
Whistle Stop



Volume 29 No. 5

Mike Jackson, Editor

May 2009

Duane and Harriet Swank, Printing/Circulation

Watauga Valley NRHS Chapter Meeting May 25 at the Renovated Bristol Train Station!

(NOTE CHANGE IN MEETING LOCATION FOR MAY)

General Membership Meeting.

The next general membership meeting of the Watauga Valley Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be held (Memorial Day) May 25, 2009, at The Bristol Train Station, 101 Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd, Bristol, VA, at 6:30 p.m., on the 2nd floor. Driving directions: proceed east on State Street in downtown Bristol till you come to the railroad tracks and the big Bristol Sign, and you are there. Please park in the lot on the north side of the Train Station not far from the Norfolk Southern Yard Office. This will be a meeting you do not want to miss. It all begins with the regular chapter meeting on the 2nd floor. After the business meeting, Brad McCroskey, General Manager of The Bristol Train Station, will present a Power Point Program on the restoration of the station along with the history of the station.

The best part of the meeting will be at the conclusion when you will get a rare walking tour of the station. You do not want to miss this meeting! The Watauga Valley Chapter President, Vice-President and National Director got a tour during the renovation of the building, and it was out of this world the way the station was put back like it was during the heyday of train passenger service!

Since 1999, the Bristol Train Station Foundation has been in the process of renovating the depot to its former glory, not only as a glorious meeting facility, but also as a centerpiece of downtown revitalization.

For decades, the Train Station was the center of Bristol's community, beginning with the arrival of the first passenger train on October 1, 1856. The first train arrived at Bristol's original depot, which was burned during Stoneman's raid on December 14, 1864. After the Civil War ended, a freight car was set up as a depot. In late 1865 and early 1866, a new depot was built for Bristol. By 1881, Bristol had outgrown this depot so it was replaced by a new building in January 1882. By 1889, a totally new depot had been designed. Although that depot was never built, the present Train Station which was finished in 1902 bears a striking resemblance to that original design. After passenger service from Bristol was stopped in 1971, the Train Station was used for shopping & dining establishments and then was left empty till the 1999 purchase by the Bristol Train Station Foundation.

The railroad was the venue through which Bristol received goods, news, mail, and new residents. It was also a conduit for local goods to be transported to other markets. Local residents fondly remember shaking hands with President Herbert Hoover, meeting friends and family, and taking vacations or business trips on Number 42 to New York City. College students came to Bristol or left for college by rail. Men went to war and returned by train. The Bristol Train Station served the Norfolk & Western and Southern Railway for many years, taking passengers all over the country on the famous trains like the *Tennessean*, *Pelican*, *Birmingham Special* and the *Memphis Special*, which were all joint passenger trains of the N&W and Southern Railway. Recently, the Bristol Train Station renovation was completed. Do not miss this special meeting. Be sure to attend and bring a friend!

SPRING CLEANING/COOKOUT AT THE JONESBOROUGH COACH YARD

A special event will happen at the Jonesborough Spring Street Coach Yard on Saturday, May 16, 2009, starting at 8:30 a.m. We will have a spring clean up session at the coach yard along with storage

of excursion supplies and some mechanical work for those who want to help on the *Crescent Harbor*. After our work session, we will roll out the grill and start cooking the food! We need everyone to come down and enjoy a day of fellowship and help us get everything ready for our fall Amtrak Excursion. There is always more work to do than just riding the excursion train. We must get ready for the fall trip, and we need your help. Please e-mail wataugavalley@wireco.net or call the chapter office (423-753-5797) if you can come down so we will have enough food.

SUMMER EXCURSION TO HIWASSEE LOOP

Our summer excursion will be on the Hiwassee Loop at Etowah, TN, on Saturday, July 18, 2009. Our buses will depart from Johnson City at 7:15 a.m. More details of this trip will be available at the next chapter meeting in Bristol.

Mike Tilley, Chapter President

Member Notes – May Whistle Stop

WELCOME to new Chapter member Geraldine "Geri" Slemp of Johnson City. We hope she will enjoy meetings and Chapter activities as well as reading the Whistle Stop.

Sympathy is extended to the family of Withrow "Ed" Jones who passed away on Friday, April 17, 2009, at the Bristol Regional Medical Center. Ed was a Charter member of Watauga Valley Chapter and attended several National Conventions in the 1980's and '90's. His mother, sister and brother survive, as well as several cousins including WV Chapter member Patrick Healy of Bristol.

Our sympathy is also extended to member Anthony Pittman in the death of his Mother, Sherrie L. Pittman on April 28, 2009, at the Johnson City Medical Center;

Please let us know if there are chapter or family members, or friends, to whom a card could be sent or a call made. We need you to help us keep in touch. THANKS!

Call the Chapter phone at 423-753-5797 or Nancy Jewell at 423-282-0918 and leave a message if we don't answer your call. We will return your message as soon as possible. Hope to hear from you soon. **Nancy Jewell**

Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS Minutes for Chapter Meeting, April 27, 2009

The Chapter meeting came to order at 6:30 p.m., on April 27, 2009, at the Johnson City Public Library. Since no one had a copy of the newsletter with them, the minutes were by-passed. Mike Tilley advised everyone present that non-paid members' newsletters would be stopped next month. We discussed the newsletters being sent via e-mail, and a trial run will be made with the May newsletter. A few more members signed up for this service. Attendance was 36 members and 3 visitors. Our newest member, Geraldine "Geri" Slemp was present.

1. Mike discussed the upcoming Fall excursions out of Spencer, NC, on October 31 and November 1 and the need for 50+ hosts. Hosts will be traveling via van rather than charter bus due to increased costs by the bus company. The vans will carry 15 passengers. 25 rooms have been reserved for the hosts in Salisbury at the Super 8 motel for 3 nights (10/30 thru 11/1). The consist will be 23 cars but exact ones are not yet known. Still waiting on Amtrak for final approval. There is a possibility some of the coaches will be sold as Premium Coach which will include a box lunch. This is still under consideration, and we are waiting for Vicki's response since she will also be preparing the breakfasts and dinners.
2. Jim Pahr spoke about the National Spring Board Meeting in Connecticut and the new Chapter formed recently in Tokyo, Japan. Jim said the NRHS Bulletins are now on schedule. He advised of the \$3.00 increase starting next billing cycle (for year 2010) making NRHS regular members dues \$36.00. He also advised that there is no guarantee for receiving publications if dues are not renewed by 3/31 of each year. There is a discount available to NRHS members for certain attractions, etc., by visiting the NRHS web site. He also brought up the idea of hosting a Board of Directors meeting (possibly in April of 2011) and that 50-60 volunteers would be needed to arrange for: hotels/meals/banquet room and dinner menu/box lunches at the meeting/meeting place/sights to see and places to visit/transportation to places of interest/transportation to & from airport/etc. He also states that he has Chapter hats/shirts/and patches for sale.

3. Mike talked of the spring excursion to the GSM and the financial success of the trip with 7 bus loads of people.
4. He mentioned there will most likely be a summer excursion in early July to the Hiwassee Gorge at Etowah that was done last summer.
5. Mike reminded everyone present that the May meeting will not be at the library as the library will be closed for Memorial Day. The meeting will be at the Bristol Trail Station with a tour of that facility.
6. Mike talked of the south end Clinchfield train chase on Saturday, 4/4, and all the places for viewing the trains. He is planning a north end trip within the next 2 months, possibly in July.
7. Bob Yapple gave the mechanics' report and again asked for volunteers to work at the yard.
8. Mike announced there will be a spring clean up at the yard on Saturday, 5/9, starting at 8:30 a.m. with a cook out for all volunteers of hamburgers and sodas at the expense of the Chapter. Helen Calhoun will be in charge of inventory and organizing supplies.
9. He said the Southern Railway Historical Society will have a get together in Bristol on Sat. (10/17) and want to tour the yard/cars and take pictures. Then they will go to the Geo. L. Carter RR Museum at ETSU. He said the N&W Historical Society also wants to come sometime to tour the yard.
10. Programs scheduled for the next three months.
June - Jim Pahriss will have a DVD
July - Richard Baker will have a DVD
August - Bob Schubel will bring a guest speaker
Mike Tilley will try to get George Hatcher from Erwin to speak sometime.
October will be the safety meeting.
11. RPCA will be at Spencer, NC, this year. The diner will be kept at the museum in Spencer through the winter for their use so there will be no dinner on the diner for Christmas. Will need to find other accommodations for the Christmas dinner.
12. Program for tonight's meeting was presented and narrated by Bob May with slides on the Southern RR (the *Tennessean*) at 7:12 p.m.

Acting Secretary Harriet Swank

Economics Affect Norfolk Southern Track Work

As most of you know, the nation's railroads are an economy fueled industry. If people are not buying goods, the railroad loses carloads, and the trains become shorter and less frequent. I am sure that you have noticed that the trains do seem shorter these days and are running at odd times. That's because during the first quarter of 2009, NS business was down by 22 percent compared to the same quarter last year, and NS stock continues to hover in the mid-30 dollar range.

My gang and the entire Maintenance of Way division of NS are actually benefiting from the slower train traffic. This allows the M-O-W gangs better track-time to get projects done. Last year, car-load and traffic volumes were so high that it was estimated that it cost the NS Maintenance of Way and Engineering department 14 million dollars in train delays because the gangs couldn't get out and work a full day. For example, just two years ago, my gang was working the main-line of the Shenandoah Valley route just south of Hagerstown, MD, and train traffic was so heavy, the dispatchers would only allow us a 4 hour block and no more.

Fast forward to April, 2009 when we are working due south of the aforementioned track, and the dispatcher was now allowing us an 11 hour block. We are the only craft on NS that is still getting overtime on each check. With the slow down in traffic this year, NS management is now focusing on infrastructure improvements. They want the tracks upgraded, signals installed, and everything ready for the trains because NS firmly believes that when the economy returns, it will ride the rails.

In these slow economic times, lay-offs are a dark side-effect, and the railroads are not immune. However, NS has worked hard to try and minimize lay-offs by encouraging retirements and moving people around to different positions and crafts. Unfortunately some NS employees have been laid off in each division across the system, mostly in transportation and train service. As of now only a few jobs in

track maintenance have been cut off, but all of the gangs are still going strong. How long will I be able to work during these slow times? Only the economy will tell.

Gary Price, Keeping the ole' N&W safe...one tie at a time.

Watauga Valley National Director's Report on the Spring NRHS BOD Meeting in Norwalk, Connecticut

The 2009 NRHS Spring Board of Directors (BOD) meeting, hosted by the Western Connecticut Chapter, was held in Norwalk, Connecticut, April 16-19. Charlotte and I departed Jonesborough early on the 16th and drove to Vienna, VA where we boarded METRO (DC subway system) for a ride to Union Station in Washington, DC. We took an AMTRAK Regional train from DC to Stamford, CT, where we transferred to a Metro-North commuter train for the final leg of the trip to Norwalk. On the 19th we repeated the process in reverse back to DC and drove home on the 20th.

On Friday the 17th we took a bus to Willimantic, CT, to visit the Connecticut Eastern (NRHS) Railroad Museum. This museum, located on the site of a former New Haven railroad yard, features a roundhouse and operating turntable, many historic railroad buildings, vintage locomotives and rolling stock. The six stall brick round house was rebuilt from the foundation up by the museum. The turntable is of the Armstrong variety, requiring two or more men to push it into position. If the locomotive/car to be turned is properly located on the turntable to where the weight is equally distributed two men can easily push the table to the desired position. This was demonstrated for us several times with different pieces of equipment. I had the privilege of a cab ride on the museum's 25 ton GE four-wheel switcher.

From the museum we took a lunch break and then rode a Shore Line East train to New Haven, CT, where we boarded a Metro-North train for our return to Norwalk. At New Haven we were on a platform out from the main station building, giving us great locations for taking photographs of AMTRAK and Metro-North trains and the Metro-North maintenance facilities. Will try and share some of the photos with you in a future issue of the *Whistle Stop*.

Saturday was a diesel powered trip from Merritt 7 station on the north side of Norwalk to the South Norwalk station where we boarded an express train to Grand Central Terminal. We received a guided tour of the terminal and also a tour of the signal maintainers training facility for the New York City Subway System. The system is still using systems put in place back in the 1930's; however, all of these older systems are being upgraded and replaced with state of the art safety systems. The training facility is located underground next to one of the subway stations and uses an O-gauge track with a Lionel RDC (Rail Diesel Car) to operate the prototype signals as a training vehicle for the students. The facility also has a short section of 1:1 track with safety features such as the automatic train stop, which is a bar positioned a few inches above the rail height on the outside of the track. If a train fails to stop on signal this bar engages a valve handle on the side of the truck, causing the air to dump from the brake system and putting the train into an emergency brake application.

On Saturday afternoon after our time in the "Big Apple" we returned to Norwalk for a Committee of the Whole BOD to discuss the business of the Society and obtain the necessary information for us to conduct the society's business during our Sunday morning BOD meeting. During a Committee of the Whole meeting motions are not entertained nor are any actions taken. It is a time to ask questions and share information.

A banquet was held Saturday evening, which culminated in a digital slide presentation titled, "The New Haven Railroad Through the Lens of T.J. Donahue." This presentation covered the New Haven's steam, diesel and electric motive power as well as its freight and passenger service.

Sunday was the BOD work day, which resulted in the following actions:

1. Dues were increased from \$33 to \$36 for Chapter primary members with no increase in Family, Student or Youth dues rates. The At-Large primary member dues increased from \$34 to \$37. The At-Large dues do not apply to our Watauga Valley Chapter members. In 2007 NRHS raised dues by 50% after a long period of infrequent and minimal increases. The Society was forced to do this in order to make some critical improvements to its business practices and fix specific problems that were driving members away. That 50% increase has allowed the NRHS to publish all of the back due issues of the Bulletin and the Yearbook. All publications are now current as the Winter 2009 issue of the Bulletin arrived the end of April. Additionally, the Society was able to cover the unexpected costs of having a forced relocation of its Headquarters. The costs incurred with these actions have depleted the NRHS's

unspecified cash reserves and these reserves have to be rebuilt to provide the Society with a cushion for unexpected expenses.

2. The Board also took action to ensure that late membership renewals do not place an undue financial burden on the Society as a whole by implementing more rigorous enforcement of the current Bylaws regarding minimum chapter size and timely remittance of Funds Held in Trust. This issue has no direct impact on our chapter, as it applies to chapters which goes inactive and has members who want to stay active in NRHS and have their membership converted to At-Large status.

3. The NRHS changed the current Bulletin and Yearbook policies:

a. New members will receive Bulletin back issues subject to availability. NRHS management will make good faith effort to produce enough Bulletins for anticipated new members and back issue sales, but will not reprint issues if supplies are exhausted.

b. Members who do not renew by the end of the grace period (March 31) will not receive any Bulletins distributed before their renewal is processed. NRHS management may make an exception to this policy at its discretion if warranted by a particular situation and if sufficient Bulletin copies are available.

c. Yearbooks will be produced only for members who are paid-up when the address list is run in mid-summer. NRHS will not produce or distribute Yearbooks to new members who join or current members who renew later in the calendar year.

d. NRHS shall allow only one free transfer between Chapter and At-Large status, or vice-versa, per member per year. NRHS will charge a service fee of \$15 for primary members and \$5 for family members for each additional transfer in a membership year, with the provision that management may waive this fee for individual cases if the situation warrants.

The bottom-line is this: Membership renewals are sent to the chapter membership chairman by the end of September each year. Members have a 90 day window to pay their membership dues for the following year (October 1 - December 31). The Society has a grace period from January 1 to March 31 for current members to pay their dues. Beginning April 1 the policies stated above in item 3 paragraphs a-d now apply. If you haven't renewed your membership for 2009 please do so now!

The 2009 NRHS National Convention will be held in Duluth, MN August 11-16. Mike has been including a registration form for the convention in the *Whistle Stop*. Now is the time to send in your registration as the convention committee is taking reservations for the events. The majority of the excursion rides at this convention will be steam powered. On Friday, August 14, there will be a membership meeting as well as a Board of Directors meeting. I'll be going to the convention, will you?

Jim Pahriss, National Director

Mechanical Crew Continues Work on Cars, Boxcar Shop

GENERAL: Several minor improvements have been made in the boxcar shop that makes our work more productive.

ROLLING STOCK: The window leak on the **Clinchfield 500** has damaged a bathroom. Art DeVoe and Duane Swank have collaborated to build and install new window sills, check rusted areas, repair a lavatory and replace the exterior rubber window seal. New rubber seal has been ordered for the rest of the car.

Reassembly of the trucks is well underway on the **Crescent Harbor**. Our AMTRAK inspector Pete Massena was on the site April 18 to check our progress and make suggestions for completion. All work done to date has been approved, and we are authorized to re-install the trucks when they are completed.

Work continues on the Head End Power (HEP) and the 27 pin communications systems. In addition, rewiring of the car continues.

The vendor for lounge lighting diffusers can produce straight sections but not curved [sections]. However, we can bond the diffuser material and will take a stab at making a curved section in house. Our welder-member Johnny Jones is continuing replacement and reconstruction of work truck parts.

INFORMATION: For more information or if you have questions concerning the work of the Chapter's mechanical crew, please contact Chief Mechanical Officer Jim Magill or Asst. Chief Mechanical Officer Bob Yaple.

Bob Yaple, Asst. Chief Mechanical Officer

The 2009 Annual Convention of the
National Railway Historical Society
will be sponsored by the National Society

Come to Duluth, Minnesota
Come to Steam on the Range



The Convention will be the week of
August 10th through the 16th, 2009

Events may include:

Inbound/Outbound special trains for the Convention
Steam pulled excursions Diesel trips
Museum visits Night photo session
Non railroad activities Banquet
Seminars by noted railroad authors

**Hotels include the Radisson Duluth
(Headquarters Hotel) and the Holiday Inn
Rates start at \$99 per night**

Mail the bottom portion of this page to:

**John Goodman
8409 13th Avenue South
Bloomington MN 55425-1705**

Notes

- Those who sign up for Advance Mailing will be sent the registration package at least 15 days before anyone else.
- The Advance Mailing Fee is \$15.00 for an NRHS member, a spouse, children and other family members living at the same address.
- The \$15.00, which is non-refundable, will be applied to the \$30.00 registration fee.
- The Advance Mailing Fee entitles the member's household to one registration package.
- Advance Mailing Requests must be post-marked by February 28, 2009.
- Members receiving an Advance Mailing may only purchase tickets for those persons listed on their Advance Mailing Request.
- Hotel information with discounted rates will be mailed with the registration packages.



Advance Mailing Request - Please Print

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____ Country: _____
Phone Day _____ Evening: _____
Email Address: _____
NRHS Membership Number: _____
Payment: Enclosed is a \$15.00 check payable to
NRHS Convention 2009
 Charge \$15.00 to my Visa / MasterCard
Credit Card No.: _____
CV Number: _____ (3 numbers on signature strip on back of credit card)
Name on Credit Card: _____
Exp.Date: _____ Signature: _____

I don't want Advance Mailing.
Please mail me the registration package when it is available.

For this option:

•Registration packages will be mailed no less than 30 days after being mailed to Advance Mailing users.

•Ticket orders will not be filled until 30 days after Advance Mailing users.

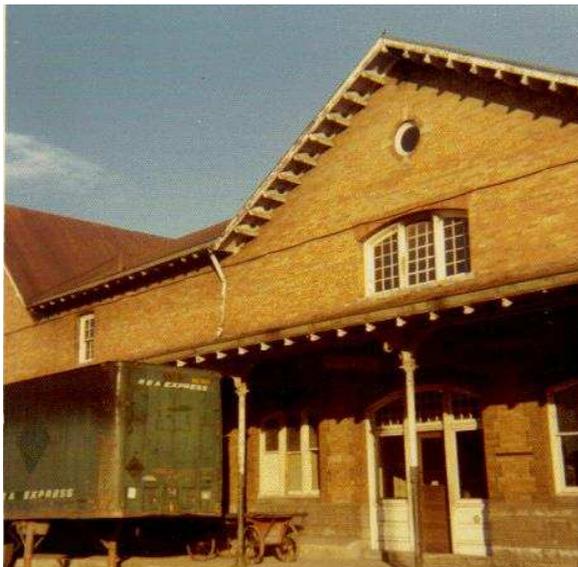
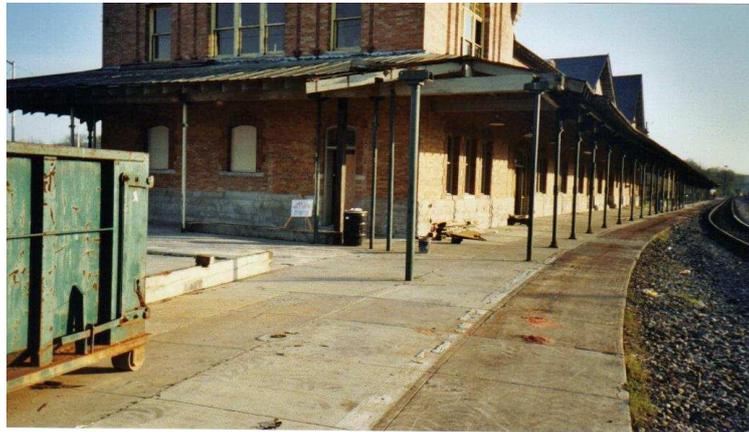
•The full \$30.00 registration fee will be required with order.

Revised June 13, 2008

Additional Persons Living at the same address

Name: _____ Name: _____
Name: _____ Name: _____
Name: _____ Name: _____

May 25 Meeting at the Historic Bristol Train Station!



Historic Bristol Train Station—The two photos above show the Bristol Train Station undergoing renovation when Watauga Valley Chapter Member Gary Price conducted a Chapter tour of the Bristol line in the spring of 2005. The top photo of the interior and the center photo were taken during the day-long tour from Bristol to Radford. Left, the picture of the front of the station was taken in May 1971, a few days after Norfolk & Western Railway ended passenger service on the Bristol-Roanoke line at the beginning of the AMTRAK era. From Mike and Betty Jackson's collection

**Railway Historical Society
Watauga Valley Chapter
P.O. Box 432
Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Johnson City, TN
Permit No. 61

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



NS 2604 leads a train west from the Bristol Train Station toward the State Street crossing. The Watauga Valley NRHS meeting for May will be at the historic and renovated train station. See Mike Tilley's column inside the *Whistle Stop*. Chapter member Chris Starnes contributed this photo.