

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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RailPictures.Net - Image Copyright © Chris Starnes

Member Chris Starnes captured veteran CSX engineer Alf Peoples guiding southbound coal loads through the community of Slant, VA on the north end of the former CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD. The Clinch River in the foreground is slightly higher than average as a result of several weeks of heavy rain and melting snow. [Posted to the WVRHS&M facebook page]

February 27th General Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have our regular meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, February 27th, 2017 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month, presented by Gary Street, will be a DVD on the 1993 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Santa Clause Special powered by UP 4-6-6-4 Challenger #3985. This promises to be one of the best programs that we have had for some time. Mark your calendar so you will not miss this meeting.

Member Notes

by Edna Kay Carter

Please keep the following folks in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns: Suzie Tilley, Bob Yapple, Kati Phelps, Nancy Jewell, George Ritchie, Gary Price and Lyndell Denny. 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 Edna Carter at (423) 571-3226.

As a reminder, Daylight Savings Time will begin on March 12th and this reminds us that spring is just around the corner. I always look forward to seeing the trees and flowers bloom.

LATE WVRHS&M DUES NOTICE

If you have not paid your dues as of press time, your WVRHS&M membership expired December 31, 2016. Please send in your 2017 dues ASAP to keep receiving your issues of the Whistle Stop, ability to join in our many exciting rail activities, and to prevent our busy membership chairman from having to send you a LATE NOTICE. Dues are \$20.00 for an individual and \$5.00 for each family member. Send completed membership form (see <http://wataugavalleynrhs.org/pdf/membership-application-2017.pdf>) and your check (no cash) for dues to Membership Chairman Edna Carter, Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. For questions, e-mail wataugavalley@gmail.com. Please get your dues in today. **NOTE: NRHS & RHA WILL SEND YOU THEIR DUES NOTICES DIRECTLY TO YOU. RETURN PAYMENT FOR BOTH THESE ORGANIZATIONS TO THE ADDRESS THEY PROVIDE ON THEIR DUES NOTICES.**

VOLUNTEERS FOR #611 EXCURSIONS

The Virginia Museum of Transportation and the Roanoke Chapter NRHS are partnering to organize the on-board staff for the 2017 #611 excursions, needing car hosts, first class staff, and some on ground passenger assistance / logistics people. Note, however, that hotel accommodations are uncertain (Greensboro especially, as the trips are the same weekend as the High Point Furniture Market and hotel space is pretty much unavailable). An online application, to be completed by April 1st, can be found at <https://www.volgistics.com/ex/portal.dll/ap?ap=1029444437>.

For Your Viewing Enjoyment ...



Here's a link to wonderful and informative behind-the-scenes video produced by CSX on their annual Santa Train. What your Editor finds reassuring is the remark towards the end that "as long as the Christmas Spirit is alive we'll continue to bring it with us on the Santa Train".

<http://tinyurl.com/z3kpuxn>

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL

All the WVRHS&M cars are back in the Jonesborough Spring St. Coach Yard. We have a full house with all tracks full. Its' good to get everything in yard at one time instead of having to leave a car at another location

The Watauga Valley Mechanical Department is looking for volunteers on Tuesdays and Saturdays to help maintain our passenger cars. If your significant other wants you out of the house after a long winter, here's a great opportunity. Please call the office and leave message at (423) 753-5797.

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): having some upgrades on the interior of the car including lights, seats and general repairs. Air conditioning upgrades have been ongoing since the car arrived back in the yard.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): has arrived back at the Spring St. Coach Yard to finish some work. Seat work is ongoing with repairs.

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400): major kitchen restoration work done is presently being performed.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): getting some new wiring and holding tank work.



Mike Tilley was on hand to view NS Train 165 bringing three of the WVRHS&M cars back to Jonesborough in January.

BREAKING NEWS: All Dome and Observation seats are sold out on our *“Spring Rail Excursion”* but there are still plenty of Deluxe Coach seats available. See <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/excursions.php> for details.

In the News

CHUCKEY DEPOT / MUSEUM AT JONESBOROUGH

Things are clicking at the Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum at Jonesborough. The building is all but done and the Heritage Alliance is working on the displays. As of this date were planning on opening the museum on May 1, 2017. Volunteer forms have been sent out; please fill it out return as soon as possible.

AMTRAK UPGRADING DINER SERVICE

[AMTRAK post on Twitter]

What's better than fluffy French Toast and a hot cup of coffee while looking out the window at incredible views? A shiny new dining car to do it in! In early December, we debuted a new dining car on the Silver Meteor as part of our continued investment into equipment upgrades for a better, more enjoyable ride for our customers. The new dining cars feature multiple rows of windows, comfortable booth seating, and the latest in cooking technology. This is the first of 25 dining cars that Amtrak expects to receive in 2017. The dining cars are part of a larger order of 130 single-level long-distance passenger cars that will upgrade your Amtrak experience, whether you're taking a short trip with us or a cross country adventure. All aboard, and bon appetit!



MORE INFORMATION ON LAST MONTH'S F7 PHOTOS

Gene Lewis, Greensboro NRHS, passed along the following. "For what it's worth, I was on the P&N in December and they told us that those two F7's are owned by the United Railway Historical Society of New Jersey, an NRHS outfit (and they have their reporting marks). They were loaned to the Iowa Pacific for the latter's use as long as they fixed them up. The P&N got them and found that they were not only inoperable, but that they were a mess and would be impossible to repair in Ranlo. So that's why they were shipped to Mississippi - for repair down there. They are ex-CNW units, but painted for the LV. I looked at the bodies and they could be all Bondo, for all I know, but they looked pretty solid."

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Moorman Makes Amtrak's Case to Congress

[From Progressive RAILROADING, 2/17/201] Amtrak President and CEO Wick Moorman suggested to a Senate subcommittee on transportation that it's time for a "new era of investment" in Amtrak's aging infrastructure, fleet and stations. "More than ever, our nation and the traveling public rely on Amtrak for mobility, but the future of Amtrak depends on whether we can renew the cars, locomotives, bridges, tunnels, stations and other infrastructure that allows us to meet these growing demands," Moorman testified this week during a hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security. In fiscal-year 2016, Amtrak logged a record ridership of more than 31 million passengers and ticket revenue of \$2.2 billion, Moorman told the senators. "I'm certain that we can get even better by relentlessly improving our safety culture, modernizing and upgrading our products and strengthening our operational efficiency and project delivery," he added.

Amtrak needs additional support from Congress and President Trump's administration, Moorman said. After 45 years of service, many of the national intercity passenger railroad's assets are at the end of their useful life. For example, Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, where it owns 363 miles of infrastructure, is the nation's busiest railroad with 2,200 daily high-speed, commuter and freight trains. But, it was built more than 100 years ago. Moorman outlined projects that warrant significant investment, including:

- construction of the Portal North Bridge and new Hudson Tunnels, both parts of the larger Gateway Program that will ensure that 450 daily Amtrak and New Jersey Transit trains can continue to serve New York City from the south;
- construction of the new Baltimore & Potomac Tunnel and Susquehanna Bridge in Maryland to expand service and improve trip time;
- expansion and improvement of Union Stations in Chicago and Washington, D.C., to improve accessibility, expand capacity, spur local development and enhance safety;
- construction of fleet of new or rebuilt diesel locomotives to support Amtrak's national network; and
- construction of track, signaling, and other improvements to remove chokepoints on host railroads or restore service in key underserved markets, such as along the Gulf Coast.

Moreover, Moorman emphasized the importance of Amtrak's partnerships with 21 states and various commuter agencies to provide service on corridors across the country and on the Northeast Corridor. Moorman urged Congress and the administration to consider advancing intercity passenger-rail service through direct investment, public-private partnerships, innovative financing, streamlining environmental review process and the removal of red tape.

From the Vault ...



Undated photo of the Limestone TN station that is still standing, although in much need of repair. [Wayne Manning collection]

Upcoming Events



MARCH 4: TVRM Steam trip to Summersville, GA.
<http://www.tvrail.com/>



APRIL 1: WVRHS&M "Spring Rail Excursion". See
<http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/excursions.php>



APRIL 8: NC Railroad Expo, Hickory, NC Metro Center.
<http://www.tarheelpress.com/Trainshow>



APRIL 8: "The Virginian", N&W 611 excursion, Spencer, NC to Lynchburg, VA. <https://www.showclix.com/events/24306>



APRIL 9: "The Charlotte Special", N&W 611 excursion, Spencer, NC to Charlotte, NC. <https://www.showclix.com/events/24306>



APRIL 9: "The Piedmont Limited", N&W 611 excursion, Spencer, NC to Greensboro, NC. <https://www.showclix.com/events/24306>



APRIL 22: "The Roanoker", N&W 611 excursion, Greensboro, NC to Roanoke, VA. <https://www.showclix.com/events/24306>



APRIL 23: "The Roanoker", N&W 611 excursion, Greensboro, NC to Roanoke, VA. <https://www.showclix.com/events/24306>



APRIL 28-30: Unveiling of historical Civil War locomotive "Texas" after year-long restoration. NCTM. <http://tinyurl.com/h3jaavt>.



JUNE 20-24: Annual NRHS Convention, Nashville, TN.
<http://www.nrhs.com/content/2017-convention>

Remaining Schedule for "Blue Unit" Circus Train

By now the demise of the Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus is old news. Should you wish to capture photos of its circus train, here's an approximate regional schedule (but you should verify before venturing out). [ED. NOTE: Rumors in railfan network are circulating about its equipment being sold.]

<i>Approx. Dates</i>	<i>Venue / Travel</i>	<i>Rail move to next city (mileage)</i>
March 20 – 22	Trenton, NJ – Richmond, VA	AMTRAK, CSX (286)
March 23 - 26	Richmond Coliseum	
March 27 - 29	Richmond – Washington, DC	CSX (109)
March 30 - April 16	Verizon Center (Washington, DC) and EagleBank Arena (Fairfax, VA)	No train movement between cities
April 17 - 19	Fairfax – Baltimore, MD	CSX (36)
April 20 - 30	Royal Arms Arena (Baltimore)	
May 1 – 3	Baltimore – Charleston, WV	NS, CSX (486)
May 4 – 7	Charleston Civic Center	
May 8 – 11	Charleston – Uniondale, NY	NS, CSX, AMTRAK, LIRR (740)

Or, for you couch potatoes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heXWQpw1BYU>

Photo Gallery ...



Mike Pierry, Jr. found NS train 22A rushing past Abingdon's beautifully-restored station on a wintry January afternoon.

Mystery Photo

Does anyone have an idea where this photo at right was taken? The hobo on the top of the car and the gifts inside suggest a take on the "Polar Express".



You don't have to travel any further west than Jonesborough to get some good shots of locomotives from "foreign" roads. Here we see UP AC45CCTE #7615 leading one of many Powder River Basin coal trains recently passing through Jonesborough on its way to the coal piers and export in Norfolk. [Mike Tilley photo]

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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