



Whistle Stop

Watauga Valley NRHS
P O Box 432 Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432
(423) 753-5797
www.wataugavalleynrhs.org



Railroading – Past, Present and Future

Volume 31 No. 5

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Chapter members pose in front of SOUTHERN 2-8-0 #630 (ex-ET&WNC #207) during their recent, memorable field trip to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum. Look for more photos inside the newsletter in the PHOTO SECTION and on the Chapter's web site.

May 23rd Chapter Meeting

The next **General Membership Meeting** of the Watauga Valley Railway Historical Society & Museum will be held Monday, May 23, 2011 at 6:30 pm, at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Chapter member Chris Harmon will present a program on the CASS SCENIC RAILROAD. Bring a friend and enjoy watching the magnificent CSRR geared steam locomotives at work.

Member Notes

by Nancy Jewell

Jim Calhoun spent several days in the Franklin Woods Community Hospital in Johnson City in early May and is now recovering nicely. Please keep Jim in your thoughts along with David Denny, Suzie Price, Walter Byrd, Elaine Moore (Randy's mother), and the many folks who are dealing with injuries and property damage caused by the recent storms in our area. Please let us know of those members, friends or families who could use a card or phone call to add some cheer to their day. Chapter phone is (423) 753-5797 or call Nancy Jewell at (423) 282-0918. Thanks for helping us keep in touch.

We will soon be observing Memorial Day. Hope you have a safe and enjoyable week-end.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Bob Yaple

General: We have purchased several new pieces of equipment including a professional buffing machine for shining up the bright trim in the Crescent Harbor. Bob Yaple and Art Devoe recently cleaned up the Spring St. coach yard and made a scrap run to the scrap yard.

Rolling Stock: The 500 and 539 are now at TVRM in Chattanooga for Service. 539 had some air conditioning problems which gave us a fit to find the problems.

Moultrie Diner: A new vent fan has been installed; one of the existing removed; and the other refurbished. This will also get rid of a consistent source of roof water dripping on the grill.

Crescent Harbor: The wastewater tank has been installed. Now for the plumbing. The genset now has doors. Interior painting continues. Wiring continues. We have procured new stainless trim for the lounge to replace trim that has been lost when the walls were papered.

500 Clinchfield Coach: The car is now back in the yard. In addition to routine maintenance, the dual battery starting system has been reworked. A torn seat back has been sent out for repair.

539 Powhatan Arrow Coach: The update of the A/C, heat controls is complete with installation of new digital thermostats. A dual starting battery system has been installed. All cars now have the same starting equipment. A heavy brace has been installed on the genset frame to prevent displacement in the event of a hard couple. The roof is being cleaned and repaired and painted. Both coaches will leave the yard again in the coming weeks for excursion service in the South.

Crescent Harbor Lounge/ Sleeper: It's been tank month. The fuel tank is now in its box location. The waste water tank is under the car and ready for installation and the design for the waste water pump tanks are near completion. The waste water pumps have been procured. Genset doors are in progress and the auto start controls installed in the electric closet. In addition to the auto-start, an additional 120 volt breaker box has been installed. This will allow for more control of the electrical systems. The decorative chrome rim is being reinstalled in the lounge and corridor.

Chapter Notices

FALL MAINLINE EXCURSIONS HAVE BEEN APPROVED

Our AMTRAK fall excursions have been approved for October 29th and 30th.

- Saturday, October 29, 2011. Spencer, NC to Roanoke, VA and return same day.
- Sunday, October 30, 2011. Spencer, NC to Toccoa, GA and return same day.

We will have approximately 25 cars on our train this year and we will need Chapter volunteers. Please mark the dates on your calendar. A sign up form will be sent out with the June newsletter along with motel information.

JONESBOROUGH DAYS

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have a booth set up at Jonesborough Days to promote the new museum coming to Jonesborough. We will need Chapter members to man the booth for July 2nd and 3rd. Please sign up at the May Chapter Meeting or call the Chapter office at (423) 753-5797 to volunteer.

WATAUGA VALLEY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY BANQUET

Happy Birthday! Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum. Come celebrate our 30th Anniversary on Saturday, July 9, 2011, 11:00am at the Food City Corp. Banquet Room, 1205 North Eastman Road, Kingsport, TN. Guest Speaker will be Mr. Bev Fitzpatrick - Director of the Virginia Transportation Museum, Roanoke, Va. Cost: \$15.00 per person Get your reservations in now! Call the Chapter at (423) 735-5797.

CHUCKEY DEPOT REPORT

The Chuckey Depot project is were some issues with regards to insurance station from the present site this issue has been resolved. of the building from railroad moving to Jonesborough in the of the placement of the depot in Jonesborough will be announced in the near future. The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum is looking forward in getting the new museum set up in Jonesborough.



moving along very well. There NORFOLK SOUTHERN in requirements for removing the but we are happy to report that Plans are now for the removal property in Chuckey and very near future. The location

Searching for Rail Information on the Web?

Looking for rail-related information on the web but don't know where to start? Try the "Links" page on the Chapter's web site. From the Home Page, click on **Links** under the Chapter logo at the top, or navigate to <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/links.php>.

On to Mullens

by Gary Price

In my last journey, I tackled the first segment of track on the former VIRGINIAN RAILWAY's Deepwater Branch. In this month's column I will crest the grade at Jenny Gap and slowly work downgrade into the yard limits at Elmore Yard. Since we were now on the Mullens side of our job, we had to pack up our camp cars and re-locate our campsite from Charleston to the west yard at Elmore. This was late November, and with December looming ahead of us, we were all hoping to be out of there before the snows of West Virginia set into some of the roughest parts of the Mountaineer State. Someone once asked me "Just how do you get to Mullens?" to which I replied, "Well, you drive towards hell and take a left." Needless to say, this is my least favorite place to work on the railroad; it is kinda like being marooned on a railroad island. There is no cell phone service, no fast food, no Wal-Mart and the town rolls up the sidewalks before dark. You have to drive an hour to find any of the aforementioned. So the sooner we could get out of town, the better.

Working downgrade has its own unique challenges. We have to be vigilant and keep our machines under control at all times. When we leave our machines for lunch or any reason, we have to make sure that the parks breaks are set, and moveable parts of the machine are in the down position to ensure that the equipment doesn't roll away unmanned. Also, we have to operate our equipment slowly and safely because the downward grade and sharp curves make the route almost like an obstacle course. NS Operating rule 814 demands that we must be able to stop our equipment in half the range of vision. This is one of our departments "Cardinal Rules" and it is strictly enforced.

After passing through the 899 foot tunnel at Jenny Gap, we steadily replaced ties westward. Three miles later, we crossed the 613 foot trestle at Slab Fork. As I crossed this rather high span, I looked below to see the tiny community of Slab Fork, which has several homes built right under the trestle, closer than most that I have seen. I often wonder what it is like to be lying in bed and hear all of those 100 car coal trains passing over the roof of the house.

Weeks and miles passed. We didn't make as much progress as we hoped to, due to heavy coal traffic, and the extra demands (more spikes and anchors) that curvy territories have on a small gang like mine. We finally reached the switch at Maben, and so did the snow. It snowed harder on us than anytime that I can ever remember at work in 14 years. They even called off work and made us stay in one day due to the roads being too treacherous. Normally, it might snow and be gone in a few days, but this time, it snowed every day in the month of December. Work was almost at a standstill. We couldn't see which ties that had to be replaced. The front rail-broom, which normally sweeps ballast off the ties, had to be used for snow removal, and we could only do about 500 ties at a time before the snow covered the tracks back up. With the snow came bitter cold and I had to wear so many layers of clothes to keep warm that I could barely move.

Finally, we made it into Elmore Yard at Mullens, snow still falling and the end of the job in sight. Elmore Yard is essentially a large WYE track with a yard on each of the three ends of the WYE. The VIRGINIAN RAILWAY was famous for the electric locomotives that were once served here. The three routes of the WYE turn into three different main lines. The Deepwater line ran northward and served Mullens to Charleston and once connected [Continued on next page.]

with the C&O and the NYC. The Guyandot River line headed west and served the mines from Mullens to Gilbert and had a connection with the N&W. Finally, the main line heads east and served towns such as Princeton, WV, Roanoke, VA, Victoria, VA, and terminated at Sewell's Point on the East Coast of Virginia. Today these three mainlines out of Mullens are still major routes for NORFOLK SOUTHERN coal trains headed to power plants and for export. There also was a lot of snow hauled out of Mullens on the top of hopper cars during the month of December.



If you are ever in the Mullens area, there is a nice museum located in a restored VIRGINIAN caboose, with displays of locks, lanterns and photographs documenting the VGN RAILWAY's influence on Mullens WV.

RIGHT: The handrails for the museum have actual railroad wrenches welded to the railing to add a little class. The wrenches were stamped with N&W on them.



Finally, the last frozen tie was put in the track, and we loaded our equipment safely onto our flatcars, and shipped them to the southern side, where we could finally have some warmer weather ... or least we thought.

Until next time, stay safe.

In the News - Region

CRR Depot. The *Johnson City Press* reported that area developer Mitch Cox Companies has signed a contract with the Johnson City Development Authority on the ex-CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD depot, a move that permits the company to begin a preliminary evaluation of the historical property. Cox has 90 days to return with proposal(s) for developing the property, probably commercially. JCDA will then evaluate development proposal(s) and, if satisfied, then negotiate a sale price. JCDA's position is that in selling the property "[they] want to make sure we're doing the best thing for downtown..." The JCDA purchased the depot in early 2010 for \$150,000.

ET&WNC ROW / Bike Trail. [Source: *Johnson City Press*] The Johnson City Commission at its April 21st meeting voted to pay Genesee & Wyoming, the parent company of the EAST TENNESSEE RAILWAY, \$600,000 for the 10-mile-long ex-ET&WNC rail corridor, which is on about 70 acres of land that runs from Alabama and Legion Streets in Johnson City and ends near the State Line Drive-In in Elizabethton. Once the agreement is approved by both parties, the deal will close in 60 days and the city will be legally responsible for the property. The company will then have 24 months to remove the rail and other equipment. Acquisition of the property allows the city to move forward with its proposed hiking / biking trail over the former rail line. In the meantime, the city is required to maintain the property should the railroad company decide to reactivate service. (Rail banking is part of the agreement.) Were that to happen, the city would be reimbursed for its costs.

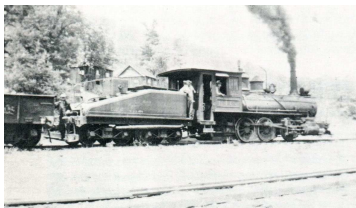
SOUTHERN RAILWAY'S LONG-ABANDONED EMBREEVILLE BRANCH

By Thomas S. Wyman

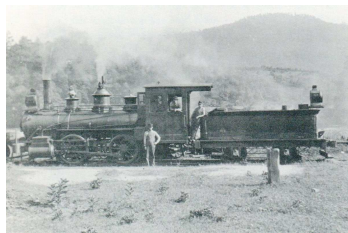
[Originally published in May-June 1993 TIES Magazine. Reprinted with author's permission. Thanks to Bob May for providing an issue suitable for photocopy.]

[Continued from last month.] The track from Embreeville to the mill in Bumpass Cove was owned by the SOUTHERN RAILWAY and leased by the Embree Iron Company. It was constructed on a steep ascent along the creek with a grade that reached 3.67% at one point. A short mile and a half standard gauge railroad, constructed and operated by the Embree Iron Company, connected the mill area with the Peach Orchard mine where substantial ore reserves had been located, and with other mines in the Cove.

The Embree Iron Company owned and operated two small standard gauge locomotives, an 0-6-0 ex-PENNSYLVANIA switcher and an 0-4-0 dinkey known familiarly as "Old Betsy," along with seven cars. The locomotives were used to shuttle Company ore cars between the mine and mill and to move SOUTHERN RAILWAY empties to the mill and return the loaded cars to the railhead at Embreeville where they could be picked up and moved to Johnson City.



Ex-PENNSYLVANIA RR 0-6-0 switcher, which shuttled cars around the Bumpass Cove mill, delivering loaded ore cars to the SOUTHERN at Embreeville. [Thomas Wyman]



"Old Betsy", an 0-4-0 dinky switch engine, probably built in the late 1880s as a wood burner, later converted to coal. [McClung Historical Collection]



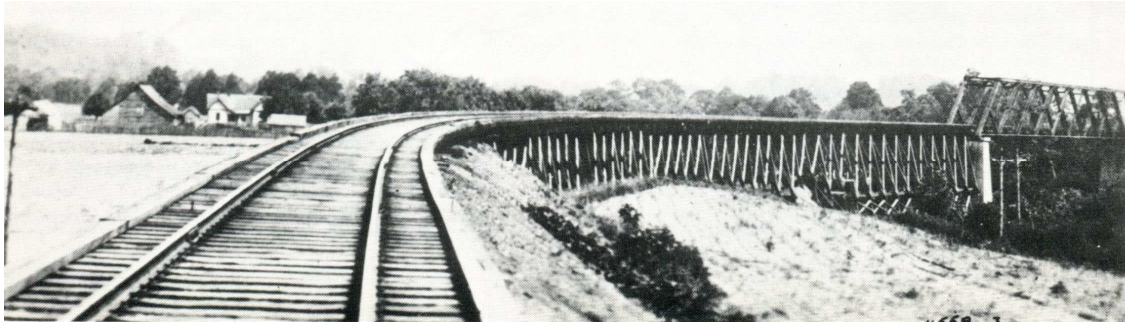
The narrow gauge gasoline locomotive with a string of one-ton ore cars. [David Sams]

The Embree Iron Company also constructed a narrow gauge railway and acquired a small gasoline-powered engine with interconnected drive wheels to move strings of one-ton ore cars from the mining area to the mill tipple roughly along the topographic gradient. The use of small ore cars which could be loaded at the mine head reduced the need to rely on standard gauge equipment which was more awkward to load and move. Although a relatively small operation, it was a soundly conceived system that served the Company well.

The production of zinc which began in 1913, and the optimism which prevailed as operations got underway, are reflected in a 1915 newspaper article headlined "Great Industrial Development at Embreeville, Tenn.:

"... What up to a few months ago looked like a town in ruins and dilapidated buildings, is again showing signs of great prosperity and development. The annual output of the mines in zinc, which is shipped via Johnson City to various points, averages about nine carloads weekly. . . the development of the zinc properties at Embreeville means much to those who are engaged in their development. A large force of men, probably 300, are at work and the payrolls of the company are very large thus bringing to that community great prosperity."

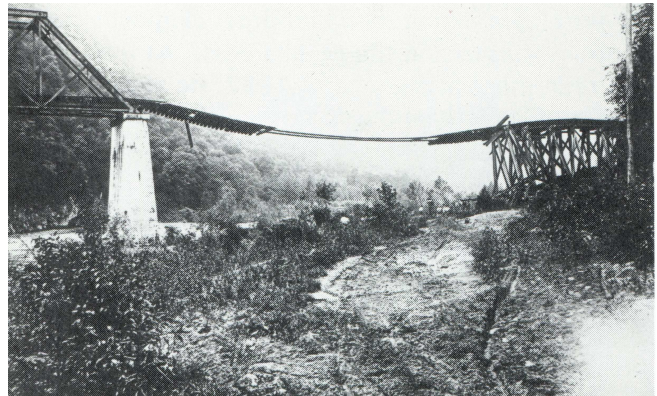
[Continued on next page.]



Looking north along the wooden trestle approaching SOUTHERN's bridge across the river on the northern outskirts of Embreeville. [Sara Willis Riden]

At mile 11 as it entered the Embreeville valley, the SOUTHERN RAILWAY's track crossed the Nolichucky River on a 233-foot steel truss bridge supported by concrete piers which had a long wooden approach trestle on the Embreeville side of the river. It was during the disastrous flood of July 1916, which heavily damaged all rail lines in the Virginia-Tennessee-North Carolina area [and elsewhere on the SOUTHERN system],

that a large section of the wooden trestle was washed out, leaving only the rails spanning the gap. At the height of the flood it appeared that the steel truss would also be lost, but waters receded and it held. Without its rail connection, the mine was effectively isolated and unable to continue operation. Although the community faced a crisis, the SOUTHERN RAILWAY had higher priority flood repair projects elsewhere before it could get the Embreeville Branch back into operation. Consequently, the Embree Iron Company quickly assembled a crew of their own



timbermen and carpenters to reconstruct the trestle.

Recognizing that the jobs of most of the men in the community depended on getting the railroad back into operation quickly, the Embree Iron crew completed the project and restored rail traffic in a span of a few weeks. (Imagine the red tape and liability issues which would arise if this were attempted today.) The miners, pleased to be able to return to work, expressed their appreciation to Thomas N. Wyman, the young engineer who supervised the work and who later became manager and vice president of the Embree Iron Company, by taking up a collection and giving him a watch.

Zinc production rose quickly from 986 tons in 1913 to 21,077 tons in 1916. Lead production began in 1917, when 4,300 tons were shipped. That same year, 32,000 tons of zinc were shipped which marked the highest annual production of each product over the entire operating life of the mine. Timber shipments also contributed significantly to the revenues of the Embreeville Branch during those early years.

Traffic was sufficient to warrant three trains a week, running on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, providing both passenger and freight service. It was a one hour run each way with two scheduled stops en route. [Continued on next page.]

(Knoxville Division.)							
BETWEEN EMBREEVILLE JUNCTION AND EMBREEVILLE.							
		No. 161 Tues. and Fri.	Miles.	Central Time.		No. 160 Tues. and Fri.	
				Lv.	Ar.		
.....		10 00AM	0	Embreeville Jct..Tenn.		1 30PM	.....
.....	f	10 26AM	3	Doves.....	"	f 1 05PM	.....
.....	f	10 45AM	9	Garbers.....	"	f 12 43PM	.....
.....			12	Embreeville.....			.....
				Ar.			Lv.

For the present, trains 160 and 161 do not run through to Embreeville.

TABLE 48 JOHNSON CITY AND EMBREEVILLE (Knoxville Division.)							
		Mixed 261 Mon., and Thurs.	Miles	Central Time		Mixed 260 Mon., and Thurs.	
				Lv.	Ar.		
.....		9 10 AM	.0	JOHNSON CITYTenn.		11 38 AM	.....
.....	f		4.2	Leeches.....	"	f	.....
.....	f	9 40	7.2	Dove.....	"	f 11 05	.....
.....	f		9.1	Haas Mill.....	"	f	.....
.....	f	9 55	11.1	Garber.....	"	f 10 45	.....
.....	f		12.1	Keplinger.....	"	f	.....
.....	f		12.5	Dry Creek.....	"	f	.....
.....		10 10 AM	13.5	EMBREEVILLE..	"	10 30 AM	.....
				Ar.			Lv.

TABLE 48 JOHNSON CITY AND EMBREEVILLE (Knoxville Division.)							
		Mixed 261 Mon. only	Miles	Central Time		Mixed 260 Mon. only	
				Lv.	Ar.		
.....		8 00 AM	.0	JOHNSON CITYTenn.		9 55 AM	.....
.....	f		4.2	Leeches.....	"	f	.....
.....	f	8 15	7.2	Dove.....	"	f 9 40	.....
.....	f		9.1	Hoss Mill.....	"	f	.....
.....	f	8 25	11.1	Garber.....	"	f 9 20	.....
.....	f		12.1	Keplinger.....	"	f	.....
.....	f		12.5	Dry Creek.....	"	f	.....
.....		8 45 AM	13.5	EMBREEVILLE..	"	9 00 AM	.....
				Ar.			Lv.

[Ed. Note: A sampling of timetables from the original article. From top to bottom: 1902, 1925 and 1931.]

As the years passed, the readily-accessible ore reserves played out, but through an active exploration drilling program, sufficient new lead and zinc ore bodies were discovered to keep them operating. With improved highway transportation and declining ore reserves, however, rail traffic decreased, and by the early-1930s it had diminished to one train per week. A small utility engine was normally dispatched from Johnson City to haul the empties to Embreeville along with an occasional shipment of coal and to pick up the loaded ore cars for the return trip. [To be concluded next month.]

About the author: Thomas S. Wyman, born in Johnson City, is the son of Thomas N. Wyman, the Embree Iron Co. engineer who supervised rebuilding the SOUTHERN's bridge over the Nolichucky. Upon his father's untimely death in 1936, his mother moved him and his brother to California, a far cry from Bumpass Cove. The West was very good to the family. Thomas graduated from Stanford and went on to a very successful career with Standard Oil of California (later Chevron). He and his wife Ellen reside in Palo Alto.



Photo Section



The following photos of the Chapter's TVRM Field Trip were shot by Nick White. For more photos, go to the Chapter's home page on the web, click on "Photo Gallery", and scroll down to "Chapter Activities".



(Left) Chapter member Randy Moore discusses the restoration of ex-SOUTHERN E8 #6914 with a TVRM shop staff member.



(Right) ex-ET&WNC #207 is shown awaiting passenger boarding prior to leading TVRM's "Missionary Ridge Local". As the years roll on, it's becoming harder to imagine this locomotive plying the rails between Johnson City and Elizabethton. Soon, even the rails themselves will become a memory.



(Left) Richard Freeman, Bob Yapple, and Dan Freeman pose in front of ex-CENTRAL OF GEORGIA Baldwin-built 4-4-0 #349. Are they having a good time? You can see the answer in their smiles

(Right) Man, all that railfanning can sure make a body hungry!



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P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432
wataugavalley@embarqmail.com

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



**Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS
P.O. Box 432
Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

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