



## O. WINSTON LINK

A successful commercial photographer from New York, Link brought his studio outdoors to create carefully arranged images designed to convey the end of the steam-propelled Norfolk & Western Railway and the communities and countryside along the right of way.

Covering much of Western Virginia and bordering portions of North Carolina, West Virginia, and Maryland, Link took advantage of the region's then unique combination of mountainous terrain, sparsely arranged populations, and steam rail infrastructure to capture the end of America's once-thriving Industrial Age.

Link was prolific, taking more than 2,200 black & white and 200 color images, and 100 7-inch reels of sound recordings. Today, Link's work constitutes the single most important photographic series taken of the region. Largely ignored for more than 20 years following their production, Winston's work enjoyed a series of international exhibitions, recordings, and two published books beginning in the 1980's. Today, Link's N&W images are known worldwide.

Two of Link's most famous photographs were taken at Rural Retreat during Christmas 1957: "The Birmingham Special Gets the High Ball at Rural Retreat" and "The Pelican Arrives at Rural Retreat", the former said to be one of Link's favorite photos. An original print made and signed by Link is on display in the Depot Museum. Of Link's sound recordings one of the most famous was made in Rural Retreat, capturing the sounds of church bells playing as the Pelican arrived and departed the Depot.

SEE LINK'S FAVORITE DEPOT PHOTO ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

THE BIRMINGHAM SPECIAL  
ARRIVES AT RURAL RETREAT



Link took his famous photos on and after Christmas Eve in 1957, just prior to the last of America's great steam engines being taken off the tracks. To learn more about Link's unique photography, visit the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke, VA.

Appearing in Link's photos in Rural Retreat is Station Agent James Lacy Akers. Akers worked at the Rural Retreat Depot as telegraph operator and agent from 1919 until 1959.

<https://www.virginia.org/listings/Museums/HistoryMuseumofWesternVirginia/>