

BYWAYS



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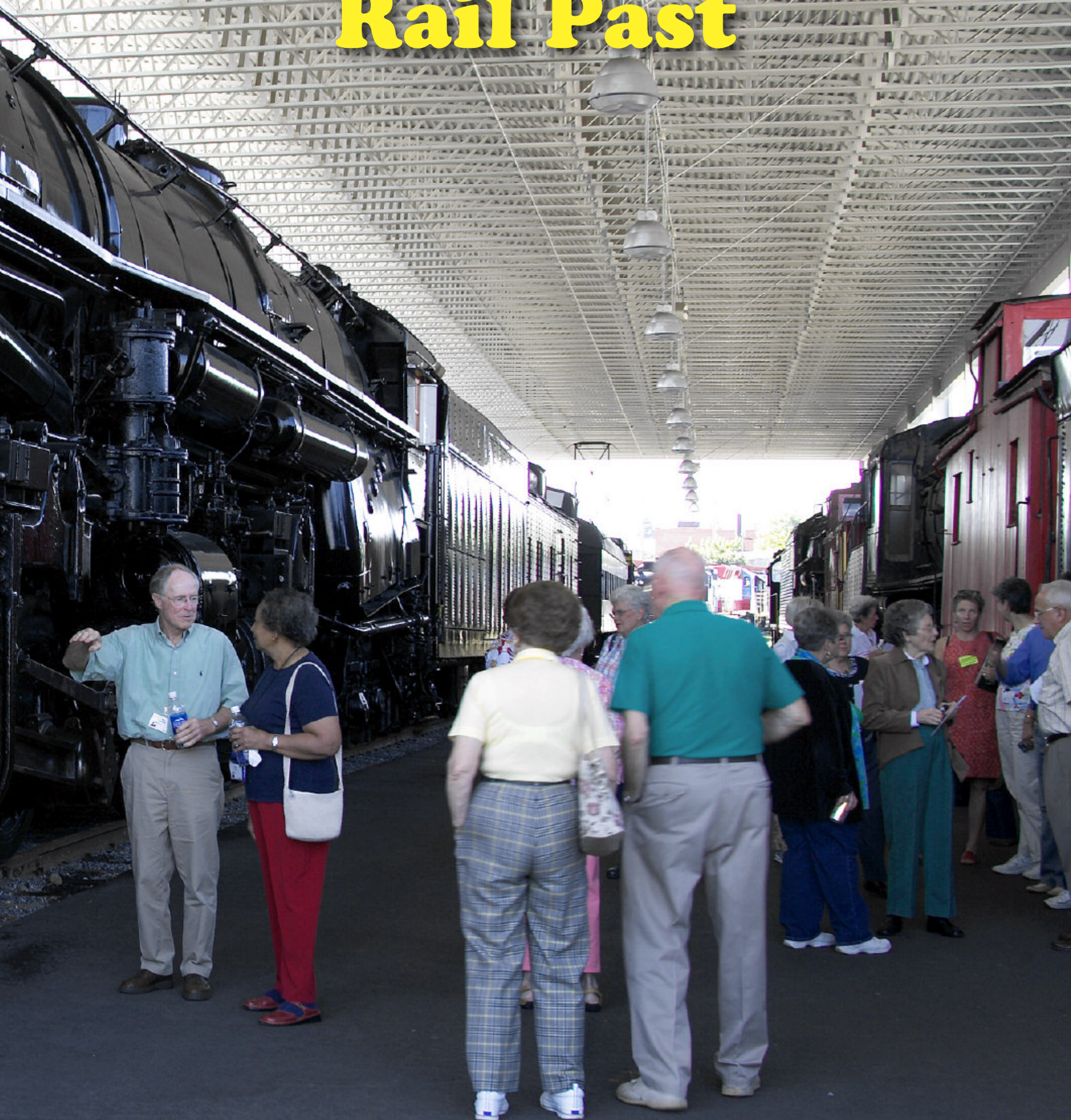
**Great American
Railroads**

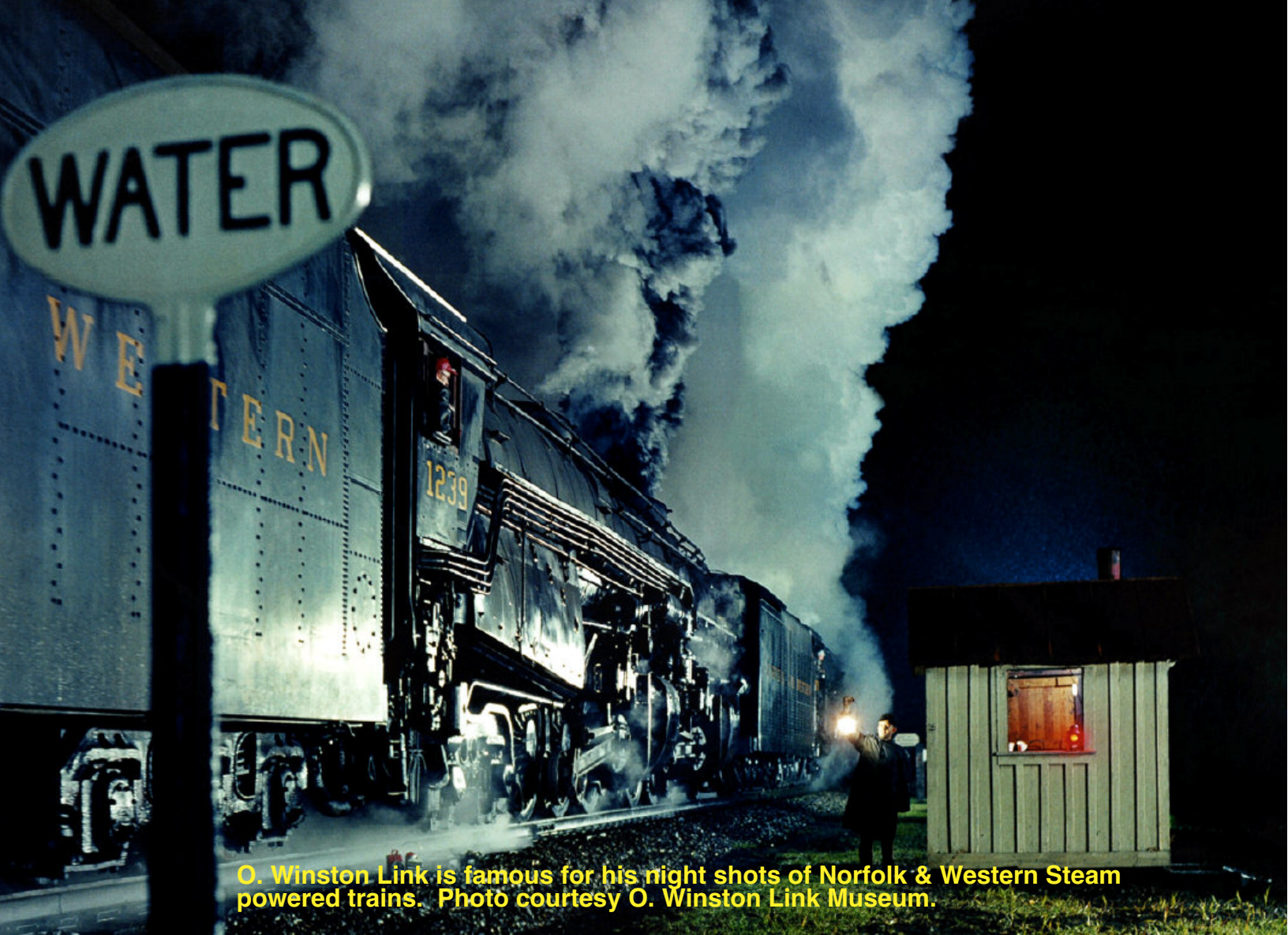
SAFETY FIRST
NOT CLIMB ON EXHIBIT



The Norfolk & Western Steam Engine 1218, one of the most powerful ever built, is on display at the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke. Photo courtesy Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau and Virginia Museum of Transportation.

Roanoke's Unique Rail Past





O. Winston Link is famous for his night shots of Norfolk & Western Steam powered trains. Photo courtesy O. Winston Link Museum.

Rail lines weave romantically throughout, tying the town to ports and portals, far from the beckoning Blue Ridge. Once a place called “Big Lick,” Roanoke took its present name for an Indian word meaning “shell money,” not long after the railroad arrived in western Virginia in the 1850s.

Today, the city skyline glistens in the starlight, as well as Roanoke’s man-made wonder – the Roanoke Star – while, at the city’s heart, rail lines shine in the summer sun, providing a continuing link to the city’s past.

In nearly all ways, the railroad has spurred a sophisticated spin within this city and continues to inspire wonder through the mystique of its museums, train-side thoroughfares, architectural gems and the fabulous Hotel Roanoke.

Roanoke spotlights its heritage as a manufacturer of steam engines at the must-see Virginia Transportation Museum on Norfolk Avenue. Situated alongside a much-active rail, the museum boasts life-size and legendary locomotives at the site of the historic Norfolk & Western Railway freight station. Here, you can spend a day exploring railroad exhibits, including two of the most powerful steam locomotives in existence today: the

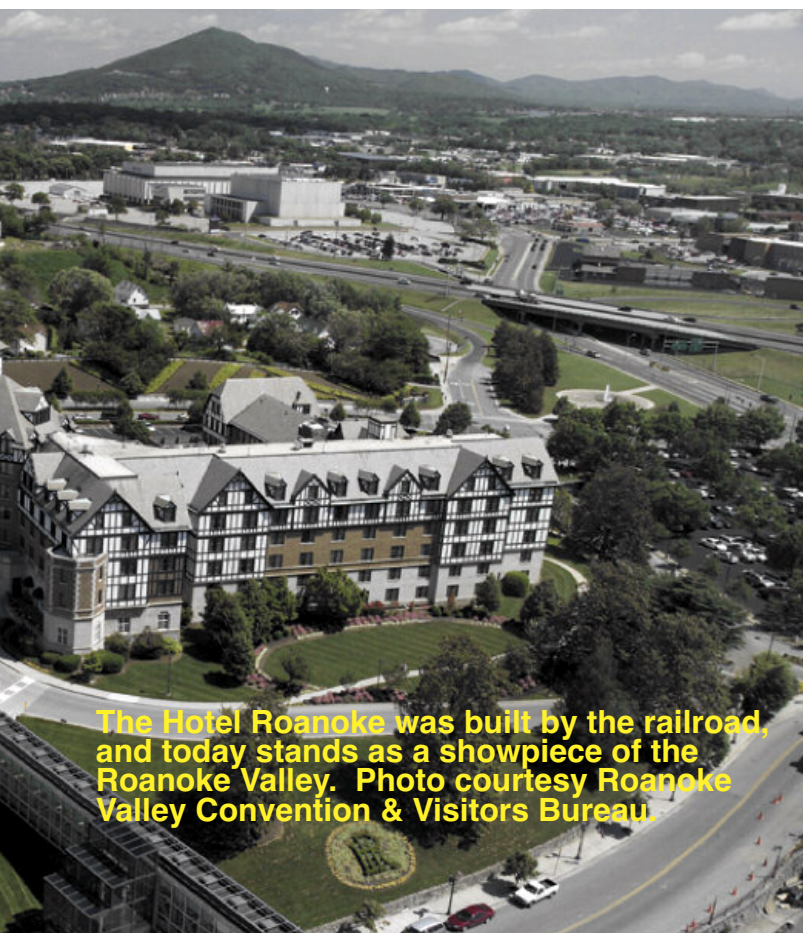




David R. and Susan S. Goode Rail Walk in downtown Roanoke.
Photo courtesy Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Class A 1218 and the Class J 611.

As the Official Transportation Museum of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the facility tells the story of what it takes to keep Virginia moving, especially by land. Exhibits feature antique automobiles, a restored dining car and train collectibles plus model trains with tracks at everybody's eye level. More crowd-pleasers include horse-drawn buggies and a trolley bus.



The Hotel Roanoke was built by the railroad, and today stands as a showpiece of the Roanoke Valley.
Photo courtesy Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau.

An exhibit on intercity bus transportation features the history of both Greyhound and Trailways, and a nearly full-size cutout of an Abbott Bus motorcoach honors the motorcoach charter and tour business.

Outside, take a stroll on the David R. and Susan S. Goode Rail Walk, paralleling the railroad for a third of a mile, with kiosks explaining the details of Roanoke's iron horse history. Then cross the Market Square Walkway, an enclosed glass pedestrian bridge built in 1994 to catch a bird's-eye view of massive tracks cutting through the heart of Roanoke, the "Capital of the Blue Ridge."

At the center of it all, feast your eyes on the elegant Hotel Roanoke. Dating to 1882, this historic hotel offers a conference center, fine dining and endless amenities, plus antiques, making it the ultimate showpiece of the Roanoke Valley. Over a century, as the city grew, so did the hotel and its reputation for excellence. Now, thanks to a multi-million-dollar restoration in the 1990s, funded by a package of public and private financing in conjunction with the City of Roanoke and Virginia Tech, the handsome hotel remains a draw all on its own, whether it's for the Hotel Roanoke's romantic "Train Lover's Package" or for a busy schedule in the conference center's 63,000-square-foot, high-tech meeting space, able to accommodate up to 1,200 people.

From Hotel Roanoke, the Market Square Walkway slips past generous samplings of public art to reach Roanoke's central downtown business district, highlighted with its perennially popular farmer's market; a wealth of shopping opportunities; and the eye-catching Taubman Museum of Art, reaching for the sky with its pointed architecture, providing a conversation piece



The O. Winston Link Museum features stunning railroad photos. It is located in the city's former passenger railway terminal, which also serves as the Roanoke Valley Visitors Center. Photo courtesy O. Winston Link Museum.

amid bustling urban streets. The city's active arts community even extends to the world of trains, with nationally renowned rail artist Andy Fletcher joining the Virginia Museum of Transportation as its first artist-in-residence. Fletcher's output has included drawings of over 2,500 trains – from steam locomotives to modern diesel engines, rail cars and cabooses. Often commissioned to paint trains for many railroad historical societies and museums, Fletcher's place at the museum now draws inspiration from a studio facing the rails of Roanoke.

No visit to Roanoke can be complete, of course, without stopping at the O. Winston Link Museum, inside the century-old Norfolk & Western Railway passenger train station.

Named for the famed New York photographer, this museum demonstrates why a picture is worth a thousand words and perhaps so many more. The late Link, the man behind the camera, traveled the tracks of Virginia's railroads during the 1950s, especially along the famed "Virginia Creeper" of Abingdon, artistically catching the dying days of steam locomotives.

Decades later, Link's famous frames are celebrated, along with his cameras and his recordings of the high lonesome wails of train whistles, sounding every bit as musical as the bluegrass tunes heard at whistle stops all around Roanoke. Galleries bearing local names like "Radford," "Pocahontas" and "Shenandoah" encapsulate the richness of railroads in the surrounding mountain

villages, scattered like satellites from Roanoke's shining star.

Music calls quite naturally across the Rail Heritage Corridor of Virginia, including the Roanoke Valley, with notes inspired by the tapestry of tracks crisscrossing the corridor where Southwest Virginia meets the Shenandoah Valley. Roanoke serves as the gateway to





Heritage Region encompasses the largest concentration of historic rail facilities in Virginia, including the shops in Roanoke, where the most modern steam locomotives in the world were designed and built.

From anywhere, you can watch the action of downtown Roanoke on Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Web Cam. Best of all, it's on all the time, capturing the trains

both fabled regions, and it's not just by geographic happenstance; it's simply the path of pioneers and progress. Stretching across Western Virginia, from Lynchburg to Clifton Forge, Virginia's Rail

the Norfolk & Western Historical Society, headquartered in Roanoke, with archives of drawings, photographs and documents open to the public.

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, meanwhile, also strives to educate, offering train excursions while restoring the antique rail equipment of Roanoke and the Virginian Railway's historic Roanoke passenger station.

Home to more than the Link museum, the historic Norfolk & Western Railway passenger train station represents the railroad's royalty in Roanoke. Rebuilt and redesigned, continually, as Roanoke grew, the depot's earliest portions date to 1881, though the station's distinctive columns, with a Greek design, come from a 1905 reshaping. The station owes its classic yet modern look, to famed industrial designer Raymond Loewy, who added accents in 1947 with a \$1.5 million facelift, exuding the influence the railroad had in bringing riches to Roanoke. Loewy's vision prompted the placement of terrazzo floors, 17-foot plate glass windows, and escalators, the first of their kind in the Roanoke Valley.

Passenger service might have ended in 1972, and while the station was once abandoned in the 1990s, the cherished structure was lovingly saved and restored, finally entering its current life as the site of the Link Museum and the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Roll into Roanoke: Discover the depot, the museums, the busy railroad, Hotel Roanoke and all the history that goes along with this city with the star on the hill. Even better, mark your calendar for National Train Day, held along the tracks on the second week of May; the leaf-changing and life-thrilling train excursions of the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society on the first weekend of November; and all the family fun of "Santa By Rail," with St. Nick rolling into Roanoke on the first weekend of December.

For more on visiting Roanoke, follow this link.

<http://www.visitroanokeva.com>

The Virginia Museum of Transportation features railroads, airlines, autos, motorcoaches (see above) and much more. Photo courtesy Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau.

