

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

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

(423) 753-5797

www.wataugavalleynrhs.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Mike Pierry, Jr. captured this almost-surreal scene of NS Train 279 during crew change in the Bristol, VA Yard. The bright orange livery of BNSF ES44C4 #6747 eerily stands out against a bleak winter sky. [Photo posted on our Facebook page.]

March 27th General Membership Meeting

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, March 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 cover the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific Railway. Abbreviated CNO&TP (reporting mark CNTP), the line is a railroad that leases the Cincinnati Southern Railway from Cincinnati, Ohio, south to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and sub leases it to the Norfolk Southern Railway system. This division is known as the "Rat Hole" due to its many tunnels. Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading.

Member Notes

Let's keep Frank Gricus in our thoughts and prayers for the loss of his mother. Also keep the Ritchie and Sanford families in our prayers for the loss of Nancy and Mike. Please remember Gary Price, Tony King, Fred Pfohl, Jim Calhoun and Jack Maloney 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 new members: Michael and Joanne DeUrso. 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.

NEW EXCURSION MAILING LIST

WVRHS&M has put together a new mass email list which allows people to receive advance notification of future excursions. Anyone interested in getting on the advance list should email your contact information to wataugavalley@gmail.com.

WATAUGA VALLEY UNIFORMS NOW AVAILABLE

The Watauga Valley uniforms are now again available, if you want an order form sent to you, please email wataugavalley@gmail.com requesting one. Order your new uniforms now for these beautiful uniforms.

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 has been 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

Three of the Watauga Valley passenger cars will be back to the Coach Yard soon and a lot of work is needed as several of them have been on the road for over 6 months. The bad weather has again taken its toll on the Watauga Valley Mechanical Team in working at the yard over the last several weeks. Hopefully the weather will turn around and we can get some of the work done that was planned for the spring. If you would like to volunteer with the team, please call our office at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com and leave message; the Mechanical Team will call you back. We are in need of several more volunteers to help on the WVRHS&M cars. Work days are Tuesdays 9am to 5pm.

ROLLING STOCK

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400): will be receiving some electrical work.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): a new A/C unit will be installed in 2023.



“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): after exterior paint work had been completed at TVRM in Chattanooga the car was sent to NCTM in Spencer, NC for their “Polar Express”. It will be returning to the Coach Yard soon.

The photo at left shows the 539 decorated in season splendor at NCTM’s “Polar Express” last season.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): is now being offered as an Airbnb accommodation at the Spring St. Coach Yard. Search for “Crescent Harbor Train Car” in Jonesborough.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): will be receiving a truck overhaul at NCTM in Spencer, NC. The trucks will be removed and shipped north for new bearings and wheel repairs. This project will take several months to complete.

Chuckey Depot / Museum

We are looking for more volunteers at the Chuckey Depot to be trained for Museum hosting. The next training sessions will be soon. If you would like to host at the depot, please email us at wataugavalley@gmail.com. Get signed up to come out and enjoy your depot.

TRAIN TRIVIA: What was the outcome of the race between a horse and the first US steam locomotive? a.) the horse won b.) the train crashed c.) the train won d.) the horse died. Answer on page 7.

2023 WVRHS&M Rail Events

SPRING TRAIN EXCURSION UPDATE

We're looking forward to hosting a large group of passengers on our May 20th Spring Excursion on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad. As of publication time, both First Class and Crown Class seats have sold out; there are still 75 Coach Class seats available but we anticipate a sell out there as well. For tickets, go to <https://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/excursions.php>.



DINNER ON THE DINING CAR

The proposed dates for our 2023 "Dinner on the Diner Car" are June 23rd and 24th. Both lunch and dinner will be served. Last year we fed over 180 people on the *Moultrie* and *Clinchfield 100*.



In the News ...

👉 *Plant Closure Effect on Blue Ridge Southern Railroad?*



[ED. NOTES: By now anyone receiving news of Western North Carolina will be aware of Pactiv Evergreen's announced closure of its mill in Canton, NC. Beyond a devastating financial impact on the community, questions arise on the fate of the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad.

For those not familiar with the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (reporting mark BLU), it is a Class III shortline railroad operating over 91.8 miles of track in Western North Carolina. The railroad is owned by Watco of Pittsburg, Kansas, and operates three lines that connect in the Asheville area that were previously owned by Norfolk Southern. The line in question is the former Southern Railway Murphy Branch. In addition, BRS is the connection of the Great Smoky Mountains Railway to the outside world.

The following is extracted from WLOS.com.]

The announced closure of the Pactiv Evergreen paper mill in Canton is having a ripple effect throughout the region. In addition to the hundreds of workers at the mill, many of the companies

that serve the manufacturing plant are also economically tied to Evergreen. Among them are trucking companies, rail lines and wood suppliers. [Continued on next page.]

At the plant, a constant stream of trucks continues to take paper products from the mill to multiple locations throughout the region. The carriers, like rail carriers, are the arteries that carry needed goods to and from the plant. Among those goods is the enormous tonnage of wood chips that are needed for the manufacturing process. For the wood suppliers that deliver the chips, the loss of the plant's business will be significant.

The two main rail lines feeding the mill are Norfolk Southern and Blue Ridge Southern. Both lines get a significant amount of business carrying products to and from the facility. But for Blue Ridge Southern, the hit will be significant. According to the Southwestern Commission, the Evergreen mill is accountable for about 80 percent of Blue Ridge Southern's business.

The entire article may be found at <https://tinyurl.com/2n9b2par>.

CLINCHFIELD GENERAL OFFICE BUILDING UPDATE

There is a party that is working with CSX to save the ex-CRR General Office building in Erwin, TN. Nothing has been worked out yet and the party has not been identified. This is very good news for the old office building. The Clinchfield General Office building was completed in 1915. The signal department and some of the track force remained in the building until late 2021. We understand everyone is out of the building as of this writing.



The bad news is that the diesel shop buildings along with switchman buildings and tracks 6 through 19 have been removed. The mechanical car shop will remain to become a MOW shop to repair track machinery.

Agreement Reached on Saluda Grade Rail Line

[By Dean Hensley, *Hendersonville Times-News*] A coalition of three nonprofits (Conserving Carolina; PAL: Play, Advocate, Live Well; and Upstate Forever) that is spearheading the Saluda Grade Trail has reached an agreement with Norfolk Southern to sell the 31-mile rail line for use as a recreational rail trail.

Conserving Carolina made the announcement in a news release on March 16. The three nonprofits are leading efforts to repurpose the inactive rail line as a trail that will run from Upstate South Carolina into the mountains of Western North Carolina, the release said. The Saluda Grade Trail will run through the S.C. towns of Inman, Campobello and Landrum and connect to the N.C. towns of Tryon, Saluda and Zirconia.

Along its route, the trail will feature rural scenery, vibrant small towns, historic landmarks and gorgeous nature preserves, lakes and waterfalls. It is expected to be a multi-use trail that will be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

We're pleased to announce this exciting progress toward the goal of a rail trail that will serve as an economic engine for our communities, provide an abundance of recreational opportunities, and improve people's health by encouraging exercise and time in nature," said Executive Director of Conserving Carolina Kieran Roe in the release.

At the request of the railroad, the terms of the agreement are subject to a confidentiality agreement. The coalition expects to close on the rail corridor within two years and is [continued] pursuing state and federal funding opportunities. In South Carolina, the coalition is advocating for an \$11 million investment by the state this year.



"In addition to being beloved community assets, trails energize economies. We've seen this play out with the *Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail*, which is a resounding success." said Executive Director of Upstate Forever Andrea Cooper in the release. "The *Saluda Grade Trail* will bring new jobs and money to the area, encourage safe outdoor recreation, and improve quality of life for residents. It's a visionary project with a return that will far exceed any initial investment." Laura Ringo, who is the executive Director of PAL, said the trail will be a transformative project for the region.

"This rail-to-trail will be a destination and provide a boost to the Spartanburg County tourism economy, especially for the cities along the route like Landrum, Campobello and Inman. During the first year that the trail is open to the community, 125,000 visitors are expected. The majority of those visitors will buy lunch or a beverage, shop along main streets, and hopefully spend the night.

"In addition, trails provide significant health benefits, and the Saluda Grade will do just that," Ringo said in the release. "Physical inactivity is a major cause of most chronic diseases and access to recreation areas and trails increases physical activity for people of all ages, abilities and income levels. The creation of trails is an investment in preventative health and studies show that every \$1 investment leads to almost \$3 in direct medical benefit."

The coalition is also taking further steps to advance the Saluda Grade Trail by beginning the process of an economic impact and feasibility study that will show how the trail will shape local economies and how to move forward with the project. This summer, the coalition will be reaching out to landowners and stakeholders along the trail to seek their input on the opportunities and challenges presented by the trail and approaches that will best meet the needs of the community, the release said.

In addition, the coalition is preparing a website, which is expected to launch in the coming weeks, for the Saluda Grade Trail where the public will be able to find information and ways to get involved.

For more information, to sign up for emails, or to make a donation to the trail, go to <http://conservingcarolina.org/saluda-grade>, <http://palspartanburg.org/saludagradetrail>, or <http://upstateforever.org/saluda-grade>.



Recent photo of the grade.

A Veteran Railroader's Perspective on East Palestine

So much media coverage has been given to the NS accident in East Palestine, OH that this newsletter can provide nothing new. However, we are offering a link to an interesting perspective on the accident and the future of rail freight traffic in *railwayage.com* by Richard L. Beadles, the former President and CEO of the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/3r5nja8r> to read his opinion.

3Cs Railroad Web Site



Our good friend and WVRHS&M member Sandhi Kozsuch is doing research on the 3Cs Railroad (the Charleston Cincinnati & Chicago) which was proposed to be 625 miles in length, stretching from Ashland, KY to Charleston, SC and coming right through Johnson City. Although much roadbed construction occurred, the line was never completed and, due to financial woes, fell in bankruptcy. Part of the right-of-way was sold to other railroads and subsequently became part of the Clinchfield. Other segments were abandoned. James A. Goforth in his book *"Building the Clinchfield"* opines that the combined abandoned segments of the CC&C is "probably the longest stretch of never used roadbed in the United States."

Today many of those segments of the original roadbed exist. Sandhi is constructing a web page purpose of which is to provide information to help 3Cs railfans and trekkers find the railroad's remnants. Examples from that web page are show below.



3Cs original trestle south of Marion NC.



Lakeridge Street south of Kingsport which was built on the 3Cs grade.

Railfans everywhere are encouraged to visit this remarkable site at <https://tinyurl.com/55y4fmnt>.

TRIVIA answer: a.) the horse won. The *"Tom Thumb"* was the first American-built steam locomotive to operate on a common-carrier railroad. It was designed and constructed by Peter Cooper in 1829 to convince owners of the newly formed *Baltimore and Ohio Railroad* to use steam engines; it was not intended to enter revenue service. It is especially remembered as a participant in a perhaps mythical race with a horse-drawn car, which the horse won after *Tom Thumb* suffered a mechanical failure. However, the demonstration was successful, and the railroad committed to the use of steam locomotion. [Source: *Wikipedia*]

Display in the Block

By Les Billings

Back in December, between Christmas and New Year's, I took a few days off and one of the days my wife and I took a little Railfanning trip west down the NS A-Line from Johnson City, TN and ended up in Morristown, TN. The real treat, besides photographing trains, was eating lunch at The Little Dutch Restaurant in Morristown. It was very good and a stone's throw to the tracks. So, below is a sample of what I captured along the way.

[Right] As my wife was putting on her final touches of getting ready for our trip, I notice on Trainmon5 (ATCS) that NS 13Z was approaching Johnson City from the east. So, I told her that I was going out to intercept this train and get my first photo of the day. I headed down Walnut St. and stopped at a clearing with a few trees. Waiting a few minutes, it thundered by with 4454 and 4427 (GE AC44C6M's) leading. It had its usual mix freight and quite a few loaded Trash Containers from the Northeast. I zoomed back home to pick up the wife and off we went. A very nice traveling day.



[Above] Once leaving Johnson City, our first stop was Greeneville, TN. I parked in the Depot parking lot and waited on 13Z as it was continuing its westward journey. He was crossing over Church St., MP56.58.

[Below] Now it's on to Mosheim, TN where we are waiting for the sister of 13Z. This was 14Z heading our way at MP65.40 just west of Spring St. He would encounter 13Z waiting between CP's Jones & Rader siding. Freight/Empty trash containers.





After lunch at The Little Dutch Restaurant, I had a little time to walk around the tracks at CP Pickens before NS 13Z would be along. He was about 45 minutes away. This is the east



[Right] Finally, NS 13Z arrives on the scene after a long wait as this is the 3rd meeting and last of this train today. They probably got tired of seeing me. I photographed him in Johnson City @ 10:23am and here in Morristown @ 3:03pm. About a 5-hour trip. He would have to travel on without my following.



1



[Left] As the end of 13Z passes, we can see the signal at CP Pickens with its double red signal. It should arrive at its destination in Knoxville, TN at Sevier Yard in an hour or so.

As the day has grown long, we start our trip back home down 11E and into Bulls Gap, TN where I never miss an opportunity to stop by the Museum and visit awhile. I even purchased a Norfolk Southern coffee mug.

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P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432
whistlestop.editor@gmail.com

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Johnson City, TN 37605-0432

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