

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

LISTED ON:  
VLR 09/20/2012  
NRHP 11/21/2012

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Norfolk & Western Railway Freight Station  
other names/site number Virginia Museum of Transportation/ DHR # 128-6162

## 2. Location

street & number 303 Norfolk Avenue SW N/A not for publication  
city or town Roanoke  vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Indep. City code 770 zip code 24016

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

[Signature] Date 9/26/12  
Signature of certifying official Date

    Title Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

    Signature of commenting official     Date

    Title     State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register     determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register     removed from the National Register
- other (explain:    )

    Signature of the Keeper     Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- building(s)
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/rail-related  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:  
Colonial Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE  
walls: BRICK  
roof: METAL  
other: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### **Summary Description**

The former Norfolk & Western (N&W) Railway Freight Station is located at 303 Norfolk Avenue SW in a historically industrial/transportation-related neighborhood in the City of Roanoke, Virginia. The rectangular 3.14-acre property is bounded on the south by Norfolk Avenue SW, on the east by Second Street SW, on the north by the eastbound main tracks of the Norfolk/Southern Railroad, and on the west by a Norfolk/Southern-owned vacant lot. There is one contributing building consisting of two distinct sections, both completed in 1918: the two-story, fifty-bay-long and three-bay-deep Freight Station proper and its attached one-story-with-basement, four-bay-wide and eight-bay-deep Annex. The Freight Station stands on a concrete foundation and is of steel-frame construction with a brick veneer curtain wall laid in Flemish bond. It has a metal-clad gable roof with gable-end brick parapets and a one-story, metal-roofed canopy on the north and south elevations. A concrete loading platform runs most of the length of the north elevation. Except for the modern central entrance and flanking plate glass windows on the south facade, the Freight Station retains most of its original metal rolltop doors running the length of the building's south and north elevations. The Freight Station's second story consists of 6/6 and 8/8 metal pivot windows. The interior space was rehabilitated in 1986 for use as the Virginia Museum of Transportation, but retains the original concrete floors, exposed metal roof trusses, most of the original exposed brick walls, and original interior metal rolltop doors. The Annex is also of steel frame construction with a Flemish bond brick veneer and features a parapet roof, a recessed entrance porch on the south, a secondary entrance on the north, and metal fixed-sash windows. Several windows in the Annex have been bricked in or filled in with glass blocks. The Annex interior retains most of its original room configurations intact, as well as such original features as the interior stair, two cashiers' windows, and wooden sliding doors along the main corridor. To the north of the Freight Station is the Robert B. Claytor and W. Graham Claytor Jr. Pavilion, a non-contributing two-story metal shed built in 1996 to shelter outdoor museum exhibits.

### **Detailed Description**

#### *Location and Setting*

The former Norfolk & Western (N&W) Railway Freight Station (now known as the Virginia Museum of Transportation) is located at 303 Norfolk Avenue SW in the City of Roanoke, Virginia. The rectangular 3.14-acre Freight Station property is bounded on the south by Norfolk Avenue SW, on the east by Second Street SW and the highway bridge that carries Second Street over the railroad tracks, on the north by the eastbound main tracks of the Norfolk/Southern Railroad, and on the west by a Norfolk/Southern-owned vacant lot. To the south is an asphalt-paved parking lot, although a portion of the original brick-paved parking area is still visible bordering the Freight Station's south facade. A small modern brick-and concrete paved plaza containing planters and museum exhibits is located south of the Freight Station, just to the east of the building's main entrance.

The Freight Station property is located in an industrial/transportation-related neighborhood of southwest Roanoke. Within sight of the Freight Station are several other buildings historically associated with the N&W Railway in Roanoke, including the company's former corporate headquarters located at General Office Building-South (1896-1907) and General Office Building-North (1931); the 1905 (remodeled 1949) N&W Passenger Station (now the O. Winston Link Museum); and the Hotel Roanoke, built by the N&W in 1882. All four buildings are listed in the National Register. Immediately to the Freight Station's east is the Roanoke Warehouse National Register Historic District, consisting of two blocks of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century brick warehouses.

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### *Freight Station Exterior Description*

The N&W Railway Freight Station consists of two clearly identifiable sections, both of which were completed in 1918: the two-story, fifty-bay-long Freight Station proper which was built parallel to the railroad tracks and now is oriented south, and the one-story-with-basement brick Annex that formerly housed the offices of the Shenandoah and Radford divisions of the N&W and was built perpendicular to the Freight Station's east gable end.

The two-story Freight Station stands on a concrete foundation and is of steel-frame construction with a brick curtain wall laid in Flemish bond. The building measures approximately 750 feet long and 50 feet deep and has 50 bays along the south façade and three bays along its west elevation. The foundation along the south façade is partially faced with squared wood railroad ties. The building has a low-pitched, metal-clad gable roof and gable-end brick parapets (the roof was partially replaced following a 2006 windstorm). The eaves are finished with metal coping and a box cornice with wood molding. A one-story, shed-roofed metal canopy runs along the Freight Station's south façade on all but the western nine bays. The jig-sawn wood rafter tails are exposed and the canopy is supported by a triangular metal truss system.

Nearly all of the bays along the south façade have retained their original full-height metal rolltop doors, although they are not currently operational. The building's main entrance near the center of the south façade dates from the 1986 conversion of the former Freight Station to the Virginia Museum of Transportation and is accessed by brick-clad steps and a brick-and-concrete handicapped ramp. The entrance consists of a double-leaf, glass-and-metal door which is flanked by tall plate glass windows. Above the entrance is a metal sign lettered with VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION.

The building's second story on both the north and south elevations consists almost entirely of fenestration, characterized by a tri-partite grouping at each bay of an 8/8-light or 6/6-light metal pivot window flanked by a 6/6-light metal pivot window on either side. Most of the windows are still operational and in good condition with only a few having broken or cracked panes.

The west gable end features a non-historic metal rolltop door flanked on either side by three small metal 1/1 double-hung sash windows. The second story has been altered by the bricking in of the two north window bays, although the south window bay with its 8/8 and 6/6-light metal pivot windows is original. There is a non-historic porch with a flat metal roof supported on metal posts.

The north elevation is similar to the south façade with its metal coping and box cornice, fenestration, and metal-roofed canopy with truss system supports and wood rafter tails. A raised concrete loading platform runs along the entire length of the north elevation, with either concrete or wooden steps placed at regular intervals leading down to the ground level. A modern resin handicapped ramp is near the center of the loading platform. The north elevation has slightly fewer rolling doors than on the south; there are three single-leaf wood doors irregularly placed along the north which lead into interior offices.

### *Freight Station Interior Description*

The Freight Station interior originally consisted of three large rooms with concrete floors, exposed brick walls, and a metal truss roofing system running north-south joined by metal tie-rods. Each large room is divided from the other by brick partition walls with four metal rolltop doors. In 1986, the building was rehabilitated for use as the Virginia Museum of Transportation and the eastern room was divided up into smaller exhibition spaces by frame partition walls with drywall finish. This area also contains a gift shop, ticket office, rest rooms, and janitor's and supply closets. The center room is used as a single exhibition room and has retained most of its

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original open space and features intact. The west room (not open to the public) is now used for storage and has also retained its original floors, walls, and exposed roof framing.

#### *Annex Exterior Description*

The Annex is four bays wide and eight bays deep with its principal entrance on the south and a secondary entrance on the north. It has a shallow-pitched metal-clad roof hidden behind a brick parapet with a concrete cap. The building is of metal frame construction with a brick curtain wall laid in Flemish bond. There is a prominent wood and metal cornice. Brick soldier bond is used for the window lintels, to frame the entrance, and to frame a square above the entrance porch with small concrete corners. The recessed entrance porch shelters a double-leaf, wood-and-glass door above which is a rectangular 10-pane transom. On the south, there are tri-partite, 9-pane windows lighting the basement story; tri-partite 15-pane windows on the first story; and a single 9-pane window on the west end of each story. The east elevation retains the original tri-partite windows on the basement level, but the windows on the upper level have been either bricked in or filled in with glass blocks. Historic photographs indicate that they were once tri-partite 15-pane windows as seen on the south elevation. The north elevation has metal steps leading to the first story and concrete steps leading to the basement level. The entrance features a single-leaf, wood-and-glass door flanked by rectangular 3-pane sidelights and topped by a wood-and-metal canopy, above which is a tri-partite wooden window. The windows on either side of the entrance have been bricked in. Historic photographs indicate that they were once tri-partite 15-pane windows as seen on the south elevation. On the west elevation, the windows have been bricked in or filled in with glass blocks. Historic photographs indicate that they too were once tri-partite 15-pane windows like on the south elevation.

#### *Annex Interior Description*

The Annex was originally built to house the offices of the N&W Roanoke freight agents, clerks, and accounting department. Although renovated over the years to house the administrative personnel of the N&W's Radford and Shenandoah Divisions, and after 1986, the administrative and research staff of the Virginia Museum of Transportation, it has retained most of its original interior features intact.

A wide carpeted staircase with intermediate landing, wood handrail, and square newel post leads from the south entrance to the first floor. Immediately to the left (south) are two large offices (originally the N&W freight agent's office and private office with bathroom). Flanking the main corridor on either side are four windows (now filled with mirrors) within a molded wood frame and a single ledge or counter on wood brackets. The windows on the north side of the corridor opened off the N&W cashier's office. The frame is now topped by a sign reading: "Shenandoah Division Offices." The windows on the south side of the corridor are similarly sealed and opened off the N&W billing clerks' offices. There are four additional offices on either side of the corridor. Each is accessed by a single-leaf wood door with two recessed panels and a large glass window. A continuous row of transom windows with molded wood frames runs above the doors on both sides of the corridors; the panes have been painted over. Each door also has a full-height sliding metal door that runs along a metal rod atop the door opening, although these doors are no longer used. The corridor walls are plastered and the floors are mostly carpeted, although a small section of the original narrow-width wood floors are visible near the north entrance. The basement level is used for storage and has no distinguishing features other than its original concrete floors and plastered walls.

#### *Robert B. Claytor and W. Graham Claytor Jr. Pavilion (Non-contributing structure)*

To the north of the Freight Station and to the west of the Annex is a non-contributing two-story metal shed with asymmetrical metal gable roof built to shelter the Virginia Museum of Transportation's outdoor exhibits,

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including its collection of historic N&W locomotives and rolling stock. The shed was built in 1996 and named for Roanoke natives and former railroad executives Robert B. Claytor and W. Graham Claytor Jr.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

**Period of Significance**

1918-1964

**Significant Dates**

1918

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Office of the Chief Engineer, Norfolk & Western Railway Co.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The Norfolk & Western Railway Freight Station was completed in 1918 and continued in operation until it was closed for railway freight business in 1964.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Norfolk & Western Railway Freight Station is significant under Criterion A on the local level in the area of transportation for its association with the history of the N&W Railway (now Norfolk-Southern), which for nearly 100 years played a significant role in the industrial development of Roanoke. Roanoke's railroad history began with the arrival of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad in 1852. In 1882, Roanoke became the most important junction point as well as corporate headquarters for the newly-formed N&W. The N&W went on to become a major carrier of coal from mines in West Virginia and Virginia. Construction of freight handling and locomotive manufacturing facilities at Roanoke by the N&W during the late nineteenth century spurred unprecedented economic and population growth in Roanoke during this period. To handle freight traffic in Roanoke, the N&W for many years utilized several older depots, including a former passenger station it had inherited from a predecessor railroad, the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio. Deemed inadequate for the ever-increasing amount of freight traffic coming into Roanoke, the N&W built a new freight station at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Norfolk Avenues beginning in 1916. Opened for freight operations in 1917, the station was completed in 1918. In addition to handling freight, the station included an Annex for its freight accounting and billing staff. The period of significance for the N&W Railway Freight Station extends from its completion date in 1918 through its closing for railroad freight business in 1964.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

## **Statement of Significance**

### *1. Historical Overview of the Norfolk & Western Railway*

The origins of the N&W Railway can be traced back to the ten-mile-long City Point Railroad built in 1837 between City Point, near the head of navigation on the James River, and Petersburg, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> Although it also carried passengers, the City Point Railroad was built primarily for the transport of agricultural goods, timber and minerals, presaging the basic business philosophy of its eventual successor, the N&W Railway. In 1842, coal was discovered twenty miles north of Petersburg and by the close of the year 350,000 bushels of coal had been raised from the ground and shipped via rail.<sup>2</sup> Thus began the close connection between coal and railroads in Virginia.

The City Point Railroad was a marginally successful carrier of mostly agricultural produce before the Civil War. In 1847, the City Point Railroad became the Appomattox Railroad; in 1854 it was sold to the Southside Railroad which operated between Petersburg and Lynchburg.<sup>3</sup> Further westward, connections with the Southside Railroad were planned in 1858 in conjunction with the Virginia & Tennessee (V&T) Railroad.<sup>4</sup> The latter railroad had initiated service to Big Lick (later Roanoke, Virginia) on November 1, 1852, had built shops at Central City (now Radford, Virginia) in 1856, and had extended its trackage to Bristol, Virginia, by the end of 1856.<sup>5</sup>

The Civil War brought a halt to both railroads' ambitious expansion plans, and they were forced to concentrate on their role as major carriers of Confederate troops, materiel, and vital agricultural produce within Virginia. The 1852 V&T railroad depot at Big Lick was burned in June, 1864, by Union troops under General Hunter.<sup>6</sup> The Southside Railroad was seized and briefly operated by Union forces between 1864 and 1865, but was returned to private ownership shortly thereafter.

After the Civil War, the trend toward consolidation of smaller intercity lines in the upper South to form larger, interconnected rail networks increased dramatically. In 1871, the Southside, the Norfolk & Petersburg, and the V&T Railroads were consolidated into the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio (AM&O) Railroad, indicative of the

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geographic aspirations of the new railroad's directors.<sup>7</sup> During 1873, the AM&O embarked on an ambitious program of improvements to its tracks, switching facilities, and passenger stations, including a brick passenger depot in Roanoke at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Shenandoah Avenue NW.<sup>8</sup> Profits were mostly eaten up by these improvements, however, and the railroad's financial health was further aggravated by extensive flood damage to its bridges in 1873 and 1876. In 1876, the AM&O Railroad went into receivership and on April 4, 1881, its track bed, property, and franchises were sold at auction.<sup>9</sup>

Clarence H. Clark of the E.W. Clark banking firm of Philadelphia purchased the AM&O and renamed the line the Norfolk & Western Railroad. The firm had already purchased the Shenandoah Valley Railroad in 1879, installed Frederick J. Kimball as president of the Shenandoah Valley Construction Company, and charged him with building that line south from Maryland to a connection with the AM&O at Big Lick.<sup>10</sup> Clark and Kimball also served as charter members of the Roanoke Land & Improvement Company, an organization incorporated in September 1881, for the purpose of "acquisition of land at Roanoke, which is to be point of connection between Norfolk & Western and the Shenandoah Valley railroads, to improve the same by laying out into streets, the erection of houses, and also to build and equip a hotel capacity about 20."<sup>11</sup>

The owners of the new N&W Railroad aggressively cut freight rates, pressed for completion of the Shenandoah Valley line, and then arranged for its absorption into the N&W system. By the end of 1881, its first vice-president Frederick J. Kimball committed the N&W to a crucial path, "one that defines and summarizes Kimball's contribution to the railroad and is largely responsible for the distinctive pattern to this day . . . the reaching out into the coal fields."<sup>12</sup>

Kimball based his vision for the N&W on his knowledge of several previous investigations of the untapped coal resources of southwestern Virginia and southern West Virginia. Kimball had read reports submitted to the directors of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad that pointed to specific deposits of coal in the Clinch River valley of Tazewell County, Virginia.<sup>13</sup> Based on this study, Kimball decided that it was economically viable to build a railroad route to the coal deposits, thereby supplying coal to Eastern factories and domestic markets, as well as supplying the N&W with its own source of cheap fuel.

Work on the N&W Railroad's New River Division, which ran west from New River Depot in Pulaski County and Radford to Pocahontas, Virginia, commenced in late 1881. On March 12, 1883, the first car of coal was loaded at the mine at Pocahontas bound for Norfolk. That year, the N&W Railroad carried 81,900 tons of coal.<sup>14</sup>

The 1882 N&W *Annual Report* had predicted that "the completion of the New River Railroad from New River Station to the Flat Top Mountain Coal Region . . . will mark a new era of prosperity for this road and the country traversed by it."<sup>15</sup> The new shipping, repair, and switching facilities developed by the N&W at numerous points along its route led to increased economic activity in these communities.<sup>16</sup> Roanoke for its part benefited as a junction point between the N&W and the Shenandoah Valley Railroad, which connected the city with Hagerstown, Maryland, to the north beginning in June 1882. The N&W held a controlling interest in the Shenandoah Valley Railroad until 1890, when it acquired the railroad outright.<sup>17</sup>

By late 1893, the newly operational mines along the completed route were having an immediate effect on the N&W's freight hauling business. Nevertheless, the 1890s were a difficult period for the N&W financially. The severe economic downturn of 1893 - 1894 greatly decreased demand for mined coal, and the N&W was left with huge stockpiles of unsold coal at both Roanoke and its Lambert Point facility in Norfolk. Faced with these economic difficulties, the N&W Railroad went into receivership in 1895.<sup>18</sup>

The company emerged reorganized as the Norfolk & Western Railway, headquartered in Roanoke, and with Kimball once again at the helm of the by-now 1,700-mile-long rail system. The N&W Railway remained committed to its role as a coal carrier after the reorganization. Between 1897 and 1899, the quantity of coal

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transported along the railroad increased from 3.6 million tons to over 4 million tons and coke shipments increased from 1.1 million tons to 1.25 million tons.<sup>19</sup> By 1899, the business in coal, coke, and lumber had grown so rapidly that the limits of the N&W's facilities at Roanoke and other freight delivery points had been reached, justifying new expenditure on realignments and double-tracking, rolling stock, and repair facilities at the division points.

Writing in 1891, the N&W's General Manager Sands put it best: "the coal business is our backbone."<sup>20</sup> In 1898-1899, the railroad carried almost 4 million tons of coal from the Pocahontas coalfield; by 1902 - 1903, this figure had increased to almost 5.5 million tons.<sup>21</sup> Over the years, the N&W developed a symbiotic relationship with the region's coal and coke mining companies. In 1901, the Pocahontas Coal & Coke Company was formed.<sup>22</sup> Wholly owned by the N&W, the company controlled approximately 300,000 acres of land in Virginia and West Virginia, of which nearly 180,000 were leased for development and mining.

The amount of coal shipped by this virtual railroad monopoly increased exponentially in the 1890s and early 1900s, far exceeding even the most optimistic expectations of the N&W's original builders. Barely 5,000 tons of coal were shipped over the N&W in 1882, its first full year of operation. In 1893, following completion of the Ohio Extension, the figure had risen to 2,869,215 tons.<sup>23</sup> By the 1910s, the figures had reached astounding levels: 15,467,781 tons of coal were transported over the N&W system in 1910 and 23,289,110 in 1914.<sup>24</sup>

The coal boom in the southern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia coal fields during the 1910s and 1920s ended sharply with the Great Depression, spiked up again during World War II, and then declined rapidly during the 1950s and 1960s. Factors contributing to this last decline included the rise of alternative energy sources, overproduction, inefficient mining practices, and labor strife. As the backbone of the N&W's freight business, the coal industry and its transformation beginning in the 1930s greatly affected the railroad, although the N&W remained consistently profitable throughout this period.

The 1950s were a time of change for the N&W as well. Although freight tonnage along the N&W remained consistently high, fewer workers were required to man freight yards, service rolling stock, and run trains. By the late 1950s, the N&W had made the momentous turn away from steam power towards diesel fuel, ending a significant chapter in its history. Employment at many of the railroad's facilities, including its headquarters in Roanoke, declined steadily, even as the N&W recorded increased yearly profits.

During the late 1950s and into the late 1970s, the N&W sought to acquire smaller, profitable railroads to both increase its market share and to access additional markets in the Midwest and Northeast. In 1959, it succeeded in acquiring the Virginian Railroad, its main rival in the coal-hauling business in southern West Virginia. During the 1960s, the N&W acquired both the Wabash Railway and the Nickel Plate Road (officially the New York, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad).

In 1982, the N&W combined with the equally financially strong Southern Railway system to form the new Norfolk/Southern Railway. The Southern Railway, with a history almost as old as the N&W, stood out during an era in which many national railroads were failing or were coming under federal ownership. The merger also was done to compete in the eastern United States with the Chessie System-Seaboard Coast Line merger which had been approved by the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1980, resulting in the formation of CSX Transportation. As a result of the transaction, Norfolk/Southern rail operations grew to include some 7,200 miles of the Conrail system (predominately the former Penn-Central Railroad). Headquarters for the newly established Norfolk/Southern Corporation were moved from Roanoke to Norfolk..

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## 2. *Roanoke and the Norfolk & Western Railway*

The birth of the City of Roanoke is synonymous with the birth of the N&W. Between 1881 and 1883, the establishment of a junction of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad and the newly formed N&W at Big Lick, Virginia, fostered a population growth from 700 to 5,000.<sup>25</sup> Seeking a more modern image, the town council changed the city's name to Roanoke in February 1882 and the city was re-chartered as Roanoke in 1884.<sup>26</sup>

The junction of the N&W and the Shenandoah Valley Railroads at Roanoke placed much bridge line traffic through the city and added to its industrial base in the form of rolling mills, railroad repair shops, and passenger and freight car manufacturing shops. The Roanoke Machine Works started production in 1882, with the first steam locomotive produced there in 1884.<sup>27</sup> The offices of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad moved to Roanoke in 1883, joining the N&W which had had its corporate headquarters in Roanoke since 1881.

In 1882, the N&W began construction of the Hotel Roanoke (destroyed by fire in 1898 and rebuilt and added onto several times thereafter) on land just north of the railroad passenger station; the old General Office Building (destroyed by fire in 1896 and rebuilt as well) to the west along Shenandoah Avenue, and the 85-acre East Roanoke Shops located east of Williamson Road.<sup>28</sup> The railroad also built a new Roanoke Union Station at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE that year and the joining of the two railroads is memorialized in the names of the two intersecting Shenandoah and Norfolk Avenues.<sup>29</sup> The old AM&O passenger depot on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW was re-used as the N&W Railroad's freight depot to handle local freight deliveries and remained in use until replaced by a new N&W Freight Station on Norfolk Avenue (now the Virginia Museum of Transportation) in 1917.

This first N&W General Office Building formed with the Union Station and Hotel Roanoke a stylistically unified ensemble of Queen Anne-style buildings. On January 4, 1896, this original cohesive unit was destroyed when the office building burned to the ground. A *Roanoke Times* reporter wrote in the January 5, 1896 edition, "The lonely chimneys, broken walls and smoldering ruins of the once handsome building presented a sad picture of desolation and destruction ..."<sup>30</sup>

In 1888, Roanoke was made the division point for train and engine crews and in subsequent years the terminal complex was extended westward to 24<sup>th</sup> Street NW.<sup>31</sup> During this same time, the N&W was undergoing a major reorganization, and when the company's office building burned, it was rumored that the railroad would move its general offices from Roanoke. The rumors seemed well-founded following the general financial panic of 1893. Yet without delay, the railroad company began construction on the Norfolk & Western Railway Company General Office Building South which was completed in late 1896. In July 1, 1897, a *Roanoke Times* reporter wrote, "The new building is a substantial and lasting monument to the feeling of confidence in us and our section that the management of Norfolk & Western have had...This should forever end rumor with regard to the company's removing its general offices from Roanoke."<sup>32</sup>

As an indication of the railroad's impact on Roanoke, the city, which became the home of N&W's company managers and workers, included 58 dwellings in 1881, and increased to 268 in 1882, with the number increasing exponentially throughout the 1890s and into the first decades of the twentieth century. By 1890, Roanoke's population had increased from 400 to approximately 25,000 people.<sup>33</sup>

By the early 1900s, Roanoke was the rail hub for the New River, Shenandoah, Winston-Salem, Radford, and Roanoke Terminal Divisions of the N&W, as well as for the Virginian Railway, which reached Roanoke in 1907. The Virginian Railway properties lay approximately one mile south of the N&W's and consisted of the South Roanoke Yards with shops and a roundhouse.<sup>34</sup>

The N&W continued to expand its facilities at Roanoke throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A roundhouse and railroad YMCA were built at 12<sup>th</sup> Street NW in 1903. The old Union Depot was

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demolished and replaced by a Colonial Revival-style brick structure in 1905 (the station was extensively modernized in 1949 by industrial designer Raymond Loewy).<sup>35</sup> In 1906, the first terminal trackage west of Shaffer's Crossing was laid and in 1918 a round house was built. By the 1930s, the extensive N&W yards at Roanoke included a forwarding yard, a classification yard, a pull-up yard, and a receiving yard.<sup>36</sup>

At the Roanoke Shops, the N&W workers learned the skills needed to build its own steam locomotives in-house. During the 1930s, the shops employed over 6,000 workers, who were producing 4 steam locomotives and 20 freight cars each day. Products included locomotives of all sizes and of increasingly better technology, from switching engines to the famed streamlined J-class passenger locomotives, the huge articulated Y5 and Y6-classes for low speed coal drags, and the A-class for fast freight service. A total of 447 locomotives were manufactured at Roanoke during a 70-year time span.<sup>37</sup>

In 1929, after years of talk about a merger between the N&W and the Pennsylvania Railroad, there was again speculation that the railroad would move from Roanoke. Although the rumors generated fear that the merger would lead to an exodus of jobs and workers from Roanoke, confidence was restored on October 1, 1929, when the N&W announced plans to build a second high-rise corporate office building on the lot adjoining the 1896 General Office Building.<sup>38</sup> The Art Deco-style "new" General Office Building was completed in 1931.

A surge in passenger rail travel during and shortly after World War II prompted the N&W to redesign its Roanoke passenger station in 1949-1950, employing the services of famed industrial designer Raymond Loewy. Competition from airlines and the interstate highway system, however, led to a steady decline in passenger rail traffic nationally, including the N&W. Passenger service to Roanoke was discontinued by the N&W on May 1, 1971. Service between Roanoke and Norfolk and Roanoke and Cincinnati was continued by AMTRAK for a few years, and a small passenger depot was built on Shenandoah Avenue between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets, across the tracks from the N&W Freight Station.<sup>39</sup> Passenger rail service to Roanoke ceased in 1979.

The Norfolk & Western Railway Company General Office Buildings provided corporate office space for the railroad company between 1896 and 1982. After the merger of the N&W with the Southern Railway to form the Norfolk/Southern Corporation, the corporate headquarters were moved to Norfolk in 1982. After this move, the Norfolk/Southern began to donate many of its real estate holdings and buildings to universities or various local non-profit organizations. The Hotel Roanoke was donated to Virginia Tech. The General Office Buildings and passenger station were donated to the Roanoke Foundation for Downtown, Inc.<sup>40</sup> The passenger station has since re-opened as the home of the O. Winston Link Museum. In 1996, Norfolk/Southern donated its 1918 Freight Station, mostly vacant since it closed for freight service in 1964, to the Virginia Museum of Transportation.<sup>41</sup>

### *3. Construction History of the Norfolk & Western Railway Freight Station, Roanoke*

Before the advent of interstate highways and commercial truck transportation, nearly all freight was transported by rail. Rail freight cars brought agricultural and manufactured products, merchandise, building materials, and coal and coke for heating homes and powering industries. Roanoke, located at the junction point of six major railroad divisions, was an important drop-off point for freight for delivery and distribution throughout the city and surrounding region.

Freight rail service to Roanoke (then known as Big Lick) commenced in 1852 with the arrival of the Virginia & Tennessee (V&T) Railroad. It, and its successor railroad, the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio (AM&O) Railroad built crude freight depots, although freight was often just loaded off onto a rail siding. The AM&O was reorganized as the N&W in 1881 and in 1882 the Shenandoah Valley Railroad reached Roanoke, increasing the need for adequate freight handling and drop-off facilities. A new union passenger station was built by the N&W in 1904

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at a location east of Jefferson Street. Thereafter, the old AM&O passenger station, located at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW and Shenandoah Avenue north of the N&W railroad tracks served as the N&W's freight station.

In the 1880s, the N&W-owned property located at 2<sup>nd</sup> (Commerce) Street SW and Norfolk Avenue, diagonally across from the N&W freight station, was occupied by a tobacco warehouse, several sheds and small dwellings, and a livery stable.<sup>42</sup> On the 1893, 1898 and 1903 Sanborn Maps of Roanoke, the site is identified as occupied by the W. K. Andrews Coal and Wood Yard, with mostly frame storage buildings shown. The map also indicates a new or renovated N&W freight station had been built on the site of the old AM&O station.<sup>43</sup>

On February 23, 1916, the N&W Office of the Chief Engineer executed a "General Layout of Transfer Shed and Freight Station, Roanoke, Virginia" (Drawing 9913) for the Norfolk Avenue property. On February 15, 1917, the Office of the Chief Engineer produced a drawing "Freight Depot, Roanoke, Virginia." (Drawing Y-104445-K, Sheet No. 1) The N&W's *Annual Report* for 1917 indicates that the freight station was being built that year at the Norfolk Avenue location in Roanoke.<sup>44</sup> A photograph dated September 3, 1917, also shows the building under construction. The freight station was built under President's Authority (PA)-3353, and the accounting in that PA indicates that some work on the freight station continued at least until the end of 1918. The cost as of December 1918 was \$490,122.98.<sup>45</sup>

The 1917 freight station floor plan shows the two large offices at the south end of the Annex labeled Agent's Office and Agent's Private Office. The four offices on the east side of the hallway are labeled (from north to south): Chief Dispatcher, Dispatcher, Supervisor of Bridges and Buildings, and Cashier's Office. The offices on the west side are labeled (from north to south) Billing Clerk, Superintendent Shenandoah Division, Assistant Superintendent Shenandoah Division, and Chief Clerk.<sup>46</sup> According to the 1919 Sanborn Map and a February 1931 photograph, there were two long transfer sheds extending the length of the freight station (equivalent to approximately 24 40-foot-long railroad box cars) along the tracks to the north of the station, and a shorter transfer shed extending along a siding at the west gable end.<sup>47</sup> These three transfer sheds were later demolished by the N&W.

Freight was carried in various box cars as carload (CL) or less-than carload (LCL) delivery and was loaded or unloaded at the freight station. In the early 1920s, nearly 100 carloads per day were shipped out of Roanoke, not counting inbound cars. At any one time, the freight station could hold over 150 standard 40-foot-long box cars. In the 1920s the N&W added so-called "trackless trains," or motorized cars pulling a long train of smaller carts of unloaded freight to different points within the freight station.<sup>48</sup>

Competition from tractor trailers increased during the 1950s and with the construction of the interstate highway system in the 1960s. The N&W Freight Station was closed when the railroad ceased less-than-carload freight operations in 1964. In 1965, the Office of the Chief Engineer prepared plans for conversion/renovation of the eastern one third of the freight station to house the N&W's Radford division. The remaining freight station space was leased for warehouse use. In 1982, with the merger of the N&W and the Southern Railroad to form Norfolk/Southern, most of the office space was vacated. In 1986, the N&W leased the freight station to the Virginia Transportation Museum and in 1996, Norfolk/Southern donated the building to the museum, which occupies it today.

#### 4. *Virginia Transportation Museum*

In 1963, the Roanoke Transportation Museum opened in Wasena Park on the Roanoke River in Roanoke. At that time, the key exhibits included a United States Army rocket and a J-class locomotive that had been donated by the N&W. As the museum grew, other key artifacts outlining the history of transportation in Roanoke were added including a horse-drawn hearse and other transportation treasures. In February 1982, the Roanoke Transportation Museum was designated the official Transportation Museum of Virginia by a joint

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resolution of the General Assembly.<sup>49</sup> In July 1985, the museum's name was changed to the Virginia Museum of Transportation (VMT).

In November 1985, a severe flood heavily damaged Wasena Park and the transportation museum facilities, causing nearly a half-million dollars in damage to the latter. Deciding not to rebuild at the Wasena Park location, the VMT's board of directors accepted an offer from Norfolk/Southern to lease space at the former N&W Freight Station on Norfolk Avenue SW and the museums' exhibits were re-installed at the new location by April 1986.<sup>50</sup> In addition to offering a rent-free lease, Norfolk/Southern stated that the lease could be renewed for two consecutive 10-year periods. After it reopened in 1986, the museum continued to add to its exhibits including an N&W A-class, a Pennsylvania Railroad locomotive, a Virginian Railway EL-C electric locomotive, the last remaining steam locomotive from the Virginian Railway and more than 50 other pieces of railway transportation history.

In 1993, the VMT announced plans to construct a \$3.7-million shelter for its outdoor exhibits.<sup>51</sup> The 17,400 square foot metal shed was completed in 1996 and named for Roanoke natives and former railroad executives Robert B. Claytor and W. Graham Claytor Jr. In 1996, Norfolk/Southern donated the former freight station by deed to the VMT.<sup>52</sup> Upon its acquisition from Norfolk/Southern, the VMT added a pedestrian plaza and a new south entrance.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: **VA Department of Historic Resources**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR no. 128-6162

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3.14 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>0593328</u>	<u>4125674</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated boundaries are shown as the solid black line enclosing the 3.14-acre Lot No. 1 as shown on Roanoke City Map Book 1, Page 1640: "Plat of Survey Showing the Subdivision of the Property of Norfolk & Western Railway Company Situate on Norfolk Avenue SW and Second Street SW, Roanoke, Virginia" (Hayes, Seay, Mattern & Mattern, Inc., Engineers, Architects, Surveyors, Roanoke, VA, December 28, 1996.) The boundaries of Lot No. 1 correspond to Tax Parcel No. 1010140 as recorded by the City of Roanoke Real Estate GIS.

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**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated boundaries include the historic Norfolk & Western Railway Freight Station building and correspond to the Lot No. 1 deeded by the Norfolk/Southern Corporation (formerly Norfolk & Western Railway) to the Virginia Museum of Transportation in 1996.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Norfolk & Western Freight Station, Roanoke City, VA**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS Page 1**

**Name of Property:** Norfolk & Western Railway Freight Station  
**City or Vicinity:** Roanoke  
**County:** Roanoke **State:** Virginia  
**Photographer:** Geoffrey B. Henry and Ellen Jenkins (Photographs 1-22)  
**Date Photographed:** December 20, 2011  
Photographs 23-26 are reproduced courtesy of the Norfolk & Western Historical Society, Roanoke, Virginia.

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

**Freight Station, south elevation, looking northeast**  
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**Freight Station, south elevation, looking northwest**  
2 of 26

**Freight Station, south elevation, Virginia Museum of Transportation entrance, looking north**

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**Freight Station, south elevation, looking northwest  
4 of 26**

**Freight Station, south elevation, detail of doors and windows, looking north  
5 of 26**

**Freight Station, south elevation, detail of canopy, looking east  
6 of 26**

**Freight Station, west elevation, looking northeast  
7 of 26**

**Freight Station Annex, south elevation, looking northwest  
8 of 26**

**Freight Station Annex, east elevation, looking southwest  
9 of 26**

**Freight Station Annex, north elevation, looking southeast  
10 of 26**

**Freight Station, north elevation and platform, looking west  
11 of 26**

**Freight Station, north elevation, looking southwest  
12 of 26**

**Freight Station, interior of current VMT exhibition space, looking west  
13 of 26**

**Freight Station, interior of current VMT exhibition space, looking east  
14 of 26**

**Freight Station, interior of present VMT exhibition space, looking northwest  
15 of 26**

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PHOTOGRAPHS Page 1**

**Freight Station, detail of roof truss system, looking southwest  
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**Freight Station Annex, cashiers' window in lobby, looking north  
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**Freight Station Annex, stairway, looking north  
18 of 26**

**Freight Station Annex, billing clerks' window in lobby, looking west  
19 of 26**

**Freight Station Annex, main hallway, looking north  
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**Freight Station Annex, door detail, looking southeast**  
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**Freight Station Annex, door detail, looking southeast**  
**22 of 26**

**View of N&W Freight Station under construction, looking east along railroad tracks**  
**Source: Norfolk & Western Historical Society, Roanoke, Virginia**  
**Date: September 3, 1917**  
**23 of 26**

**Birds eye view of Freight Station Annex, east elevation, looking west**  
**Source: Norfolk & Western Historical Society, Roanoke, Virginia**  
**Date: February 1931**  
**24 of 26**

**Freight Station Annex, southeast corner, looking northwest**  
**Source: Norfolk & Western Historical Society, Roanoke, Virginia**  
**Date: Unknown**  
**25 of 26**

**Interior of Norfolk & Western Freight Station, looking west**  
**Source: Norfolk & Western Historical Society, Roanoke, Virginia**  
**Date: January 28, 1943**  
**26 of 26**

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 6.
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- <sup>7</sup> FHWA, *Through the Coalfields* (2010), 11.
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- <sup>15</sup> Norfolk & Western Railroad Company. *Annual Report* (1882), 3.
- <sup>16</sup> R. G. Henley, "The Story of Our Shops," *Norfolk & Western Magazine* (October, 1942), 468-472.
- <sup>17</sup> Thomas, 45.
- <sup>18</sup> Lambie, 132.
- <sup>19</sup> *Annual Report* 1898-1899, 36.
- <sup>20</sup> Lambie, 135.
- <sup>21</sup> *Annual Report* 1898-1899, 45; 1902-1903, 44.
- <sup>22</sup> Lambie, 237.
- <sup>23</sup> *Annual Report* 1893, 10.
- <sup>24</sup> *Annual Report* 1911, 46 and 1915, 39.
- <sup>25</sup> Harnsberger and Kraus, 8.2.
- <sup>26</sup> Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration, *Roanoke: Story of County and City*, (Roanoke, Virginia: Stone Printing and Manufacturing Company, 1942), 25-26.
- <sup>27</sup> Henley, 468.
- <sup>28</sup> Harnsberger and Kraus, 8.2-8.4.
- <sup>29</sup> Burnett, 2.
- <sup>30</sup> Harnsberger and Kraus, 8.3.
- <sup>31</sup> Burnett, 5.
- <sup>32</sup> Writers' Program, 35.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 38.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 2.
- <sup>35</sup> Harnsberger and Kraus, 8.3.
- <sup>36</sup> Burnett, 6.
- <sup>37</sup> Norfolk-Southern Corporation, "Our History" at [www.nscorp.com/nscportal/history.com](http://www.nscorp.com/nscportal/history.com) .
- <sup>38</sup> Harnsberger and Kraus, 8.3.
- <sup>39</sup> Burnett, 8.
- <sup>40</sup> Harnsberger and Kraus, 8.6.
- <sup>41</sup> Record of Tax Map, City of Roanoke and Deed Book 1791, page 1758. October 22, 1996.
- <sup>42</sup> Sanborn Map Company. *Roanoke, Virginia*. Map No 3. January, 1886.
- <sup>43</sup> Sanborn Map Company. *Roanoke, Virginia*. Map No 3. July 1893.
- <sup>44</sup> N&W Railway Co. *Annual Report* 1917-1918, 7.
- <sup>45</sup> Email communication from Gordon Hamilton, N&W Historical Society Archives Committee, December 11, 2011.
- <sup>46</sup> N&W Office of the Chief Engineer, "Freight Depot, Roanoke, Virginia," February 15, 1917.
- <sup>47</sup> Sanborn Map Company. "Roanoke, Virginia," Map 41, July 1919.
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- <sup>49</sup> *Roanoke Times and World News*, February 22, 1983, page B-2.
- <sup>50</sup> Joe Kennedy, "Transportation Museum Offered Permanent Home," *Roanoke Times and World News*, (Roanoke, Virginia, April 12, 1986), A-6.
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