

NRHS News

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2020

The *Southern Crescent* on the Rails in Virginia

By ALEX MAYES, Potomac Chapter NRHS



Photo courtesy of Alex Mayes

IN MARCH 1978, THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY'S LEGENDARY SOUTHERN CRESCENT ROLLS NORTH ON THE MAIN LINE AT CLIFTON, VIRGINIA – The four green and white EMD E8s and Pullman-built stainless steel cars were always a treat to see.

The Southern Railway was one of three US railroads that decided not to join Amtrak in 1971 and continued to run its own passenger trains. The other two railroads were the Rock Island and Denver & Rio Grande Western, which also continued to run their own passenger trains. The Southern Railway's flagship train in the 1970s was the *Southern Crescent*, which ran between New Orleans and Penn Station New York. The Southern Railway continued to operate the *Southern Crescent* until February 1, 1979, when Amtrak assumed its operation. It is about a mile walk to this location; however, it is now overgrown with trees.

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Table of Contents

THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT ON THE RAILS IN VIRGINIA	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND CONVENTIONS	2
SUBMISSION DEADLINES	2
THE TWO LIVES OF THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT	3
EMERY RAIL HERITAGE TRUST ANNOUNCEMENTS	6
NRHS AND NORTH TEXAS CHAPTER COMMEMORATE AT&SF #3417	7
PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEBURNE MUSEUM	8
THE VIRTUAL FACE OF THE NRHS.....	8
HERITAGE GRANTS CHALLENGE MET, ADDS 2021 FUNDS	9
COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN – GIVE TO NRHS	9
MANY THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND RENEWALS.....	10
EDITOR'S NOTES – HOLIDAY JINGLES ALONG THE RAILS	10

Upcoming Conferences and Conventions

August 23-28, 2021
2021 NRHS Convention
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

October, 2021
2021 NRHS Fall Conference
Ronkonkoma, New York

Submission Deadlines

Month	Print or online issue	Deadline
December 2020	Online issue	November 15, 2020
January 2021	No issue	
February 2021	Online issue	January 10, 2020

The Two Lives of the *Southern Crescent*

By Alex Mayes, Potomac Chapter NRHS

The Southern Railway did not join Amtrak at its creation in 1971 and continued to operate its *Piedmont* and *Southern Crescent* trains independently. The *Piedmont*, which ran between Washington D.C. and Charlotte, NC in its final days, was discontinued on November 23, 1976. However since this was close to Thanksgiving, Southern Railway extended it to November 29th and called it the "Thanksgiving Special". The *Southern Crescent* continued to run between New York Penn Station and New Orleans. The New York-Washington segment ran over Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. On December 3, 1978, the northbound *Southern Crescent* derailed at Shipman, Virginia killing six passengers and injuring more than 60 crew members and passengers. Three of its four E8 locomotives and seven cars derailed, all of which were badly damaged.

With mounting losses to run this train and the loss of the cars and engines in the wreck, Southern Railway decided to join Amtrak and conveyed its *Southern Crescent* equipment to Amtrak. The first run under Amtrak control was on February 1, 1979. The Amtrak version was called just the *Crescent*. After the wreck, the *Southern Crescent* never looked the same. I never saw four green and white E8s on its head end again. Here are a few photos I took of the *Southern Crescent* in its last days and the *Crescent* under Amtrak control. All of these photos were scanned from Kodacolor prints, so the resolution is not sharp.



Photos courtesy of Alex Mayes

IN THE WINTER MONTHS, THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT SOMETIMES RAN WITH JUST THREE E8S - This was the case in January 1978. This is the north bound Southern Crescent with three E8s at CR Tower in Alexandria, Virginia preparing to leave the Southern Railway main and go up the Horn Track to connect with the RF&P.

Once on the RF&P the Southern Crescent will first stop at the Alexandria Amtrak station, and then continue north on the RF&P to RO Tower in Arlington, VA just south of the Long Bridge over the Potomac River, where it will connect with Conrail's ex-PRR trackage to go to Washington Union Station.



THE CRESCENT'S FIRST NORTHBOUND RUN UNDER AMTRAK CONTROL – The train passes through Springfield, Virginia taken from the Backlick Road overpass on February 2, 1979. This train originated in New Orleans the previous day. Leading the Crescent is Amtrak E9 No. 408, two southern E8s are coupled behind.



DURING THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF AMTRAK CONTROL, A FRESHLY PAINTED AMTRAK E-UNIT WAS USUALLY ON POINT - This shot was taken as the north bound Crescent was slowing for the stop at Manassas, Virginia station. On the right is a Southern freight heading to Potomac Yard.



A FEW WEEKS AFTER AMTRAK CONTROL, EMD F40S BEGAN SHOWING UP ON THE POINT – I lost interest in photographing the Crescent after this. This shot was taken of the north bound Crescent at Clifton, Virginia in March 1979.



THE SAD SCRAPPING OF SOUTHERN RAILWAY E8 NO. 6902 - This is the saddest photo I have EVER taken. On a business trip to Chicago in April 1979 I went by Pielet Brothers scrap company in McCook, Illinois next to the EMD plant and happened to see No. 6902 being scrapped. This engine was traded in to EMD in 1979. Also visible in this photo is a line of Soo Line F7s in various stages of demolition. To the right, outside of the view, is another dozen Erie-Lackawanna F7s being scrapped.

Emery Rail Heritage Trust Announcements

By TOM SHARRATT, Wisconsin Chapter NRHS

The Emery Rail Heritage Trust announces two important changes to the qualifying guidelines that have just been made. Originally, equipment for which funds were requested had to be owned by the requesting organization. Now, in certain cases groups can apply for grants for equipment or facilities that are owned by a governmental agency or are leased from a different owner. Special requirements apply – read the guidelines on the Trusts website (emeryrailheritagetrust.org) carefully for details.

This July, two special grants totaling \$85,000 were awarded outside of the normal annual application cycle to help fund completion of two steam locomotive restorations: “The Last Baldwin” – C&O 2-6-6-2 #1309 at the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad received \$50,000 and \$35,000 to the Pacific Railroad Preservation Association to complete restoration of SP&S 4-8-4 number 700. Almost at the same time those grants were approved, one of the projects that the Emery Trust had funded on two separate occasions paid off: Rio Grande Southern 1899 4-6-0 #20 steamed for the first time in 70 years following a 14 year effort that raised \$1.5 million.

Most rail enthusiasts probably had not heard the name “John Emery” until five years ago, when a trust established by John announced in February 2016 that thirteen lucky rail preservation groups had been awarded \$165,500 for a wide variety of preservation projects. These ranged from restoration of steam locomotives to restoration of passenger cars to replacement of line poles supporting electric catenaries. As word spread, more rail preservation groups submitted grant applications. In the first five years of annual application submissions, sixty three groups have received \$1,376,310, some for up to three applications for the same or different projects in different years.

John Emery was a quiet and unassuming man who loved travel in all corners of the world so long as it was on a railroad. He especially thrived at riding “new” lines that he had not travelled on before. He was a serious mileage collector, and many trains took him to new places that he could explore. From the time John was a boy, he had travelled some of the great trains on famous railroads during the “Golden Age” of railroading. His Emery Rail Heritage Trust was created with the goal of giving modern day people the chance to ride trains at museums or on historic railroads that operate equipment that once provided the lifeblood of transportation in America from 1920 – 1960. Some of these trains were famous name trains that ran on the best known railroads in the country. Others were older more basic trains, some even on narrow gauge rails, which carried passengers living in remote areas and mail to a connection with the bigger Class One railroads. John loved them all, and enjoyed every mile. Electric interurbans were popular too with John. Growing up in Chicago, John’s favorite was the North Shore Line which he rode regularly. One of his last “trips” was to the Illinois Railway Museum where he had a chance to operate a North Shore Line interurban. He was in failing health, but that day was a very special one for him and he shined. The Emery Rail Heritage Trust accepts applications from tax exempt 501(c)(3) organizations annually. Applications are due not later than 1 February. Visit the website for details, instructions and an application form which must be submitted online. Read the instructions carefully – some applications are disqualified annually based on lack of required information or submission of projects that do not qualify for funding. Don’t wait until the last minute – the application requires some detailed information that might take some time to assemble.

Good things happen in rail preservation, sometimes in a short period of time, often taking many years – but virtually all take large sums of money. John’s vision and generosity are paying dividends for future generations, just as he wished.

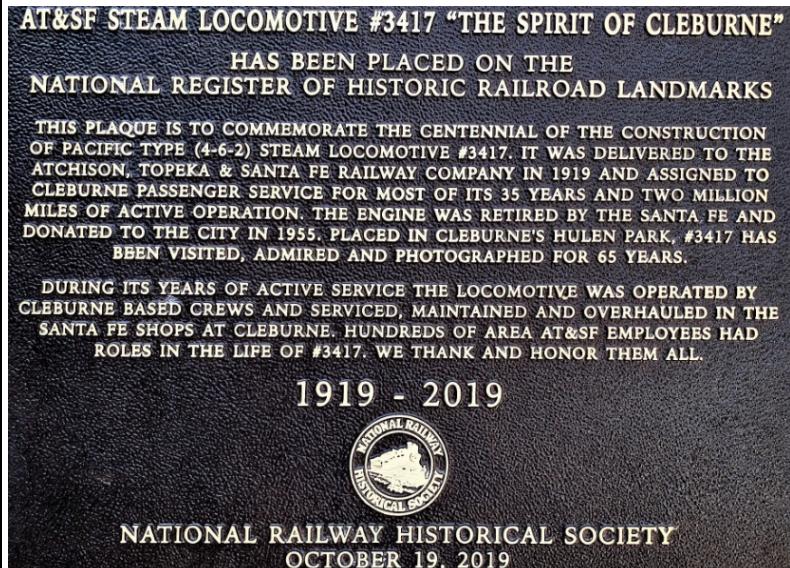
The Trustee for the John Emery Rail Heritage Trust is First Option Bank in Paola, Kansas.

NRHS and North Texas Chapter Commemorate AT&SF #3417

By ROBERT KENNEDY, North Texas Chapter NRHS

The 100th anniversary (centennial) of the AT&SF steam locomotive #3417's construction was commemorated by the addition of an historic NRHS plaque. It is installed in a beautiful stone base with the plaque inclined for easy reading.

On October 19, 2020, the plaque was presented by the North Texas Chapter and the NRHS at the locomotive's birthday party in Hulen Park, Cleburne, Texas.



*Photo courtesy of Dan E Roberts
HISTORICAL PLAQUE RECOGNIZES ATSF # 3417 - North Texas Chapter and the NRHS presented the plaque to honor the 100th anniversary of the locomotive's construction .*



Photo courtesy of Dan E Roberts



Photo courtesy of Cleburne Museum

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC RAILROAD LANDMARKS PLAQUE - The marker for Locomotive ATSF #3417 has been beautifully installed at Hulen Park.

The Virtual Face of the NRHS

By MARLIN R. TAYLOR, Film Archival Committee NRHS

Have you recently visited the web site of the National Railway Historical Society? If not, how about exploring it sometime soon ... just plug in "nrhs.com"! As you've likely read, it was completely rebuilt a year ago and has been expanded.

Two items in particular to note:

- *Photographic Images Collection* - When you land on the Home Page, see the collection of photos that slowly change. If you find these of interest, you'll want to check back every couple of weeks as some will change every few days. The Society is in possession of thousands of slides and our Director of Visual Media, Mitch Dakelman, is digitally scanning slides as time permits ... with the goal of creating an ever-growing library of photos for access by members and historians.
- *Directory of NRHS Chapters* - The other feature ... as you scroll down, in the right column is a listing of all NRHS chapters and each chapter's key information. By the way, if you are a chapter officer, we suggest you check your chapter's listing for any inaccuracies. If corrections are needed, send them to our webmaster, Dawn@DHolmberg.com so all data is kept up-to-date.

What would you like to see added/more of on your Society's website? Keep in mind, it's the NRHS' face to the outside world!

By the way ... how about suggesting to your non-member friends that they visit and see what the NRHS is about? It may encourage them to join and become part of preserving rail history!

Heritage Grants Challenge Met, Adds 2021 Funds

By ROBERT J. ERNST, NRHS Fund President

Thanks to dozens of NRHS members who have stepped up to meet the challenge, our anonymous donor will be writing a check for \$5,000. The Challenge will add almost \$11,000 to the funds available for Heritage Grants in 2021. With the grant received from the Sam Freeman Foundation, it brings the total, to date, for Heritage Grants at \$39,000.

Last year the Grants Committee awarded \$48,000 to sixteen projects and every year the Grants Committee receives more applications than grant money available. The Committee would like to be able to give \$50,000 in grants. Right now, they are \$11,000 short of this goal.

Please consider making a year-end tax-deductible donation and help the Grants Committee reach their goal.

To make an online donation by credit card, please go to the NRHS.com website, click on the GIVING button, then scroll down the right column to Heritage Grants."

If you'd rather send a check, make it payable to "NRHS Fund Inc." and note "NRHS Heritage Grants". Please mail it to:

NRHS Heritage Grants Challenge
505 South Lenola Road, Ste 216
Moorestown, NJ 08057

Thank you for helping preserve our nation's great rail history!

Combined Federal Campaign – Give to NRHS

By WESLEY ROSS, Central Kentucky Chapter NRHS

The National Railway Historical Society is listed in the 2020-2021 Combined Federal Campaign. The campaign runs **through January 15, 2021. NRHS is listed under the number 10276.**

This is one of the most successful workplace fundraising programs in the world. Federal employees, military personnel, Federal contractors, retired government employees and military retirees are encouraged to participate. You can participate through the on-line site at <https://cfcgiving.opm.gov>. Once you reach this page, you can register and make your pledge. Your pledge can be made to any number of participating charities at the same time. Your pledge will be deducted from your check during each pay period in 2021. The mission of the CFC is to promote and support philanthropy, through a program that is employee-focused, cost-efficient and effective, in providing all Federal employees, the military and retirees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all.

Those members who are government employees, or who are serving in our military, know of the good work that is being done by the Combined Federal Campaign. This year government retirees and military retirees can participate directly in the Campaign through the website and the amount of their donation will be deducted automatically each month from their retirement check. New this year is the Giving Mobile App (for Apple and Android devices) to allow federal employees to make one-time donations via credit card, debit card or bank transfer.

If you are eligible to participate in the CFC, please consider making a generous donation to support the good work that our organization does during the year with such programs as Rail Camp and our Heritage Grants Program. Please encourage your friends, who are Federal employees, members of the military or retired, to **participate in the CFC and make a donation to the National Railway Historical Society Number 10276.**

Many Thanks for Your Support and Renewals

By AL WEBER, President, National Railway Historical Society

Welcome to the many new NRHS members and thank you for joining and supporting our railway history preservation efforts. I also thank and welcome our renewing members for their continued support of the NRHS and its many efforts and projects. For those of you that have not renewed yet, *PLEASE* renew as soon as possible.

If you are thinking of a person that has everything, why not give a gift membership in the NRHS? While renewing, please consider giving a few extra dollars to the NRHS. We have an anonymous donor that has a challenge grant and will match your donation. See Bob Ernst's column (on page 9) for the details. We also are in the Combined Federal Campaign for all of

you that work for the Federal Government; see Wes Ross' column (on p. 9.)

The NRHS is still planning for an in person summer 2021 convention. We have a dedicated group of people lead by John Goodman working on getting all the details worked out.

I also want to personally thank all the NRHS volunteers that keep the organization running so smoothly. The volunteers on the many committees are always working out all the things that keep us in the business of supporting railway history preservation. Many of you never see all the hard work that goes into running the NRHS but without them little would get done.

Last, 2020 has been a very difficult year. I hope and wish that 2021 is much better for all of you.
Al <aeweber@nrhs.com>

Editor's Notes – Holiday Jingles Along the Rails

By VALLI HOSKI, Editor, NRHS News, & member North Texas Chapter, NRHS

'There's no place like home for the holidays' – so sang Perry Como, a real Pennsylvania kind of guy. But how do travelers get home for the holidays in a musical way?

Popular railroad songs tell us that *'someone's in the kitchen with Dina'*. Or is it that someone's in the kitchen dining car? Remember, you have to *'rise up so early in the morn'* to get your eggs and toast? Glenn Miller told us that *'dinner in the diner, nothing could be finer, than to have your ham'n'eggs in Carolina.'*

Santa rides the train too, on all types of railroads, from Canadian Pacific to Kansas City Southern along with regional and local lines in communities across America. If Santa seems far away, the Polar Express is for you.

Its music will jingle into your heart. Just don't lose your bell. With one of the most famous faces in railroading, Thomas the Train has a unique *'Holiday Train Song'* and invites us all to hum along the rails.

Perhaps the best holiday train is the one just steps away— your own holiday train set that runs around the indoor tree faithfully all these years. Listen to your favorite holiday songs, enjoy hot chocolate with marshmallows and other favorite treats. Jingle your bell as the locomotive steams on by.

May your holidays be warm, cozy and comforting in these disconcerting times. Best wishes for good health, good holidays and happiness to you and yours.

Val <News@nrhs.com>

The NRHS News is published nine times a year by the National Railway Historical Society. Valli Hoski, North Texas Chapter NRHS, Editor. Alex Mayes, Potomac Chapter NRHS, content and editorial assistant. Send items to: NRHS News, c/o Valli Hoski, P.O. Box 234, York Springs, PA, 17372. E-mail: <NEWS@NRHS.COM>. Phone 717-398-0430. The address for the Society is: National Railway Historical Society, Inc., 505 South Lenola Road, Suite 226, Moorestown, NJ 08057. All membership information changes should be sent to Hugh Harris <hughrharris@aol.com>.