

RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY

POSTAL HISTORY RESEARCH - ARTIFACTS

www.railwaymailservicelibrary.org

(540) 837-9090 - TELEPHONE

fscheer@railwaymailservicelibrary.org - e-MAIL

117 EAST MAIN STREET

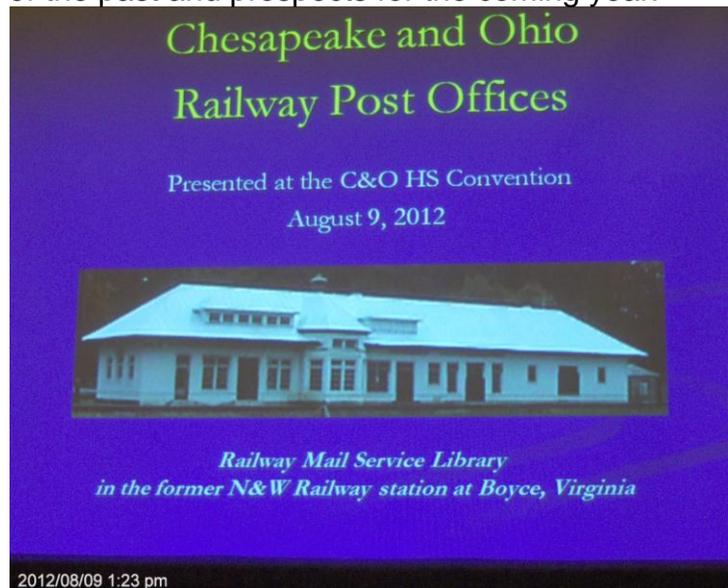
BOYCE, VA 22620-9639

December 31, 2012

Dear Railway Mail Service Library friends:

2012 has been another year of progress for the Railway Mail Service Library (RMSL). I'll briefly survey the highlights of the past and prospects for the coming year.

The RMSL participated in three major events during 2012 as a part of its mission to communicate the contributions of the Railway Mail Service/Postal Transportation Service (RMS/PTS). Frank presented an overview of the RMS/PTS at the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway Historical Society during September, as well as the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad Historical Society annual meeting during November. These included viewings of MEN AND MAIL IN TRANSIT and MAIL IN MOTION, both of which were filmed in 1956 and



summarize how Railway Post Offices operated. The Digital Video Disk (DVD) of these movies are available for \$21 postpaid, with proceeds devoted to Boyce depot maintenance.

Boyce depot has its own notable history as the community's center of commerce. As an active railway station between 1913 and 1958, it was also the town's Western Union and Railway Express Agency. Passenger services, carload, and less-than-carload freight arrived and departed from the station. During the telegram era, the agent-operator handled both railway and commercial messages. The depot was known as DK Office; "DK" were the call letters on the Morse wires. This heritage was celebrated during national Morse Day, when Chris Hausler and Mike Cizek demonstrated telegraphy over virtual wires via the Internet, linked with other offices around the country. This will be relived on April 27, 2013, when DK Office will again be on "the original information super-highway," when data for the first time approached light speed.

Boyce' station's centennial in on Saturday, October 5, 2013, will highlight the depot's history and multiple purposes during the past ten decades. The rise and decline of railroad prominence in the local economy parallels the town's development. In recent decades, the station has become the town's icon, so an image of the depot will appear in a special pictorial postmark for the evening picnic and "train night" celebration.



The RMSL will also present an overview of Railway Mail Service schedules at the National Association of Timetable Collectors' annual meeting during September at Cumberland, Maryland. Throughout 2013, the Library will continue a transition from accessioning new materiel to organizing and disseminating information already in the collection. Projects for the year will be arranging shelving and improved organization of the collection. A volunteer effort is underway to index the journals of the Railway Mail Association and the National Postal Transport Association. Much more needs to be done, and people are welcomed to help –even if they cannot visit Boyce. Several activities such as transcribing oral recollections can be done at home during time that is available.

If you haven't been by Boyce in a while, I invite you to visit. In the meantime, enjoy a virtual peek: Railpace magazine feature Boyce depot in a two-page spread appearing in its January 2013 issue. The narrative and photos were provided Jon Wright who has captured captivating night images of the building. These are included with this letter, by permission. The town and surrounding area has always been a great place to see, be, and be seen. If the Smithsonian Institution is "the nation's attic," the RMSL is the "Railway Mail Clerk's basement." It's located at the grade crossing of post office history and railroading lore!

Season's greeting and
Happy new year,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Frank R. Scheer'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Frank R. Scheer



The Lady in White Turns 100—
Boyce, Virginia, Station Celebrates its Centennial by Jon Wright

YEAR 2013 marks the 100th anniversary of the Boyce, Virginia, train station. The town is situated between Hagerstown, MD, and Front Royal, VA, on the former Norfolk & Western (now Norfolk Southern) Hagerstown District, or “H-Line,” at milepost H 46.1. The building opened to much fanfare when it replaced an 1880s frame station built by the Shenandoah Valley Railroad, which was absorbed into the N&W in 1890. The station has

come to symbolize the town of Boyce, which owes much of its growth to the railroad and to the Winchester and Millwood Turnpike it is built around. The Boyce station is the present home to the Railway Mail Service Library as well as the local ATCS monitor and www.radioreference.com audio feed. After the depot was closed by the N&W in 1956, it continued to serve as the town post office, and later, a wood shop, art studio and even a restaurant.

Much larger than other stations built at the time for a town its size, it is even larger than the station located in the Clarke County, VA, seat of Berryville, just eight miles to the north. This is believed to have been due to citizen contributions from wealthy land owners wanting a place to ship their



TOP: Northbound NS manifest 12R stirs the early morning quietness at 4:00 a.m. October 28, 2012 as it illuminates the heavy moisture in the air and the face of former Norfolk and Western station at Boyce, VA. *Jon Wright*

ABOVE: A view from inside the station agent's office towards the tracks. On the window desk are various Morse Code and telegraph instruments that were used throughout the station's railroad service. These are now part of the Railway Mail Service Library. *Jon Wright*

RIGHT: OSing 11R south by Boyce on Morse Day in April 2011. *Nathan Simmons*





goods and to make it easier for family members to embark on their journeys. Electricity and running water were just some of the features built into the station that were at the turn of the 20th Century quite a luxury. The station also served as the community center throughout its life.

Railway Mail Service Library curator Dr. Frank Reeder Scheer, a railfan himself, is happy to provide tours and discuss all aspects of the station's life as it served as the postal center both during and after its railway ownership. A desk lining the windows in the agent's office displays a variety of telegraph equipment ranging from keys, sounders, relays, jack boxes, and switchboards. Telephone items include the Chicago Telephone "pipe phone" used by the N&W, ringers, bells, and selectors, many like the ones actually used here.

Morse Day is a yearly event at the station on the Saturday in April closest to the April 27th birthday of Samuel Morse, the creator of Morse code. On this day, the Morse Telegraph Club sets up mock telegraph 'wires' at stations all over the country and carry on telegraph conversations as well as OS trains.

Stop by Boyce station on a Saturday, take a tour and enjoy an afternoon trackside on the busy H Line, but please respect the property of the RMSL, Norfolk Southern and surrounding land owners. Presented here are a selection of photos inside and out, starring the Lady In White as she continues to show off her grandeur in very dramatic settings.

Happy Birthday Centenarian!



TOP: Norfolk Southern 11R passes the former N&W station at Boyce, VA, on a late October night. The station is now a museum dedicated to the history of the Railway Mail Service. The photo was taken from the side yard of a home which at one time belonged to the N&W Section Foreman for this stretch of railroad.
Sean Hoyden

ABOVE: NS 212 rolls north through Tropical Depression Ernesto in September 2006.
Nathan Simmons

LEFT: Northbound manifest 12R streaks by the Boyce depot, lighting up the station just after sundown in November 2012. The building has been a fixture of Boyce since 1913.
Jon Wright