

# THE MAIL POUCH

VOLUME 37

Issue No. 12

December 2025



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## MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 8th 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.

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## January Meeting Agenda

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

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*Cover: The locomotive that became 'The Polar Express' still steams through Michigan holidays. Pere Marquette 1225 steam locomotive is the only steam engine of its class that is still operational, a modern example of World War II-era engineering and remains one of Michigan's most beloved holiday traditions. Date, location and photographer unknown.*

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## A monthly publication of the Rappahannock Railroad Museum

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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

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## Museum Officers and Staff

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Secretary:	Andy Sentipal	Newsletter Editor:	James Keehner
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Web Site: [www.RRMuseum.org](http://www.RRMuseum.org)

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## 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



*Updated Christmas time display on the large scale display. Thank you to the members who worked on this.*

**“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”**

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## 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:

**January 08, 2026**

**February 12, 2026**

**March 12, 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](http://www.45thnngc.com)

### HARRISBURG NARROW O SUMMER MEET

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

### GREENBERG TRAIN SHOWS

**Jan. 3-4 - Monroeville, PA**

**Jan. 10-11 - Oaks, PA**

**Jan. 17-18 - Richmond, VA**

**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

Membership Meeting, Jan 13, 2026

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

### RAPPAHANNOCK MODEL RAILROADERS

**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.*



*Railway Express Agency 1/4 page ad from 1935*

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**“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”**

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## MONTHLY RECAP

**11-01-2025** - ANOTHER POSTIVE DAY! The weather was really nice, all equipment ran well, had good attendance, But short of help in north annex. LYT made 4 trips to wash out and donations were good. Hope we can continue days like this and we will with your help.

We do have several projects that need help. Thomas layout needs to be checked out for the Christmas Show, don't wait to last minute. Need to keep area free of leaves and trash, thanks to those who are working on this. Still hope to get signal up by container before it is vandalized. Last four boards need to be replaced at train station. Let's work on these projects BUT make sure we make visitors happy and enjoy time with us.

Membership renewal time: renew now before spending all your money on the holidays. Please fill out renewal forms so we can update any changes needed. Also, anyone joining now will be joining for 2026, remind them of the bonus time. We have not raised dues for a long time, so any donation you would like to give with your renewal would help operations.

Wash out has shorten our excursion some but so far, we can give a nice ride up to it. We have not heard when they will start repairs but all parties have been notified. Hoping it will be a simple fix but may not be, track is out of service for CSX at this time.

We will always have growing pains, but we always learn from them on how to improve our Museum. More pains to come as plans are still in place to 4 lane Rt.2. See you Saturday Morning

**11-08-2025** - LOT OF SMALL JOBS UPDATED. The weather was real good for November, we had good attendance with a total est. 69 at Museum. We did make three runs with LYT but we still had to run in park, crossing gates not repaired yet.

Lot of small projects worked on that you do not always think about that are needed for safety and eye appeal. Leak in caboose propane tank (valve) was found and being corrected by Company. Maintenance walkway between container #1 and #2 repaired and scrap wood removed, Main Street Siding was cleaned, Main Street crossing cleared of loose gravel and flanges cleared, leaves cleared from station area, Thomas layout setup ion box car for checkout. Two families joined. Work continued on the HO River Scene dubbed "Wood River". All these happen while welcoming families to Museum. Some members are volunteering time during the week, THANK YOU!

2026 Membership renewal time. Already have a start of renewals. renew now before you spend all your money on Holidays. Renewal Forms on info desk and as attachment in this Update, please file out NEATLY, so I can read them my glasses only help some. See you Thursday at meeting and Saturday morning, to learn, teach, meet and enjoy your favorite hobby.

**11-15-2025** - GOOD REPORTS. Saturday unusual in that I could not attend until after closing due to family emergency. I was very proud of our members who opened, operated and closed Museum even if they were very short of members (not just me). Normal three trips were made with LYT, good number of visitors toured area. Total est of attendees 69, including local business who gave us some great reviews on their web site.

Items for Thought:

Crossing gates are supposed to be repaired Monday 17th. Maybe then back to at least the wash out.

Walkway between caboose and B-60 is being rebuilt.

We need to finish checking out Thomas layout for train show "NOW".

We need to set track signal up next to container #2.

We are working on repairs to fuel valve on N&W and get it filled.

Work continues on the river crossing on HO layout and other updates.

Time to renew membership for 2026. About 20% have already, don't wait too long.

Remember we will try to open every Saturday during winter, But if weather too bad in your area for Your safety do not come. If only a couple come we will open building and have a cup of coffee and have social time for anyone there. SAFETY FIRST! See you Saturday, I hope.

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## "Promoting Railway History and Preservation"



## MONTHLY RECAP

**11-22-2025 - DREARY DAY.** We had low attendance with a total est. of 51 attending. We did not take LYT out due to weather. We did welcome visitors and they enjoyed inside displays, even helped a lady with a local history question. We did get several projects worked on. Walkway between B-60 & N&W rebuilt River scene on HO continue building, and other plans discussed. Thomas layout was checked out and Ready for show we have a sign-up sheet for that weekend, (Dec. 12 meet at Museum to load at 2:00 for setup, Dec13 Show, 9 to 5, Dec14, 10 to 3) see Chip for more Info. Remember that Saturday we need to have members at train show and operated our museum.

Renewal time for 2026: We have received about 40% of member renewed already, thank you for quick action, Others please don't put off renewing as we expect an exciting 2026 with you doing your help and your enjoyment. NOTE do not put renewal in ballot box and please fill out a form. If you just lay cash on desk, it may not get logged. Work with Treasurer as she logs info.

"Museum Security" last two members leaving Museum CHECK ALL LOCKS, DOORS AND WINDOWS. We are very busy during closing time, and we all overlook some things. You are not checking on anyone but making sure your museum is secure. See you Saturday, Keep on Track!

**11-29-2025 - ANOTHER PRODUCTIVE DAY.** It was very cold to start but soon warmed up to a working temperature. Attendance was a little low at a total estimate of attendees being 43. We only gave one excursion with LYT. We were able to take more time with visitors on their interest in history and rail operations.

Our stoves in cabooses were cleaned and checked out fully. Good progress made on updating walkway between B-60 and N&W caboose. Lots of improvements to model layouts. Mailbox had several "Ballots and Membership Renewals". Several members took classes and were qualified to crew the LYT. We discussed future of repairs to park track and will be in contact with County.

BIRTHDAY PARTY this Saturday in the RF&P caboose. Be sure to unlock car early and help family with questions. Mike T. will start STOVE. We just turn it off at end of day as instructed.

Membership Renewal for 2026: Have received about 40% already. Thanks for beating the Christmas Rush. Remember your renewal and donation really helps thru the winter months.

WEATHER, we plan on opening each Saturday all year, BUT if roads are bad in your area do not take a chance on coming out. Your safety is number ONE. If only a few come, we can check Museum area out and have a little social time. Enjoying time living and presenting History to all. See you Saturday.



*Another Railway Express Agency 1/4 page ad from 1935*

**"Promoting Railway History and Preservation"**

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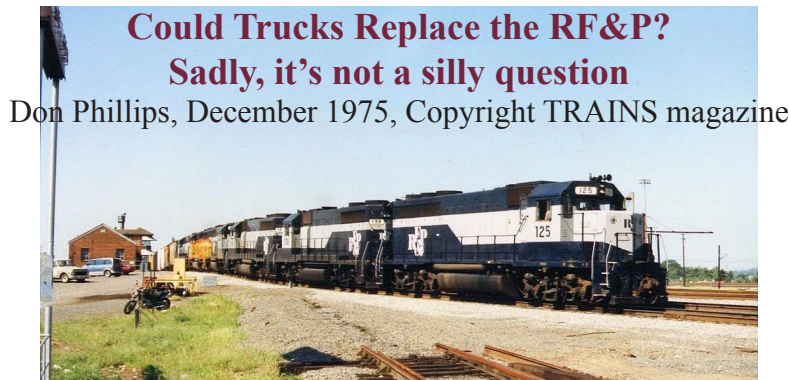
## 50 YEARS AGO (December 1975-2025)

### A Provocative Article by a Noted Journalist About the RF&P

Submitted by Justin Duffus, images added by Editor

Don Phillips was one of the nation's top transportation journalists who wrote a number of articles for Trains magazine beginning in 1966, eventually writing a monthly column during two stints between 1977 and 2018, and afterwards authored columns for Railfan & Railroad and Passenger Train Journal. He also worked more than 20 years covering transportation subjects for the Washington Post and the Paris-based International Herald Tribune.

Phillips died in September 2025 at age 83, just three months before the 50-year anniversary of probably one of his most famous railroad articles. Below is a reprint of this provocative Trains article followed by an analysis of how well his article has aged.



THE Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad is a fast, high-capacity, well-maintained, vital link between North and South. Right?

Well, anyone standing at trackside can testify that the RF&P is fast. Double track with reverse signaling is certainly high-capacity. And one look at the well-manicured roadbed is evidence that RF&P is one of the best-maintained railroads in the East.

And, of course, everyone “knows” that the RF&P is vital. If any noncoal, general-merchandise railroad is vital, it would be RF&P-the only direct link between the Northeast and Southeastern Coast and Florida.

But let's take an objective look at just how vital this Richmond-Washington railroad is. Follow me through a mental exercise.

In 1973 (the last year for which statistics were available when this was written), RF&P reported 1,208,362,000 net ton-miles. (A net ton is the actual weight of freight, discounting the weight of equipment.) Dividing by 365, we see that the RF&P carried 3,310,580 net ton-miles per day.

The RF&P is 110 miles long, so we divide again to find the net tons RF&P carries each day: 30,096 tons.

Now, how many truckloads is that? Here we have to make some assumptions. Assume that each tractor-trailer carries 20 tons (actually, the maximum allowable weight would be greater - perhaps 27 tons or so). Now, assume a 20 per cent empty factor - about right for trucking operations. This means that 1805 trucks per day could handle all of RF&P's traffic, a figure that looks even smaller when one considers that parallel Interstate Highway 95 already handles about 5500 trucks per day.

In short, if the RF&P disappeared tomorrow, theoretically one could stand beside the Interstate and see one extra truck only every 48 seconds: one every 1 minute 36 seconds northbound and one every 1 minute 36 seconds southbound - probably well within the capacity of the highway.

No one is picking on the RF&P. In fact, it is one of the busier railroads in the East. Even the Penn Central main line through Cleveland would not look good under the same test (about 4000 trucks per day).

NOW that we have disposed of the myth that the highway system could not handle the railroads' nonmineral traffic (at least in theory), it would be nice to be able to say something like this: “But railroads are the low-cost, fuel-efficient transportation mode, so this little mental exercise is meaningless.

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## “Promoting Railway History and Preservation”

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## 50 YEARS AGO (December 1975-2025) cont.

Sorry. We have a few more myths to kill. Let's start with cost.

The conventional wisdom is that the cost of operating trucks is far greater than of operating trains. Some "studies" have put the cost differential as high as 4 to 1 or 5 to 1. A prevalent theory in Washington is that if the railroads only were given the freedom to lower rates they could easily chop rates on many commodities and recapture business lost to trucks.

No knowledgeable person in the inner circles of either the railroads or the Government believes this myth any longer, however. We can cite no less an authority than the Association of American Railroads. Alan J. Montgomery, an AAR staff analyst, in a little-noticed speech to the National Rail Piggyback Association in New Orleans last January, declared that those who compare rail and truck costs have made two basic errors: (1) They have relied on ICC figures which lump together full-truckload hauls with high-cost l.t.l. operations for which the railroads do not compete; and (2) they have ignored two of the railroads greatest competitors: private truck fleets and private owner-operators ("gypsy" or "independent truckers").

Montgomery said that the AAR had developed a highly accurate method of comparing the costs of the trucking operations which really do compete with the railroads and those of various railroad operations. Here is what the model produced, based on the newly enacted 80,000-pound gross-weight limit for trucks (and what naive person believes that even this higher limit is being obeyed by everyone?):

Cents per ton-mile	
Private motor carrier	1.99
Owner-operator	1.88
Irregular-route common-carrier truck	2.51



Montgomery pointed out that he had no way of directly comparing rail costs, since the ICC cost formula is "inappropriate for a number of reasons" and his own railroads keep their own cost data secret. But he selected three different types of rail rates which he figures are very close to the variable costs of handling the traffic. Here is what he found:

Cents per ton-mile	
Rail carload (canned goods)	1.92
TOFC Plan IV plus drayage (delivery) factor	2.57
TOFC Plan II drayage factor	2.72



Montgomery said that even the "improved intermodal service" plan now being worked out by the Transportation Department would operate at a cost of 2 cents per ton-mile.

"Clearly, then," declared Montgomery, "the difference between truck and rail costs is not about five to one, but is closer to one to one. Indeed, in some cases truck costs appear less than rail costs. Note, too, these are not for short, under-400-mile markets where terminal time and expenses put railroads at a significant disadvantage but are for the medium and long-distance 'bread-and-butter' markets."

Montgomery is not alone in his figures. Government planners are running their own numbers, and they are finding the outcome frightening.

ALL RIGHT, we have killed two myths. What about the thought now rumbling around in the minds of almost everyone who has read this far that truck costs could soar if only trucks were required to pay their fair share of highway maintenance costs? Okay, let's take a quick look at that.

The latest study on the subject by the Transportation Department (May 1970) showed that large tractor-trailer trucks paid between 52 and 65 per cent of their allocated share of Highway Trust Fund expenditures depending on the size of the rig. In short, big trucks pay only one-half to two-thirds of their fair share of the Interstate and Federal aid highway system.

Suppose, then, that we double fuel and user taxes for big trucks. Does that significantly raise their operating costs? Hardly, when one considers that such taxes are only a minor portion of truck costs. A 5 per cent driver pay raise probably would hurt worse.

THEN we come to fuel economy. Fortunately for the railroads, this is no myth, at least in the handling of bulk commodities. What about the high-quality merchandise business, though-the type of traffic that railroads haul in dedicated

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## "Promoting Railway History and Preservation"



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## 50 YEARS AGO (December 1975-2025) cont.

TOFC trains? The full story is not yet told, but preliminary studies seem to indicate that once the TOFC train hits the mountains its fuel economy advantage is gone.

Consider the comparative rare (empty) weight that the truck and the train must lift over the Sierra, the Alleghenies, the Rockies, and so on:

### TRUCK

Tractor	8 tons
Trailer	5 tons
Total	13 tons



### TRAIN

Empty 89 ft. Flat car	36 tons
Two trailers	10 tons
Locomotive (share of weight per car)	16 tons
Total	62 tons
Half of total (for each trailer)	31 tons



This means that the train must lift 31 tons per trailer at the same time the truck is traveling over a low-grade Interstate highway lifting 13 tons. Not even the efficiency of the steel wheel on the steel rail can overcome that disadvantage.

WHAT does all this mean? Is the railroad really obsolete? Does the truck really have all the advantages we have been ascribing to the rails for all these years?

No. The railroad - in theory - is still the most efficient, most environmentally acceptable form of transportation. The very fact that railroads have survived at all against unfair and often stupid Government regulation, partially subsidized competition, and their own often shortsighted management is a tribute to the inner efficiency of the rails.

The point is that no one any longer may sit back and assume there will always be railroads because the country can't get along without them. The country can indeed get along without railroads despite the penalties it would pay in greater fuel use and a somewhat worse environment.

Government planners know this all too well. That is why you are hearing an avalanche of save-the-railroads plans, statements, and legislation from Washington. If the rails continue to deteriorate and more freight is diverted to trucks, the Government may someday find itself buying a railroad system to haul coal, ore, and freight that the trucks don't want. The resulting drain on the Treasury would be stupendous.

If truck weight limits continue to increase, and costs per ton-mile continue to decrease in relation to rail costs, even a nationalized rail system could not compete with trucks. Government planners look with horror at the statistics on double-bottom (two-trailer) rigs, especially in view of the fact that the truck driver now accounts for 50 per cent of truck costs. Put two trailers behind one driver nationwide, and even the efficiently run railroad might not be able to compete.

CLEARLY, the time to act is past due. Obviously, there must be more even Government policies regarding regulation and financing.

However, the burden of maintaining a private railroad system ultimately must fall on the managers of that private railroad system. The time has come to take unconventional actions to meet unconventional times, to stop scoffing at the idea men like John Kneiling in and out of the industry. Perhaps the integral train deserves something more than a bemused grumble.

It is obvious that railroads must deliver better service at lower cost. This may mean low-weight fast container trains, and it certainly will mean greater efficiency both in terminals and on the road. (For instance. rail trailers run empty often enough to give heart attacks to any good truck operator.)

More obviously, any recovery-if there can still be a recovery-must be based on something more than myths.

### Let's review how well Phillips' article has aged.

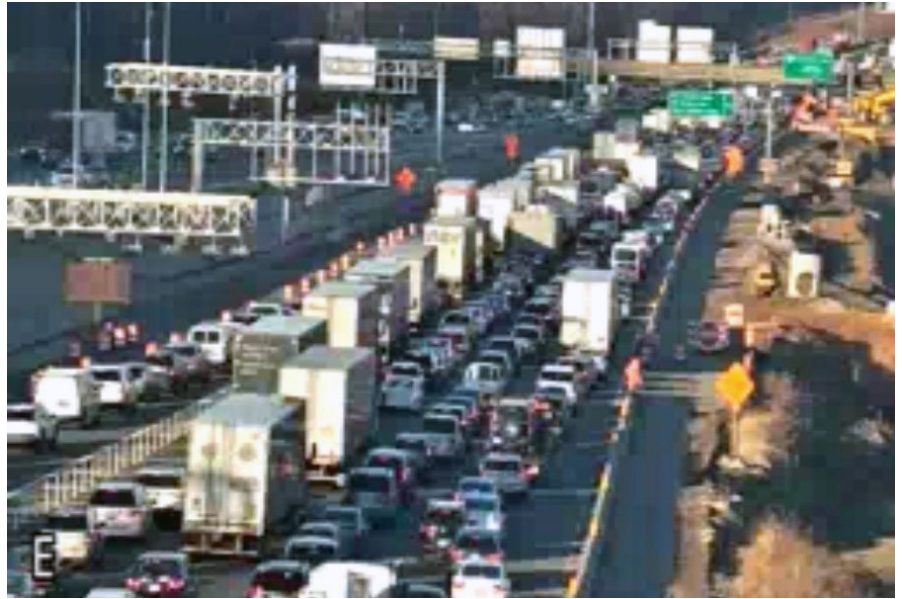
First, nobody wants more trucks on I-95! The idea that no one would notice in 1975 is certainly not true today even after widening many parts of I-95 through northern Virginia. Truck traffic on I-81 through Virginia is even worse. His argument that it would not be noticeable no longer holds up today even if it is not significant to the overall volume.

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## 50 YEARS AGO (December 1975-2025) cont.

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And today there would certainly be more than 1,805 trucks needed to carry the RF&P subdivision traffic. Despite the railroads' continued loss of carload traffic by about 45% nationally over the last 50 years, intermodal now makes up over half of their traffic nationally, and on the RF&P subdivision, overall tonnage has gone up. Tonnage miles over the RF&P has increased as shown in a Trains magazine map showing gross (equipment and freight) tonnage ranges in 1980 and 2005. The RF&P subdivision of CSX increased from 20-49.9 million gross tons to over 50 gross tons yearly in those 25 years. But CSX does not report tonnage by subdivision, so it is difficult to determine tonnage in recent years as Phillips did in 1975 by quoting RF&P reports of almost 11 million net (freight only) annual tons for the year 1973.



So if we just estimate that freight tonnage has increased to 12-18 million net tons (per Artificial Intelligence calculations) on the RF&P subdivision in the last 50 years, it does not necessarily mean that the number of trucks would need to increase proportionally. Allowable truck loads have gone from 20/27 tons then to over 30 tons now. So any increase in tons carried on the RF&P is offset partially by the increased allowable truck weights.

On the other hand, there is the fallacy that each truck would be carrying the maximum tonnage allowed. Just look at the garbage trains on the RF&P subdivision for example. While volume requires a full truck, the tonnage for a garbage container will usually be much lighter. Regardless of the statistical games, one extra (stinking trash) truck on I-95 is one too many for most drivers!

Second, Phillip's discussion about rail versus truck operating costs has proven true. Staggers deregulation in 1980 finally gave railroads the ability to chop prices or make deals. Despite this, in 2025, rail intermodal traffic in many lanes is still very sensitive to truck pricing. When trucking is tight or fuel costs go up, more traffic comes to the rails, but when trucking has excess capacity, rails lose traffic. So Phillips was surely correct in his assessment that the operating cost of rail was comparable to trucking in 1975, and even with deregulation, it is still largely proved true in 2025.

Third, Phillips asked if trucks pay their fair share for their use of Interstate highways. Trucks today pay about the same share of the Highway Trust Fund as quoted in the article in the early 1970s. Trucks today pay nearly half of all HTF user fees, but the HTF is insolvent and the government has infused \$275 billion dollars since 2008 to keep it afloat. It will need another infusion in 2026. Interestingly, the federal diesel fuel tax of 24.4 cents per gallon has not changed since 1993 despite inflation. If the cost for maintenance of the Interstate system from damage caused by trucks is not fully covered, the costs should be increased for trucks since railroads maintain their own infrastructure. Phillips said doubling the HTF fees would be minor for trucks to absorb, but if so, why has it not been done in the last 50 years?

Fourth, it seems that Phillips was a bit quick to point to some preliminary studies about the efficiency of TOFC trains on mountains compared to trucks. He indicated that on mountains, rail loses its efficiency over trucks which was true because of the extra weight trains must pull. Quoting his equipment numbers of 13 tons for a truck and 31 tons for a trailer on a train and then adding in a hypothetical 20-ton load, a truck would need to only pull 33 tons up a mountain while a train would need to pull 51 tons for the same load. So while a train may pull a third more weight for the same load, the train still holds a 6-7 times physical advantage over trucks in rolling resistance on flat terrain. For a steep railroad grade of 2-3%, this weight difference will result in more force needed for the train as gravity dominates over rolling resistance.

Given that highway grades are much steeper and more undulating, grade comparison is difficult. Rails tend to have more miles for the same distance to avoid grades, so it is difficult to make anything more than empirical comparisons.

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## **"Promoting Railway History and Preservation"**

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## 50 YEARS AGO (December 1975-2025) cont.

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And now with COFC more prevalent than TOFC, there is no chassis for the container reducing equipment weight, and with double stacks, weight of railroad equipment has been further reduced by about 20%. So all this to say that based on empirical data, not theory, railroads today hold a 3-5 times average advantage across the board in energy efficiency which includes mountains.

Furthermore, since 1980, the statistics from the Surface Transportation Board derived from railroad R-1 reports show that there has been a 100% fuel efficiency improvement. This is due to locomotive technology but also to lighter rolling stock and many operating practices such as Distributed Power Units (DPUs), speed control and less locomotive idling. Locomotive technology includes diesel engine improvements, the switch from DC to AC traction motors, software-based throttle control efficiencies, etc. Who would have guessed this in 1975?

Phillips only hinted at it, but the environmental factor has greatly increased in importance in the last 50 years, making railroads much preferred for hauling freight as they emit significantly less carbon dioxide.

So much has changed in 50 years since Phillips wrote the article. Is Phillips' question about trucks replacing the RF&P subdivision still relevant today? The answer is yes but for distinct reasons. The two biggest reasons are labor costs and reliability.

Phillips mentions the horror of two trailers behind one driver which occurs today in certain locations and under certain circumstances. But even more to the point are driverless trucks, something Phillips never imagined in 1975. A large part of the cost of trucking is the driver as Phillips said. If the cost of the driver is taken away, the cost of trucking will greatly be reduced and railroads as of today will never be able to compete except perhaps with mineral or grain traffic. Some people will argue that trucks will never become driverless, but they are already here in the form of commercial pilot tests in dedicated lanes. The only question is will it be five years or ten years for them to become commonplace.

Engineer-less trains will not reduce costs to the same extent as driverless trucks will, but the automation of railroads must be accelerated despite the constant push back to save jobs. Steel wheel on steel rail is far more efficient, and the country should figure out how to improve the efficiency and speed of this form of transportation rather than just putting driverless trucks on asphalt Interstates.

It is encouraging to see new companies testing autonomous rail cars powered by battery. These cars can travel independently or in platoons. More frequent rail service is needed, not less, especially on lower density lines, and autonomous rail cars are one possible answer. There are many potential advantages including improved energy efficiency from battery power, electronic brakes and quicker stopping ability, onboard gps and remote tracking, onboard track maintenance monitoring, and blocked track detection. While this has significant regulatory and public perception hurdles, this must continue to be tested expeditiously in order to compete in the future.

As an aside, what is the future of diesel-electric locomotives? Will they be converted to battery, hydrogen, overhead electric, or be replaced by autonomous rail cars? Only time will tell, but now is the time to accelerate such testing and planning.

Lastly, the current reliability and service standards of railroads do not meet those of truck delivery. That must change if railroads are to compete. There are fundamental disadvantages that rail has, and some of this is caused by long trains. Shifting towards shorter trains goes against what makes railroads cost efficient, but if autonomous rail cars are embraced, most of the efficiency disadvantages of short trains can be mitigated. Positive Train Control (PTC) must play a part in allowing this.



So yes, trucks remain a formidable threat to mid and long-term railroad viability. Instead of waiting for even more loss of carload volume to hit them, the railroads must strategize for the future, a task that historically they have not done well. There must be fundamental improvements in railroad reliability and service standards. Transcontinental mergers will help establish new service lanes between west and east, but it will not stop the threat from trucks. The traditional rail industry will look very different 50 years from now if railroads are successful. Not only is it in the interest of Wall Street, but it is in the interest of the country to see railroads be successful.

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## **“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”**

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# PHOTOS



Top Left: This is beautiful scene that visitors enjoyed.



Top Right: This is where we stop now due to the washout.

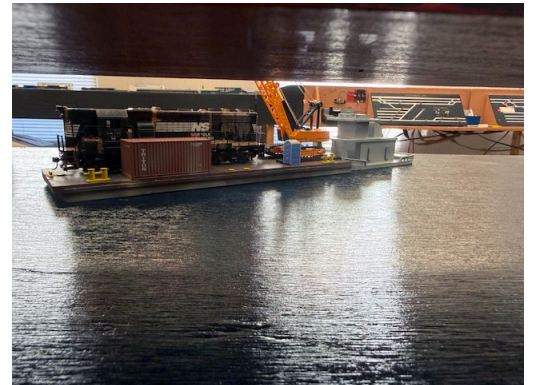


Upper Center Left: Some of our kids like to play in snow.



Upper Center Right: Some of the items on display in the "Taylor Annex"

Lower Center Left and Right: Progress on the new section of scenery on the HO display. On the left is a few small updates to the "Farm" module with added windmills, hay wagon and a small herd of cows. On the right is a "water level" view of the recovery barge and sunken locomotive. The pusher boat is not complete but good progress has been made.



Bottom Row: A few more views of items from the December 1935 issue of "The Express Messenger" Left is the cover of that issue. Center is a full page ad in that issue. Right is a stand alone advertisement for shipping items to make it to their destination by Christmas.

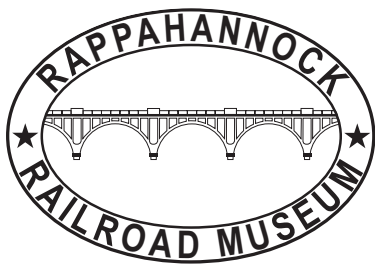


**"Promoting Railway History and Preservation"**

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## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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**“Promoting Railway History and Preservation”**



# DECEMBER MONTHLY MEETING AGENDA

Saturday	December 6th	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	December 11th	<b>MUSEUM MONTHLY MEETING IN THE TAYLOR ANNEX.</b> Monthly meeting starting promptly at 7:00pm. Important discussion on Museum future activities.
Saturday	December 13th	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	December 20th	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	December 27th	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 is approaching like an Express train,**  
**It's the time of year for frosty temps and a lot of rain;**  
**Improvements abound at the Museum in both annex,**  
**Keeping the visitors returning to see what's up next.**

## **“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.*