

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Photographer Kevin Gilliam timed this nostalgic recreation of a crossing meet between a steam-powered passenger train and a Ford hotel "woodie" perfectly. The photo, taken at Jonesborough, TN during the NS 21st Century Steam Train's Sunday, April 6 return to Bristol, can only make one wish that high-resolution, color photography existed back "in the day". For more of Kevin's imaginative capturing of this and Saturday's excursions, go to page 5.

April 28th General Membership Meeting

This month's General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held at 6:30 pm on April 28, 2014 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. This month's program, presented by Gary Street, will feature a DVD on the CSX Santa Train's 50th Anniversary run in 1993, the highlight of which was UP 4-6-6-4 #3985, repainted for the occasion as CLINCHFILED Challenger class #676. Come out bring a friend and enjoy a great night of railroading with your friends.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewel

Please keep the following members in your thoughts as they continue to deal with health concerns: Anna Banner, Helen Calhoun, Linda Calhoun, Judy Freeman and Bob Yaple. As always, let us know of any member, friend or family to whom a card might be sent or a phone call made.

The office phone number is 423-753-5797 or call Nancy Jewell at 423-282-0918. Thanks for helping us keep in touch.

Welcome Aboard New Members!!!

Bob L. & Norma J. Hand

Brian Patteson

David & Marcia Safewright

Delores & Harold Mick

Douglas & Betty Arnold

Gloria Sims

James & Serry Wietzel

Julia Slempe & Jacob Nance

Sharron Curtis

Travis & Cindy Church

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

By Bob Yaple

GENERAL: The bad weather has again taken its toll on the Watauga Valley Mechanical Team for working at the yard over the last several weeks. Looks like spring is knocking on our door and we can finally get some work done. If you would like to help out at the Yard on Tuesday or Saturdays, please call Chief Mechanical Officer Jim Magill 423-647-2125.

539 – “Powhatan Arrow” coach: Recently made its Washington, DC trip in March along with the scheduled Bristol and Grundy 21st Century Steam Excursions in April.

500 – “St Augustine” coach: Also made the Bristol and Grundy trips. During the April 13th trip the car had some wires short out in the disconnect box. Plans are to repair before the Grundy trips on April 19.

400 – “Moultrie” diner: WVRHS&M members have been cleaning in the kitchen area.

2351 – “Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge: Work has resumed on the Genset; a new frame has been made to set the Genset under the car. Also, head end power wiring repair is on going under the car.

100 - “Clinchfield”: At press time, the car is being prepared at the North Carolina Transportation Museum to return back to East Tennessee. [See page 3 for an update.]

CHERRY BLOSSOM SPECIAL A GREAT SUCCESS

The Watauga Valley RHS&M and the North Carolina Transportation Museum’s “Washington Cherry Blossom Special” was a big success, a sold out train with over 100 passengers who enjoyed good weather and excellent tours in Washington. More trips are planned.

In the News



CLINCHFIELD CAR 100 HOMECOMING

Watauga Valley RHS&M is extremely happy to announce that CLINCHFIELD Office Car 100 will be heading back to East Tennessee during the week of April 21st, arriving in Jonesborough on Friday, April 25th. At press time, the CSX Transportation Health Fair Committee has invited us to bring Car 100 back to Erwin Yard for their fair on Wednesday, May 7. More details will be available on this event at this month's Membership Meeting; we are still waiting for approval from CSXT and NS to move Car 100 to Erwin. If approved, this will be the first time in 32 years the car has been in Erwin.



611 MOVE TO SPENCER

The mechanical team at Roanoke's Virginia Museum of Transportation (VMT) is preparing N&W Class J #611 for its big move to the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC, for its long awaited restoration. The move begins on May 24 when the 611 will leave the VMT's rail yard. She'll spend a few days in Roanoke getting ready for the trip and then start the move to Spencer with a planned arrival on May 29 - just in time for the NCTM's Streamliners Event.

VMT is not at liberty to provide routing information, and in any event, following 611 from Roanoke to Spencer could be problematic. Security, traffic, crowds - these are all concerns - and the dead-in-tow will be slow. Those who insist on following her should remember to do so only from safe public vantage points. Trespassing on railroad rights of way is both potentially hazardous and illegal.

VMT expects the restoration of the Class J 611 to take up to nine months, and there is a chance the restoration could take longer. You can follow the 611's progress on its website, <http://fireup611.org/>. You can also look for updates on fireup611.org, [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Emphasis has been placed on getting the 611 to Spencer to begin her restoration. Final decisions have not yet been made about ticket prices, ticket sales, excursion routes, or what type of equipment will be in the consist. The timing of the first excursion will depend on the restoration timeline. It is anticipated that the first excursion will happen in 2015.



RAIL SERVICE RETURNING TO ANDREWS, NC?

By press time a public meeting was held in Andrews, NC concerning the possible reactivation of the rail line from Andrews to Murphy, NC. Both the towns of Andrews and Murphy have expressed support for the service's return, and the Cherokee County Economic Development Commission, N.C. Department of Transportation and Stantec, a Canadian professional services firm with offices in Charlotte, have been conducting a study assessing what it would take to get the trains back to Murphy.

Some of the issues the study will consider is freight mobility, tourism, passenger service, development potential, upgrades, repairs needed and return on investment. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians officials have taken an interest in returning rail service as it owns land where the rails cross. With Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino & Hotel opening early next year, possible casino excursions between casino properties have been suggested. Whistle Stop will follow the progress of this proposal as it develops.



TAZEWELL, VA WORKING TO RESTORE TRAIN STATION

On March 11, 2014, the first official committee meeting was held, and planning began for the restoration and repurposing of the Tazewell Train Station. Mayor Donald Buchanan and Town Manager Todd Day greeted the committee and offered the support of the Town of Tazewell in this endeavor to Councilman Dr. Terry Mullins, who spearheaded this project.

The depot was donated by NORFOLK SOUTHERN in 2007, and a study was completed in 2012 assessing the structural needs of the building. Complete restoration, which would include plumbing, electrical, structural, and heating updates, are estimated between \$270,000 and \$310,000.

Four key groups were established, each with a unique purpose, from research, to grants, fundraising, and repurposing. The repurposing and research teams have started the intensive application process for registering the Tazewell Train Station on the State and National Historic Registers. Achieving this designation will be a valuable asset, and will provide great opportunities for grant funding and promoting tourism.

The repurposing committee is also keenly focused on the possibilities the building will offer once restoration is completed. The station is currently divided into 3 distinct areas, a passenger waiting room, ticket counter office area, and the luggage/cargo room.

Short term options being weighed include using the waiting room as a visitor/information/museum/display area, renting the ticket counter space out as office space (with the understanding that the lessee hold office hours that would allow the visitor area to remain open for the public), and using the luggage/cargo area as a community center meeting facility.

Long term goals include revitalizing the area (tourism zone, arts district), Farmer's Market, music pavilion, bicycle rentals for the Clinch River Trail, train excursions, passenger car display (school activities and weekly story time), and Mystery Dinners. The committee members believe that together, with the support of the community, all of these goals can be achieved. [Source: <http://trainstation.townoftazewell.org/>]

BRISTOL 21ST CENTURY STEAM TRAIN EXCURSIONS

What a weekend on April 5th and 6th with the NS 21st Century Steam Trains out of Bristol, VA / TN! Both trips sold out in just a couple of weeks with over 1500 passengers. So many people were turned away that we could have sold another trip the next weekend if it had been available to run. The best part of the trip was that Southern 630 steam locomotive was able to power the trains after being in the TVRM shops for most of the winter, coming out just days before the trips. Hats off to the TVRM steam crew for making this happen. On April 12-13 and 19th, WVRHS&M also provided car hosts for the Grundy, VA to Devon, WV excursions, which were sellout trains as well.

The WVRHS&M Board of Directors would like to thank all member hosts who worked all 15 cars on all of these excursions. You guys did an excellent job in making our passengers safe, comfortable, and, most of all, happy.

Photo Section

We continue with Kevin Gilliam's beautiful shots of the April 5th NS 21st Steam Train Excursion from Bristol to Radford. Clockwise from upper left: (1.) northbound at Glade Spring, VA; (2.) northbound at Groselcose, VA; (3.) northbound outside Wytheville, VA; (4.) southbound at Rural Retreat, VA; and (5.) southbound at Glade Spring. Two of these photos are noteworthy as the CPL (color position light) in the shots is becoming as much a rarity as a steam locomotive. (NS is in the process of replacing CPLs in many of its divisions with modern signaling systems.)



April 6th found the #630 and her consist headed south from Bristol to Bulls Gap, TN. At upper right the train is positioned next to Bristol's beautifully restored passenger station, ready to charge into Tennessee. At upper right finds the train south of Bristol at Vance, TN, a shot worthy of any promotional brochure and testimony to the thrill and beauty of steam power. The smoke plume captured in the bottom photo indicates the engine has been put to work on an uphill grade outside of Midway. TN. Again, may thanks to Kevin Gilliam for these fine photographs.



21ST CENTURY STEAM!



And from the archives ...

Members Jack Maloney, Harold Smither and the late Bill Hart at the Erwin Health Fair in May 2005. They were serving as hosts for our coach WATX 500, which was then called the 'CLINCHFIELD'.

Upcoming Events



May 29 – June 1, 2014:

“Streamliners at Spencer”, NCTM, Spencer, NC.

A four-day festival for lovers of classic streamlined diesel locomotives of the ‘30s through the ‘50s. *****22*****

diesel locomotives will be gathered around NCTM’s 37-stall roundhouse for daytime photos, special operations, nighttime shots and more. Primarily a photographic event, this will be a rail fan’s delight.



To order tickets, go to <http://www.nctrans.org/>



August 16, 2014: Watauga Valley RHS&M’s Summer Excursion on the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD in Bryson City, NC. Tickets will go on sale soon; a sign up sheet for car host duty will be available at the April 28th Membership Meeting.



November 1st and 2nd, 2014: The very popular Fall Amtrak Excursions, co-hosted by WVRHS&M in conjunction with NCTM. Saturday, November 1, the train will travel from Spencer, NC to Appomattox, VA and return. On Sunday, November 2, a roundtrip from Spencer to Toccoa, GA for their Fall Festival is scheduled.

For Your Viewing Pleasure

You Tube April 5th excursion crossing the New River west of Radford. TURN ON YOUR SOUND! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NECQ_SH07qI

You Tube Check out NORFOLK SOUTHERN’s latest commercial, which focuses on its greatest asset: its people. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRRCwcyZOD0&feature=youtu.be>

You Tube And then we have this incredible night video of a Chinese steam engine blowing out sparks like it was a blast furnace on wheels: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baASHBjFZY4>

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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