



# The Highball

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER  
of the  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OLD DOMINION CHAPTER



Volume 57

February 2017

Number 3

odcnrhs.org

## Monthly Meeting

Bill Todd

The monthly meeting of the ODC will be held at 7 pm on Monday, 2/20 at Hull Street Station. ODC member Robin Shavers will present another of his famous slide programs entitled "Stuff Ya Just Don't See Anymore." His two 80 slide trays will include steam, electric & diesel from "Fallen Flags" around the USA. With his commentary and show, you will enjoy this evening so please make an extra effort to come out for our ODC fellowship, refreshments & slides. Also, please bring a friend.

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## From the President

John DeMajo

As I promised, lots of good things are starting to happen.

Our intern has started working on the inventory of club property. She is currently cataloging the contents of the museum collection. When she completes that, she will move on to the REA car where she will begin cataloging the items in the archives. It is one of my primary goals, as president, that we have an accurate and readily available inventory of all the club's property, so this will be an on-going project as long as "person-power" is available to us.

At the January board meeting, Calvin Boles was appointed Curator of Exhibits at the museum. As most of you probably know by now, Calvin was instrumental in getting the dingy old photo boards replaced, including donating a substantial amount toward the project. Having completed the four boards that highlight the museum and Richmond railroads, he has turned his attention to replacing the time-worn board where we display our photos of our Hallsboro operations. In the weeks to come, Calvin will be looking at several artifacts that have

been in storage for years, and incorporating them into the museum's public displays. This will include the wig-wag signal which has been hidden for many years, as well as a streetcar exhibit that he is planning.

The museum again has a railroad china collection on view. I was able to work out a loan agreement with the board to place my personal china collection on an extended loan. This will once again allow us to show our visitors china and menus from the great dining cars of old.

Finally, we are actively working on a master plan to carry the museum into the next decade. There is increased development activity in Manchester, and we intend to have the Richmond Railroad Museum be the crown jewel of that movement. More on that in coming months.

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## Book Review

Brandy Martin

*Virginia Rail Trails*

*Crossing the Commonwealth*

By Joe Tennis

2014 - The History Press, Charleston SC

\$ 19.95 paperback

A few years ago I could count on the fingers of one hand my mental inventory of abandoned rail lines converted to trails for public recreation. I recognized the N&W Abingdon branch, the C&O Lexington branch, the entire W&OD, the short stretch of the South River Lumber Company on the Blue Ridge Parkway, and most recently the N&W High Bridge inclusion in the state park system. Beyond those I was in the dark. But no more. Santa Claus saw to that.

Joe Tennis has been writing about rail trails for magazines and newspapers since 1992. In 2014 he authored a 254 page paperback *Virginia Rail Trails*,

### *Crossing the Commonwealth.*

Even before getting to the Table of Contents page you are hit with a state map on facing pages with 45 numbered dots. Yes, 45. Who knew? Certainly not I. Amazed? Yes. Embarrassed by my ignorance? Yes. The geographic distribution bears study. There are but 4 in the entire Tidewater area, with one being on the eastern shore at that. There are six in northern Virginia. There are but two in the central Richmond area. Southside has 10. The central part of the Valley and nearby has 9. Southwest Virginia wins the contest with 14.

What is so great about this book is its inclusiveness of history with current comment on what to see and how to get there. Rounding out the story is a variety of historic and contemporary photographs, plus some maps of specific trails. Tennis mentions in the text the remaining stations. I only wish there was an all inclusive list of them in this book. As a side note – there is the web site for the Railroad Station Historical Society that includes Virginia county by county. The best is for last – Tennis includes Resources (web sites where known), a Bibliography, and an Index.

If railroading in Virginia is your interest, add this book to your library.

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### **February Archives Photo**

Charles Curley

In this late 1940's shot by J I Kelly, an Atlantic Coast Line 4-6-2 heads a southbound freight past FA tower at Walmsley Blvd.



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### **Aboard the Amtrak Beech Grove**

Doug Riddell

Since it's Amtrak's only office car (note, I did not say "business" car—but "office" car) the Beech Grove, so named because it was constructed from a wrecked Amfleet I coach at the railroad's Beech Grove Shops, just outside of Indianapolis IN, gets around the system with great frequency. When not

in use, the "10001" usually sits at the stub end of Washington Union Station's Track 20. (The 10002, the Corridor Clipper, is technically a track geometry and performance measuring car. There are two other former UP sleepers, converted to support the Beech Grove, with a washer and dryer, storage and other amenities, for longer trips, as well.)

It was ordered by W. Graham Claytor, Jr., during his tenure as president of the US passenger carrier. Amtrak had previously leased the Adolphus Busch private car, "10000" for its purposes, but after converting much of its fleet to 480-volt hotel power, it was decided to construct an office car of its own that would not have to rely on steam heat, but one that would contain the latest electronic enhancements, which included live video cameras and monitors, later updated to include a GPS system. Doing this to a piece of leased equipment made no sense.

Having previously served as president of the Southern Railway, Claytor realized the importance of being able to provide the executive staff with a proper venue in which to conduct business, especially in light of the fact that quite often, it was necessary to meet with community leaders at points along the national system where there was lack of an adequate facility.

Unlike the railroad office car fleets owned by America's freight railroads, with its shoe string budget, Amtrak could not afford their luxury trappings and dedicated staff. When the Beech Grove went out on the rear of a train, it had a single onboard cook/attendant to take care of all the duties. When not serving as the car's attendant, the Washington-based employee worked scheduled passenger trains, such as the Capitol Limited or Northeast Corridor runs. Where there was a large group was to be hosted, the company prevailed upon local management to provide manpower to help serve, or called members of the Corp Comm and Government Affairs staff to make the trip.

In addition to a comfortable observation room and open platform, the Beech Grove has two bedrooms, a dining room with a table to seat eight, a kitchen and a smaller dorm area for the attendant. The car was upgraded at Beech Grove about ten years ago to make it more appealing aesthetically and operationally. During Amtrak's 40th anniversary celebration, when I was assigned as the company photographer, I traveled from time to time with Amtrak president, Joe Boardman, who used the car extensively, traveling several times from coast to

coast as well as up and down the system from one end to the other.

It was for the rollout of the first Amtrak Superliner, refurbished at Beech Grove, that I got to spend a lot of time on the car—even joining Joe and other Amtrak executives, conducting tours of the car for some of the very people who built it. The degree of pride each took in their role of its construction was readily apparent.

After a long day of festivities, tours and meetings, we were worn out. The Beech Grove was to be moved the five miles or so to Indianapolis, where we would be attached to the rear of No. 50, the Cardinal, and forwarded to Washington during the middle of the night. After he called home, I told Joe to go ahead and retire for the night, and I'd handle the yard move over the former NYC main into town. I had no idea of the complexity of doing so. I was to get quite an education. The move was entirely on non-signalized track that required us to crawl, being shoved all of the way, which required me to operate the rear flood lights, but doing so without blinding the young lady who was our conductor for the move. And she did everything by the book. But then, when I was handling the office car of the president of the railroad, I was so scared that something would go wrong, that I did the same thing, so I didn't say anything about the overabundance of caution she exercised. By the time we coupled up, did our brake tests and got under way, the Cardinal was two hours late.

When we awoke in the morning, we were rolling along the falls of the Kanawha. "Where'd we lose the time?" Joe asked. I then explained the time-consuming move from Beech Grove, after which he said, "I think we'd better walk through the train and see if we can't smooth some ruffled feathers." So we did. Along the way, we found a troop of Boy Scouts coming home from their Jamboree, so we brought them back to the Beech Grove and gave them a tour as well. By that time, attendant Lou Drummetter, had breakfast ready, so I took one of the folding chairs out onto the observation platform and ate as the colorful panorama of the hills and hollers of West Virginia faded into the distance. Murphy's Law ruled that trip. Just as we were about to descend into Charlottesville, we were halted at Ivy, and told that a truck on US Rt. 250 had jumped the guardrail and landed in the middle of the Buckingham Branch main line, east of town. The track had to be inspected for damage before we could proceed, so our delay grew longer. "If you

plan to get to Richmond tonight, you'd better take the connecting bus, rather than try to get to Alexandria and make the Meteor, Doug," Joe suggested. And I did. Lou packed a box lunch for me and grinned, as he always did.

I'd ride the Beech Grove to Savannah on the rear of the Palmetto and other trains, but when I see the Beech Grove pass through Ashland these days in retirement, my thoughts go back to enjoying breakfast on its open platform, giving tours to the Boy Scouts and the workers at the Beech Grove Shops. I've enjoyed writing about my tales "from the cab," but I can honestly tell you, I also enjoyed my times "on the rear."



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### **New Addition to the BB**

Greg Hodges

For some years now the ODC has leased its GP7 in RF&P livery to the BBRR for additional power

needs. Now, the 101 reportedly will be joined at the BB by an SD40 that was originally Chesapeake and Ohio locomotive # 7534. CSX is donating the historic (1971) engine to the C&O Historical Society in Clifton Forge. The unit will be repainted in its original C&O paint scheme at CSX's former C&O shop facility at Huntington, WV. following cosmetic repairs before being delivered to the COHS in Clifton Forge. The 7534 will be leased to the BBRR to supplement its motive power needs.

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**Richmond Railroad Museum and Archives  
Report for February 2017**

Bob Dickinson

Visitors: 233

Total for 2017: 233

Donations: \$195.00

Volunteer hours: 205

Gift shop sales: \$392.91

Chapter meeting attendance: 24

Thanks to all who hosted and volunteered in January – it was a busy month for everyone. A new “face” at the museum on Saturday mornings is “Wally Winn” who has volunteered to take care of the caboos on a regular basis. We still have a few openings for hosts. Particularly for someone who can help supervise activities in the model train room and at the train simulator when there are lots of visitors!

Calvin Boles, display and exhibits chairman continues to work on updating displays. At the present he is re-doing the one about the Chapter’s yard at Hallsboro. He is also looking for help to “rebuild” the front of what is left of the old Richmond streetcar that is stored in the boxcar so it can be included in a new exhibit about streetcars that ran in the city. Some woodworking skills needed.

No shortage of ideas about how to improve the museum including the building, grounds, equipment, displays, etc. exists. The only thing lacking is money to do the projects. Most museums are subsidized as very few generate enough internally to cover operating cost. The Richmond Railroad Museum is no exception. The Old Dominion Chapter, NRHS covers the museums operating deficit! As most everyone knows the ODC earns most of its income from the operation of excursions on the Buckingham Branch Railroad. Some of the same “hosts” that work at the museum

also work long hours to make the excursions successful. We are so thankful to the BB for supporting our activities on their railroad which in turn support the Chapter and the museum. We also desire to make the museum operation as self-sufficient as possible as there are other Chapter projects that need resources too. Museum and caboos rental are great potentials. Fresh ideas and volunteers are the keys to success for these endeavors!

The next museum committee meeting will be Saturday morning 3/11 starting at 9:30 AM in the museum. All interested are invited to attend. COMING SOON! - Hiding in the archives for almost 70 years are some of the records and newsletters of the “Old Dominion Railway Club”. Some of these will soon be available “online” and available in the archives storage car ex RF&P 185 for your examination. Almost unbelievable today are descriptions of special trips that were operated and their costs! Can you also believe that the “club” had a private “reading room” at the old “Broad Street Station” available at any time to members who had their own key? More details next time.

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**February Museum Host Schedule**

Linda Nelon

4	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Bill Taylor	Host
	Bob Stevens	Host
5	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Jack Newsome	Host
	Doug Riddell	Host
11	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Jacob Hoffman	Host
	Calvin Boles	Host
12	TBA	Gift Shop
	Jim Lewis	Host
	Bob Williams	Host
18	Bob Dickinson	Gift Shop
	Ned Krack	Host
	TBA	Host
19	Carl Steiner	Gift Shop
	Charles Curley	Host
	Steve Tarrant	Host
25	TBA	Gift Shop
	Wayne Poates	Host
	Ray Potter	Host
26	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Bob Dickinson	Host
	Jerry Grosshans	Host

## Railroading Today

Gerry Grosshans

More on the tunnel project and the commencement of double-stacks through the area. After I read the article I mentioned last month, I tried to keep a lookout for such service to begin, only catching the two mentioned last month, right at the deadline for publication in **THE HIGHBALL**. Since then I have seen several single trains, but on the last Sunday of January, after hosting at the museum, I took a friend home, grabbed a bite to eat and headed for Centralia, only to catch two heading east (south) about 20-25 minutes apart, the timespread of the two mentioned last month.

I had always thought that there would be some sort of ceremony when the first train went through, a car or two of dignitaries, perhaps even the Governor, if he wasn't otherwise busy with a distillery, brewery, winery or some similar place. This was due to the fact that everything going through the tunnels is either coming or going through Virginia

To sum up, the first train passed, from Portsmouth to North Baltimore on December 22-23 under the symbol of Q135. The only trains I am certain about are Q136 east and Q135 west, much like their older single level predecessors. There was also a Q130 and occasionally a Q139 baretable as needed. I believe there were other trains, most often the same routing at a different time, same number with an "L" prefix. A couple of things....As these are east-west trains the numbering system is the opposite of what is usual on CSX, being odd south and even north. Another way to tell these trains is by the containers, usually Maersk, Matson, etc. belonging to over-seas shippers, and currently these trains are the only doublestack trains on CSX in the area.

There are still plenty of single level intermodals running north-south. These trains carry UPS, FedEx and other domestic carriers, most notably JB Hunt and Schneider. I have noticed that both of these carriers are now labeling their containers not to be stacked over two high.

CSX intends to operate an intermodal terminal, similar to North Baltimore, at Rocky Mount, NC, to open late 2019.

With domestic intermodal operating as single level equipment, we probably will have to wait until the tunnel situation in Baltimore is resolved. A terminal was originally planned for location between DC and Baltimore, only to have plans for such dropped due to neighborhood opposition

The tunnel problems in Baltimore are primarily the Howard Street tunnel affecting CSX but the B&P tunnel there affects Amtrak, NS and MARC. Other problems include Long Bridge and eventually what will have to be done at Ashland and in the Fredericksburg area. Right now the Ashland situation is to be studied further, but I noticed that the use of the ex-C&O Piedmont line now operated by the BB was also mentioned as an alternative. I seriously don't believe that anything under consideration right now will please everyone. If one doubts about the arrival of double-stacks in the area, there was a good shot of such a train when it had an encounter with a car which had turned onto the tracks in Ashland, a good shot of a bad situation, repeated on all channels. A closer look showed an "ET" locomotive leading, with a CW60 in second place, and perfectly aligned containers. One thing that struck me as ironic, one channel was showing some advertisements on a crawl at the bottom of the screen, one being for a heating contractor, and just about the time the train hit the car, the wording, "It's hard to stop a Trane" appeared. But seriously, that occasion was not the first where some-body claimed false or erroneous directions from a GPS device. I believe the lawyers are working overtime: And, this shot proves to me that the double stack trains are night crawlers, just as the older single level trains were.

On the local railfanning scene; I took a little time to check out the Curtis street crossing in Chester, which appears to now have room to park nearby but West street, a block to the south, does not. By the way, horns blowing for these two crossings can easily be heard at Centralia, giving notice of northbounds. Also, just north of Colonial Heights is the location of a highway department facility, and I have been told it's OK to park in the visitor's lot for a short time, (I would limit this to daytime.), but across the tracks near the fenced-in equipment lot is an area, not posted, about the size to hold 4 or 5 cars. I sat there for almost 2 hours with no problem, when I saw the signals just north of there display for trains on both tracks. Also that location is one of the few which can easily get the news from the Walthall defect detector.

I did make a swing over to Collier and plenty of trains as apparently there were signal problems at the Appomattox River bridge. The consists were nothing out of the ordinary other than a five-unit set containing an older NS SD70 and a CP GEVO unit to go with a couple of older CSX GE's (Dash g's)

and a shabby looking SD70Mac. I went as far south as Ellington, the only place I saw any workers, apparently working on microwave antennas and equipment. The gantry spanning the tracks still has nothing mounted on it. The signal formerly known as Reams just south of the yard, has been removed and the new signal further south may inherit the Reams name, as the whole area there is referred to as Reams.

My old scanner is working by fits and bounds, but I am looking for a newer narrow-band unit any suggestions, now that Radio shack has bit the dust? (Editor's note: According to their website, Radio Shack still operates 2 stores in the area – one at Dumbarton between 64 and the Amtrak station and one at Willow Lawn.) Also, I would like an

employee's timetable for the area, if one knows where I can get one, as the newest one I have is roughly 20 years old.

I noticed that I can sit at North Collier and hear directors being given to F705 (The Hopewell train) but cannot hear such at Centralia.

The NS "dormitory" cars are back in Petersburg under the bridge. I also saw an R.J. Corman large pickup with materials on it, which I tried to follow, but I was in the wrong lane and could not follow him after he crossed the river

I understand that CSX has resumed rebuilding and/or upgrading SD40's GP40's and GP38 's each into dash3 models

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