

Whistle Stop



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

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The Santa's Helper dispensing Christmas joy from the rear platform of our Business Car 100 on a past "CSX Santa Train" is a member of Watauga Valley. Bet you do not recognize him. Hint: he was at our 40th anniversary dinner.

No Membership nor BoD Meetings in December

As a reminder, there will be **no General Membership nor Board of Directors meetings in December** due to the holidays. See you in January 2022.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Member Notes

Please keep the following in your prayers and thoughts: Suzie Price, Nancy Ritchie, Francis Tafer, and Lois Tilley. If you know of anyone who is sick or has lost a loved one, please email wataugavalley@gmail.com or call the office at (423) 753-5797 and leave a message with your information.

The Watauga Valley Railroad Museum did not have any new members for the month of December.

2022 OFFICERS and BOARD ELECTION RESULTS; MEETING PLACE DECISION

The Nominating Committee reports that the following were elected as 2022 Officers and Directors: We welcome all for 2022.

President – Mike Tilley
 Vice President – Howard Orfield
 Secretary – James Smallwood
 Treasurer – Jeanie Walker
 Historian – Gary Price

Board of Directors –
 Art DeVoe
 Ralph Clarke
 Bob Hand

Meeting Place Survey. The membership voted to continue having the general membership meetings at the Chuckey Depot Museum for 2022.



WATAUGA VALLEY CHRISTMAS GALA 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Great food, fun and fellowship were had by all at Watauga Valley's Annual Christmas Dinner on Saturday, December 11th at the Food City Depot Banquet Room in Johnson City. There was approx. 70+ attendees packing the house. President Mike Tilley conducted a short business meeting. Gary Price presented a great program on the 40th anniversary of the Watauga Valley Railroad Museum. If you missed this event, you missed a good time, a wonderful review of our accomplishments and a remembrance of those who have passed on. For more photos, go to our Facebook page.

2022 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership Dues statements for 2022 were emailed or sent by US mail in November.

Dues: Individual Membership	\$ 20.00
Family Membership	\$ 5.00 per family member

Benefits: 12 issues of the "*Whistle Stop*", Watauga Valley's newsletter.
 Membership in the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum.
 Participation in all Museum functions and events.

Chuckey Depot / Museum

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot/Museum in Jonesborough has been very good during the holidays. We have about 87 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 email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com or phone 423-753-5797 to get signed up. Everyone who hosts enjoys volunteering at the depot.

CABOOSE/DEPOT SANTA EVENT

The Santa Caboose event will be big hit for the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum and the Town of Jonesborough on December 18th. We are planning to have a large group including parents and children attending the event. We want to thank all WVRHS&M members who are helping with this event and Junior Risner, who will be Santa Claus.

2022 WVRHS&M Train Excursions

We have scheduled our Spring Excursion for Saturday, May 14th, 2022 on the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad. Visit our web site, <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/>, in January for more information. Tickets will go on sale on the internet on January 15th at 6 pm on that site. We will be signing up hosts for the trips at later date.

Major Photo Collection Donated to Watauga Valley

The Gilbert Family of Jonesborough has donated to WVRHS&M a large collection of photos, taken by Gilbert Photography, which include many railroad photos of the Clinchfield, Southern, ET&WNC, Norfolk Western and many more. You will start seeing these photos in the *Whistle Stop* in 2022. Below you'll find a sample of what's found in this marvelous collection – ET&WNC 2-8-0 #208 switching in Elizabethton and at Bemberg. Look forward to a wonderful rail trip down Memory Lane.



Mechanical Department Report

by Jim Magill and Art DeVoe



GENERAL

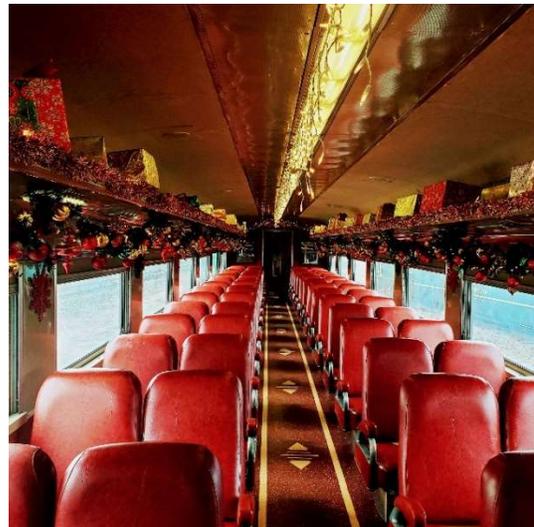
New ties were recently installed at the yard by a contractor from Kentucky. Laid in the 1980s, the old ties were in rough shape when removed.

ROLLING STOCK

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): at the coach yard in Jonesborough for upgrades.

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539), “Moultrie” diner (WATX 400): “Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100), and “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): all four cars are in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum on their

“Polar Express” trains. See photos below.



In the News

#1309 passes FRA inspection; scheduled for public trips

[Greg Larry, *Cumberland Times-News*] The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad's steam locomotive No. 1309 received approval from the Federal Railroad Administration on Friday, Nov. 19, to be placed into service. "We were on pins and needles waiting ... but we got the green light," said Del. Mike McKay, WMSR board president. "It's great news. The staff did a yeoman's job getting 1309 ready for service."



The scenic railroad purchased the massive Baldwin steam locomotive in 2014 from the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore. The engine's restoration was more than a \$3.5 million investment, and the effort spanned three general managers – Michael Gresham, John Garner and the current one, Wesley Heinz. Hired in June, Heinz has extensive experience with steam locomotives. He came to the WMSR from the Narrow-Gauge Railroad & Museum Co. in Portland, Maine, which operates steam locomotives. Heinz said the No. 1309 was taken for a celebratory lap Friday, Nov. 19 up to Helmstetter's Curve

near Cash Valley Road before returning to the train yard. He said people took pictures and applauded as the engine, known as Maryland Thunder, traveled through the Narrows. "It's been an incredible day," said Heinz. "There will be steam in the valley again." [ED. NOTE: On December 9th the 1309 made a trip all the way to Frostburg. That says their track problems have been solved.]

Maryland Thunder is scheduled for service beginning in mid-December for *Polar Express* excursions. [Trips are scheduled for December 17, 18 and 19.] Once in service, No. 1309 will be the largest steam locomotive available for regular public service east of the Mississippi River. "Every goal was achieved, and the engine performed as expected and hoped she would," said Heinz. "There were no ailments or problems. She's quite a machine." Built in November, 1949, No. 1309 is a Mallet type 2-6-6-2 articulated steam locomotive. Heinz said it is the largest compound Mallet steam locomotive operating in the world.

Nashville Steam Preservation Society Soliciting Donations



You can help power ex-NC&StL 4-8-4 #576 back to the rails and create a first-class shop for its continued operation. All donors become part of the Nashville Steam Preservation Society. Learn more about Donor Benefits and Levels at <https://www.nashvillesteam.org/donate/>.

All donations are tax-deductible and can be made online or by traditional mail.

Display in the Block

by Les Billings

I can't believe it is Christmas time already. Time really flies when you are having fun. This months "Display in the Block" will feature work from Piney Flats. Piney is a very good railfanning area with many places to stop. You can get 2 trains for one visit since there is a siding. This is part 1 of Piney Flats - West End.



Entering Piney Flats is NS 126, eastbound, snaking through the curves as it approached Piney Flats road. This was a perfect July afternoon for railfanning. NS 1206 leading a 2 unit front, and 2 dpu's mid train.



Below right is a special military load that was heading west on NS 15T. A little research shows it is a RSLP1 – Rocket System Launch Program vehicle, used to launch a Minuteman III ICBM. I was standing on the porch of the old Wolfe Bros. & Co. building as I spotted it rolling by. Interesting what goes through our community.

Above left you will see NS 22A waiting in the siding as NS 202 passes by heading east. 22A will shortly receive a clear signal to leave and finish its trip to Youngstown Yard, Louisville, KY. This is on the east side of the of the Piney siding.





NS 127 heading west out of Piney Flats through the valley on its way towards Johnson City after crossing Piney Flats Road. On this day I was met by a curious neighboring dog that wanted to see what I was up to. It had to cross the tracks to get to where I was standing, I was afraid when the train came it might cross back and get hit. But living by the tracks it was used to all the train activity and did return home with no issues. By the way it was a nice dog and kissed my leg.

“Two Locomotives that pass in the day.” NS 126 (left) meets NS 201 (right) as 201 waits for him to clear the main. This is the way I started my July 4th celebration with a little train watching. As you can see, trains do not take a holiday. Freight must keep moving.



As we started out this month, we were entering Piney, and I will close leaving the Flats. NS 201 departs the siding on its way to Rossville, TN.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR**

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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL