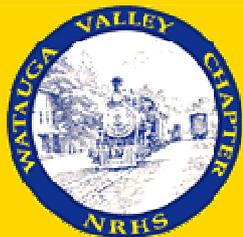


Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley NRHS
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Railroading – Past, Present and Future

Volume 31 No. 3

March 2011

The next General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held Monday, March 28, 2011 at 6:30 pm, at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St. Johnson City, TN. Come and learn more information about our 2011 excursion program.

The program will be presented by Doug Zimmerman: "CLINCHFIELD 676 Comes to Kingsport, TN." In November, 1992, to help the City of Kingsport, TN and CSX celebrate the 50th anniversary of the running of the Santa Train from Elkhorn City, KY to Kingsport, UNION PACIFIC brought in their Challenger class 4-6-6-4 locomotive, re-numbered and re-lettered as CLINCHFIELD 676.

Photo courtesy of
Steve Barry



The CLINCHFIELD was the last Class 1 railroad to be built east of the Mississippi. It opened in 1915, linking Spartanburg, SC with Elkhorn City, KY. It went from the extreme southeast corner of Kentucky, through the western tip of Virginia, eastern tip of Tennessee, the western tip of North Carolina, and into the northwest corner of South Carolina. No railroad that served five states was shorter than the CLINCHFIELD. In 1924, the ATLANTIC COAST LINE and the L&N leased the railroad. The CLINCHFIELD maintained a separate identity up to the mid 1970s, when it was folded into the FAMILY LINES, which morphed into THE SEABOARD SYSTEM then into CSX.

During the increased war-time traffic of the early 1940s, the CLINCHFIELD needed more locomotives. They ordered eight single-expansion 4-6-6-4s from the American Locomotive Company and took delivery of them in 1942 and 1943. They were similar to the D&H Class J "Challengers" built in 1940. These locomotives were designated Class E-1 and were assigned road numbers 650 through 657. They had (4) 22 x 32 cylinders, 69" drivers, a boiler pressure of 265 psi, exerted 101,000 lbs of tractive effort and weighed 607,000 pounds. After the war in 1947, four more "Challengers" were received from ALCO. This group was designated Class E-2 and given road numbers 660 through 663. These locomotives were very similar to the Class E-1s. There were six other "Challengers" received by the CLINCHFIELD. The D&RGW did not like the six ALCO built 4-6-6-4s they received through the War Production Board in 1943. They preferred the locomotives they had purchased from the Baldwin Locomotive Works. The D&RGW sold the six Alco-built "Challengers" to the CLINCHFIELD in 1947. This group was designated Class E-3 and were given road numbers 670 through 675. All 18 of the CLINCHFIELD "Challengers" were scrapped in 1953 and 1963.

This will be a program you do not want to miss. Bring a friend and enjoy a great night of railroading.

Member Notes

by Nancy Jewell

Sympathy is extended to Jack Maloney in the death of his uncle, W.A. Maloney, on February 20, 2011, at Appalachian Christian Village, Johnson City. Mr. Maloney had been a lifelong resident of Telford and Washington County, Tennessee.

With continuing heart concerns, Walter Byrd is considering a pacemaker and could already have one in place by the time this article is being read. Whatever his decision may be, we hope Walter continues to enjoy participating in Chapter and other activities.

Please help us keep in touch with members, families, and friends by calling Chapter phone (423) 753-5797 or Nancy Jewell at (423) 282-0918 with requests to make a phone call or send a card. Thanks for thinking of others.

MOTTO CONTEST

The Watauga Valley NRHS Board of Directors discussed adopting a Chapter motto that sums up what we do, or our vision. It was decided that a contest should be held among all the membership to determine what that motto should be. The Board will be taking ideas now through the March 28 Chapter Meeting. Proposals will be reviewed by the Board at their April 2011 meeting for a vote on the motto that best suits the Chapter. A prize will be awarded for the best suggestion. Suggestions should be submitted to the Chapter at wataugavalley@embarqmail.com or brought to the March Chapter Meeting. Have fun, and be creative.

CHAPTER TURNS 30 YEARS OLD IN MAY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WATAUGA VALLEY NRHS! The Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS will turn 30 years old in May. A big celebration is planned for Saturday, May 14 at 12 noon at the Food City Banquet Room on Eastman Road in Kingsport, TN. A very special speaker will be announced shortly. A registration form will be provided in the next WHISTLE STOP. Please mark your calendars for this special event.

IT'S ABOUT OVER FOR NON RENEWALS – ACT NOW!

If you haven't renewed your membership, by the time you receive this WHISTLE STOP, you are just days away from losing your membership in the Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS. Please take action now and get your dues in so you will not miss the next WHISTLE STOP. Mail to: Watauga Valley NRHS, Suzie Price, Membership Chairman, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Bob Yaple

GENERAL

The four wheel sets that were removed from the Crescent Harbor trucks have been sent to TVRM for their use. One wheel set, removed from Coach 539, is still on site. More secure storage space in the office has been proved for the radios.

ROLLING STOCK

400 MOULTRIE DINER: Work outlined in the February report continues.

500 CLINCHFIELD COACH: The car will return to the coach yard for a brief check up before going back out on the road again.

539 POWHATAN ARROW COACH: The generator staring problem has been resolved and dual starting batteries are in progress.

2351 CRESCENT HARBOR: Installation of the generator continues. The new fuel tank has been painted and is ready for installation. Interior work continues, including paint preparation and painted parts installed. New window sills for the lounge have been received. They will be sealed and stained and installed as the window gasket replacement progresses.

The mechanical committee appreciates all the big crowds that have been attending the coach yard work sessions the past month. Everyone has a great time on either Tuesdays or Saturdays. If you want to be part of this group, give us a call at (423) 753-5797. No better way to spend a Tuesday or Saturday than being on a railroad passenger car.

SPRING 2011 GSMR EXCURSION

We are happy to announce that our Spring 2011 GSMR Excursion is *sold out!* This year we have nine bus loads of happy passengers traveling to Bryson City to enjoy a day outing on the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD. The Watauga Valley Board of Directors wants to thank all the members that have volunteered to assist with our trips this year.

LIBRARY DONATIONS

Our library collection in Jonesborough is growing fast. We appreciate all the donations that have been made so far. Please bring your railroad book donations to any Chapter Membership meeting or call the chapter office at (423) 753-5797. If you are finished reading or just want to donate, put your books to good work. We have plenty of room to add more books!

And Mingo was Its Nameo

by Gary Price

As if Pittsburgh wasn't far enough away, we soon learned that our tie gang was now on its way to work the yard tracks located at Mingo Junction, Ohio, and that means we had to drive almost another hour further away from home and deep into former CONRAIL territory.

The yards at Mingo Junction were at one time owned by the PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD and were an important link to the massive network of steel mills located up and down the banks of the Ohio River. Today the yard there handles mostly power plant coal traffic and the most disgusting commodity that NS hauls – trash. That's right, nasty, rotting trash! A weekly container trainload of trash (some marked medical waste) from New York and New Jersey is handled in the yard and sometimes sets for days until the landfill is ready for it, and low and behold, they parked it right next to our camp cars! Pee Yew! We had to call the yardmaster and request it be moved to another track in the yard, which he did ... the next day. A strip coal mining facility is located along the line at Powhatan Point (pronounced POW-HATTAN, different than the name on our WATX 539, which is pronounced POWAH-TAN ARROW). I can imagine all of you trying to mouth the words right now. Anyway, the coal comes out and the trash goes in. Also, several styles of steel coil cars can often be found at the interchange between NS and W&LE at Mingo.



ED. NOTE: No wisecracks about NJ trash, please.

One of the sights that I like to see while in this area is the Ohio River tug boats as they maneuver 4-6 barges of coal up the mighty Ohio River. Around here we talk about truck / train competition. Up there it is a big deal between tugboats and railroads. I had a great uncle who once was a tugboat captain on this route.

At the Southeastern end of the yard is a massive trestle that crosses the yard, the Ohio River and over into West Virginia. This is the former WABASH RAILROAD Bridge that later became a part of the NORFOLK AND WESTERN in 1969. Now it belongs to the short line WHEELING AND LAKE ERIE RAILROAD. Their colorful black and orange striped locomotives could be seen switching cars back and forth at the local steel mill. I was thrilled to see W&LE SD40 #3046 at the point of one train. W&LE 3046 is painted in a DENVER AND RIO GRANDE WESTERN RAILROAD inspired scheme.

Now back to work, The tracks in the yard were in poor condition and the ties were rotten. In order for us to perform our work safely, we had to have three tracks cleared out to work in: the track we were working in plus a track on each side of us to set up new ties and dump the old ties onto. It had been around 10 years since the yard had been re-tied and that means 10 years of debris and dust accumulation, making our [job difficult and dirty to say the least. One day in particular the front 4 machines had finished working the track and we had pulled out of the yard and onto the mainline. Suddenly, [continued on next page]

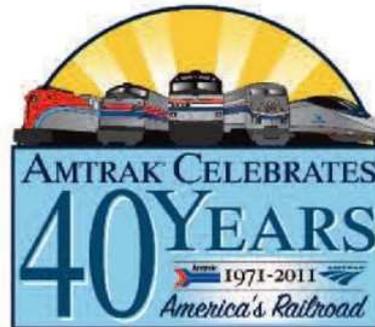
the weather alert went off that a storm was fast approaching. We barely had time to get our rain gear on when the storm hit carrying 40 mile an hour winds with it. As we five employees looked back a half mile to the rest of the gang, the storm kicked up the dirt with such force that it resembled a tornado as it swept across the yard, covering all the machines and the other employees in a sticky mist of mud and rain, I was thankful that I was already out of the yard. I just got a little wet while the other guys looked like they had just climbed out of a coal mine. After the storm passed, two beautiful rainbows stretched across the yard, which kinda made me think back to Bible Study and Noah and the Ark.



Mingo Junction yard power awaits an assignment. Pictured are RP-E4D #937 and #921 and SD-40-2 #3430.

Yard operations are always an interesting place to work. We have to be aware of our surroundings at all times and be on the look out for trains. Because of all of the noise associated with a yard, a train, or a railcar alone, can sneak up on you.

It took us three weeks to complete our work, and we were happy to load up the equipment and head back to our home division. Next stop: West "By God" Virginia.



***PROGRAMS NEEDED
FOR
2011 CHAPTER MEETINGS!!!***

The Chapter is still in need of programs for our General Membership meetings for each remaining month in 2011. If you have any program material, including railroad slides, a video, a DVD, or know of a possible speaker, contact Nick White, the Program Director, at any Chapter meeting; leave a message on the Chapter phone (423) 753-5797; or send an e-mail to wataugavalley@embarqmail.com.



***2011 Narrow Gauge Convention
September 7-10
Hickory, NC***

***For information, navigate to
<http://www.narrowgauge2011.com/>***

SOUTHERN locomotive 154 and the Embreeville Branch

The recent restoration of ex-SOUTHERN RAILWAY 2-8-0 No. 154 in Knoxville has stirred a lot of Chapter interest in not only the engine itself but also the Embreeville Branch of the SOUTHERN which it served. A great article on the history of the branch line has fallen into the hands of your Editor. Unfortunately, it arrived too late to obtain the necessary permission to reprint and to search for a copy suitable for digital reproduction to include in this month's WHISTLE STOP. That will be my task in the upcoming months. The branch line has a storied history, not only as a means of hauling iron ore and zinc from the Embreeville mines but also as the beginning of a proposed, competitive route with what would become the CLINCHFIELD into Marion, North Carolina. Look for a continuation of this engaging story of local history in future issues of the WHISTLE STOP. In the meantime, I'll whet your appetites by reproducing the branch line map below, which was drawn by Thomas S. Wyman. Mr. Wyman is the son of Thomas N. Wyman, who served as Vice President and General Manager of the Embree Iron Company. Information on the restoration of No. 154 may be found at <http://www.southern154.com/>.

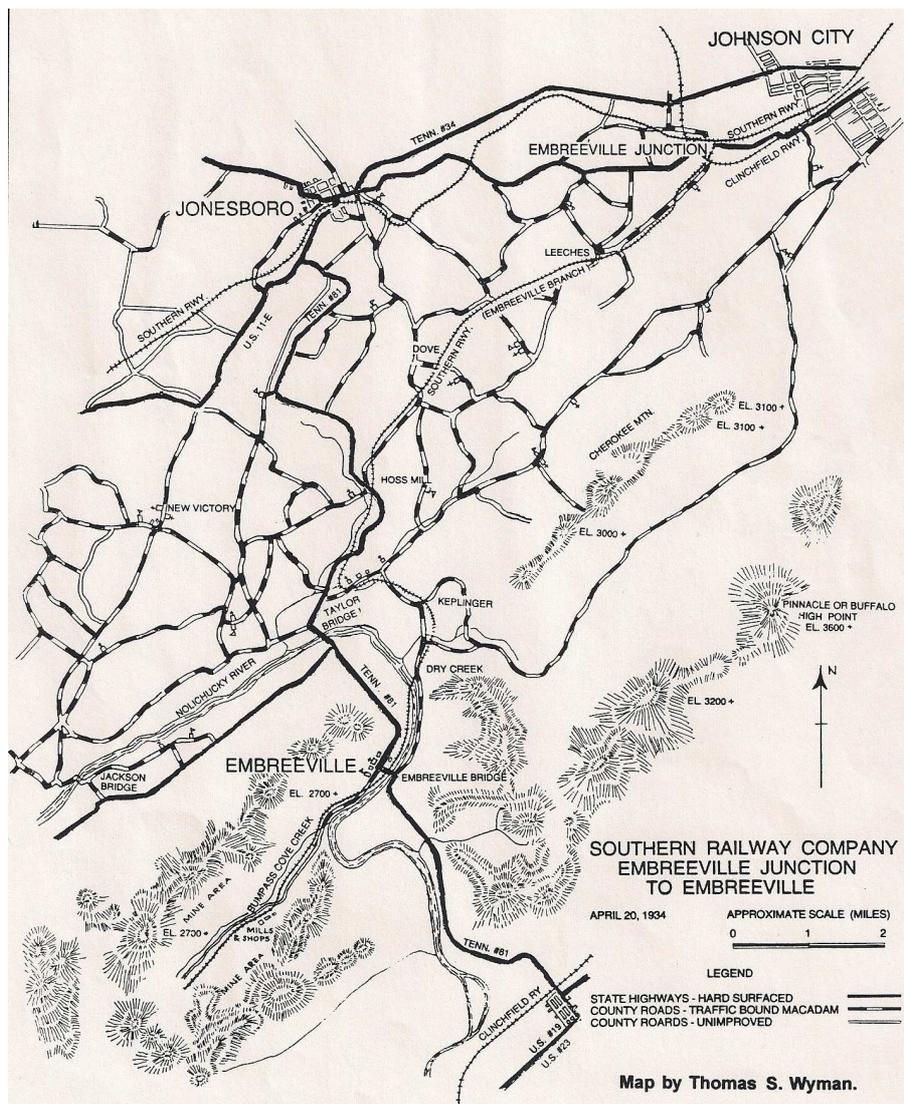




Photo Section



All of the talk and excitement about our upcoming GSMR excursion has your Editor reminiscing about past Chapter excursions. I've dug deep into the vault and pulled out a few shots from the busy year of 1986 that are sure to bring back memories for those who worked these excursions. For our newer members, this may be the first glimpse you've had of those trips you've heard so much about.

This first photo (right) shows ex-CLINCHFIELD FA and FB units #116 - #119 leading the Chapter's "Springfest Mountain Express" on April 12, 1986. The location is Dungannon, VA. (Both color photos by David Johnson.)



The next photo on the left has CSX U30B #5725 at point on the October 19, 1986 "Clinchfield Autumn Leaves Special." The train is headed southbound at Spruce Pine, NC, and the engine is just hours away from

developing ground relay problems, which led to ...

... a rescue by SD45-2 #8969, still in CLINCHFIELD black, seen here coupling to the Chapter's coach "CLINCHFIELD". The irony captured in the photo is left to the reader's imagination. The units behind the #8969 are the #5725 and CSX U30B #5511. The location is the old "Y" just above the Marion, NC depot. (Photo by Jim Brooks of the *Johnson City Press*.)



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Michael Hardin Collection

Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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