

The Rockton-Rion Flyer

News and Information from the South Carolina Railroad Museum
Volume 43 Number 2 Spring 2015

STEAM RETURNS!



Gramling Locomotive Works' 0-6-0T No. 126 chugs into Rockton with a trainload of happy passengers.

FLYER NEWS FLASH:

2015 has started off with a number of popular events. The Easter Bunny trains were very well received and enjoyed clement weather. The return of steam to the RR&W resulted in a good turnout despite some rainy weather. Several maintenance projects have been very well attended and addressed. We received an Award of Merit from the SC Museum Federation for improvements to the Gallery, one of only 3 awarded.

UPCOMING EVENTS: Saturday excursions are now running. Help is needed to staff the train and the gift shop and ticket office. Contact David or Rodger to participate.

HOT TOPIC: BBQ dinner trains are scheduled for July 18th, August 15th, and September 19th at 6:30 PM. Contact Kelvin or Rodger to help out.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING: Saturday, September 12, 2015 at 10 A.M. in the Rion office building. We will be reviewing and voting on bylaw changes. All members are encouraged to attend.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS:

Please send articles and pictures to:
SCRM, P.O. Box 7246, Columbia, SC 29202
email: libreez@carolina.rr.com.

Vince LiBrizzi, Editor

Maintenance Update

By Charles Weber and Gene Allen

Our maintenance crew has completed many tasks so far in 2015. From installing cross ties at the north main switch at Rion to helping with the donation and delivery of the container storage box, we have made much progress and improvement to the RR&W. Projects completed so far this year include the winter track renewal of the right-of-way from the Guardian switch to the entrance of the Greenbrier cut; removal of rail stored at Greenbrier and transport to Rion; and removal of concrete ties from the truck trailer for removal off SCRM property.

This is an impressive list, but there are still many tasks needed to maintain and upgrade our railroad. These include finishing the new storage siding in Rion, putting the north main back in service, repairing the ballast regulator, and repairing RS4-TC1A No. 1275's fuel sight glass to return her to service after years of inactivity. We have work sessions nearly every Saturday targeting specific projects.

Many people have contributed countless hours to these tasks. Thanks all the hard working members and volunteers for their continuing efforts. A special kudos to Charles Weber for taking the lead on managing these projects and involving so many people! A railroad is only as good as its physical right-of-way condition and equipment, so we really need your help to keep the trains running safely and smoothly. Come on out for a work session and get some iron in your diet and improve the RR&W! Please contact Charles Weber at cwebersr@bellsouth.net or (803) 317-7187 for more information or to help out with our track maintenance efforts.



No. 126 chugs by Hunter's Crossing towards Rockton.

Steam Returns to the RR&W

By Vince LiBrizzi

For three Saturdays this past spring, steam returned to the Rockton Rion & Western when 0-6-0T No. 126 ran excursions from Rockton to Greenbrier. Nearly 900 passengers rode the excursions, which differed from previous steam events by the addition of a photo run-by. At Greenbrier, passengers detrained and lined up with their cameras and phones handy. No. 126 backed up several car lengths and came storming past in a wild display of steam, smoke, and whistle blowing. Despite the rainy weather on April 25th, many people traveled from as far as Georgia to ride behind steam and hear the whistle blow.

The Green Giant open car was sold to capacity on most trips, and there were several repeat passengers from previous steam events. Four engineers had the opportunity of running No. 126: John Parker, Adam McDowell, Vince LiBrizzi, and Charles Weber. Tim Hill and Marty Cheney did the firing, and many members helped out with the fire train and the crowd control on the ground in Rockton and at Greenbrier. Thanks to all for an event well done!



No. 712 at Rt. 34 in Rockton. Station burned in the 1980s.

Steam Locomotive No. 712 in Service

By Rodger Stroup

The Rockton & Rion Railway was one of the last railroads in the United States that operated steam locomotives through the 1960s. Railfans frequently visited the R&R to photograph steam long after most other railroads had retired their last iron horse. We have over 1,000 photographs from steam operations during the 1950s and 1960s. The primary locomotives were two Baldwin 2-8-2s: No. 19, now on display at the Railroad Historical Center in Greenwood, SC; and No. 31, now on display in Waycross, GA. The R&R also had Washington & Lincolnton Baldwin 2-8-0 No. 203 for a time, now converted to oil firing and running the Three Rivers Rambler excursions in Knoxville, TN. Baldwin built 2-8-0 No. 712 in 1903 for the Atlantic Coast Line railroad and she was acquired by the R&R during World War II. No. 712 was lighter and less powerful than the other locomotives and used only if the others were out of service; not many pictures of her in steam exist. No. 712 operated sporadically until she was taken out of service in 1966 and stored at Anderson Quarry for a flue renewal that never happened. Recently, a color slide of No. 712 was auctioned off on eBay for over \$60. We are always interested in obtaining Rockton & Rion photos for the museum's collection.



Easter Trains Popular, G Scale Missed; Motor Car Rides Added

By Vince LiBrizzi

On March 28th and April 4th, the RR&W had two successful Easter Bunny Eggspress events. Sunny skies and mild temperatures contributed to the great turnout, and as in previous years, two trains operated providing hourly service. Over 1,160 passengers were carried during the event, up from last year. Passengers participated in many activities at Greenbrier, such as meeting and greeting the Easter Bunny, storytelling, and face painting. However, for reasons beyond our control, the Thomas G scale trains did not operate. Many passengers, especially our younger ones, missed seeing the trains and were disappointed. We responded by bringing two motor cars for display and operation on April 4th. This was met with a positive response from the passengers, who still missed the G scale railroad, but enjoyed seeing and riding on the cars during the layover at Greenbrier. The museum has purchased its own set of G scale trains, including Thomas, coaches Annie and Clarabel, a 44-ton side-rod diesel (similar to No. 82), and four freight cars. We also ordered a G scale layout built that is transportable and quickly set up and now have several members staffing this important attraction! Look for them at Pumpkin Patch!

**South Carolina Railroad Museum
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Return Service Requested



Rockton & Rion 2-8-2 No. 19 in steam at Anderson Quarry.

Rededication of R&R 2-8-2 No. 19

By Rodger Stroup

The unveiling of Rockton & Rion 2-8-2 steam Locomotive No. 19 was in Greenwood, South Carolina at 4:00 pm on June 26th at the Railroad Historical Center. The museum has repainted the locomotive and made some other improvements to her appearance. No. 19 (Baldwin builder's No.29383, built November, 1906) came to the R&R in 1936 from Birmingham Rail & Locomotive and ran in freight service well into the 1960s. No. 19 left the property for display in Greenwood apparently under her own power! The next time you are in Greenwood, visit the Railroad Historical Center and see another piece of railroad history from the R&R.