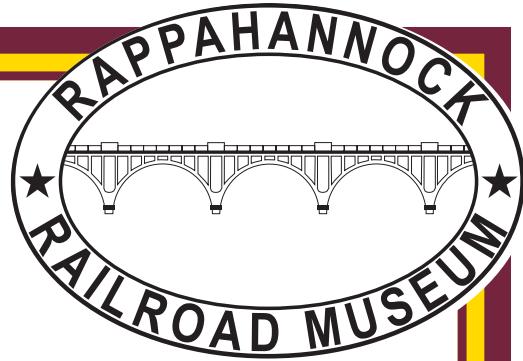


THE MAIL POUCH

VOLUME 38

Issue No. 01

January 2026



MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 12th 2026. The meeting will begin promptly at 7:00pm and will be held at The Museum's Taylor Annex. For directions or additional information, please contact James Taylor at (540) 295-2974.

February Meeting Agenda

- ***Brief Update on recent progress at the Museum's cars and displays.***
- ***Discussion of future projects and needs.***
- ***Entertainment TBD.***

Cover: Norfolk Southern operated N&W modern A-class 2-6-6-4 steam locomotive # 1218 leads its northbound Railfan Excursion Train on the main line for a photo run-by in Tennessee, October 1987 photographer unknown.

A monthly publication of the Rappahannock Railroad Museum

Opinions expressed in ***The Mail Pouch*** are those of the editor and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Rappahannock Railroad Museum, Inc.. Please send all correspondence to the following address:

Rappahannock Railroad Museum, Inc.
11700 Main St.
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Museum Officers and Staff

President:	James F. Taylor	Chief Mech Engineer:	Donald Kirkpatrick
First Vice President:	Curtis Tammany	Museum Liaison:	Theodore Barker
Secretary:	Andy Sentipal	Newsletter Editor:	James Keehner
Treasurer:	Virginia Smith	Registered Agent:	Mike Thomas
Museum Curator:	James F. Taylor	Chairman B.O.D.	Mike Thomas
Webmaster:	Dennis Overcash		

THE PRESIDENTS 1/2 PAGE

No message for this edition.

James (Jake) Taylor
President
Rappahannock Railroad Museum

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Museum and the Editor can use your help to fill the pages of the Mail Pouch. If you have a subject you would like to share, photos or just about any other information, please consider submitting it for publication in our Mailpouch. There are a lot of exciting things happening at the Museum, I would be glad to publish personal notes from those who are making the changes and updates at the museum. All submissions will be included in the Mail Pouch (unless restricted by copywrite laws).

Thank you all for your support.

Jim Keehner
Editor
Rappahannock Railroad Museum

QUESTION TO THE MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

Recently there has been renewed discussion by long time members about the possibility of returning to functions the Museum would host for the membership such as a Pizza Party Meeting and an Annual Picnic. Below is some information and a question for the members of the museum. This request is a limited time opportunity so please respond to Andy's request as outlined. (Italicized text added by the Editor for additional historical information)

At the most recent meeting we learned that we have adequate funds in the pizza fund to pay for a pizza party for club members. Jake suggested we poll members to decide on the location. It would be on a regular meeting night later this year.

Two suggested locations:

1) City Dock where we could watch trains *on the Rappahannock River Bridge* and enjoy fellowship. Like we did with the club years ago, *usually the June or July meeting*.

2) At our museum and possibly have a special LYT run at the same time, *as well as non-public operations on the museum model displays*.

Responses to me at asentipal@gmail.com. Cut off date February 15th.

Thanks

Andy

“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”

UPCOMING EVENTS

Rappahannock Railroad Museum EVERY SATURDAY MORNING TRAIN RIDE – EXCURSION. Ride the rails along Historic Deep Run Creek in Spotsylvania Co. on open rail maintenance cars and experience how the railroad workers of the mid 20th century rode to their worksites. Every Saturday 9AM to Noon – weather and conditions permitting. To ensure you get aboard the last train run, please be at the museum by 10:30AM. We attempt to board all parties on a first come basis but boarding is conducted on the platform by our station conductor and train crew so first come first aboard may not always occur. All children under 12 or those needing intensive supervision must be accompanied by a responsible adult. They must be seated together. Departing from the Rappahannock Railroad Museum, 11700 Main Street, Fredericksburg, Va. 22408. Donations accepted.

Monthly Meetings:

February 12, 2026

March 12, 2026

April 9th, 2026

NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION

2026 NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION – CHATTANOOGA, TN JULY 27 TO AUGUST 2, 2026, <https://www.nmra2026.org>

NATIONAL NARROW GAUGE CONVENTION

Collinsville, IL / St Louis, MO • September 3 - 6, 2025, www.45thnngc.com

HARRISBURG NARROW O SUMMER MEET

Harrisburg, PA • June 12 - 13, 2026, More info to follow!

GREENBERG TRAIN SHOWS

Feb. 7-8 - Hampton, VA

Mar. 14-15 - Rochester, NY

Mar. 21-22 - Wilmington, MA

Mar. 28-29 - Edison, NJ

Prince William County Model Railroad Club Schedule - PWMRC.org

Jan 31 - Feb 1, 2026 Great Scale Model Train and Railroad Collectors Show

RAPPAHANNOCK MODEL RAILROADERS

February 7 & 8. 2026 - Fredericksburg Kids Fest

Editor's Note: If anyone has any other Organizational information that they would like to see in the "Upcoming Events", please forward that information to the Editor for inclusion. I try to get a spread of regional and National events, but I cannot research every organization that is out there, so if you belong to or are interested in something that is not included here, please send me the information.



The Senior Group visiting 12/20/2025 was happy and liked having their group picture taken. We enjoyed talking with and helping them.

"Promoting Railway History and Preservation"

MONTHLY RECAP

12-06-2025 - PARTY TIME! It was cold and light snow on ground but for a large family Celebrating the Birthday of their son, Grandson. They had a Great time with lots of goodies and decorations. They were all able to get ride on LYT (full Load). We also had other visitors even a family from OHIO. We were very short on members but all members did a fine job of making visitors welcome. We did have a total est. of 69 attending museum.

Monthly Business meeting (CHRISTMAS MEAL AT Scafa's Italian Restaurant 7:00 PM). Same place as last year. All ballots must be in by 6:30, to be counted. Business part will be very short. Reports, 2026 officers announced, Lantern Awarded and lots of good social time.

Membership renewal time! Remember to mail in or drop at Visitor desk. We already have about 50% of members renewing for 2026. Forms are on welcome desk, at least put you name on form so we know you, please don't just drop funds on desk.

Train Show! Remember if you signed up to help, please show up! Friday Dec. 12 at 2:00 meet at museum to load out. Dec 13 be At train show 9:00 to 5:00, Dec 14 at train show 10:00 to 3:00 and return display to Museum. Remember time you signed up for, Don't Let Chip down.

See you Thursday and next Saturday, we have a busy weekend Ahead of us. Join in the FUN! Let's keep getting BETTER!

12-13-2025 - BUSY WEEKEND. Busy but good week, on Thursday we had our December business meeting At Scafa's Italian Restaurant. Good attendance, Good Food, Good social time And short Business time. Officers for 2026 reported by Election Committee: James Taylor President, Vice President Curtis Tammany, Secretary Andrew Sentipal, Treasurer Virginia Smith, Chief Mechanical Officer Don Kirkpatrick, Board of Directors Leo Zerhusen and Mike Casey. John Anderson was Awarded the Bill Jerow Volunteerism Award for 2026.

The Rappannock Railroad Model's had their Christmas show this weekend. We were Invited and put up a display. A big THANK YOU goes out to RRM members who worked the Show Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Saturday at Museum had very low attendance but understandable as the Train Show was in town, VRE was running their Santa Trains and it was COLD. We only Had total est of 19 attending at Museum, there were other members working the Train show. We did get some needed things done, gave lesson on and check problem with RF&P Caboose stove, continued building walkway between N&W and B60, gave crew training, worked on displays and layouts and the LYT made One passenger run and one training run. Was a good catchup day.

Next Saturday hoping it will be a little warmer as we open. We have two small Groups who plan on visiting us and riding Train. Wishing ALL a Merry Christmas, Be Safe and enjoy time with Family. James & Ellen Taylor

12-20-2025 - TWO GOOD TOUR GROUPS. It was rather cold and lots of Holiday plans so attendance was down, the two Scheduled groups did take tours, a large family and a group of senior citizens. All had a good time the family was given ride on LYT. The seniors did not have Time for ride but plan to return for their ride. All told we had a total est. of 58 Attending. Hope more members can attend after holidays. I understand this Is an important family time. Planning on picking up speed after Holidays. I do Thank those attending and working on special projects Saturdays and during the week

OFFICER ELECTION UPDATE! Saturday December 20, I was handed a letter From Mr. Mike Casey stating with deepest regrets he cannot accept the Board Of Directors office due to personal reasons. I had the election committee recount Ballots and informed me of next person with most votes. It was Mr. Dennis Overcast, I contacted him and ask if he would except position and he said yes. Thanks Mr. Overcast I look forward to you serving as Board Member.

2026 Membership Renewal time running out. Mail or drop off your form at Museum. Looking forward to an exciting year of growth. Get on Board, most have already boarded the 2026 train. Wishing all a Merry Christmas! Please be Safe and enjoy time with family and Friends.

12-27-2025 - GOOD ENDING TO 2025. The weather was nice for end of December, had good attendance, Train made two trips around back and one short trip. Scheduled another Birthday party for January 10th (twins). Gave tours and had good social Time. Lot of visitors were out of town, traveling for the holidays.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2026! We have had a good member of Members who have renewed, but a few have not YET! Be sure and Send or hand in your renewal, we are expecting a fun and improved Year in 2026. Don't be left at the Station after train leaves. Hope all had a good Christmas, now looking for 2026! SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”

The Future of Norfolk Southern's B-Line Extension in Shenandoah County Rail or Trail?)

Submitted by Justin Duffus, images added by Editor

The Shenandoah Rail Corridor Organization (SRCO) (www.shenandoahrailcorridor.org) is working to preserve rail service on Norfolk Southern's "B-Line extension" from Front Royal to Broadway, VA. It is a 49-mile rail corridor that last saw freight service in 2020 running primarily through the valley in Shenandoah County but also with endpoints in Warren and Rockingham Counties. SRCO claims eight railroad operators have expressed interest in re-introducing service. There has also been much discussion about tourist trains, excursion operations, and rail bikes which would run through a very historical and beautiful valley. Check out the YouTube video from SRCO about the project.

However, a very vocal rail to trail coalition has been advocating for years that the corridor be turned into a trail only. The Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail, as it is called, has a more than 20-year history of study and advocacy. In 2023, the Virginia legislature approved \$35M to purchase the line for a trail but required that any action not preclude options for preservation of rail transportation. SRCO advocates a rail with trail option which has been very successful in other locales. Norfolk Southern maintains a minimum 33-foot right-of-way on either side of the rails.

In December 2025, thousands of emails on both sides of the debate from citizens, companies, organizations, and elected officials were sent to the Commonwealth Transportation Board in Richmond expressing their opinions. On Jan 6, 2026, the Board voted 7 to 6 to move the project from the Virginia Department of Transportation to the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VRPA) and to begin acquisition of the line for the rail with trail option. VRPA will facilitate purchase of the line from Norfolk Southern for \$23M and the other appropriated \$12M is earmarked for trail development only. Norfolk Southern told VDOT that the sale should be completed by May 2026 so that its pending merger with Union Pacific does not disrupt and delay acquisition efforts.

This action by the Commonwealth Transportation Board preserves the rail corridor, at least for now, and allows for excursion rail, rail biking, short line operation and potentially commuter or passenger rail in the future. It also allows for the trail to be built alongside it, a win-win for all parties.

Virginia does not intend to own the line or trail but to facilitate the purchase for a non-government entity to own and oversee. Currently that designated organization is the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation in New Market. Further funding for trail creation or railroad rehabilitation would need to come from private sources. VDOT estimates \$164M is needed to convert the line to trail only and \$687M total for trail (\$382M) with rail (\$305M - FRA Class II – 25mph). Some industry estimates place the railroad rehabilitation costs to be much less than the VDOT estimate as the railroad is in much better condition than is typical for similar "out-of-service" lines (e.g., 132 lb CWT on the north end; 100 lb CWT rail on the south end, and only 17.5 miles of 80/85 lb rail in the central section).

Running past historical Civil War battlefields and trails, NS's "B-line extension" or "Harrisonburg line" (as Southern Railway called it) runs west from Front Royal and turns south near Strasburg following I-81 and ends in Harrisonburg, after traveling about 110 miles from Manassas. Historically, it was built as part of the Manassas Gap Railroad in the 1850s from Manassas to Mount Jackson over the Blue Ridge Mountains through Manassas Gap near Front Royal. The Manassas Gap Railroad itself ended at Mt. Jackson, about 15 miles north of Broadway, but subsequent owners extended the line south to Harrisonburg. In 1896, most of the original Manassas Gap Railroad became part of the Southern Railway system which in turn became part of the Norfolk Southern Railway in 1982.

After the 1982 merger, "the Weed Line", as it was affectionately called by its crews, only ran a series of road locals linked relay-race like from end to end. This was a result of Norfolk Southern after the merger prioritizing the parallel ex-N&W mainline from Roanoke to Front Royal and Hagerstown via Page County, and the ex-Southern mainline from Atlanta to Washington DC through the Virginia Piedmont region.



Norfolk Southern C40-9W #9153 pulls a manifest through Markham, VA on the B-Line in 2011.

50 YEARS AGO (December 1975-2025) cont.

The last train traveled north from Woodstock to Strasburg in 2007 and south from Mount Jackson to Broadway in 2014. The trestle between Woodstock and Mount Jackson was put “out-of-service” in 1989 by Norfolk Southern to alter N&W and Southern union operating agreements. In 2016, the entire portion between Strasburg and Broadway was put out of service, roughly 38.5 miles. Then in December 2020, the last freight customer in Strasburg closed and the northern ten miles of the corridor were finally designated out-of-service.

Today, Norfolk Southern actively serves the Harrisonburg to Broadway segment which connects to its mainline at Elkton. Norfolk Southern still owns the “out-of-service” corridor from Broadway to Front Royal and has never filed for abandonment. The corridor currently connects to the national rail network in 3 locations: Front Royal (NS – connecting diamond currently removed), Strasburg (CSX), and Broadway (NS). There are many industries along the line that desire rail service for feed, fertilizer, propane, and other products that had been unable to obtain service previously.

The corridor is flanked by three thriving short line railroads: Winchester & Western Railroad (53 miles from Gore-Winchester-Hagerstown owned by OmniTrax – 12,500 annual carloads), the Buckingham Branch Railroad R&A Division (199.6 miles from Richmond-Doswell-Staunton-Clifton Forge leased from Virginia with an operating and maintenance agreement – 12,500+ annual carloads system wide), and the Shenandoah Valley Railroad (20.2 miles from Staunton-Pleasant Valley/Harrisonburg operated by Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad – 2,100+ annual carloads). These railroads move thousands of carloads per year and offer a glimpse of the possibilities for the Shenandoah Corridor.

Excursion/Freight Operator Selection
Northern Shenandoah Valley Transportation Preservation Corp.
RFP - June 2024

III. MAP OF LINE OF RAILROAD



Norfolk Southern's B-Line Extension from Front Royal to Broadway

“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”

SNAKES ON A TRAIN!

Submitted by Andy Sentipal



Originally published in the official employee magazine of the Railway Express Agency in June, 1931. So we handle hundreds of snakes during the course of a year but if any get out it is news indeed.

Thus when messenger William G. Stuart saw that a long python snake squirmed out of the box in which it was travelling it was broadcast in newspapers throughout the land.

It was late Saturday afternoon May 10th when Erie Railroad Train 13 was passing Barberton, Ohio when Messenger Stewart saw "what was what." The rules require that a messenger should not vacate his car while on duty, But he had the presence of mind to "pull the air" and as the train slowed down to get out of the car. The train crew wired ahead to be ready for action. Messenger Stewart rode the remainder of the trip in a different car.

When the train arrived at the station a number of railroad workers were ready to help. A search of the car found the snake coiled up on the top of a pile of freight at the end of the car. The workers removed as much of the greater portion of the contents of the car and talked about how to capture the snake. Due to the large crowd of spectators who gathered at the station no action was taken at that point as there was fear the snake might get out of the car. The car was sealed and continued onto Chicago.

The snake was estimated to be 12 feet long and it was one of four snakes being delivered from Singapore to Brownsville, Texas.

At Chicago, the Erie Railroad Superintendent made contact with a reptile expert at the Lincoln Park Zoo. A representative met the train. Railway Express employees removed all the money and valuables from the car. It was then spotted on a platform without steam so as to let the car get as cold as possible.

The plan was to grab the snake's head with a noose on a long pole brought from the zoo. Then a number of men would uncoil the snake to keep him straight and attempt to keep him from coiling. The snake was found to be in a bit of a stupor due to the cold temperature of the car. The snake was coiled up on a crate so a different method of capture was used. A packing trunk was obtained and the men tipped the crate with the snake into the larger crate and closed it up.

The snake was then moved into its original container and the consignment was back enroute to its destination via the Santa Fe.

PHOTOS



Top Left: Birthday party setup track side.



Top Right: Setting up Birthday party parking lot side

Top Center Left: Conductor giving history of area to Birthday party.

Top Center Right: Christmas meeting at Scafa's.



Bottom Center Left: Mr. John Anderson is presented with the Bill Jerow Brass Lantern for his outstanding support of Museum in 2025.



Bottom Center Right: Even the model train crews have the spirit.

Bottom Left and Center: More improvements to the removable Wood River scene.

Bottom Right: Model Citizens now have appropriate safety devices for their protection.

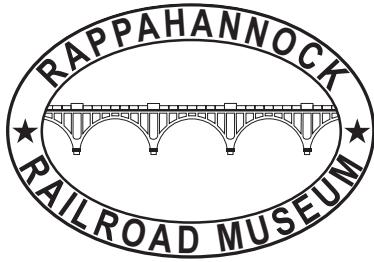


Trying something new Mike C. made a youtube link of Our Christmas layout scene. If it works for most may build other links of action at our museum. <https://youtu.be/cMPrOZAS0g0>



“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Membership Application/Renewal Form

Rappahannock Railroad Museum, Inc.
Please type or print legibly

New Renewal if renewal Updated information Y N

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Family Membership(S) if Joining: _____
Membership

Regular \$15.00 _____, can Vote, can hold office

Family \$1.00 each _____, cannot vote, cannot hold office.

Museum Donation _____

Total: _____

Please mail to the following address or hand in at meeting.

Rappahannock Railroad Museum, Inc.
11700 Main Street
Fredericksburg, VA. 22408

I agree to be a member in good standing and follow safety rules of
the Rappahannock Railroad Museum, Inc.
Membership dues for January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026

Signature: _____ Date: _____

“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”

January MONTHLY MEETING AGENDA

Saturday	January 3rd	Meet at our Museum Site 9:00am to 12:00pm for tours and train rides, construction and upgrades(weather permitting). Members continue to improve displays and area.
Thursday	January 8th	MUSEUM MONTHLY MEETING IN THE TAYLOR ANNEX. Monthly meeting starting promptly at 7:00pm. Important discussion on Museum future activities.
Saturday	January 10th	Meet at our Museum Site 9:00am to 12:00pm for tours and train rides, construction and upgrades(weather permitting). Members continue to improve displays and area.
Saturday	January 17th	Meet at our Museum Site 9:00am to 12:00pm for tours and train rides, construction and upgrades(weather permitting). Members continue to improve displays and area.
Saturday	January 24th	Meet at our Museum Site 9:00am to 12:00pm for tours and train rides, construction and upgrades(weather permitting). Members continue to improve displays and area.
Saturday	January 31st	Meet at our Museum Site 9:00am to 12:00pm for tours and train rides, construction and upgrades(weather permitting). Members continue to improve displays and area. Additional work days may be scheduled on an as needed basis.

The New Year brings new changes,
A new opportunity for fresh glances;
Our Yellow Train keeps rolling along,
Keeping visitor's interest where it belongs.

“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”

SUBMISSIONS NOTE: Any items that you wish to have published in ***The Mail Pouch*** must be submitted as a complete package, articles must have all supporting images and diagrams at time of submission. Items to be published that are “borrowed from other publications” must have the proper credits noted to avoid copyright violations. Any items that you wish to have published in ***The Mail Pouch*** must be submitted to the Editor in electronic format (Text Files for articles and separate Digital Photos) prior to the **20th** of the proceeding month. Items not in an electronic format (items needing scans or typesetting) must be submitted prior to the **15th** of the proceeding month. Articles, Photos and other items may be submitted in person on Saturday mornings at the Museum, or electronically at jkeehner67@hotmail.com, **subject line EDITOR.** *All items submitted after the deadlines of the month will be held for publication in the following months Newsletter.*