and noted that the ITM had not taken any steps toward moving after it knew its lease would not be renewed in December 2017.

The museum has already found a new home in Logansport but wants to move seven locomotives, 18 box cars and 20 passenger cars worth about \$4 million. ITM President John McNichols said it would cost \$1.5 million to move the equipment by truck but much less by rail. The City of Noblesville issued a statement saying "it is the right ruling and in the public's best interest." "The property is a mess but will be restored in a safe and efficient manner," spokesman Robert Herrington said. "The City will continue to hold ITM responsible for any environmental issues remaining at the site." The bad blood between the City and museum began two years ago when the Port Authority ordered ITM to halt its popular Indiana State Fair Train because it said the tracks, which ITM is responsible for maintaining, were unsafe. In addition, the city said ITM had contaminated the site and called in the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to inspect drums leaking oil, grease, and diesel fuel and ordered ITM to clean it up.

On July 1, 2018, The Kentucky Steam Heritage Corp (KSHC), a Kentucky-based nonprofit rail preservation institution, announced that an agreement has been reached with the Indiana Transportation Museum to aid in an emergency move of pieces of their historic rail collection. KSHC has agreed to purchase the museum's tool car, an ex-Pennsylvania Railroad Railway Post Office Car as well as to transport ex-Nickel Plate steam locomotive No. 587 to their Ravenna, Kentucky shop for eventual re-build. NKP No. 587, a Mikado-type locomotive, was built in 1918 and operated by the Nickel Plate Railroad in Indiana until being retired in 1955. It was placed on display in Broad Ripple Park in Indianapolis later that year. The engine gained significant fame in the late 1980s and early 1990s when it was restored by museum volunteers and operated all over the eastern United States for Norfolk Southern's steam program. It was in service for the Indiana Transportation Museum's tourist operation until 2003.

ITM and KSHC have enlisted Underwood Machinery Transport, Inc. of Indianapolis to move the engine, tender, and tool car. Jim Irwin, Vice President

of Underwood, said the company was initially responsible for moving 587 out of Broad Ripple Park in the 1980s during its first restoration. Because the museum track is not tied to the national rail system, all equipment will need to be removed and transported via truck. On July 6, 2018, the move began to relocate NKP No. 587 to Kentucky.

The Kentucky Steam Heritage Corporation (KSHC), P.O. Box 23971, Lexington, KY 40523 1-833-KY STEAM (1-833-597-8326), is a Kentucky based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization operating with the intent to educate, entertain and inspire past, current and future generations by operating historic rail equipment. The hallmark of KSHC's efforts is the restoration of Chesapeake & Ohio Railway Steam Locomotive No. 2716 to operation. The restoration and operation of 2716 and other historic pieces will prove to be living history and will serve as an educational tool, enhancing heritage tourism and stimulating economic growth www.kentuckysteam.org. (Indianapolis Star www.indystar.com; KSHC Press Release)

EVENTS

Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show. August 18-19, 2018. 10am-4pm. Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly, VA 20151. FREE PARKING. Cost: Adult Admission is \$10 Saturday or \$9 Sunday (on-site ticket sales cash only) NOTE: All Saturday tickets are good for both days; Kids 11 and under are admitted free and do NOT need a ticket; Adult Saturday ticket GOOD FOR SUNDAY TOO; Adult Sunday only ticket IS NOT GOOD for Saturday. Tickets also available on-line at <http://trainshow.com/chantilly08/>

Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show is the largest and longest-running model train and collectible toy show in the country. The show is geared towards the general public and towards modelers and hobbyists, featuring hundreds of tables of trains and accessories for sale, huge operating exhibits, activities for kids, and more. All aboard!

EXPERIENCE BEING BEHIND THE SCENES, IN THE CAB, OR UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH NORFOLK & WESTERN CLASS J No. 611. DATES: August 31 - September 23, 2018. Opportunities include: FIRE UP 611 BEHIND THE SCENES; 611 AT THE THROTTLE; 611 JUMP SEAT CAB RIDES; ADD-ON AT THE THROTTLE VIDEO CAPTURING YOUR EXPERIENCE BEING THE ENGINEER OR FIREMAN ON THE 611 AS YOU GUIDE THE LOCOMOTIVE DOWN THE RAILS; RIDE IN THE N&W CABOOSE BEHIND THE 611; "FIRED UP" NIGHTTIME PHOTO SHOOT; RIDE BEHIND THE 611 AS IT PULLS THE NCTM PASSENGER TRAIN ON SEPTEMBER 3 (Labor Day); and Experiencing an N&W "PELICAN" DINNER - A SOUTHERN STYLE MEAL INSPIRED BY A DINNER MENU FROM THE "PELICAN" PASSENGER TRAIN. Check out the NCTM website for schedule details, prices, and purchasing tickets. Presented by: The North Carolina Transportation Museum and The Virginia Museum of Transportation. Location: N. C. Transportation Museum, 411 S. Salisbury Ave., Spencer, NC 28159 (704) 636-2889 E-mail: nctrans@nctrans.org Website: www.nctrans.org

2018 ANTHRACITE RAILROADS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION. September 8-9, 2018, Steamtown National Historic Site, 350 Cliff St, Scranton, PA 18503. For banquet flyer/registration form visit Website: <http://www.anthraciterailroads.org>. 2018 represents the 70th Anniversary of the ARHS- and Tri-State-owned EMD F3 units. Saturday includes these units with a chartered excursion from Steamtown to Tobyhanna and return, with photo stops and followed by a barbecue dinner on the Steamtown property. Sunday features presentations including a report on the status of the ARHS, the history of the ARHS/Tri-State F3s, a CNJ veteran speaking on his career with the CNJ, an overview of the railroad photography of Donald Furler, and other surprises at Steamtown's auditorium with tours of the F3 units available following the presentations. SPACE IS LIMITED TO FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED, SO REGISTER EARLY TO GUARANTEE YOUR ATTENDANCE!

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS is published monthly by the Potomac Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 235, Kensington, Maryland 20895-0235

Website: <http://potomacnrhs.org/>

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