

Whistle Stop



**Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society &
Museum**

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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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News of all of the exciting steam-related rail activity across the nation has your editor feeling nostalgic about the days when we were treated to such action in our own back yard.

To wit: here we see N&W's "Queen of Steam" charging the Blue Ridge grade east of Roanoke on May 2016 excursion duty. [Photo by Brian Crosier]

April 25th General Membership Meeting

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, April 25th, 2022 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Our program this month will be on the Cass Scenic Railroad in Cass, WV. Bring a friend out and enjoy a great evening of railroading.

Member Notes

Welcome to new member Tom Woodmaska.

If you've sent in your dues but not received your membership card, please email wataugavalley@gmail.com requesting one.

NEW EXCURSION MAILING LIST

WVRHS&M has put together a new mass email list for people to get advance notification of future excursions. Anyone interesting in getting on this advance list, please send your information to wataugavalley@gmail.com.

WATAUGA VALLEY UNIFORMS NOW AVAILABLE

Watauga Valley uniforms are now again available. If you need an order form sent to you, please email wataugavalley@gmail.com requesting one. Order your new uniforms now for these beautiful uniforms.

2022 WVRHS&M Rail Events

GSMR EXCURSION. We are happy to announce that our 2022 Spring Excursion has sold out. We will have a very large crowd riding with us on the April 30th GSMR trip. The next Great Smoky Mountain Railroad trip will be held on Saturday, Sept 17th.

HIWASSEE LOOP. The next Hiwassee trip near Etowah, TN is scheduled for October 15th.

DINNER ON THE DINERS. The date for the "Dinner on the Diners" event has been confirmed for Saturday evening, June 25th, 2022, in Jonesborough, TN. The highlight of the evening will be an elegant meal in one of WVRH&M's vintage dining cars, followed by stories from an authentic railroad storyteller. This unique opportunity allows young and old alike to relive a dining experience of a bygone era. Tickets are \$55.00 and must be purchased in advance. Tickets are available at the Jonesborough Visitors' Center, located at 117 Boone St., or by calling (423) 753-1010 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Tickets may also be purchased online at <http://www.jonesboroughtn.org>. Refunds are not available.



Please note: these dining cars will be in the rail yard on static display and will not move. Both cars were built before the Americans with Disabilities Act, and due to their historic significance and age, are exempt from ADA compliance requirements. Please consider suitability when ordering tickets.

Proceeds from ticket sales will help fund the restoration program of Watauga Valley's historic rail passenger cars, and to fund new exhibits and educational experiences at the Chuckey Depot Museum. The museum is housed in the former Southern Railway train depot, which Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, the town of Jonesborough, and the Heritage Alliance partnered to relocate and preserve.

Mechanical Department Report by Jim Magill



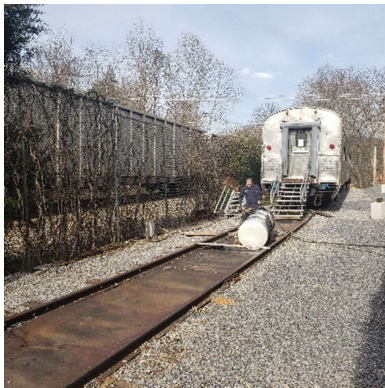
GENERAL

All work sessions at the Coach Yard, 210 Spring St., Jonesborough, are planned each Tuesday every month. Please show up at 9:00 am if you can help.

ROLLING STOCK

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400) and “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): both cars enroute to Jonesborough.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): having a new water system installed on the car. At right is David Billings at work. Below we see Gary Lombardi also at work on the water tank and Jim Sutterlin on the fuel tank.



“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): at the Spring St Coach Yard for ongoing repairs.

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): at the Spring St Coach Yard getting some wiring done; being prepared to head to the paint shop soon. Photos below show work needed on rusty windows.



Chuckey Depot / Museum

CHUCKEY DEPOT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are looking for more volunteers at the Chuckey Depot to be trained to host at the Museum. The next training sessions will be offered soon. If you would like to host at the depot, please email us at wataugavalley@gmail.com. Get signed up to come out and enjoy your depot.

Whistle Truck

OUR WHISTLE TRUCK NEEDS A NEW HOME

Our Whistle Truck has been stored in a Greenville, TN warehouse for nearly ten years. However, we lost that lease this past January. Since then, it has been moved place-to-place with a notice given that it has to be moved again by April 30th. A new inside storage location has to be found; otherwise, the truck will be stored outside which could result in weather-caused damage to the whistle machine.

Members are being asked if anyone has a suggestion for a new storage location. Dimensions for the truck and whistle trailer are 10 feet wide, 12 ½ feet high and 39 feet long. A new location's radius of 40 miles from Johnson City is desired as are reasonable rates.

Anyone having ideas on a new storage location should call Mike Tilley at (435) 335-1100 or email him at wataugavalley@gmail.com.

In the News ...

Update on Erwin Yard

CSX continues to dismantle the ex-CRR yard in Erwin, TN. Track removal continues and the diesel shop is being torn down. No plans for the future of the property have been announced.



Saluda Grade's Future



[Article by Chase Gunnoe, *trains.com*; photo by Fred Waskiewicz] Nearly 22 years have passed since freight trains descended Southern Railway's Saluda Mountain. Kudzu vines conceal the right-of-way in many places and heavy Appalachian rains have washed away sections of track. Although shrubs and small trees are reclaiming North America's steepest main line in rural western North Carolina, Norfolk Southern has not abandoned the notion that freight trains could again descend Saluda's 5.1% grade.

NS made the decision to idle a section of its route across Saluda Mountain in December 2001 when it discontinued use of the 67.4-mile corridor as a

through route between Asheville, N.C., and Spartanburg, S.C. It replaced over-the-road trains with local service originating from Asheville Yard and from Hayne Yard in Spartanburg, idling the middle segment across Saluda. In closing the mountain, western North Carolina freight shippers gained access to the balance of the NS system via the railroad's ex-Southern Railway east-west lines from Asheville. To the east, freight operates across Old Fort Loops to Salisbury, N.C., where it connects to the original Southern main linking Washington, D.C., to Atlanta. And Asheville west is the NS's water-level route to Knoxville, Tenn., along the French Broad River.

Jim McClellan, then-NS senior vice president of planning, explained that in choosing between two rail lines in proximity, the railroad will select the low-cost, fast option, even if it gives them extra circuitry. He explained how it doesn't cost railroads much money to leave lines in place and abandoning tracks and salvaging rail doesn't generate significant tax savings or scrap revenue.

Saluda was, and likely still is, perceived as a low-velocity, high-cost route that is redundant compared to other higher density NS lines in proximity. While today's routing adds route miles to locomotives and railcars, NS still likely benefits from cost-savings and less capital associated with maintaining and operating Saluda Mountain. And keeping Saluda in an idled state doesn't have a significant drag on NS's bottom line. "Many of these lines actually have a net-liquidation-value that's negative, after the environmental mitigation," McClellan said.

Saluda's fate is in the hands of the NS strategy team. Even though very little has changed with the mountain in the first two decades of the 21st century, the rail landscape of western North Carolina has changed. In 2014, NS sold a portion of the Saluda route to Watco, creating its Blue Ridge Southern Railroad. The short line provides service on about 26 miles of the corridor from the NS interchange at Asheville to Milepost 26.0, near Flat Rock, N.C., about 7.3 miles from Saluda proper.

NS also eliminated run-through traffic between Knoxville and Salisbury, North Carolina, via the Old Fort loops in 2020, after they cut back operations at its Linwood Yard near Salisbury. Instead, freight in Asheville and on the Blue Ridge Southern gain access to the NS system with a pair or regularly scheduled trains between Asheville and Knoxville. Local switch jobs handle local industries east of Asheville.

Despite these network adjustments and ample opportunity to forego Saluda forever, NS has not filed paperwork with the Surface Transportation Board, leaving the possibility that one day service could resume.

Advancements in technology allow the safe operation of longer, heavier trains. While Saluda remains North America's most grade-intensive route, it is possible that NS could reopen the mountain and operate trains more efficiently than before. Perhaps, however, they are holding onto Saluda for an entirely different reason.

Train Talk

Folk listening to Chuckey Depot's Railroad Radio have requested a list of the signals that the trains call between Bristol and Greeneville, TN. In response, we're publishing the following lists that includes station mile post, signal mile post, detector milepost including stations and radio transmitters. Hope you enjoy. Please note Centralized Train Control and Track Warrants (CTC) are at the following locations. All track warrants have been discontinued off the radio and went to onboard computers recently.

Bristol to Piney Flats CTC
 Piney Flats to Sand Valley Track Warrant
 Sand Valley to Telford CTC
 Telford to Jones Track Warrant
 Jones to Radar CTC
 Radar to Justice Track Warrant

Radio towers between Bristol and Bulls Gap. 160.56 Channel 1 and 161.40 Channel 2

Bristol Yard Office
 Buffalo Mtn
 Washington College
 Greeneville Station
 Bulls Gap.
 Justice to Knoxville MP 130 CTC

SIGNALS ON NORFOLK SOUTHERN'S A-LINE, BRISTOL TO MORRISTOWN

MP 0	A-LINE STARTS STATE STREET (CTC TO PINEY FLATS)
MP 0.3	FORD
MP 3.4	UNIVERSAL (APPROACH SIGNAL TO BRISTOL/FORD)
MP 6.0	VANCE
MP 8.8	UNNAMED
MP 11.8	BLUFF CITY
MP 12.9	DETECTOR
MP 13.7	CURTIS
MP 15.7	PINEY FLATS (TRACK WARRANT PINEY FLATS TO SAND VALLEY)
MP 18.5	WATAUGA (APPROACH SIGNAL TO PINEY FLATS)
MP 20.9	UNNAMED
MP 23.3	JOHNSON CITY CHEMICAL
MP 24.0	CARNIGIE YARD (INTERCHANGE WITH ET RAILWAY)
MP 26.3	WEST SIDING (BEHIND CARNIGIE HOTEL)
MP 27.2	DETECTOR (BELOW JC MEDICAL CENTER)
MP 29.6	JOHNSON CITY IRON AND METAL
MP 31.7	JONESBOROUGH (1.2 MILES EAST OF WATV COACH YARD) APPROACH TO SAND VALLEY
MP 32.5	WATAUGA VALLEY COACH YARD
MP 33.1	CHUCKEY DEPOT AT JONESBOROUGH
MP 35.9	SAND VALEY SIDING CTC (SIDING 2 MILES LONG) EAST END
MP 37.9	TELFORD SIDING CTC (SIDING 2 MILES LONG) WEST END TRACK WARRANT TELFORD TO JONES SIDING.

MP 40.3	WASHINGTON COLLEGE (ALSO DETECTOR LOCATED AT SIGNAL) APPROACH TO TELFORD
MP 43.7	LIMESTONE
MP 46.5	CHUCKEY
MP 49.5	AFTON SIDING EAST END
MP 50.6	AFTRON SIDING WEST END
MP 52.3	GREENEVILLE IRON METAL
MP 52.9	DETECTOR
MP 54.3	OLE PIGGY BACK TRACK
MP 56.5	GREENEVILLE DEPOT
MP 62.3	RADAR SIDE TRACK
MP 64.4	JONES SIDE TRACK
MP 66.8	MOSHEIM DETECTOR
MP 76.0	BULLS GAP
MP 79.0	WHITESBURG DETECTOR
MP 87.1	MORRISTOWN DETECTOR
MP 89.0	PICKENS START OF DOUBLE TRACK TO ALPHA



Missing big power steam action? There's plenty to be had in Maryland. Check out <https://wmsr.com/>. [Photo by Bart Kinlein published in "High Green", Chesapeake Railway Association]

Display in the Block

by Les Billings

In this installment of “Display in the Block”, I am going to display some of my Black & White photos. B&W has a timeless and nostalgic feeling. It can give a feeling of days gone by. Color photography has overshadowed the appreciation of these types of images. Please view these photos and dream of the past.



On a sunny 45 deg, December day, I took a part of my lunch hour to go to New St. in Johnson City to view NS 11Z passing by the signal entering Carnegie yard. With its ditch lights flashing and horn blowing, 4336 was leading the way. Its westbound journey takes this mixed freight train from East Yard in Binghamton, NY and concludes at Sevier Yard in Knoxville, TN.

Here at Bristol, we see NS 127 passing by the train station on the main, getting ready to cross over State Street and cross over into Tennessee. But before it could do so, it had to give one of its locomotives to NS126, because it had one of its units catch on fire down around Greeneville. As I understand, 126 had to use the Greeneville switcher to have enough power to make it to Bristol. As soon as the switch was complete 126 cleared the main track at CP “Ford” and 127 was able to continue its way.



One of my worst fears in railfanning is parking on one side of the track then crossing to the other side and have the train stop with no way to get back to my car. On this day I had this happen. This crossing is just before CP "Jones", just west of Greeneville. The train was moving a little slow but moving toward the siding. I had no idea that it would stop, but that is just what it did. This is when I thought that I was in trouble. I



paced back and forth wondering what I was going to do. Depending on what was wrong, this could take hours. So, after about 10 minutes or so, I heard the air brakes release and, the train began to move. I thanked the Lord and took a few more photos and the returned to my car.



On a fine Sunday afternoon in Piney Flat TN, we see a rare NS 40N Grain Train, eastbound, taking the signal as it approaches NS 127 waiting around the bend on the siding. 40N's destination is Norfolk VA. This train only runs on an as needed basis. It's always fun to catch these rare trains as they make it through our region. The more trains the merrier. This photo was shot with a 10x zoom lens on my phone.

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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL