

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432
(423) 753-5797
www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 39 No. 8

August 2019



Megan Kegley found NS SD70ACC no. 1800 in "sonic bonnet" livery leading train 16T at Bulls Gap, TN on a sunny, summer day. Full story on page 8.

July 22nd General Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will conduct our monthly General Membership meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, July 22nd, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Johnson City Public Library, 100 West Millard St. This month's program, offered by Jerry Harris, will be a surprise! (He's picking whatever film he wants.) While an unknown topic, you surely won't be disappointed!

Member Notes

by Edna Kay Carter, Membership Chairperson

Keep the following in your thoughts and prayers as they deal with various health concerns. They are Nancy Jewel, George Ritchie, Gary Price, Sharon Eaton, Gary Street, Claudia Banner, and Fred Phofl and wife. 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 number is 423-753-5797 or call Edna Carter at 423-571-4612.

We have no new members this month.

Hope everyone is enjoying the summer weather.



WVRHS&M Rail Excursions

GSMR HOST TRAINING

All hosts who volunteered to help on the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD excursion trains at the last membership meeting will need to attend the GSMR Safety Meeting on August 26 at 5:45 pm at the Johnson City Public Library prior to our regular membership meeting.

"Autumn Leaf" Scenic Hiwassee River Train Excursion



The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum is once again pleased to announce another "Autumn Leaf Rail Excursion" through the scenic Hiwassee River Gorge of East Tennessee. The excursion date is set for Sunday, October 13th, 2019 and will offer 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. An added feature is traversing the famous, spiral "Hiwassee Loop".

The excursion train will travel through the Narrows, where the Hiwassee River flows through rock channels, and around Bald Mountain on the "Hiwassee Loop". The track actually passes over itself on a high trestle during a corkscrew climb up the mountain near Fanner. Tracks along this route parallel the river for most of its length, providing views of the lower gorge.

For complete trip description and tickets, visit the WVRHS&M web site at <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/excursions.php>

Tickets will go on sale Monday, July 29, 2019, 6 pm EST.

Mechanical Department Report

by Jim Magill

We're in need of volunteers to work at the Spring St Coach Yard on every Tuesday 9am to 5pm. If you want to get involved in our great projects, please call (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): is in Jonesborough getting upgrades for the fall excursion season.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): is being cleaned prior to departure from the Spring St coach yard in September.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): is in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum.

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400): is at the Jonesborough Coach yard for upgrades.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): work continues on major upgrades and is showing signs of progress as the mechanical crew put it back together. Here are the things that have been done as of press time. Much more will be done in the coming weeks but WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!!

1. Ceiling installed
2. Floor Heat installed
3. New Windows installed
4. New floor
5. New Wiring installed
6. Walls sanded
7. Outside of car buffed



Upper left: Mike Dowdy and Jim Sutterlin working on the new ceiling. At right is a new electrical box recently installed, an example of the effort and level of detail being put into the car's restoration.

Chuckey Depot and Rail Museum

A radio was recently installed at the Museum that allows visitors to hear train talk on NORFOLK SOUTHERN's A-Line. In the photo below we see Mack Muir performing the installation work.



Railfans can also go to <http://www.broadcastfy.com> to hear the chatter online.

The two screenshots below from the Museum's web cam froze NS Heritage units #8101 and #8103 roaring past the depot.



From the Vaults ...



At left is an Alf People's photo of CRR 1 and 100 all decked out at a July 4th, 1970 Independence Day celebration at Spruce Pine, NC.

In the News ...

West Virginia Intermodal Terminal May Close or Be Sold

[*Transport Topics*, distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC] Once touted as a key economic development tool for southwestern and central West Virginia, the \$32 million Heartland Intermodal Gateway is likely to shut down this fall, and go on the auction block within a year, [WV] Transportation Secretary Byrd White said July 2.

Members of the state Port Authority on July 2 authorized White to negotiate a short-term contract with a private entity to operate the intermodal facility in the interim, with the intent of selling the 100-acre road-to-rail cargo transfer station at Prichard, Wayne County, at auction within a year.

White said that Norfolk Southern railroad, which donated much of the property for the intermodal facility, will stop service to it in October unless the railroad is able to reach a 15,000-container-a-year threshold.

"If we can't get to 15,000 containers a year, they're not interested," White told the Port Authority.

In May, he said, Prichard handled a total of 68 containers.

As the only intermodal facility in West Virginia, the state-of-the-art complex uses giant stacking machines to move 20- and 40-foot cargo containers between rail cars and flatbed trucks.

White said July 2 that the state is losing about \$500,000 a year operating the facility.

"The old saying is, 'When you're in a hole, quit digging,'" he said.

In the 2019-20 state budget, Gov. Jim Justice zeroed out taxpayer funding for the facility. White said July 2 that it will run out of operating funds within six weeks.

He said he had not spoken directly to Justice about Prichard, but added that, "losing a half-million a year does not make anyone happy, and I think the governor's in that boat."

Justice appointed White, a longtime business colleague, as [WV] Transportation secretary in March, after firing Tom Smith for reportedly failing to adequately address problems with deteriorating secondary roads around the state.

Prior to its December 2015 opening, government officials touted the facility as a game-changer for the region's economy.

"The Heartland Intermodal Gateway Facility will play a vital role in helping our state successfully compete for upcoming economic development projects," then-Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin said during a tour of the site in fall 2015. "The investments supported by Congressman [Nick Joe] Rahall and our state Department of Transportation have the potential to open a number of freight corridors and port destinations from Virginia to Chicago, and will help our state strengthen its presence in both the trucking and rail shipment industries." [Continued on next page,]

The facility never achieved those lofty goals.

A planned four-lane highway linking it with Interstate 64 remains on the drawing board. Proposed barge traffic to the complex would require dredging about 2 miles of the Big Sandy River.

“At present, we couldn’t afford to dredge a bathtub,” White said July 2.

One key hang-up discussed July 2 is that the facility’s major customer, Toyota Motor Manufacturing, uses 20-foot containers to bring parts to its plant in Putnam County, while companies shipping lumber require 40-foot containers. Prichard has never had enough incoming 40-foot containers to meet their needs.

White said he believes there are several options for private entities to operate profitably at the complex, although continuing it as an intermodal facility is probably unlikely.

“Having it strictly as an intermodal facility, in my opinion, to turn it around would take a long time,” he said.

[WV] Commerce Secretary Ed Gaunch asked that his department be kept apprised of developments with the complex, noting, “I see this as a commerce function, ultimately.”



NS Forms New Department to Achieve Best-in-class Customer Experience

[NS Press Release] As Norfolk Southern continues to Reimagine Possible in support of the strategic plan, the company is forming a new department, Customer Operations, to transform key customer-facing aspects of the business.

Team members will:

- Engage directly with customers and with field transportation to optimize service and customer experience in each of NS’ business markets.
- Focus on terminals, equipment, and assets to build a foundation that permits customers to receive consistent and valuable service.
- Pursue new technologies, practices, and approaches that continually improve operational performance and customer service.

“This new department has a major, audacious goal of generating a best-in-class customer experience to help advance NS’ five core principles,” said John Scheib, recently named as NS’ first chief strategy officer. “Achieving this goal requires innovation, energy, and persistence.”

Based on the five principles of serving customers, managing assets, controlling costs, working safely, and developing people, the new strategic plan quickly highlighted the imperative for a new, customer-facing team.

The new department will be led by Karol Lawrence, currently vice president customer service, and report to Scheib. “Customer Operations will be laser-focused on aspects of our business that directly impact our ability to provide a superior customer experience,” Lawrence explained.

Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge in Jeopardy ???

The 416 Fire in Colorado last June created one big devastating number: 54,000. That is how many acres were destroyed during the blaze, which lasted five months and also crippled the local economy in Durango and Silverton, CO. Another number is coming up, and it could bring the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad to its knees.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Denver has filed a lawsuit against the owner of the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, American Heritage Railways Inc., claiming the company caused the fire due to burning particles emitted from an exhaust tack on a coal-burning steam engine locomotive. The U.S. Attorney's Office wants Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad to be held liable for all of the damages caused by the fire. The suppression of the fire alone cost \$25 million.

Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad denies any wrongdoing and refuses to settle the lawsuit outside of court. Dunn says he does not have to prove the company was acting negligently or carelessly. All that needs to be established, according to Dunn, was the railroad caused the fire.

Upcoming Railfan Events



JUL 20: Natural Tunnel (VA) State Park annual "Railroad Days". A rare opportunity to walk the tunnel (both sides) and see a NORFOLK SOUTHERN engine up close.



JUL 31 – AUG 3: Appalachia, VA "Railroad and Coal Days".



JUL 31 – AUG 4: Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society's 50th Annual Conference. Cincinnati. <https://tinyurl.com/y3z2nyzo>



AUG 10: "Lynchburg Railroad Day 2019", oldest model train and railroading show in Central Virginia. <https://www.blueridgenrhs.org/rail-day>.



AUG 24-25: Tweetsie Railroad's "Railroad Heritage Weekend".



SEPT 15: GSMR excursion sponsored by WVRHS&M. **SOLD OUT!**



SEPT, OCT various dates: N&W 611 visits Strasburg Railroad. See <https://tinyurl.com/y4ba6nxj>



NOV 3: GSMR excursion sponsored by WVRHS&M. **SOLD OUT!**

Whistle Truck Schedule

The WVRHS&M Whistle Truck recently spent the day at the Hub City Railroad Museum in Spartanburg SC. What a fun day; the crowds showing up enjoyed blowing the whistles. Our next event is in Appalachia, VA for their "Railroad and Coal Days" event on August 3. If you have a event that you want the Whistle Truck to perform, please call (423) 753-5797

Megan's Manifest

by Megan Kegley

July 7th, 2019 ... the guessing game of where is NS 16T began. The night before, I saw in one of the railroad groups that I am a part of on Facebook that the NS 16T had left Irondale, AL with the 1800 SD70ACC (**once again another sonic bonnet**) leading. After having breakfast in Kingsport at Waffle House, I decided to take off to Bulls Gap, TN (**shocking, right?**) just to see if maybe I would get lucky enough to catch this locomotive leading this train. As most of you know, these trains have changed since the Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) had started for NS on July 1st. **HOWEVER**, 16T is still one of the trains that runs the NS A Line. I have to say it was a little weird seeing it run 2x2 (**which simply means, 2 locomotives on the front and 2 in the middle as DPUs**) with engines. ANYHOW, I pulled in at the Bulls Gap Railroad Museum and didn't have to wait maybe 20 minutes at the most until I heard on the radio... "NS 16T signal indication east bound." I went over and looked at the ATCS screen at the museum and saw that the train was close. I kept thinking "well... maybe I will get lucky and get to see this Sonic Bonnet." Sure enough, 16T rounded the curve at Justice (**the signals way down in the background of the photo**) and there was the yellow nose! I honestly do not know how I managed to get this. It just happened by pure luck! Another special paint unit can now be checked off the list of units to catch!

A few weeks prior.... Before the PSR went in effect on NS I caught this NS 163 at New Line in Morristown, TN which is where the NS A line and S line meet. My friend from Bulls Gap rode along with me. Even though it was absolutely pouring rain we still went after this train because neither of us had shot a train at this particular location before. We ended up seeing



this 163 as it was setting off cars in Bulls Gap Yard; we didn't really care what the power was as we just wanted to go get a train here. And we did just that! I'm pretty pleased with the outcome!!

Above we have NS 16T heading east bound through the signals at Kite on the NS A line on a beautiful sunny day! I don't care how many times I shoot photos at Kite; it will continue to be one of my favorite



places to take photos! I met up with some of my out-of-town friends on this day to catch any train within a 20 mile radius LOL. All in all, it was a fun day even though all we caught was black and white power. It's always a fun day when I get to railfan with my friends!



Above is one of my favorite spots on the Norfolk Southern Appalachia District which is Clinchport! This is a West bound NS 79K at the Clinchport trestle. After a long week at work, I decided to go after a few trains one evening and this is one I got. Since

there isn't much that runs on this part of the Appalachia District, anything I can see, I go see it! I don't care if it's just black and white power, I will go take pictures because you just never know when it may be a thing of the past.

Whistle Stop

Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432
whistlestop.editor@gmail.com

Opinions or viewpoints are those of the writer and may not necessarily reflect those of the organization members, officers or directors. Items of interest are welcome and will be credited to the author; however, because of space constraints, all submissions are subject to editing. Permission to reprint *Whistle Stop* articles with the exception of photographs is granted if proper credit is given. Reuse of photographs must receive permission by the editor and the photographer.



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum
P.O. Box 432
Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE MATERIAL