

Whistle Stop



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

Volume 36 No. 1

January 2016



Photographer Mike Pierry, Jr. caught the November 2015 edition of the CSX Santa Train, with EMD SD40-2 #8033 on point, at a scheduled stop at St. Paul, VA along the route of the former CLINCHFIELD. There's much speculation within the railfan community that this wonderful annual tradition may end after 73 years.

January 25th Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will conduct our first General Membership Meeting of the new year at 6:30 pm on Monday, January 25, 2016 at the Johnson City Public Library 101 West Millard St. Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will be NORFOLK SOUTHERN's excursion trains, presented by Mike Noonkester. Bring a friend along for a relaxing evening with your fellow members.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewel

As this is being read, we will be more than half way thru January. Calendars are already being filled with meetings, appointments, and other events. Look forward to a busy 2016.

A reminder to keep the following folks in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns: George and Margaret Holley, Jim Calhoun, Gary Price, Art DeVoe, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Smallwood, Bob Yaple, and Sidney Blankenbeckler.

As always, let us know of any members, friends, 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. Your help is needed and appreciated.

WATAUGA VALLEY RHS&M LATE MEMBERSHIP DUES

If you have not paid your dues as of press time, your WVRHS&M membership **EXPIRED ON DECEMBER 31st, 2015**. Please complete the dues notice attached to the end of this newsletter to keep your issue 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 by sending your dues and check to Membership Chairman Edna Carter, Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN, 37605. Membership in the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum is a very reasonable \$20.00 individual membership with an additional \$5.00 for each family member. For questions, e-mail wataugavalley@gmail.com.

PLEASE NOTE: NRHS and RHA WILL SEND THEIR DUES NOTICES DIRECTLY TO YOU. RETURN PAYMENT FOR BOTH OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS TO THE ADDRESS THEY PROVIDE ON THEIR DUES NOTICES. DO NOT SEND NRHS AND RHA DUES TO WVRHS&M.

ELECTRONIC VERSION OF NEWSLETTER

We continue to ask members receiving paper copies to switch over to the electronic version of the Whistle Stop. The electronic version is in living color and the quality is so much better than the printed copy. It also has active links to referenced web sites. Please try it! Call the office (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com and give us your e-mail address so you can start receiving this improved version and help us save money!

THINK YOU HAVE A LOT OF SNOW TO REMOVE THIS WINTER?

Well, to be honest, you'd have to live in the Rockies this year, thanks to El Niño, to experience snow removal fatigue. But you might want to save the following link in case you ever do as a reminder of how much worse it can get. Click <http://tinyurl.com/jas7nm8> to view spectacular footage of snowfighting in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California during the winter of 1951-1952 when heavy snowfalls caused havoc on the railroads.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATV 539): Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum (NCTM) for the past couple of months. As of press time the car is headed back to the Jonesborough Coach Yard.

“St Augustine” coach (WATV 500): Has been in excursion service at NCTM for the past couple of months. As of press time the car is headed back to the Jonesborough Coach Yard.

“Moultrie” diner (WATV 400): Has been in excursion service at the NCTM for the past couple of months. It will remain there for future trips.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATV 2351): Is in winter storage at the Jonesborough Coach Yard.

“Clinchfield” business car (WATV 100): The WVRHS&M Mechanical Team is putting plans together for possible upgrades.

GENERAL

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



[Left] Don Findley and Jim Magill are seen setting up the new storage building at the Coach Yard. The building will provide additional storage, supplementing the box car's capacity.

Volunteers Needed!

The WVRHS&M Mechanical Team is looking for more volunteers. As most of you know the team is composed of volunteers with all kinds of different experiences. We now have five operating passenger cars which means it takes a lot of manpower to keep the equipment up and running. We need volunteers to help with all kinds of projects, even if you do not have any mechanical experience. The WVRHS&M Mechanical Team is an all-volunteer force; some are retired, many are still working, and all are great bunch of guys enjoying working together to keep our equipment up and running on the rails. If you're interested, please call the WVRHS&M office at (423) 753-5797 and leave a message that you are interested in volunteering at the Jonesborough Coach Yard. Work days are Tuesdays from 9 am to 5 pm and on Saturdays from 9 am to 12 noon. If you're tired of lying around the house during the winter months, here's a great opportunity to remain active and contribute to your organization. Call and let us know of your interest; we'll find plenty of meaningful work for you to do!

In the News



JONESBOROUGH DEPOT and MUSEUM

Work on the railroad depot and museum at Jonesborough has slowed down during the last couple of months due to construction crews being pulled off to work on the new Jonesborough Senior Center. Despite that, a new roof was installed in January. In the near future the crew will be returning to the depot/museum to start installing electrical wiring and heating/air. Everyone should be seeing a lot of progress in the coming months. Plans at this time are to have the museum open in August 2016.



NORFOLK SOUTHERN MERGES DIVISIONS

[NS Press release] Norfolk Southern Corporation is consolidating its Virginia and Pocahontas divisions to form the new Pocahontas Division, with headquarters in Roanoke, VA, effective February 1. The consolidation is part of the company's ongoing drive to enhance operating efficiencies and support long-term growth. This announcement follows other recent strategic initiatives, including the reduction from three corporate office locations to two, restructuring of the Triple Crown Services subsidiary, and integration of the D&H South Line to increase options for shippers.

In a related move, NORFOLK SOUTHERN is changing traffic patterns and idling parts of its "West Virginia Secondary," a 253-mile line between Columbus, Ohio, and central West Virginia that has experienced steady declines in business in recent years. This follows the idling of a 33-mile mainline between Elmore and Princeton, WV in September 2015.

The new Pocahontas Division will comprise 2,581 route miles, mainly in Virginia and West Virginia, extending from the Port of Virginia to Portsmouth, Ohio, and from Bristol, VA to Hagerstown, MD.

Combining the divisions will improve service by placing most of the company's coal routes under the operating authority of a single division. Additionally, the move further consolidates operational control over the company's Heartland Corridor, a double-stack intermodal route through Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio.

Roanoke, which will serve as headquarters of the new Pocahontas Division, currently is headquarters of the Virginia Division.

The consolidation will affect management and office staff positions now based in Bluefield, WV, currently the Pocahontas Division headquarters. Those employees will have an opportunity to relocate to Roanoke or apply for other positions at the company. With the consolidation, NORFOLK SOUTHERN will operate 10 divisions across its network.

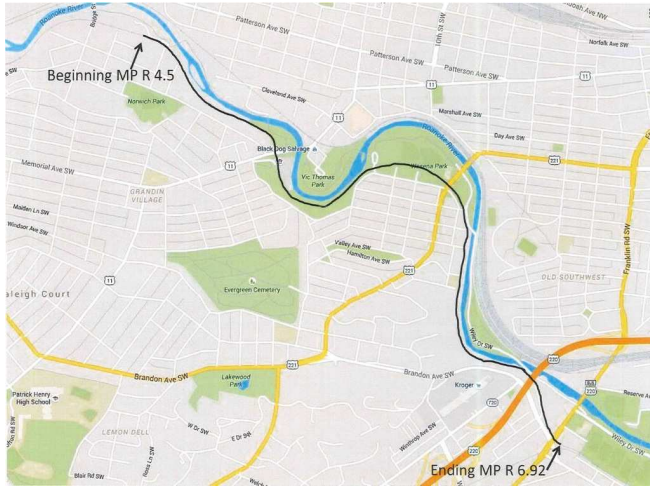
The company will continue to operate its rail yard in Bluefield. Trains moving Appalachian coal comprise most of the business handled there, and yard traffic has declined as coal volumes moved by the railroad have dropped over the past five years. Currently, about 130 people work in operations departments at the yard, including in transportation, engineering, and mechanical.

ANOTHER PIECE OF CLINCHFIELD HISTORY SAVED

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum is happy to announce the donation of Clinchfield Railroad coal hopper CRR 56338. This coal hopper served the Clinchfield for many years in what the railroad did best: HAULING COAL. The car is in good condition and will be restored back to CLINCHFIELD lettering and painted black. Details about the restoration project and location of where it will be displayed will be announced at a later date. [Mike Tilley posting on WVRHS&M facebook page]



A NEW TOURIST TRAIN FOR ROANOKE?



A new rail attraction could be coming to Roanoke, VA, bringing with it major tourism dollars if all goes as planned. NORFOLK SOUTHERN is considering donating its Roanoke Belt Line to the Virginia Museum of Transportation. Railfans will be excited to know that leaders there are hoping to use it as a tourist train excursion destination. Fran Ferguson, Director of Development at VMT, says they've been working on securing the donation of the Belt Line rails, and the money to launch the excursion, for years. But, it's not a done deal yet. After completing the restoration of

the #611, the next most asked for attraction from visitors is a small tourist train through Roanoke, Ferguson said. "There is not another one in the State of Virginia and it would be so much more compelling and draw visitors to the Roanoke Valley."

Ferguson says the Roanoke Belt Line would accommodate about an hour long ride with a diesel train. While the #611 would not be able to run on those tracks, the Roanoke Chapter NRHS, a partner of VMT, could provide diesel trains to carry passenger for the excursion. Leaders at VMT have already purchased property near in Roanoke to build a passenger boarding station and three passenger rail cars. Ferguson says the rail cars need a lot of work before they can be used.

If VMT can secure the tracks from NS, Executive Director Bev Fitzpatrick says, it will cost nearly \$400,000 to renovate, but it's a project they believe is worth it. Ultimately, the donation must be approved by the Surface Transportation Board. VMT and its partners have worked through complicated legal processes to ensure the donation can be made. There is no estimated time in which a decision will be made; if the deal goes through, it could take several years to complete. [WSLS10 TV, Roanoke]

The "Texas" Arrives at NCTM for Restoration



The 1856 WESTERN ATLANTIC RAILROAD locomotive #49, the "Texas", made famous in the "Great Locomotive Chase of 1862" during the American Civil War, has arrived at NCTM in Spencer for cosmetic restoration. This Civil War-era steam locomotive has an amazing history and has just made an amazing journey from her home in Atlanta to Spencer, where she'll reside through most of 2016, undergoing historical research and restoration work by Scott Lindsay's Steam Operations Corporation.

In late 2016, she'll be headed to a new home at the Atlanta History Center's Buckhead Campus where the "Texas" will be permanently featured in a custom-built glass-walled enclosure that will put the prized artifact of Atlanta's rich railroading past on prominent display; it will be illuminated at night. The glass enclosure housing the "Texas" will connect the Atlanta History Museum to the new Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker Cyclorama Building, which will house The Battle of Atlanta painting, which is estimated to open late 2017. The History Center has dedicated \$500,000 to Texas conservation. To watch the arrival of the "Texas" at NCTM, go to <http://tinyurl.com/zwar6cc>

#611 Excursions and Special Appearances for 2016

[VMT Press Release] The Virginia Museum of Transportation (VMT) and North Carolina Transportation Museum (NCTM) are pleased to announce that the NORFOLK & WESTERN Class J #611 steam passenger locomotive will return to the mainline in 2016 with an exciting schedule of public excursions and special appearances.

The #611 will move from Roanoke to NCTM in February in preparation for maintenance and its annual Federal Railway Administration inspection. Following that work, spring will see a total of four weekends of public excursions behind #611 on the NORFOLK SOUTHERN system. A variety of seating options, including coach, first class, and dome cars are planned for each excursion. In addition, special appearances by #611 are being planned for Roanoke, Manassas and Danville, VA and Spencer, NC.

For safety reasons, there will be no open vestibules or open vestibule windows, or photo run-bys. The public is encouraged to take pictures of #611 for personal use when the locomotive is stopped in publicly accessible locations and when it is in operation. All passengers and spectators must stay off and away from the tracks, respect NORFOLK SOUTHERN and other private property, and adhere to all instructions from NS and other security personnel.

Look for an announcement soon (February) for ticket prices, sale dates and the exciting new train consist, which includes first class and dome seating towards the front of the train. Follow <http://fireup611.org/excursions/> for excursion information and to sign up for email notifications.

 ***More Work on C&O #1309***

Shop crews of the WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD continue to be busy restoring the 2-6-6-2 compound articulated steam locomotive that was built in 1949 for the CHESAPEAKE & OHIO RAILWAY. Known as C&O #1309, the engine is expected to be restored to operating condition by late July 2016. WMSR General Superintendent Mike Gresham has provided the following update on the work. The greatest challenge to the rebuild work is the scale of the project. Gresham says that #1309 will require 300 new boiler tubes, approximately 200 new flexible stay-bolts, all 12 driving wheels to be turned on a wheel lathe, two full sets of running gear refurbished, a dozen major appliances such as pumps, injectors, dynamo, and the stoker motor rebuilt, and hundreds of parts and wearing surfaces in need of attention. While most of these tasks are within the capabilities of the WMSR shop, the railroad has decided to call on outside contractors to help ensure the timely completion of #1309. Gresham says that experts from across the country have been contacted to ensure the restoration of #1309 will be completed on time, with the work performed to the highest quality.

The railroad ordered seamless tubes and flues from Robert Franzen's Steam Services Corporation of America, and these items were delivered by the end of October. Franzen has also been serving in an advisory role on such critical issues boiler and stay-bolt condition and project management. In October, Scott Lindsay and the Steam Operations Corp. completed the ultrasonic testing of the boiler and the driver axles. Lindsay will also prepare the FRA Form 4 once all boiler work has been completed. Michael Manwiller and the HEBER VALLEY RAILROAD in Utah are involved with rebuilding #1309's air pumps and safety valves. A decade ago, Manwiller worked on WMSR #734 as the steam locomotive's engineer. On November 24, the rear driver wheels were removed from beneath the boiler, then later all twelve driver wheels from #1309 were sent to central Pennsylvania where they will be turned on a wheel lathe by machinists of the historic Strasburg Rail Road Company. ["The Automatic Block", Western Maryland NRHS]

 ***CONGRESS PASSES FINAL TRANSPORTATION BILL***

[NARP Press Release] House and Senate conferees released the final transportation bill on December 1, 2015, the product of weeks of negotiations. The legislation is a historic win for passenger train advocates. Passenger rail was included as part of a comprehensive transportation bill for the first time ever! This achieves a goal that the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) has been working on for years. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act is a five-year bill that would invest \$305 billion in U.S. infrastructure. While the vast majority of it will go towards highways, \$10.355 billion has been authorized for intercity passenger trains, along with \$12.209 billion in dedicated funding for transit.

While [NARP believes] this is an important step in the right direction for this country, the ongoing task for rail advocates is now to make sure that Congress follows through on fully funding these programs; that states and local communities know they can use these new programs to secure more frequent, improved service; and that, eventually, we secure a dedicated, predictable funding source that is essential for building a modern rail system and a connected America.

Upcoming Events



At Whistle Stop press time, the WVRHS&M excursion schedule for 2016 has not been announced. We hope to have the schedule available at the January 25th General Membership Meeting.

#611's 2016 EXCURSION SCHEDULE

- April 9, 2016 - *The Virginian*, Spencer, NC to Lynchburg, VA
- April 10, 2016 - *The Blue Ridge Special*, Spencer, NC to Asheville, NC
- April 23, 2016 - *The Roanoker*, Greensboro, NC to Roanoke, VA
- April 24, 2016 - *The Roanoker*, Greensboro, NC to Roanoke, VA
- May 7, 2016 - *The Powhatan Arrow*, Roanoke, VA to Lynchburg, VA
- May 7, 2016 - *The Pelican*, Roanoke, VA to Walton (Radford), VA
- May 8, 2016 - *The Powhatan Arrow*, Roanoke, VA to Lynchburg, VA
- May 8, 2016 - *The Pelican*, Roanoke, VA to Walton (Radford), VA
- June 4, 2016 - *The American*, Manassas, VA to Front Royal, VA (runs once)
- June 5, 2016 - *The American*, Manassas, VA to Front Royal, VA (runs twice)

#611'S SPECIAL APPEARANCES

In addition to opportunities to ride and watch #611 roll by on excursions, the public is invited to take advantage of a number of special opportunities to get up close to #611 under steam, take photos, and meet the crew.

"We are very excited to offer this experience that people haven't had before, to get really close to #611," said Jim Stump, Forward 611 committee chair for the Virginia Museum of Transportation (VMT). "We will be taking #611 to new destinations and giving communities an exciting opportunity to celebrate their history and rail heritage. It is amazing to experience this engine fired up."

- Over the weekend of May 14, 2016 - visitors to the Virginia Museum of Transportation will get to view #611 fired up, and meet the crew.
- June 4, 2016 - After the morning excursion, #611 will make a guest appearance at the Manassas, Va., Heritage Railway Festival.
- June, 2016 - #611 will be on display at the VMT.
- July, 2016 - #611 will be featured at the North Carolina Transportation Museum for special events.
- Early August, 2016 - #611 will return to the VMT.
- Early September, 2016 - #611 again will return to the NCTM for special events and maintenance.
- Sept. 24-25, 2016 - #611 will travel to Danville, Va., to be featured during Danville Rail Heritage Days.
- #611 will return to Roanoke after the NCTM events conclude in the fall.

From the WVRHS&M Archives ...

We received the photos below from George and Margaret Holley. They are from the Blanche Martin collection and appear to be a special train that the CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD operated in 1959, Erwin to Elkhorn City, KY, perhaps an employee train going to a picnic. The consist seems to be made up with eight N&W passenger cars and two gondolas. Three F units are in the lead.

Two of the photos were made at the CLINCHFIELD station in Johnson City - you can see Buffalo St. where the engines are crossing. On another shot, where the passengers are loading at Johnson City, you can see CLINCHFIELD Car 50 – the Safety Car.

Yes, the photos are grainy, but remember this was 1959 – the age of Brownie Instamatics, long before folk carried high-resolution cell phone cameras.

If anyone has more information about the train, please let us know by dropping a message to wataugavalley@gmail.com.



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Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE MATERIAL

Membership Renewal for 2016

**WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM
PO BOX 432
Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

Make check payable to WATV and remit to above address

Member Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

APPLYING FOR:

___ INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP - \$20.00. \$ _____

___ FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

- \$ 5.00 for each additional family member joining. \$ _____
- LIST FAMILY MEMBER NAMES

TOTAL REMITTANCE \$ _____