

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 34 No. 8

August 2014



Watauga Valley Motor Coach Historical Society?

No, we are not switching our focus to motor coaches. Don Finley captured this line of buses (10 in all) ready to transport nearly 600 folk to Bryson City, NC for a wonderful day of riding an excursion train and viewing some mighty fine Appalachian scenery.

August 25th General Membership Meeting

The next General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held on August 25th, starting at 6:30 p.m., and located at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. This month's program, a short historical look at the South Carolina group that was trying to beat the WNCRR to Asheville, will be presented by Righton McCallum, a retired English teacher and research librarian. She grew up in a railroad family and has always loved trains. She teaches the "Railroads of Western North Carolina" course for the Road Scholar (<http://www.roadscholar.org/>) program based in Montreat, NC.

UPDATE! Change in November Excursion Destination

Due to railroad operating constraints, the destination for the Nov. 1st excursion had to be changed from Appomattox, VA to Charlottesville, VA. The Nov. 2nd trip will be as planned to Toccoa, GA. The Volunteer Host sign up forms are attached to the end of this newsletter; please sign up for these beautiful trips.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewel

Please keep the following folks in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns: Sidney Blankenbeckler; Carrie Denny; Art DeVoe; Nita Johnson; Bob May; Lois Tilley's sister; Billy Walker's mother, Belva Walker; 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. Your help is appreciated.

As most schools are back in session or will be in a few days, please be aware of additional car and school bus traffic. Be alert!!

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

By Bob Yaple

GENERAL. As stated in the last Whistle Stop, there is renewed interest in expanding the Coach Yard In Jonesborough, TN. Talks are ongoing with the landlord in making this happen within the next few months. Drawings and surveys have already taken place.

ROLLING STOCK

539 Powhatan Arrow coach: is in Spencer, NC at Willetts Rail Car Company getting the exterior painted.

500 St Augustine coach: is at the Jonesborough Coach Yard for mechanical upgrades

400 Moultrie diner: Kitchen improvements are on going.

2351 Crescent Harbor sleeper/lounge: the head end power damage has been repaired. The mechanical team has the new genset up and running.

100 Clinchfield: An AMTRAK Structural Engine visited the Coach Yard recently to inspect Clinchfield 100 to see if it is a candidate for AMTRAK Certification. We will have the report back soon.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN SUMMER TRAIN EXCURSION A BIG SUCCESS

Our Summer 2014 excursion on the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD enjoyed a very fast sell out. With 10 bus loads carrying nearly 600 passengers and excellent weather staying with us all day, GSMR and WVRHS&M teamed up to carry off one of the largest excursion trains ever to run on the GSMR (16 cars plus 3 locomotives). WVRHS&M wants to thank our 27 volunteers who hosted the buses and train and helped make this event such a success.

In the News



WVRHS&M WHISTLE TRUCK A BIG HIT AT CELEBRATION

The Watauga Valley Whistle Truck was on hand for the August 3rd 100th Anniversary Celebration of the ex-N&W Green Cove, VA Station on the Virginia Creeper Trail. Hundreds of people showed up for this special event. The event started out with the Whistle Truck traveling down the Green Cove road approaching the station and blowing its whistles. Many of the ole timers could not believe the sounds from the past. WVRHS&M members stayed for several hours during the event to let the general public blow the whistles. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the event.



RURAL RETREAT DEPOT RESTORATION

The restoration of the ex-N&W Rural Retreat, VA depot is coming along beautifully. Work on the foundation, which was in pretty bad shape, has completed and the replacement of the loading dock is underway. A grant application for roof replacement and siding repair, scheduled to be completed by next summer, has been submitted.



Photo by Mike Pierry, Jr.

Although interior restoration won't begin until the exterior work is finished, the depot has already been returned to service for the community. A "Farmer's Market at the Depot" began its second year of operation on July 2nd, and a second benefit auction was held on July 26th as the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation (www.theruralretreatdepot.com) continues to raise money for matching funds for grants.



C&O #1309 ARRIVES AT WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD

The 1949-built (Baldwin's last for a domestic customer), 2-6-6-2 articulated steam locomotive, C&O #1309, arrived on the tracks of the WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD (WMSR) late Thursday morning, July 24th. At that time, CSX locomotives pushed two flatcars carrying the engine and its tender onto the CSXT/WMSR interchange track in Cumberland, MD. With the assistance of Caterpillar crawler-tread tractors plus their crane arms and massive counterweights, a local contractor successfully completed the unloading of this massive machine onto WMSR tracks. #1309 and its tender have been moved to WMSR's shops in Ridgeley, WV where restoration has begun. Projected operation on WMSR is 2016. To view a video clip of the unloading operation, go to <http://youtu.be/H6O90qldUzg>. ["The Automatic Block", Western Maryland NRHS]





611's RESTORATION ON SCHEDULE

- written by Trey Davis, member of the Fire Up 611! Committee



After the 611 shed her cover, the crew prepared the 611 to move inside the roundhouse where the more detailed work of the restoration could begin. She barely fit through the door!

The first step was to bead blast the boiler. Bead blasting is a high-pressure cleaning system that "blasts" small particles on the boiler's surface to dislodge buildup that accumulated due to water scale buildup. It took the mechanical volunteers several days to remove the hundreds of pounds of small particles and residue from the bead blasting.

On July 11, Scott Lindsay, chief mechanical officer, and crew hooked up the stoker to a compressed air system. After sitting idly for 20 years, it turned on air -- more evidence that the motor was not frozen. With the tender and locomotive separated, the rebuild crew will continue to inspect the drive shaft, universal joints and auger system that deliver the coal from the tender to the firebox.

On July 12th, the locomotive and tender were separated. The crew used a hydraulic ram assembly to compress and remove the buffer springs. The safety and service drawbar pins were then removed and the locomotive was pulled away from the tender. The locomotive was then moved into the roundhouse.

"Moving the locomotive into the restoration bay was a major milestone," said Preston Claytor, project director and Fire Up 611! Committee Chariman. "The roundhouse (at the North Carolina Transportation Museum) allows for a controlled environment for our work to continue. It also gets our team out of the weather."

Having a great shop to work in allows us to understand what a fully equipped mechanical facility can mean to the long term care of 611, he added.

Also on July 12th, the crew measured and marked a grid on all pressure bearing surfaces.

Ultrasonic testing of the boiler was conducted over a period of two days. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations require this testing as a part of the 1,472 day inspection and it is an important stage in the restoration process. Boilers are designed to withstand extremely high pressure steam - 300 psi in 611's case - and the ultrasonic testing ensures that there are no weak or thin spots in the metal. Data gathered during the inspection has been transferred to other members of the Steam Operations Corporation team for further analysis and Form 4 preparation.

Work will continue over the coming weeks to test superheater units and perform flexible staybolt inspections.

The tender has undergone significant work as well. Volunteers have carefully cleaned the coal bunker and water tank, finding a few interesting items along the way, such as a pair of safety goggles that went missing in the 1990s.

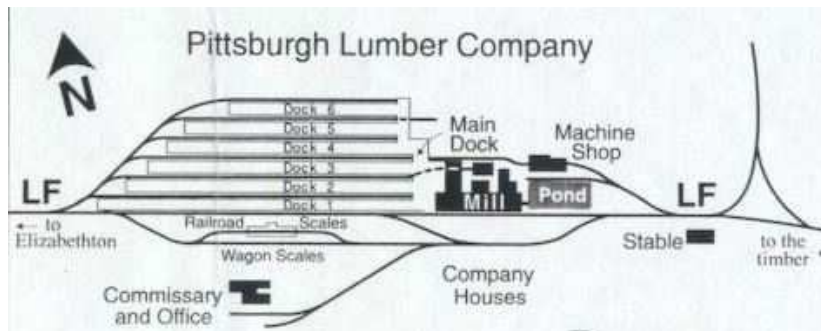
To view a Roanoke TV station video showing 611 at Spencer under repair, go to

<http://www.wsls.com/video?autoStart=true&topVideoCatNo=default&clipId=10402156>

Logging Along the Laurel Fork – Part 2

Fred Waskiewicz

[This article first appeared in Volume 63 #1 (1998) of the *NRHS Bulletin*. Since then, new information has come to light which corrects errors in that original publication.]



As for the construction of the mill, nothing has been revealed that makes it unique. It originally featured a double-band saw with a resaw and a planing mill. However, the resaw broke shortly after installation and was never repaired, leaving only the single-band saw for the remainder of the operation.

Power was provided by two generators: a large one for the mill and a smaller unit for lighting the lumber yard. The mill pond was man-made and fed by flume from the creek. Besides the mill, Pittsburgh Lumber Company built offices, a power house, machine shops, a commissary, an ice house to service the commissary and community, and a large number of company houses. The town of Braemar also boasted a post office, recreation building and its own baseball team (which L.D. Gasteiger managed as well), field and grandstand.

The LF locomotive roster included three 70-3 Shays, road numbers No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 (c/n 2390, 2391, and 2760, respectively). These engines, purchased new from the factory, were not delivered completely assembled; side rods had to be mounted at the Braemar shops. These engines served in the woods as well as running trains to and from the mill, bringing loaded cars down in the evening and returning empties in the morning. They also ran the interchange trains into Elizabethhton during the night.



A view of the mill from the mill pond looking northwest towards Elizabethhton. The silhouette of a log loader is barely visible to the left of the mill.

It is at this point that a roster error in the initial article will be corrected. An eyewitness, Albert Carden, a night watchman for the lumber company, remembered a narrow gauge engine on the property where it underwent a conversion to standard gauge. Mr. Carden recalls the engine was named "Katie" and spent most of its time in the LF shops. Lima records indicate that two wood-burning, narrow gauge 13-2 Shays, (c/n 187 and 2195) were on location and owned by the Laurel Fork. This author suggested "Katie" was c/n 187 and cited Lima records when identifying the Laurel Fork as its owner. However, a noted rail historian has shown Lima records are in error. c/n 187 spent its working life in Texas and was never in Tennessee; the notation in Lima records assigning it to Laurel Fork ownership was a clerical error. If Lima records are correct in placing c/n 2195 in Braemar, then it is likely the engine named "Katie". However, according to the historian, again the ownership notation is incorrect due to a clerical error. Conversion was possibly under contract from another area logging operation (using Lima records as a reference, a likely candidate is original owner White Lumber Co., Elk Park, NC). Lima records, hopefully accurate, show the

engine as being bought by an Arkansas lumber operation in 1914. This episode clearly illustrates the problems encountered when tracking down "ghost" railroads.

The equipment roster included two log loaders (one, a model No. 10 Barnhart, was purchased in May 1920); a steam shovel; 40 flat cars (30 of these, numbered 1-30, 40 feet in length and with 40-ton capacity, were reported in 1923); 12 service cars; and a Model T Ford on dump car wheels that was used for inspection trips. The lumber company neither owned nor employed steam skidders. That type of work was always delegated to man and beast or flume along the Laurel Fork. As a freight-only carrier, the Laurel Fork owned no passenger equipment.

The trains into Elizabethton were normally 12-15 cars in length and included boxcars filled with lumber, lattice and tan bark (for the Watauga Extract plant). Once past the early construction phase, life on the railroad settled into a more leisurely pace (except for an occasional wreck).

Little has been passed down about camp life. The men were locals, not "boomers," and as such lived a quieter life than in some of the rowdier camps of other companies. In all, 20 camps were set up (although possibly more were planned). Each was manned by approximately 80 men who were housed in one large dormitory. Normally, two camps were active at any given time. Camps were only identified by number, but were built at locations with some pretty colorful names, such as Frog Level (No. 4), Snake Curve (No. 16) and Big Flats (No. 20). Work days were 11 hours long, six days a week. Wages in 1912 were \$1.40 a day, from which board was charged to the men in the camps at the rate of 40 cents a day. The "wood hicks" of these camps primarily cut hemlock, chestnut and poplar. (Despite the local mountain's name, walnut was rare.) One tract alone was said to have yielded 60,000 board feet per acre.

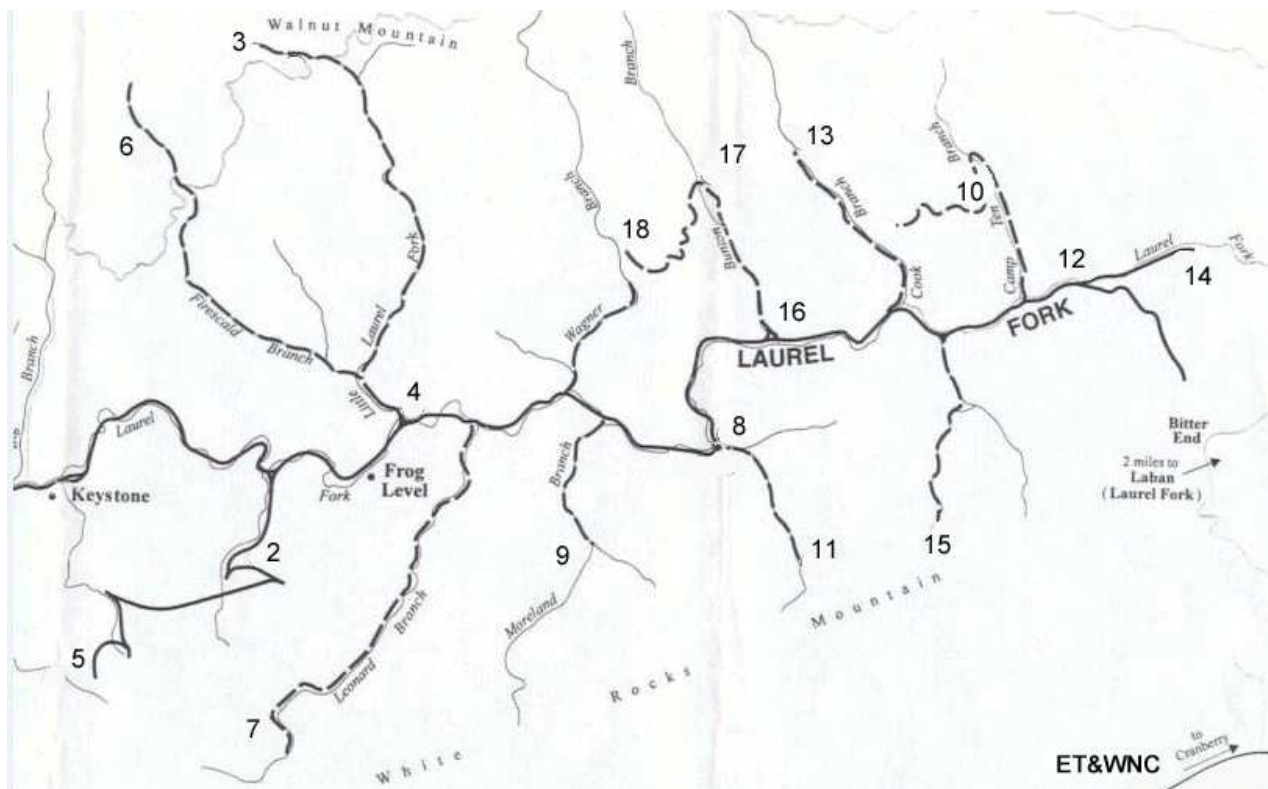
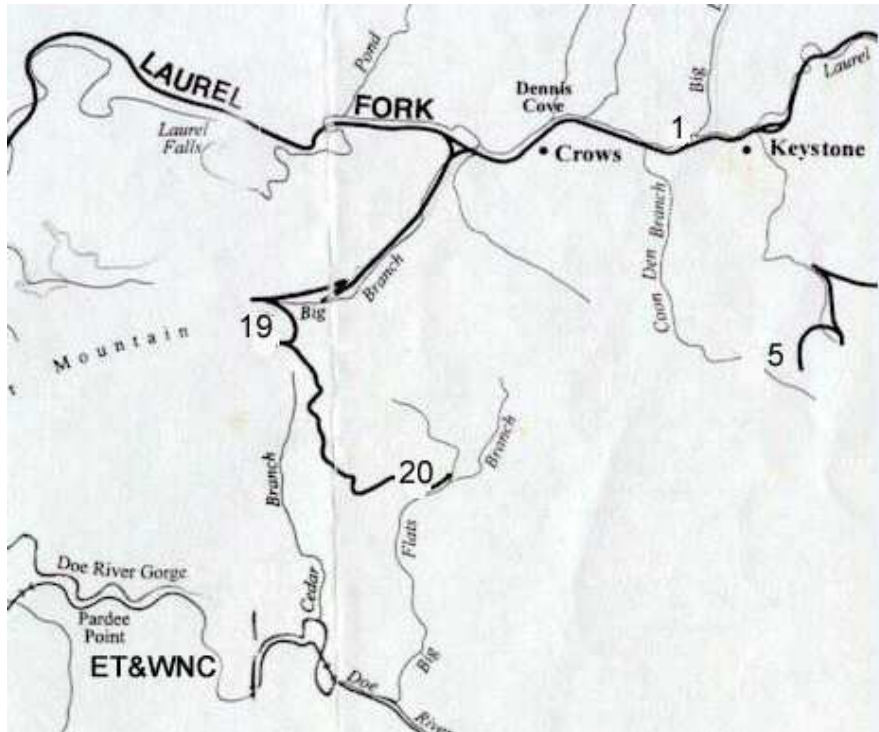
The work day within the mill was equally nondescript. The size of the mill work force stabilized at 200, with the same six-day, 11-hour-per-day schedule as the woodsmen and two 2 1/2-hour night shifts worked per week in the yard. Mill wages were 20 cents per hour. Approximately 110,000 board feet per day of lumber were produced. At one time, over 22 million board feet of lumber sat in the Braemar yard.

Although life for the most part along the Laurel Fork was filled with the day-to-day drudgery of hard work, where there's a railroad there's bound to be a good story as well. One of the best tales on the Laurel Fork centers on Irishman Alec "Daddy" McLain, an engineer in his sixties. Camp Cook Nate Street remembers hearing one of the Shays moving "way too fast" while approaching one of the sharper mainline curves down from Camp No. 8. McLain was at the throttle when the engine jumped the tracks and tumbled into the creek below. Fireman Will Hamby had chosen not to join his captain in going down with the ship and jumped. When the dust settled, Will clambered down the steep bank, expecting to find the worst. The sight of the Shay on her side with the wheels still turning confirmed Will's fears that he had lost his friend. Suddenly, McLain struggled out of the cab window and yelled at Hamby in his deep Irish accent " 'And me me owl can! This is the first time I've ever seen 'er that I could really owl 'er!" ("Hand me my oil can...")

While never the subject of colorful stories, L.D. Gasteiger nonetheless proved to be as much an entrepreneur as any of the Flinns. When it became apparent that the power house's two generators would provide more power than the mill needed, he began selling electricity to the homes in Braemar and Hampton. This service started in 1912 and was not the 24-hour service we enjoy today. Customers were only provided electricity until 11 P.M. when the mill shut down for the night. Another less profitable venture was an attempt to graze goats on the cut-over land, which failed.

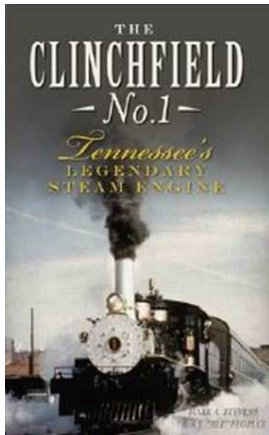
The topic of electric power introduces an interesting side note. In 1909 (coincidentally, the time of the Flinn purchases) the ET&WNC planned a hydroelectric project in the Doe River Gorge. These efforts progressed over the next few years as far as purchasing land and water rights. Among the ET&WNC's intentions was to provide "electric current" for manufacturing purposes to towns along its routes to stimulate growth. Braemar just happened to be in the vicinity of the proposed dam site (along with another large mill belonging to W.M. Ritter and Company). Certainly the prospect of

two large sawmills must have served as enticement for such an ambitious project; however, the ET&WNC's interest in the project died before construction ever started. As a result, the Pittsburgh Lumber Company always provided its own power. [To be continued]



The two maps above indicate the approximate location of the logging spurs and the 20 camps built by the Pittsburgh Lumber Company. (Dashed rail lines indicate an approximation; solid rail lines are based on company maps as are camp locations.)

Upcoming Events



AUGUST 23, 2014: Book signing on the CLINCHFIELD 100.

Everyone is cordially invited to attend as authors Mark A. Stevens and A.J. "Alf" Peoples will be on hand to sign purchased copies of their new book, "The Clinchfield No. 1: Tennessee's Legendary Steam Engine."

The signing will be held on Saturday, August 23rd, from noon to 2 p.m., at the WVRHS&M Coach Yard at Spring Street in Jonesborough, TN . A special treat will be a tour of Watauga Valley's CLINCHFIELD 100, the opulent railroad office car once used by CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD General Managers.

An event flier is attached to this newsletter.

SEPTEMBER 6-7: Tweetsie Railroad "Railroad Heritage Weekend"



Two days of steam trips with 4-6-0 #12 and 2-8-2 #190 at Blowing Rock, NC. More information: [Tweetsie Railroad](http://www.tweetsierailroad.com)



SEPTEMBER 12-14: Great Smoky Mountains Railroad RailFest

Annual festival features special excursions and events at Bryson City, NC. More information: [Great Smoky Mountains Railroad](http://www.gsmrailroad.com)



OCTOBER 4: Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum's "Summerville Steam Special"

Southern 2-8-0 #630 or 2-8-2 #4501 leads a trip from Chattanooga to Summerville, GA.

More information: [Tennessee Valley Railroad](http://www.tnvalleyrailroadmuseum.com)



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 Charlottesville, VA and return. On Sunday, November 2, a roundtrip from Spencer to Toccoa, GA for their Fall Festival is scheduled. . Details can be found appended to this newsletter.

Back Issues of the Whistle Stop

A reminder that back issues (to January 2009) of the Whistle Stop can be found on our web site at <http://wataugavalleynrhs.org/newsletterarchive.php>.

VISIT WATAUGA VALLEY ON FACEBOOK

Follow us on
facebook

Please visit the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum facebook page hosted by Gary Price. So far we have nearly 500 friends. To find us, start searching with our full name (a pop up should occur before having to type completely).

Photo Section

The snapshots below capture the rewards of our hard excursion work: smiling faces.



THE CLINCHFIELD VAN TRIP A BEAUTIFUL TRIP

The CLINCHFIELD South end Van Trip on August 2nd, hosted by WVRHS&M member and CSX engineer Tony King, turned out to be an excellent trip for 14 WVRHS&M members. We started out in Jonesborough with two van loads and headed to Spartanburg, SC with the first stop at the Hub City Railroad Museum. The museum is located in the former Spartanburg SOUTHERN RAILWAY station (which now hosts the AMTRAK Station) and is definitely an interesting place to visit for anyone interested in railroads. Lester Collins and Bob Klempner along with Art Patterson and other Carolina Railroad Heritage Group members gave our group a tour of the museum and its caboose.

After leaving the Hub City Museum we traveled down to the “Ghost Tunnel” in Spartanburg which was built for the PIEDMONT NORTHERN RAILROAD but never had a train go through it. Next stop was Tony’s favorite place to eat, Wades Restaurant in Spartanburg. Great meal for all, but one problem: we all ate too much. But with a little push, we piled back in the vans for the trip “up the CLINCHFIELD”.



Pictured above: Art Patterson, Don Findley, Gerry Bultman, ?mystery guest?, Paul Bultman, Bob Douglas, Thomas Black, Howard Orfield, Brad McCroskey, Penny May , Nick White (kneeling), Mike Tilley, Tony King, Frank Rohrer.

We headed to Chesnee then on to the new Horse Head Plant which was built near the Cliffside Power Plant. From there we traveled to Thermal, Vein Mountain, Marion, Sevier, Camp 2 on the CLINCHFIELD Loops, Altapass, Spruce Pine, Green Mountain and Poplar, NC before heading on to Erwin.

Good train watching with several trains to photograph.

Plans are in coming together for a CLINCHFIELD North End tour and also an N&W tour this fall. Stay tuned for more information.

Whistle Stop

Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE MATERIAL



CAR HOST ASSIGNMENT REQUEST FORM
for
NOVEMBER 1st and NOVEMBER 2nd, 2014 EXCURSIONS

MEMBER _____ PHONE (_____) _____

MEMBER _____ PHONE (_____) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

I WOULD LIKE TO SIGN UP FOR FIRST CLASS CAR HOST ON THE SPENCER, NC, TO CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA ROUND TRIP EXCURSION ON NOVEMBER 1, 2014 AND THE SPENCER, NC TO TOCCOA, GA ROUND TRIP EXCURSION ON NOVEMBER 2, 2014.

WVRHS&M WILL PROVIDE FREE TRANSPORTATION TO SPENCER, NC, AND BACK TO JONESBOROUGH, TN. WE WILL LEAVE JONESBOROUGH AT 7:30 AM ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31. YOU ARE ALSO WELCOME TO DRIVE DOWN TO SPENCER IN YOUR OWN CAR IF YOU WISH. THE CHAPTER WILL PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION BACK TO JONESBOROUGH ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3.

ALL CAR HOSTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAKE THEIR OWN HOTEL RESERVATIONS AT SALISBURY SUPER 8 AT A SPECIAL RATE OF \$54.95 PER NIGHT. YOU WILL NEED TO CALL 704-738-8888 AND ASK FOR WATAUGA VALLEY NRHS SPECIAL RATE.

PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS BY AUGUST 22, 2011. YOU WILL NEED ROOMS FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31 AND SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1. STAYING ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2 IS OPTIONAL.

ALL WVRHS&M MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO SIGN UP FOR THIS GREAT TRIP TO SERVE AS CAR HOST. PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AT THE AUGUST MEMBERSHIP MEEETING OR MAIL IT TO: EXCURSION WATV, P.O. BOX 432, JOHNSON CITY, TN, 37605-0432, BY AUGUST 30. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE 423-753-5797.

ONE DAY ONLY! • SATURDAY, AUG. 23, FROM NOON-2 P.M. • ONLY IN JONESBOROUGH!



FROM No. 1 TO CAR 100

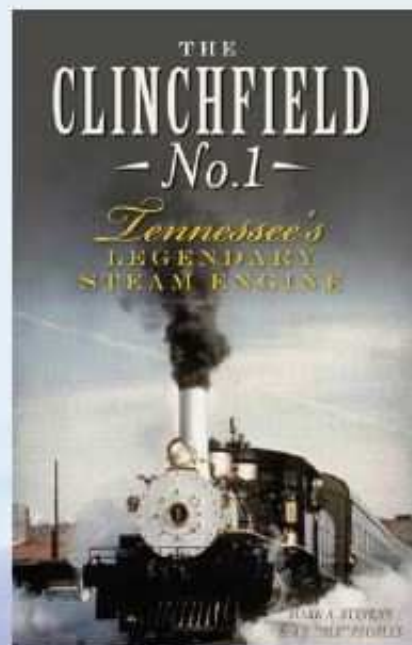
For the first time ever at its now home at the Watauga Valley Railroad Museum, tour CRR 100, the Clinchfield RR general manager's opulent office car, now being restored.

Join us on board as we welcome

**Mark A. Stevens
& A.J. "Alf" Peoples**

Who will be signing copies of their just-released *new* book,

**"The Clinchfield No. 1:
Tennessee's Legendary
Steam Engine."**



Book available for \$19.95. This is Alf and Mark's *brand-new* definitive history book, the *follow-up* to their 2013 award-winning pictorial history book, "The One & Only," which will *also* be available at a *special* discounted price.

