

# Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum  
P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432  
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[www.wataugavalleynrhs.org](http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org)



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Every few years we reprint this classic shot of Santa waving from the cab of CRR FP7A #200, a picture that captures our group's interest in railroading and the joy of this time of year. This photo originally graced a seasonal public relations card mailed out by the railroad.

## *January 22<sup>nd</sup> General Membership Meeting*

**Remember that there is no December meeting due to the holidays.** Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Our program is entitled "THE RAILROAD THAT WENT TO SEA". Plan to join us for an entertaining evening of railfanning.

# Member Notes

Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers as we wish them a speedy recovery: Gary Price, Lois Tilley, Jim Calhoun, Paul Bultman, Chuck Lewis, Coy Edwards, Tony King, and Mike & Betty Jackson.

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](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or [railfan04041961@gmail.com](mailto:railfan04041961@gmail.com).

**WELCOME ABOARD!** New members: Thomas Pttman, Newland, NC; Jack Butler and Adriana Butler, Winter Green, FL; Danielle Doughty, Bristol, TN; Josephine Hemphill, Johnson City.

**Note to Members:** If anyone’s address, phone number or email address has changed in the last years’ time, please contact Les Billings at [railfan04041961@gmail.com](mailto:railfan04041961@gmail.com) for correction. This will ensure that no one misses mailings, phone calls or emails. Also, if this info changes at any time please send us the correction. Thank You.

## 2024 OFFICER AND BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

We welcome the following as 2024 Officers and Directors:

### Officers

President -----	Mike Tilley
Vice President -----	Howard Orfield
Secretary-----	Connie Hunt
Treasurer-----	Jeanie Walker
Historian-----	Gary Price

### Board of Directors

Frank Gricus

Tony King

Jim Sutterlin

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

## 2024 EXCURSION SEASON

Watauga Valley’s 2024 excursion season will start in late April with a trip on the *Great Smoky Mountains Railroad*. Tickets will go on sale soon; visit our web site in January for more information. Sign up for trip volunteers will follow afterwards.

## 2024 WVRHS&M MEMBERSHIP DUES

If you have not paid your 2024 dues yet, please do so before your membership expires on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Dues are as follows: Individual Membership \$20.00, Family Membership \$5.00 per family member. Checks should be made out to WVRHS&M and mailed to P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432.

# Mechanical Department Report

by Art Devoe

## 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):** at the Virginia Museum of Transportation.

## WVRHS&M Annual Dinner

Great food, fun and fellowship were had by all at the Watauga Valley Annual Christmas Dinner on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at the Food City “Depot” Banquet Room in Johnson City. Approximately 80 attendees packed the house. President Mike Tilley conducted a short business meeting. We were then treated to entertaining and informative talks by Sandhi Kozsuch (bottom left) on the 3Cs Railroad and Scott Jessee (bottom right) talking about his experience as Trainmaster at CSX out of Dante and Kingsport.



## Chuckey Depot / Museum

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot/Museum has been very good during the holidays. Many Watauga Valley members have taken the host training session. We plan on having another class in January and already have several signed up for it. Volunteering at the depot is a good way to start out 2024. If you would like to volunteer a day a month at the depot, email [wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com) or phone (423) 753-5797 to sign up for training.

### BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

The “*Breakfast with Santa*” event was a major success with 50 attendees for both the 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. seatings. There was a lot of enjoyment for the children and parents listening to Santa’s stories. Thanks to Rick Chinouth, Anne Mason, Jim Sutterlin, and Les Billings for working this event. And a special thanks to Junior Risner as Santa.



### SANTA CABOOSE

The Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> “*Santa Caboose*” event was a big hit for the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, Heritage Alliance, and the Town of Jonesborough. Despite the pouring rain, we had over 100 attendees who came to see the Depot and visit with Santa. We want to thank all WVRHS&M members who helped with this event and especially Santa (Junior Risner).

### SOUTHERN X450 CABOOSE DECORATIONS

A big thank you to Rich Szymkowski and Kitty Kilgallon for a beautiful job decorating the caboose for our Christmas events at the Chuckey Depot. If you have not seen how festive the car looks, drive by the Chuckey Depot one evening.

## *In the News ...*

### *Amtrak to Bristol Passenger Rail Study Announced*

[Emily Hibbitts, *WJHL*] Virginia U.S. Senators Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine announced \$2 million in federal funding to study improvements to passenger rail by potentially extending Amtrak service to new cities, increasing frequency, and creating faster routes.

Out of the \$2 million, \$500,000 will go towards the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation for a proposed plan that would extend Amtrak services to Bristol, Virginia.

The plan would also include new frequencies, improved travel times, improvements to reliability and new stations, including an infill [a train station built on existing passenger rails] stop in Bedford, Virginia, a release from the offices of Warner and Kaine said.

“For years, we’ve been championing the expansion of rail to every corner of the Commonwealth because it’s a slam dunk for local economies, cuts traffic and protects the environment,” Warner and Kaine said in a release. “We’re thrilled the bipartisan infrastructure law is taking a big step towards expanding service across the entire Commonwealth so communities along the I-95 corridor and beyond can be connected by more convenient, consistent passenger rail.”

Each project now enters “Step 1” of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its service development plan, the release said.

In addition to Bristol, \$500,000 went to areas of Eastern Virginia, Roanoke, Northern Virginia, Charlotte, N.C. and Washington, D.C.

### *Passenger Rail to Asheville?*

[SPECTRUM NEWS] Grants [seven at \$500,000 each] announced last week [first of December] will go to looking at expanding rail service in North Carolina.

The grants will help expand rail in the South. “This \$3.5 million in grant funding to identify and develop potential rail lines across North Carolina could be transformational in how North Carolinians travel,” Sen. Thom Tillis said in a statement.

One grant will look at reviving the passenger rail service from Raleigh to Wilmington, which last ran in 1968. The route would use an existing line, but parts of it have been abandoned and would need to be rebuilt. The state would also need to build new stations on the route that would stop through Goldsboro on the way to Wilmington.

Another route on the docket could connect Asheville to the existing Raleigh to Charlotte service. “The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment between Asheville and Salisbury in western North Carolina, following a line that last hosted passenger trains in 1975,” Tillis’s office said.

There is no timeline for when these routes could be taking passengers to Wilmington or Asheville, but the funding is the first step to get the projects moving.

## *CSX Heritage Series Honors Atlantic Coast Line Railroad*

[CSX Press Release] The CSX fleet of heritage locomotives is continuing to grow with the introduction of a unit painted in a custom design honoring the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.

Designated CSX 1871, the seventh locomotive in the heritage series was unveiled at the CSX Locomotive Shop in Waycross, Georgia, which has designed and applied the paint schemes for all the heritage units. The latest in the series features the modern CSX design on the head end, transitioning to historic paint scheme and logo of the Atlantic Coast Line at the rear.



The Atlantic Coast Line name first appeared in 1871, and the American Coast Line Railroad (ACL) was officially incorporated in 1900. The ACL extended from Georgia to Richmond, Virginia, and later expanded into Florida. In 1960, the company opened a new headquarters building in Jacksonville, which continues as CSX headquarters to this day. The ACL merged with the Seaboard Air Line Railroad in 1967 to form the Seaboard Coast Line, which later became part of CSX.

“We do a lot of research on the colors and the schemes just to make sure that we get it right,” said Jeromy Hutchison, CSX carman painter. “We want to make sure we do our heritage justice.”

CSX 1871 will carry the ACL colors in service across the 20,000-mile CSX network, reinforcing employee pride in the history of the railroad that continues to move the nation’s economy with safe, reliable, and sustainable rail-based transportation services.



CSX Transportation’s *Santa Train* departs Dante, VA, with its 13-car train as it rolls along empty coal hoppers and Lick Creek on Nov. 18, 2023. The photo was taken from Dante Mountain Road. [Steve Smedley photo published in *Trains Newsletter*]

# Display in the Block

By Les Billings

This Month I am displaying random photos taken in the region this summer from Piney Flats, Johnson City, Kingsport, and Sandy Valley. Railfanning has become difficult since the ATCS has gone off the air. Radio and word of mouth has become the source of train location knowledge. This limits the distance of travel. Maybe one of these days we will be lucky and get it back.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!**



**[Above]** Piney Flats – NS 127 pulling into C.P. Curtis moving past the propane tank for wintertime thawing of the switch. It was headed toward the siding to wait on an eastbound.



**[Above]** Johnson City – Northbound CSX sitting on the siding behind ETSU. This is M692 or M652. This was once a busy siding as you could always bet on a train waiting here as a southbound came through. Not so much anymore.



**[Above]** Kingsport – Little rusty run-down Caboose (Short Body- CSX 16630) sitting on the siding next to east Main St. I believe it is used by Eastman as a shoving platform for their trains.

**[Below]** Piney Flats – NS 279 rounding the curves. He will stop and wait for NS 14Z coming from Johnson City, eastbound.

**[Below]** Sand Valley – Two East bounders meet on the siding. The left train had to give the right train one of its units because of a failure.



# *Whistle Stop*

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**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**