



N.C. Transportation Museum Dedicates New Additions During the 2009 Family Rail Days Festival

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Dedications Included Rail Equipment, A New Exhibit And New Additions To The N.C. Transportation Museum Grounds

SPENCER – The N.C. Transportation Museum dedicated new pieces of rail equipment, an exhibit honoring an essential part of railroading history and two new additions to the museum grounds as part of the 2009's Family Rail Days activities, June 13 and 14. N.C. Transportation Museum Foundation President Roy Johnson said, "It's been an exceptional year, as we're showing off a number of improvements at the museum."

The N.C. Ports Authority L-3, the N&W Coal Hopper #59159, a Norfolk Southern Signal Bridge, the N.C. Lining Bar Gangs exhibit and the new West Lead railroad track were all dedicated. A pedestrian bridge on the N.C. Transportation Museum grounds since 1996 was also re-dedicated following recent improvements.

The N.C. Ports Authority L-3 was built by General Electric in 1943. The 45-ton switcher was used by the Ports Authority in Wilmington its entire career. The Ports Authority switched freight for shipment overseas. They also moved and loaded freight brought in by ship. Donated by the state of North Carolina in 1980, the L-3 is one of the two oldest diesel locomotives at the museum. Following recent efforts and a \$2000 heritage grant from the National Railroad Historical Society, the L-3 has been restored to the condition in which it was used in the late 1970's.

Jack Salt, chairman of the NRHS Heritage Grant Program, christened the locomotive with a unique alternative to the traditional champagne bottle. A Royal Crown Cola bottle filled with water from the Cape Fear River was broken over the L-3 instead. The water comes from the river basin where the L-3 operated for so many years. The RC bottle was used due to the popularity of the drink in the eastern part of the state.

N.C. Transportation Museum Volunteers Robin Eanes and Mike Tant painted the locomotive, while a number of other volunteers and Master Mechanic John Bechtel aided in the L-3's restoration.

As the museum sits on the grounds of the former Spencer Shops train repair facility, operated by Norfolk Southern Railroad, it was appropriate that two items from Norfolk Southern were also dedicated. The Norfolk & Western Coal Hopper was built in 1940. In the era of steam powered locomotives, coal accounted for 50 – 65% of all freight on the railroad. Mined in West Virginia, coal was loaded into these hoppers and shipped to Norfolk, Va., then exported to several factories in North Carolina. The N&W Coal Hopper was

presented to the museum by Norfolk Southern after years of service. Museum volunteers Jim King, Ken Dillon, David Speight and Richard Morse restored, painted and lettered the hopper as it was in 1940.

A second item from Norfolk Southern is a railroad signal bridge. These bridges are used to signal engineers if the tracks are clear ahead. This keeps a proper distance between trains. Signal bridges are essential to prevent collisions due to the distance necessary to stop a train.

Volunteers Doug and Charles Nixon restored and painted the huge metal structure. Museum facilities staff helped position the bridge for restoration while Mid East Railroad Services was the crane contractor for the project and installed the bridge over the railroad tracks near the museum entrance.

In helping to dedicate the two items, Norfolk Southern Chairman, CEO and President Charles W. "Wick" Moorman, said the railroad is proud to help the N.C. Transportation Museum grow. "After all," he said, "it is a part our heritage." Keith Hardison, who heads Historic Sites, a division of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, referred to the equipment as the "physical legacy" of the state's transportation history. The "living legacy," he said, were those gathered to witness Saturday's dedications.

Moorman also helped dedicate new railroad track on the museum grounds. Referred to as the "West Lead," because of its placement on the property, the new track expands the museum on-site train ride. A 2006 U.S. Department of Transportation grant allocated \$485,335 of the necessary funds for the project. The N.C. Transportation Museum Foundation raised another \$121,335 to meet the full cost. Work began in December of 2008 and was completed in April of 2009. A land lease was also arranged with Norfolk Southern Railroad, as part of the new tracks are located on NS property.

With the new design, riders see views of the town of Spencer, the Master Mechanic's Office and the south end of the property. The return trip features the museum's Roundhouse and the enormous Back Shop. N.C. Transportation Museum Executive Director Elizabeth Smith says, "I think the new train ride route improves the visitor experience. I hope those that have ridden in the past will return to see the new track."

An essential piece of railroading history, N.C. Transportation Museum officials dedicated a new exhibit, "N.C. Lining Bar Gangs," during Saturday's festivities. The exhibit opened in February as part of Black History Month. A lining bar gang consisted of a foreman and ten to thirty laborers or "gandy dancers." A gandy, also called a lining bar, is used to align track with manual leverage. In order to keep a fluid motion, many crews sang songs.

The work and music of these mostly African American crews is honored with this new exhibit. Created by museum staff, it features period photos and an audio soundtrack featuring interviews and songs from lining bar gangs.

Curator of Cultural History with the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Michelle Lanier, was a featured speaker at the exhibit's dedication. Noting the surrounding displays of steam and diesel engines, Lanier said the equipment is impressive, but the stories behind the equipment are just as important to preserve.

Also featured at the dedication were members of the Buckingham Lining Bar Gang. The re-enactors perform the songs and work of lining bar gangs. Charles White, Sr., who heads the Buckingham Lining Bar Gang, read some of the lyrics used by these hard working men, such as, "I got a gal on yonder hill/she won't dance but her sister will." The Buckingham Lining Bar Gang also performed twice during Rail Days, showing visitors how the work was done before lining tracks became a mechanized process.

Grant funding for "N.C. Lining Bar Gangs" was provide by Rowan County, the Blanche and Julian Robertson Foundation, the Spencer Woman's Club and Steven S. Zahniser.

The Family Rail Days ceremonies also included the re-dedication of a pedestrian bridge located at the N.C. Transportation Museum since 1996. Known as the Stokes County Bridge Number 38 it was one of just three such steel bridges in North Carolina. It is thought to have been built by the Champion Bridge

Construction Company between 1900 and 1920. There are few records and the dates are unclear. In 1961, the bridge was moved from an unknown location and installed over Big Creek in Stokes County.

After being replaced by a concrete structure, Bridge Number 38 was moved to a DOT yard and then donated to the N.C. Transportation Museum. The bridge connects two parking lots and spans the museum's railroad tracks, providing an opportunity to watch and photograph trains passing underneath. Wooden decking was installed in 1996, but deteriorated over the years.

New decking was donated by Fiber Con industries and installed by N.C. Transportation Museum facilities staff. Volunteer Ricky Stevenson also contributed to the project. The new decking is safe, attractive and promises to weather many years at the museum.

The N.C. Transportation Museum, located in historic Spencer Shops, the former Southern Railway repair facility, is part of the Division of State Historic Sites, Department of Cultural Resources. The museum is located just five minutes off I-85 at Exit 79 in Spencer, N.C., and about an hour from Charlotte, Greensboro or Winston-Salem. Visit www.nctrans.org for more information. The N.C. Department of Cultural Resources is celebrating the 2009 theme of "Treasure N.C. Culture." For information on the Department of Cultural Resources, call (919) 807-7385 or visit www.ncculture.com.

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