

Whistle Stop

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

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

(423) 753-5797

www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Saturday, November 22nd, will mark the 83rd run of the CSX *Santa Train*. Started in 1943 by the Clinchfield Railroad, this annual event distributes the holiday spirit and goodies to the families of the Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky coal fields .

November 24th General Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have our regular General Membership Meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, November 24th, 2025 at the Chuckey Depot, 110 South Second Ave., Jonesborough, TN. The Program will be on Passenger Trains. We will also be discussing our 2026 train excursions. Bring a friend out and enjoy a great time of railfanning.

Happy
Thanksgiving

Member Notes
Les Billings, Membership Chairperson

Prayers and thoughts for Mike & Betty Jackson , Fred Phfol, Lois Tilley, Anita Worley, and every-one else that has been under the weather.

Welcome Aboard! Please welcome our newest members: Ethan Gibson of Grundy, VA and Joe & Susan Bodmann of Jonesborough, TN. See you around the Depot!

Note to Members: If anyone’s address, phone number or email address has changed please contact Les Billings at wataugavalley.membership.com for correction. This helps to ensure no one misses mailings, phone calls or emails. Thank You

2026 OFFICER AND BOARD NOMINATIONS

At the October General Membership Meeting, Nominating Committee Chairman Jim Sutterlin asked for nominations from the floor. As there were no nominations forthcoming, it was voted to close the nominations. The following are now presented as candidates for office:

Officers

- President ----- Mike Tilley (Incumbent)
- Vice President ----- Howard Orfield (Incumbent)
- Secretary ----- Harold Wilson
- Treasurer ----- Jeanie Walker (Incumbent)
- Board of Directors (vote for 3) ----- Howard Berry, Les Billings (Incumbent), Rick Chinouth (Incumbent), and Bob Mushet (Incumbent).

Ballots were mailed out recently and must be returned by 12:01 pm, December 13th, 2025. A ballot box will be available at the November meeting and Christmas Luncheon, or you can mail to Nominating Committee, Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432.

2026 WVRHS&M DUES

The 2026 Dues Notices were recently mailed out. Please return your dues and check back to the Membership Chairman ASAP at 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 add each family member at \$5.00 each. For questions, email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

HISTORIC JONESBOROUGH TRAIN SHOW



The Historic Jonesborough Train Show was a major success with nearly 50 vendor tables and 500 attendees. If you missed the show, you missed a great time.

WVRHS&M Holiday Happenings

WVRHS&M Polar Express Call for Volunteers

Watauga Valley will have our 2nd Annual *Polar Express Event* on Saturday, December 6th and Sunday, December 7th at the Jackson Theatre in Jonesborough. We need volunteers to host this event. Please email us at wataugavalley@gmail.com if you can volunteer and let us know which day you can host.



Come See Santa in His Red Caboose

The Historic Southern Railway X450 Caboose at the Chuckey Depot/ Museum at Jonesborough will be open for everyone to see Santa Claus greeting guests on Saturday, December 20th from 3pm to 6pm Santa will greet all his guests from outside the caboose, providing the perfect photo opportunity, before visiting with children inside the caboose.

The caboose and Chuckey Railroad Museum will also be open prior to the greeting of Santa on the same day from 10am to 3pm for tours of the depot and this historic piece of equipment. Santa will arrive at 3pm at the caboose. Many railroad enthusiasts in the area are likely familiar with the caboose as the Southern Railway x450 which was used for many years on Southern Railway trains traveling through Jonesborough.

There is no charge for this event which is located on 110 South Second St. in Jonesborough. For more information, call the Jonesborough Visitors Center at (423) 753-1010.



WVRHS&M ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON



THE WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13th, 2025. THIS WILL BE A WONDERFUL GATHERING WITH GOOD FOOD AND A SPECIAL PROGRAM ON THE CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD.

RESERVATIONS ARE FILLING UP FAST! GETS YOURS IN BY THE NOVEMBER 24TH DEADLINE. RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENT MUST BE MADE BEFORE THE EVENT; WE CANNOT COLLECT MONEY AT THE DOOR ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT

THE EVENT WILL BE HELD THIS YEAR AT:
DEPOT ROOM AT FRANKLIN COMMONS (FOOD CITY)
920 NORTH STATE OF FRANKLIN ROAD
JOHNSON CITY, TN 37604

Arrive by 11:30 a.m. for socializing; the serving line will open promptly at 12 noon.

NOTE: THE WATAUGA VALLEY CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON WILL BE THE **ONLY MEETING IN DECEMBER** DUE TO THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. THE DECEMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING WILL BE HELD AFTERWARDS.

Mechanical Report

The Watauga Valley Mechanical Crew does a great job keeping our equipment up and going. Gary Lombardi and all the mechanical team are working on the getting the semaphore installed at the Chuckey Depot museum They're doing a great job.

We would like invite our members to come aboard and be part of this team. If you're interested, email wataugavalley@gmail.com or call the WVRHS&M office at (423) 753-5797 and leave a message.

Rolling Stock

Moultrie diner (WATX 400), **Powhatan Arrow** coach (WATX 539), **St. Augustine** coach (WATX 500) and **Clinchfield 100**: in service at the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC on their "Polar Express" trains.

Crescent Harbor sleeper/lounge (WATX 2351): at the Coach Yard receiving upgrades.

WATX 6219 coach: being prepared for its move to Jonesborough on NS.

CLINCHFIELD motor car



Recently Terry Worley and crew took motor car CRR 79 to the Craggy Mountain Railroad in Woodfin, NC (Asheville) to run more extensive tests. While a few minor adjustments were required, the tests were an overall success.

Chuckey Depot / Museum

Since the Museum was open on October 2, 2017, we have had several thousand visitors at the depot and hundreds of volunteer hours. We want to thank all the WVRHS&M volunteers that are trained to host at the museum. If you would like to be trained to host at the museum, please call (423) 753-5797 and leave a message. We are planning more training sessions in 2026. Everyone is having a good time at the museum, please come and volunteer one day a month for four hours. If you're interested in hosting at the depot, please call the office at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP GUESTS MEET SANTA

Our annual **Meet Santa on the Red Caboose** will be held on December 20th at the Chuckey Depot from 3pm to 6pm. WVRHS&M and the Town of Jonesborough will sponsor the event. Everyone is welcome to come out to the restored Southern Caboose X450, bring their children, and meet Santa Claus. We will need volunteers to help host the event, helping visitors lining up around the caboose.

If interested, register your intent by signing up at the November 24th General Membership Meeting, emailing wataugavalley@gmail.com, or calling (423) 753-5797. This event offers good publicity for us as we are expecting a lot of people to come aboard our beautiful red caboose and Depot.

In the News



2025 Edition of the CSX Santa Train

The annual CSX *Santa Train* trip is set for Saturday, Nov. 22nd, 2025, the railroad has announced. The 83rd running of the train, a tradition dating to 1943, will again feature a 110-mile trip from Shelbiana, KY to Kingsport, TN, distributing more than 15 tons of toys, gifts, and winter apparel to thousands of families.



“What makes the CSX *Santa Train* special isn’t the miles it covers, but the moments and memories it creates for families,” Bryan Tucker, CSX vice president of stakeholder engagement and sustainability, said in a press release. “We’re touched by the generations of families who gather to welcome the CSX *Santa Train* year after year and by the overwhelming support it receives across the country.” Supporting the communities where we live and work is at the heart of our ONE CSX culture. It’s about bringing people together, sharing joy, and honoring a tradition that helps connect families across the

region. It’s a privilege to help carry this legacy forward and share in the joy it brings.” A video announcing this year’s train can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBMO4mN4W8E>.

(Check out the run over Copper Creek trestle in the final shots.) A full schedule and additional details are found on the CSX *Santa Train* page on **Facebook** and **Instagram**.



Norfolk Southern tops 1,000 DC to AC conversions

[**ED.NOTE:** If you’re like me, you know the difference between AC and DC power, but why should the railroads care and go to the expense of this conversion? According to Chat GPT:

1. **Efficiency:** AC motors are more efficient at high speeds and provide better performance over long distances, especially for high-speed or freight operations.
2. **Maintenance:** AC motors require less maintenance than DC motors because they don’t have brushes or commutators. This reduces downtime and maintenance costs.
3. **Power Supply Flexibility:** AC systems are generally more flexible, as they can be easily adapted to different voltage and frequency power supplies. AC can also be generated and transmitted over long distances more efficiently, which is an advantage when the locomotives travel through regions with varying power infrastructure.
4. **Performance:** AC traction systems allow for smoother acceleration, better speed control, and higher efficiency. AC locomotives can maintain power over a broader range of speeds, which is beneficial for both passenger and freight trains.]

Once a holdout on AC traction, Norfolk Southern now boasts the industry’s most modernized locomotive fleet thanks to a \$2 billion rebuild program. NS didn’t mind being late to the AC-traction party. And NS wasn’t just fashionably late, either. [continued on next page]

In the News (continued)

[The following text, created by Generative AI, is a summary of a *trains.com* article written by Bill Stephens. It discusses Norfolk Southern's successful conversion of over 1,000 locomotives from DC to AC traction, highlighting the benefits of modernization and improved efficiency in their fleet. For the complete *trains.com* article, go to bit.ly/4r5H8At.

Norfolk Southern's AC Conversion Milestone

Norfolk Southern has successfully converted over 1,000 locomotives from DC to AC traction, modernizing its fleet significantly. - Achieved 1,000th AC44C6M conversion milestone with No. 4947 in September 2025. - The conversion program is part of a \$2 billion investment to modernize the fleet. - Nearly 80% of NS's road fleet is now AC traction, with 948 AC44C6Ms converted from Dash-9s. - The program began with prototypes in December 2015 and ramped up in 2016.

Advantages of AC Traction Technology

The late adoption of AC traction technology has allowed Norfolk Southern to benefit from advancements in locomotive design. - AC traction technology has improved significantly since its inception, leading to better performance. - Modern AC44C6Ms are 25% more fuel-efficient and 40% more reliable than their DC predecessors. - The new locomotives provide over 50% improvement in tractive effort for the same horsepower. - Maintenance requirements are reduced by 20%, leading to cost savings.

Conversion Process and Efficiency

The conversion process at Norfolk Southern's Juniata Locomotive Shop is efficient and thorough, resulting in near-new locomotives. - Each conversion takes about nine weeks and involves stripping the locomotive to the frame. - New components, including cabs and traction motors, are installed during the rebuild. - The process includes updates to the latest control systems and energy management technologies. - Each AC44C6M is expected to have a lifespan of over 20 years.

Environmental Impact and Sustainability

Norfolk Southern's modernization efforts contribute significantly to environmental sustainability and fuel efficiency. - Each AC44C6M saves approximately 50,000 gallons of fuel annually and reduces CO2 emissions by 515 metric tons. - Over 20 years, this equates to 1 million gallons of fuel and 10,300 metric tons of CO2 saved. - The program promotes circularity by reusing 50% of components, avoiding additional emissions. - Fuel efficiency has improved by 12% since 2019, with a target of another 3% improvement this year.

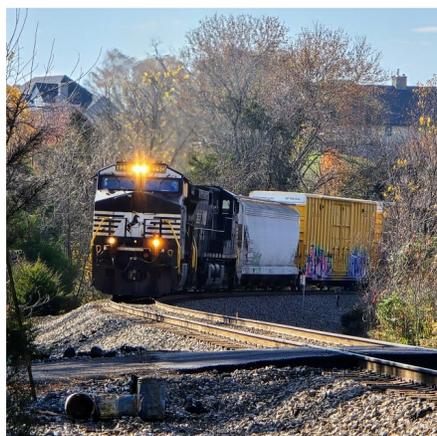
Future Plans for Fleet Modernization

Norfolk Southern plans to continue its modernization efforts with additional conversions in the coming years. - Approximately 190 Dash 9s remain to be converted, with plans for 40 more conversions next year. - The company is nearing the completion of its DC-to-AC conversion program. - Continued investment in modern technology is expected to enhance operational efficiency and sustainability.

Display in the Block

by Les Billings

A couple of weekends ago, I caught a CSX and NS train in Johnson City and Jonesborough. The NS was 16T eastbound with its mixed freight and empty trash containers, shot from the Spring St./ Mill Springs Rd. crossing in JB. The CSX was an empty coal train heading north for a reload and was shot from the bridge on Walnut street in JC. I will say it again. I am sure glad the see the CSX trains running again. The work the crews did with the rebuild in the gorge in a year was pretty awesome to say the least. _____ **Happy Thanksgiving all !!**



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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL