

# The Rockton-Rion Flyer

News and Information from the South Carolina Railroad Museum  
Volume 45 Number 2 Summer/Fall 2017

## **RR&W EXPANDS PASSENGER FLEET!**



Passenger cars from the former Ringling Bros. *Red Train* arrive in Rockton courtesy of Norfolk Southern.

---

### **FLYER NEWS FLASH:**

We are on track (pun intended) to haul more riders per event in 2017 than in many years! The BBQ dinner trains have been completely **SOLD OUT** and the Saturday excursions are carrying over 100 passengers!

**UPCOMING EVENTS:** Our annual Pumpkin Patch Trains will operate October 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> with the return of the *Spooky Special* by popular demand on the evening of October 28<sup>th</sup>. There are several roles on the train, at Greenbrier, and along the railroad to fill to make this event possible. Please plan on attending! Contact Rodger to help... ***WE NEED YOU!***

**HOT TOPIC:** Work sessions are being held for track work and other maintenance items. Contact Charles Weber for details

**MEMBERSHIP MEETING:** The next Membership Meeting is Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 A.M. in the Stribling Rion office building. BBQ lunch provided for members after the meeting (see flyer). Please RSVP! All members are encouraged to attend.

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS:** Please send articles and pictures to: SCRM, P.O. Box 7246, Columbia, SC 29202 [vincentlibrizzi@att.net](mailto:vincentlibrizzi@att.net). ***NEW EMAIL!***  
Vince LiBrizzi, Editor

## **Maintenance Update**

*By Charles Weber and Vince LiBrizzi*

The maintenance crew has worked diligently on several projects this year. Much progress has been made on rebuilding and re-grading the South Main in Rion and extending the track over the causeway. If you haven't been down to Rion lately, you probably won't recognize it. Major regrading of the area around the Stribling building and the space between the north main and other yard tracks have transformed the area completely. The plan is to have a much more passenger friendly destination at Rion to load and unload our customers more conveniently.

If you're not on the weekly email list, please contact Charles Weber. Many people continue to contribute countless hours to improving the railroad. Thanks to all the members for their continuing efforts to improve the museum throughout 2017. Contact Charles at [cwebersr@bellsouth.net](mailto:cwebersr@bellsouth.net) or (803) 317-7187 for more information, to get placed on the email list or to join our work sessions.

## **Financial Report**

*By Henry Nechemias*

2017 is shaping up to be a year of growth for the museum, which means purchases and invoices. Extensive upgrades to the property, especially in Rion, replacement of the HVAC systems in the Rockton buildings, and the start of the rebuilding of our recently acquired passenger cars have all been part of the recent activities at the railroad.

However, the revenue from charter trips, our regular Saturday summer excursions, BBQ dinner trains, Easter Bunny Eggspress, and other events have kept us financially secure. With the Pumpkin Patch and Santa Trains, we should have a strong finish to 2017!



GSMR 2-8-0 No. 1702 on a train for the **HeritageRail** event.

## **HeritageRail Alliance Meeting**

*By Henry Nechemias*

I attended the spring meeting of the **HeritageRail** Alliance, (formerly **Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums**) in Bryson City, NC, hosted by The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad. Except for the weather, it was a very enlightening and educational meeting. We rode behind steam and diesel-powered trains, and had an information session in the new steam workshop. GSMR spent over \$500,000 restoring -ex U.S. Army and Reader railroad 2-8-0 steam locomotive No. 1702 to active service after a 13-year absence.

Based on my discussions with many other tourist operations, we are doing quite well here at the museum. There was much discussion about the benefits of offering special events to bring in additional riders: contracting with Rail Events to bring *The Polar Express* to boost riders and revenue; utilizing paid staff rather than volunteers; and having a destination to add interest to the train ride. All good ideas to consider.

The fall **HeritageRail** meeting will be in October in Minneapolis. The April 2018 meeting will be held at the Strasburg Railroad and we anticipate sending a representative. If you are interested in learning more about **HeritageRail**, check out [www.atrrm.org](http://www.atrrm.org). We have been a member for many years.



Packed *Green Giant* with a CN coach and diesel No. 1276.

### **Saturday Trips and BBQ Trains Popular By Rodger Stroup**

The Rockton Rion & Western has seen ridership grow for the regularly scheduled Saturday excursions and the BBQ Dinner Trains. The BBQ Dinner trains are so popular they are selling out without any advertising or promotion other than a posting on our Facebook page and website. These trains have a 40-passenger capacity and feature the open car and XC-6 caboose. Passengers are treated to a delicious BBQ dinner in the air-conditioned Stribling building in Rion during the layover. All remaining BBQ trains are already SOLD OUT for the season!

The Saturday excursions, featuring RS4-TC-1A diesel locomotive No. 1276, a Canadian coach (as a buffer from No. 1276's strident air horn), *Green Giant* Open Car and XC-6 caboose, have been well patronized. On many weekends, we have carried more than 100 passengers. Currently, we don't have an air-conditioned car in service. The plan is to repair or replace the *Lake Rion* dining car's A/C system and build a generator car to power our recently acquired passenger cars, which are already equipped with HVAC and lighting. Hopefully by next season we will have cars with A/C to beat the heat!



Interior of Ringling Bros. former RPO equestrian car.

### **Ringling Bros. Cars Arrive in Rockton By Kelvin Woods and Vince LiBrizzi**

We received three former Ringling Bros. *Red Train* dormitory cars that were donated by Feld Entertainment. These cars housed the Ringling Bros. staff and have all the comforts of home. The cars were shipped from the Oak Island terminal in NJ via Norfolk Southern to the Rockton interchange. We also received an equestrian transport car, originally built as an RPO (Railroad Post Office) and used to transport show horses for the circus. For a sneak peek at our new acquisitions, come see the cars in Rion on September 9<sup>th</sup> after the Membership meeting!

The dormitory cars are equipped for 440V HEP (Head End Power) and need a power source for lighting, HVAC, and a PA system. The Ringling Bros. cars' HEP system is unique with special rooftop conduits and connectors on top of the cars, unlike most passenger cars which have conduits running underneath the frame and connections close to the couplers and brake hoses. Building a generator car and modifying the HEP system on these cars is being researched and will be part of the needed improvements for the cars to be put into service. The interiors of these cars are in good shape, but will need to be renovated for passenger use on the RR&W.

**South Carolina Railroad Museum  
PO Box 7246  
Columbia, SC 29202-7246**

*Return Service Requested*

**The Queen of Steam visits the Queen City  
*By Vince LiBrizzi***

On Saturday April 9, 2017, N&W J Class 4-8-4 No. 611 embarked on a one-time roundtrip excursion from Spencer to Charlotte. It had been nearly 20 years since the Queen of Steam, as she is widely known, visited the Queen City. The excursion was also the first time the 4-8-4 had visited the new NS Intermodal terminal and turned on the wye near the airport. The 19-car train paused for over thirty minutes at the terminal for the official NS photographer to capture this event. The excursion featured many dome cars and special passengers, including our own Rodger Stroup! Here is a picture I took of the excursion as the 611 smoked it up leaving Charlotte on the return to Spencer.



4-8-4 No. 611 blasts out of Charlotte with the excursion.