

## Comptrollers Needed – Society & NRHS Fund

*By Ralph “Bob” Bitzer, NRHS Treasurer*

### **NRHS Finance Office Help Wanted**

Hello to all of our members. I hope this finds you well and managing through these difficult times with the COVID-19 issues we have all been facing.

It has been a while since I have written to you. The main reason for this letter is to ask for your support and assistance for the Society’s financial management team. Both the Society and the NRHS Fund need member volunteers to serve in the capacity of comptrollers. We currently have no one in these positions. This is a very important and required function in the Society.

I know you are asking yourself what is required to serve in these positions. What type of background and experience is needed to be a comptroller of a non-profit volunteer organization? So let’s begin with a brief definition and overview of what a comptroller does.

“A comptroller is a management level position for supervising the quality of accounting and financial reporting of an organization. They oversee accounting by financial personnel such as preparation of financial reports, income statements and annual budgets.”

The primary duties of a NRHS Comptroller are to review the Society’s bank accounts (on-line), ensure the correct accounts are being used for income and expenses, review the investment account, budget preparation and tracking, work with our outside CPA firm for the preparation of the annual tax filings (990) and prepare as necessary financial status reports for Society management.

Before everyone says how many hours a week, conference calls and travel is involved let me assure you it is not that difficult. All of the Society’s accounting is done through Quickbooks and is on-line through a cloud server. If meetings are required they are done by conference calls or using internet on-line services such as “Go To Meeting” or “Zoom”. Once in-person BOD’s meetings are held again we ask that whenever possible the comptroller attend these meetings. Need more information, call me, I offer free advice.

One additional thought, if you as a member of the Society work in the accounting field either through employment with an Accounting company, or as an independent contractor, there may be possible tax advantages. The NRHS is a 501c3 educational organization and as such donations of time and services for accounting work on behalf of the Society may be tax deductible. This is something which should be discussed with a tax professional.

I know that there is going to be a positive response to this help wanted request for comptrollers. So give me a shout by phone 301-206-5321, or by email at [treasurer@nrhs.com](mailto:treasurer@nrhs.com) to volunteer. Let’s talk. Remember, it’s rewarding and it feels good to be a part of this great organization of ours.

Stay well. Bob B

# NRHS NEWS - MAY 2021

## *Table of Contents*

---

<b>Comptrollers Needed – Society &amp; NRHS Fund .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Table of Contents</i> .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Upcoming Conferences and Conventions</i> .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Submission Deadlines</i> .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Passenger Depots in Gordonsville, VA .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>NRHS Fund Report, May 2021 .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Vintage Flexi-Flo Hopper Car To Be Preserved .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Nuclear Fuel Trains .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>NRHS Bulletin Back Issues Available to Chapters .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>President’s Column – Welcome Back.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Editor’s Notes – Why be an Editor? It’s the People! .....</b>	<b>10</b>

## *Upcoming Conferences and Conventions*

---

<b>August 23-28, 2021</b> <b>2021 NRHS Convention</b> Milwaukee, Wisconsin	<b>October 7-11, 2021</b> <b>2021 NRHS Fall</b> <b>Conference</b> Ronkonkoma, New York
--	---

## *Submission Deadlines*

---

<b>June 2021</b>	<b>Online issue</b>	<b>May 10, 2021</b>
<b>July 2021</b>	<b>none</b>	
<b>August 2021</b>	<b>Online issue</b>	<b>July 10, 2021</b>

# Passenger Depots in Gordonsville, VA

By RICK JOHNSON, Blue Ridge Chapter NRHS

The first passenger depot in Gordonsville, Virginia was part of the existing freight station. That station was replaced around 1870 with a two-story depot inside the wye. The new station included a telegraph office and served both the C&O and the Orange, Alexandria & Manassas (successor to the Orange & Alexandria).



*PHOTO FROM THE COLLECTION OF RICK JOHNSON*  
***C&O STATION AND 'G' CABIN AS VIEWED LOOKING WEST AT GORDONSVILLE,, VA, SEPTEMBER 15, 1977 - A Chessie System passenger special between Richmond and Orange stopped here for photos. The special train is seen on the Washington/Charlottesville leg of the wye. The train was powered by two black Western Maryland F7s since ex-Reading T1 No. 2101 experienced mechanical issues the previous weekend.***

That station was replaced in 1904 by this unique station (see above.) It was also built inside the wye. The new station resembles other stations built around the same time (e.g., Doswell, VA; St. Albans, WV). It served the C&O until the advent of Amtrak. The train sheds were removed, I believe, in 1975 and the station itself was torn down in 1978. (Source: C&O Railway Historical Society.)

# NRHS Fund Report, May 2021

---

By *ROBERT ERNST, Fund President NRHS*

---

Keeping in mind that we, the National Railway Historical Society, are about preservation and restoration of all things related to the great legacy railroads play in our nation ... I have great news – which also presents you and your fellow members with a challenge!

First, as you may have read, your Society's Railway Heritage Grant Program in this year of 2021 will award a whopping total of \$75,000.00 ... the largest amount ever given in a single year since its inception back in 1991! Something to be proud of!

And, I am pleased to announce that the NRHS Fund's application for another three-year grant from the Samuel Freeman Charitable Trust has been accepted and we have been awarded \$100,000 for the NRHS Heritage Grants Program, with the dollars being spread across the next three years, 2022 through 2024.

This grant gives our Heritage Grant Program a fantastic head start for each year, yet the remainder depends on the generosity of you, your fellow NRHS members and good friends if we are to equal or, hopefully, surpass this year's \$75,000.00 amount.

Yes, now's the time to begin building that nest egg so as to be ready for the arrival of 2022.

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, note on the check which program you want to support and make it payable to the "NRHS Fund, Inc.". Please mail it to:

The NRHS Fund  
505 South Lenola Road,  
Suite 226  
Moorestown, N.J. 08057

Thank you for your continued membership and support of the NRHS. We're coming up on the 200th anniversary of the birth of railroading in America . . . so there's much history to be preserved. And, there are so many aspects to railroad history ... not only locomotives fueled by coal, diesel and natural gas, there's other rolling stock of many sorts along with stations, towers and other buildings and trackside signals.

Always keep in mind: It's not history if it's not preserved. And, you are doing your part in meeting the challenge with your contribution of any amount!

## Vintage Flexi-Flo Hopper Car To Be Preserved

---

By *RUDY GARBELY, Conrail History Society*

---

### **Non-Profits Partner to Save a Vintage Flexi-Flo Hopper Car**

On April 16, 2021, the Conrail History Society and Danbury Railway Museum (CT) announced a joint preservation project. After nearly two years of volunteer efforts, a rare railcar representing a significant technological advance in railroad history has found a permanent home at a museum.

A 46-foot-long hopper car was delivered to the Danbury Railway Museum at 11:20 AM on Tuesday, March 30, 2021. Built in May of 1966 by ACF Industries in Milton, PA, the car was one of only 220 "Flexi-Flo" hopper cars produced for the New York Central, the first pressure differential cars ever constructed.



*PHOTO COURTESY OF RUDY GARBELY*

*CONRAIL FLEXI-FLOW HOPPER CAR - Cooperative preservation project between Conrail History Society and Danbury Railway Museum.*

By applying air pressure to the inside of the car, the contents (typically cement or other dry bulk goods) could be easily unloaded into a nearby truck or storage tank. This technology was revolutionary in the rail industry, and it helped railroads recapture some of the business that was being lost to trucks and the interstate highway system in the 1960s. The pressure differential technology first used on these cars has grown in popularity and is in use today on nearly all modern hopper car designs. This car represents the genesis of a technology in use around the world.

The new hopper car at Danbury started life as New York Central class 996H hopper car #885738, branded "Flexi-Flo" by the railroad. The New York Central merged with the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1968 to form Penn Central, and this hopper car was conveyed to its new owner. The following year, Penn Central converted the #885738 to a scale test car by filling it to a weight of 266,000 pounds. It was painted bright yellow, renumbered Penn Central #80019, and used throughout the Penn Central rail system to test the accuracy of railcar scales.

Following Penn Central's 1970 bankruptcy (and the insolvency of several other northeastern railroads in the same time period), the federal government created the Consolidated Rail Corporation, better known as Conrail, to rescue the northeast's financially troubled rail system. From its inception in 1976 until it was acquired by CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern in 1999, Conrail's success was one of the most significant developments in the American railroad industry.

The former Penn Central #80019 was repainted into Conrail gray in the late 1970s and retained the same number, serving the entire 23 years of Conrail until it was conveyed to CSX Transportation in 1999. Nearly all of the original 220 Flexi-Flo hopper cars continued in service (some in their original configuration, others reconfigured like this car) into the mid-2010s, when most were scrapped at the end of their mandatory 50-year service lives.

Volunteers with The Conrail Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, reached out to CSX in 2019 to inquire about the status and future of this rare car, which survived longer

than any others in its class due to its conversion as a scale test car.

After nearly two years of negotiations and planning, CSX agreed to donate the car to The Conrail Historical Society in January of 2021. The Conrail Historical Society's volunteers spent two months working closely with CSX Transportation, the Housatonic Railroad, and Metro-North to arrange and pay for the complicated shipment of the car to the Danbury Railway Museum in Danbury, Connecticut. Upon the car's arrival at the museum, The Conrail Historical Society transferred ownership to the Danbury Railway Museum, ensuring the car's long-term preservation and interpretation as a revolutionary concept in railcar design.

"We're pleased that this collaboration has resulted in saving a one-of-a-kind artifact," said Rudy Garbely, president of The Conrail Historical Society. "This hopper is an extremely rare and worthy candidate for long-term preservation, and the volunteers at both organizations have made an extraordinary commitment and effort to get it saved. There are many opportunities for cooperation and innovation in the preservation industry, and we

## Nuclear Fuel Trains

*By Arlen Sheldrake, Pacific Northwest Chapter NRHS and T. Trent Stetz*

A March 2nd Trainorders.com posting by "we-ye-it" titled "a Surprise Along The Maryhill Highway" included a beautiful February 27, 2021 picture taken by his wife of a BNSF train with some specialized casks and a "caboose" in the Columbia River Gorge. On February 27th at about 11:18 a.m. Vincent Schwindt and his wife Angela were driving west on SR 14 after some exploration on the "Maryhill Highway", the former SP&S right of way before the dams were built. (See next page.) The idler cars, locomotive, and staff car were reported in Blackfoot after dropping the loads at Scoville. Vincent's posting and his wife's picture prompted some research.

This train was part of the Naval Spent Fuel Transportation system of moving spent fuel from Bremerton to the Naval Reactors Facility in Idaho. A late 2010s report noted that the U.S. Navy has some 100 nuclear reactors in 13 aircraft carriers, 78 submarines, and some land-

look forward to a long and fruitful partnership with the skilled staff at the Danbury Railway Museum to tackle future projects of this magnitude."

"The pioneering technology behind the Flexi-Flo's design and its rarity made this car a prime candidate for preservation," said Danbury Railway Museum president Jose Alves. "When The Conrail Historical Society made us aware of their efforts, we knew we had to help. Both of our organizations share a common goal when it comes to preserving America's railroad history, and with railroads regaining the public's interest, organizations like ours provide a necessary link to the past."

Many thanks are due to the capable staff at CSX Transportation, the Housatonic Railroad, and Metro-North, all of which went above and beyond to coordinate with The Conrail Historical Society's volunteers and ensure the safe transportation of this car to its permanent home. The car will be restored and maintained in Conrail paint by Danbury Railway Museum volunteers, representing the scheme that it wore for over 40 years of its 55-year career on the rails.

based prototypes/training facilities. Nuclear-powered warships comprise more than 45% of all of the Navy's major combatants. The Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program (NNPP), founded in 1948, has been shipping both new and used nuclear fuel by rail for over 60 years.

The Naval Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) is the main component of the NNPP four separate facilities, the Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory (KAPL) in Schenectady, New York; the Kenneth A. Kesselring Site in West Milton, New York; and the Naval Reactors Facility within the Idaho National Laboratory. NNPP trains carry components in boxcars and, for larger items, in specialized shipping containers on flatcars (as shown in the photo). Two different types of sealed containers are used to transport spent nuclear fuel.



*PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELA SCHWINDT*

***EASTBOUND BNSF SPECIAL – Train with what was reported to be spent nuclear fuel from the Navy in Bremerton, heading for the Idaho National Lab west of Idaho Falls.***

All shipments are classified (security) and invoke the Department of Transportation National Security Exemption (49CFR173.7b):

- Radioactive labels and placards not used. - No advance notification.
- The railcars used for these shipments are frequently inspected and maintained at the highest standard.
- The location and status of the train is constantly monitored by satellite tracking.
- Advance arrangements are made with railroad operations and railroad police.
- Previous outreach has been made to civilian authorities for accident exercises.

For perspective, the current fuel for an attack submarine operates for the 33-year life of the ship (or are they boats?). Most new and used Navy nuclear material to/from Bremerton transits

via the Columbia River Gorge. (See rail map on next page.)

Angela's picture shows two of the unique types of rail vehicles used by the NNPP program:

- Escort Vehicle (sort of looks like a caboose): This houses security personnel, train monitoring equipment, and satellite tracing. The couriers escorting the Navy shipments are Federal Officers who provide constant surveillance, and act as first responders in the event of an issue with the transport.

- M-140 Naval Spent Fuel Shipping Container: Type B NRC/DOE certified. With at least 10" thick solid stainless steel, and 350,000 pounds (loaded). The thick solid steel typically results in radiation levels much lower than the safe maximum DOT limits.



The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is developing special railcars for future large-scale DOE transport of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) from nuclear power plants. Designs include new buffer railcars, the Atlas Railcar (to transport SNF containers), and a new escort railcar for security personnel that was developed in collaboration with the U.S. Navy. All railcars are expected to complete testing and meet North American/Association of American Railroads (AAR) freight standards in 2023. Trainmaster DOE estimates it will take about 8 years of railcar development and testing to verify that all of the new railcars meet the S-2043 standard and receive approval the Association of American Railroads. (This from USDOE – Atlas Railcar 10/2020.)

A NNPP report notes that Vigor Works LLC (previously known as Oregon Iron Works) was designing new escort vehicles with design

complete in 2016, initial procurement planned for summer 2017, and delivery tested in January 2020. The plan noted procurement of four additional vehicles in 2020 and 2021 (2 each year).

These cabooses carry reporting marks of VWXX-800, for example. The new design appears to be substantially larger and more capable than the armored escort cabooses that the NNPP has now (as seen in the photo), which notably have no visible firing ports. It's unclear how many of those escort railcars exist now, but a 2016 Naval Reactors presentation said that the plan, at least at that time, was to acquire five of the new examples from Vigor Works. It is certainly very possible that this represents a one-for-one replacement plan.

Vigor Works is best known for designing and building a number of stealthy special operations boats for the Navy, and has also previously

developed an unmanned seaplane for the Navy, built streetcars in cooperation with Czech firm Skoda, and crafted a buoy designed to test the possibility of turning waves into energy. Common routes for those trains run between facilities in New York and Virginia and shipyards on the East and West Coasts of the United States. When it comes to spent fuel, those ships generally run from shipyards on the coasts to the Naval Reactors Facility in Idaho, where this waste is stored, at least temporarily.

It is somewhat interesting that Naval Reactors continues to use rail transport for its nuclear movements, at all. More than three decades ago, the Department of Energy ended the practice of moving nuclear weapons via specialized trains, known variously as "atomic trains" or "white trains," the latter referring to their initial plain white paint schemes. They featured multiple heavily armored boxcars sandwiched in between 'turret cars,' which protruded above the rest of the train. The turrets had slit windows through which armed DOE guards peered out, prepared to shoot if they needed to defend the train. "Known in DOE [Department of Energy] parlance [as] 'safe, secure railcars,' or SSRs, the white trains were highly resistant to attack and unauthorized entry. They also offered 'a high degree of cargo protection in event of fire or serious accident,' the DOE assured a wary Congress in 1979." Protests and public outcry, driven in large part by growing opposition to nuclear weapons in general toward the end of the Cold War, prompted changing the paint scheme of the trains from white to various colors in the early 1980s.

There were still concerns, both inside the U.S. government and out, as well as elsewhere around the world, about the safety and security surrounding these trains, the simple accidental derailment of which presented the potential risk of a major nuclear or radiological incident. It's important to note, of course, that rail transport remains in use for the movement of commercial reactor components and nuclear waste. At the same time, reactors for naval vessels, in general, are significantly different from civilian power-generating types. Most notably, in part to help keep the reactors compact, but powerful, they often use weapons-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU). As of 2016, the Navy alone accounted for approximately 60 percent of HEU use in naval applications worldwide, according to the Arms Control Association.

It's worth pointing out that the head of Naval Reactors is also one of a number of Deputy Administrators at NNSA, underscoring both the importance and the sensitivity of the NNPP. Regardless, at least in the meantime, Naval Reactors will continue to use rail as a means to transport nuclear and nuclear-related cargoes around the country.

*Other sources:* Naval Spent Fuel Transportation report (undated). Also article titled: "Wait, This Mysterious Heavily Armoured Blue Train Caboose Belongs to the Navy?" posted on on March 8, 2021.

Many thanks to the authors for sharing this article from April 2021 issue of the *Trainmaster*, newsletter of the Pacific Northwest Chapter NRHS.

## NRHS Bulletin Back Issues Available to Chapters



Now that rail events are opening up again, your chapter has a friend in the NRHS to help with free giveaways and publicity.

Back issues of the *NRHS Bulletin* are available for chapter to use as free marketing material, displays or to promote membership. All copies are in excellent condition.

If your chapter could use some, please contact Jeff Smith, 2375 S. Whittmore Street, Furlong, PA 18925 or reach out to Jeff Smith at [bulletin@nrhs.com](mailto:bulletin@nrhs.com) for more information.

## President's Column – Welcome Back

By AL WEBER, President, National Railway Historical Society

Here in the St Louis Mo area, things are getting back to a "New Normal". We still have social distancing but events are starting back up. The museum here is having a train show with over 50 vendors this weekend and a large number of attendees are expected. I have seen advertisements for train trips, open houses and train tours, so at least here we are restarting our new normal events. I see that many NRHS chapters are also starting to have in person meetings again. Some are still very limited but the face to face meetings are restarting.

Here at national we are also trying to get things back on track. We have had committee members working on many items, Historical Grants, next year's RailCamps and the 2021 Convention. The convention committee has been busy and has a very good plan for this August 23-28 in Milwaukee WI. The events are really outstanding so please

plan on attending; also consider staying a few days extra and seeing the local area.

One of the committees developed a member survey, we mailed out a very small sample of 500. I have now received back about 180 of the surveys. If you were one of this very small sample of NRHS members and did not return it, PLEASE do. All the results are confidential, they are tabulated and that will be summarized to the board. No member information is kept or used or presented to the board. If you did write a note I personally will be doing the follow up. I have received several notes and will write a summary of the survey and the notes in a future NRHS News.

Well, stay safe and thanks for helping preserve railroad history for future generations.

Al

## Editor's Notes – Why be an Editor? It's the People!

By VALLI HOSKI, Editor, NRHS News

The fun is all in the stories, the memories, the reconnecting with a friend, a club, a town or city. Helping someone reconnect with the hobby, their passion for railroading, a great club and/or great friends.

When the email arrives, phone call comes, or a casual remark is made, the reconnection begins ...

- "Hey Val, thanks for another great issue ... I recall that rail event, made some friends that day ... want to call them again ... how do I contact the author?"
- "Fun issue ... that rail event was my first activity as a new railfan ... how do I contact the author? I still recall the faces and fun."
- "Here's my holiday train story ... Let's see, I was 7, my brother was 9. We just got into Lionel trains, a small set. But boy oh boy, our dog loved barking at the thing. Here's a good story for you about that train set and my railroad dog ..."
- "You know, I travel a lot with my job. Rail fanning is a great hobby for that. I find a local rail club wherever I'm in town, and there you go ... a whole new bunch of people to meet and find out about great rail locations around. The last issue covered the best club meeting I ever was at. Is that chapter still alive?"

Some folks count the number of cities they've lived in, or towns, and rank which ones they want to get back to and ones they ignore. Well, for me that's the story of rail clubs. I've been a member of a bunch of them. Some great, some okay, a few were just cliques. I might not recall the town, but I ALWAYS remember the great rail group, their laughs, their stories and the friends I've made.

Please send this editor an email with your best of ... new rail group, best town with best club, largest group, smallest group? What are some of the best excursions you've been on? Worst conditions or track or not worth the time (no names please)? And, if you could do one all over again, just once, which excursion, rail group or see railroading friends - which one would you love to do again?

We all look forward to your best railroading times, places, and people. 1991. Send your 'best of' to [News@NRHS.com](mailto:News@NRHS.com). The email box and your fellow members await your story.

My best club and best time? My first chapter Bluewater onboard NS Steam excursions, Detroit/Forth Wayne, assisting with onboard communications and logistics. Best crew, best friends, best time, best memories, and many thanks from public and crew. Never get tired of the memories or telling stories. Best wishes as always, Val.

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](mailto: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](mailto:hughrharris@aol.com)>.