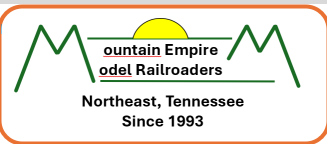


The Mission of the George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society is to preserve and promote the Legacy of the local Railroads that helped shape our past and to remember those who had a part in that legacy.



The Mission of the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders is to further the interest in model railroading and railroad history by supporting the Johnson City Railroad Experience.



The George L. Carter Chapter of the NRHS is proud to announce that Isaac Seay will receive the Chapters scholarship to attend the NRHS RailCamp Northwest, June 21-27, 2026 at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA.

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# The Coal Road

George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society

## Everyone Has A Railroad Past

By Scott M. Stodola, President of the George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society

Everyone has a railroad past?! Do you believe that? What's yours?

I have been asked many times, "what brought you to model railroading?" Well, I'll tell you. My Dad, Larry Stodola.

My dad began his 22 year railroad career after getting out of the Army, in either 1970 or 1971. My dad started with the



Norfolk & Western Railroad (N&W) on the East Side of Chicago, at what was known as the Nickel Plate Railroads Calumet Yard. He was a switchman, conductor, yard master, train master, and an engineer before being medically retired from the Norfolk Southern Railroad around 1992.

As I write this, I will also give you a little history on the Calumet Yard as I understand it with some pictures that I found.

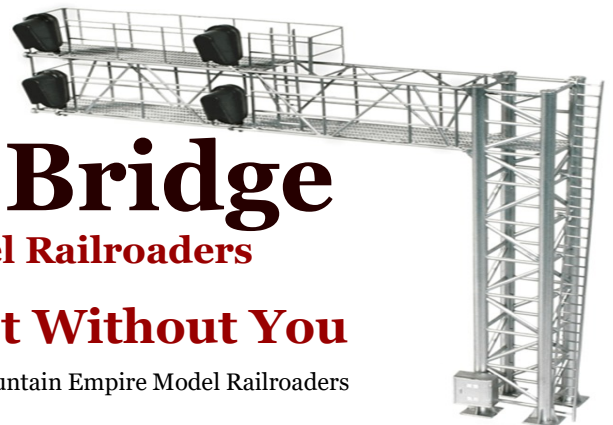
The Nickel Plate Road (NKP) Calumet Yard in Chicago served as a critical freight



Calumet Yard, 1938

terminal and engine servicing facility on the South Side of Chicago, supporting the railroad's rapid, high-speed freight operations between Chicago and Buffalo, and it was a crucial terminal for the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad (Nickle Plate Road),

*Continued, Railroad Past, page 3*



# The Signal Bridge

Mountain Empire Model Railroaders

## We Can't Do It Without You

By Bob Grygotis, President, Mountain Empire Model Railroaders

Well folks, a considerable amount of time has passed since we were doing articles for a newsletter, almost five years to be exact. During this time, we have moved to the new site and evolved our train collection, layouts, and museum to where we are today. This has been no easy feat, as we have accomplished what we have with close to 100,000 man-hours. What has continued to amaze me is that we have an awesome group of volunteers who step up when it is necessary to learn a new skill or donate

time or resources to make improvements. These people, in most cases, did not know each other until we connected



with this hobby or the passion for what we do.

The diversity of this group is

what makes us so effective and able to agree on various approaches to finishing up our layout. The last section will be more industrial and urban in flavor and is well underway. We have the track plan to the point of laying some road bed and then rail. A major yard is going to land on the top leg and re-engineering the old roundhouse which had been a cornerstone for the club. The new incline on the back wall will be something new and take the place of the temporary "Little Saluda".

*Continued, Volunteers, page 6*

# Where Would I Be If It Wasn't For Model Railroading?

By Dan Toporek

Easy to answer that one right? Most likely not writing this! So to fully appreciate this particular hobby, let's travel back in my time of the early 70's (known as the Generation Jones). A time of black and white television, rotary phones on street corners and airport lounges. A time when big toy stores such as Kiddie City and Toys "R" Us had all your hobby needs in one huge building. Walking



through these stores back in the day was like a kid's dream come true. Toys of all types from floor

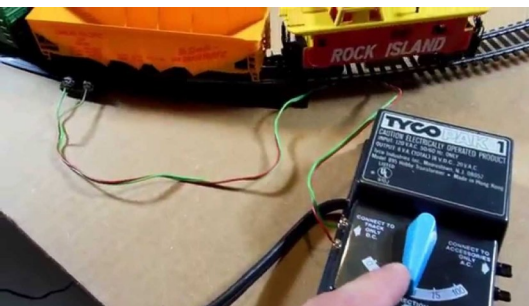
to ceiling. Most parents knew better to keep their youngster's away from such stores, especially when the holiday season rolls around. Hobby shops were around, but it was always more fun to walk the aisles of toys loaded with variety.

Finding the aisle with trains, slot cars, and model car kits was never a challenge to me. And there it was, a HO Rock Island

Tyco! I tracked down mom and gave her a long look and pointed over to the set on the shelf. I heard the same usual response, "Maybe Santa will bring it". I said to myself, "well if that's the case then I'm gonna ask Santa for a slot car set too!"



Well Christmas finally arrived and I could hardly wait anymore to see what was under the tree. Our family tradition was church first, breakfast second, then time to unwrap. I crawled under the tree and grabbed that long narrow box and there it was in all its splendor. That Tyco set I saw at the toy store. So I looked at my parents and said, "but I asked Santa for a Lionel"!! (just kidding). After opening the box and removing all the pieces, I realized I had no idea how this thing moves. Later that morning my dad and I made it downstairs and assembled it on top of the ping-pong table. It was at that moment I learned about electricity and to respect it. I learned



the importance of correct wiring and the use of hand tools. Then the little black box that plugs into the wall that makes all the magic of this little train come to life.

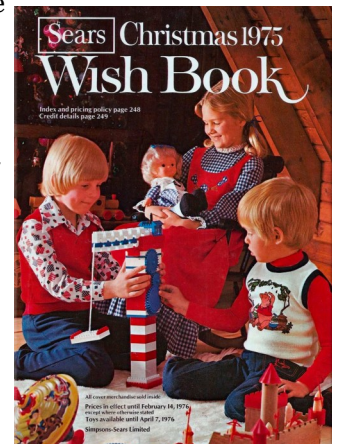
All of this was a learning curve for me that would last me a lifetime. If things didn't work then, I had to figure it out. I had to think for myself, no computers or internet for help. Live and learn was the motto back then. The following Christmas came and I got my first Lionel set, "The Cannonball." A basic starter set with big wheels and cars, no

fiddling with fine track sections. The best part of it all, I no longer needed help from my dad. Now I had priceless



experience of how to hook this up. But what's with the three rails? As time progressed, I was bored with this round and round thing. I finally found a large book in the mail called the "Sears Christmas Wish Book".

And I soon discovered HO slot cars. Yes, I received a set and the Lionel train set came off that ping-



pong table real quick. The skill needed to run that car around the track was far more fun and exciting than watching that train. As life moved on, I wanted something more creative and larger. I soon discovered plastic model building and that was another



learning curve as well. From there I wanted my model building time to be more fun and exciting, so then I discovered Radio Control cars and trucks.



Model railroading started my fascination with assembling things, diagnosing those things, and operating them. All of these early in life experiences lead me to a career as an automotive technician for 20 years. Such exposure to these hobbies improved my skills, and most importantly how things work. Looking back to these days, the best thing I can say about growing up in the 70's is there never was a 'game over' scenario. It was called a do over till you got it right.

So to answer the question of where would I be if it wasn't model railroading, I have absolutely no idea. I still have interest in all of the hobbies mentioned and have joined and started many clubs over the years. Life is what you make of it...Get busy Kiddo!

## Railroad Past, continued from page 1

which was founded in 1881 to compete with the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway.

In 1925, the City of Chicago approved for the NKP to construct a belt line and terminal, including dredging a channel in Lake Calumet.

This yard was established to handle heavy industrial traffic and was central to the NKP's, and later the Norfolk & Western Railway's, Midwest operations, particularly in the 1940s-1950s when it serviced the famed 2-8-4 Berkshire steam locomotives.



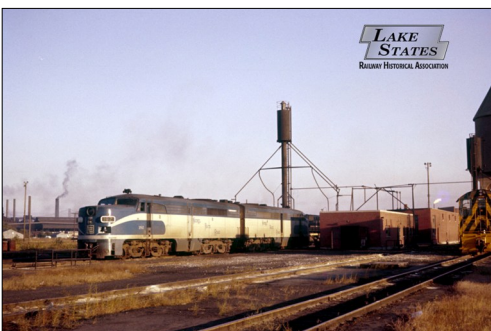
Here, 2-8-4 #766 and #741, a pair of S-2's, take on fuel at the Calumet Yard coaling tower.

This yard and engine terminal was home to the last roundhouse built in the U.S. during the steam era, complete in 1952.



C1956 Nickel Plate Road 2-8-4 #760 on the Turntable at Calumet Yard.

In April 1958, shortly after dieselization was completed, several of these locomotives, including class S engines, were documented at the terminal.



Here the NKP #182, Alco PA-1 in on the service track in 1960.

The first diesel road engines began to arrive on the Nickel Plate in 1947.

In 1964, the NKP, including the Calumet Yard, was merged into the Norfolk and Western Railway and the yard began to grow with the increase of raw materials and finished goods for the Chicago steel and industrial region.



Calumet Yard, mid to late 1970s.

I was born in 1969, and by the mid to late 70s, I can remember my dad taking us for car rides to Calumet Yard and driving through the yard. He would explain what each building was for, and how everything was laid out in a way that would provide easy operation of inbound and outbound trains.



N&W (ex-NKP) Calumet Yard roundhouse in 1976.

I remember seeing the roundhouse for the first time and thinking how cool that was to be able to work on the engines by just putting them on a table and pointing them towards an open stall.

Norfolk & Western Railway went on strike in 1978. I do remember a few things about this period. I do remember that my dad was not working and that he explained what a strike was, and why they were on strike (though I do not remember the why part). He would go to "work" even though "work" was standing on the picket line. As I remember, this happened in the summer or late summer, and I do remember it being before Thanksgiving.

With my dad being on strike, I started to notice how we were not going out to

eat or to different places. At Thanksgiving, I remember how the conversation was mostly centered around the strike and what was going on. At the time, my aunt also worked for N&W.

One thing that I will never forget, is how even though money was tight, that Christmas, my brother and I had just as many presents under the tree as years earlier. My mom and dad did everything that they could to keep the strike from affecting us, which probably looking back at it, meant doing without things for themselves just so that my brother and I had a Christmas just like the years before, as if the strike never happened.

In 1987 I graduated from high school and had no clue about what I wanted to do. My dad said that the railroad was hiring and I thought why not. I was hired on as a switchman and made it to conductor before being let go 9 1/2 months later. Working long hours on the extra board is no excuse, however, to make it through the long hours I allowed my addiction to get the best of me.



Here we see an N&W GP40 mated with a UP SD40 series unit, and a true family picture, Southern SD40-2, NS SD40 series and an N&W SD40-2, and a decent shot of a sand tower. Early spring, 1987.

Back in the 80s and 90s, NS ran annual excursions out of their Chicago Calumet Yard to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. The next few photos are of the NKP #765, the N&W articulated class A #1218 and the famous N&W #611.



*Continued, Railroad Past, page 5*

# Photographic History

Photos submitted by Geoff Stunkard



## Southeast Hotties

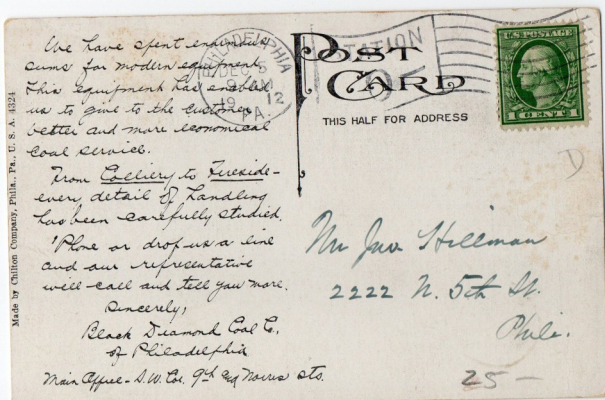
It is September 1970 and photographer Emory Gulash is positioned on the original Seaboard Coast Line mainline in Yemassee, SC as former ET&WNC #208, renumbered back to Southern Ry. 722, storms by with a fast northbound excursion between Savannah and Charleston during the 1970 NRHS Convention. The second engine number is not listed on this 35mm slide mount, but the tender design means most likely it is fellow survivor SOU #4501.

*Image: Geoff Stunkard Archive, 35mm slide purchased from Morning Sun Books /Emory Gulash estate.*

## Found in Black & White

Its morning in Englewood, Illinois, where the name trains of Pennsylvania, New York Central, Rock Island, and Nickel Plate Road all met during the 1940s going into and out of Chicago. Almost-new NYC Niagara 4-8-4 #6021 is inbound to the Windy City with Presidential hopeful Thomas Dewey on his 1948 campaign special. Harry Truman would end up as the victor following voting day that year, continuing on in the presidency following his succession to the late Franklin Roosevelt, who had died in office as the Second World War concluded. This image is not dated, but could well have been taken in that early November 1948, when a Chicago newspaper ran their infamous and incorrect “Dewey Defeats Truman” headline. At this moment, the Central was rapidly converting its mainline “Great Steel Fleet” of passenger runs to diesel operation, and the 2-year old Niagara's were already being moved to other duties such as this.

*Image: Geoff Stunkard Archive, large format negative, photographer unlisted.*



## Postcards from the Edge (of the tracks...)

This unique postcard was postmarked in 1912, sent from the offices of the Black Diamond Coal Co. of Philadelphia to a regional customer explaining that the company had just purchased the “latest equipment” for delivery, namely the early truck show. Cancelled at Philadelphia trolley transit “Station O” (a rare cancel as well), this is an advertising item featuring preprinted cursive writing denoting the business and listing another early communication device—the telephone. There is a real problem with this card - what is it? No phone number is listed! Which may be why the card is so rare today, costing \$25.00 or more if it can even be located.

*Image: Geoff Stunkard Archive, postcard library.*



# Railroad Past, continued from page 3

So the Big Boy wasn't the first big articulated that came to Chicagoland.

The N&W 611. This is where I fell in love with steam.



N&W #611 sitting in Calumet Yard ready to depart.

In September of 1983, I was 14 years old, standing on Torrence Ave. on Chicago's Southside. The 611 just rounded the curve after crossing the Calumet River and 130th street. When she came thundering by, my dad was waving out of the cab window. You see, my dad was steam qualified and road qualified. That meant that when she came to Chicago and was heading to Ft. Wayne, Indiana, besides the normal engineer that traveled with her, my dad was the only steam qualified engineer out of Calumet Yard that knew the road from Chicago to Ft. Wayne.

Now I don't know if that is my dad sitting in the window box in the above picture, but when he was waving out at everyone as he was pulling that whistle cord as he crossed Torrence Ave., I do remember thinking and saying, "That's my dad!"

I've see the 611 several times at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. When I learned that the 611 would be running excursions out of Victoria Station in Goshen, VA, I knew I had to go. I made that trip several times over course of the



The N&W J-Class leads the Shenandoah Valley Limited on the first run of the day at 9:39 a.m. on Friday, October 13, 2023. Picture taken by Scott M. Stodola

excursion schedule. The first time was with Pam and we actually went up to chase her and take pictures.



October 13, 2026 at 9:51 a.m.

Two weeks later on our second trip to Victoria Station, I surprised Pam with tickets to ride behind her. When that weekend approached, I learned that the 611 would not be



pulling our train due to a leaking stay bolt, but 2 diesels would. Yes, I was disappointed

to say the least. I tried to put a smile on my face though because we would be standing next to her. Pam and I would take many pictures that day standing next to a quiet Queen of Steam. We took our trip as planned and still had a great time.

When we pulled back into Victoria Station, there was thick black smoke coming from her. The Queen was alive. The day was a good day.



Last year I made the trip again and this time I took Logan, Connor, and Garrett along. We definitely had a great day chasing her.

The 611 definitely has a special place in my heart. My dad, Larry Stodola was one of the engineers that took her from Chicago to Ft. Wayne, In back in 1983.

I have made the trip to see the Queen of Steam every year since she began running again.



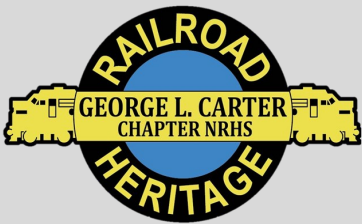
Continued, Railroad Past, page 6



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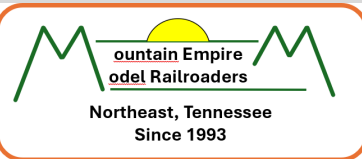


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## Railroad Past, continued from page 5

Some 42 years later, on October 18, 2025 I had the privilege of sitting in the same seat as my dad did back in 1983. I would say, my love for the 611 will never fade.

On June 19, 2026, Pam and I will be riding behind the Queen of Steam out of Staunton, VA on what is being billed as the Summer of Steam. This trip is a 40 mile round trip, as it was in the old days, mainline passenger service.

Every time that the Queen of Steam is out stretching her legs, we'll be there with her.



## Volunteers, continued from page 1

One of the most valuable parts of our club are those that have been willing to take their time and donate it to being hosts at the museum. We have entertained and educated many groups of school kids with great success in addition to several adult groups. We are keeping the history alive that created our communities across the Tri-Cities.



If you think about it, all of the major cities in our area are linked to the railroads by history and trackage. Across the years from Erwin to Bristol and Elizabethton, the railroad was a lifeblood that made us what we are today. We have probably close to 200 years of connectivity to the rails that none of our industries or commerce could have benefited from without.

So if you know someone that has not been in the museum to find out about our history and this story, tell them where to find us and why it is so important to know this information. We love to tell others about what we do and have shared our story with people from many countries outside the U.S. and other influential people employed by the railroad that helped make this story real.

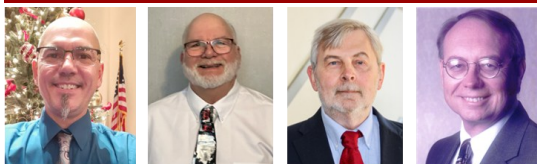
Thank you for all of your contribution to our story!

### Johnson City Railroad Experience



Left to right, Dr. Fred Alsop III, Director; Carson L. Sailor, MA, Assistant Director; Camden Callahan, Front End Manager

### George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society Officers



Left to right, Scott M. Stodola, President; Gary Giddens, Vice President; John Dodge, Treasurer; Mike Tarter, Secretary

### Mountain Empire Model Railroaders Officers



Left to right, Bob Grygotis, President; Scott M. Stodola, Vice President; Gary Giddens, Secretary; Mike Tarter, Treasurer