

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Happy New Year!



And it is, indeed, a happy one for WVRHS&M as our latest acquisition, ex-CLINCHFIELD Business Car 100, shown above fresh out of NCTM's paint shop, is headed home to Tennessee after a 32-year absence. For more information, read the Mechanical Report on Page 3.

January 27th General Membership Meeting

This month's General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held at 6:30 pm on January 27, 2014 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will feature the CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD. Bring a friend out for a relaxing evening with your fellow members.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewell

Please keep the following members in your thoughts as they continue to deal with health concerns: Linda Calhoun, Bob May and Bob Yaple.

As always, let us know of a member, friend or family to whom a card might be sent or a phone call made. The office phone number is (423) 753-5797 or call Nancy Jewell at (423) 282-0918. Thanks for helping us keep in touch.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In an effort to keep up with the changing times and the popularity of social media sites, the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be launching two new media outlets to the public to keep those who follow our museum up to date with coming events and photographs of exciting adventures experienced by our dedicated members. Last year, WVRHS&M unveiled our Facebook page, and to date the page has 318 followers, and is accredited in helping TVRM sellout of our spring 21st Century Steam excursions in record time.

However, not everyone uses Facebook. A lot of people choose Twitter because it is simple, easy, and less congested. Twitter allows a brief statement, or "tweet" to be posted and anything else has to be attached in a link in which the reader decides if they want to click on it and download or pass on to the next "tweet". You can follow WVRHS&M tweets by going to www.twitter.com/WVRHSM and clicking on the blue follow icon.

For those members who prefer seeing mostly photographs, the society now has an Instagram page. Here there will be photos of Society activities downloaded for members and fans to see what we are doing as an organization. You can join us by visiting www.instagram.com/wvrhsm.

Gary Price will continue to administrate the Facebook and Twitter accounts, Emily Price, and Ian Ring are administrators for the Instagram account. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at nsheavyduty@yahoo.com.

LATE DUES NOTICE

If you have not paid your dues as of press time, your membership expired December 31, 2013. Please complete the dues notice found on the last page of this newsletter to keep your issues of the Whistle Stop coming to you. This will be the last time that the dues notice form will be in the newsletter. Please get your dues in today.

VALENTINE DINNER ON THE MOULTRIE



We are planning a Valentine Dinner on WVRHS&M's Moultrie dining car on Friday, February 14th and Saturday, February 15th. This dinner will be open to the general public along with WVRHS&M members. For information, please phone (423) 753-5797 for cost and reservations.



Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

Bob Yaple, Assistant Chief Mechanical Officer, is still in NHC Healthcare Facility 3209 Bristol Highway, Johnson City, TN. If you're in the area, please stop by and see Bob. He enjoys having company and talking with WVRHS&M members.

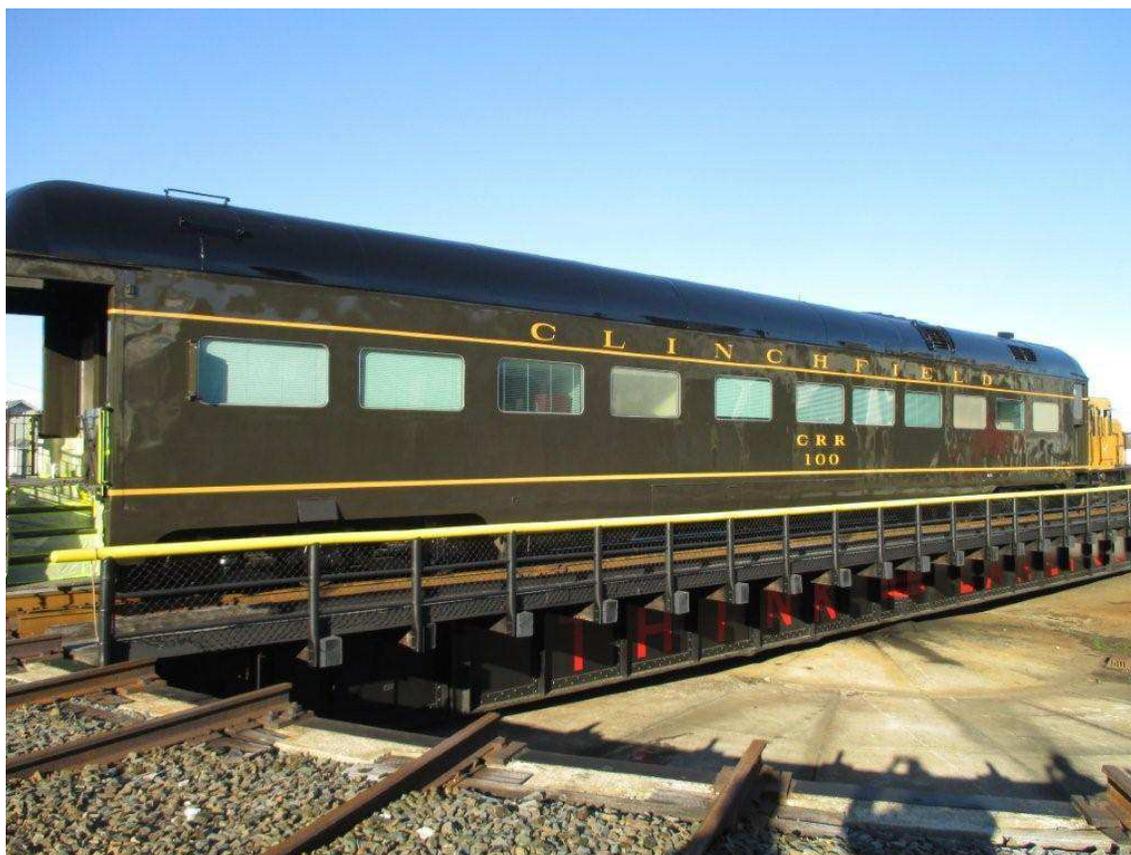
ST. AUGUSTINE COACH: Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum for the past couple of months. As of press time the car is headed back to the Jonesborough Coach Yard.

POWHATAN ARROW COACH: Has been in Spencer in excursion service; car will remain at the museum for painting and interior upgrades.

CRESCENT HAROBR LOUNGE/SLEEPER: HEP repair work continues on the car and should be finished in about 30 days.

TRACK EXTENSION: The WVRHS&M Mechanical Committee is working on plans for the track extension at the Jonesborough Coach Yard. Details will be announced when the plans are firm.

CLINCHFIELD BUSINESS CAR: Was rolled out of NCTM's roundhouse on January 14, 2014 with a new paint job. (You can view this movement on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/kaauyfm>.) WVRHS&M wishes to thank everyone that helped with this project's matching the car's original paint scheme and lettering when she rode the rails of the CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD. The car will be on its way back to Tennessee soon after a 32-year absence. Several activities are being planned for the car in the spring.



In the News



CHESAPEAKE & OHIO NO. 1309.



Recently there was talk of the WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD leasing the C&O Allegheny class 2-6-6-6 #1309 from the B&O Railroad Museum. #1309 is part of the museum's collection, currently displayed in a car shop building adjacent to the museum's landmark roundhouse. Nothing new has been heard in recent months. However, some information about the engine was included in *The Automatic Block*, newsletter of Western Maryland NRHS.

The WMSR's current steamer, Baldwin 2-8-0 #734, is approaching a long-planned major overhaul at the end of the 2015 season, and although the railroad also rosters a pair of former CONRAIL PG30s occasionally used in excursion service, steam remains an important part of the railroad's *Mountain Thunder* marketing and image. The search for steam power that could haul longer fall-season and Christmas passenger trains over the WMSR's steep grade to Frostburg, MD (more than 2% in spots) means that not just any steam locomotive is suitable. Any steamer acquired would likely face a rebuilding or overhaul process taking a year or more, although CMO Dan Pluta says, "We expect the overhaul of #734 to take approximately five to six months." The locomotive's last overhaul was in 2000-2001, and took a mere 2 1/2 months, but more work is anticipated this time.

One important consideration for any potential substitute for #734: It must be able to fit the former WM turntable from Elkins, WV, now used to turn engines and change tracks at Frostburg. The two GP30s fit with inches to spare and considerable overhang at the ends, while #1309, despite its massive appearance, has a wheelbase, including tender, of 88 feet.

Part of a 1948 order for 10 such locomotives, #1309 was built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Eddystone, PA in September 1949 near the end of domestic steam production for Baldwin. Considering its late construction date, #1309 and its nine sisters of the H-6 class were built to a considerably archaic design, first delivered to the railroad in 1911 as an improvement upon earlier 2-6-6-2 designs. The H-6 class featured a compound design, where high-pressure steam was used first in the rear pair of cylinders and then re-used at a lower pressure in the larger front cylinders before being exhausted. Compound articulated locomotives like the #1309 enjoyed a brief surge in popularity between their development by Frenchman Anatole Mallet in 1885 and the post-World War I era. Compound Mallets eventually lost favor to "simple" articulateds, which fed high-pressure steam to two pairs of cylinders simultaneously. The latter-day largest articulated steamers, such as the B&O EM-1 2-8-8-4s, C&O Allegheny 2-6-6-6s (the heaviest reciprocating steamers ever built), N&W Class A 2-6-6-4s, UP Challenger 4-6-6-4s and UP Big Boy 4-8-8-4s, were simple articulated.

#1309 worked out of the C&O's Peach Creek terminal in Logan, WV in relative obscurity on mine run and switching duty for only seven years before being retired in 1956. It remained in the Peach Creek roundhouse until the mid-1970s when it was transferred to the B&O Railroad Museum. #1309 spent years on prominent display in the front lot of the museum before weathering severely and being withdrawn to storage pending future cosmetic restoration. If restored to operation, #1309 would be one of the few remaining compound steamers in service.

Upcoming Events



January 24-25, 2014: O. Winston Link Museum 10th Anniversary Celebration, Roanoke, VA. Night photo shoot; rail fan tours. Limited space available; reservations required. Contact Amber Carter at (540) 982-5465 or acarter@linkmuseum.org.



February 7 & 8, 2014: Southern Rails, a traditional get together not open to the general public offering traditional elements like clinics, contests, vendors and, above all, fun. The meet will be held at Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain Georgia. As a plus the family will have the opportunity to visit Callaway Gardens while attending. More information is available at www.SouthernRails.org.



March 15, 2014: NCTM in Spencer, NC will host "Clinchfield Days", an event featuring special guest speakers that had ties with the Clinchfield Railroad; train rides on WVRHS&M's "Clinchfield" Business Car 100; and a photo session with the 100 on the NCTM turntable.



April 5-6, 2014: NORFOLK SOUTHERN 21ST Century Steam excursions sponsored by WVRHS&M. Go to <http://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/excursions.php> for details.



April 12, 2014: 12th Annual NC Railroad Expo at the Hickory, NC Metro Center. For details, read <http://www.tarheelpress.com/APRshow.pdf>



May 29 – June 1, 2014:
"Streamliners at Spencer",
NCTM, Spencer, NC.

Planned is a four-day festival for lovers of classic streamlined diesel locomotives of the 1930s through the '50s. Twelve or more engines (subject to timely transportation and mechanical availability) will be gathered around NCTM's 37-stall roundhouse for daytime photos, special operations, nighttime shots and more. Primarily a photographic event, this will be a rail fan's delight.



Tickets will be on sale soon!

Changing World

by Gary Price

There's no doubt that the current restrictions on coal have a negative impact on the communities of Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky. In these small towns, coal is the lifeblood of the communities, and that vein is slowly drying up. I myself did not know the extent of this changing world until I was cast unwillingly into it.

As many of you know, I am a 17+ years veteran of NORFOLK SOUTHERN's maintenance-of-way division; my daily duties have always involved making the tracks safe for the trains that carry the weight of the world in each car. Coal from the region has been long been a mainstay for Virginia railroads ever since the first carload of coal traveled from a mine in West Virginia across the entire state and was delivered to Norfolk in 1883. Coal is also the heaviest commodity that these rails see on a daily basis, and heavy trains mean heavy maintenance. This is where it starts to get ugly.

Politics. I am not one to argue this subject, but current government policies regarding coal production has forced some major changes in my career. Coal shipments have dropped drastically with all the domestic power plants being "persuaded" to switch to natural gas and mines in the coal fields are now shutting down. In some cases, they are tearing the coal loading tipples down and closing the shaft permanently. So, simple equation: Less Coal Trains = Less Railroad Maintenance.

In June 2013 we were informed that one of our Pennsylvania gangs, TS32, would be abolished immediately. Two weeks later, we were informed that my gang, TS20, would be abolished at the end of the 2013 schedule. This was a total shock to all 38 employees. I mean, honestly, when I hired in on this gang back in 1996, I was content on retiring from this gang after a long and illustrious career, but now my entire life, career, and outlook was going to be changed. Then came yet another surprise: I returned to work from a vacation (after our AMTRAK trips) on the fourth week of October 2013, and was informed that it would be my last week - they were abolishing my job two months early.

So now I was forced to have to exercise my seniority and place a "kick" on a younger employee, something that I dislike to do. After a few phone calls, my options were narrowed down to two positions: one in West Virginia, the other in Pennsylvania. How did I choose? Why, from a rail fan perspective of course! I love the old NORFOLK & WESTERN RAILWAY, so West Virginia with all those mountains, tunnels and trestles were calling to me, but the thought of new Pennsy adventures and Horseshoe Curve made it a hard choice. Then I thought about the logistics: I can drive to just about anywhere in West Virginia in under 4 hours, but I can't even see Pennsylvania in 4 hours, so that was my deciding factor. I packed my bags and headed to West "by God" Virginia and settled into my new position as a machine operator on TS23 ...

.... and where am I working right now?? South Carolina, of course! Gotta love the railroad.

Breaking News! Steam to return to GSMR

Last month (December 2013) the Swain County, NC Board of Commissioners unanimously agreed to work with the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD in the restoration to service of GSMR's 2-8-0 steam locomotive #1702. Construction of a turntable is also planned. The development agreement states that Swain County agrees to loan up to \$700,000 to GSMR, contingent upon certain terms and agreements. More information to follow in future issues of the Whistle Stop.

What a Night!

by Abe Burnett

[ED. NOTE: If you think this winter is giving you a headache, read on.]

My snow storm story concerns a run one night, probably 1966-ish, east out of Roanoke as the flag on a Norfolk Division mixed freight called No. 92. We were on duty at 9 pm.

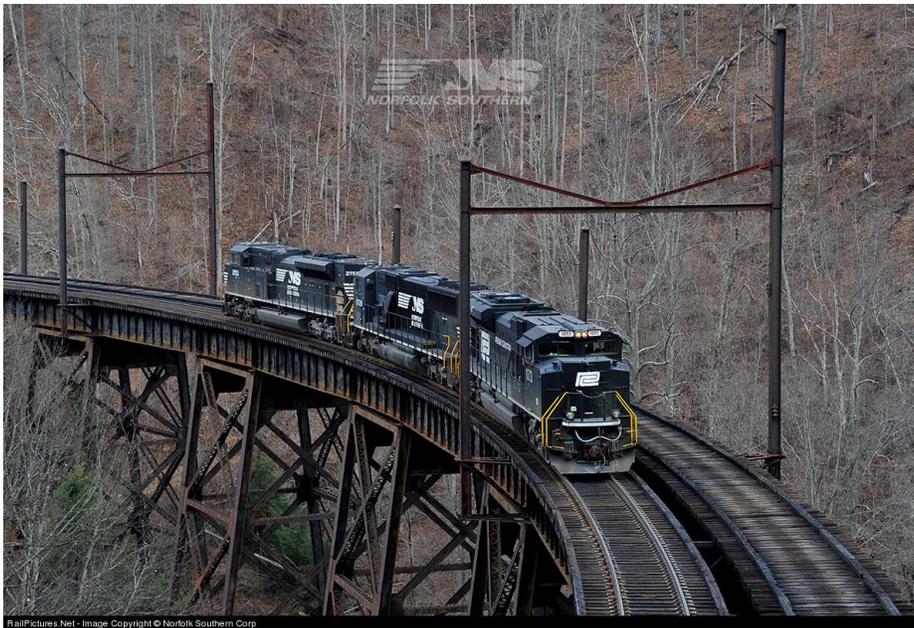
The switch markers were completely covered over with snow and not a thing was moving in Roanoke Yard, but somehow we got rolling. The Conductor hung his fishing thermometer on the back platform of the caboose and it registered 5 below zero.

We made it over Blue Ridge, but when we got to Montvale, the bottom of the Blue Ridge Grade, the signal was red. Stuart Saunders [president of the NORFOLK AND WESTERN RAILWAY from 1958 to 1963] had ripped up the double track east of Montvale, and the dispatcher couldn't get the switch at the end of the double track, and the signal maintainers were immobile. So we backed the train all the way up Blue Ridge Mountain to Blue Ridge. The plan was to bring the train through the hand crossover at that point and head east for Montvale again, using the other main track.

But at Blue Ridge, we found the hand crossover frozen solid ... and I do mean solid. We used all the waste and journal oil and kerosene and hot box coolant sticks on the caboose for building fires, and still could not get the switches unbound. The conductor went to the phone around 9 am, and we were instructed to back the entire train all the way back into Roanoke.

Total mileage run: 16 miles Roanoke to Montvale, then 16 miles Montvale to Roanoke. Total time on duty: 16 hours. What a night!

Photo Section



NORFOLK SOUTHERN Pocahontas Division train U85 is seen soaring high above Gooney Otter Hollow as it crosses the former VIRGINIAN RAILWAY curved trestle at Garwood, WV. The loco set is returning downhill to Elmore Yard (away from the camera) after lugging 100 loads of Tidewater coal up the hill to Clarks Gap, where they will later become part of a Norfolk-bound unit train. The PENN CENTRAL heritage unit is far from the real heritage of this line, which featured electric motors that utilized the

catenary poles still in place from days gone by. [Text: NS Corp.; photo by Casey Thomason.]

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor

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