

HIGH GREEN

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The *High Green* is published monthly. Please send address changes to Paul Bergdolt at the snail-mail or email address above. Contributions to the *High Green* are welcome. Send news items and articles to the editor at the address above. Photographs and slides can be emailed to the editor in digital format, sent via snail-mail, or hand delivered. Originals will be scanned and returned. Be sure to include caption information.

JANUARY TIMETABLE

Greenberg's Toy, Train & Hobby Show: From 10 to 4 each day; \$7 for adults, kids 11 and under free.

- **2-3:** Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly, VA

- **9-10:** York Expo Center in York, PA.

9: Winchester Chapter, NRHS Membership Meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Calvary Church of the Brethren, 578 Front Royal Pike (Route 522), Winchester, VA. The church is located south of Route 50 near Winchester Airport Road (southeast of Winchester and east of I-81).

11: Baltimore Chapter, NRHS Membership Meeting at the Baltimore Streetcar Museum, 1911 Falls Road, three blocks from the Amtrak station.

12: Action Coalition for Transit Meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD.

15: Washington DC Chapter, NRHS Membership Meeting at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial at 8 p.m. featuring *Gillette, the Best a Railfan Can Get*.

19: Potomac Chapter, NRHS Membership Meeting at 8 p.m. at the Montgomery County Executive Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD. Alex Mayes will present *New Mexico and Colorado*, a slide show covering the highlights of New Mexico and Colorado from a September 2009 trip. Included will be regular service and "photo freights" on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic, the BNSF main line east and west of Belen, Amtrak and New Mexico *Rail Runner Express* trains on the Raton Pass line, and a ride over La Veta Pass behind steam over the former D&RGW main.

21: Old Dominion Division RRE Membership Meeting at 8 p.m. at Thoreau Middle School, 2505 Cedar Lane, Vienna VA, in the Lecture Hall. Pre-meeting dinner will be at Neighbor's Restaurant across Cedar Lane from the school at 6:30 p.m. Alex Mayes will present *2009 in Review*, a slide program covering some of his travels in 2009. Included will be winter trips to Sand Patch and the Northeast Corridor, a few scenes from a trip to Australia and New Zealand, opening day at the East Broad Top, the major steam fest in Owosso, Michigan, visits to steam-powered Greenfield Village Railroad and Huckleberry Railroad in Michigan, the NRHS convention in Duluth, a few scenes from the Rio Grande Scenic's steam-powered excursion train over La Veta Pass, Cumbres and Toltec Railroad, BNSF in New Mexico, coverage of the dedication ceremony for the new Lynchburg-Boston Amtrak train,

EBT's *Fall Spectacular*, and chasing ex-reading FP7s on the Perkiomen Branch.

23-24: World's Greatest Hobby on Tour at the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly, VA from 10-6 on Saturday and 10-5 on Sunday. Admission is \$10 for adults, kids \$16 and under free. See www.wghshow.com

AROUND THE BEND

6-7 Feb: Great Scale Model Train Show at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium MD, Sat. 9-4, Sun. 10-4. Admission is \$9, under 15 free, family \$18; tickets good for both days.

INTERNAL BIDNIZ

Our Next Meeting will take place on **January 6** at the Bauer Drive Community Center in Rockville, where Glenn Olsen will present a program on the Rhaetian Railways of southeastern Switzerland, operating over almost 400 km of meter gauge lines. See you there!

The deadline for purchasing tickets for the 2010 Saint Pat's trip, advertised in last month's *High Green*, is January 25. After that date you'll still be able to buy a ticket directly from Amtrak but without the CRA group discount. Even at the full price of \$11 each way, it's still a bargain and a great way to beat the winter doldrums by joining your fellow buffs on an enjoyable train ride.

Paul Lubell, who suggested our Harpers Ferry-DC trip, asked about using the dining car and this was Amtrak's response: "We will be happy to have you eat in our Lounge/Café car, which is open between 6:00am and 11:00pm closing only shortly for breaks. The Dining car, at this time, is not serving lunch between Harpers Ferry WV and Washington DC, and on your return trip we do not start serving dinner until 5:00pm. We look forward to your group traveling with us."

LAST RUNS

Joe Pearsall, the general manager of the Maryland & Delaware Railroad, passed away at his residence on December 11. He was 60 years old. The MDDE operates over former PRR Delmarva Peninsula tracks and pulls the trains at the annual Hurlock Fall Festival held each October.

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Chessie member **Ray Petersen**, 79, passed away peacefully on Feb. 7, 2009, in Howard County (MD) General Hospital with his wife, Norma, by his side. He died of medical complications following kidney failure.



In Ray's obituary his son, Carl, wrote, "Other than his family, my father's greatest passion was railroads. He enjoyed taking trips by rail, often making the journey from Maryland to Amherst on the train, and many family outings centered on attending train-related events. In addition, he enjoyed puttering with his large collection of HO models. But as much as my father loved trains, he disdained airplanes and took great pride in the fact that he never once flew."

WES VERNON ON THE RAILS

Metro Considers Service Cuts. What About Automobile/Highway Service? Is There (Again) Method to Buffett's Madness? In the week ahead, the WMATA board is to consider possible Metro service cuts. And once again, train operations (and buses as well) are the bull's eye for policy makers, while auto/road traffic is ignored as if it were as natural as breathing.

The one-sided budget "gap"

Cutting Metrorail service is a self-defeating proposition. We learned all that when mass transit was in the private sector. As ridership growth leveled off, service was cut. Remaining riders were thus inconvenienced. They reacted by switching to their automobiles for their commutes. That of course resulted in a further decline in ridership. The transit companies in turn reacted by further reducing the service, resulting in more miffed customers who deserted the transit system, leading to more service cuts, leading to... Well, you get the picture. The end result was that as the private operators downsized, public authorities took over. (Below, consider what "they say" about doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result as the surest sign of insanity).

While all this was going on, the interstate highway system was blasting its way through cities, destroying all that stood in its way, including once-thriving urban communities.

You can trace that imbalance to fears of another Great Depression.

Back in 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower spent many of his waking hours trying to figure out how to deal with the political problem of a recessionary economy. He

would emphatically make the point to anyone with whom he came in contact that, as the first Republican president since Herbert Hoover, he was damned if he would tolerate a reprise of the Great Depression that had marginalized his party. Well, there was not going to be another depression - not on *his* watch, by God! The automobile/asphalt complex stepped up to Ike and said, "Mr. President, have we got a deal for you!"

And that, boys and girls, is the real story of how we got the interstate highways that all but destroyed so many of our great cities. The system was devised to minimize taxpayer's angst by setting up a Highway Trust Fund - drawing largely on gas taxes - minimal at the time. States were paid off with a 90/10 ratio of endless federal dollars. "National defense" was the PR fig-leaf. Rail operations had to compete with one hand tied behind their backs.

Fighting a 21st century recession: a one-way street?

So as the year 2010 dawns, our public authorities are mulling over how meet their budget deficits - occasioned by the current recession.

Here in the Washington area, Metro managers are considering such cuts as increasing train headways from 12 to 15 minutes daytime Saturday; 15 to 20 minutes daytime Sunday; and 20 to 30 minutes at night Saturday and Sunday. Some station entrances would be closed at Anacostia North, Stadium-Armory, New York Avenue South, Shaw-Howard University South, L'Enfant Plaza West, King Street North, Navy Yard East, U Street East, and Silver Spring North.

Regarding the station closings: I know the New York subway system closes some subway station entrances during off-peak and on weekends, and that it is a royal pain, especially if you are not forewarned and find you have to trudge through inclement weather for a couple of blocks to the entrance that is open. Sometimes, you have to find a third entrance. But you see, many New Yorkers don't own cars (most of the time they don't need them) so there's no competition. Here in Washington, most of us own automobiles (much of the time we need them), so we have alternatives. What works in New York (more or less) won't necessarily fly here.

Regarding the increased headways: Guaranteed to drive customers away and further impoverish the system. It is especially counter-productive on Saturday nights when many are using Metrorail to navigate Washington's night-life. In fact, premium rush hour fares are charged on Friday and Saturday nights (or early Saturday and Sunday mornings for those who want to be technical about it) between 2 and 3AM. Those are market-driven forces at work. We do not roll up our sidewalks at 6PM, nor are we inclined to do so and our transit system should comport itself accordingly.

There is other nonsense being kicked around - such as eliminating eight-car trains - so as to better contribute to the sardine population in rush hour, but we'll ignore that for the moment.

On sharing the burden

Unfortunately, we do not put all our passenger transportation dollars into one big pot. Perhaps this would be a good time to rethink that.

Real reform would reason that all local expenditures for roads, highways, subways, light rail, and commuter trains would be included in one big vault (local

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transit buses would be included under roads) and distributed according to need. This of course, would involve a tsunami-style showdown with sacred cows such as highway bureaucrats, the Triple A and others, but we can hold out perhaps one last hope that common sense may prevail in the end. Note we have not extended this to the national transportation picture. After all, you take one step at a time, and the states and local communities are meant to be laboratories for what may or may not work nationwide - or in an urban versus a rural environment.

In a perfect world...

Under this scenario, when a recession hits, and some cuts are deemed a necessity, *all* forms of passenger conveyance would be considered. Thus there would be a sit-down of all D.C.-area transportation governing bodies to make a decision, with adequate time for hearings that invite public input.

Along with cuts in train service, we could assemble on the decision-making table additional proposals such as the following:

1. Non-rush-hour weekday one-way thoroughfares between Maryland and the District would be confined to every other street except for taxis, emergency vehicles, buses, and those trucks necessary to make deliveries on the affected street.
2. Non-rush-hour weekday bridges between Virginia and the District would be used on an alternating basis except for taxis, buses, and emergency vehicles.
3. Weekend road service on the Beltway would be confined to buses, interstate and local trucks, taxis, and emergency vehicles.

This would alleviate the urgency for money required for road and highway upkeep and would help the road and highway authorities to meet their newly enabled budget crunches - the end of their bottomless pit piggy bank having morphed into the same kind of kitchen table budgeting required of the rest of us.

But seriously folks.....

Though this column firmly believes trying the "all in one-big pot" system would be ideal, we recognize some institutional barriers to its implementation. But if it were seriously proposed, perhaps we could at last have general recognition that *all* forms of transport should be considered for the "big picture." If anyone has a better or more practical idea, we would love to hear it.

As for an immediate solution to Metro's budget gap, the WMATA board may want to contemplate using inflation as an annual yardstick for fare hikes. We proposed exactly that here in this space in our November column. We advocated going back several years to play catch-up if necessary - allowing inflation credits for the last time WMATA raised fares.

That elicited an e-mail from a reader who pointed out that there are those who believe the feds are lying to us about the rate of inflation, that it is actually larger than we are being led to believe.

He is not alone in that belief. Many others have advanced similar conclusions. Which of course, opens up a whole separate can of worms - far beyond the relatively narrow scope of railroading. And since this is a rail-centric newsletter, we will reserve any in-depth discussion of that for a broader more general venue.

And get a load of this

In my column for *Railfan and Railroad*, I reported on the decision of investor super-star Warren Buffett to buy up BNSF. I dealt with *Wall Street Journal* speculation that the world's most famous investor put these eggs into his portfolio basket because he has a long-term faith in the industry's future.

Again, an e-mail from my reader friend. Says he (in citing predictions that the dollar is on a long-term downward trajectory): "My own belief is that Buffett, being no dummy, actually has little faith in the dollar and the economy, and that he traded tens of billions of depreciating dollars for a hard asset that will be worth something as dollars continue to lose value. When you own tens of billions of them, depreciating dollars represent massive losses, and trading them for a railroad is a wise move. (I doubt that he could trade an equivalent number of dollars for gold. Where would one find that much for sale?) It's unlikely he wanted to come out and say this was his actual intention and that he thinks things will get much worse before they get better (if they ever do), but instead he preferred to put a 'happy face' on it and let everyone get a warm fuzzy feeling from it. At some point in the future, however, we may look back and the true motivation behind the purchase may then become obvious."

My own comment

This column finds the reader's analysis quite credible -with some caveats:

1. Though the dollar's trajectory is at present heading south as some skilled economists have noted, one should also consider the following: Never underestimate the ability of a politician to solve (painlessly) the politics of a problem without actually solving the problem (requiring some pain). It has happened over and over. If we are going to hell in a fiscal handbasket, bear in mind that politicians who wish to get past the next election have a low tolerance for public constituent uproar for more than - oh about thirty seconds. I don't know what political rabbits can be pulled out of a hat on this one, but if all hell really breaks loose in the public discourse, look for desperate efforts among lawmakers to find the dike into which they can stick the finger.

2. If the economy collapses to the extent some fear, the fortunes of BNSF and others in the industry would suffer right along with it. That would diminish the value of Buffett's investment, hard asset or not. But one assumes that "being no dummy," the sage of Omaha may well have sold his stock long before then.

Presumably, the moral of the story is - When Buffett sells his BNSF holdings, sell everything in your portfolio and head for the hills. Then again, maybe we won't get that warning. Could be a "hard asset" is what Buffett reasons that he can ride out. He surely can afford the gamble. Oh, well. As the late Westbrook Pegler once remarked, "As long as we're all going to hell in a Kalamazoo-shut hack, we might as well get drunk and enjoy the ride." *Wes Vernon*

PASSENGER RAIL NEWS

3 New Generation Streetcars Arrive in MD for DC Project: The District is losing a panda to China but gaining three red inchworms from the Czech Republic.

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Actually, they're streetcars, but they resemble worms because they share the ability to bend in a couple of places, making them more nimble than streetcars of old when it comes to negotiating turns. They are about eight feet wide and 66 feet long and are powered by overhead electrical lines.

The three cars, built in the Czech Republic by Skoda-Inekon, arrived in Baltimore by ship and were loaded onto flatbed trucks for the trip to Metro's Greenbelt Yard, where they will sit until the first DC streetcar tracks are ready for them.

The District Department of Transportation says the first project, a 1.5-mile line in Anacostia, should be operating by fall 2012. *Ashley Halsey III/Washington Post, December 16, 2009*

DC Officials Map Out Streetcar Plan: The DC DOT's plan to install eight streetcar lines in the District – an effort the agency believes will plug some of the city's transportation gaps – is causing some controversy along H Street and other parts of Ward 6.

The department plans to construct a 37-mile system in three phases within seven to nine years, beginning with three lines:

- a Georgia Avenue/14th Street/7th Street line that would begin at the Takoma Metrorail stop and end in Southeast near Nationals Park;
- a Benning Road/H Street/K Street line that would end in Georgetown; and
- a Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue/M Street line that would further connect Anacostia to its northern neighbors.

The rest of the system would involve:

- an 8th Street SE/Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue/K Street/H Street line;
- a Rhode Island Avenue/U Street/14th Street/K Street line;
- a Florida Avenue/8th Street SE/U Street/Calvert Street line that would run from Far Southeast to the Woodley Park Metrorail station;
- a Minnesota Avenue line; and
- a Calvert Street/Columbia Road/Irving Street/Michigan Avenue line that would link the Woodley Park and Brookland Metrorail stations.

The entire system as proposed would cost \$1.45 billion, according to the department. But that figure depends on a number of factors, including whether the streetcars are powered by overhead wires.

In an attempt to "force the issue," Ward 6 Council member Tommy Wells plans to introduce legislation sometime this fall to override an 1889 federal law that bans overhead wires within the boundaries of the City of Washington. But Wells said his legislation would make exceptions in certain parts of the city — streets with north-south "view sheds" of the U.S. Capitol and other monuments, and possibly neighborhoods that oppose the wires.

The National Capital Planning Commission has indicated its distaste for overhead wires. Some civic organizations, such as the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, oppose overhead wires for the planned line on H Street NE, where tracks are already being laid. Both groups said the wires would ruin views, and the neighborhood association labeled potential wires as "visual pollution" in a letter to Wells.

But Joe Fengler, chair of the Northeast Capitol Hill advisory neighborhood commission, which represents H Street, said overhead wires would not ruin any views there and in fact would eliminate unsightly empty storefronts by spurring economic development.

Some neighborhoods might entirely reject the prospect of a streetcar. Wells himself has already voiced opposition to the two lines proposed for 8th Street SE (Barracks Row), instead suggesting that they should be moved farther east to 19th, 15th or 14th streets to promote development in Hill East, where an enormous mixed-used complex is planned for the site of the old D.C. General Hospital.

In Georgetown, where a line is planned for K Street, and may extend up Wisconsin Avenue in the far future, the neighborhood's business community is still discussing the plan.

"Obviously, we would prefer any wires to be underground," said Ed Solomon, a Georgetown advisory neighborhood commissioner and business owner. "I think [the streetcar in general] would be a concept the community would embrace if done properly."

After gathering initial comments, city officials will embark on an 18-month environmental review process, during which the public will have an opportunity to comment on the plan. DC DOT Assistant Director Scott Kubly, in charge of the streetcar project, said it would take another year to award the project to a design and construction team. After that, he said, construction would last four to five years. *Julie Westfall/Voice of the Hill, November 07, 2009 via Phil Bush*

VRE Eyes Early Local Express Rail Run: To lure passengers onto the Virginia Railway Express Fredericksburg Line, the commuter train system is poised to start a 5 a.m. morning express in July that will collect passengers only at Fredericksburg, Leeland Road and Brooke.

Eliminating all the stops in between--Quantico, Rippon, Woodbridge, Lorton, and Franconia-Springfield--will save 20 minutes.

If it becomes official, the 5 a.m. express train would be the earliest morning train on the Fredericksburg Line. Currently, the earliest train leaves Fredericksburg at 5:15, and it is the most-crowded morning train. Riders that board the train at Rippon and Woodbridge usually have to stand because no seats are left. It's hoped an express train will attract riders to VRE, and make the 5:15 a.m. train less crowded. *Kelly Hannon/Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star, December 19, 2009*

Letter from Karl W. Helft, Herndon, VA, to Mr. Joe Boardman, President & CEO, Amtrak:

Dear Mr. Boardman,

I am writing to you concerning your welcoming remarks in the System Timetable, for October 26, 2009 – April 2010.

I am retired now, but spent a lifetime producing collateral materials including timetables for airlines and steamship companies. I cannot for the life in me believe that you would issue to the world a printed compendium of Amtrak's services absent the Northeast Corridor.

Your decision runs counter to just about anything I have ever learned (or forgotten) about how to approach

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the issue of schedule changes due to work in progress. My plaintive answer to that problem is “so what.”

Every railway faces the same issue. I would much prefer to see you including the core services with annotations to reflect that changes would be occurring and be done with it. Whoever talked you in to the current rendition, one of omission, is not the answer. I am flabbergasted you took this option. Remember your timetable is seen worldwide and the reader is taking one step forward and two back.

I would have much preferred to see a national timetable of “selected national schedules” and in the front or back panels show the companion pieces, e.g. Northeast Corridor, NY State Empire Services, etc. Not all users are computer equipped or literate in their use.

Your most productive revenue producer, the Northeast Corridor should never be left out of your system timetables. It is a very bad decision that has been repeated several times now; my former colleagues in the trade find it perplexing and sophomoric.

Very truly yours,

Karl W. Helft

Cardinal Service Disrupted: Starting on December 22, Amtrak’s Cardinal did not operate east of Huntington, WV, due to CSX signal and track problems on the new River Subdivision. It resumed regular operation on December 29. *Via Amtrak*

Amtrak’s Lynchburg-Washington Line Beats Projections: The new Amtrak train between Lynchburg and Washington had twice as many passengers as expected during its first month of operation in October, state rail officials said. *Ray Reed/News & Advance, December 16, 2009 via Alex Mayes*

TRAINS AFAR

The Orient Express Reaches the Buffers: The world’s most famous train finally stops running on Monday (12/14). While the new European railway timetable brings speedier journeys for Kent commuters, it also consigns the *Orient Express* to the history books. Not the Venice-bound tourist service that offers an expensive fantasy of teak, crystal, white damask and black-tie dinners, but the real *Orient Express*, the train that started running from Paris to Constantinople back in 1883.

To be fair it’s been slowly dying for years. In the 1970s the weekly through sleeping car from Paris to Istanbul was axed; in 2001 it ceased running to Bucharest. Two years ago, its route was pruned further, so it simply ran from Strasbourg to Vienna. But until Sunday, Austrian Railway’s *Euronight* service 461 still bears the moniker *Orient Express*.

The service was founded by Georges Nagelmackers; a Belgian impresario and splendid self publicist; the Richard Branson of his day. He promised a direct service from the Gare de l’Est [East Station] to the Ottoman capital, taking 75 hours. There was one slight problem – there wasn’t actually a railway line all the way. Andrew Eames, in his splendid book *The 8.55 to Baghdad* tells of the inaugural journey. One of the passengers

described the train as being “as well appointed and comfortable as any luxury flat in Paris.” There was a bearded Burgundian chef who served ten-course dinners, and a Hungarian band joined in Vienna. At the Romanian border the passengers had to disembark, as there was as yet no bridge over the Danube. The news was then broken to them that the final stage would be by boat. As most of the passengers were journalists, Nagelmackers sensibly instructed the crew to bring with them as many bottles as brandy and wine as they could carry. The press corps gave the service unanimously positive reviews.

Within a few years the railway line was completed – and Nagelmackers’ Wagons-Lits service expanded its horizons, running a network of luxury trains across Europe and beyond. By the 1920s the *Taurus Express* offered services from Istanbul to Baghdad, Aleppo and Damascus. This was the route that Agatha Christie made great use of while visiting her archeologist husband Max Mallowan in Iraq. Thomas Cook offered a forty-day tour to Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia for £40. There’s a great description of a 1930s *Orient Express* journey north, and a timeline tracing its history on the ever-inspiring Seat 61 website.

Somehow the *Orient Express* survived revolution in Turkey and subsequent border conflicts with Greece and Bulgaria, two world wars, and the imposition of communism in half the countries it ran through. The growth of the airlines finally stymied its existence as a practical means of travel. How ironic it ceases running just as those gathered in Copenhagen encourage us to consider the train as a practical alternative to travel around the continent. *Petroc Trelawny/The Telegraph (UK), December 11, 2009 via Alex Mayes*

RAIL PRESERVATION

Delmarva Railroad Bridge Faces the Wrecking Ball: The long-unused railroad bridge over MD State Route 404, just west of Tuckahoe Creek, is facing demolition as part of a \$15 million road widening project.



Bob Thompson photo

The bridge is part of a dormant ex-PRR line operated by Bill Bartosh’s Chesapeake Railroad until the

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company's operating insurance lapsed in mid-1997. The line folded and was cleared of rolling stock in the fall of 1998. Bill had hoped to open the line all the way from the Conrail interchange in Clayton, DE, to Easton, MD, but was only able to reach a point immediately south of this bridge. The rest of the line remained blocked by tree and brush growth, and later the tracks in Easton were pulled up and replaced by a hiker-biker trail. Proposals to convert the rest of the line to a trail have been delayed by funding shortages.

Bob Thompson snapped the accompanying photo after the CHRR ended operations and chain link fences blocked both ends of the bridge. Long a familiar sight to drivers headed to the peninsula's beaches, the bridge will soon exist only in railroad memories.

Stewartstown Railroad's Future Derailed?

Supporters are trying to get it back up and running, but it could be put up for auction if it can't repay a debt soon.

For more than a year, some shareholders and supporters have been trying to get the Stewartstown Railroad back on the tracks. They've done some work to repair the roof on the station in Stewartstown and prepared a business plan to that could allow the company to open at least a mile of track for tourist rides within a year.

But the 124-year-old railroad company is fast running out of time. If it can't repay more than \$350,000 in debt by Jan. 30, its biggest assets -- including two stations and an engine house listed on the National Register of Historic Places -- will be sold at sheriff's sale.

The railroad owes the estate of George M. Hart, who died in April 2008. Hart's money paid the railroad's bills for more than 20 years, and there is clause in his will reminding the executor to collect that money. That money, and most of Hart's estate, will eventually pass onto the Bucks County Historical Society, of which Hart was a lifetime trustee.

Some company shareholders and supporters have started a campaign to ask the historical society to allow it to repay the lien over time with proceeds from the re-opened railroad. But the historical society says that as the residual beneficiary in Hart's will - the heir that receives everything not otherwise allocated - it can only accept whatever the estate does, not make choices about how his will is administered.

The estate's executor, John Willever, said he can only carry out the will, but could approve changes if an agreement is reached by the historical society and the railroad. Meanwhile, the estate's attorney, Jim Gillotti, said collecting the debt is up to the estate. And, with major players living in several states, that's only the beginning of the confusion. But one thing is clear:

The railroad company, some say the oldest of its kind in the country, has little more than a month to find a resolution or face the auction block. *James Frantz/Daily Record-Sunday News, December 26, 2009*

A LOOK BACK DOWN THE TRACKS

Electric Railways of Arlington (Part 6)

By Frank L. Ball

(Condensed from a speech by the late Frank L. Ball to the Arlington Historical Society, January 14, 1966.)

You can never understand the joy these railroads brought to us. And you can never understand what a help, what a blessing it was to the community. I saw them pass out. The first one to go was the one east of Arlington. It closed up in '21. The next was the line from 12th Street in the District up to Clarendon. It closed in '32. At least the electricity was shut off in '32; I reckon it didn't run anymore. Couldn't find the exact time it closed but I did find the time the contract for the electricity was cancelled by the Corporation Commission. Then the line from the Key Bridge operated until 1937. The last electric car was on that line. And in 1938 the electric railway to Mount Vernon also closed. No more lines into 12th Street, on any line.

After 1937 they had whey they called puddle-jumpers on the Arlington-Fairfax line for a while. These were cars that could run on the track or off the track. They ran off the tracks plenty of times, too. They ran on rubber wheels just like an automobile but they had flanges hanging down to keep them on the track. They didn't last very long. Well, the Old Dominion operated for quite a while, and still operates; no more electric lines, and no more passengers, but it still operates freight lines, Alexandria to Purcellville. And they're talking of selling the right-of-way to the State for a road. The people up that way are trying to block them because they say the railroad is still a great advantage to them.

These roads were great friends. I came here tonight to pay tribute to them. They brought more joy to this old man's heart as a boy than you can imagine. We used to go up and down those roads when they first started trolley rides, everybody on the car - the whole community out - the car packed and jammed - to Falls Church and back three or four times, singing hymns and songs, whatever you wanted to do, great doings all evening. Went up to Great Falls; they'd charter a car - get the whole crowd, everybody in the whole community - and get on and go up there and spend the day; it was a beautiful place. Eat up there, with the ants, out in the open. And the men who were on there were wonderful, friendly people. They had whole families on, some of them, almost. George Veitch's boys: Clayton and Morgan and Albert. I think Arthur worked on there a little, too. Henry Croson had three of his sons work on there regularly for a short time. Henry Miller and Ranny; Ranny was the first employee they ever had. He spent his whole life on that railroad. And everybody knew everybody else. What a wonderful time we had!

The railroads were a public amusement. We didn't have any fights with them; they didn't have any fights with us. Just one big happy family!

I wish they were here today; I believe they'd make money. I'll tell you one thing: they'd furnish a lot of fun if they would let me ride on them.

Thank you folks ever so much for listening to me tonight. It's wonderful to have this kind of audience. You've given me the attention I didn't deserve. I hope that I said something that may be of interest to you, and may have given you some idea of the days that are gone. We buried these roads; "they ain't going to rise again. They ain't got no faith in the here-after." We said goodbye to them. But they sure served their day.

Many, many thanks to you...