



Whistle Stop

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

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This wintry scene of the Chuckey Depot, taken by Mike Tilley after a recent snowfall, reflects a tranquil moment in the midst of the holiday rush.

No December General Membership Meeting

THE DECEMBER 2ND WATAUGA VALLEY ANNUAL GATHERING AND CHRISTMAS MEAL WAS THE ONLY MEETING IN DECEMBER DUE TO THE HOLIDAYS. SEE YOU ON JANUARY 22, 2018 FOR OUR NEXT MEETING!

Member Notes

by Edna Kay Carter

Sympathy is extended to the family of Kati Phelps who recently passed away. She was a member of the WVRHS&M for several years and she and Tom were car hosts on our excursions. Let's keep husband Tom, daughters Angie and Pennie in our thoughts and prayers as they go thru this difficult time. Her obituary is included at the end of this newsletter.

Please keep the following in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns. They are Bob Yaple, Nancy Jewel and Gary Price. 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.

Hope all of you have a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

NEW MEMBERS

Joseph Meyers, North Chittenden, VT (yes, Vermont, that's not a typo)
Carol Mercer & Andy Warshaw, Cosby, TN
Jim Bishop, Johnson City, TN
Randall Griffin, Gate City, VA
Rick Chinouth, Telford, TN

2018 OFFICER AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

The Nominating Committee reports that the following were elected as 2018 Officers and Directors: We welcome the following in the seats for 2018.

Mike Tilley – President Bob Schubel – Vice President James Smallwood – Secretary
Jeanie Walker – Treasurer Historian – Gary Price
Board of Directors – Tony King, Scott Wise, Cline Knowles

2018 MEMBERSHIP DUES

The 2018 Dues Notices have been mailed out or sent electronically via e-mail mast month. Please get your dues and check back into the Membership Chairman Edna Carter before your membership expires by remitting to Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432. You can join the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual and adding family members at \$5.00 each. For questions, e-mail wataugavalley@embarqmail.com.

WATAUGA VALLEY RHS&M SPRING EXCURSION ANNOUNCED

We have our Spring Excursion scheduled for Saturday, March 24, 2018 on the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad. This will be the first time that we have operated the full length of the GSMR (Dillsboro to Nantahalla) and to the turn around. We will be signing up host for the trips at the January meeting. Visit our web site in January for more information.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL

Our NORFOLK & WESTERN Signal was re-wired by Terry Worley and painted by Mike Tilley; it is in operation now.

ROLLING STOCK

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): Has been in excursion service in middle Tennessee; should be returning to the yard soon.

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400),

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539),

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): All cars in Spencer for the “Christmas Polar Express” trains out of the North Carolina Transportation Museum.

CLINCHFIELD #100 business car: Is in winter storage in Jonesborough, TN. Just got back from Kingsport, TN and the CSX Santa Train event.

CHESSIE “Safety Caboose” #903102: Got a new paint job in “Safety Handle” orange.



These before and after photos serve as testament to the fantastic work performed by our Mechanical Crew in car maintenance and restoration.



CLINCHFIELD box car #5586: Also got a new paint job in its CLINCHFIELD livery. [Mike Tilley posting on facebook.]



In the News

C&O #1309 UPDATE.



A lack of money is forcing the WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD to stop all work on restoring CHESAPEAKE & OHIO 2-6-6-2 #1309. "A lot of our visitors have the idea that we should throw all of our money into the #1309's restoration, but that would bankrupt us," Executive Director John Garner tells *Trains News Wire*. In explaining why the project is short of funds, Garner

says that grant requirements and personnel issues are partly to blame. *News Wire* could not independently verify Garner's specific claims. Garner does say the railroad has "done a poor job of communicating" how operations keep the railroad in business and that the railroad considers #1309 to be a special project, akin to other projects, such as landscaping. "Those special projects come to a stop when money runs out," he says.

The railroad has received at least \$400,000 from the State of Maryland to help fund the #1309's restoration. *News Wire* confirms with Maryland officials that money is nearly gone. Garner says that it will take at least an additional \$530,000 to complete the restoration, an estimate Garner says he received from the railroad's contractor on the steam locomotive project, Diversified Rail Services. Documents Garner provided to *News Wire* show that the running gear and the boiler would require \$120,000 and \$115,000 to complete, respectively.

In April, Garner said the railroad had spent \$800,000 of its own cash on the project and had expected to spend the \$400,000 State grant. In August, Garner told *News Wire* that the project's total cost sat at \$1.8 million. Follow-up calls to confirm the latest totals were not answered. Garner also says that funding issues alone, not any ongoing mechanical problems, were behind the railroad canceling an early November hydrostatic test on the articulated locomotive's boiler. "We filled the boiler with water up to the crown sheet, and repaired a few leaks around the stay bolts," Garner says. Then we ran out of money."

Garner says WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC is actively pursuing alternative sources of funding, but railroad officials' attempts so far have been insufficient to keep the project moving forward. Garner says that the staff is pursuing additional grants from various donors, but those funds are unlikely to arrive until late 2018 — if they are approved at all. Special photo freight charters held in October did not bring in as much money as anticipated. "Those trains brought in a modest amount of money for the #1309, but there weren't as many people as we hoped," Garner says. "I don't think that we fully understood what was going on in the region on that weekend, there were several other railroad themed events going on around the same time."

Garner says that the railroad will hold another round of freight photo charters in February 2018. In the meantime, he says that railroad officials hope to bring in funds through a letter writing campaign. He says that staff members are currently preparing to send out about 1,600 letters to potential donors in Virginia. [*Trains News Wire* via *Potomac Rail News*]



CHUCKEY DEPOT MUSEUM AT JONESBOROUGH

The Santa Caboose event was a big hit for the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum and the Town of Jonesborough on December 2nd. We had a large crowd of over 500 – mostly parents and children – who attended the event in just 4 hours. We want to thank all WVRHS&M members who helped with this event and especially Mr. and Mrs. Junior Risner (Santa and Mrs. Claus) who delighted all both days.

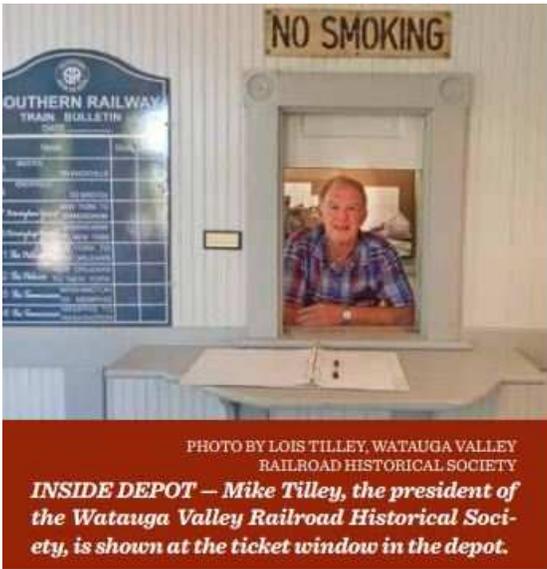


PHOTO BY LOIS TILLEY, WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INSIDE DEPOT – Mike Tilley, the president of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society, is shown at the ticket window in the depot.

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot/Museum

has been very good during the holidays in Jonesborough. We have had about 44 Watauga Valley members that have taken the training host session to work the depot. We plan on having another class in January and already have several signed up for it. If you would like to volunteer a day a month at the depot, please e mail wataugavalley@embarqmail.com or phone 423-753-5797 to get signed up. Everyone who have hosted has enjoyed volunteering at the depot.

There's a 4-page article in the December 2017 issue of NRHS News featuring the restoration and dedication ceremony of the Chuckey Several photos of the event, including that at left of WVRHS&M president Mike Tilley, are included.



Status of Steam over NORFOLK SOUTHERN in 2018?

[This information is circulating among the railfan community; no official announcement has been made as of publishing this newsletter.]

There will not be any steam excursions operated on Norfolk Southern in 2018. NS will allow deadhead moves over some of their lines, but they will not run any steam excursions...not even Amtrak trains. NS has decided that they need to refocus on their core freight operations without the distractions that steam excursions represent.

You have to understand that a steam excursion is a major "distraction" to normal freight operations. It disrupts crew rotation schedules, presses all hands into service for a weekend (all company officers, all police department officers, mechanical department, operating department, etc.) and delays the scheduled freights that pay the bills. Rather than condemn current management as being steam haters, why not remember the fantastic opportunity that NS gave to outfits like the 630, 611 and 765 operations from 2012 through 2016. The pendulum swings back and forth. It will come back again someday.

Rich Melvin, CEO, *O Gauge Railroad* magazine

Railfan Gallery



The CLINCHFIELD returns to Kingsport! This James Glenn photo finds CRR #800 and former CRR business car #100 parked in front of Kingsport's railroad station, a scene not viewed in decades. The locomotive pulled this year's CSX Santa Train, while the car was on loan from WVRHS&M for display.



For those of you not able to chase this year's Santa Train, here's a link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qcwA8NHos> to a terrific 18-minute youtube video that follows it through its entire journey. Professionally photographed (and occasionally photobombed) the cacophony of sound at Speers Ferry is worth the view alone. (Kudos to engineer Tony King for attempting Christmas tunes with a monotone diesel whistle.) It's ALMOST as good as being there.

This video is under license and may only be viewed; it cannot be copied.

Watauga Valley Christmas Gala

Great food, fun and fellowship were had by all at the Watauga Valley Annual Christmas Dinner on Saturday, December 2nd at the Jonesborough Visitors Center. There were approximately 80 plus attendees packing the house. Before dinner, president Mike Tilley conducted a short business meeting. We want to thank everyone involved in preparation for their hard work in putting together this gala Christmas event. If you missed this event, you missed a good time.



Important Dates in 2018 ...



MARCH 24: GSMR excursion sponsored by WVRHS&M.



MAY 17-20: N&W Historical Society Convention, NCTM, Spencer, NC.



AUGUST 7-12: NRHS Convention, Cumberland, MD.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE MATERIAL

Dorothy "Kati" Phelps



DOROTHY "KATI" PHELPS, 70, OF ASHEVILLE NORTH CAROLINA. LOST HER BATTLE WITH CANCER ON SATURDAY DECEMBER 09, 2017, WHILE IN THE CARE OF HOSPICE SURROUNDED BY HER FAMILY.

KATI WAS BORN ON 2.18.1947 IN PENSACOLA FL TO MARTHA PATE PITTMAN AND CECIL PITTMAN AND HAD LIVED IN ASHEVILLE FOR 45 YEARS. TOM PHELPS AND KATI WERE MARRIED ON MARCH 20TH 1981. KATI LOVED WORKING FOR AB EMBLEM FOR 42 YEARS BEFORE RETIRING. SHE ENJOYED WORKING AT FASHION BUG & BEING A PART OF THE FUN FASHION SHOWS WITH CHRISTOPHER & BANKS FOR MANY YEARS.

SHE WAS A MEMBER OF FRANCIS ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. KATI ENJOYED BEING THE QUEEN OF THE "RED HOT READERS OF WEAVERVILLE", BEING IN THE WEAVERVILLE BOOK CLUB, SECRETARY OF THE ASHEVILLE CHAPTER, NHRS & RHA AND YOU NAME IT, ANYTHING TO DO WITH TRAINS. KATI & TOM VOLUNTEERED TOGETHER FOR OVER 8 YEARS BEING MR. & MRS. SANTA CLAUS FOR THOUSANDS OF EXCITED CHILDREN. THEY BEGAN THIS ALMOST DECADE LONG ACTIVITY WITH THE GREENVILLE & WESTERN RAILROAD ON "THE SANTA EXPRESS" THEN TO THE CRAGGY MOUNTAIN LINE "JINGLE BELL TROLLEY RIDE" AND INCLUDED GOING TO KATI'S BROTHER'S RESTAURANT THE CHICKEN BASKET ON SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER. THEIR LOVE OF TRAINS ALLOWED THEM TO VOLUNTEER AS CAR HOST FOR MANY EXCURSIONS.

KATI WAS PRECEDED TO THE GATES OF HEAVEN BY HER MOTHER, FATHER, BROTHER, WAYNE, AND SISTER, CECILIA. SHE LEAVES BEHIND HER LOVING HUSBAND, TOM; SISTER, LINDA; BROTHER, JEFF; TWO DAUGHTERS, ANGIE AND PENNIE; FOUR GRANDCHILDREN, CINDI FOSTER, BEN VANDIKE, LOGAN FOSTER AND ALICIA BRADFORD; AND SIX GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN WITH ONE ON THE WAY.

[ED. NOTE: A MEMORIAL SERVICE WAS HELD ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 PRIOR TO PUBLISHING THIS NEWSLETTER.]