

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432
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www.wataugavalleynrhs.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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CSX President and CEO Joe Hinrichs and this month's General Membership Meeting guest speaker Santa Claus enjoying their ride on the back of the CSXT Santa Train as it passes over Copper Creek trestle. [Photo by The Santa Train Group, permission to use.]

October 23rd General Membership Meeting



Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, October 23rd, 2023 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Santa Claus (Watauga Valley Member Don Royston) will be our guest and will share his experiences as Santa on the back of the CSXT Santa Train for many years. This is a program guaranteed to put you in the holiday spirit. Bring a friend out and enjoy an evening of railroading on the CSX Santa Train with Santa, er, Don.

Member Notes

WELCOME ABOARD! New members: Hal Hunter, Johnson City; Matt Dombkowski, Jonesborough; Karen Bobbitt and Mike Sipple, West Jefferson, NC; and Frank Caston, Moncks Corner, SC.

If you know of a member that needs a card, thoughts for various concerns, or to request that one of our members or family be reported for various concerns in the *Whistle Stop*, email a request to wataugavalley@gmail.com or railfan04041961@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership Dues Statements for 2024 will be emailed or sent by US mail in November. Dues are as follows:

Individual Membership \$20.00 Family Membership. \$ 5.00 per family member
Benefits:

- Membership in the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum.
- Participation of all functions of the Museum.
- 12 issues of Watauga Valley's newsletter, the "*Whistle Stop*".

2024 OFFICER AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS

The Nominating Committee will be presenting a slate of candidates for the upcoming election. Nominations will also be taken from the floor at the October General Membership Meeting. Ballots will be mailed out soon.



41st Annual Christmas Luncheon



The date for our annual Christmas Luncheon has been set for Saturday, December 9th, 2023 at the "*Depot at Franklin Commons*" at Food City, 920 North State of Franklin Road, Johnson City. We are pleased to announce two guest speakers at our Christmas Luncheon this year. Sandhi Kozsuch, railroad historian, who will discuss the origins and routes of three area legacy lines: 3Cs, Southwestern Railroad and Clinchfield. Also speaking is former CSX Trainmaster Scott Jessee who will share his experiences with the 50th Anniversary (1992) Santa Train powered by UP Challenger #3985. Scott will also talk about the derailments he experienced while working on the Clinchfield. The cost is \$15.00 per attendee. Information on the menu, making reservations and directions is attached to the end of this newsletter.

PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2023/4

Howard Orfield and Brad McCroskey, WVRHS&M program directors, are looking for General Membership Meeting programs for the remainder of 2023 and next year as well. We are looking for speakers; let us know of someone who would come and present a railroad related program. And as always, we are looking for DVD and slide programs. Please call (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com if interested.

TRAIN TRIVIA: What year did Joshua Lionel Cowen found the Lionel Manufacturing Company?
a.) 1899 b.) 1900 c.) 1897 d.) 1910. [Extra credit: what was its first product?] Answers on page 4.

Mechanical Department Report

by Art Devoe

GENERAL

Thanks to all the Mechanical and Cleaning Committee volunteers for all the work you have done over the past year on our passenger cars: Art Devoe, Don Findley, Jim Sutterlin, Cline Knowles, David Billings, Mike Tilley, David Denny, Jan Edwards, Gary Lombardi, Bob and Norma Hand, Connie Hunt, and Frank Gricus (hope we did not forget someone).

If you would like to help at the Jonesborough Coach Yard on Tuesdays between 9 am to 5 pm or Saturdays 9 am to 12 noon, please call our office at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

ROLLING STOCK

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400), “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), “Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539) and “Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): all four cars are at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC serving on their *“Polar Express”*.



“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): in service at Goshen, VA on the *“Shenandoah Valley Limited”*, the N&W #611 trips over the Virginia Scenic Railway. At left we see the *Crescent Harbor* parked at the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke awaiting movement up the line to Goshen, VA.

611'S REMAINING EXCURSION SCHEDULE

The *“Shenandoah Valley Limited”* will depart Victoria Station in Goshen, VA at 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on the following dates:

- October 20 – 22
- October 27 – 29
- November 3 – 5



For more information about #611 and the *“Shenandoah Valley Limited”*, visit <https://www.virginiascenicrailway.com/rides/shenandoah-valley-limited/>. [#611 photo posted on Virginia Scenic Railway web site.]

Chuckey Depot / Museum

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot/Museum has been very good. Visitor numbers are higher than expected. 479 people came through the door in September.

Automatic Train Control System

We are sorry to announce that the Automatic Train Control System (ATCS) at the Chuckey Depot was recently taken off line as Norfolk Southern has changed its operating system to a different location. This includes the A line through Johnson City / Jonesborough and the Bristol Line between Bristol and Roanoke. The TV screen will remain at the Depot displaying the west camera.

Host Training

We are getting ready to schedule host training sessions for any WVRHS&M member who is interested in hosting at the Chuckey Depot. If you would like to attend one of the host training sessions, please call the office at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

Volunteers Needed for Santa Train Exhibit

WVRHS&M and the Town of Jonesborough will sponsor this year's Santa Train Exhibit on December 17th at the Depot from 3 pm to 6 pm. Everyone is welcome to come out, bring their children, see our restored Southern Caboose X450 and greet Santa Claus. We will need volunteers to help assist with the event by getting visitors staged around the caboose. Please express your interest in helping by signing up at the November 27th General Membership meeting, emailing wataugavalley@gmail.com, or calling (423) 753-5797. This will be good publicity for us as we are expecting a lot of people to view our beautiful red caboose and depot and to greet Santa while attending the Jonesborough Christmas Parade.



[left] Norfolk Southern recently moved its Jonesborough "station" sign from the Chuckey Depot area to a placement across the site of the former Southern Railway Jonesborough Station. [below]



TRAIN TRIVIA ANSWER: b.) 1900. The New York City company's first product was an electric fan. [Sources: toytales.ca, Wikipedia]

Identifying Local Trains ...

Train Numbers through Johnson City

NORFOLK SOUTHERN		CSX
13Z WEST BOUND	14Z EAST BOUND	C NUMBERS COAL
126 EAST BOUND	127 WEST BOUND	L NUMBERS LOCALS
278 EAST BOUND	279 WEST BOUND	M NUMBERS MERCHANDISE
288 EAST BOUND	289 WEST BOUND	B NUMBERS ETHANOL AND GRAIN
T 24 EAST/WEST BOUND LOCAL		

In the News ...

North Carolina to provide \$12 million for Saluda Grade trail

[*Trains Newswire*, October 3] The effort to turn the former Saluda Grade into a hiking and biking trail has received an additional boost with \$12 million in funding from the state of North Carolina, the Spartanburg (S.C.) Herald-Journal reports.

The North Carolina state budget approved Sept. 22 includes that funding over a two-year period toward purchase of the 16-mile portion in that state of the former Southern Railway route, once the steepest mainline railroad in the U.S. That is according to Conserving Carolina, one of the three nonprofit groups involved in purchasing 31.5 miles in North and South Carolina from Norfolk Southern for conversion to a trail under a deal reached earlier this year. South Carolina has already set aside \$15 million for the trail; the full cost has not been announced under a confidentiality agreement between the railroad and the three nonprofit groups.

The first meetings to solicit public comment on plans for the trail are coming up later this month, the Herald-Journal reports. The first will be Oct. 17 at the Inman, SC, public library; the second will be Oct. 19 at Polk County High School in Columbus, NC. Both meetings are scheduled to run from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

New bullet trains misfire on old U.S. railroad tracks

[Extracted from *E&E News* article by Minho Kim, September 5] The first U.S.-made high-speed “bullet” trains will start running as early as 2024 between Boston, New York, and Washington, with the promise of cutting transportation emissions by attracting new rail passengers who now drive or fly.

But Amtrak’s plan to run high-speed rail service on its Northeast Corridor faces a major obstacle — the 450-mile route does not have modern tracks that can handle the speed.

Amtrak, a federally owned passenger-rail company, will have to operate the new trains on tracks that were built more than a century ago for much slower commuter and freight service. The bullet cars will be forced to run slower than 110 mph in most segments.

Many European and Asian countries operate high-speed trains around 200 mph on special tracks designed for faster speeds and closed to slower rail cars.

Building a national high-speed rail network requires decades of annual appropriations similar to the funding stream that built the interstate highway starting in the Eisenhower administration, said Louis Thompson, a former director of the Federal Railroad Administration and a member of the California High-Speed Rail Peer Review Group. “Until we are serious about high-speed rail in the same way that we were serious about the interstate highways, we’re highly unlikely to see a national high-speed rail system,” Thompson said.

The interstate highway system cost \$129 billion — roughly \$290 billion in current dollars — and took 35 years to complete, running from 1957 to 1992. The \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill enacted in 2021 has \$102 billion for rail, but none of the money is set aside for high-speed rail.

Amtrak’s new rail cars can tilt at curves to maintain high speeds, but many curves are too sharp even for the most modern technology. Currently, only 32 miles of tracks on the Northeast Corridor can handle speeds up to 160 mph

To read the entire article, go to <https://tinyurl.com/yjufb6km>

Tesla buys German railway line

[Keith Fender, *Trains Newswire*, September 19] Electric vehicle maker Tesla has opened its railway line east of Berlin to passenger trains designed for use by workers at its new ‘Gigafactory’ east of the German capital. Trains started running on Sept. 4, and are free of charge and available to all passengers whether Tesla employees or not.

The short rail line — around 3-miles long — was bought from an independent German rail infrastructure holding company and gives Tesla direct connections to the Deutsche Bahn (German Railways) owned main line that links Berlin with Poland. The rail line has already been used during construction of the factory to bring in materials and will be used once the factory is fully open to dispatch or receive up to six freight trains daily.

Tesla has built its Gigafactory — its first European factory — at Grünheide east of Berlin, in a forested area used before 1990 by the former East German Stasi secret police as a training base, as well as, housing a facility where all parcels sent to East Germany from abroad were opened prior to delivery to check for prohibited items.

Once in full operation the Tesla factory is expected to employ around 10,000 people working three shifts 24 hours a day and whilst many of those people will likely drive cars to get there, a large number, especially those living in Berlin itself, will come by train. Tesla has sponsored the operation of passenger trains to and from the new station built on the branch line, just outside the factory gates. These are being operated by a local passenger rail contractor — the Niederbarnimer Eisenbahn (NBE) — and run 54 times a day on weekdays, mainly timed for Tesla employee shift changes, from Erkner station, around 5 miles west of the site, which is served by fast commuter rail trains on the mainline and is the terminus of a separate slower (all stations) commuter rail ‘S-Bahn’ line from Berlin too.

Longer term, a nearby Deutsche Bahn owned station at Fangschleuse on the mainline, served by regular commuter rail services to and from Berlin, is to be re-located near the new Tesla factory but not before 2025; whether the dedicated Tesla shuttle train will continue long term is not currently known.

Display in the Block

By Les Billings

In this installment of "Display in the Block" I will present some CSX action that is within a 1/8" mile of my house in Johnson City. This section of track is the north end and where the "Highline" begins. I hear the 115.2 MP and the 125.1 MP defect detectors go off on the radio and I know it's time to get over to the tracks. A few minutes wait and here they come. So, here are a few recent shots I have been able to capture.



[Above] CSX M692, was shot as I was going to work. It is heading southbound toward Erwin.

[Below] ES44AC-H #3180 southbound on a Sunday afternoon. 3 head units on a manifest.



EOT shinning bright as M693 fades southward.

[Above] M693 with its freshly painted EMD SD70MAC. For this shot I was on the east side of the tracks where I have a long unobstructed view.

[Below] A long shot of M693 as it passes over the Embreville Rd crossing. I cross here on my daily trip to work.



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Opinions or viewpoints are those of the writer and may not necessarily reflect those of the organization members, officers or directors. Items of interest are welcome and will be credited to the author; however, because of space constraints, all submissions are subject to editing. Permission to reprint *Whistle Stop* articles with the exception of photographs is granted if proper credit is given. Reuse of photographs must receive permission by the editor and the photographer.



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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum Annual Christmas Luncheon

Date: Saturday, December 9, 2023

Time: Meal at Noon; may arrive 11 a.m. for socializing

Location: Same as last year; Depot Room at Food City Franklin Commons,
920 N. State of Franklin Rd, Johnson City, 37604

Reservation & pre-payment deadline: Thursday, November 30, 2023

Cost: \$15.00 each; make check payable to WVRHS & M and specify "Christmas Luncheon"

See Reservation Form below

Menu

Oven Fried Chicken -or- Roast Beef Au Jus
Tossed Salad with choice of dressings
Twice Baked Potato & Green Beans Almondine
Rolls & Butter
Coffee, Tea, Water, Coke products
Dessert: choose from 2 pies and 2 cakes

***A Veggie Tray and a Cheese Tray will be available during the social hour (11 - 12 noon)
buffet line will be ready at Noon***

Registration & payment form for Christmas Luncheon:
detach & mail to: WVRHS & M; PO Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432
We must receive your check & form by Thursday, Nov 30, 2023

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Number of persons attending _____ x \$15. Per person = \$ _____ (enclosed)

- Make check payable to WVRHS&M, and designate as *Christmas Luncheon*
- Mail to WVRHS&M, PO Box 432; Johnson City, TN 37605-0432

We must receive your reservation and your payment by Thursday, November 30, 2023

We cannot accept payment or reservation at the door !!

Our annual Christmas Luncheon and program are something we all look forward to; it's a time to enjoy a good meal and socialize with friends while leaving all of the work to the Food City Catering Service. We've tweaked our menu this year, and we trust you will enjoy the choices we've made. The Food City catering group do such a great job with meals for "Dinner on the Diner", and we felt they are our best choice for our annual Christmas Luncheon.

- Note: The WVRHS & M is paying a portion of the cost of each meal, so your portion is a very reasonable \$15. each.