



Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley NRHS
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Railroading – Past, Present and Future

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Mike Jackson, Editor

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Next Watauga Valley NRHS Meeting March 22

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The next General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held Monday, March 22, 2010, at 6:30 p.m., at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. The program you do not want to miss will be on 'POTOMAC YARD'. As most of you know, POTOMAC YARDS was one of the largest freight yards in the United States in the 50's, 60's, and 70's, and has been stripped down to 3 tracks and used mainly for passenger service. See the whole story about what happened to a GIANT that fell to the ground. This DVD shows every railroad that served this yard near Washington DC. See the yard in its heyday and see what it looks like now in this program produced by Guerin C. Goldsmith

MEETING CANCELATION ACCOUNT OF SNOW

If it snows the evening of the regular membership meeting and you're not sure if we are going to have the Chapter meeting, please call the Chapter office 423-753-5797 for a recording that will be posted if the meeting is canceled.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

All non-renewal members as of March 10, 2010, have been sent notices that their memberships will expire on March 31. Please bring your dues to the March meeting or mail to Watauga Valley NRHS, P O Box 432, Johnson City, TN, 37605 ASAP or your membership will expire as of March 31 as stated above, and **THIS WILL BE YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER.**

CHAPTER'S SCENIC SPRING EXCURSION

Tickets are selling good for the Great Smoky Mountain Trip on March 27, 2010. If you know anyone who wants to take the trip, please give them our web site at www.wataugavalleynrhs.org and tell them to click on excursions. At the deadline for the newsletter (March 12), we still have tickets available in all classes.

The trip will begin in downtown Johnson City with buses departing at 6:30 a.m., at the Legion St/Big Burley Parking Lot (across the street from the Johnson City Recreation Center), where passengers will board a motor coach to Bryson City, N.C. Passengers will board the excursion train at 11:00 a.m. This 4.5-hour excursion covers 44 miles to the Nantahala Gorge and back to Bryson City.

The route travels the banks of the Little Tennessee and Nantahala Rivers and crosses Fontana Lake Trestle standing 100 feet above the lake and spanning 780 feet. After crossing Fontana Lake, passengers will enter the gorge.

There will be a one-hour layover at the gorge for sightseeing. Passengers will have several options for lunch on their own. These options include: Bring your lunch in small coolers only, or enjoy a Chicken Buffet lunch that will be available for purchase on board the train. On the return trip to Bryson City, if time permits, passengers may have time to shop, snack, and visit

the Smoky Mountain Train Museum before boarding the bus and returning to Johnson City. Expected arrival back to Johnson City will be 6:30 p.m.

The railroad has become a favorite of film producers over the years. The train wreck scene in the 1993 movie "The Fugitive," starring Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones, was filmed in Dillsboro along the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad. The wreckage of the set can still be viewed on the outbound train excursion from Dillsboro.

The Great Smoky Mountain Railroad also was used in the filming of the 1996 comedy "My Fellow Americans," starring Jack Lemmon and James Gardner, when they stumble on a charter train full of UNC-Chapel Hill fans headed for the NCAA Final Four.

Train scenes in the 1998 movie "Forces of Nature," starring Ben Affleck and Sandra Bullock, also were filmed on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad.

Passengers can choose to ride in comfort in reconditioned coaches (windows that open and close and ceiling fans), Coach Crown coaches or a Club Car, which are climate controlled with large picture windows. All cars have grand views of the passing scenery. Clean Restrooms are available on the train.

Nearby attractions include the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Cherokee Indian Reservation, and the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, N.C.

Ticket prices for adult coach seats are \$79 and \$58 for child (2 to 12 years). Adult crown coach seats are \$89 and \$68 for children (2 to 12 years). First class service Club Car seats are \$120 for anyone 21 years and older.

When ordering coach tickets, please specify open air or closed cars. Also, specify if you will accept an alternate class of service if your choice is sold out. Money will be refunded if you do not wish an alternate service.

To order tickets, enclose your check or money order along with the number of tickets and the class you choose. Send checks to Spring Excursions, Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS, P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN, 37605-0432.

For questions about the trip, email: wataugavalley@embarqmail.com or write: Watauga Valley NRHS, P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN, 37605-0432. Those interested in the trip can also visit the chapter at www.wataugavalleynrhs.org for a printable order form.

CHAPTER MOTOR CAR

We need someone to store of our Chapter's motor car inside. If you could store it in a safe, secure location for a few months, please let us know. Call the Chapter phone at 423-753-5797 or let us know at the March meeting.

OFFICIAL CHAPTER WEB SITE

The New Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS web site is up and running. Thanks to Fred Waskiewicz and Nick White for all their hard work in putting this beautiful site on line. Please visit at www.wataugavalleynrhs.org

CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS



All members and guests are invited to a day to remember down the Southern Railway Bristol line Tour to Knoxville, TN. The trip will start on Saturday April 10 in Johnson City at 7:00 a.m., at the Cherry St. Parking Lot. We will travel the A- line by automobile all the way to Knoxville including station stops at Jonesborough, Telford, Limestone, Greeneville, Radar, Mohawk, Bulls Gap, Whitesburg, Morristown, Jefferson City, Mascot and arriving at the John Sevier Knoxville Yard with photo opportunities through out the Knoxville area. We plan to include a visit to the railroad museum in Knoxville. The highlight of this tour is the visit to the site of one of the worst mainline passenger train wrecks in the United States—the '1904 New Market Wreck'. **Please see article below in the *Whistle Stop*.** During the tour, we will visit the site of this bad passenger train wreck that killed over 100 people. Sign up sheet will be available again at the March meeting or you can e-mail your name to sign up. As of press time, we have nearly 20 members who have already signed up. Do not get left out on this one! Sign-up today!

By Mike Tilley, President, Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS

Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS Minutes for Chapter Meeting, February 22, 2010

The Chapter meeting came to order at 6:30 p.m., on February 22, 2010, at the Johnson City Public Library. Mike Tilley, President, presided. Jim Pahrts made the motion to omit the reading of the January minutes, Paul Haynes seconded, and the motion passed. There were 30 people in attendance.

Programs - Nick White will be organizing the special programs for each month's meeting.

Spring Excursion - The Great Smokey Mountain Railway Excursion will be on Saturday, March 27th. The article about the excursion has been placed in several newspapers and has recently been in the Johnson City and Kingsport papers. Mike announced that we will be exploring other potential bus-train trips.

Southern Railway Tour - The tour of the Southern Bristol Line will be on April 10th and will leave Johnson City and go south visiting several towns along the line before arriving in Knoxville. We will also possibly see the Sevier Yard and the railroad museum in Knoxville. Sign-up as soon as possible for this trip!

Website - Nick White announced that the group is putting the finishing touches to and will open up the Chapter's new and updated website by the end of the week. The new site will be posted after the Board of Directors approval.

Fall Excursion - The Fall Excursion will be on October 30 and 31. Details will be forthcoming.

Motorcar - The Chapter's motorcar is still in storage at Dan & Charlene McLeod's storage shed and needs to be moved out soon. This will need to be stored and secured somewhere until the Jonesborough Museum is complete and it can be placed there.

By Laws - Jim Pahrts gave a review of the progress of the By-laws Committee. The next meeting of the Committee is planned for March 5th. He also reported that the National Board of Directors is revising the national by-laws.

Dues - Mike Tilley reported that letters have been sent out to members reminding them to pay their dues as soon as possible (that is, for the ones who have not renewed yet).

Mechanical - Bob Yapple reported that little has been done in the yard due to the frigid cold and bad weather. There will be repairs made on the 539 to fix the flat wheel. The diner will be back from NC within 30 days. The 500 is at the TVRM.

The program tonight was presented by Jim Pahrts regarding the state of the NRHS.
The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Jackson, Secretary
22 February 2010

Approved,
Mike Tilley, President

OUR APOLOGIES

"We regret the miscommunication that occurred over the announcements in the January and February 2010 newsletters that Jack Cope would have the program for the January meeting, and we are deeply sorry for any misunderstanding and for any inconvenience that occurred. In the future we will strive to avoid such unfortunate experiences in our efforts to offer quality programs at Chapter meetings."

**Mike Jackson, *Whistle Stop* Editor,
Betty Jackson, Chapter Secretary,
Mike Tilley, Chapter President**

Publicity Director's Report

I have been promoting the Watauga Valley Chapter and our Spring Excursion on March 27th to the various media representatives in our area. Recently, I was on News Channel 11 at Noon with Josh Smith, and I was invited on Channel 5 WCYB's News at Noon the week of March 17th. In another public relations effort, I promoted the Chapter and our activities on FM94, a powerful-100,000 watt country station in Marion, VA. Several radio stations and other media have been sent a public service announcement about the excursion as well. I will continue to work with other radio stations to see if they will run a public service announcement for the spring excursion.

Also, I have contacted the surrounding newspapers in and around Johnson City to run a meeting announcement notice inviting new people to attend our monthly meetings. We hope to gain more members and more publicity for the excellent work our Chapter members are doing!

Fred Waskiewicz and I are excited that the Chapter's website is now live, so please take a look at our new site. It features a message board for Chapter members, a special events page for upcoming events, and many photos in the photo gallery for you to enjoy.

Also, if you have any ideas for a program, please contact me!

By Nick White, Membership Recruitment, Publicity, and Program Director

Mechanical Report by Bob Yaple

GENERAL: The clean-up continues at the Chapter's Spring Street Coach Yard. Among other things, we found a new electric fuel pump which will save us from buying one for the *Crescent Harbor*. The water supply for the caboos has frozen twice now and hasn't broken so we don't know where the trouble is. The cold weather this month (February) has seriously curtailed our operations at the Yard.

ROLLING STOCK: The 400 *Moultrie Diner* is still in Spencer, NC, at the North Carolina Transportation Museum and will return in March. The 500 *Clinchfield Coach* is in Chattanooga, TN, at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum and will remain there for their use. Art DeVoe, Jim Magill, and Bob Yaple went to the TVRM in late January for the roll-out inspection of the 500. A couple of minor problems were repaired by the TVRM. The 539 *Powhatan Arrow Coach* needs a new wheel, and the mechanical crew have located a new wheel and are assembling the costs for drilling and installation. The car's Genset has been serviced.

CRESCENT HARBOR: Wiring on the marker light system continues and is nearly complete. The drawings for the new side bearings (required by AMTRAK for high speeds) have been approved and are being assembled by Johnny Jones in his shop. The old wall-hung toilets in Bedroom A and B have been removed and the new style toilets which are currently on sale have been ordered. The design drawings for the waste water holding tank are being completed. We are also exploring alternatives for the required water heater hoping to find a commercial unit that can be used.

By Bob Yaple, Asst. Chief Mechanical Officer

From Membership Chair Harriet Swank

A donation was made to the Watauga Valley Chapter last month by Eddie McDonald Dougherty. Thank you, Eddie, for your donation.

We would like to WELCOME ABOARD new members, Benjamin & Jonah Blevins of Marion, VA.

Remember, the Watauga Valley Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society was chartered as a non-profit, all volunteer, and educational organization dedicated to a unified goal of preserving rail related history. Thank you for your support of our Chapter's programs and activities.

Additionally, Members' Notes Reporter Nancy Jewell reminds everyone to let her know when a card or a phone call is needed during times of illness and the passing of a friend or loved-one. Also, please let Nancy know the good reports, too, such as job promotions, wedding and birth announcements, etc. Please call Nancy at 423-282-0918 or call via the Chapter phone 423-753-5797. Thank you!

Derailments and SNOW!!

Gary Price, Keeping Norfolk Southern safe...one tie at a time (in 40+ inches of snow, too!).

As mentioned in my February article, news of a derailment on my home territory in central Virginia meant an end to my visit on the Southern side and before we could get gone from South Carolina, we learned of a second derailment in Vardo Yard, located at the northern most end of my territory at Hagerstown, Maryland. So on 1/28/10, we loaded our equipment onto flat cars at Columbia, and sent them off to our next destination in Shenandoah, Virginia.

Monday, 2/1/10, we unloaded our equipment in Shenandoah Yard and traveled by rail three miles to the derailment site at milepost H110.9. A wheel on a covered hopper car, loaded with plastic pellets, had shattered causing the rear truck to derail and the car was dragged for a mile. The wheel that was broken acted like a radial saw blade and cut a deep gash down the middle of the ties and destroyed a track side analyzer located at milepost H111.8. It was determined that we had to replace approximately 3,000 ties in this mile, and we went to work and completed the job by the next day in the snow, then loaded our equipment, and drove northward to Hagerstown, MD.

Several cars had derailed in track #4 in Vardo Yard and while my gang was there it was decided that we would also re-tie yard tracks Numbers 1, 2, and 3 to help prevent other derailments similar to the one in track #4. We tied our machines down on Thursday and left for the weekend and that's when the bottom fell out of the sky and Maryland was hit with Blizzard like conditions.

On Sunday 2/7, my Supervisor called and told me to stay at home because Vardo Yard was covered with 41 inches of snow, and more snow was called for during the week, so I had to turn in a week's vacation, sat home and watched it snow. The following Sunday, My Supervisor called once again and said he had some good news and some bad news.



Above Photo: Norfolk Southern had to bring in a big gun—the Jordan Spreader—to tackle the 40+ inches of snow that buried Maryland.

Well, Gimme the bad first, I asked him. No work again this week, NS was shipping in a Jordan Spreader from Buffalo, NY, to plow the snow off the yard tracks he told me . . . OK, now for the good, he told me to report to work at the Marion section house, and I spent my week working in Bristol Yard, changing out switch stands on the yard tracks, and sleeping in my own bed.

The snow finally was plowed off and melted away and my gang returned back to a very muddy rail yard on 2/22/10. We finished the yard tracks and headed out of there before another snow could come along and bury us again.

Next month, I will report from the Norfolk Southern awards banquet being held in early March in downtown Norfolk, Virginia.

Gary Price

Keeping Norfolk Southern safe...one tie at a time.



Gary Price reports the first "bow" handle switch was installed in Bristol Yard on 2/16/10. Soon all the ball handle type switches in Bristol yard will be replaced with this "easier to throw" style switch. "It is not often that I get to take part in a piece of railroad history, but I had the honor of installing and throwing the first three 'bow handle' switches in Bristol Yard," Gary said.

National Train Day will be May 8, 2010!

Amtrak will host the third annual National Train Day on May 8, 2010 with events across the country to celebrate America's love for trains.

For more information please go to <http://www.nationaltrainday.com/press/>

1904 New Market Train Wreck

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JEFFERSON CITY, TN**



Saturday, September 24, 1904 was a terrible day in the history of one east Tennessee community. On this day two trains collided, head on, near the town of New Market. At the time, it was the worst wreck of its kind to ever occur in North America. It is believed that up to

113 people lost their lives in this tragedy.

The wreck involved train Number 15, a local train, out of Bristol and train Number 12, the Carolina Special, out of Chattanooga.

Train Number 15 left Bristol that Saturday morning headed for Knoxville. It made stops to pick up passengers in Morristown and New Market. Number 15's

three cars were filled with 140 passengers headed to Knoxville for a day of shopping or to attend a fair that was going on in the city. It was common to travel by train in those days because roads were bad and automobiles were scarce and not dependable.



The Carolina Special left Chattanooga that same morning intending to make

a loop through Knoxville and then to continue through Morristown and eventually on to Asheville, North Carolina. At its stop in Knoxville, more cars were added to the Carolina Special. When it left Knoxville the Carolina Special had nine cars behind its locomotive. Two were mail cars, three were wooden passenger coaches, and the last four were steel Pullman passenger cars. Many passengers in these new steel Pullman cars were headed home from the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, where they had tasted something new and wonderful... the ice cream cone! 210 people were riding on the train.

The track the two trains were traveling on was a single track, so the usual procedure was for the local train (Number 15) to pull off on a side track at a place called Hodges Switch, located between New Market and Strawberry Plains, in order for the larger train to pass. But when Number 15 pulled into Morristown that day, they received orders to do something different. They were told to stop at a side track in New Market instead of Hodges Switch until the Carolina Special had passed. Both the conductor and the engineer signed they had read the new orders. Number 15 proceeded on and stopped in New Market to pick up more passengers. The train should have then traveled only a few hundred feet to the side track and then pulled off. It didn't. People working at the depot in New Market, who knew of the change of plans, were horrified when Number 15 traveled on past the side track. A telegraph was quickly sent to warn the Carolina Special. The Carolina Special was just pulling out of the station in Strawberry Plains when the telegraph arrived. "Number 15 has run the switch and is on the main line!", it read. People in the depot ran out to shout and wave their arms at the departing train. Some even threw rocks at the train to try and get someone's attention, but no one on the Carolina Special noticed and the train traveled on.

Those who witnessed the error knew there was one more chance to warn the trains. A telegraph was sent to Hodges Switch, the normal side track, where someone should have been on duty. For some unknown reason though, no one was there and the message was never received. The two trains roared on towards each other, unaware!

As the Carolina Special's engineer approached New Market Hill, a slight upgrade just east of Strawberry Plains, he began to build speed. He soon had the train up to about 60 miles per hour. That same grade was downhill for Number 15. Number 15 was running behind schedule, so the engineer decided to make up time on the downward slope and had the train up to 70 miles per hour. The trains met at a place in the tracks that ran through Joseph Whitaker's farm near Lost Creek. Upon seeing the other train, each engineer applied his brakes, but the Carolina Special had just rounded a curve when the trains met. By the time the crews spotted each other it was too late. The trains were slowed slightly before impact, but it is estimated that they had a combined speed of up to 110 miles per hour when they hit head-on. The impact was so strong it knocked the steam boilers off both trains, but the worst was yet to come. The locomotive and the coal tender of Number 15 broke loose from the cars behind it, went air-borne and turned upside down in mid-air. Number 15's massive locomotive sailed over the locomotive of the Carolina Special, the tender car, and then the postal and express cars. It landed squarely on top of the Carolina Special's three wooden passenger coaches. At the same time, the four steel Pullman cars at the end of the Carolina Express kept moving forward, smashing those same three coaches between them and the other two cars.

It was all over in about seven seconds. Amazingly no passengers were killed on Number 15. The engineer and fireman were killed, however, and many passengers were injured. It was far different on the coaches of the Carolina Special. The wooden cars, carrying most of the passengers, were damaged beyond hope and many lives were lost.

People living up to 15 miles away heard the crash, and soon help arrived from all directions. Jessica Whitaker, the sister of Joseph Whitaker, on whose farm the wreck happened, is said to have torn up all the fine fabrics from her hope chest to use as bandages. The injured were rushed to General Hospital in Knoxville. Then, everyone began the huge task of clearing the tracks.

Many people have tried to figure out how this terrible accident could have happened. Two questions will never be answered: Why didn't Number 15 stop on the side track at New Market as it had been instructed on that day? The engineer and fireman on Number 15 were both killed in the wreck, so no one will ever know what they were thinking. And, where was the person on duty at Hodges



Switch? If someone had been there to receive the warning message, the accident could have been prevented. Everyone who learns of this terrible wreck wonders about these two questions, even today, over 100 years after the wreck occurred.



Above are more Photos of the New Market Train Wreck. Article and Photos on the New Market Train Wreck are used by permission.



From the Editor

***Whistle Stop* Uses New Heading**

Beginning with this printing of the *Whistle Stop*, we have made a change in the heading, and I want to thank Chapter Webmaster Fred Waskiewicz, a former editor of the newsletter, for designing a more attractive heading.

You may know that Fred and Publicity and Membership Recruitment Chair Nick White have been working with Jeff Forrester in designing a new website for the Chapter, and their excellent work is evident when one views the new site at <http://wataugavalleynrhs.org/>.

Again, thank you very much Fred for an excellent heading for the newsletter!

If you have anything to contribute—a suggestion for an article, a train-related story, a train riding or spotters' report, a photograph—please send it in. Our priority is to include all railroad-related materials that pertain to the interests of our Chapter members, such as the article on the 1904 New Market train wreck in this issue that ties-in with the Chapter's upcoming Southern Railway Bristol-Knoxville Line tour in April.

You can contact our Chapter President Mike Tilley at wataugavalley@embarqmail.com or myself at ki4ojomike@gmail.com. Remember, if the item is protected by copyright, please get permission. Thanks! **Mike Jackson, Editor**

The Whistle Stop

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Opinions or viewpoints are those of the writer and may not necessarily reflect those of the Chapter members, officers or directors. Items of interest are welcome and will be credited to the author; however, because of space constraints, all submissions are subject to editing.

Clip Art of Railroad Heralds Courtesy of Ken Houghton (KH) Railroad Clip Art.

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Nick White, and Betty Jackson, contributors

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Clinchfield locomotives at Unicoi, TN. Mike Tilley took this picture in 1978, and it is one of five photos of the Old Clinchfield from Mike's files that will be included in the *Whistle Stop* through June.

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