

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society &
Museum

P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432

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www.wataugavalleynrhs.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Member Bobby L. Hand posted this fine shot on our Facebook page of SD70ACC #1800 leading an eastbound train 126. #1800, part of Norfolk Southern's DC to AC conversion program, was originally built in 1994 as EMD SD70 #2537. #1800 was rebuilt by Progress Rail's facility in Muncie, Indiana, to include a new safety cab and electrical upgrades to provide AC traction. The yellow color in "mane" paint scheme represents Progress Rail's parent company, Caterpillar.

February 27th General Membership Meeting

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, February 27th, 2023 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Our program this month will be on the **Blue Ridge Southern Railroad**. The Blue Ridge Southern Railroad is a Class III short line railroad operating over 91.8 miles of track in Western North Carolina, operating three lines that connect in the Asheville area that were previously owned by Norfolk Southern. Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading.

Member Notes

Please keep the Dowdy family in your thoughts and prayers for the loss of Mike Dowdy. Remember Gary and Susie Price, Tony King, Fred Pfohl and Hal Hunter in your thoughts and prayers for various health reasons.

If anyone knows of a member that needs a card, thoughts for various concerns, or to request that one of our members or family be reported for various concerns in the *Whistle Stop*, email a request to wataugavalley@gmail.com or railfan04041961@gmail.com.

Welcome Aboard! Please welcome our newest members: Ed Krause and wife Betty Frazier. See you around the Depot.



If you have a friend or know of someone interested in railroads, please hand them a New Membership Brochure. We have the brochure available at the general membership meetings.

2023 WVRHS&M DUES **LATE NOTICE**

Late dues notices were recently sent out to all members that have not renewed for 2023. Time is running out and your name will be removed from the membership list soon. Act fast and get your dues mailed back to the Membership Chairman, Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. You can join the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual and by adding each family member at \$5.00 each. For questions, email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

Web Site Address Confusion

If you're experiencing problems linking to our web site (especially to the web cam), you might be using a bookmark for our old web address, <https://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/>. The correct link to use should be <https://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/>. The matter of two links will be corrected.

PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2023

Howard Orfield and Brad McCroskey, WVRHS&M program directors, are looking for General Membership Meeting programs for 2023. Please call (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com if you have an interest in offering a program this year. We are looking for speakers interested in presenting a railroad related subject. And, as always, we're looking for video and slide shows.



Whistle Truck for Lease

The Whistle Truck is now available for lease to anyone or group who has a special event that they would like the Whistle Truck to attend. A description of the Whistle Truck can be found at <https://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/passengercars.php>.

Call (423) 753-5797 for lease information.

Mechanical Department Report

by Art Devoe

GENERAL

The Watauga Valley mechanical team is looking for more volunteers. If you're interested in joining us, please email us at wataugavalley@gmail.com or call the Watauga Valley office at (423) 753-5797 and leave a message that you are interested in volunteering. Work days are Tuesdays 9am to 5pm.



ROLLING STOCK

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400) and **“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500)**: both cars are in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum.

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): is in Spencer NC and will be returning soon to the Coach Yard soon.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): At the Coach Yard for upgrades.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): The 100 will receive extensive truck rebuild and update during the first quarter of 2023 at NCTM.

HISTORY of WATX 500, the “ST. AUGUSTINE”



Beginning on January 23, 1963, the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) sustained a 14-year, violent strike. The story is well known and is described in detail in Seth Bramson's wonderful book ***Speedway to Sunshine***. In 1965 the Federal Court ordered the FEC to operate passenger service as no authority was ever given to stop service but everyone was afraid to ride the train because of being shot at or involved in derailments, It was always an empty train. The strike, which began as a dispute over wages, was characterized by hard feelings, mutual recrimination

and more than 200 acts of vandalism or sabotage. There was dynamiting along the right of way from Jacksonville, FL to Miami, FL during the strike and derailments happened everywhere. Watauga Valley's coach *St Augustine* was used as the strike car to transport company officials into work. They would park their automobiles at a specified location so their cars would not get vandalized and FEC would transport the company men by passenger train to work. The strike was one of the worst in railroad history and our coach *St Augustine* was right in the middle of it in that it took some gun shots in the fluting during the strike. Purchased by Watauga Valley in 1986, we never changed out the fluting on the 1954 Pullman-built *St. Augustine* because it was involved with history of the strike. Today the *St. Augustine* is still riding the rails and thousands of people have ridden in it during the many excursions sponsored by the Watauga Valley Railroad Museum.

Chuckey Depot / Museum

Things are ticking at the Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum at Jonesborough. Even though the cold and rainy weather has been around the last couple of months, attendance at the museum has been good. We had record number of visitors during the month of December. If you're interested in volunteering one day a month, please call Mike Tilley at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

New Exhibit Announcement

The new exhibit coming March 4 at the Chuckey Depot honors the influence of women and African Americans on the railroad industry. Plan to attend the inaugural showing on Saturday, March 4, at 1pm.

A Message from Down Under

Hi Wataugavalley RR.,

I quite often check your little red caboose X450 and wait for a train to go by. (railcam) Can you advise the lucky couple that their wedding was watched from Australia and they were married on 19th Feb. here. :-)

Sometimes get to see the close and lockup of the X450. How about when the lock up is done, the bloke doing the job stands on the platform at the top of the stairs, faces the camera and gives us all a salute to signify he / she has done a good job and we are all thankful for the time that has been spent doing the job.,

Hope to visit one day...bloody airfares have gone up and the Oz \$ has dropped a bit.

Best wishes
Ian

May 2023 WVRHS&M Rail Excursion

On Saturday, May 20, 2023, 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 on to the Nantahala Gorge, NC and return to Bryson City. This trip covers a lot of the current operating trackage of the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad.

Patrons will have two choices in getting to the Bryson City, NC train station. They can either drive directly to Bryson City or board a motor coach out of Johnson City, TN. For more information and to order tickets, go to <https://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/excursions.php>.

TRAIN TRIVIA: Which city was a major stop of the *Wabash Cannonball* passenger train? a.) Denver b.) St. Louis c.) Omaha d.) Tulsa. Answer on page 7.

Display in the Block

By Les Billings

This month, we are looking at some cabooses that I have photographed. These are rare of course these days. However, there are a few in service today, mainly on local trains and a switcher or two. Most are privately owned for excursions or on static display in railroad towns and communities. It was a sad day when railroads stop using the caboose. I have said many times, that trains look like sentences without a period. Birth of the EOT.



[Left] This rare caboose came through Johnson City on October 4th, 2021. Black is not a color one thinks when thinking of a caboose. I caught this shot during one of my lunch hour adventures. It was a Department of Defense caboose along with a flat car in front (DODX900). I am not sure the train # but it was a westbound train. It was a good sight making the train look complete again.

[Right] This caboose NS 555647 is one that has been seen frequently when visiting the Bristol Depot. It is used on the Bristol Switcher (V19) and Bristol to Radford (V40). On this Friday evening, I overheard someone saying that it had hit a truck, with its steps, at a private crossing near Piney Flats. The steps appear to be little out of alignment. It has seen better days, but at least it is still being use. This cupula design is my favorite style.





[Left/Right] On a cloudy/rainy Sunday a few weeks ago I found this caboose in Kingsport in the south yard connected to two NS Locomotives. A little research found that it works Eastman, South Yard, the Island and then up to Yuma Yard and back. It works under NS T62. It looked strange to see Norfolk Southern equipment on and around the CSX Line.



[Above] This little jewel, Southern X648, serves at the N.C. Transportation Museum in Spencer N.C. It was being used on the Polar Express Train in 2021 in this photo.



[Above] The Rio Grande Caboose 01490 can be seen over in Bryson City at the Great Smoky Mtn. Railroad serving on excursions as was here in April 2022.



[Above] Looking down from the Williamson Rd. Bridge, we see O. Winston Link's Private 19th century caboose. It is on display at the Link Museum in Roanoke, VA.



[Above] NW 555012 caboose was setting in the roundhouse in Spencer, NC. This Caboose was built in 1976 at the cost of \$45,000. Maybe it needed a little work or just being stored.

In the News ...

Matt Bumgarner (1966-2023)

[Extracted from his obituary. Matt was well-known to many Watauga Valley members.] Matthew C. Bumgarner, 56, of Hickory passed away after a brief illness on January 26, 2023 at Catawba Memorial Hospital.

Matt authored numerous books and published even more under his company, Tarheel Press. Matt's publishing ventures were specific to the subjects that fascinated him: the Civil War and local railroad history. Matt worked tirelessly with friends at the Newton, NC Depot to uncover, preserve, and document local railway history. Depot volunteers who worked with Matt knew well that there was always a new project to tackle--be it bush-whacking a locomotive out of the woods, restoring a Ford Model T depot hack, or organizing the yearly Hickory Train Show.

First Steam Test Run for Restored Cass-Durbin Line

[Alan Byer, Trains News Wire] Cass Scenic Railroad Shay No. 5 made the first trial steam run over the restored former C&O Greenbrier Division track between Cass and Durbin, WV, on Wednesday [Feb .1], operator Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad has announced.

The 30-mile round trip was the first for a steam locomotive since the Greenbrier River destroyed much of the line during flooding in 1985, and was a notable milestone following completion in January of the Trout Run bridge, the last major obstacle in restoring the line.

The trip by No. 5 — at 117 years, the oldest locomotive in the United States still operating on the track for which it was built — was to retrieve former Meadow River Lumber Company three-truck Heisler No. 6. That locomotive powered the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley's "Durbin Rocket" for seven years. The Heisler is out of service with a badly eroded smokebox floor and will require about six months in the shop to return to steam, according to Durbin & Greenbrier Valley president and CEO John Smith.

When repaired, No. 6 may be a candidate to power the recently announced Greenbrier Express trains set to begin operation between Cass and Durbin later this year given a top speed nearly twice that of the available Shay locomotives or of Climax No. 9, the former No. 6 of the Middle Fork Railroad (Ellamore, WV). Eventual plans call for the train to be powered by former Buffalo Creek & Gauley 2-8-0 No. 4, awaiting restoration to operating condition. For information on how to donate to that restoration effort, please visit <https://www.steamthe4.com/>.

Smith said the route will see a trial run with passenger equipment sometime next week. The first Greenbrier Express trains are scheduled to begin operating in April. For information on that trip or other Durbin & Greenbrier Valley trains, visit Mountain Rail at <https://mountainrail.com/>.



TRIVIA answer: b.) St. Louis. The Wabash Cannonball was a passenger train on the Wabash Railroad. The first, named *Cannon Ball*, express train traveled from Chicago southwest to El Paso, Texas in the 1880s. The railroad resurrected the train in 1950, naming it after the song "Wabash Cannonball", which ran until 1971 between two major Midwestern cities, St. Louis and Detroit. [source: *Wikipedia*]

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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL