

# Carolina Conductor



Volume 11 Number 8

Monthly Newsletter of the Carolina Railroad Heritage Association, Inc.

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## Preserving the Past Active in the Present Planning for the Future

**Web Site:** [hubcityrrmuseum.org](http://hubcityrrmuseum.org)

**Facebook:** Carolina Railroad Heritage Association & Hub City RR Museum

### Hub City Railroad Museum and SOU Rwy Caboose #X3115:

Spartanburg Amtrak Station

298 Magnolia Street

Spartanburg, SC 29301-2330

Wednesday 10-2 & Saturday 10-2

### Meeting Site:

Fountain Inn Presbyterian Church

307 North Main Street

Fountain Inn, SC 29644

Third Friday of the Month at 7:00 p.m.

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Articles can be submitted anytime.

# Norfolk & Western

The Norfolk and Western Railway (NW), commonly called the N&W, was a US class I railroad, formed by more than 200 railroad mergers between 1838 and 1982. It was headquartered in Roanoke, Virginia, for most of its existence. Its motto was "Precision Transportation". It had a variety of nicknames, including "King Coal" and "British Railway of America".

N&W was famous for manufacturing its own steam locomotives, which were built at the Roanoke Shops, as well as its own hopper cars. After 1960, N&W was the last major Class I railroad using steam locomotives; the last remaining Y class 2-8-8-2s would eventually be retired in 1961.

In December 1959, the N&W merged with the Virginian Railway (VGN), a longtime rival in the Pocahontas coal region. By 1970, other mergers with the Nickel Plate Road and Wabash formed a system that operated 7,595 miles of road on 14,881 miles of track from North Carolina to New York and from Virginia to Iowa.

In 1980, the N&W merged its business operation with those of the Southern Railway, another profitable carrier, to create the Norfolk Southern Corporation holding com-



pany. The N&W and the Southern Railway continued as separate railroads operating under the single holding company.

In 1982, the Southern Railway was renamed Norfolk Southern Railway and the holding company transferred the Norfolk & Western Railway to the control of the newly renamed company.

## History—Predecessors City Point, Southside and Virginia and Tennessee Railroads

The N&W's earliest predecessor was the City Point Railroad (CPRR), a 9-mile short-line railroad formed in 1838 to extend from City Point (now part of the independent city of Hopewell, Virginia), a port on the tidal James River, to Petersburg, Virginia, on the fall line of the shallower Appomattox River. In 1854, CPRR became part of the South Side Rail-

# Museum Happenings



← The Thomas layout gets a workout from our younger visitors.



↑ Madness prevails when rising third grades visit.



The completed lantern display explains what the different colors of each lantern means. Thanks to Bo for its construction.

## Wanted—Articles for the Carolina Conductor

Submit an article of 200 words or more with some photos and captions and see them in print. Every one of us has some unique railroad experience that would make interesting reading for our membership. Your editor always needs more contributions of railway history and news.

road, which connected Petersburg with Lynchburg, where it interchanged through traffic with the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad (V&T) and the James River and Kanawha Canal.

### Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad

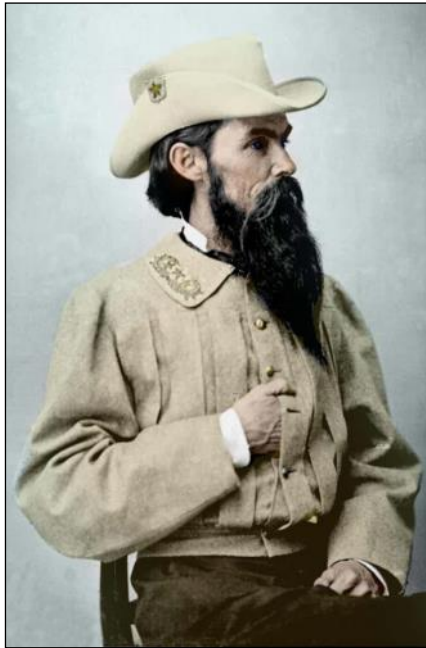
William Mahone, an 1847 engineering graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, was employed by Francis Mallory to build the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad (N&P) and eventually became its president in the pre-Civil War era. Construction of N&P began in 1853. Mahone's innovative corduroy roadbed through the Great Dismal Swamp near Norfolk, Virginia, employed a log foundation laid at right angles beneath the surface of the swamp. It is still in use 150 years later and it withstands immense tonnages of coal traffic.

Mahone married Otelia Butler, from Smithfield in Isle of Wight County, Virginia, a daughter of Robert Butler, a Virginia state treasurer. Popular legend has it that Otelia and William Mahone traveled along the newly completed N&P naming stations along the 52-mile tangent between Suffolk and Petersburg from *Ivanhoe*, a book she was reading by Walter Scott. From Scott's historical Scottish novels, Otelia chose the place names of Windsor, Waverly and Wakefield. She tapped the Scottish Clan "McIvor" for the name of Ivor, a small Southampton County town. When they could not agree on a name for a station just west of the Sussex County line in Prince George, it is said that the young couple invented a new word in honor of their "dispute", which is how the tiny community of Disputanta was named. The N&P was completed in 1858.

### Civil War

Of small stature, dynamic "Little Billy" Mahone became a major general in the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. He was widely regarded as the hero of the Battle of the Crater during the Siege of Petersburg in 1864-65. Otelia Mahone served as a nurse in the Confederate capital of Richmond.

The N&P was severed by the war. The portion east of the Blackwater River at Zuni, Virginia, was held by the Union for most of the war. The eastern portion of the City Point Railroad played a crucial role for Union



General William Mahone.

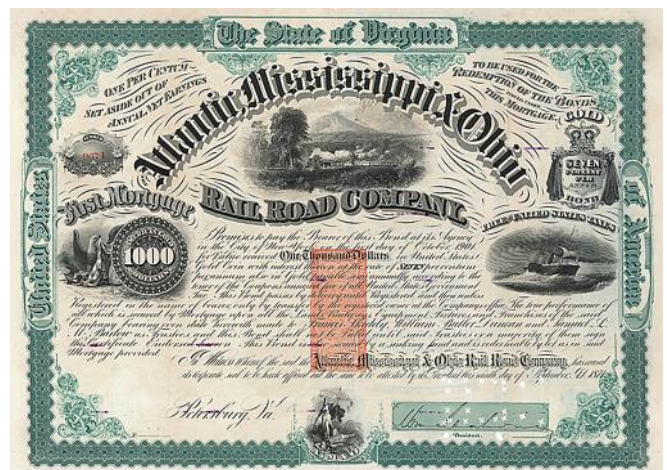
General Ulysses S. Grant during the Siege of Petersburg, and was operated by the United States Military Railroad. The South Side Railroad was also heavily damaged.

### Early Years Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio RR

William and Otelia Mahone were illustrious characters in post-bellum Virginia.

Mahone quickly got to work restoring "his" N&P and resumed his dream of linking the three trunk lines across the southern tier of Virginia to reach points to the west. He became president of all three, and drove the 1870 merger of N&P, South Side Railroad and the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad to form the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad (AM&O). The AM&O extended 408 miles from Norfolk to Bristol, Virginia. The Mahone's moved to the headquarters city of Lynchburg, the midpoint of the AM&O. The acronym AM&O was said to stand for "All Mine and Otelia's."

The AM&O operated profitably in the early 1870s



Atlantic Mississippi and Ohio stock certificate.

but like many railroads encountered financial problems during the Panic of 1873. A fourth road of the AM&O family was planned to extend west through the Cumberland Gap to Kentucky, but was never built. Mahone retained control of AM&O for several more years before his relationship with English and Scottish bondholders deteriorated in 1876 and receivers were appointed to oversee his work. After several years of operating under receiverships, Mahone's role as a railroad builder ended in 1881 when northern financial interests took control.

At the foreclosure auction, the AM&O was purchased by E.W. Clark & Co., a private banking firm in Philadelphia with ties to the large Pennsylvania Railroad. The PRR was seeking a southern connection for its Shenandoah Valley Railroad (SVRR), which was then under construction up the valley from the Potomac River.

### **Name Change to Norfolk and Western**

In 1881, the AM&O was reorganized and renamed Norfolk and Western, a name perhaps taken from an 1850s charter application filed by citizens of Norfolk, Virginia. George Frederick Tyler became president. Frederick J. Kimball, a civil engineer and partner in E.W. Clark & Co., became First Vice President. Henry Fink, whom Mahone had hired in 1855, became Second Vice President and General Superintendent.

Kimball and his board of directors selected Big Lick, a small Virginia village on the Roanoke River, to be the junction of SVRR and the N&W. Big Lick was later renamed Roanoke, Virginia. Over time, Roanoke began to grow and in the 1950s, reached a population of over 90,000.

At its founding, N&W primarily transported agricultural products. Kimball, who had a strong interest in geology, led the railroad's efforts to open the Pocahontas coalfields in western Virginia and southern West Virginia. In mid-1881, the N&W acquired the franchises to four other lines: the New River Railroad, Mining and Manufacturing Company, the Bluestone Railroad, and the East River Railroad. Consolidated into the New River Railroad Company, with Kimball as president, these railroads became the basis for N&W's New River Division, which was soon built from New Kanawha (near East Radford) up the west bank of the New River through Pulaski County and into Giles County to the mouth of the East River near Glen Lyn, Virginia. From there, the new line ran up the East Riv-

er, crossing the Virginia-West Virginia border several times to reach the coalfields to the west near the Great Flat Top Mountain. Coal transported to Norfolk soon became NW's primary commodity and led to great wealth and profitability.

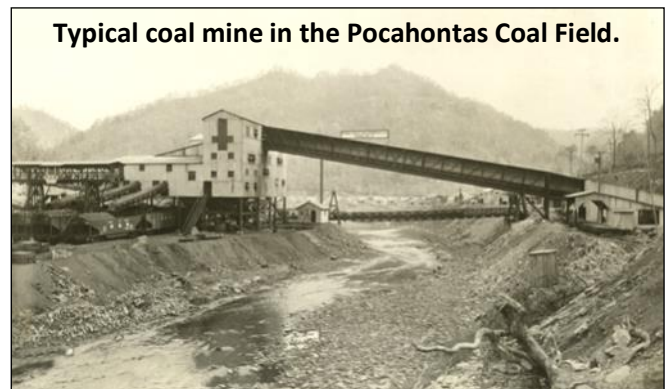
Kimball served as N&W president from 1883 to 1895. Under his leadership, the N&W continued expansion westward with its lines through the wilderness of West Virginia with the Ohio Extension, eventually extending north across the Ohio River to Columbus, Ohio by the Scioto Valley Railroad. Acquisition of other lines, including the Cincinnati, Portsmouth and Virginia Railroad (CP&V) (which it had long supported and leased) extended the N&W system west along the Ohio River to Cincinnati, Ohio, south from Lynchburg to Durham, North Carolina, and south from Roanoke to Winston-Salem, North Carolina. By the time Kimball died in 1903, the railroad had attained the basic structure it would use for more than 60 years.

In 1890 the N&W bought out the Shenandoah Valley Railroad. This gave the railroad a reach north of the Potomac River and the Virginia-Maryland border, and a line with territory reaching as far north as Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This would become referred to as the Shenandoah Valley Division.

### **Coal**

In 1885, several small mining companies representing about 400,000 acres of bituminous coal reserves grouped together to form the coalfields' largest landowner, the Philadelphia-based Flat-Top Coal Land Association. The N&W bought the association and reorganized it as the Pocahontas Coal and Coke Company (PCCC). The PCCC was later renamed the Pocahontas Land Corporation (PLC) and is now a subsidiary of NS.

As the availability and fame of high-quality Pocahontas bituminous coal increased, economic forces



**Typical coal mine in the Pocahontas Coal Field.**

took over. Coal operators and their employees settled dozens of towns in southern West Virginia, and in the next few years, as coal demand swelled, some of them amassed fortunes. The countryside was soon sprinkled with tipples, coke ovens, houses for workers, company stores and churches. In the four decades before the Crash of 1929 and subsequent Depression, these coal towns flourished. One example was the small community of Bramwell, West Virginia, which in its heyday boasted the highest per capita concentration of millionaires in the country.

In 1886, the N&W tracks were extended directly

the Roanoke Shops at Roanoke. The Shops employed thousands of craftsmen, who refined their products over the years. The A, J, and Y6 locomotives, designed, built, and maintained by NW personnel, brought the company industry-wide fame for their excellence in steam power. The N&W's commitment to steam power was due in part to its investment in the manufacturing capacity and human resources to build and operate steam locomotives, and partially due to the major commodity it hauled, coal. During the 1950s, N&W rebuilt its W Class 2-8-0 Consolidations into Shop Co W6 0-8-0Ts. In 1960, the N&W

became the last major railroad in the United States to abandon steam locomotives for diesel-electric motive power. Today, the Roanoke Shops continued to build and repair rolling stock until 2020 when NS closed them.

Later Years

Roanoke & Southern

The Roanoke & Southern Railway Company was organized in 1887, succeeding separate companies called Roanoke & Southern in



Aerial view of Lambert Point Coal Pier.

to coal piers at Lambert's Point, which was located in Norfolk County just north of the City of Norfolk on the Elizabeth River, where one of the busiest coal export facilities in the world was built to reach Hampton Roads shipping. A residential section was also developed to house the families of the workers. Many early residents of Lambert's Point were involved in the coal industry.

Roanoke Shops

The company was famous for building its own steam locomotives, a practice rare outside Britain (where most railways either built their own locomotives or had outside contractors build locomotives to their designs). The locomotives were built at

NORFOLK AND WESTERN RAILWAY																
Table 10—NORFOLK AND BRISTOL.																
25	1-11	15-41	29	23-13	Mis.	July 28, 1929.						14-4	12-2	30-16	42-16	28
(Eastern time.)																
.....	.....	P M	P M	A M	A M	o	lv. ... + Norfolk	δ	arr.	6 50	.....	7 30	A M	A M	.....	
.....	.....	*845	*6 00	*7 45	o	lv. ... + Norfolk	δ	arr.	6 50	.....	7 30	A M	A M	.....		
.....	.....	1040	8 50	10 03	8 1.6	arr. + Petersburg	lv.	4 35	.....	5 30	5 30	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	*945	*7 00	*9 00	.....	lv. ... Richmond	δ	arr.	6 25	.....	8 20	8 20	.....	.....		
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*AM	A M	2 15	12 35	2 10	204.5	arr. + Lynchburg	δ	lv.	1 20	P M	2 05	2 05	P M	.....		
*815	*6 55	2 25	12 55	2 25	204.5	arr. + Lynchburg	δ	arr.	1 10	7 15	1 55	1 55	*755	.....		
943	8 45	3 55	2 35	4 10	257.5	arr. ...	lv.	11 45	5 20	12 30	12 30	6 35	.....	.....		
955	8 55	5 45	4 20	4 25	257.5	lv. ...	lv.	11 30	5 10	10 30	12 10	6 25	.....	.....		
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.....	.....	9 42	.....	5 00	5 09	281.0	+ Shawsville	δ	.....	4 20	8 42	a	o	.....		
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.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	297.6	+ Walton	δ	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	11 02	.....	5 50	6 00	300.6	arr. + East Radford	lv.	10 05	3 40	8 58	n	o	5 13		
.....	.....	11 13	.....	5 50	6 20	300.6	lv. + East Radford	δ	10 00	3 25	8 58	n	o	5 13		
.....	.....	11 23	.....	5 54	6 24	302.8	+ Radford	δ	9 50	3 20	8 55	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	11 26	.....	5 57	6 27	302.8	+ New River	δ	9 53	3 16	8 50	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	11 39	.....	6 09	6 39	308.6	+ Dublin	δ	9 42	3 05	8 39	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	11 46	.....	.....	6 47	312.2	+ Wurno	δ	9 39	2 57	.....	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	11 53	.....	6 25	6 55	315.9	+ Pulaski	δ	9 25	2 48	6 23	n	o	.....		
.....	.....	12 18	.....	6 56	7 22	325.7	+ Max Meadows	δ	8 55	2 17	7 57	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	12 25	.....	.....	7 30	335.7	+ Kent	δ	.....	2 09	7 48	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	12 34	.....	7 12	7 40	335.7	+ Wytheville	δ	8 38	2 02	7 40	o	o	.....		
.....	.....	12 48	.....	7 27	7 55	344.4	+ Crockett	δ	8 21	1 45	7 25	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	12 58	.....	7 37	8 05	349.6	+ Rural Retreat	δ	8 12	1 35	7 15	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	1 05	.....	7 46	8 15	353.6	+ Groseclose	δ	8 04	1 25	7 05	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	1 15	.....	7 55	8 24	358.4	+ Atkins	δ	7 55	1 15	6 54	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	1 27	.....	8 05	8 35	363.9	+ Marion	δ	7 42	1 02	6 42	o	o	.....		
.....	.....	1 44	.....	8 22	8 49	371.3	+ Seven-Mile Ford	δ	7 26	12 44	6 23	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	1 52	.....	8 30	8 56	374.7	+ Chilhowie	δ	7 20	12 58	6 15	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	2 05	.....	8 42	9 08	380.3	+ Glade Spring	δ	7 10	12 28	6 04	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	2 13	.....	8 50	9 16	383.8	+ Emory	δ	7 02	12 20	5 53	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	2 18	.....	8 56	9 22	385.9	+ Meadow View	δ	6 58	12 15	5 48	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	2 40	.....	9 15	9 40	393.6	+ Abingdon	δ	6 43	11 59	5 32	o	o	.....		
.....	.....	2 52	.....	9 27	9 52	399.4	+ Wyndale	δ	6 32	11 48	5 18	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	3 00	.....	9 35	10 00	402.7	+ Wallace	δ	6 26	11 42	5 12	.....	.....	.....		
.....	.....	3 15	2025	9 50	10 15	408.3	arr. + Bristol	δ	6 15	11 30	5 00	*800	*2 15	.....		
(Eastern time.)																

North Carolina and Virginia. Norfolk and Western leased the Roanoke & Southern (called the Norfolk, Roanoke & Southern Rail Road by 1896) starting in 1892 but it became part of Norfolk and Western in 1911.

### **World Wars, Great Depression, and Efficiencies**

The N&W operated profitably through World War I and World War II and paid regular dividends throughout the Depression. During World War I, the N&W was jointly operated with VGN under the USRA's wartime takeover of the Pocahontas Roads. The operating efficiencies were significant, and after the war, when the railroads were returned to their respective owners and competitive status, the N&W never lost sight of the VGN and its low-gradient routing through Virginia. N&W meanwhile during World War 2 used their J's, K1's, A Class, and S1 Switchers to handle the troop trains from Ohio to Norfolk, a point of embarkation. Other three were New York, San Francisco, and San Diego. However, the US Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) turned down attempts at combining the roads until 1959, when a proposed N&W-VGN merger was finally approved.

The N&W also operated safely in this time, being the recipient of the Gold E. H. Harriman Award for 1938. In a promotional booklet published in 1939, the N&W wrote "For the second time in 12 years, the American Museum of Safety has awarded the Harri-man Memorial Gold Medal to the Norfolk & Western Railway for the outstanding safety record during 1938 among class I railroads of the United States." It is further noted that the railway carried one million passengers more than 86,000,000 miles without incident in the period from 1924 to 1938.

At the end of 1925, the N&W operated 2,241 miles of route on 4,429 miles track; at the end of 1956 NW operated 2,132 miles of route on 4,759 miles of track.

### **Acquiring the Virginian Railway**

VGN was conceived and built by William Nelson Page and Henry Huttleston Rogers. Page had helped engineer and build the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway (C&O) through the mountains of West Virginia and Rogers had already become a millionaire and a principal of Standard Oil before their partnership was

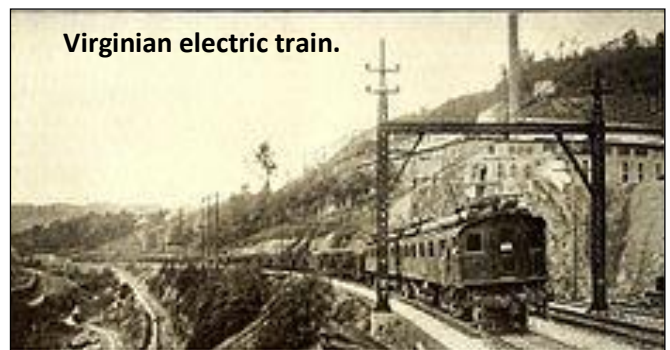
formed early in the 20th century.

Initially, their project was an 80-mile-long short line railroad. After failing to establish favorable rates to interchange coal traffic with the big railroads (who shut them out through collusion), the project expanded. Rogers was apparently a silent partner in the early stages, and the bigger railroads did not take Page seriously. However, the partners planned and then built a "Mountains to Sea" railroad from the coal fields of southern West Virginia to port near Norfolk at Sewell's Point in the harbor of Hampton Roads. They accomplished this right under the noses of the pre-existing and much bigger C&O and N&W railroads and their leaders by forming two small intrastate railroads, Deepwater Railway, in West Virginia, and Tidewater Railway in Virginia. Once right-of-way and land acquisitions had been secured, the two small railroads were merged in 1907 to form the Virginian Railway.

Engineered by Page and financed entirely from Rogers' personal resources, VGN lines were laid on the principle that picking the best route and buying the best equipment would save operating expenses.

Mark Twain spoke at VGN's dedication in Norfolk, Virginia, only 6 weeks before Rogers died in May 1909 after his only inspection trip on the newly completed railroad. That June, Booker T. Washington made a whistle-stop speaking tour on VGN, traveling in Rogers' private car, Dixie, and later revealing that Rogers had been instrumental in funding many small country schools and institutions of higher education in the South for the betterment of Black communities.

VGN operated over more modern alignments than the C&O, and the N&W, and its track was built to the highest standards. It provided major competition for coal traffic to C&O and the N&W. The 600-mile VGN



**Continued on Page 7 - N&W Rwy**

followed Rogers' philosophy throughout its profitable history, earning the nickname "Richest Little Railroad in the World." It operated some of the largest and most powerful steam, electric, and diesel locomotives.

The VGN electrified 134 miles of its route between 1922 and 1926 at a cost of \$15 million, and had its own power plant at Narrows, Virginia. It shared electrical resources with N&W from 1925 to 1950, when the N&W discontinued its own, shorter, electrified section through the Elkhorn Tunnel and Great Flat Top Mountain region. The VGN track was de-electrified in 1962, after the N&W-VGN merger.

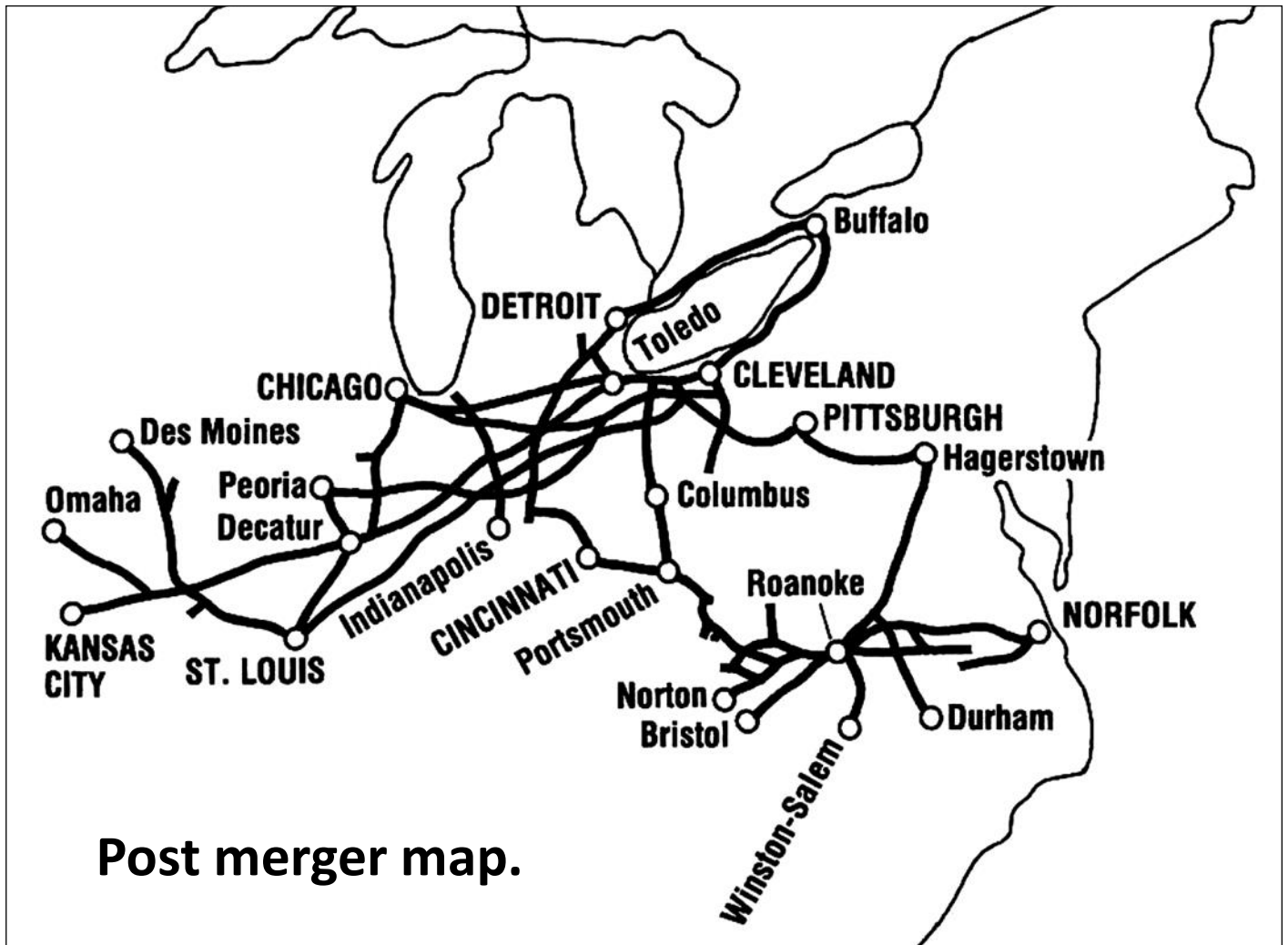
**Merger Era: 1960–1982**

In 1955, the N&W operated in North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, and Ohio. In 1959, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) approved VGN's merger into the N&W.

In 1964, the former Wabash; Nickel Plate; Pittsburgh and West Virginia Railway; and Akron, Canton and Youngstown Railroad were brought into the system in one of the most complex mergers of the era. This consolidation, plus the 1976 addition of a more direct route to Chicago, Illinois, made N&W an important Midwestern railroad that provided direct single-line service between the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes and Mississippi River.

In 1968, the N&W formed Dereco, a holding company that owned the Delaware & Hudson (D&H) and Erie Lackawanna (EL) railroads. Dereco's troubled railroads were not merged into the N&W: EL eventually joined Conrail and D&H was sold to Guilford Transportation Industries; it is now part of Canadian Pacific.

In 1970, the N&W operated in North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Penn-



**Post merger map.**

## Carolina Conductor

sylvania, New York, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa.

On September 1, 1981, the N&W acquired Illinois Terminal Railroad. The N&W was also a major investor in Piedmont Airlines. By 1996, N&W ran in most of the Midwest and Eastern states. Many N&W lines by 1998 were abandoned and some of them were never used again. However, the Norfolk to Bluefield line still exists but traffic has slowed because of its 12-mile 1.2% grade. ↘



↑ N&W had 4-8-0s called Mastodons. One of which still runs on the Strasburg Railroad in Pennsylvania.



N&W "J", "Y", and "A" class steam locomotives.



CHECK OUT THE CRHA:  
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