

NRHS News

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 2021

Potomac Eagle Scenic Railroad's Vintage Diesel

By ALEX MAYES, Potomac Chapter NRHS

The Potomac Eagle Scenic Railroad acquired FP9 No. 1755 for its excursion trains on the South Branch Valley Railroad between Romney, WV and the picturesque "Trough" near Sycamore Bridge and other destinations. The vintage cab unit was built by General Motors Diesel (GMD) in London, Ontario and

delivered to the Canadian National Railway in May 1957 as their No. 6531. Five additional FP9s were delivered to the CN at the same time. When VIA Rail was formed in 1978 the 6531 was transferred to the new Canadian inter-city passenger rail service and retained its CN number. (Continued on p. 3)



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALEX MAYES

SOUTHBOUND "TROUGH TRAIN"– With No. 1755 on the lead, the train heads south at Vanderlip, West Virginia on August 16, 2020 .

NRHS NEWS - MARCH 2021

Table of Contents

Potomac Eagle Scenic Railroad's Vintage Diesel.....	1
<i>Table of Contents</i>	2
<i>Upcoming Conferences and Conventions</i>	2
<i>Submission Deadlines</i>	2
Membership Matters, March 2021	3
NRHS Fund Report, March 2021.....	4
Fresno Mallets	4
Heart of Dixie Chapter Activity Report	8
North Texas Chapter & 2020 Al Coppinger Award	9
President's Column – Planning & Reopening Rails	10
Editor's Notes – Starting a Rail Conversation	10

Upcoming Conferences and Conventions

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

October 7-11, 2021
2021 NRHS Fall
Conference
 Ronkonkoma, New York

Submission Deadlines

April 2021	Online issue	March 20, 2021
May 2021	Print/mailed issue	April 5, 2021
June 2021	Online issue	May 10, 2021



THE "TROUGH TRAIN" OPERATES IN PUSH-PULL FASHION WITH AN ENGINE ON BOTH ENDS – On August 16, 2020, ex-Bessemer and Lake Erie F7 No. 722 painted in the B&O's blue, grey and gold passenger livery, is crossing Route 28 at Vanderlip, West Virginia.

(Continued from p.1) Following VIA Rail's purchase of newer locomotives in 1987 the 1755 was acquired by several owners, including Pioneer Rail, Wisconsin Central and Algoma Central Railway before ending up at Potomac Eagle Scenic Railroad.

While on the Algoma Central No. 1755 powered their popular "Agawa Canyon Train" passenger trains and their "Snow Trains". No. 1755 was delivered to the Potomac Eagle Scenic Railroad in its Algoma Central paint scheme.

Membership Matters, March 2021

By HUGH HARRIS, Membership Administrator NRHS

We've started to mail out the new 2021 Membership cards. They're noticeably different from previous years – they're plastic (like credit cards), they're printed in more than one color and they should be more durable than before. The first batch of just over 2,000 went to the mail service the last week of December so they should have arrived. Another batch of several hundred went to the printer in another week, after that it will depend on how fast the renewals come in. We won't send out your card until you are renewed for the 2021 year. We still have quite a lot of Members who renew only at the end of the year – they never will get a 2021 card. By the time they pay their 2021 dues many other people are already paying the 2022 dues so we'll be starting to issue the cards for that year.

I'll be sending out another reminder in a week or three. It will go to everyone who isn't renewed for 2021- even if you just paid, if that was the 2020 dues, then you'll get a reminder that you haven't paid the 2021 dues.

It would substantially reduce the work of the Membership Volunteers if we could get everyone to renew over a three month period. More work at the time but for a much shorter time period. I'm going to ask the Board and the Membership to consider a three month Grace Period for renewals – so all renewals would have to be done by March 31st. Many organizations have such a limit and I think we should consider it. Thanks for listening.

NRHS Fund Report, March 2021

By *ROBERT ERNST, Fund President NRHS*

Your generosity in 2020 to the NRHS has been outstanding. Donations have been strong throughout the year. You matched a \$5000.00 challenge for the NRHS Railway Heritage Grants and because of your donations there will be \$75,000 available for 2021 Heritage Grants distributions. A record amount!

The NRHS Fund will continue to be the fundraising arm for the NRHS and its programs. The NRHS Fund has applied for another 3-year grant from the Samuel Freeman Charitable Trust Fund. Last time the NRHS Fund received \$83,000 to be exclusively used for the Railway Heritage Grants program. Therefore, the distributions for the Grants have been higher than past years.

Whether you contributed \$5.00 or \$5,000.00 you made a difference. The NRHS continues to operate and its programs remain strong. We look forward to the day we can gather again for a Conference or the Convention. Until then, the NRHS News and NRHS Bulletin will be published on time. The NRHS News will keep you up to date on the activities of the NRHS and its chapters.

Please consider donating to the NRHS. To donate online go to the NRHS website and proceed to the "Giving" tab. The site gives you the option to give an unrestricted donation or a restricted donation to one of the NRHS programs, Heritage Grants, RailCamp or the Film Preservation Program.

If you prefer to send a check, please make it payable to the "NRHS Fund, Inc." and mail it to
 NRHS Fund
 505 South Lenola Road
 Suite 226
 Moorestown, N.J. 08057

Thank you for your continued membership and support of the NRHS.

Fresno Mallets

By *KENNETH G. JOHNSON, Pacific Northwest Chapter NRHS*

The August issue of *The Trainmaster*, with Arlen Sheldrake's note about efforts to cosmetically restore S.P. 2-6-0 #1727, landed in my mailbox one day after I had stopped in Dunsmuir, California, to inspect that very engine on my way home from California. The engine is very visible from Interstate 5 and I always make it a point to stop and check out the old gal when I pass through.

The 1727, and the rest of the clan collectively known as the Fresno Mallets, have a special place in my heart. In 1954 at the ripe old age of 8, I was given my very first locomotive cab ride in one of the Fresno Mallets. I was visiting my grandmother in Reedley, 20 miles south of Fresno, and I spent hours each day standing at trackside a couple blocks from her home watching as the Southern Pacific crew switched

cars around the packing houses with an M-6 class 2-6-0.

In those halcyon days no one worried if an 8-year-old kid wandered a few blocks away to watch trains. And no one would have gotten upset when the friendly crew of the 2-6-0 offered me a ride. I remember they asked me if I wanted to ride in the engine or the caboose. "Engine!" was my instant reply! My excitement overflowed as I climbed up the ladder into the cab and saw up close the array of controls, and smelled the smells of a working steam engine.

We shuffled around town for a while, during which time the engineer and fireman offered me a sandwich and (jokingly of course) a cigarette. I was in seventh heaven. If there had been any doubt up until that time that I was a devoted railfan, all doubt permanently disappeared. I was hooked!!

These engines were nicknamed Fresno Mallets because of their amazing amount of strength for their size. In the flatlands of California's San Joaquin Valley they could pull as many cars as Southern Pacific's much bigger Mallet articulateds could pull over the mountains. And yet they were nimble and able to negotiate the tight curves and light rail found along the fruit packing branch lines of the valley.

S.P. crews liked the Fresno Mallets because of their versatility in tight quarters, and their relatively smooth ride. They did not use up as much fuel and water as larger locomotives, and yet they could pull 50 loaded refrigerator cars at 65 miles an hour! Because of these characteristics, they were well suited to the flat San Joaquin valley conditions and spent most of their careers in California. Dunsmuir's 1727 gave the railroad 55 years of faithful service.

S.P. 1727 and most of its brethren were built by Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1901. They were built to a design pioneered by Samuel Vauclain known as a 4-cylinder Vauclain Compound. Each side had a high pressure cylinder and a low pressure cylinder, in an attempt to utilize the steam more efficiently by using it twice. However, the resulting pounding of the drive rods gave the engines a rough ride and put more wear on the rails. So Southern Pacific

eventually converted them all to simple operation.

Number 1727 was "simplified" in 1908 and if you look at its smokebox you will see a plate affixed by the Sacramento Shops stating that the engine was rebuilt by them in December of 1908. This rebuild certainly contributed to their long service lives. How many diesel locomotives do you know of that gave their railroads 55 years of service?

Several Fresno Mallets were saved by the Southern Pacific and donated to towns in California and elsewhere. My favorite is in nearby Woodburn, Oregon. For many years, Portland resident Frank Scheer has cared for S.P. 2-6-0 #1785 on display in downtown Woodburn. Frank, along with the late Chris McLarney, cosmetically restored the 1785 over 30 years ago and has kept it in immaculate condition ever since. Frank spared no detail. It is the finest cosmetic restoration of a steam locomotive I have ever seen. It is right up there with the Southern Railway PS-4 Pacific in the Smithsonian and the Southern Pacific Cab Forward in the California State Railroad Museum. It is definitely worth a visit if you haven't checked it out before. If you want to help another Fresno Mallet regain its rightful appearance, you can donate to the Friends of the 1727, P.O. Box 412, Dunsmuir, CA 96025.



*PHOTO FROM THE COLLECTION OF KENNETH G. JOHNSEN
DUNSMUIR'S FUTURE FRESNO MALLET #1727 IS SEEN IN SERVICE AT
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA ON DECEMBER 7, 1955 - The doughty 2-6-0 has already given
its owner 54 years of service at the time of this photo, and is still going strong.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNETH G. JOHNSEN

MY DAD GAVE ME A CAMERA IN 1955 AND I BEGAN TAKING TRAIN PICTURES - Unfortunately we had moved away from California and I was unable to photograph my beloved Fresno Mallets in action. We returned to California in 1958 and by then the action was all done. A long row of dead Fresno Mallets lined the yard in Fresno. The engines would soon meet the scrapper's torch.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNETH G. JOHNSEN

SINCE 1957, S.P. M-6 #1785 HAS BEEN A DISPLAY LOCOMOTIVE IN WOODBURN, OREGON - Under the loving care of Frank Scheer, it has blossomed into one of the finest cosmetic restorations anywhere. Frank spared no detail to keep this engine as an accurate representation of a Southern Pacific branchline locomotive in the days of steam.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNETH G. JOHNSEN

S.P. M-6 #1727 WAS GIVEN TO DUNSMUIR, CALIFORNIA BY THE RAILROAD IN 1957 - It is looking a bit shabby these days and a grass roots effort has been started by The Friends of the 1727 to cosmetically restore the engine and tender.



PHOTO FROM THE COLLECTION OF KENNETH G. JOHNSEN

BUILDERS PHOTO OF S.P. 2-6-0 FRESNO #1727.

Heart of Dixie Chapter Activity Report

By JIMM SUMMERS, Heart of Dixie Chapter NRHS

The Heart of Dixie Chapter, NRHS met for its Annual Members' Meeting on January 23, 2021. President Mark Walker updated the museum on the many successes of the Chapter and the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum in 2020.

Despite mandated closure canceling all Spring Events, the Museum was able to begin operations in July. With a little creativity, "Scarecrow Junction" and "Christmas at the Station" replaced "Pumpkin Patch Express" and "North Pole Express" to provide for a safe visitor experience under the State of Alabama's Health Mandates.

Superintendent Jimmy Summers presented on the museum's Shelby & Southern Narrow Gauge Steam Railroad which returned to

operation in July 2020. The 1975 built 24" gauge Crown Metals locomotive and 4 Crown "fancy cars" formerly served the Birmingham Zoo.

Trainmaster, Alan Dismukes, presented on the successes of the Calera & Shelby Railroad. Wendy Cale gave a membership update. Treasurer Mike Walker gave a financial update. Executive Director, David Brewer updated members of ongoing activities around the Museum.

Congratulations to Alan Jones, Bailey Reynolds, and Mike Walker who were elected to serve on the Board of Trustees. Outgoing trustees are Jimmy Summers, Mark Walker, and Mike Walker.



FEBRUARY 6, 2021, VOLUNTEERS ATTENDED CREW SAFETY TRAINING - Safety Director, Blake Wilder covered general safety required for volunteers. Jacob Carey, Larry Collins, Alan Dismukes, Lindsay Barnett, and Manley Seale led breakout sessions for each crew position.

North Texas Chapter & 2020 Al Coppinger Award

By WAYNE SMITH, President, North Texas Chapter NRHS

On Friday, December 4, 2020, the North Texas Chapter members enjoyed a traditional holiday gathering at the Depot Café, in Frisco, Texas. With seasonal greetings, tasty food and a gift exchange, a good time was had by all.

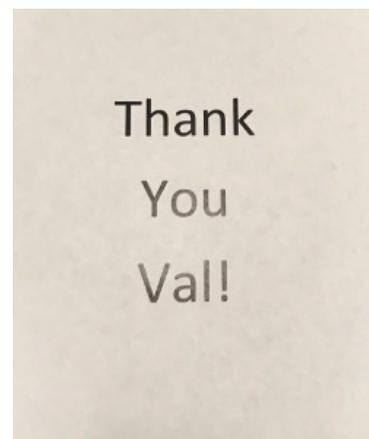
The Chapter also celebrated the 15 years of service given by the Vice-President of Communications, Valli Hoski. Val joined the chapter as a charter member, and continues today with North Texas as her NRHS home

chapter. At the Chapter's request, Val stepped up to become editor of the North Texas Zephyr and led it through 15 years of publication.

In addition, Val was a chapter volunteer on the 2008 Lone Star Rails national convention of the National Railway Historical Society held in Dallas. Val also volunteered for the NRHS conferences sponsored by the North Texas Chapter as well as other Chapter activities.



RECOGNIZING VAL AS CHARTER MEMBER AND FOR CHAPTER SERVICE SINCE 1993 – In recognition of Val as a charter member with long-standing service, the North Texas Chapter presented her with the Al Coppinger Award virtually at the holiday dinner.



SMILING MEMBERS GET THE MESSAGE DELIVERED – The North Chapter members enjoyed their annual dinner and gave thanks for the fun of being an active NRHS member.

President's Column – Planning & Reopening Rails

By AL WEBER, President, National Railway Historical Society

I get many emails from NRHS members and railroad preservationists each week. I try to respond to each and every one even though it takes several hours of my time. Some do end up in my spam box, so I miss those. If you sent me an email and I did not respond please contact me again.

One of the sad items is that I have been receiving more than normal death notices of NRHS members and railroad historians than in previous years. I know that in general our demographics put us in one of the high risk Covid-19 groups. I am quite concerned about the larger numbers of deceased.

On that same track, I have received the occasional request from a deceased member's family - what to do with the member's railroad historical items. I thank them for not just pitching the items and encourage them to contact a local NRHS chapter or local museum. I know that many museums and chapters are very limited in what they can do. However, most that I have referred people to are very happy to get

the historical items. We all need to thank those workers for helping preserve railroad history for future generations.

Please remember to tell your loved ones of your desires for disposition of your collections, so they are not just pitched in the trash. Here is why you need to pre-plan - one of those donations went to our photo collection, a set of original Lima photos for preservation. We will have some out on the NRHS web site soon.

Many museums are reopening in the next few months. The one that I volunteer at (NMOT) here in St Louis MO will open fully to the public on March 15th 2021. I also have received notice of chapters doing public Amtrak excursions. Some are done with the chapter's own passenger cars. If you see an open museum please attend them and if you see a train trip take it. All these venues need support after being closed for almost a year. Stay safe.

Al Weber <aweber@nrhs.com>

Editor's Notes – Starting a Rail Conversation

By VALLI HOSKI, Editor, NRHS News

I hope this issue finds you with good health, improving spirits and a growing list of railroad 'To-Do's' for this spring or summer. News of increased vaccinations is wonderful to hear, but let's still 'be safe out there'. If your chapter, local rail museum, or historical / hobby group is planning to re-open or resume activities this summer, please let the *News* know.

The annual *NRHS Discount Guide* is planned as part of the *NRHS News* June issue. Your tips / hints on local rail attraction re-openings or new programs will increase the summer railroading fun for members, friends, and families. Remember - wear a mask, and remain careful.

Something new is being tried in the *News* – 'themes' or a topical focus for each issue. Members are responding well, sending in their own story, tale, or comments on the theme of the month. I give my personal thanks to each member who has done so.

Why a 'theme'? Well, it's like a 'conversation starter' for the issue. I suggest an idea, it rattles around in members' memories for a while. Then, someone reaches for a pen or keyboard, and voila', an interesting submission arrives in the News@NRHS.com email box.

Your article, ideas, photographs keep the *NRHS News* fresh and interesting. Don't wait for a perfect 'theme', for the best rail ride you will ever have, or the prettiest train station you'll ever see. Think back to the funniest train joke you've heard, the unplanned rail adventure you've had or look forward to doing. Follow the 'theme' down the tracks; see where it leads through your memories of trips taken or wished-for adventures to come. Write it down, email it to News@NRHS.com. The email box and your fellow members await your story. Best wishes as always, 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>.