

Whistle Stop



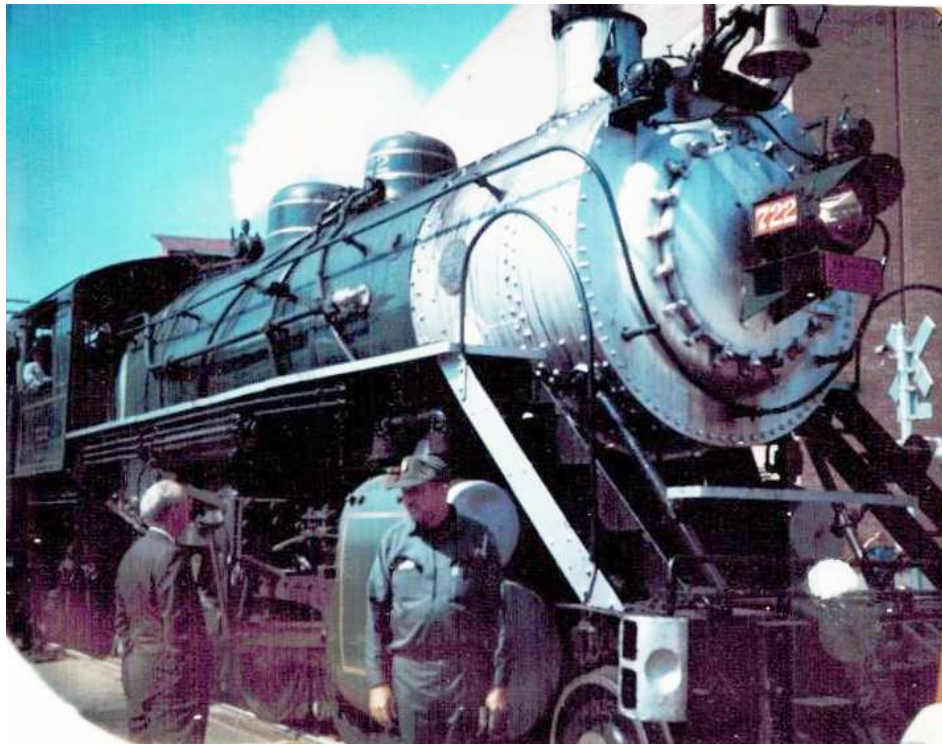
Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Mike Tilley passes along this 1970 photo taken at the Southern Railway station in Johnson City. The occasion was SOU 2-8-0 #722 (ex ETWNC #207) making a visit up the Bristol Line on its way to Roanoke for an excursion assignment. The two men in the photo are not known. Mike reports being treated to a coach ride on the 722's train from Morristown to Johnson City. The engine is now stored at the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad shops area in Dillsboro awaiting restoration.

July 26th General Membership Meeting

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, July 26th, 2021 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). The program for July will be retired SOU / NS employee Wayne Manning recounting his experiences of working on the railroad. You'll also have the opportunity to enjoy visiting the Chuckey Depot/Museum and watching trains passing by the depot.

Member Notes

By Edna Kay Carter

Please keep in your thoughts and prayers Dewey Risner (Santa Claus) in the loss of his wife Gwen (Mrs. Claus); also, Frank Gricus in the loss of his companion Linda. Continue to remember the Ritchie and Tilley families as they continue to deal with the loss of family members.

Continue to keep Nancy Ritchie, Sharon Slagle, Gary Price, Jack Maloney, Lois Tilley and Billy Walker in your thoughts and prayers as they deal with various health concerns. As always, let us know of any member, friend or family member 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 to report currently.

Hope everyone will continue to stay safe and enjoy all the summertime activities.

OFFICIAL CHANGE IN MEETING LOCATION

The Johnson City Public Library recently notified the Watauga Valley Railroad Museum that they were opening up but with major changes. They told us that the meeting room that we always met in would not be available for the months of June and July due to library events. Also, we could not book a year in advance as we have done in the past. We could only book for three months and on the fourth month, someone with the library foundation would be in line to rent it before us. With this in mind, having to go from one facility to another during the year would not work. We have decided to keep meetings at the Chuckey Depot on 2nd St in Jonesborough due to these changes at the library.

NEW WHISTLE STOP CONTRIBUTOR

Whistle Stop is happy to announce a new monthly contributor, member Les Billings, who will be treating us to photos of his railfan experiences. Les' column, "*Display in the Block*", can be found on page 6.

WATAUGA VALLEY WEB SITE WILL BE REDESIGNED IN COMING MONTHS

The Watauga Valley Web site will be upgraded in the coming months. If there are changes that you would like to see go in the web site, please email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

WATAUGA VALLEY UNIFORMS

Several members have asked about ordering uniforms. We will be sending out a new order from very shortly.

LIBRARY DONATIONS

Our library collection in Jonesborough is growing fast. We appreciate all the donations that have been made. Please bring your railroad book donations to any membership meeting or call the chapter office at 423-753-5797. If you are finished reading or just want to donate, put your books to good use. We have plenty of room to add more books!

Chuckey Depot / Museum

At times we've been receiving 75+ visitors at the Chuckey Depot/Museum on account of the warm weather bringing more people out to see our beautiful Depot/Museum. We have nearly 80 Watauga Valley RHS&M volunteers who host at the museum each month. May was the record month with over 550 visitors. We had another record month in June thanks to Jonesborough Days held on June 29th through July 4th.

TRAINING SESSION IN THE PLANS FOR THE CHUCKEY DEPOT

The next host training session for the Chuckey Depot will be in September; get involved to volunteer at the depot/museum one day a month. Please call our office at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com to get your name on the list. We are needing more hosts since the hours of the depot have been extended.

VIRGINIA & SOUTHWESTERN AND SOUTHERN RAILWAY ARTIFACTS NEEDED

We will be changing out the displays and are needing V&SW and SRR artifacts in August. If you have anything you would like to loan to the museum for a six-month period, please email Rick Chinouth ASAP at chinouthhome@yahoo.com. Our members have some great artifacts; please share them with the museum.

Mechanical Department Report *by Jim Magill and Art DeVoe*

Looks like summer is knocking on our door and we can finally get some work done. The weather has been good to the Watauga Valley Mechanical Team and there have been a lot of good working days at the yard over the last several weeks. If you would like to help out at the Jonesborough Coach Yard on Tuesdays between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or Saturdays 9 a.m. to 12 noon, please call the WVRHS&M office at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): receiving air conditioning updates. Door repair due to pin fitting into floor which rusted out. New holding tank has been applied. Repairs on plumbing system.

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400) some electrical repairs in kitchen underway.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): receiving some upgrades.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): new windows installed; damaged floor under repair.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): a new 10-ton air conditioning unit installed; conversion to a table car completed; and a new generator installed. Will be installing some new windows and performing interior upgrades.

In the News

2021 Santa Train Cancelled



[Team Santa Team Twitter post] Out of an abundance of caution for all our attendees, volunteers and employees, Team Santa Train has made the decision to once again hold a drive-thru gift distribution event at Food City locations throughout the area on Saturday, Nov. 20, from 8 to 10 a.m.

Nantahala Outdoor Center Sues GSMR over Crossing

[WLOS, Asheville] The Nantahala Outdoor Center has filed a federal lawsuit against Great Smoky Mountain Railroad. NOC wants the railroad to reopen a crossing that the two businesses share so staff and visitors can have access to NOC property.

Railroad pavement at the crossing was destroyed out of safety concerns for its workers and passengers following a 2017 crash. Eight people were injured when the driver of a charter bus collided with the train. The bus driver was charged with ignoring the flashing signs.

NORFOLK SOUTHERN Changes Radio Frequencies

160.56 Channel 1, main channel, train to train.

161.40 Channel 2, This is the track authority channel dispatcher to train.

CLINCHFIELD Traffic is Starting to Pick Up

CSX has added several coal trains to the CRR line. Coal trains are traveling to Terrell and Brice, NC. Several grain and ethanol trains have been seen on the Clinchfield. The frequencies to hear these trains are 161.100 Channel 1 and 161.52 Channel 2, which are dispatcher channels, and 161.55, which is the yard frequency.

WSMR Updates: New Dome Car, #1309

[Trains News Wire] As tourist railroads and museums emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, they are offering new experiences to attract the public. At the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, this effort has translated into the addition of Amtrak's last dome car.

The *Ocean View*, built in 1955 and retired by Amtrak in 2019, debuted earlier this month on the Western Maryland Scenic between Cumberland and Frostburg, MD. The Super Dome, now in Western Maryland's red and white "circus" colors, is part of a trainset that also includes a newly renovated open-air car and privately owned cars *Pacific Trail* and *Overland Trail*. The is proving to be an exciting addition, says Wesley Heinz, interim executive director at Western Maryland.

The *Ocean View* was part of a six-car order built by Budd to serve as lounges for sleeping-car passengers aboard the *Empire Builder*, with five cars assigned to the Great Northern and one to the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy. Three of the cars eventually went to Amtrak, with one kept by Burlington Northern for its executive train, one sold to Holland America, and one burned and destroyed.

The Amtrak cars were converted to head-end power and had their vestibules replaced with an electrical locker. Two of the cars, *Mountain View* and *River View* were sold to Xanterra and are now at Grand Canyon Railway. *Ocean View* was retained for Amtrak to use on executive trains and on specials and seasonal service until the company retired the car, citing maintenance costs.

The car was purchased and renovated by a partnership between Rail Excursion Management and PAXRAIL. It's believed to be the first dome car to operate over the Western Maryland Railroad other than one or two documented detours of Baltimore & Ohio passenger trains pre-Amtrak.

Meanwhile, Western Maryland is preparing to begin testing on its Chesapeake & Ohio 2-6-6-2 No. 1309. The locomotive, the last Baldwin steam engine built for domestic use, is awaiting new firebrick for its firebox. Firebrick has been stalled due to supply and labor shortages.

NS Lays Off 86 Employees at Altoona Locomotive Shop

[WTAJ, Altoona, PA] Approximately 86 employees working for Norfolk Southern at the locomotive shop in Juniata were laid off on Friday [July 9] morning. According to Norfolk Southern Spokesperson Jeff DeGraff, employees working in their mechanical department were furloughed as part of a long-term business plan by the company that he says will best serve the needs of their customers. In addition, 16 positions that were vacant will no longer be filled.

"We appreciate the hard work and commitment of all the men and women on the Thoroughbred Team and will work with furloughed employees on opportunities to apply for open positions, elsewhere in our system," DeGraff said.

Congressman John Joyce provided a statement regarding the furloughs and committed to helping those affected find new job opportunities. It is incredibly disappointing that Norfolk Southern has chosen to furlough members of the workforce at the Juniata Locomotive Shops," Joyce said. "These hardworking Pennsylvanians are valuable members of our community and part of our local tradition of railroad excellence."

"We're very saddened and disappointed to hear this. It was a business decision on the part of Norfolk Southern," Senator Judy Ward said. "All the elected officials locally will be working with our partners, our state and federal partners to try to get all the help that we possibly can for these displaced workers."

WVRHS&M Train Excursion

The Great Smoky Mountain Train Excursion Saturday, September 11th, 2021

AN OPPORTUNITY TO RIDE A TRAIN EXCURSION THROUGH THE SMOKY MOUNTAINS!

On Saturday, September 11th, 2021, the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will sponsor a beautiful train excursion - a ride on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad through the majestic mountains and beautiful countryside of western North Carolina from Bryson City, NC and on to the Nantahala Gorge, NC and returning to Bryson City, NC. This trip covers a lot of the current operating trackage of the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad.

For a complete trip description and instructions on ordering tickets, go to our web site at <https://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/excursions.php>.

Display in the Block

by Les Billings

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the *Whistle Stop* on a monthly basis. I have become a busy Rail Fan and enjoy traveling around the region photographing and videoing trains. I hope everyone enjoys my photos published on our newsletter



Heritage Unit “*Virginian*” 1069 passes by Chuckey Depot on June 6, which I hosted on a nice sunny Sunday afternoon. It was leading on NS 201. I was given a heads up the day before from one of my Facebook friends. It had been spotted in Hagerstown, Md the day before. The platform on the Museum is an incredibly good viewing location. It even vibrates as the train is passing by.

NS 127 is poking its head around the bend. It is approaching MP 31.8, just east of Jonesborough. I have heard the engineers calling out clear signal at this location many times as I listen on my scanner. This is where you can first hear the horn of the train, while in Jonesborough, knowing it will be passing the Salt House and the Chuckey Depot very soon.



This photo is one of my favorites that I shot over the winter. It also of NS 127. It is entering Sand Valley just east of Telford on the main track on its way to Chattanooga. 127 is one of the best trains to view. I do believe it had a clear signal and did not have to stop. This is an excellent location to railfan. It has a wide-open area and a good place to park at Sand Valley Road Crossing.

Early in the month we had several special trains traveling through our area. These are real treats to see. So, for those who did not see, I have added a few shots to enjoy.

The first three shots are of NS 052, a military train that had a small army of equipment. Someone said it probably had more equipment on the train than owned by a lot of small countries. I was out at 1:30 a.m. at the Depot getting these shots. It was running very slow for a restriction and took over 15 minutes to pass.



NS 954

Executive train with a pair of SD60E's in the lead. This was caught at mp25 in Johnson City just before lunch.



NS 904

Research train with NS 34 geometry unit. Taken from bridge on the old Jonesborough Hwy.



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