



**This is a fake proposal – we made everything up – but it will give you an idea of what we would like to see.**

## **Program Proposal**

**Ramblin' Railroaders  
Historic Railways of New England**

**Tell us what the show will be about and what will be interesting**

American railroading started in New England. The Boston and Worcester Railway, chartered in 1830 and first operated between Boston and Newton, was one of the first commercial railways in the USA. (This stretch is now the Riverside branch of the Green Line.) One of the great engineering feats of the 19th century – the Hoosac Tunnel under Mount Adams in northwestern Massachusetts – was the longest tunnel in North America (and the second-longest in the world) when it was built in 1873. (Over a hundred and fifty years later, it's still the 4th –longest railroad tunnel in the USA and the longest east of the Rocky Mountains.) Boston's Green Line was the very first subway in the USA. And a hundred years ago, South Station was the busiest railroad station in the country.

Much of this pioneering history is still alive and visible. The Boylston Street T stop – on the original subway line – is fundamentally unchanged from its original condition as built in 1901. The Hoosac tunnel is still open to traffic. The successor to the Boston and Worcester Railway decorated its route with some of the most beautiful train stations ever built in the world – several designed by Henry Hobson Richardson – architect of Copley Square's Trinity Church. They're still in operation!

So, come travel with us, the Ramblin' Railroaders of New England, as we explore and explain New England's rich railroad heritage – from video tours of historic sites to detailed explanations of how these complex networks worked in a day before computers and even electricity! All leavened with tales of dreams and ambitions that inspire us even today...



**Some words about our organization...**

### **About Us**

The Ramblin Railroaders of New England was founded in 1975 to further the knowledge and interest in the historic railways of New England. We publish a monthly newsletter (The Ramblin Railroader) with articles of interest to railroad historians, maintain a web site of historic information ([www.ramblinrailroaders.org](http://www.ramblinrailroaders.org)), and sponsor excursions to historic locations and on historic equipment.

We meet at 8:00 PM on the third Wednesday of the month at the MIT Model Railroad Club, 180 Vassar Street, Cambridge MA. Meetings feature speakers knowledgeable about historic railroad operations and travel, and offer slide shows, movies and discussions about historic railroad operations.

Some words about our organization...

We are affiliated with The Railroad Enthusiasts, Inc., a national organization with divisions throughout the nation.

**And a bit about the prospective hosts.  
Video experience is not required!**

### **About our Hosts**

Frank Johnson is President of the Ramblin Railroaders of New England. His love for railroads extends back to childhood – his earliest memory is of the Old Colony steam line trains that passed his Quincy home. He teaches Mechanical Engineering at Boston State College and an advanced class in public transit and railway engineering. He led the fundraising effort to restore the historic 1898 Westinghouse 'Little Giant' Steam Engine, now on exhibit at the Kennebunk Transit Museum.

John Doane is Editor of the The Ramblin Railroader newsletter. A Boston & Maine railroad executive for 40 years, he is now retired and devotes his attention fulltime to exploring and explaining the New England Railway heritage. He has written many articles in the historic railway press, and is a specialist on the corporate history of New England railways.

George Jarrod, is our Film/Video Librarian and webmaster. He is proprietor of the Model Railroad Store in Brighton, MA, and an expert in historic railway cars.



**More than anything else, this list will give us an idea of what the show will be like. You won't be required to do them – we mostly just want to make sure you have thought of enough ideas to carry a quarter.**

Proposed Show Topics:

**The Tremont Street Trolley Tunnel:** What is now the Green Line between Government Center and Boylston Street was the very first subway in the USA – it started out as a tunnel for trolley cars to avoid congestion on what was then Boston's busiest street. We'll talk to George Axelrod, subway historian, who will explain how controversial it was, the special efforts that went into its construction, and historical artifacts that can still be seen along the route.

**The Hoosac Tunnel:** It took 22 years to build, used just about every digging technique available, and almost every possible mistake was made. It was finally completed with the use of nitroglycerine – the first commercial use of this unstable explosive: 196 lives were lost during construction – many due to spontaneous explosions. But it was one of the greatest engineering achievements of the 19th Century – and connected New England to the burgeoning West. We've invited UMass Boston History Professor George Herberts, a specialist on the development of New England Railroad, to explain the many frustrating attempts to complete the project and show historic and contemporary photographs of the tunnel.

**The Red Line to Harvard:** Boston's first real subway. It necessitated the construction of a tunnel under some of Boston's most historic (and expensive) real estate under Beacon Hill and the construction of a new bridge across the Charles. MBTA Historian Harold Jones will discuss the challenges and successes of this ambitious engineering project.

**Historic Steam Locomotives:** Can you tell a Bell Locomotive from a GE Steam Master? George Jarrod can! He'll tell us about how these magnificent machines were used in New England, how they worked, show dramatic photographs of these impressive machines in their glory, and tell us where one can see them today.

**Signaling and Switching:** What do those double-white lights mean? A red and a green? How are trains steered down the correct track? What do the folks in the master T control room really do? Retired Railroad Engineer (45 years with the Boston and Maine Railroad) Sid Johnson explains the special signals and switches railroaders use to regulate traffic on the tracks.

**Historic Rail Film:** The oldest film of a transit vehicle in the USA is a 1904 2-minute snippet of film of a trolley going down along Tremont Street. It belongs to the Museum of Transportation in Brookline – Museum Film Curator Herbert Hobarts will show the film, and discuss the changes that have happened since that fateful day...



Lost stations on the T: Did you know there used to be a station between Haymarket and what is now Government Center? (It was called Adams Square.) Several retired stations still exist and can still be seen by the knowledgeable rider: Joey Romilio, webmaster for the 'Historic MBTA' web site will tell us how to catch the old Court Street station on the Blue Line and the old Harvard Square station on the Red line. And he'll bring his extensive picture collection of late lamented stations and explain why they are no more...

Suburban stations: Commuting by railroad used to be the way to get into town, the New England railroads built stations to match customers' expectations. Architect Hugh Helms will discuss the various designs used by the different companies, show pictures of many existing and now-gone stations, with a special segment on Boston's most distinguished railroad architect: Henry Hobson Richardson – who also designed Copley Square's Trinity Church.

The East Boston Trolley Tunnel: What is now the Blue Line harbor tunnel between State and Maverick was built in 1904 as a trolley tunnel to replace the ferry connections from East Boston to downtown. It was the first underwater tunnel in North America. We'll interview T historian Frank DeLorenzo about the challenges faced during its construction, how it worked in the old trolley days, and the complexities associated with converting the tunnel to rapid transit in the 1920's. He'll show lots of pictures and reveal where we can still see evidence of the tunnel's historic past... P.S.: He'll also explain why Blue Line trains need to change from third-rail power to overhead wire at Maverick station...

Allston Stock Yards: Allston was once Boston's slaughterhouse district. The large railyard and stockyard near what is now the Mass Pike fed a collection of slaughterhouses that dominated the area. Tom Cranston speaks about this little-known aspect of New England railroad history, shows pictures, and explains how this industry was once a critical portion of Boston's infrastructure.

The Boston and Providence Railroad: The B&P was one of Boston's original rail lines – it crossed the Back Bay when it was still water and its original line ran from what is now the Park Plaza hotel to Back Bay Station and on to Providence along the Amtrak line. At its height, it had a magnificent Gothic-style, station one that completely filled the block now occupied by the Park Plaza hotel and office building. Guest John Furness discusses the history of this important railway line and shows rare photographs of the long-gone Park Square station.



South Station: It was once the busiest railroad station in the USA! This historic terminal was built to combine the various separate railroad operations running to the south into a single terminal. South Station historian Jennifer Allerton explains the political, financial and engineering challenges faced by the builders, shows rare pictures of the old terminals it replaced, and discusses the innovative basement commuter loop – which preceded Grand Central's famous turnaround by over ten years!

**We hope this example has been instructive. For more information or assistance with BNNLive Show Proposals, please don't hesitate to contact Ashley Lewis BNNLive Studio Manager at 617-708-3221 or at [alewis@bnnmedia.org](mailto:alewis@bnnmedia.org)**