

THE SWITCHLIST

OLD NORTH STATE CHAPTER
NRHS

Volume 27 Number 6

June, 2011

June Meeting

The railroad, in one way or another, has been a regular player in movies since Thomas Edison first established the medium. Sometimes it's in the background; at other times it is a major character. The latter is especially delightful to us when the railroad involved has scenery, trains and operations that are noteworthy. That is certainly the case in this month's program, when John Sokash will share his DVD of "Danger Lights" with us. This 1930 film features steam on the Milwaukee Road in Montana, with the railroad as a star. Steam and scenery – how could it miss?

Our meeting will return to our usual venue, Red Hot and Blue at 6615 Falls of the Neuse Road on Tuesday, 14 June. As is regularly the situation, our meeting room will be available around 5:30 pm, with dinner together at 6:00 and the program beginning at 7:00. You'll want to join us for this great movie night.

May Meeting Report

Our evenings at the Ross home are always very special, but perhaps this one rose to a new level of delight. Ken had determined that, rather than his New York Central preferences, he would take us back to his Seaboard Air Line experiences in Raleigh when he was younger and serving in the US Army Signal Corps. Ken rode the "Silver Meteor" from Raleigh to New York City and worked to recreate that experience by recruiting Art Peterson to bring SAL slides of operations in Raleigh and by running an HO scale version of the train on his layout.

Of course, Ken also expanded on some of what was viewed and discussed in the course of the evening, running trains and equipment germane to the interests of all of us. Couple this with delicious pizza, drinks of our choice and a fantastic Key Lime pie that Jule Shanklin brought for our dessert, and you know why the 10 May meeting was such a great hit.

Thanks so much, Ken for this truly memorable time.

OF INTEREST

Kentucky obviously recognizes the importance of its short line railroads and believes in investing in them. Governor Steve Beshear announced recently that the state would provide more than \$3.1 million for short line infrastructure projects. Funding will come from the Short Line Assistance Fund, which is maintained by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. Most grants will cover half of project costs, with each railroad providing the remainder.

The state will provide more than \$1.1 million to R.J.Corman to build a siding in Midway and extend a siding at Lexington Center. Another \$1.1 million will go to the Paducah & Louisville to replace a bridge in Muldraugh and rehabilitate several crossings. The TransKentucky Transportation Railroad will receive \$360,000 to rehabilitate roadbeds with the TennKen Railroad getting \$197,000 for rail replacement, the Louisville & Indiana obtaining \$184,000 to repair an Ohio River bridge pier and the Kentucky Railway Museum getting \$190,000 to repair track and a crossing. Because the museum stores rolling stock, it is part of the short line system.

Governor Beshear reminded Kentuckians that, "Freight rail companies, including the eight short lines that operate in Kentucky, contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to our economy each year in the form of wages and benefits."

General Electric, with a \$4.1 billion backlog of locomotive orders, will construct a \$96 million locomotive assembly plant in Fort Worth, Texas to complement the Erie, Pennsylvania plant in building both passenger and freight locomotives.

GE Transportation believes that the new plant will help GE meet what it expects to be a rising demand for locomotives, both domestically and internationally. The Erie plant can produce approximately 1,000 locomotives a year. However, the plant also assembles products for the mining, marine, drilling and stationary power industries. With more of that equipment now being produced in Erie, the company needs more capacity for locomotive production elsewhere.

The Texas site will be located in an existing 900,000-square-foot building with rail access. While the company had looked at sites in Massachusetts, the state of Texas offered \$4.2 million in incentives.

Texas came up in other locomotive news when the Smithsonian Institution donated former Santa Fe ALCO-GE PA 59L to the Museum of the American Railroad in Frisco, Texas. Burlington Northern Santa Fe donated the necessary move of the locomotive from Oregon to Texas. Sister PA 62L is being restored by rail equipment collector Doyle McCormack to Nickel Plate colors. The 59L will be restored to its original appearance and Santa Fe "Warbonnet" colors.

New Jersey Transit had locomotive news of its own when it unveiled the first of its Bombardier dual-mode diesel electric/straight electric locomotives at Newark Penn Station. "We are excited to modernize the NJ Transit fleet by bringing dual-powered technology to our state's rail network," said James Weinstein, NJ Transit's executive director. "These new locomotives have the benefit of being quieter, more fuel efficient, and more environmentally friendly than the locomotives they'll replace, some of which are 40 years old."

Station Bulletin Board

Vicksburg, Mississippi has a beautiful Yazoo & Mississippi Valley station that was not deemed important enough to be put behind a recently erected flood wall. The structure was to have served as a future transportation museum, but it is questionable whether such a use will be practical. It is certain that cleaning the station after the flood subsides will prove difficult at least, and perhaps the damage will prove fatal to the future of this 1928 building.

The 1895 Louisville, New Orleans and Texas shops in Vicksburg are on somewhat higher ground, but it isn't known whether the flood wall provided any protection for them.

Mooers, New York has a beautifully restored Rutland Railroad depot, not because of any major community effort or corporate contribution, but because Larry Marnes, who grew up in the community, had a love for the Rutland from his youth. When he turned ten, he got the freedom to explore town on his trusty Columbia bike; naturally, he focused his free hours on the Rutland, and especially on the depot. Those were the days of four trains daily: locals AM-1 and MA-2 and through freights XJ-1 and JX-2. Larry got to know, as many of us did, the regular crew of the local freight. In Larry's case the conductor was Ellis Keeler (Pewee) Stone, a most competent railroad man, and, not surprisingly, a most consummate practical joker. Under his tutelage Larry got an in depth understanding of the functioning of the local freight in particular and the railroad in general.

When not watching the locals work, Larry queried Clem, the station agent. He was always happy to answer questions and especially to encourage his fascination with Morse code. Clem told Larry that Morse was something he could learn if he really wanted to. Clem began teaching Larry, who was delighted when he finally began picking up a few words off the wire. He kept at it, not always getting all of a message, but finding that it gradually began to make sense.

Larry found sending easier than copying, so he became a clear text sender with Clem's help. One day Clem told him, "If someone can't copy your sending, it's because they don't really know Morse. Your sending is excellent." This was encouraging praise from an accomplished telegrapher that made Larry work all the harder.

When Clem saw that Larry was extremely interested in everything pertaining to the railroad, he made certain that his student got training in the Book of Rules, station accounting, car checking, seal records, recording train movements, the use of block sheets, clearance cards and train orders. Clem let him fill out some of the forms and even had him make calls to LCL customers to notify them that their packages had arrived. After fourteen years in Mooers, Clem bid successfully on the Rouses Point agency. The agency at Mooers in turn was filled by Francis McArdle, who had been a longtime agent at Madrid. Happily, he welcomed Larry's interest.

After the Rutland's demise, Larry watched his beloved depot suffer from neglect and decay. In the Spring of 2003, he acquired the building and began the long, slow process of bringing it back to life. With the help of one close friend over the next five years, Larry now has a depot that is a time machine back to his youth. That's satisfying!