

# Whistle Stop



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

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This year's CSX Santa Train crosses the Copper Creek Trestle at Speers Ferry, VA as it deadheads north to its origination at Shelby, KY. [Photo by Kenneth Fitzgerald; used with permission]

## *No December General Membership Meeting*

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will not have a General Membership Meeting or Board of Directors meeting in December due to the Christmas holiday. Our next General Membership Meeting will be held on Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. See you then!

## *Member Notes*

*by Edna Kay Carter, Membership Chairperson*

Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers as they deal with various health concerns. They are Nancy Jewel, Gary Price, George Ritchie, Sharon Slagle, Jim Bishop and Diana Brewer. 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 would like to welcome aboard new members Janie Solomon, John and Julie Humphries, Dennis May, Holly White, John Richard Peterson, Charles Holly and Frank Gricus.

Wishing all of you a very Merry Christmas and a blessed and Happy New Year.



### **ANNUAL CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER**

Great food, fun and fellowship were had by all at the Watauga Valley Annual Christmas Dinner held on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at the Food City Depot Banquet Room in Johnson City. There were 100 + attendees packing the house. President Mike Tilley conducted a short business meeting and presented a program on the restoration of Clinchfield 100. If you missed this event, you missed a good time



### **2020 WVRHS&M DUES**

The 2020 dues notices were sent out last month. If you haven't paid your dues yet, please get your payment sent in before December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 before your membership expires.

### **2020 ELECTIONS**

We welcome the following who were elected by the membership as 2020 Officers and Directors:

President: Mike Tilley                      Vice President: Bob Schubel      Treasurer: Jeanie Walker  
 Secretary: James Smallwood      Historian: Gary Price  
 Board of Directors: Edna Carter, Richard Chinouth, Gary Street

Jim Calhoun was awarded the honorary Board of Director position for serving so many terms on the board.

## *WVRHS&M 2020 Spring Rail Excursion*

Our Spring 2020 Excursion has been scheduled for Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 on the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad. We will operate the full length of the GSMR, Dillsboro to Nantahala. Visit our web site, <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/>, in January for more information. Ticket sales will go on sale January 13<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm on that site. We will be signing up trip hosts at the January General Membership Meeting.

## *Mechanical Department Report*

*by Jim Magill*

### ROLLING STOCK

**“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539), “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), and “Moultrie” diner (WATX 400):** In Spencer, NC for the “Christmas Poplar Express” trains out of the North Carolina Transportation Museum.

**“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351):** Recently returned back to the Spring St. Coach Yard to serve as Marty Stuart’s celebrity car on the “2019 CSX Santa Train”.

**“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100):** Served as the “Santa Car” on the “2019 CSX Santa Train”.

## *Chuckey Depot and Rail Museum*

### “MEET SANTA ON THE CABOOSE” EVENT

The “Meet Santa on the Caboose” event was a big hit for the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum and the Town of Jonesborough on December 14<sup>th</sup>. We had several hundred visitors attending including parents and children attending in just 3 hours. We want to thank all WVRHS7M members who helped with this event and especially Junior Risner, who portrayed Santa Claus.

### “BREAKFAST WITH SANTA” AT THE CHUCKEY DEPOT

Children will have the opportunity of have breakfast with Santa at the Depot on Saturday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 at 8 am, 9 am, and 10 am seatings. For tickets, go online <http://www.jonesboroughtn.org>.

### ARTIFACTS STILL NEEDED FOR THE NEXT MUSEUM DISPLAY

The Chuckey Depot Artifact Committee is still looking for your favorite artifact for the next display. The next exhibit is intended to be WVRHS&M members' "favorite railroad artifact/memorabilia". It does not need to be from any particular rail line, it just needs to have the following information accompanying it: 1. What is the item? 2. How did you acquire the item? 3. Does this item have any special significance for you? It is extremely important that any member wishing to help make our next exhibit display something for visitors to really enjoy seeing. Contact Rick Chinouth at (423) 612-7647 for more information. Note that there is a deadline of the first of the year to get loaned items included in the display.

### CHUCKEY DEPOT EVENTS

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot/Museum has been very good during the holidays. We have about 87 Watauga Valley members who have taken the training host session to serve at the depot. We plan on having another class during the first quarter of 2020. If you would like to volunteer one day a month at the depot, please email [wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com) or phone (423) 753-5797 to get signed up. Everyone who hosts really enjoys volunteering at the depot.

*Megan's Manifest*  
by Megan Kegley

First off, Merry Christmas to everyone! It is so hard to believe that it is already December! Time



flies when you are having fun - right?!? Anyhow, I'm going to share a few photos of the 77<sup>th</sup> CSX Santa Train that I took last month! This first photo(left) is none other than our precious CRR 100! This photo was taken at Elkhorn City, KY. The light

M.Kegley Photography

was not the best but I made it work. Although this photo didn't turn out that great (to me at least) it is still one of my favorites!!!!

I'm sure most of you can guess where this photo was taken ... If you guessed St. Paul, you are correct! The weather was very bad for the 77<sup>th</sup> CSX Santa Train, very rainy and cold! But ... myself and my three friends Heather, John, and AJ were on the road to Elkhorn City by 0230 in the morning! We did not care how crappy the weather was going to be, they had never seen/chased the Santa Train. We chased from Elkhorn City to Kingsport! I guess you could say we are dedicated! LOL.



M.Kegley Photography

One last photo of the *Santa Train* for this month's "Manifest"! The photo of Car 100 see here was taken at Ft. Blackmore, VA! You think there is a lot of people around the crossing below ....

Honestly, there were more people on the highway overpass where I took this from!! Despite the crappy weather, there were railfans from all over the US



chasing this train!!! It just goes to show how much this train means to folks, whether it's for the ones like me that love trains, or the ones receiving presents from Santa off the back of the platform!!

I hope each and every one of you have a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!!!

### More Santa Train Photos



Mike Tilley offers these additional photos of this year's special. Left: deadheading north; below: Santa handing out goodies at Toms Bottom, VA,



## *In the News ...*

### ***CLINCHFIELD #800***

The January 2020 issue of TRAINS magazine offers two great shots of CRR F7 #800, the first ferrying ex-C&O 2-8-4 #2716 from its display at the Kentucky Railway Museum to the Kentucky Steam Heritage Corp. in Irvine, where it will undergo operational restoration. The #800 was on loan to KRM by its new owner, the Southern Appalachian Railway Museum in Knoxville. The second finds the #800 also on loan for excursion service offered by the Ohio Rail Experience.

### ***WV Plan to Sell Failed Intermodal Hub in Question***

[Trains.com, 12/18/2019] CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The state may sell a failed West Virginia intermodal hub, built for \$32 million, for as little as \$1 million — a prospect that drew objections Tuesday from legislators.

The Heartland Intermodal Gateway in Prichard, W.Va., opened in December 2015 with the goal of handling 15,000 containers a year, the Charleston Gazette-Mail reports. It closed earlier this year after handling as few as 20 containers a month. Norfolk Southern stopped serving the 100-acre facility, built on land donated by the railroad, on Oct. 1.

The state is seeking bids from real estate auction companies to sell the facility, Transportation Secretary Byrd White said, but legislators asked that any auction be delayed until after the legislature returns in January.

State Sen. Robert Plymale argued during a Tuesday meeting of oversight committees on transportation and infrastructure that the facility “has been so mishandled by the [state Department of Transportation] and the Port Authority. ... I’ve never seen anything so mishandled.” The Port Authority had not met for two years before a new member was appointed in July, Plymale said, to create a quorum for a meeting to authorize sale of the facility. Another legislator expressed concern that the state would get “mere pennies on the dollar for what was invested.”

### ***AMTRAK Service Expansion to Roanoke?***

[WSLS TV 10, Roanoke via *Turntable Times*, Roanoke NRHS] Tourism leaders said AMTRAK is far exceeding expectations two years after passenger rail service returned to the Star City. AMTRAK representatives tell 10 News Roanoke's ridership is the highest of any individual line in the commonwealth. Since launching in 2017, that's more than 110,000 passengers coming in and out of Roanoke. "People that are curious. They're curious about a new way to travel and for us, that's great," said Brian Wells, general manager of the Hotel Roanoke. For the Hotel Roanoke, AMTRAK means big business. "We get a lot of guests that come off the train. Some of them are very impromptu. They were in Boston the day before and said, 'Hey, let's just get on the Northeast corridor and see where it takes us,'" Wells said.

Catherine Fox, vice president of public affairs and destination development for Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, said AMTRAK's success benefits not only existing businesses, but future development. In just the last year, three new hotels have been announced in downtown, including one just this week. "Having AMTRAK has developed what we consider as a critical mass to downtown," Fox said. [Continued on next page.]

The early success is raising the question of whether AMTRAK could expand in Roanoke. "We'd love to see them expand to more than one daily train to northern Virginia and we'd love to see the timing of the train alter from early a.m. departure, late p.m. arrival to some additional train coverage in the middle of the day," Wells said. Jennifer Mitchell, director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, gave 10 News the following statement: "While there are no current expansions for the Roanoke line planned at this time, Virginia continues to work with our valued partners at Norfolk Southern to explore potential new mobility options for its citizens."

## *AMTRAK to Christiansburg and the New River Valley?*

[Dorr Tucker, *Turntable Times*, Roanoke NRHS] Construction of a new passenger rail station in Christiansburg is well into the planning stage with a designated location that would be convenient for Blacksburg as well as other outlying New River Valley Communities.

Until recently, the thinking was to change the schedules of current southbound AMTRAK trains 171, 147 and 145 that are on slightly different schedules on different days of the week. That plan, using the same consist, was for the northbound trains to leave from the new Christiansburg station around 7:00 am weekdays (90 minutes later on weekends), receive passengers in Roanoke around 8:00 am, and head up to Alexandria and arriving at Union Station in Washington by 12:45 pm with a New York arrival around 5:30 pm and on to Boston before 11 pm. The southbound schedule would be essentially the same as 171 on weekdays but running about 30 minutes ahead of the present schedule to assure a pre-11 pm arrival at the new Christiansburg Station (at least on week days).

However, recent reports from notable authorities indicate that the Christiansburg service will be handled by separate trains with separate rolling stock. We understand that the northbound train will be scheduled to leave Christiansburg around 8:30 am on weekdays, but we don't have any knowledge of the southbound schedule but assume that it will run a little earlier in the day than either No. 147, 145, or weekday 171. Also, we don't have any knowledge of a New River Valley maintenance facility for the new service. Nor do we know if new crew districts will be established.

One area where we have a little knowledge is that the consists of the new trains must be backed 7 miles (that could be 6,5 miles from the new station location) to Walton to be turned on the Wye (unless some type of push/pull motive power is assigned). Walton is only about five miles from Radford where the former passenger station is a crew base and off limits to the general public; however, a short platform as well as a maintenance facility could be built.

We should note that passenger service to Christiansburg is still some time away, especially since Norfolk Southern has not yet agreed to do the study they require and funding from the Commonwealth is not yet available.

## *2020 Railfan Event Calendar*



**FEB 28-29:** Asheville Train Show, WNC Agricultural Center. Info:  
<http://www.asheville-trainshow.com>.



**MAR 28:** WVRHS&M *Spring Rail Excursion*, GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD, Dillsboro, NC.

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