

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS

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

MAY 2018



OVER AND UNDER ON BNSF! In April 2018, two BNSF stack trains met here at Frost on BNSF's ex-Santa Fe transcontinental mainline between Los Angeles and Chicago, three miles east of Hesperia, California. One track of the double track mainline crosses over the other, which makes an interesting sight. This line is very active, with trains running in both directions every few minutes. (Photo by: Alex Mayes)

PROGRAM: RAILROADING IN THE EASTERN U.S. AND CANADA. An interesting selection of slides from the Midwest, Canada, and the Mid-Atlantic region will be shown by Bill Kalkman. See page 2 for details.

MEETING: May 15, 2018. 8PM. Lobby Level Auditorium of the Montgomery County Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD.

NEXT MEETING DATE: June 19, 2018

DEADLINE FOR JUNE ISSUE: May 25, 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 John S. Small who passed away on January 24, 2018, at the age of 92.

John served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1943 to 1946. He was a radioman with the 7th Fleet Air Force Logistics Section, U.S. Army Transportation Corps. He served most of his time in the South Pacific on a supply ship and traveled to the Western Pacific, Australia, New Guinea, the Philippines, and Indonesia. His WWII awards include the Philippine Liberation Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. His last post was on the USCG Cutter Haida, which was a weather ship stationed in Ketchikan, Alaska. They patrolled along Alaska's coast, in the Gulf of Alaska, and the Aleutian Islands. After active duty he served in the U.S. Naval Reserve from 1948 to 1952.

John held various Federal government jobs in his early years and then worked at the National Institutes of Health, spending 33 years in the United States Public Health Service. John retired from Federal Service in 1995.

After retirement, John volunteered with many groups. He served on the Planning Board for the College Park Airport - Aviation Technology Museum. He really enjoyed volunteering his time at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair 'Old-Timers Corner'. For many years he volunteered with the C&O Canal Association and he donated a new carved stone for the restored Catoctin Aqueduct.

He loved to travel, which often included hiking and photography. He was still hiking at 91 and when he was in his 80s he hiked along most of the C&O canal. In his 70s he was still hiking parts of the Appalachian Trail.

John was predeceased by his wife Betty 'Jeannie' Small, and is survived by daughter Debra Gerrish and son John A. Small and their families.

John was born on May 1, 1925, in Riverdale, MD, and lived his entire life, except for his WWII service, in Maryland. He lived for 53 years in Gaithersburg. His funeral service was held on February 1, 2018, at Grace UMC in Gaithersburg, MD. Memorial contributions can be made in John's honor to the National WWII Memorial Trust Fund - American Battle Monuments Commission, P.O. Box 71, Holbrook, NY 11741. (The Frederick News-Post)

The Potomac Chapter extends its Deepest Sympathy to John's family and friends. Please remember John and his family in your Thoughts and Prayers.

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM. Bill Kalkman's presentation of "RAILROADING IN THE EASTERN U.S. AND CANADA" begins with scenes of Bennet Levin's immaculately restored pair of Tuscan Red PRR E8s on excursions in the Altoona, PA, area, followed by trips to Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania for some mainline, regional, and shortline action. The program then segues to Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois for some scenes of Weirton Steel's railroad, Ohio Central, Soo Line, Chicago Northwestern, BNSF, and Amtrak. Trips to Canada include the Huron Central, VIA Rail, Canadian Pacific, Ontario Northland, and GO Transit in the Toronto area. Bill's show concludes with scenes taken in the local area.

CHANGES APPROVED FOR OUR SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM. The proposed changes that were published in the February and March PRNs were adopted by a vote of members attending the April Chapter meeting. Accordingly, the Potomac Chapter's Small Grants Program has been re-authorized with the following guidelines: (1) The President is empowered to make small grants to the rail-related non-profit organization; (2) The annual limit for these grants is \$1500, plus any funds available from designated gifts for the small grants program; (3) The President is limited in the amount he can give to one organization in a year. That limit

is \$750 or half the funds disbursed that year, whichever is greater.

President Gordy Bjoraker always welcomes suggestions for grant candidates. If you know of a worthy organization that would benefit from a small grant, please feel free to let Gordy know.

RAIL NEWS

PRIVATE CAR OWNER: SAFETY ISSUES, BEHAVIOR LED TO AMTRAK DECISION. Bennett Levin, owner of the Pennsylvania 120 office car and others as well as two well-traveled PRR E8 locomotives, says the enthusiast community may do more harm than good by contacting Congress to put pressure on Amtrak to reverse a recently imposed ban on special trains and a major curtailment of private car moves.

"I would urge everyone who claims to have an interest in this matter, from those who own the equipment to those who stand trackside and record its passing for history, to use reason and restraint, and not add fuel to an already raging fire being fed by ineptness, poor judgment, and short sightedness," he said in a letter to National Railway Historical Society President Al Weber and echoed in a written statement to Trains News Wire.

Both the Association of Private Rail Car Owners and the Railroad Passenger Car Alliance have urged members to contact their elected leaders at the Federal level.

Levin tells Trains News Wire that he's concerned that such action by railfans and private car owners is ill-timed and nearing "hysteria." Levin says he believes Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson, a former airline executive who took over the railroad January 1st, is looking at the private car and special train issue as a matter to be thoroughly considered in the context of the railroad's regular operations. Levin cited examples of bad behavior in recent years by private car owners or passengers that he says justifies Amtrak's pause on excursions.

"Things have spiraled out of control. Neither of the private varnish organizations have taken positive steps to address these issues, so now Amtrak has said, 'Enough,'" Levin says. "What Amtrak has done is not draconian. It is prudent."

"The issue of safety is paramount. And the recognized and organized private varnish community has done a poor job recently in self-policing its members and instilling a culture of Safety First," Levin says.

The two private passenger car organizations issued a joint statement on April 16th in response to Levin's comments. In it, alliance President W. Roger Fuehring, and association President Robert G. Donnelley say that their organizations have safety committees, have issued safety manuals to members, and that there have been no incidents or accidents that have been reportable to the Federal Railroad Administration. In addition, the association "has denied membership to car owners who have a 'poor safety' record. Not all car owners, however, are AAPRCO or RPCA members," they wrote. "Both organizations have investigated and taken action on the occasional violations of our membership." With regard to private passenger car association members calling on members of Congress for help, the two men wrote that Amtrak's changes were both sudden and severe. "It is not surprising that some tourist railroad organizations, charterers, private car owners, and car owner associations have sought help from their legislators in view of the fact that Amtrak is a government approved monopoly receiving aid from the legislature," they wrote. The association and alliance's full statement to Trains News Wire is online.

An Amtrak representative responded to a Trains News Wire request for comment on whether safety and passenger behaviors on private cars had a role in the recent policy changes, but only said, "We are still in the process of finalizing our private car policy and should be able to communicate that publicly in the

near future."

Levin says he worries that if car owners and railfans get their wish, and inspire intervention from Congress, the result may be something far worse than a decrease in the frequency of private passenger car trips on the national rail network.

Levin has said his trip with his locomotives and cars from Philadelphia to Altoona and return in May will be the last, as he does not plan to equip the units with positive train control gear. (Trains Industry Newsletter)

BENNETT LEVIN'S PRR E8 TRIP HAS BEEN CANCELLED. To the members of the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society, and all the riders on the Pennsylvania Inspection Trip to Altoona.

It is with deepest regret and sorrow to inform all that despite the tremendous effort on the part of Bennett Levin, who I am forever grateful, Amtrak has decided not to honor the agreement that we already had with them.

I will contact every rider who paid to ride this train by phone, and return all funds that were sent to the Society for the trip. A huge amount of time, money, and effort has been spent putting this trip together on the part of Mr Levin, the PRR T&HS, and myself. This is definitely not the last that will be said about all of this, and my sincere apologies to those who made their plans and reservations to be a part of our 50th annual meeting celebration, and will not be attending due to the trip cancellation, especially those from outside the US. I hope that even though this train will not be running, you still may consider coming to Altoona to experience the railroad history out there, along with what our Society has planned for those 4 days. Thank you, Steve Staffieri, President Pres PRR T&HS

MANCHIN ANNOUNCES TENTATIVE AGREEMENT REGARDING NEW RIVER TRAIN. Progress has been made in discussions between Amtrak and the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society to re-establish the New River Train service and officials hope to reach a concrete deal soon.

In a May 2nd news release, West Virginia U.S. Senator Joe Manchin that a tentative agreement has been reached. "I understand that they will need to continue further discussions to work out some of the logistics, but I am pleased with the progress they have made so far." "Amtrak understands the negative impact its decision could have on our economy and local non-profits, while Collis P. Huntington has been a tremendous partner to Amtrak and has a stellar record with no operational issues or citations. "Losing the New River Train would take an estimated \$5 million out of West Virginia's economy. So, I was happy to bring both parties to the table and glad we could work out an agreement that works for everyone."

The Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society has posted a notice on its website, saying the New River Train Excursion tickets are back on sale.

Last month, Amtrak President and CEO Richard Anderson announced a new policy in which Amtrak would no longer accept private cars and charter trains on regular routes, including service for the New River Train. Anderson previously said these operations "caused significant operational distraction, failed to capture fully allocated profitable margins and sometimes delayed our paying customers on our scheduled trains."

The Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society is a 59-year-old non-profit that showcases cultural effects on the railroad in southern West Virginia. It operates private railroad cars through Amtrak, including the New River Train from Huntington to Hinton during the Railroad Days festival. "I brought Amtrak officials, Hinton, and Summers County leaders, and the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society together to discuss and work out an agreement for the

52nd running of the New River Train," Representative Evan Jenkins said. "This tradition and its impact on our State's economy and culture are too important to let fade away."

U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito said she is thrilled to hear about progress that the Railroad Days celebration will take place this fall. "My staff and I have been working diligently with Hinton officials and members of the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society to make sure Amtrak knows how important this service has been to the community and our economy. The long-standing tradition in our State is something West Virginians look forward to each year, and I will continue doing what I can to support this important local event."

Manchin and Representative Evan Jenkins called a meeting last month between the President and CEO of Amtrak and Collis P. Huntington Railroad Society officials "productive." The two sides met in Washington, D.C., in hopes of finding a path forward to reestablish service for the New River Train. (Register-Herald Reporter - Beckley, West Virginia)

PIKES PEAK COG RAILWAY CLOSED FOR 2018 AND MAYBE LONGER. After 126 years of operation, The Pikes Peak Cog Railway has decided not to reopen this spring for 2018, or for the foreseeable future. Over the past several months, the railroad has undergone a major evaluation and it has been determined that the infrastructure and equipment has run its course. The railroad is in the process of determining next steps and action plans for the future.

"We just need more time to make the best decision possible," said Jack Damioli, CEO of The Broadmoor. After 126 years of operation, the time has come to reassess the overall infrastructure of the trains, the track, the depot, and the parking situation. "We've maintained a perfect safety record and it's imperative to us that we keep it that way."

The Obstacles of Working on the Cog: There are a lot of different things to take into consideration when it comes to working on the Cog. The resources are very limited and all outside of the US for trains and replacement parts. The Broadmoor Pikes Peak Cog Railway is one of two cog railways in the United States, and one of only 40 in the world. Couple that with the difficulties of track maintenance at 14,000 feet or worse, transporting replacement materials without roads for trucks or other maintenance equipment to access the more remote areas of track, and you've got one heck of a coordination puzzle to solve.

"This project has become like an onion, the more layers we pull back, the more we uncover. It's really quite complicated and we need more time to make sure that we're doing this properly. There are a number of entities that will need to be involved in order to make this a success, and that's a huge undertaking." (www.pikes-peak.com)

DESPITE PRIOR DEAL, CSX PLANS TO DEMOLISH HISTORIC RAIL DEPOT IN GLADSTONE VA.

When Joanne Absher was a little girl, there was a lot more life in this tiny village on the southern tip of Nelson County. Then a bustling hub for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, now CSX, with more than two dozen tracks stretched all the way from the depot building across Gladstone Road from her current house to the banks of the James River. Her father was the yardmaster, and she spent many an hour in and around the depot and the three shifts of workers who kept it humming around the clock.

When she "got to worrying my daddy too much," Absher says, he'd put her on the yard engine while it moved cars between tracks, and let her ride up and down the yard. After decades of rail decline (passenger service ended around 1970 and the railyard was taken out of service about 15 years later) Absher says she rode on the yard engine's final day: Memorial Day 1986.

"It was a beautiful little town," she said. "Every house had a family in

it." Now, there might be more dogs than people roaming Gladstone. And the depot, built in 1889 by the Richmond and Alleghany Railroad shortly before it was taken over by the Chesapeake and Ohio, may be headed for demolition.

Absher and others working to save the depot say CSX has reneged on an agreement that would keep it standing and allow it to be used for a senior and community center. State and County officials have also thrown their support behind Absher's group, Friends of Gladstone Depot, thus far to no avail. "It's just going to break my heart," said Absher, 59. "I can't believe a company as big as CSX would let their history be destroyed."

CSX would not make company officials available for interviews. But in a statement, the Jacksonville, FL,-headquartered railroad said it has been working with the County for more than a year and more recently with the Friends of Gladstone Depot group on requests to preserve the building. "Throughout the course of those discussions, inspections of the property and structures revealed serious health and safety hazards that needed to be addressed before any transfer in ownership or relocation could occur," CSX said. "CSX has communicated these issues to the Friends and worked to identify a path forward. Unfortunately, an agreement could not be reached. The safety of our employees and members of the community is our top priority, and that is why CSX must move forward on plans to demolish the hazardous buildings on the property."

The depot has been boarded up for at least 20 years, according to a report by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, which called it a "rare and unique surviving example" of the railroad style developed in the late 19th century. The depot is likely the "last remaining structure of any kind" built by the Richmond and Alleghany Railroad, which operated between Richmond and Clifton Forge before its acquisition, the Department says. "This building is a rare survivor on this rail line," said Julie Langan, DHR's Director. Small communities like Gladstone were especially dependent on rail service into the 1960s, and the railroad and its depots played crucial roles for such rural industries as agriculture and timber, the report says. Gladstone's location as a midpoint between Richmond and Clifton Forge made it a key stop for fuel, water, and crew changes, prompting many railroad employees, such as Absher's father, to raise their families there.

"As small-town depots and other historic railroad-related buildings become increasingly rare across the country, those that survive should be even more highly esteemed for their roles in their respective communities and in the country's economy," the report says. Langan said the depot building is eligible for placement both on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, though those designations require property owner consent. CSX has been opposed, though in the past it has allowed depots in James City County, Newport News, Amherst County and elsewhere to be moved, according to DHR staff. CSX was also persuaded not to demolish its depot in Dante, a struggling former coal town in Russell County. Norfolk Southern has allowed depots to be reused. In Richmond, the former Southern Railroad depot in Manchester is now a rail museum. "We do think that given just a little more time, the pieces could be put into place that would make it possible for the building to be saved," Langan said.

Safety concern for CSX's Absher and Paul Zelinsky, Vice President of the Friends of Gladstone Depot, thought they had a deal that would chart a path toward using the depot building as a new community and senior center. For years, residents had used an adjacent building, which locals call the "YMCA building," also a CSX property that once housed rail workers on overnight stays, for a senior center and thrift store. When CSX announced plans to demolish both the YMCA building and the depot, the company offered to donate the property to Nelson County, which passed because of liability concerns. However, County officials, including County Administrator Stephen Carter and Larry Saunders, a member of the

Board of Supervisors, attempted to help broker the conveyance of the property to the Friends group. "I love history," Saunders said. "I just really hate to see it destroyed. ... The group has bent over backwards to work with CSX."

In August, Damien D'Anna, CSX's Director of Real Estate Acquisitions, wrote an email to Carter that laid out the terms. "We appreciate the County's efforts to work toward a win-win. If the citizens vacate the YMCA building within 30 days and the County provides a letter and photos to CSX evidencing the vacation, CSX will agree to pursue a donation of the depot and the land under the existing YMCA building to the county," D'Anna wrote. "CSX will donate the land and depot [and absorb the cost of demolishing the entire YMCA building]. However, we cannot absorb the cost of relocating the depot."

By September, the Friends group had formed a nonprofit group and begun fundraising to pay for the cost of moving the depot. It wouldn't be the first time the depot had been moved. Sometime before 1922, it was hauled on skids by mules about 400 feet to a more central location, according to the DHR report. "I'd use mules if they would let me," Absher said. Then, on March 5, Absher got an email from D'Anna's replacement at CSX, Catherine Adkins, who told her that CSX now wanted \$20,000 for the YMCA building land and another \$20,000 for the depot in order to "facilitate a safe ownership transfer." "Should you decide not to move forward on relocating the depot, we intend to demolish the depot at the same time as the YMCA building. Therefore, we will need to hear your decision by the end of March," Adkins wrote.

Absher was stunned. The group, thinking it was raising money to move the building, has raised about \$5,000 so far. But not having a title to it or legal access to the building and land has prevented more serious fundraising and applying for grants. "That is the hardest fundraising to do," Langan said. "Who wants to give money to something that may never happen?"

In an attempt to come to a new agreement this month that drew in the offices of Governor Ralph Northam and Senator Creigh Deeds, D-Bath, among other State and local officials, the Friends offered to cover the costs of asbestos remediation and construct a fence around the depot, in exchange for a five-year window in which to move the building. That was also rejected by CSX.

"We are saddened to see the Friends were not able to raise enough funds in the last eight months to facilitate the transfer of ownership and relocation of the depot. However, for safety and liability reasons, CSX must move forward on a solution in the coming weeks," Adkins wrote. "In line with company policies and safety guidelines, CSX cannot transfer the depot prior to abating the asbestos. The proximity of the building to the railroad tracks is a major safety concern for CSX. We cannot allow the building to remain so close to the tracks under private ownership; it's a risk to safe railroad operations and to the public."

That leaves the Friends in a difficult position, since the group persuaded seniors to move out of the old railroad YMCA building and into a local fire station that isn't suited for the job, Absher said. "It's been a real loss to our community, and it's an inconvenience to our fire department," she said. "CSX could have kept their word to us. ... They misled our organization, and they misled our community. ... We just want CSX to give us more time." (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

EVENTS

OLD DOMINION DIVISION RRE MONTHLY MEETING. May 17, 2018 8:00 PM. James Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Drive, Vienna, VA, in room 110. The closest entrance door to this room is Entrance No. 1. Pre-meeting dinner at 6:30 at the Amphora Restaurant, 377 West Maple Avenue Vienna. TO REACH THE SCHOOL: From Amphora Restaurant go south two blocks on West Maple Avenue to James Madison Drive and turn right. School is at the end of this street. **PROGRAM:** Southern Railway Excursions in the Seventies - A commercially produced presentation featuring the heyday of Southern Railway steam excursions in the 1970s and early 1980s will be shown. The presentation was photographed in color with sound, and was shot mostly in the Chattanooga area. The engines included in the presentation are ex-Texas and Pacific 2-10-4 No. 610, Southern Railway engines Nos. 4501, 2716 and 630, N&W Class J No. 611, and some early diesel scenes.

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

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