

Whistle Stop



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



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Member Chris Starnes captured a loaded CSX grain train working uphill on the south end of the former CLINCHFIELD at Poplar, NC, framed by an early November snowfall and the last of fall foliage, in this beautifully composed photograph. [Used with permission.]

February 23rd General Membership Meeting

The next General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held on February 23rd, 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, presented by Mike Noonkester, is a DVD spotlighting STRASBURG RAILROAD's recreation of N&W's famed "Virginia Creeper" mixed train, featuring their cosmetically altered Class M 4-8-0 #475 to resemble Abingdon Branch regular engine #382. Watch this mighty Mastodon-class locomotive battle heavy snow. Also offered is CANADIAN NATIONAL 2-6-0 #89 struggling with a snowplow and a tour of SRR shops. This is terrific winter steam action! Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading with your fellow railfans.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewel

Our sympathy is extended to Coy and JoAn Edwards in the death of Coy's brother, S. T. Edwards, on January 26th, in Johnson City. Sympathy is also extended to the family and friends of longtime member Walter Byrd on his death on January 28th in Marion, VA. Walter enjoyed working/riding on many of our excursions as long as his health permitted. Walter will be missed.

Please keep the following folks in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns: Sidney Blankenbeckler, Carrie Denny, Bob May, Jim Calhoun, George and Margaret Holley, Gary Price, Mrs. Smallwood, 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.

LATE DUES NOTICES FOR 2015

2015 Late Dues Notices have been mailed out and sent electronically via e-mail. If you haven't done so already, please get your dues and check back into the membership chairman Suzie Price at Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. **Time is running out and your name will be removed from the membership list.** You have several options to consider in renewing: (1) joining the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual, adding family members at \$5.00 each; (2) joining the National Railway Historical Society for \$70.00, adding family members at \$10.00 each; (3) joining the Railroad Heritage Alliance for \$35.00 individual, adding \$10.00 per additional family member; or joining all three organizations for \$85.00 individual, adding family members at \$15.00 each. A renewal form is appended to the end of this newsletter. For questions, e-mail wataugavalley@gmail.com.

“CHERRY BLOSSOM SPECIAL” TRAIN EXCURSION

WVRHS&M and the North Carolina Transportation Museum will once again be operating the annual “Cherry Blossom Special” train excursion, leaving on March 12th and returning March 15th. These roundtrips are scheduled from Spencer, NC to Washington, DC. Tours of our nation's capital are included in the trip. For information and tickets, call NCTM at (704) 636-2889 ext. 237.

“HIWASSEE RIVER GORGE” TRAIN EXCURSION

WVRHS&M is pleased to announce its Spring 2015 Rail Excursion through the Scenic Hiwassee River Gorge in East Tennessee. Excursion date is set for Saturday, April 11, 2015. The 50-mile, 3-1/2 hour round trip offers an opportunity to ride the rails through the one of the most beautiful river gorges in the United States as the railroad tracks travel along the Hiwassee River and including the panoramic "Hiwassee Loop". For detailed information, visit our web site at <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/excursions.php>.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

GENERAL: The bad weather has taken its toll on the Watauga Valley Mechanical Team in working at the yard for the last several weeks. Hopefully the weather will turn around and we can get some of the work done that was planned for the spring.

We have renewed interest in expanding the capacity of the Spring Street Coach Yard. Details will be announced in the coming weeks. Expanding the yard will be required to store our newest piece of equipment – the Clinchfield 100.

539 “Powhatan Arrow” coach: The interior has been painted and the car will be returning from the NCTM in Spencer, NC. On arrival back at the Jonesborough Coach Yard, plans are to replace the vinyl on the floor, put in base board heat, new carpet on the walls and bulk head, and reupholstering the seats. The exterior was painted last year. Plans are also to put the Powhatan Arrow Logo back in the floor in the walkway.



View of interior painting work on the 539 at NCTM.

500 “St. Augustine” coach: Has arrived back at the Spring St. Coach Yard to finish some work. The mechanical team is going to replace the main holding tank on the car, work on a door that is hanging up and some general maintenance work on the car. The car will be leaving the first of March for the “Cherry Blossom Special” to Washington.

400 “Moultrie” diner: Had issues with the main blower fan making a noise. It was found that the motor had a bent rod and bad bearings. A new motor was purchased and installed.

2351 “Crescent Harbor” sleeper/lounge: Is stored at NCTM. Problems with the generator were reported; the mechanical team will be traveling over to Spencer to check it out. This car will also be going to Washington on the “Cherry Blossom Special”.

From the “Tell Us Something We Don’t Already Know” Department:

A recent survey conducted by the ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society yielded the following membership statistics when respondents were asked their age group:

0% Under the age of 20; 2.5% Age 20 – 29; 3.8% Age 30 – 39; 7.6% Age 40 – 49; 8.9% Age 50 – 59; 26.6% Age 60 – 69; 38% Age 70 – 79; 12.6% Over the age of 79.

The numbers jump out at you, speaking for themselves. Yet another indicator of the recruitment challenges faced by today’s historical and special interest groups interested in American railroading.

In the News



JONESBOROUGH RAILROAD DEPOT / MUSEUM



Photo courtesy Claire Salvail

Plans at this time are to start on the foundation of Jonesborough Railroad Depot / Museum (the “Ole Chuckey Depot”) in mid-spring. The first Depot Committee member meeting will be held this month. The WVRHS&M caboose will be moved very soon to the site to be placed beside the depot. The committee is looking at the Old Fort, NC depot (photo at left) as a model.



NORFOLK SOUTHERN to Close Roanoke Office Building

[NS News release] NORFOLK SOUTHERN on January 27 announced that it will close its Roanoke office building at 110 Franklin Road SE later this year and relocate the functions currently housed there to Atlanta, GA or Norfolk, VA. Approximately 500 people currently work in the building in marketing, accounting, information technology, and other departments. Affected employees will have the option of relocating with their positions. The Roanoke office building was built in 1992 and consists of 203,000 square feet of office space. Disposition of the building will be determined at a later time.

The action is being taken to foster departmental synergies and to make better use of the company’s real estate assets and support the company’s goal of streamlining its management workforce. NS is in the final process of evaluating which positions will be relocated to its corporate headquarters in Norfolk or its operational headquarters in Atlanta. Some regionally oriented positions will remain in Roanoke but will move to other work locations in the area.

“This will not involve any involuntary force reductions, and we will provide substantial relocation packages for those who choose to relocate,” said James A. Squires, NS president. “NORFOLK SOUTHERN has been a proud corporate citizen of Roanoke for more than 130 years, and that will not change. While our profile may be reduced, Roanoke will remain a key location in our network, and we will remain engaged in the community.”

Roanoke will remain the headquarters for NS’s Virginia Division, and the company will continue operating a local switching yard and locomotive and car maintenance facilities at Shaffer’s Crossing, and a locomotive overhaul and rebuilding facility in its East End Shops. In total, about 1,700 people currently work for NS in Roanoke.



NORFOLK SOUTHERN Announces Elimination of 140 Roanoke Rail Yard Positions

[Scott Leamon, WSLs TV Roanoke] NORFOLK SOUTHERN announced plans to layoff 140 from its Roanoke Terminal hump yard. In a news release, the company said its volume of traffic at the yard has decreased by 30 percent since 2006. Most of the workers laid off inspect and repair railcars, according to the press release. A NS spokesman told WSLs the company does plan to hire around 1,000 people this year, and will offer those positions first to those affected by this situation and furloughed employees. The TV reporter did speak with union groups involved but they did not want to comment. NS employs 1,870 in the Roanoke area.

 *Work Continues on the Restoration of ET&WNC Combine 15*

[Gil Williams, Combine 15 Project Manager at NCTM via "The ET Times"]

Work continues on ET&WNC Combine 15, said to be the sole survivor of the country's finest narrow gauge passenger train set. The 97-year-old combine is a triple combination car containing a Railway Post Office, a baggage compartment, and a passenger compartment. When complete, the restoration will return the car's appearance to its first twenty years of operation. Exterior siding will be replaced and the roof repaired.

The vestibule end diaphragm and the buffers from both ends were removed after 1940. The vestibule end diaphragm only will be restored. A stove and a bathroom were added to the baggage compartment during WWII. We have the stove. It is clearly not original but is from the early 1900's. We believe this section of the car was operated as a Jim Crow Car during World War II. The hole in the roof has been resealed. We will restore the baggage compartment to its pre-1940 condition. A sink was added to the stove bulkhead wall in the RPO compartment and piped to the water tank. The original sink in the toilet stall is there with no piping. These will be restored as is. The seats were replaced and the seating pattern changed early in the life of the car. The seat upholstery is Panasote, a material that is similar to naugahyde. The original seats came with rattan. The original seating pattern of 4 stationary seats and 2 walkover seats will be restored. The clerestory windows and screens have been covered over or sealed. These will be restored to as-built operating status. The green opal glass in the clerestory and above the triple windows will be restored. The glass in the oval bathroom window will be replaced with the original leaded green opal glass. The interior colors will be the original Orange Shellac (light mahogany stain) for the woodwork and light green ceiling in the passenger compartment and original yellow with white ceiling in the Baggage and RPO Compartments.

The exterior colors over the years have been original (believed to be Pullman Green) burgundy, gray, Southern Green, red, light green (or gray), and green. We anticipate the restored exterior color will be the original Pullman Green with red window trim and red roof. The original color for the trucks is believed to be green.

The following areas will be restored to as-built if we can find the missing parts: We seem to be missing both original stoves. We have one stove which is not original that is small enough to fit in the RPO spot. The passengers' pot is bigger. We do not have any of the oil lamps.

 *China - Spain Rail Route the "New Silk Road"*

[*Progressive Railroading*] The world's longest train journey ended last month after traveling 8,000 miles from China to Spain. The train left the eastern Chinese city of Yiwu in mid-November, traveled 20 days and passed through eight countries before arriving in Madrid on Dec. 8. Designed to test what could become a new rail route directly between China and Spain, the train's goods arrived in Spain 10 days sooner than if they had been shipped by sea, the *South China Post* reported. On the trip to Spain, the train's containers were loaded with tools and toys. As of press time, the train was scheduled to return to China loaded with wine, olive oil and cured ham. A regular China-Spain freight-rail service could open next year. During a ceremony held upon the train's arrival in Madrid, Zhejiang governor Li Qiang told news media the route is important to further expand trade between the continents and "implement the strategy of developing a new silk road."



Rail Improvements between Andrews, NC and Murphy, NC Possible

[Asheville, NC "Citizen-Times" 1/7/2015] A proposed draft rail plan for the state calls for spending \$16.4 million to renovate roughly 15 miles of rail line between Andrews and Murphy sometime between 2021 and 2025. The state Department of Transportation owns the line, which a local railroad official said has not been used since the late 1990s. The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad once operated occasional scenic excursion trains on the line, but abandoned it because ridership was low, said Kim Albritton, vice president and general manager.

The railroad owns the track between Dillsboro and Andrews and offers excursion trains in Jackson and Macon counties. The railroad has been discussing track restoration in Cherokee County with DOT in connection with an industrial prospect that was considering locating a manufacturing plant in an empty plant building in Marble, between Andrews and Murphy, Albritton said.

Great Smoky does not now operate freight trains because of lack of demand, but, "We'd very much like to be a freight hauler," she said. However, Albritton said the manufacturing prospect did not materialize and there would not be enough passenger traffic on the route to justify the railroad paying for revitalization. Ties and trestles on the line need replacement, she said. If the railroad did operate excursion trains on the track, which mostly passes through farmland, the schedule would probably be limited to special events or weekends, she said.

The rail plan is scheduled to be adopted sometime in 2015. Carrying out its provisions would be dependent on the availability of funding.



NS unveils first publicly funded, emissions-friendly locomotives

[NS Press Release] The first emissions-friendly locomotives funded by the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program have been released for road testing by Norfolk Southern from its Juniata Locomotive Shop in Altoona, Pa.

The first two GP33ECO switching locomotives – of a total 25 partially funded by CMAQ for production by Norfolk Southern – sport a distinctive paint scheme that reflects their environmentally friendly mission. After in-service testing in the Altoona area, they will be permanently assigned to their respective grant award areas of Chicago and Atlanta. Funding for the locomotive to be used in the Chicago area was awarded by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency, sponsored by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation.



Funding for the locomotive to be used in Georgia (on NORFOLK SOUTHERN's Atlanta Terminal) was awarded by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division.

Upcoming Events in 2015

Railroad Heritage Alliance Meeting

RAILROAD HERITAGE ALLIANCE BOARD MEETING
All are invited



Our meeting will be at the SE Narrow Gauge Museum
1123 North Main Avenue
Newton, NC 28058

Saturday, February 21, 2015 1:00 PM

Please be prepared to discuss the future of RHA and what you will do to help the organization.



MARCH 6 & 7: Asheville Model Train Show, WNC AG Center, Fletcher, NC. Details: <http://www.asheville-trainshow.com/>.



MARCH 12-15: The "Cherry Blossom Special" roundtrip from Spencer, NC to Washington, DC via rail. Call NCTM at (704) 636-2889 ext 237 for information and tickets.



APRIL 11: "SPRING 2015 HIWASSEE RIVER" rail trip sponsored by WVRHS&M. See <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/excursions.php>.



MAY 15-17: Cass Railfan Weekend, Cass, WV. Includes rare mileage trips between Spruce and Cheat Bridge. For details - <http://www.cassrailroad.com/> and <http://mtn-rail.com/>



JUNE 14-20: NRHS National Convention, Rutland, VT. For details - http://www.nrhs.com/2015_Convention



JUNE 18-21: Norfolk & Western Historical Society Annual Convention, Marion, OH. <http://www.nwhs.org/convention/2015marion/>

"O Gauge Railroading" Magazines

Member David Denny is offering his thirty-year accumulation of *O Gauge Railroading* magazines to anyone interested for free. It is not a complete collection as some were lost due to water damage; those offered are in good condition and in order. They are headed to the nearest recycling bin unless someone wants them. If interested, contact David at (423) 794-7581.

For Your Viewing Pleasure



WDBJ TV in Roanoke does a fine job of reporting 611's restoration effort at <http://tinyurl.com/nb22xc4>.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum
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TIME VALUE MATERIAL

WVRHS&M LATE 2015 DUES NOTICE

IF YOU HAVE NOT PAID YOUR 2015 DUES, YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM **EXPIRED** ON DECEMBER 31, 2014. TO RENEW, YOU HAVE A CHOICE OF WHICH TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP YOU DESIRE. PLEASE SELECT WHICH MEMBERSHIP YOU CHOOSE AND MAIL THIS FORM ALONG WITH YOUR CHECK (NO CASH, PLEASE) TO WATAUGA VALLEY RHS&M, P. O. BOX 432, JOHNSON CITY, TN, 37605-0432. IF YOU HAVE ALREADY PAID YOUR DUES, PLEASE DISREGARD.

___ OPTION 1: WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Dues

Individual Membership \$20.00

Family Membership. \$ 5.00 per each family member

\$ _____

___ OPTION 2: WATAUGA VALLEY CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dues

Individual Membership \$70.00

Family Membership \$10.00 per each family member

\$ _____

___ OPTION 3: WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM AND THE RAILROAD HERITAGE ALLIANCE

Dues

Individual Membership \$35.00

Family Membership \$10.00 per each family member

\$ _____

___ OPTION 4: MEMBERSHIP IN ALL THREE ORGANIZATIONS ABOVE

Individual Membership \$85.00

Family Membership \$15.00 per each family member

\$ _____

Donation to Watauga Valley RHS&M \$ _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED (check only, please) \$ _____

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