

Get to Know the Northern Shenandoah Chapter



The Northern Shenandoah Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, was founded in 1967 as the Winchester Chapter. The Chapter's roots can be traced to the efforts of local railfan, James A. Walsh, who made the initial inquiry with the national convention on how to establish a local chapter in Winchester.

On March 11, 1967, Walsh hosted an organization meeting at his Bluemont Virginia "Berkley" Farm. Joining him that night, was Carrel I. Tod, national vice-president, supporting members from the Washington DC chapter, and 11 local rail enthusiasts. Before the evening concluded, the Winchester Chapter, predecessor to the Shenandoah Chapter, was born.

The first chapter officers were Russell Bell, as president, James Walsh as vice-president, Dan Rollyson as secretary-treasurer, and Fred Hunt as the national director. In addition to the officers, Courtney Bennington, John Sours, and Claude Strickler were present, and are therefore, recognized as charter members as well.

The Chapter's first monthly meeting was held in June 1967 at the Winchester First Presbyterian Church. The main business that night was to officially receive the chapter charter from the national convention. After the business was completed, the first program was a slide presentation on African railroads by Archie Julian.

The next meeting was held on July 22, 1967, in the Civil Air Patrol room in the Virginia Woolen Mill, corner of Piccadilly Street and East Lane. There were 14 members present, and the dues were set at \$1 per year.

Key Dates in Chapter History:

September 30, 1969	Chapter incorporated by Attorney G. William Hammer.
March 22, 1969	Robert Reed appointed as first Chapter Historian.
March 1, 1970	Chapter published the first edition of the "High Iron" newsletter
March 28, 1970	First Chapter Banquet, held at Unger's Angus House in Winchester. Guest speaker was NRHS President E. Lewis Pardee. There were 40 members and guests present. The steak meal was \$3 per person.

August 23, 1970	Members enjoyed its first chapter picnic combined with a tour the Western Maryland Railroad Shops in Hagerstown, Maryland.
September 27, 1970	The Chapter sponsored a rail excursion from Winchester to Baltimore, Maryland on five Baltimore and Ohio Budd Diesel Cars. There were 427 passengers on the train.
August 31, 1972	National Fruit Company donates a wooden vinegar tank car to the chapter which relocated the car to the Strasburg Museum. The car was eventually placed on public display in Guilford, Pennsylvania.
April 7, 1976	Mrs. Jack Hughes, owner of the Winchester & Western Railroad, donates the C207 caboose to the Chapter. The Chapter relocated the caboose to Clearbrook Park and renovated it for public display.
October 6-7, 1984	The Chapter sponsored two excursions on the Winchester and Western Railroad between Gore, West Virginia and Winchester. These trips were the first passenger trains between the two destinations since 1934.
May 22, 2016	Chapter members restored and installed station signs on the former Cumberland Valley / PRR freight station on West Boscawen Street and on the former B&O passenger station on Piccadilly Street.
October 26, 2024	The Chapter relocated the C207 caboose to downtown Winchester, Virginia for public display.
January 1, 2025	The Chapter name is changed to Northern Shenandoah Chapter to reflect the Chapter's regional membership

Throughout its history, the Northern Shenandoah Chapter has dedicated its efforts to promoting the knowledge and appreciation of railroads. Through a variety of preservation projects, social gatherings, and educational events, the Chapter encourages the "Railfan" hobby among men and women throughout the Northern Shenandoah Valley.¹

The Chapter invites anyone who enjoys trains to attend its meetings or extra activities.

¹ A more detailed historical record of the Northern Shenandoah Chapter may be found in the member's section of the Chapter website.