

# Whistle Stop



**Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum**

**P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432**

**(423) 753-5797**

**[www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org](http://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org)**



**Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage**

Volume 44 No. 2

February 2024



With three F unit pushers on its rear, southbound coal Train 26 is clearing the north siding switch at Barrett Yard in Johnson City, Tenn. to allow Extra 817 North to proceed. Photo by Steve Patterson, March 1965.

## *January 22th General Membership Meeting*

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have our regular meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, January 22, 2024 at the Chuckey Depot / Museum at 110 2<sup>nd</sup> St Jonesborough Mark your calendar so you will not miss this meeting. The program will be on *The Railroad That Went To Sea*. Sounds like the Florida East Coast. This program will promise to be a great and informative program.

Bring a friend out for a relaxing evening with your fellow members.

## *Member Notes*

Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers as we wish them a speedy recovery:  
Gary Price and Paul Bultman.

---

### *Welcome Aboard!*

**New members:** No new members this month.

---

### **LATE DUES NOTICE FOR 2024**

If you have not paid your dues as of press time, your membership expired **December 31, 2023**. Please submit your dues ASAP so our membership chairman will not have to send you a LATE NOTICE and to keep receiving your issue of the "Whistle Stop".

Membership Dues for 2024 are:

Dues: Individual Membership \$ 20.00

Family Membership \$ 5.00 per family member

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

Dues should be sent to Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. For questions email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com).

---

## 2024 Officers and Board of Directors and Appointees

### **Officers:**

President: Mike E. Tilley  
Vice President: Howard Orfield  
Secretary: Connie Hunt  
Treasurer: Jeanie Walker  
Historian: Gary Price

### **Directors:**

Howard Orfield - Chairman of the Board  
Art Devoe                      Ralph Clark  
Frank Gricus                      Bob Hand  
Rick Chinouth                      Tony King  
Les Billings                      Bob Mushet  
Jim Sutterlin

### **Appointees:**

Art Devoe, Mechanical Officer  
Don Findley, Asst Mechanical Officer  
Fred Waskiewicz, Newsletter Editor  
Les Billings, Asst Newsletter Editor  
Jeff Forrester, Webmaster  
Cline Knowles, Circulation Whistle Stop  
Mike Tilley, Trip Director  
Frank Gricus, Grant Director  
Frank Gricus, Depot Camera Director

Mike Tilley, Chuckey Depot Advisory Board  
Rick Chinouth, Chuckey Depot Advisory Board  
& Sub Committee Chairman  
Les Billings, Nominating Comm  
Les Billings, Membership Chairman



**Officer/Director nominating committee members for 2025:**

Bob Hand  
 Rich Szymkowski  
 Connie Hunt  
 Les Billngs



## *Chuckey Depot / Museum*

Things at the Chuckey Railroad Depot Museum in Jonesborough are going great. Most volunteers are working around one day a month at the depot. We will have another training session for host in February, if your intersected to sign up please e mail [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or call the office at 423-753-5797 for information.

### *New Chuckey Depot Exhibit Announced*

The title of the upcoming exhibit is "Louisville & Nashville Railroad - The Old Reliable". It focuses on the development of the L&N and its importance to the Nashville area.



It will open on Thursday, February 29th and the Grand Opening will be Saturday, March 1st with refreshments and featured speaker Ron Flanary, noted railroad photographer and L&N historian.



A display will also be devoted to the Tennessee Central Railway that played a smaller but influential role in the Middle to East Tennessee areas in terms of both passenger and commercial traffic.

### *PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2024*

The WVRHS program committee is looking for General Membership programs for 2024. Please notify us at the January meeting or email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) if you can do a program, we are looking for speakers, also if you know someone that would come and present a railroad related program. And as always were looking for DVD and slide programs.

### *LIBRARY DONATIONS FOR RAILROAD SECTION*

Please bring your railroad book donations to any membership meeting or call the chapter office at 423-753-5797. Our Railroad Section at the Jonesborough Library is growing everyday. If you are finished reading or just want to donate, put your books to good works. We have

# Mechanical Department Report

by Art DeVoe



With the off season upon us, the Mechanical team is waiting on the return of our cars. When they arrive, they will jump on them to make improvements and repairs to get them ready for the Fall and Winter season. **Thank you all who served.**

The Watauga Valley mechanical team is looking for more volunteers. As most of you know the WATV mechanical team is composed of volunteers with all kind of different experiences. We now have five operating passenger car and it takes a lot of man power to keep the equipment up and running. We need volunteers to help with all kinds of projects, even if they do not have any experience. The WATV mechanical team is all volunteers and most of them are retired and many still working. The team is a great bunch of guys enjoying working together to keep our equipment up and running on the rails. If you're interested, please e mail us at [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or call the Watauga Valley office at 423-753-5797 and leave a message that you are interested in volunteering at the Jonesborough Coach yard. Work days are Tuesday's 9am to 5pm. If you're tired of lying around the house during the winter months, please call and let us know and we will get you scheduled to see what you can do to help.

## ROLLING STOCK

**ST. AUGUSTINE COACH** Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum the past couple of months. Car will return back to our coach yard in Jonesborough in Soon! [ WATX 500 ]

**POWHATAN ARROW COACH** Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum the past couple of months. Car will return back to our coach yard in Jonesborough in Soon! [ WATX 539 ]

**MOULTRIE DINING CAR** Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum the past couple of months. Car will return back to our coach yard in Jonesborough Soon! [ WATX 400 ]

**CRESCENT HAROBR LOUNGE/SLEEPER** Was in service with Norfolk & Western 611 during October and the first week in November. The car at press time is at the Virginia Museum in Roanoke, VA and will be returning back to the Spring St coach yard very soon!

**CLINCHFIELD OFFICE CAR WATX 100 Has** been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum the past couple of months. Car will return back to our coach yard in Jonesborough in Soon!

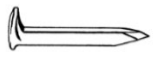
## Track Work



Approximately 15 switch ties were condemned by NS recently at the Spring St. Coach yard in Jonesborough. We had track crew come in on Friday the 12th and repair. The Yard is now in good shape from end to end. We are ready for the Coach Cars to return for maintenance.



## *In the News*



### *Tracks and Trestles to get a facelift with Grants from NCDOT*



[The Sylva Herald] The N.C. Department of Transportation's Rail Division is investing \$10.2 million as part of 50-50 matching grant funding for rail infrastructure projects along 10 short line railroads, including one partially in Jackson County.

The state's share of the \$20.5 million for all the rail projects is provided through the NCDOT's Freight Rail & Rail Crossing Safety Improvement program. It will match

equal investments from several railroad companies.

The projects will improve 14 railroad bridges and 27 miles of railroad track in North Carolina, supporting the increase of freight rail traffic on the statewide railroad network, and reducing highway traffic congestion by diverting freight to rail.

Locally, Great Smoky Mountains Railroad was awarded \$1,319,745 for bridge improvements and track upgrades along the mainline rail corridor in Jackson, Macon and Swain counties.

"We are pleased to work with our short line railroad partners to improve the state's critical freight rail network," said Jason Orthner, NCDOT Rail director. "These projects are important investments to ensure our infrastructure can support growing transportation demands and economic development opportunities."

Each of the rail improvement projects will be paid for with 50-50 matching funds from the state and private railroad companies.

### *CSX eighth installment of their Heritage Locomotives*

Numbered CSX 1853, CSX's eighth heritage locomotive commemorates the distinguished history of the New York Central Railroad (NYC)! Originally chartered in 1853, the NYC was a vital transportation link between the Northeast and Midwest United States. It eventually merged with the Pennsylvania Railroad, which subsequently became part of Conrail and, ultimately, part of today's CSX. Each of our new heritage locomotives reinforces the [#ONECSX](#) team's pride in the history of CSX as we continue to deliver for our communities into the future.



## *Scenes From the Past*

**Submitted by Mike Tilley**

### ***ONE OF THE WORST WRECKS ON THE CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD***

Photos courtesy of Phil Laws.

About 1:15am on October 25, 1970, a head-end collision occurred between two Clinchfield Railroad freight trains, 4403 feet south of the station at Green Mountain, NC near mile post 160 which is 24 miles south of Erwin Yard, TN. The engineer and brakeman on the northbound train were killed and the brakeman on the southbound train was injured.

The collision was caused by failure of the engineer to operate the southbound train in accordance with restricting signal indications at the south end of Green Mountain, due to the engineer neglecting to see the Approach aspect displayed by a signal and being erroneously informed by the front brakeman that the signal had displayed a clear aspect.

The Northbound train departed Spartanburg SC at 625pm with the following consist engines 822 868 907 810 806 plus 60 cars and a caboose with train crew engineer Jake Hartsell and head brakeman Jerry Eller.



The Southbound train departed Erwin Yard, TN at 12:05am engineer Frank Duncan and head brakeman M R Leonard with 135 cars of coal (13,600 tons) along with 3 pushers and a caboose. The crew caller in Erwin on second shift had run out of engineers off the call board and called engineer Duncan to see if he would accept an early call since he arrive in Erwin earlier from Spartanburg on Train 97. Mr. Duncan took the early call.

Neither crew was calling signals that night and the last radio transmission was head engineer Mr. Duncan talking with pusher engineer Arnold Williams that he was having wheel slippage on 822. Mr. Williams responded back that he had 822 a couple of days earlier and it was bad about doing that. When Southbound 822 passed the south signal at Green Mountain, NC the engineer asks the head brakeman what the signal indication was when they passed it since for some unaccountable reason, he did not see it. The head brakeman told the engineer that the signal was clear and their southbound train proceeded on through Green Mountain down the main line at the speed of 30 mph estimated by the engineer to the south end signal which they noticed was red meaning (STOP). The northbound train had an approach signal and a signal into the Green Mountain Siding. At that point the southbound engine crew noticed a reflection of a headlight in the distance and immediately put the train in emergency and jumped off the train. Because of the of its excessive speed, there was insufficient braking distance for extra 822 to get stopped at the south signal. Northbound Extra 808 crew was not so lucky to jump from the locomotive. Engine 808 and 822 met head on 168 feet from the south signal at Green Mountain. The



crew members on the northbound train were deceased in the explosion and fire of the diesel fuel. The head crew on the southbound jumped off their train with only injuries to the head brakeman. No injuries to the pusher crew or crew on caboose.



**1968 Photo**

Clinchfield #1 and CRR Car 100 traveling northbound at the north end of Barrett Yard beside Signal Road in Johnson City.

*2024 WVRHS&M Rail Events*

*EXCURSION REPORT*



The Watauga Valley Excursion Committee has been working on several Excursions in 2024. The dates and destination of trips are as follows.

May 4, 2024 Spring - Great Smoky Mtn. Trip—Diesel Power



Sept 14, 2024 Fall - Great Smoky Mtn. Trip—Steam Power

**Dinner on The Diner**

The date for the “Dinner on the Diner” event has been confirmed for Friday and Saturday evening, April 26th and April 27th 2024 at the Spring Street Yard, in Jonesborough, TN. Dining times are 5pm and 7pm. This unique opportunity allows young and old alike to relive a dining experience of a bygone era.



# Display in the Block

by Les Billings



**Happy New Year to all!**



Although one may say that the cars below have been vandalized and these painting done by trespassers, but there are some that are very creative. Some of these folks seem to be real artist. I know I could not come close to creating some of these if I had a white sheet hanging from a tree. Below is a sample of the Rail Cars I have photographed along my railfanning adventures. These were taken from both Norfolk Southern and CSX





[Left] On a day trip between Christmas and New Years, my wife and I visited Beech Mountain

were our fellow member Fred Pfohl has his store *Fred's General Mercantile*. I have wanted to visit his place for a while. After arriving, we went in and had a short visit with Fred as he was getting ready to travel to Boone for some produce. We looked around, and bought a hat. We then went downstairs to the grill and had a Country Ham Biscuit which really hit the spot.. This was my first visit to Fred's and hope to come back soon.



[Right] After Visiting Fred's we proceeded to travel south down to Marion, NC. I wanted to go to Moodytown crossing where *The SouthernRailFan* (Kyle Lael) shoots his YouTube videos. I make it a point to check out his daily postings that I thoroughly enjoy. I had 3 goal's in mind. Visiting the crossing, meeting Kyle and photographing a train. I was able to accomplish 2 out of 3. Getting some shots of train traffic did not happen. I was told, we had just missed a southbound. As my wife sat in the car, I talked with Kyle for a while and I did get some photos with Kyle and a few of the surroundings. After the nice visit, we headed west toward Asheville and then home.



## *Interest*

### **CLINCHFIELD TUNNEL #36 BRUSH CREEK**

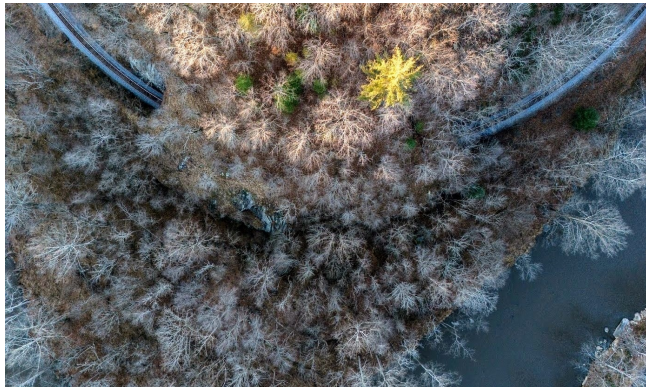
Thomas Pittman

Brush Creek Tunnel at Mile Post 163.1 on Clinchfield Railroad had a little history that many railfans did not know about. When the railroad was built in the early 1900's, it was decided to not make a tunnel at Brush Creek and go around the hill. The curve around the hill was very sharp and several derailments happened so the railroad after approximate 3 years decided to tunnel through the hill and do away with the major sharp curve beside the Toe River and name the tunnel Brush Creek. The tunnel is 304' long on a curve and completely unfinished, except for some supporting concrete on the left of the south portal. The reason for the concrete supports at the portal is that in the 1940's or 50's, an Alco Challenger clipped the portal as it came through this tunnel. Also in the early 80's train No. 93 had a piggyback in his train and it did not make the curve inside the tunnel and derailed.

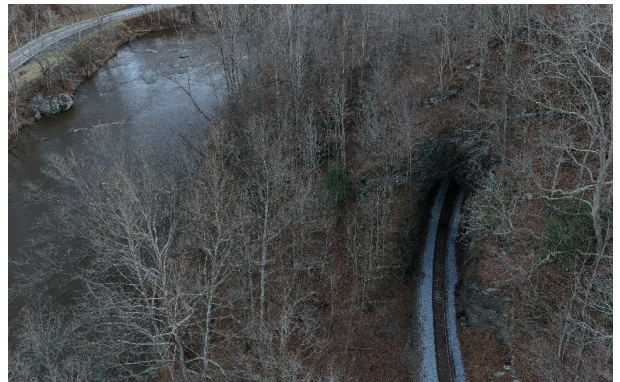


There has been talk over the years of daylighting the tunnel but it never happened. Recently Wa-

tauga Valley Member "Thomas Pittman" took the time and went over to Green Mtn, NC and took overhead pictures with his drone of Brush Creek Tunnel from the highway.



You can see the curve still shown in the pictures around the tunnel



which was done over 100 years ago.

## *Photo Collection for Sale*

Scott Jesse has a collection of photos he would like to sell. They are photos by Robert Harvey. This collection contains B&W photos of The Clinchfield #1 and its Excursions. There around 43, 8" x 10"s and around 8, 5" x 7" photos. This collection will be available for purchase at the January Meeting on the 22nd. Set Price: \$50.00.

## *Whistle Stop*

Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432

[whistlestop.editor@gmail.com](mailto:whistlestop.editor@gmail.com)

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.



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum**

**P.O. Box 432**

**Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**