

Intro:

Hello everyone and welcome aboard the Virginia Scenic Railway, hosted by the Buckingham Branch Railroad! Today, you'll be enjoying a 64 mile round trip journey from Louisa to Shadwell. During today's trip, we will be pointing out some interesting historical facts about the communities through which we pass. Be sure to listen for the train whistle and that will be your indication of an upcoming narrative. The narration will reference the North side and South side of the train. The South side is the side of the train where you boarded today. So, sit back, relax and enjoy the trip, as we travel over one of America's most historic railroad routes.

Louisa (Start)

History and genealogy buffs will love Louisa County. Established in 1742, the County has a rich history and diverse heritage.

Louisa County is a genealogy goldmine, and people from all across the nation find they have roots here. Our courthouse records alone date back to the County's founding in 1742.

The county is rich in Revolutionary and Civil War history. Patrick Henry lived in and represented Louisa in state government from 1765 to 1768. The Virginia Central Railroad also ran right through Louisa County during the Civil War. It was an important supply line for Confederate armies. Several significant battles took place in the county, including the battle fought at Trevillians in 1864. More on that later in our ride.

Boxley Place Inn

Coming up on the North side of the train is The Boxley Place Inn. The original frame farm house structure was built by Dr. Edwin Lee Smith a dentist in the early Louisa Courthouse community in the 1860 era. He purchased the land where the house now stands for \$225 in 1859 and began construction the following year. It is believed that the home was also used as a field hospital for soldiers wounded in the Battle of Trevillians Station during the Civil War, locally called the "War of Northern Aggression", or "the War Between the States". Griswold Boxley often remarked that "there was NOTHING CIVIL about it" (meaning the war).

The second generation of Smiths, Dr. Walton O. Smith, was one of the first Louisa Town Council members in 1873 (he was also a dentist). The Smith family, occupied the property until it was sold to Bruce Vaughn Boxley Sr. and Ethel Glasgow Whyte Boxley in August 1913 for \$6000. Also residing in the house was Dr. James Garland Boxley who had been commissioned as an assistant surgeon in the Confederate Navy and worked at the "Exchange Hotel" field hospital in Gordonsville during the Battle of Trevillians in the Civil War .

It was through the efforts of Ethel and Bruce Vaughn Boxley Sr. directed by the Richmond architect of the Louisa Courthouse: D. Wiley Anderson that the 1918 renovations were completed. This 1918 renovation morphed the structure from the 1860 farm house to today's stately colonial revival residence. Bruce "senior" was a partner in the Boxley Brother Construction Company and Ethel was responsible for organizing the Louisa Chapter of the

Daughters of the American Revolution and was their first Regent. The renovations must have taken several years as evidenced by the original roof tiles, some of which are dated May 25, 1922. The original farm house was enhanced by adding a kitchen and bathroom, dining room wing, front and south porches that included large Ionic columns and Chinese Chippendale railings reminiscent of Jefferson's Monticello.

Electricity came early to the home as evidenced by the remaining porcelain knob and tube wiring still visible in the basement. And the 1916 photo of the "pre-renovation" Boxley Place shows the home's own water tower looking a lot like the Town of Louisa water tower.

The second generation of Boxley's to own the property was Bruce Vaughn Boxley Jr. and his wife Anna Griswold McIntosh Boxley (May). Bruce V. Boxley Jr. owned the Central Virginian newspaper and acted as it's Publisher until his death in 1955. After his death, his wife Anna Griswold Boxley became Publisher.

Their daughter Griswold Boxley Cousins, the third generation of Boxleys, was born in this home in 1929, was married in this home in 1949 and in 2004 died here at her beloved home known as The Boxley Place. Gris, as her friends called her, worked at the Central Virginian newspaper, was a member of the Town Council and a teacher at the Louisa County High School among other accomplishments. She also spearhead a renovation and modernization of the building in the 1980's

In 2005 the fourth generation of Boxley women began a complete restoration of the residence. After being recognized as a Virginia State Landmark, then being listed by the State Department of the Interior and placed on the National Register of Historic Places, Griswold's oldest daughter Breese Cousins Glennon and her husband Robert J. Glennon completed a comprehensive restoration. Directing the renovations was Architect Joseph F. Yates of Richmond Va. In November 2008, after 3 years of restoration, the stately building known as The Boxley Place was opened to the public as "The Boxley Place Inn".

The Netherlands Tavern (1700's)

On the north side of the train, we are coming up on site of The Netherlands Tavern, built in 1822, but was eventually demolished in the 1950s. The tavern served travelers on the Fredericksburg Stage Road and the Louisa Court House Road to the south. It also served rail passengers after the Virginia Central Railroad started operating in the 1850s. During the Civil War, Netherland Tavern became a center of military activity as the conflict entered its final year. In June 1864, Union General Ulysses S. Grant ordered General Philip H. Sheridan to lead two cavalry divisions west from Cold Harbor in Hanover County, destroy Virginia Central Railroad track, united his force with General David Hunter's infantry at Charlottesville, and returned with him to the main army.

Confederate General Robert E. Lee, learning of Sheridan's departure on June 7, dispatched the cavalry divisions of Generals Wade Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee in pursuit.

Hampton, commanding the expedition, made his headquarters here at the tavern on the evening of June 10 and spent the night sleeping on a carpenter's bench outside the front door. Sheridan, to the north, reached General Wade Hampton Clayton's Store (present-day Oakland the same night, and only a few miles separated the two forces. At dawn on June 11, Hampton was awakened by two of his subordinates, Generals Matthew C. Butler and Thomas L. Rosser. When Rosser asked Hampton what his plans were, Hampton replied, "I propose to fight."

Battle of the Travillians/Travillians Station

We are now entering the historic battle grounds of Trevillians Station. In June 1864, shortly after the bloody battle at Cold Harbor, Union Major General Philip H. Sheridan and his cavalry moved westward to disrupt the Virginia Central Railroad and unite with Major General David Hunter's army, then operating in the Shenandoah Valley. Confederate cavalry under Major General Wade Hampton and Major General Fitzhugh Lee engaged Sheridan in intense fighting here in June. The Confederates established a strong position on the Gordonsville Road that night, and the Federals failed to dislodge them during repeated attacks on 12 June. Sheridan then retreated eastward. This was the largest all-cavalry battle of the war.

OGG Farm

After breaking off the fighting of June 11, 1864, Confederate General Wade Hampton's cavalry division withdrew to a position near here. General Matthew C. Butler's South Carolinians spent the next morning preparing a stout defensive position along the Virginia Central Railroad. You are near the point of the L shaped line Butler established to block Union General Philip H. Sheridan's route to Gordonsville. A few yards from here, the apex of that line became known as the Bloody Angle during the heavy fighting later that day. Col. Richard H. Dulany's and Col. Gilbert J. Wright's brigades supported the South Carolinians and extended the line past the O G G House and along Charlottesville Road. The Danne Store and Gentry Farm occupied the narrow ridge to your front. Behind this narrow ridge was the staging area for numerous Union assaults on the Confederate line.

After spending the morning of June 12 destroying more than three miles of the Virginia Central Railroad and burning Trevilian Station, General Alfred T.A. Torbert's Union cavalry division moved out toward Gordonsville about 2 P.M. The horse soldiers soon encountered Butler's strong defensive works, and General George A. Custer's Wolverines deployed to attack them. The 1st Michigan, supported by the 7th Michigan, assaulted along the railroad tracks and were repulsed with heavy losses. They withdrew and were not a factor in the rest of the day's fighting.

Gordonsville, VA Orange County

Welcome to the historic town of Gordonsville Virginia. "Formed from Spotsylvania County in 1734. Orange County, a pastoral Piedmont county, was probably named in honor of William the 4th, the Dutch prince of Orange, who married Anne, the Princess Royal, daughter of George the second of England, earlier that year. President James Madison lived here at Montpelier and President Zachary Taylor was born here. Some fifty square miles of the county

comprise the Madison Barbour Rural Historic District, an area rich in historic resources including the ruins of Barboursville, the home of Governor James Barbour designed about 1814 by his friend Thomas Jefferson”

Exchange Hotel & Civil War Museum

Coming up on the North side of the train is the Exchange Hotel. It is a historic 1860 railroad hotel beside the Virginia Central Railroad that served as a Civil War receiving hospital, treating 70,000 plus wounded Union and Confederate soldiers. Now a museum of Civil War medical and railroad history.

Luck Stone Quarry

We are now passing through Luck Stone Quarry. Opened in 1936, Luck Stone’s Charlottesville Plant is located on U.S. Route 250 approximately four miles east of Charlottesville at Shadwell, Virginia. The Charlottesville quarry mines Catoctin Greenstone, a rock formation created out of volcanic lava flows over 500 million years ago. The Catoctin originated as a type of lava called basalt, which contains plagioclase and pyroxene minerals. During the mountain-building processes responsible for the Appalachians, epidote and chlorite infused the formation with what it is known for today, its popular green color. With its unique green color, Charlottesville material is shipped to many surrounding states for use in landscaping and concrete applications.

Rivanna River Crossing

We are now coming up on The Rivanna River, which is an abbreviation for “River Anna” and was named after the Queen of England. It’s an appropriate moniker for one of Virginia’s prettiest small rivers that has a regal history, including the honor of being the State’s first governmentally designated Scenic River.

The headwaters of the Rivanna lie in the foothills and mountains west of Charlottesville, actually reaching the Eastern border of Shenandoah National Park. Its importance as a transportation artery in the 1700s and 1800s is well known, and remnants of the aqueducts, canal, locks, and tow paths that facilitated this use can still be seen today. Because of its natural beauty, history, and location near Charlottesville, the Rivanna has attracted a lot of attention from conservationist groups and the public, in general.

In fact, The Rivanna Conservation Society was formed by concerned members of the public to help protect this priceless resource. It’s a valuable source of information for anyone interested in learning more about the River and/or getting involved in its conservation. Among other things, it sponsors a program that monitors water quality and general stream health along the entire length of the Rivanna to its confluence with the James River at Columbia.

Uncoupling Procedure and Recoupling

We’ve come to a stop so our train crew can do what’s called, “Run Around the Train”. Now, this doesn’t mean you’ll see any of our train crew physically get out and run around the train. “Run

"Around the Train" is a railroad phrase for the process of decoupling the locomotive from one end of the train, and recoupling it to the other end. Procedures for a run around move are simple and safe. It begins by stopping the train. The Conductor manually tightens the brakes. You may hear a ratcheting noise when he is doing this. That is the chain being drawn tight, applying the brake shoes to the wheel. After the shoes are tightened, the locomotive can bump slightly against the train car to make sure the brake shoes are holding the train car in place. The last thing we want is a runaway coach car.... After the brakes are verified as applied, the conductor will cut the air supply off to the passenger car from the engine and separate the two pieces of equipment. The conductor communicates with the engineer that he is in a safe spot; that he has opened the knuckles; and that the locomotive can now separate away from the passenger car. Trains do not rely on brake fluid. Instead, all braking is applied through movement of air throughout the train. Each locomotive is equipped with its own air compressor. This compressor generates the air that is then moved from the air tanks on the locomotive through a pipe to a black hose which you see at the ends of each and every locomotive and or freight and passenger car. They are called air lines. These air lines are connected manually by our conductor and they are held together by a device known as a glad hand. Think of a hand shake, each end of an airline has a glad hand that can lock together with another glad hand. Each and every car is coupled together not only with what is called a knuckle, but also by air lines. When our Locomotive engineer applies the brakes, they can release pressure through the air lines to not only apply braking to the locomotive, but also braking to the rest of the train in the consist. Now, back to the run around procedure.. As the engine separates from the train, the switch for the siding up ahead is controlled remotely from the Buckingham Branch Dispatch office in Staunton. Signal systems much like a stop light on the highways are used to communicate with trains. When the light is green, a train can go past. When a light is yellow, a train must slow and prepare to stop, and when a signal light is red, it must stop, not going past the red light. These colored lights are operated from our dispatch office. Communication of where the train is on the track is also done through the rail. The rail acts as a conduit to transfer a signal back to the computer software, indicating to our dispatch team where the train is. Dispatch teams communicate with each train engineer, letting the engineer know what's up ahead and whether they have permission to proceed in addition to the signal light. Here, our engineer will communicate with dispatch via a radio to verify the train can proceed out of one track and come down another to "run around the train." Once the locomotive clears the switch point, the engineer can change direction of the locomotive simply by moving a lever, going from moving forwards to going backwards. The engineer can see out both ends of the engine. Locomotives can run safely forwards or backwards! As the engine passes, be sure to wave to our train crew and see if you get them to sound a horn! As the engine heads back to the other end of the track, there again, our dispatch team will remotely throw the switch for the locomotive, aligning the switch so the engine can come onto this track. As the locomotive approaches, the engineer will slow down the speed in preparation for coupling to the other end of the passenger car. As the engine approaches, the engineer is watching carefully to see how close they get in order not to bump the car too hard when recoupling to the passenger car. As the engine couples, you may feel a slight bump of the car. This results when the knuckle on both the passenger car and locomotive lock up. A locking pin drops between both knuckles, preventing them from opening. When our engine is coupled to the passenger car, the conductor will ask the engineer to give a little tug on the passenger car

and see if they separate. This is done as a check of the locking pin. Finally, the conductors secure the air lines from the engine to the passenger car. Once the air hoses are attached, the hand brakes can be released from the passenger car and we are ready to head back out for the return portion of our trip.

Keswick Hall Golf Club

On the South side of the train you will see the Keswick Hall Golf Course. Keswick Hall has been an icon of the Virginia countryside for over one hundred years. In order to preserve this landmark estate, they have partnered with some of the most coveted purveyors to bring Keswick Hall into the future whilst paying homage to its storied past. Keswick Hall invites their guests and locals to discover a sense of discrete luxury where you can retreat from the everyday into the calm comforts of a space all your own.

Klockner Pentaplast

On the North Side of the train, you will see Klockner Pentaplast which is a global leader in the manufacturing of rigid and flexible plastic packaging and specialty film solutions. Headquartered in Luxembourg and London, the company operates 31 facilities in 18 countries with approximately 5,700 employees as of 2026. The Gordonsville plant was the first production facility outside Germany and was opened in 1979. Klockner Pentaplast makes high-barrier, protective plastic films and rigid trays for various industries, including pharmaceuticals (blister packs for pills, medical devices), food packaging (trays for meat, bakery, ready-to-eat meals), consumer goods (credit cards, labels, toothbrushes), and specialty applications like home/building products, focusing heavily on sustainable and recycled materials. They create products that keep items safe, fresh, and secure, from blister packs holding medications to the clear trays holding fresh produce.

Rail car types

We are often asked what kind of car is this? On the Virginia Scenic Railway, you may see a variety of cars, but certainly not all the types of railcars out across the United States. The car you are in today is a passenger car. These cars are designed to carry people, the most precious commodity on the railroad. After passenger cars, there are freight cars. On the Buckingham Branch the freight car types vary from boxcars, tank cars, covered hoppers, gondolas, coal cars, flat cars, rock cars, vacuum hopper cars, and wood chip cars. These are the majority of rail car types used on this line, but certainly not the limitation. These cars carry a variety of products including cardboard, lumber, propane, butane, ethanol, grains, aggregates, railroad ties, transformers, plastics and wood chips. There are other rail cars out there across the country including autorack cars, intermodal cars, super heavyweight cars, log cars, piggyback cars, refrigerated cars and more. Each of these cars are designed to carry a commodity, whether in liquid, dry or gaseous state. These commodities can also be temperature controlled throughout its journey, but more often than not, these products are able to be shipped as is. Often we are asked if we use a caboose. The answer is sometimes! Back in the day, cabooses had a few purposes— not only were they a location for brakemen and trainmen to keep an eye on their train, but also were train crews home away from home! When a train crew is in the locomotive, it can be almost impossible to see the entire train you are pulling if it's of any great length. A train

engineer could potentially have no idea anything is going wrong behind him because of a train's length. Trains back in the day could be upwards half a mile in length (or more!) and that can put the tail end of the train out of sight to the train crew in the front that's possibly going around curves or up and down mountains. Larger freight trains today are often at minimal a mile in length, but more often two miles long! Today's trains have electronic boxes on the rear which can notify the train crew in the front that something may be wrong with the brakes and they should stop the train. Back then though, trainmen and brakemen would ride the cabooses and use flags or lanterns or flairs to communicate to the locomotive things were good on the tail end of the train such as nothing dragging, nothing coming loose, no hot wheels or that something is not looking right and they should stop. However, this could only be communicated when a train was in an open curve where an engineer could look back and see their train or on a straight section of track. Trainmen in the caboose could also apply the brakes manually should they feel the need to stop. This would notify the engineer in the front that something is wrong as the train would begin to slow without him braking. Trainmen in the caboose could also manage their paperwork for the train, ensuring customers orders and cars were delivered to the right location. In the early days, all paperwork was done manually with pencil and paper. When a train crew arrived at its destination and their day was done, this train crew could camp out in their caboose car for the night until they were ready for their next run. Often these crew members would not necessarily go back to the same place they started. Railroads back then often sent these men away for days, going from destination to destination before heading back to their home station. These cabooses were often equipped with a pot belly stove for cooking on and warming the car, often had a toilet and a tank of water that was gravity fed and bunk or bench to sleep on in addition to a few captains chairs and a desk. Today, cabooses are nearly extinct as during the 1980's technology evolved so much that a caboose and extra train crew personnel was no longer needed. Today, the Buckingham Branch retains a few operating cabooses, used for some freight moves and on the Virginia Scenic Railway for show.

Locomotive Power and Speed

The Buckingham Branch relies on diesel powered locomotives as do most railroads operating today. The locomotives used today are more efficient and cheaper to operate and maintain as compared to steam engines of yester years. The maintenance required for boilers and wheels and moving parts on steam engines cost large sums of money and many many hours of work to tear down, clean and put back. In addition, steam engines were labor intensive, requiring multiple people to operate— whether it was a job at the throttle or a fireman feeding the fire. Running multiple steam engines together for more pulling power also meant crews for each steam engine. However, multiple diesel engines coupled and operating together are able to communicate between each other with only one crew in the front locomotive. When diesel engines entered the railroad industry around the 1940s, railroads were quick to catch on to their cost savings whether in train crew size, fuel source, maintenance and repair. Diesel locomotives throughout the ages have taken on many different shapes and styles. There have really only been a handful of manufacturers who ventured into this market to build these powerful machines. Today's diesel engines can generate upwards of 4000 to 6000 horsepower and 137,000 foot pounds of traction effort. Traction effort is defined as the amount of linear output force (or how hard it pulls) to get up and going. More modern diesel locomotives also weigh in

excess of 390,000 pounds. Locomotives on the Buckingham Branch and Virginia Scenic Railway often had previous lives dating back to the 1950's up through the 1980s. These locomotives began their careers operating for other railroads before our railroad acquired them. It's often much cheaper to purchase an older locomotive and fix it up as compared to buying new. New locomotives today cost several million of dollars to purchase just one. Over the years, these locomotives have been modified slightly, but overall are still the workhorses they were created to be. Within our fleet of 21 locomotives, most average around 2000 to 3000 horsepower, can produce roughly 50 to 60,000 foot pounds of traction effort and weigh on average 250,000 lbs each. The horsepower and tractive effort is produced through its 16 cylinder diesel engine generator which turns an alternator which creates current. It's the use of current, or electricity, that actually turns the wheels to make a locomotive move. Average speed for today's trip will be about 25 mph. Although we are permitted to run upwards of 40 mph on this line, we want to take you on this journey at a fun and adequate speed for an enjoyable ride. Freight trains on this line you may see, such as CSX Transportation or our own local Buckingham Branch Freight train can run upwards of 35 to 40 mph as well. Amtrak trains however have permission to run upwards of 60 mph on this line!

Horn Sequence

As our train approaches public road and railroad crossings, have you ever noticed there is a sequence to the horn blows, two longs a short and a long? This sequence dates back to the Queen of England when she used to travel by ship down the river Thames. In morse code, the Letter Q is communicated by two longs, a short and a long. The letter Q in this example stood for Queen. Ships would do a long long short and long sequence to announce to other ships in the harbor this is the queen, get out of the way. When the queen switched from traveling by boat to rail, the same signal sequence followed. Train engineers thus too would blow two longs a short and a long. When US railroads began, the tradition from England was maintained as the standard signal and it is still used today, almost 200 years later! Rules regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration dictate that 15 to 20 seconds before the train enters the crossing, but no more than a quarter mile from reaching the intersection of track and road, train engineers should begin this sequence. The last long is to last for the entire time the train is going through the crossing. Note however, train horn sequences, lengths for beginning and end are completely subject to the train engineer's judgment. This feature is not automated to be perfect every time. It's simply a rule though all train engineers must abide by across the country.

Nearing end of Ride

We're nearing the end of your experience with us today. We certainly hope you enjoyed your time on the Virginia Scenic Railway. Please be sure to check out our website for future rides and special events. At this time we'd like to ask you to look around your table and make sure you have all your belongings. Thank you for riding with us today and we hope to see you again soon for another adventure on the Virginia Scenic Railway.