

# The Rockton-Rion Flyer

News and Information from the South Carolina Railroad Museum  
Volume 46 Number 1 Spring 2018

## STEAM RETURNS!



Recently restored Gramling Locomotive Works' Jeddo Coal Co. 0-4-0T No. 85 awaits passengers for the next excursion to Greenbrier at Rockton Station.

### **FLYER NEWS FLASH:**

Over 1,000 passengers were carried during the Steam Train event this May. The evening BBQ dinner trains powered by No. 85 were all SOLD OUT. Ridership and interest are up from advertising on Facebook and in the newspapers.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:** Our annual season kicks off on June 2<sup>nd</sup> with excursions on Saturdays at 10 AM and 1:30 PM. The first BBQ dinner train of the season is June 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. 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 or send an email to [cwebersr@bellsouth.net](mailto:cwebersr@bellsouth.net).

**NEXT BOARD MEETING:** The next Board Meeting is Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 A.M. in the Stribling Rion office building. All members encouraged to attend the open sessions of the Board Meetings.

### **NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS:**

Please send articles and pictures to:  
SCRM, P.O. Box 7246, Columbia, SC 29202  
[vincentlibrizzi@att.net](mailto:vincentlibrizzi@att.net).

**Vince LiBrizzi, Editor**



The Seaboard Air Line Caboose now has a sheet metal roof installed.

### **Seaboard Air Line Caboose Update**

*By Jim Owens*

The Seaboard Coast Line wood caboose is undergoing restoration and recently received a completely new type of roof. This roof is made of sheet metal and will last much longer than the wooden tarpaper covered roof that did not withstand the hot sun and elements. Next, the metal sheathing on the caboose sides will be removed and authentic tongue and groove wood siding will be added. Look for progress on this classic caboose the next time you're at the museum.

### **Financial and Marketing Report**

*By Henry Nechemias*

So far in 2018, proceeds from charter trips, Valentine Dinner Trains, BBQ dinner trains, Easter Bunny Eggspress trains, and other events has increased our revenue. The return of Steam Train excursions this spring added over 1,000 riders, including 120 extra fare BBQ dinner train passengers. We have over 8,100 "likes" on Facebook and have a strong base of followers that instantly get word of our events when they are posted on our Facebook Page. Our advertising on Facebook and in the SC Newspaper Network has increased our exposure and ridership and been very cost effective.



No. 85 waits for BBQ dinner train passengers at Rockton.

### **Steam Returns to the RR&W**

*By Vince LiBrizzi*

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup>, and May 12<sup>th</sup>, Steam Trains once again ruled the rails on the RR&W. The Gramling Locomotive Works' latest locomotive, Jeddo Coal Co. No. 85, "Mack," a spunky 0-4-0T saddle tanker built by Vulcan in 1928, was the star attraction on four excursions to Greenbrier each day. The passengers were treated to photo run-bys with No. 85 backing up and thundering by in a display of steam, smoke, and whistling.

A first-ever steam powered BBQ dinner train to Rion was operated all three Saturday evenings. Passengers enjoyed the cool breeze on the way to Rion and were treated to a delicious BBQ dinner served in the Stribling Building. On the return trip, No. 85 put on quite a show easily taking the 2-car train up the steep 4% grade out of Rion with thundering stack talk and whistle blowing in the darkness. The passengers raved about the sights, sounds, and culinary delights of riding a BBQ dinner steam train. All said, over 1,000 passengers rode the 12 daytime excursion trains and 3 BBQ dinner trains over the three weeks steam was on the railroad. Many positive comments were heard from the passengers to the crew and on our Facebook page regarding the return of steam!



No. 1276 waits on the Guardian siding as No. 1249 passes.

### **Santa Express operates on Hourly Schedule for the First Time**

***By Rodger Stroup and Vince LiBrizzi***

The Rockton Rion & Western has seen the ridership increase for the Santa Claus Express over the last few years. This past season the railroad decided to operate two trains rather than one and provide hourly service as a convenience for the passengers. Due to the longer run to Rion, this meant trains would be meeting and passing at either the run around at Greenbrier or the Guardian siding.

After experimenting with the travel and wait times at both meeting locations, it was determined that Guardian would be a more optimal location for this operation. For the first time, locomotives Nos. 1276 and 1249 and their respective trains met and passed at the Guardian siding with their holiday consists. More passengers were carried, and surveys showed the passengers preferred not having to wait as long for the trains as in previous years when trips were run every two hours. A real *Santa Express* on the RR&W not only by name!



SW8 No. 2028 at Rion with the Valentine Dinner Train

### **Valentine Trains Completely Sold Out** ***By Kelvin Woods and Vince LiBrizzi***

On February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, the RR&W operated its annual Valentine Dinner Train. Both trains were sold out nearly the same day the tickets went on sale. Since one price included the 150-minute train ride, 3-course catered meal, wine, beer, or soft drinks, dessert, coffee, service, gratuity, and special gifts for the sweethearts, it's no surprise tickets went so fast. No other railroad operation offers a Valentine Dinner Train with so much for such a reasonable cost anywhere in the area.

The train was powered by SW8 No. 2028 and featured the *Lake Rion* dining car, a bi-level passenger coach, CN passenger coach, and RS4-TC-1A No. 1249 for lights, bell, and horn on the return trip to Rockton. It is the railroad's plan to significantly increase capacity beyond the current 40 passengers the *Lake Rion* is set up to handle at this time. We could easily sell 80 tickets per trip if we had another dining car available to use. The Board is working to make this capacity a reality soon.

South Carolina Railroad Museum  
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Columbia, SC 29202-7246

*Return Service Requested*

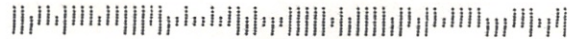
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**Museum Receives Model Train Donation**  
*By Frank Brubaker*

The museum received a generous donation of model trains from Commander Master Chief Victor L. Bennett, E9 GSCM (SW). Mr. Bennett served 27 years of military service, picked the crews and built the USS Comte DeGrass, San Jacinto, and John McCain. Then he worked in Casino Management in Las Vegas, and then as a Field Engineer for GE building power plants. After retirement, he focused on O scale and DCC HO model trains and hand built an impressive layout with a roundhouse, depots, industrial plants, mills, and homes. His legacy will live on with his family's gracious donation of his beloved model trains.

**Heritage Rail Alliance**  
*By Henry Nechemias*

A few years ago, two tourist train advocacy groups, TRAIN and ARM, merged and are now the *Heritage Rail Alliance*. They have become a powerful force in lobbying for more appropriate regulations, offering a forum for sharing ideas and suggestions, and organizing two very useful meetings each year. This has proven to be a wonderful forum where folks involved in railroad museums and tourist trains can meet, learn and talk about common problems and concerns. I have represented the SCRM at two recent meetings and plan to continue attending whenever possible. To learn more, see [www.heritagerrailalliance.org](http://www.heritagerrailalliance.org)