

Whistle Stop



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

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SUMMER 2013 EXCURSION ANNOUNCED! SEE PAGE 8 FOR DETAILS

***** Meeting Date Change *****

May 20th General Membership Meeting

Due to the Memorial Day holiday, this month's General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held at 6:30 pm on **May 20th**, 2013 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will be a DVD on the SEABOARD AIRLINE RAILROAD showing its passenger and freight operations during the 1950's and 1960's. Program presented by Richard Baker. Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading.

Breaking News!!!

CLINCHFIELD 100 OFFICE CAR IS COMING HOME

Many members remember the CLINCHFIELD 100 Office Car, which was the General Manager's car of the CLINCHFIELD Railroad from 1952 to 1982. It hauled General Manager T.D. Moore around for many years including the maiden excursion trip of the CLINCHFIELD No 1 in 1968. It served as the rear car on the Santa Train and excursions on the Ole CRR for many years. The car has so much history on the CLINCHFIELD and left Erwin in 1982 and went to storage yard at CSXT West Jacksonville yard when the CLINCHFIELD Railroad changed names to the SEABOARD SYSTEM, bringing an end to the CLINCHFIELD.

We are happy to announce that the CLINCHFIELD 100 is now part of the WATV car fleet. The WVRHS&M has purchased the car and is preparing it to move. More details will be announced at the **May 20th** monthly meeting about plans for the car. The WVRHS&M is honored to be the proud owners of this historic car.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewell

Congratulations to Casey Price on his graduation on May 24th in the Class of 2013 at Marion Senior High School, Marion, Virginia. Casey is the son of Gary and Suzie Price and as a Watauga Valley member has helped on several sponsored excursions. We wish only the best for Casey as his future unfolds.

Please keep the following folk in your thoughts: Bob Yaple and Jane and Art DeVoe. As always, help us keep in touch by letting us know of any members, families, or friends to whom a card might be sent or a phone call made. Call the office at 423-753-5797 or Nancy Jewell at 423-282-0918. Let's "make someone's day."

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

By Bob Yaple

GENERAL: We have renewed interest in expanding the capacity of the Spring Street Coach Yard. It is not an easy task. There are property limits, town regulations regarding to the Historic District and, most important, cost. In addition, disposition of the SOUTHERN caboose is not certain.

POWHATAN ARROW is still involved with various trips. The **CLINCHFIELD** will soon be back in the yard. It will have a major interior overhaul. The foam in the seats will be replaced as well as new carpeting. Other areas will be painted. While the seats are out, we will remove the existing base board steam heat and install electric heat. Comfort level will increase with overall heating capacity. **MOULTRIE** interior improvements continue with completion of removal and rehab of the crew commode closet and painting of this area including storage areas. Work is progressing on the completion of wiring diagrams. One feature is eliminating electrical rationing in the galley. **CRESCENT HARBOR** interior detail work continues. A duplicate of the original AM radio antenna that runs the center of the roof has been completed. The car looks like very much like its Pullman production pictures. Work has resumed on the Genset.

Fall WVRHS&M Rail Excursion

Fall Excursions – Charlottesville, VA and Asheville, NC. We are happy to announce our Fall Excursions for the 2013 season to Charlottesville, VA and Asheville, NC on October 12 and 13.

Mark your calendar for all three special excursion dates. Fall Excursion Car Host worker forms will be available in June; make plans to volunteer on these two special excursions.

In the News



Bad Day on the Ole CLINCHFIELD



Mike Tilley sends along this May 7th photo by T. Hill of a bad slide on the Blue Ridge Subdivision of CSX (ex-CLINCHFIELD) at Mile Post 166, proof of the dangers of railroading even in these modern times. You can see the front wheels of the lead engine resting on rails, hovering over a 10 foot slide. Fortunately, the rail supported the engine and did not break. Disaster was averted by the crew getting in the back

engine and pulling the front engine out of the hole. Mike says the washout was repaired and trains running within 4 hours. The location of MP 166 is near Toecane, NC.

RECEIVE YOUR COPY OF THE WHISTLE STOP IN BEAUTIFUL COLOR VIA EMAIL

If you're receiving the Whistle Stop in hard copy you are missing out on the beautiful photo colors each month. Whistle Stop is offered to all members via email (PDF) which is so much more detailed and colorful. Also, helpful navigation links to informative web sites are provided in electronic copies of the newsletter. Finally, you'll receive it about week in advance of the mailed-out hard copy. If you're interested in receiving your newsletter via email, please call the WVRHS&M office at 423-753-5797.

MEMORIES OF BEING FORCED UP-THE-ROAD FIFTY YEARS AGO – Part 2

by Abram Burnett © March 23, 2013

A Typical Day's Work

A typical day's work on one of the Saltville Shifters went as follows. All members of the train crew (conductor and brakemen) reported at the Telegraph Office where the conductor registered his train on the branch and received his switching instructions from the operator or one of the agent's clerks. The engineman, however, reported at the Engineman's Register Room, which was in a tiny brick building, the only remnant of the old Glade Spring main line coal wharf. The train crew then walked to the engine track, met the engineman and brought the engines off the engine track. The first work was to switch out of the clean out track as many empty box cars and flats as had been ordered by Plasterco. Then the crew went up to the hill tracks west of Maple Street and coupled to the Saltville cars which had been set off by eastbound and westbound through freights, numbers 95, 51, 88, First 52 and Second 52. With all these cars, the train then headed down the Branch to Saltville, nine miles away.

US Gypsum at Plasterco was the first "work" on the local, pulling loads and placing empties. It was a nasty place to work due to the white mineral on the ground – in wet weather one's feet sunk down in white mud. Plasterco shipped its product both in box cars and on bulkhead flats. Both the First and the Second Saltville jobs completely "tore down" the place, pulling everything out of the plant and setting it up again from scratch. The "re-sets" (cars which were only partially loaded and had to be set back in place) caused the switching headaches. Switching was also difficult because all the tracks were on curves and, due to both curvature and buildings, the brakemen had to string out to relay hand signals to the engineman. Both locals spent several hours a day in Plasterco.

The worst of the work was over by the time we left Plasterco. At Saltville we simply cut away from the cars destined to Olin Matheson, ran around the loads we had picked up at Plasterco, and found the outbound cars which the Olin crew had brought up for us. At this point, we usually "Took Twenty" (stopped for a bite to eat.) If the weather was nice, we walked two blocks to a little diner on the main street and ordered a hot dog and a Grapette soda, which together cost thirty-five cents.

The N&W didn't have an agent at Saltville (his job having been abolished several years earlier and the station closed), so there was no one to coordinate our interchanges with the Olin crew. We just "looked out for" the Olin crew so that no conflicts arose. Olin did have a yardmaster in their plant, but he never came up to our yard. Occasionally, he would send the one of the Olin engines up with a message that there were "hot" cars, not yet loaded, that we would have to wait for.

After our "Twenty," we classified ("blocked," to use the modern term) all the cars going back to Glade Spring. We made up three blocks: Bristol, Roanoke and Radford. Most of the Radford cars were empty hoppers which would be moved to Bluefield by a job called "The Short Run." When all the cars were classified and the train made up, we returned to Glade Spring and set them on one of the hill tracks west of the Glade Spring wye; the Bristol's tied down at the west end; and the Radford's (head out) and Roanoke's (behind the Radford's) tied down at the east end. Then we put the engines away and registered off duty at the station.

Both ends of the hill tracks west of Glade Spring were protected by derails, and early in my time on the Saltville Shifter I had a learning-laden experience with one of those derails. After we had spotted our outbounds at the proper ends of whichever of the hill tracks [continued on next page]

we were using, one of the brakemen was assigned the duty of tying the cars down with hand brakes, re-applying the derails, and closing up the switch from the passing siding to the hill tracks, after which his work was done and he made the long walk back to the engine storage track. I was the brakeman designated for this closing-up job. During the few minutes it took to accomplish this work, the rest of the crew made a quick dash to put the engine away and report off duty. It was not an efficient way to work as the tie-down took only several minutes and the engine could have easily waited, but the conductor and the engineman were always in a hurry to be relieved as quickly as possible. This practice made a lot of extra walking for one of the new men... me!

Several nights into my "Glade Spring Experience," I was left up on the hill to do this closing-up work while the rest of the crew "ran for the quit." After doing my thing, I walked down to the engine track and the conductor met me there and said, "You left one of the derails off." The night was pitch black and I asked him how he knew I had left a derail off. "Walk over to the main line with me," he said. He then pointed westward into the darkness and said, "See those crossing flasher lights blinking at the road crossing? The derails are wired into them. If you leave one of the derails off, the flashers keep flashing. Now go back and fix your mistake!" The crew had already been registered off duty and I asked if I could get a few minutes extra paid time for walking up the hill and back down again. The answer was a string of curse words. That long walk in the darkness taught me a lesson, and the mistake was one never to be repeated. (This particular road crossing today shows as Maple Street, but back then there was a street sign which showed it as "Hillman Road.")

Sometimes we had to wait for "hot" cars coming out of Olin. One of my time book entries shows a three hour wait one night. If the conductor needed to communicate with the operator at Glade Spring, there was a crank telephone in a company T-Box near the road crossing at the upper end of Saltville Yard. There was still a rickety pole line between Glade and Saltville which carried two wires on the cross arm – wires for the telephone.

Under what operating rules was the Saltville Branch operated? By 1964, the system of "Time Table and Train Orders" had been abandoned on the branch and it was operated by "Register Rights." There were no scheduled trains on the branch, no one gave authority for a train to operate on it, and all trains could proceed without either schedule or train orders. In the telegraph office at Glade Spring was a large book called the "Saltville Branch Train Register." The conductor of any train wishing to use the Branch had to check to see if any train which had previously registered "on the branch" had also registered "off the branch." A train that had thusly "registered on the branch" could move in either direction without fear of meeting an opposing or following train. In registering his train on the train register, a conductor listed his train symbol (which was the word "Extra" followed by the engine number and the direction, "West",) and signed his last name. All this was covered by Timetable Special Instruction. To fail to register one's train "off the branch" at the end of a trip was unforgivable, for it prevented the next train from using the branch.

Undesirables from Dog Town

The regular men on the Saltville jobs always referred to Roanoke (and specifically to Shaffers Crossing) as "Dog Town." You can understand why when you realize that they themselves were sometimes forced to Roanoke (e.g., when being marked up on the Conductor's Extra List,) and then had to live in "the VASCO" at Shaffers Crossing. "The VASCO" was the railroad's decrepit, dimly lit and greasy "beanery" (restaurant) with rooms upstairs, operated by a subsidiary of the railroad called Virginia Supply Co. Glade Spring'ers and other unfortunate "up-the-road people" forced to Roanoke rented a bed there until they had enough seniority to bid back home. Therefore, we frequently heard the regular men on the Saltville Shifters [continued on next page]

say things like, "I have two new green-horn brakemen from Dog Town." Such appellations made one feel really welcome on the job. The sense of exclusion for a Dog Towner was exacerbated by the fact that Peco Norris, the head end brakeman on the Second Shifter, "ran" the job (i.e. called the moves) and generally made it uncomfortable for green-horns. Ergo, "getting forced to Glade" was not an experience one relished, and it certainly was not conducive to the learning that newer employees needed to acquire. The older generation of railroaders was not replete with good teachers. [To be concluded next month.]

CORRECTION: The caption of the Branch photo in last month's article incorrectly stated that it was shot from an engine cab. It was taken from the cupola of a caboose.

Radio Controlled Switch

by Gary Price

From the first time that steel wheels have rolled on steel rails, there has always been the need to switch the train from one track to another for smooth operations. In the beginning it was a laborious job with a large switch stand that moved an entire section of track to reroute the flow of traffic. As time moved on and technology improved, the switching operation became more simple and easy for the person operating switches. Mainline switches soon came under the control of the dispatcher and a simple push of a button from miles away could reroute a train without a person being present at the switch.

However, the fact remained that yard operations still involved the manual handling of switches within yard limits. At first it was a ball type handle that involved bending over, unlatching the handle, and manhandling the lever to the desired direction of travel. Later a bow type handle was created to help employees by not having to bend over so far, the handle was now about waist level, and was indeed much easier to handle. With modern technology and computers, it was just a matter of time before things would become even simpler.



Recently while I was in Bluefield, West Virginia, I observed a piece of NORFOLK SOUTHERN's newest technology, a radio controlled switch. With the event of remote controlled locomotives in yards, it was still awkward for the engineer in control to throw switches because of the bulky control pack that is strapped to his waist. Now, with the radio controlled switch, this handy device can be thrown by simply punching a special code on the operator's radio keypad and pressing enter. The lights inform the operator of the position of the switch points. This same technology is also being applied to yard derailleurs.

Years ago, who would have thought that a modern day railroad, could be operated similar to your basement model trains?



Photo Section



Members David and Lyndell Denny thoroughly enjoyed our recent, jointly-sponsored trip with NCTM to Washington, DC. These shots serve as a wonderful pictorial trip report.



NCTM car hosts. They did an outstanding job keeping the passengers fed, happy and together which, at times, was not an easy task. From left to right: Marcus Neubacher; Jim Freeman; John Tackett; Kelly Alexander; Sara Gettys; and Kristin Trexler.



Don Findley, who accompanied the two WATV cars as a member of the Mechanical Crew.



Wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery. A visit to the cemetery on Saturday morning was part of the tour package.



Ex-SOUTHERN RAILWAY Ps-4 no. 1401 on display at the Smithsonian Institution.



Boarding our "Powhatan Arrow" in Alexandria for the return journey.



The George Washington Masonic Memorial as seen from the Alexandria train station, a sight very familiar to anyone ever riding a southbound train out of our Nation's Capitol.

Summer 2013 Rail Excursion

If you're experiencing the Summer Doldrums, we have the cure for you – getting out of the house and taking a great train ride! Escape the Dog Days of Summer with a cool, refreshing and scenic train trip through the mountains of the Southern Appalachian region.

On Saturday, August 17th, 2013, WVRHS&M will sponsor its “Summer 2013 Excursion” – a train ride on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad through the majestic Smoky Mountains and the beautiful countryside of Western North Carolina. The train follows the route of the former Southern Railway's Murphy Branch line, established in 1891, with its five percent grade, many bridges, and the beautiful whitewater Nantahala Gorge. Much of the route hugs the banks of the Little Tennessee and Nantahala Rivers and crosses Fontana Lake Trestle, standing 100 feet above the lake and spanning 780 feet. After crossing the lake, the train will enter the breathtaking Nantahala Gorge – a natural wonder.



COACH CLASS



CROWN CLASS



FIRST CLASS

Passengers can choose to ride in comfort in Coach Class, Crown Class or First Class coaches. All classes offer seating in vintage, restored passenger cars. Coach Class features windows that open and close for fresh-air viewing and ceiling fans. Crown Class offers larger windows for better viewing (windows do not open) and climate control for passenger comfort. First Class passengers will travel in luxury and style in restored 1940s-era bar / lounge cars that feature seating at well-appointed tables and lounge / restaurant style chairs. First Class passengers will also enjoy lunch (included with ticket purchase) at their seat.

Ticket prices for adult Coach Class seats are \$79 and \$58 for children (2 to 12 years). Adult Crown Class seats are \$92 and \$71 for children (2 to 12 years). First Class service Club Car seats are \$139 for anyone 21 years and older.

The trip will begin in downtown Johnson City, TN, where passengers will board a motor coach departing 9:15 a.m. from the Legion Street (Big Burley) parking lot across the street from the Johnson City Recreation Center. Upon arriving Bryson City, NC, passengers will have time to shop, snack, and visit the Smoky Mountain Train Museum before boarding the excursion train at 1:45 p.m. for the 4.5- hour roundtrip to the Nantahala Gorge and return. There will be a layover at the Gorge for sightseeing. Expected arrival back to Johnson City is 8:30 p.m.

To order tickets (and lunch for Coach and Crown Classes, if desired), send your check or money order along with the number of tickets, the class of car you choose and lunch choices to Summer 2013 Excursions, Watauga Valley RHS&M, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN, 37605-0432. A

printable ticket / lunch order form is available by going to our web site at www.wataugavalleyrhs.org and clicking on the “[Excursions](#)” link. Please specify if you will accept an alternate class of service if your choice is sold out; you will be refunded the difference. Money will be refunded if you do not wish an alternate service.

Passengers will have several options for lunch:

1. Bring your lunch (small coolers only).
2. The following box lunch meals will be available for purchase at \$9.00 per meal and must be pre-ordered with your train ticket.
 - a. TURKEY & CHEESE ON CROISSANT
 - b. BAKED CHICKEN BREAST ON CROISSANTIncluded with the box lunch are chips, cookies and a choice of drink (unlimited coffee, tea or soft drink) in a disposable cup. Box lunches can be picked up in the concession car once boarded.
3. We're excited to offer our passengers a dining in historic dining cars. A truly unique, on board dining experience in the grand tradition. A choice of meal (see menu below) will be available for selection. Note all dining car meals must be pre-purchased when ordering train ticket. These dinners include a choice of drink (unlimited coffee, tea or soft drink) in a Souvenir Tumbler; and a special dessert. The cost is \$13.00 per person.
4. A meal is included with a First Class ticket but menu selection must be made at time of ticket purchase.
5. Purchase food from the concession car.

For questions about the trip, visit our web site at www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org; phone (423) 753-5797; email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com; or write us at Watauga Valley RHS&M, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432.

Dinner Menu

Southern Pulled Pork

Eight ounces of pulled pork oven roasted in Sweet Baby Ray's barbecue sauce served with mashed Yukon potatoes and coleslaw that's homemade daily.

Beef Tips

Seasonal 8 ounces of Choice Cut beef tips in rich gravy atop mashed Yukon Gold potatoes with steamed seasonal vegetables on the side.

Mediterranean Salad

Baked chicken breast atop mixed salad green and spinach with Kalamata olives, Roma tomatoes, shaved red onions and feta cheese served with balsamic vinaigrette on the side.

Mediterranean Salad – Vegetarian-style

Mixed salad green and spinach with Kalamata olives, Roma tomatoes, shaved red onions and feta cheese served with balsamic vinaigrette on the side.

Nearby attractions

[Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#), the [City of Asheville](#), the [Cherokee Indian Reservation](#), and the [Biltmore Estate](#) in Asheville, NC.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE MATERIAL