

# *THE SWITCHLIST*

OLD NORTH STATE CHAPTER  
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## September Meeting

*Most years Art & Lynette Peterson fuse their attendance at the annual Railroad Station Historical Society convention with an Amtrak journey. This year they really did so, putting together a 9,200 mile Amtrak journey and the convention in Oklahoma City. The resultant 24 boxes of slides obviously were more to share than would fit into one evening. Thus, the August program was Part One of a two-part show, which focused on the Oklahoma portion of their travels. The September program will cover the Amtrak journey with experiences that were new to them, and they'll be delighted to tell you about the trip, so do plan on being with us.*

*Our meeting will be at our usual venue, Red Hot and Blue at 6615 Falls of the Neuse Road on Tuesday, 13 September. As is regularly the situation, our meeting room will be available around 5:30 pm, with dinner together at 6:00 pm and the program beginning at 7:00 pm.*

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## August Meeting Report

The Petersons gave us a first-hand look at their Oklahoma adventures, showing the structures they found and photographed prior to, during and following the Railroad Station Historical Society convention. Bringing together a bit of the history of the railroads that served Oklahoma with the images we viewed obviously added to the enjoyment of a superb audience. We got to see structures of some fifteen different railroads, ranging from the larger roads, as exemplified by the Santa Fe to the very short lines, as exemplified by John Ringling's Oklahoma, New Mexico and Pacific.

It is always a delight to bring a program to the Old North State chapter. Your responses are a great encouragement to us, fueling our enthusiasm and informing us as to what you want in future programs. Thank you for that!

**OF INTEREST**

**Art Peterson** began, in the August Switchlist, a recounting of his growing up in New Jersey from 1935 onwards. In this issue he continues the story.

Art's railroad related experiences in his youth weren't limited to steam. When his Dad took him on one of their regular visits to New York City, they followed a very interesting and inexpensive route. It began with a walking-beam side wheel Staten Island Railway ferry that traversed the Arthur Kill between Perth Amboy and Tottenville. They then boarded a Staten Island Rapid Transit electric train to St. George. Yes, the ferry and the train both belonged to the same Baltimore & Ohio subsidiary; they simply were handled by different departments and were painted accordingly.

The trip to St. George was always interesting. World War II was going on over the years when we traversed the line, and the piers and businesses along Staten Island's shore were busy seven days a week. On one trip Art spotted a locomotive unlike any he had ever seen. He pointed it out to his Dad, who looked at it carefully and noted that it looked like it had been made out of a Mack truck. Years later Art got back to Staten Island and photographed this Pouch Terminal Mack, solving the mystery.

The next leg of the trip had other fascinations. New York Harbor was always full of action, with ships of nations from around the world readily visible from the ferry. At least one of them was, it seemed, always being loaded or unloaded by railroad lighters, and car floats and tugs moved back and forth across the harbor continuously. These two observers always delighted when they spotted a Lehigh Valley vessel; they made note of its name and what was being transported.

Back to the trip to New York. Once they arrived at South Ferry, Art and his Dad walked the short distance to the Third Avenue Elevated, where they caught a train to mid-Manhattan. Riding a train down the man-made canyons of the city had a fascination for both of them. Arriving at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, there were nearby fascinations, including the Chrysler Building, which became (and remains) Art's favorite skyscraper. There were regularly exhibits that featured Chrysler's contributions to the war effort.

On one of their visits Art asked his Dad if he had ever been in Grand Central Terminal, which was adjacent to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street elevated station. His Dad thought for a moment and admitted that he never had. They entered the building together and were both astonished by it. Even on a Sunday morning there were crowds of people thronging the station, but it was the architecture that they were both taken by. As they explored, a fragrance led them to the Oyster Bar. Lunch time was at hand, so they agreed to have some Oyster stew. Art instantly was converted!

Whatever other food adventures Art and his Dad had in the city, they always included a stop at a Horn & Hardart Automat. It was fun to put in the nickels and the lemon meringue pie was excellent. The many free museums and other attractions in the city consumed a day quickly, and they retraced their route back home.

In the course of planning what activity they would pursue one weekend, Art's Dad recalled that there had been an amusement park at South Beach on Staten Island. No one seemed to know whether it still existed, so they agreed to ride the South Beach branch to determine what was what. It turned out that the park was gone, but Art was pleased in later years that he got to ride this branch that was subsequently abandoned.

Dad had family scattered around New Jersey and the New York metropolitan area, so he and Art regularly had excursions to a number of communities. Newark still had a good number of trolley lines that ran near where Art's Uncle Walter lived. Their visits entailed Uncle Walter telling them the best way to get to his home by trolley; exploring his neighborhood and having lunch together frequently brought them to a different trolley line. Walter knew all the routes and would write out directions for getting back to the station for their trip home. In later years Art suspected that Uncle Walter was a closet trolley enthusiast. He certainly fostered Art's interest in them.

Learning his way around rail facilities served Art well over the years. When he had opportunities to photograph locomotive facilities, Art always sought permission and usually was granted it. When he stopped back to let the person who had given him permission that he was leaving, they typically told him that he was more than welcome to come back any time. They had observed that Art stepped over rails, avoided turnouts, didn't climb on equipment or go into restricted areas and concluded that this was the kind of visitor they could trust.

There were also benefits that came from knowing how to fire and run. Once, Art was in southern Indiana where he hoped to ride the Whitewater Valley, which had an operating Lima diesel. Knowing that the diesel was regularly assigned to the first train of the day, he arrived early and was surprised to see the ex-East Broad Top 0-6-0 being prepared for the run. Talking with the hostler, Art learned that the diesel was out for repairs and that they had a problem. They needed two firemen for the day's runs, but had only one. Naturally, Art offered his services, which were gratefully accepted, and he got to fire the 0-6-0 on the trip from Connorsville to Metamora. Since Art wanted to get home at a reasonable hour that day, he swapped jobs with the fireman on the Florida Saw Mill 2-6-2 that had pulled the train following ours, but which left earlier. It was one of those days when he was glad that he maintained a set of old clothes and good work gloves in the trunk of his car.

Art had a number of fortuitous visits to other rail museums. Once he was in the Chicago area on a weekend and, having a vehicle, decided to visit the Illinois Railway Museum. What he didn't know was that this was the weekend when the area railroad museums hosted the national rail museum convention. The folks at Union had every piece of equipment that was operable out and running, and his cameras got plenty of exercise as Art rode everything. A quick visit to South Elgin followed and Art bought a pass that would allow him to ride everything that they were operating. The rides began with a round trip on an ex-Rio de Janeiro open car. Following that, the person in charge indicated that they were closing for the day. Happily, the motorman who had sold Art his pass intervened, saying that they couldn't disappoint me; I had purchased a pass and was entitled to ride Chicago, Aurora & Elgin #20 (the oldest operating interurban car in America). We left with just two passengers, and Art was able to stand next to the motorman on the first leg of the trip. As they talked, Art shared his experiences of running a variety of equipment. When they "changed ends" at the terminal, the motorman asked if Art would like to run the 20 back to South Elgin. The answer, of course, was a delighted "Thank you", and Art added a unique piece of equipment to his memory bank.

In the course of Art's travel with both the military and his several jobs, he covered many miles on a wide variety of trains. He'll share some of that in this continuing series.