

Whistle Stop



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

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Photographer Mike Pierry, Jr., a frequent contributor to this newsletter, found GSMR Baldwin-built 2-8-0 #1702 at rest during twilight in Bryson City, NC. For you photographers out there, Mike used a short time exposure, camera on a tripod, and an off-the-camera flash to highlight wheels and locomotive detail. [Photo used with permission.]

April 23rd General Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will conduct our monthly General Membership meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, April 23rd, 2018 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. This month's program will be on our 1990 NS excursion trains with N&W #1218 from Bristol to Radford, VA and from Bristol to Knoxville. Come out bring a friend and enjoy a great night of railroading with your friends.

Member Notes

by Edna Kay Carter

Hope everyone is enjoying our beautiful spring season. Continue to keep those who have lost loved ones during the year in your thoughts and prayers. Please keep the following folks in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns. They are Bob Yapple, Nancy Jewel and Gary Price. As always, let us know of any 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 Edna Carter at (423) 571-3226.

We are still receiving new members for the club (see below) so we say WELCOME ABOARD to them.

Ronnie & Sabrina Holmes
Margaret & Makayla Harrison
Ben & Amy Merritt

Sandy Stiltner
Connie Ruble
Stanley & Kathryn Brown

Tim M. Pratt
Jacquelyn J. Murphy

WVRHS&M News

MEETING LOCATION CHANGED FOR MAY AND JUNE

Due to the Johnson City Public Library meeting room not being available for the May and June meetings, **the location for both months has been changed** to the Chuckey Depot / Museum at 110 South Second St., Jonesborough. Details to follow.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN TRIP #1 WENT OFF WITH A BANG

Sold out train! RAINY weather didn't prevent a great bunch of passengers from enjoying beautiful scenery, making this GSMR Excursion a successful trip. March 24 was excellent day to ride a train down by the river and through the mountains. Everyone had a wonderful time and viewed some good spring scenery through the mountains of Western North Carolina. Thanks to all the Watauga Valley volunteers who served on the excursion.

HOST TRAINING SESSION SET UP FOR MAY

Due to the demand by Watauga Valley members wanting to host at the Chuckey Depot / Museum for one day a month, we will be offering host training on May 12th at the depot, 110 South 2nd St., Jonesborough from 10 am to 11 am. If you're interested in coming out and getting started with hosting at the museum, please call (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com. Due to scheduling issues, the April 20th and 21st training session has been canceled.

AUTUMN AMTRAK EXCURSIONS UPDATE

Despite AMTRAK discontinuing operation of excursion trains (see page 4), WVRHS&M and NCTM have applied for an autumn AMTRAK Trip out of Spencer, NC, hoping this policy will be rescinded. The proposed dates and routes are November 3rd, Spencer to Charlottesville, VA and November 4th, Spencer to Toccoa, GA. Details will be coming soon.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL

The weather has been good to the Watauga Valley Mechanical Team and there have been a lot of good working days at the yard over the last several weeks. Looks like spring is knocking on our door and we can finally get some work done. If you would like to help out at the on Tuesday's between 9 am to 5 pm or Saturdays 9 am to 12 noon, please call our Office at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com.

ROLLING STOCK

"Powhatan Arrow" coach (WATX 539): is having some air conditioning updates. Door repair where pin goes in floor has rusted out.

"St Augustine" coach (WATX 500): will be getting new 26C brake system in the near future.

"Moultrie" diner (WATX 400): is getting some electrical repairs in kitchen.

"Crescent Harbor" sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): is getting some new blinds installed in the bedroom.

CLINCHFIELD OFFICE CAR (WATX 100): will be getting some new windows and interior upgrades.

Important 2018 Dates ...



MAY 17-20: N&W Historical Society Convention, NCTM, Spencer, NC.



MAY 18-20: "Rail Heritage Weekend", Cass Scenic Railroad, Cass, WV. See <http://mountainrailwv.com/tour/spring-photo-special/>.



May 26: Tennessee Valley Railway Museum trip to Summerville GA with steam (4501 or 630). See <https://www.tvrail.com/>.



June 2: Tennessee Valley Railway Museum trip to Summerville GA with **DOUBLE-HEADED steam** (4501 and 630). See <https://www.tvrail.com/>.



AUGUST 5-12: NMRA National Convention, Kansas City, MO. Info: <http://www.nmra.org>.



AUGUST 7-12: NRHS National Convention, Cumberland, MD. Info: <http://www.nrhs.com/content/2017-convention> [2017 is not a typo]



SEPTEMBER 5-8: National Narrow Gauge National Convention, Bloomington, MN. Info: <https://nngc-2018.com/>.



SEPTEMBER 8: GSMR Excursion #2.

In the News

AMTRAK to Discontinue Charter and Special Trains

[From Richard Anderson President and Chief Executive Officer AMTRAK]

AMTRAK Policy Changes March 28, 2018

AMTRAK must operate a safe and reliable schedule for our customers. Our mission from Congress is clear: safely and efficiently operate our trains on schedule while minimizing federal subsidies. Therefore, we have implemented two significant changes in our business lines that are consistent with these two principles.

Charters and Special Trains Generally, AMTRAK will no longer operate charter services or special trains. These operations caused significant operational distraction, failed to capture fully allocated profitable margins and sometimes delayed our paying customers on our scheduled trains. There may be a few narrow exceptions to this policy in order to support specific strategic initiatives, for example trial service in support of growing new scheduled service. Otherwise, one-time trips and charters are immediately discontinued. We must narrow our focus to running a great core railroad: safe, on time, clean cars, friendly service and great customer-facing technology.

[The second policy change, related to discounts, is omitted here.]

[Letter from Al Weber, NRHS President] As you may have heard AMTRAK has announced a new policy for private passenger cars and special trips. This change will effect [sic] many of our members and I would like you to read it. You can find the AMTRAK Policy [above].

I would like you to contact your congressmen and women expressing your thoughts on this AMTRAK policy change. You can find the committees and the contacts at http://rpca.com/webpages/Gov_Contacts.html

It would be nice if you also contacted your Senators and Representatives about this expressing your views on the policy change.

[Follow up news from the Associated Press, April 15]

Congressman Evan Jenkins and U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin say they've arranged the meeting with AMTRAK on Tuesday [April 17th] to discuss this issue.

Also scheduled to attend are representatives of the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Society, which operates the New River Train, and leaders from Hinton and Summers County. AMTRAK decided last month to end charter and special service trains, putting traditions such as the New River Train and Hinton Railroad Days in jeopardy.

Manchin says eliminate the service would take about \$5 million from West Virginia's economy.

 ***CHUCKEY DEPOT / MUSEUM AT JONESBOROUGH*****CHUCKEY DAYS AT THE CHUCKEY DEPOT / MUSEUM MAY 19th, 2018**

The Chuckey, TN SOUTHERN RAILROAD depot was disassembled and moved to Jonesborough, TN where it was reincarnated as a museum. In honor of the people of Chuckey and Greene County that the depot served, a dedication and celebration, hosted by the Town of Jonesborough, Watauga Valley RHS&M and the Heritage Alliance of East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, is planned for Saturday, May 19th; speeches, refreshments and tours will be offered.

 ***SEPTEMBER 8th GSMR TRIP #2 SOLD OUT***

In less than 36 hours, our September 8th excursion on the Great Smoky Mountain sold out. With the so many wanting to go on this trip, we will put another trip on the market very soon. For those wanting a ticket, watch for an email and also visit our web site at <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/excursions.php>.

 ***AMTRAK Policy Could Put the Brakes on 611 Trips***

[By Mike Allen, mike.allen@roanoke.com, Apr 13, 2018]

A corporate decision by AMTRAK could halt the Norfolk & Western Class J 611 steam engine in its tracks, and raises questions as to whether the restored historical treasure will pull excursions again.

Virginia Museum of Transportation executive director Lisa Sphar said the museum continues to hope that the Roanoke-made 611 will have a season of excursions in the fall. "We continue to work with our friends and partners in the industry to look at options for continuing operations and remain hopeful for 611's future."

In late March, AMTRAK implemented a ban on trips by special trains like the 611. Museum officials learned of the new policy after sending a proposed excursion schedule to AMTRAK. "When this announcement came out, we were in the 11th hour," Sphar said. "It took us by surprise as well as everybody else."

Sphar noted that AMTRAK is allowing some exceptions. The company has not yet given a direct answer to the museum's proposal.

The Roanoke museum, which owns the 611, organized a successful \$1 million campaign to put the once-moribund locomotive in working order, culminating in a triumphant May 2015 homecoming. Built in Roanoke in 1950 at Norfolk & Western's East End Shops, the 611 is the last remaining passenger steam engine of its class, hailed as a peak example of Roanoke ingenuity.

Since 2015, the 611 has pulled sold-out excursions in Virginia and North Carolina that have drawn in tourists. "It's a big revenue generator," Sphar said.

"It is a major draw for our area," especially for train enthusiasts, said Catherine Fox, vice president of public affairs and destination development for regional tourism bureau Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge. [Continued on next page.]

Fox cited an economic study commissioned by the transportation museum that concluded that the 611's 2015 homecoming and excursions brought about 200,000 visitors to the valley and contributed from \$4.5 million to \$7 million to the economy. Anecdotally, when the tourism bureau promotes the 611 on its website, "we probably have more interest in that than we do in just about anything."

Tax records show that the 611 excursions fueled a remarkable increase in the museum's revenue streams. In fiscal year 2013-14, the museum reported \$447,663 in total program revenue. In 2014-15, the museum reported \$566,208 in excursion revenue alone. In 2015-16, excursion revenue sprang to more than \$2 million.

The return of passenger rail to Roanoke brought a change in how the 611 excursions were to be conducted.

After the 611 was renovated, the museum had to work out scheduling and destinations with Norfolk Southern. In January 2017, Norfolk Southern notified the museum that excursions from 2018 onward would have to be arranged through AMTRAK, said former museum director Bev Fitzpatrick, who retired at the end of last year. During that year, negotiations with AMTRAK were productive, with no significant change foreshadowed other than increased costs, as AMTRAK leases use of the track from NS, he said.

In March, AMTRAK policy changed. "Generally, AMTRAK will no longer operate charter services or special trains," wrote AMTRAK spokeswoman Kimberly Woods in an email Friday. "Given the limited revenue these services provide, it is difficult to justify the cost and operational resources."

Organizations affected by the decision first learned about it through a March 28 article published in Trains magazine, Fitzpatrick said. The article states that the policy announcement came in the form of a memo to employees.

The repercussions don't just affect Roanoke. In West Virginia, Republican Congressman Evan Jenkins has released a statement that he's working with the governor's office to preserve the New River Train excursions based in Huntington. "AMTRAK is willing to make some limited exemptions to its ban on charter trains, and after our call, I feel confident we will be granted this exemption," he said in the statement.

With AMTRAK's response still pending, the museum hasn't attempted to recruit that sort of outside aid, Sphar said. "We don't feel that's the appropriate way to go at this point because we're still under consideration."

At present, the 611 is at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, North Carolina, undergoing routine maintenance. It was unclear Friday whether AMTRAK's policy would affect the return of the locomotive to Roanoke.

The museum is selling tickets for a series of 11 dome car excursions pulled by AMTRAK trains, scheduled from April 28 to May 13. Those excursions are not affected by AMTRAK's policy change, Sphar said.

Train buffs aren't staying quiet. Philadelphia rail fan Nicholas Parker has launched a petition on Change.org demanding that AMTRAK reverse its decision.

"Personally, I have dedicated several volunteer hours over the past few years to 611's cause," Parker wrote in an email. As of Friday afternoon, the online petition had accumulated more than 12,600 signatures.

Megan's Manifest

by Megan Kegley

On April 3, 2018 I had time off from school and work, so I got in my car early that morning



and decided I was going to go to Appalachia, VA. I get to Duffield and my good friends and fellow railfans David Hammond and Paul Clawson called me up on the phone to tell me that CSX W584-01 was on its way toward Frisco down the NS line. The train was loaded in Mt. Vernon, KY and it left out of Loyal, KY that morning to go to Duke Energy in Brice, NC. So, I took the opportunity to go catch CSX W584-01 at Glenita, VA. We all left Duffield, VA and headed toward the Glenita siding to catch the train. Paul, David,

and myself had not been able to get together and watch trains since the Santa Train ran last November. It was nice to spend some time with my friends and just enjoy part of the day together. The day started off real dreary and rainy, but it slacked off in the middle of the day about the time this train came through. It seemed like mother nature was in our favor when this one came rolling by.

Why not change it up a bit and go with model trains for this one. Pictured above is my new set of HO Proto 2000 New York Central Alco units. I recently obtained these NYC units from a fellow model railroader. I already had one NYC Alco and a NYC Baldwin Shark unit, so this A-B-A set fit in nicely with my other locomotives. Also, in the background is my HO Broadway Limited Pennsylvania Railroad T1 Duplex no. 5524. This photo was taken at the Lonesome Pine Model Railroad Club in Appalachia, VA. We tend to do lots of photography when we have down time at the model RR club.



Here we see NS ES44AC no 8101, The Central of Georgia heritage unit, near Tacoma, VA in Wise County. I do not remember what Train ID this was, but this was taken last fall. This is the train that I took with my two best friends chasing with me. The young boy had never been on a train chase and I am beyond blessed to have been a part of it with him!! We heard this had already come by Gate City and he really wanted to see this heritage unit, so I told him to get in the car and we will go after it. Call us crazy but we chased this train from Gate City to Tacoma which is close to Coeburn, VA. Finally, we found this public dirt road near the tracks and we caught it. When we arrived, they were changing crews at Tacoma, which worked out great for us. It gave us time to set up the camera. This was the best shot I could get at this particular [continued on next page]

location but it turned out pretty good. As the train started to pull out and come closer to us, the look on his face when the Central of Georgia engine rolled by us was priceless! He was beyond happy to see it!! After the chase, we decided to go to the model railroad and run trains to celebrate! I have often said that it is the little things in life that matter the most, and this was one of them!



On April 7, 2018 I was traveling back home from Johnson City and as I came through Weber City, VA I heard the EOT go off on the scanner, so I knew something was close by somewhere. As I came through Weber City I saw the tail end of NS 74A. NS 74A is a Yuma turn train that runs from Yuma, VA to Andover, VA. Anyhow, I decided to go to the famous Hob Nob Drive-In to snap a photo of 74A. I go by the Hob Nob quite often, yet I rarely eat

there; I honestly forget about it being there. I pulled in the Hob Nob parking lot and waited about 5 minutes for it to come by. I have never shot a train at this particular location before, so I figured I would for once in my life. NS 74A, had a total of 21 cars and 2 locomotives. Leading is NS ET44AC no. 3678 and behind it is NS ES44DC no 7602.

At right we have CSX T090-07 coal train coming down the NS line bound for Kingsport, TN on April 8, 2018. I heard this one was about to leave Big Stone Gap around 12:30; I had nothing else to do that day so I decided to go after it. The weather was perfect for train chasing and I couldn't resist but to go after this one. I first caught the train at Glenita then went on down to Copper Creek to get this shot. In the lead is CSX ES44AH no 731 and CSX ES44AC no. 898. On the rear of the train pushing was CSX ES44AH no. 3104 and CSX ES44AC 968. Needless to say, this coal train had a nice GE lashup. After I caught this one at Copper Creek I went back toward Duffield to my friend David Hammond's house to sit



around and chit-chat about trains, laugh about silly things on the internet, and to watch the pusher set come back by.

Dinner in the Diner

What a great time for all at the Chuckey Depot / Museum fundraiser at the Spring St. Coach Yard in Jonesborough on April 14th. All of our special guests had a very enjoyable meal on board our *Moultrie* dining car, as evidenced by the photos below. Thanks to all volunteers who helped with mechanical operation and hosting on the cars, as well as the kitchen and serving staff. [All photos by Mike Tilley]



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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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