

THE PENNYRAIL

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
WEST KENTUCKY CHAPTER OF
THE NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**October 2021
Meeting
Innovation Station
Monday,
October 18
7:00 PM**

**Former Chapter
Member Tommy
Johnson Passes
August 6**



Minutes from September Meeting

No Meeting in September

Tommy Johnson Passes

Thomas Scott Johnson
June 2, 1949 - August 6, 2021

GREENVILLE – Thomas Scott Johnson, 72, of Greenville died Friday, August 6, 2021, at 11:35 a.m. at Owensboro Health Muhlenberg Community Hospital in Greenville. Thomas was born June 2, 1949, in Hammond, IN and was retired from Research and Development for Ahlstrom. He was preceded in death by his parents, Paul and Alice Johnson.

Survivors include his wife, Georgeann Evitts Johnson; daughter Dawn (Jayme) Grundy; son Wesley (Taylor) Johnson; grandchildren Payton Grundy, Taylor Grundy; grand-dog Molly; and sister Pauletta Dillard.

Current Treasury Balance October, 2021

7/1/21	Beginning Balance				2,597.41
8/1/21	Begginging Balance				2,597.41
8/4/21	Drawing			36	2,633.41
9/1/21	Beginning Balance				2,633.41
10/1/21	Beginning Balance				2,633.41

NEWS BRIEFS



No Photo Contest until 2022



The Headless Hobo of Crofton Ky

By William Farrell



So, the legend goes it was a cool autumn night in late October 2004, with a full moon high in the southeast sky. There were three CSX locomotives making their way south on the main line through northern Christian County. As the trio of C-40-8's struggled to pull their heavy load of coal south the sound of their diesel engines crackled through the crisp night air.

As the heavy train approached the East Princeton Street (Highway 800) grade crossing in Crofton. The crossing gates

reacted to the CSX coal drag with red flashing lights as the lead locomotive gave a loud blast on its deep throated horn. The sound of the horn broke the roar of the diesel engines as the train passed over the East Princeton Street crossing in the sleeping rural community.

It so happens that a local resident of Crofton got caught by the lumbering train as it made its way south to unload the cars filled with black diamonds. He later reported as he sat in his car as the coal drag passed by him, he noticed a dark human like figure clinging to the ladder on one of the coal hoppers. He later remarked, "it must have been a hobo heading south to a warmer climate for the winter".

Then with a sudden leach and the sound of twisting, banging metal the hoppers started to react violently as the sound of the coal cars slamming into each other's couplers. The long train automatically went into emergency as a dozen cars filled with coal started to be tossed around like some child's toys. The black cars were heaved up into the air like the wind blowing so many autumn leaves into a pile. There were cars buried half way down into the earth, while other came to rest on top of one another. Cars were bent and twisted laying on their sides with pieces of rail sticking through them like a tooth picks in a sandwich. A large dark gray cloud covered the bent and twisted cars as they oozed their valuable contains on to the track side ballast. Before the derailed cars could come to rest, they managed to takeout the newly installed but not yet operational south bound signal lights along the right of way. The sound of the grinding metal coming to a sudden stop brought many of the residents out of their track side

Headless Hobo continued

homes to see what all the noise was about. To their sleepy, tired eyes they saw the horrifying sight of a dozen coal hoppers piled up and twisted in the late October night air. This is something you live with when your home is close to a mainline track but you never think it will ever happen to you or your community.

The next morning the residents who were able to go back to sleep got up to a flurry of activity in their town. CSX personnel along with R.J. Corman emergency railroad services had arrived sometime during the early morning. The tracks had to be cleared of all the rubble and debris that was created during the derailment. The railroad would stand to lose over two million dollars a day for each day the line remained closed. Work crews started immediately clearing the right of way as the sun was coming up in the east. Inspection teams from CSX were on hand to see which hoppers might be salvaged from the twisted mass covering the once pristine rails.

As a road foreman and his team made their way around a bent and crushed hopper, which had spilled its contents, they noticed a shoe sticking out from under one of the coal hoppers. Immediately they started with shovels to free the person under the mountain of black rocks and bent steel. They were too late the car had fallen on a hobo's body crushing him. They brought in a piece of heavy equipment and were able to lift the coal car high enough to pull the man's lifeless body out from under the twisted, jagged metal. When all present looked at the limp corpse, they couldn't help but to notice the hobo had been decapitated in the wreckage earlier that night. The county coroner arrived, took one look at the man's mangled, headless, coal covered body and pronounced him as dead. The coroner then checked the hobo's coal dust filled pockets for identification with none to be found. In a matter of seconds, the lifeless remains would become known as, "The Headless Hobo". Shortly after the coroner was finished with his examination. Emergency services had the man's body on a stretcher and in the back of a pickup truck for transportation to the Hopkinsville morgue.

The word of the headless hobo spread among the crews that were working the wreckage. Everyone was told to be on the lookout for the head of the unfortunate man that was hitching a ride south with CSX. Every man working on that derailment was very apprehensive about what might be around the next pile of spilled coal. No one wanted to come upon or discover the decapitated head from the hobo. The railroad crews worked several days restoring service to the mainline in order to get it open once more. It took close to six weeks before CSX could get all the broken and derailed coal cars completely clear from the right of way.

The derailment brought people from far away just to see how horrendous and violent the incident must have been for the few seconds it lasted. During the time span of clean up,

different railroad crews were on sight but no one ever found the hobo's head. Surely it must have been buried under one of those huge piles of coal and debris that was created by the derailment. Then crushed and pushed down into the rock and soil by wheels or tracks of heavy equipment working the site.

Years later motorist on highway 41, CSX locomotive engineers and Crofton locals have reported a strange sighting in the area of the derailment. These sightings can only be seen at night in the fall of the year. It appears to be a fiery ball of molten steel about the size of a basketball racing down the tracks south of the Brown Street grade crossing in the area of the fatal derailment. Many CSX locomotive engineers and conductors have seen the ball of fire out run their speeding locomotives. Then all at once it jumps over to the siding and races back up the tracks from where it started. Many people have seen this phenomenon but no one can scientifically explain what is happening out on the tracks in this little rural community. If you ask the Crofton locals, they will tell you, "it's the head of the headless hobo looking to be reunited with his body".

The moral of this tale is, "You Can Get Ahead with CSX".



I visited Wally Watts and surprised him with chocolate and a balloon on his 91st birthday! September 18, 2021.

Ricky Bivins

PHOTO SECTION



4014 at Ware, Ill. on Saturday, August 28th. Photo by William Farrell

EMD GP40
 Builder# 30954
 Delivered to New York Central 12/65 as NYC 3017,
 part of NYC's first order of 36 GP40's
 Became PC 3017, then Conrail 3017
 PC maintenance base Collingwood OH
 Returned to owner/lessor upon expiration of the
 lease in 1980
 Sold to Precision National Corp July 1980 and
 leased to Chicago & North Western
 Sold to C&NW 3/81, renumbered to CNW 5507,
 and rebuilt sometime between 6/81 to 12/81 at the
 C&NW Oelwein shops.
 Became UP 638.
 Sold to National Railway Equipment, rebuilt to
 GP40-2 standards, renumbered NREX 638
 Sold to Evansville Western Railroad Inc, rebuilt as a
 GP40-2M, renumbered EVWR 3840
 Still in service!

EVWR photo by Mike Kirsch.

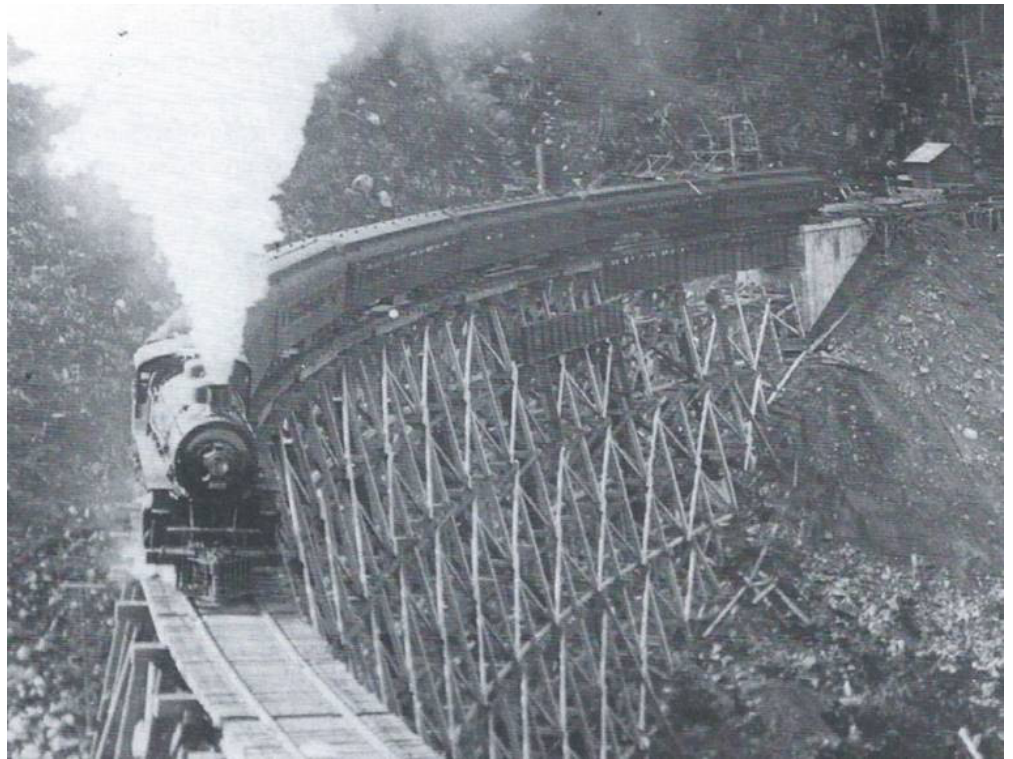


DVDs For Sale from Johnson Estate

A photo list of DVDs for sale by the estate of the late Tommy Johnson can be seen at the following site: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/sNWXh52AC91k7rYK6>.
If interested contact Wesley Johnson at wjohnson@dcplibrary.org.

Gary's Gallery

In their rush to build westward, the railroads built some pretty substantial wooden bridges across chasms and watercourses. Timber was readily available and cheap, and steel was out of the question at that time. After the railroad's "Last Spikes" were driven, and the bottom line *improved*, so did their rights-of-ways. The Milwaukee was the late-comer to extend their reach toward the Pacific Northwest, thus their route choices were made after two other major railroads built their lines across the same prairies and mountain ranges.



One could argue that you are viewing the same bridge, years apart. But, from the mid-teens, (the main picture), to the modern era a lot tree growth and foliage would have transpired. Also, the Milwaukee bridge design is pretty standard. There are five steel trestles in about a twelve mile stretch of rail-line leading to the 2-mile tunnel under Snoqualmie Pass. All five are curved in the same manner as these examples. You can see four to this day from your drive over Interstate-90.

Looking closely at the wooden trestle, you'll see there are steel uprights inside the framework of the bridge. The first and second girders are set in place and the third has been lowered, temporarily secured, while an eastbound passenger train charges past. Earthen fills were used when conditions permitted. Factors included the height, and volume of the water-course being crossed, and availability of nearby fill material.

Gary's Gallery Section 2

In their rush to build westward, the railroads built some pretty substantial wooden bridges across chasms and watercourses. Timber was readily available and cheap, and steel was out of the question at that



Photo Gallery



Ex-NKP. Tipton IN. September 23, 2021.
Rick Bivins photo.

A railroad funny sent in by Ricky Bivins.



Photo Gallery



Wabash at Princeton IN
September 23, 2021



Pennsylvania RR. Wabash
Railroad Museum Terre Haute IN
September 23, 2021



ex-NYC. Wabash Railroad
Museum.
Terre Haute IN. September 23,
2021.

Rick Bivins photos.