

Whistle Stop



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



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 32 No. 1

January 2012



GSMR GP35 #223 in service on the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD, one of two Spring excursions we're sponsoring.

Breaking News! *Two Exciting Rail Trips Offered!*

See page 6 for details.

January 23rd Membership Meeting

The first Watauga Valley RHS&M Membership Meeting of the year will be held **Monday, January 23, 2012** at 6:30 pm at the Johnson City Public Library, 100 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will feature excursions on the SOUTHERN RAILWAY. This will be a program you do not want to miss. Bring a friend out for a relaxing evening with your fellow members.

Member Notes

by Nancy Jewell

Our sympathy is extended to the family of Kenneth Kerns in his death on January 4, 2012 in Unicoi, Tennessee. Ken was a charter member of our NRHS Chapter. He spent many, many hours at the Jonesborough Yards helping with the restoration and upkeep of the rail cars during the 80's and 90's. Ken and Agnes were both loyal members and great friends. Please keep Bob Yaple in your thoughts as he recovers from recent shoulder surgery. As always, call us at (423) 753-5797 or Nancy Jewell at (423) 282-0918, with the name of a member, family, or friend to whom a card might be sent or a call made. Help us keep in touch.

Membership Renewal

If you did not pay your membership dues, your membership expired 12/31/11. Please renew ASAP to keep your membership current. Dues Classes:

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum	Indiv. \$20.00	Spouse \$5.00
Watauga Valley NRHS	Indiv. \$56.00	Spouse \$5.00
Watauga Valley Railroad Heritage Alliance	Indiv. \$36.00	Spouse \$5.00
Joining all three	Indiv. \$71.00	Spouse \$10.00

You can turn your dues in at the January 23, 2012 Membership Meeting or mail to: Membership Chairman, Watauga Valley RSHM, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432.

2012 Officers, Board Members and Appointees

Officers

President: Mike E. Tilley
 Vice President: Bob Schubel
 Secretary: Jim Smallwood
 Treasurer: Jeanie Walker
 Historian: Gary Price

Board Members

Helen Calhoun
 Jim Calhoun
 Art Devoe
 Penny May
 Randy Moore
 Nick White
 Robert W. Yaple

Appointees

Jim Magill, Chief Mechanical Officer
 Bob Yaple, Asst. Chief Mechanical Officer
 Fred Waskiewicz, Newsletter Editor
 Fred Waskiewicz, Webmaster
 Mike Tilley, Trip Director
 Howard Orfield, Attorney
 Nancy Jewell, Membership Notes
 Suzie Price, Membership Chairman
 Jack Maloney, Spring Street Yard Maintenance
 Nick White, Membership Recruitment and Publicity
 Harold Smitter, Librarian

Christmas Dinner

If you missed our Christmas Dinner, you lost out on some good food and fellowship. First, we want to thank Helen and Jim Calhoun for all the hard work they did to put the event together. They did a super job. We had 62 members and friends attend. Great food and fellowship topped the event off. A presentation of a plaque was made to David Denny for serving as Attorney for 30 years of dedicated service. David is going into retirement. **THANK YOU DAVID!** Everyone enjoyed this event and had a great time. The Events Committee is already planning for the December 2012 Event.

Activities Report for 2011

by Gary Price

[Ed. Note: Gary's regular article will return next month with "*Home Sweet Home (in a box)!*" Hint: It's about life in a camp car.]

As 2011 dawned on the Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS, a renewed sense of excitement filled the air as we all looked forward to our 30th anniversary and all that was in store for the membership throughout the year.

With the direction and guidance of President Mike Tilley and the Board of Directors, the Chapter set goals and exceeded them with the hard work of each Chapter member who volunteered their time and knowledge to make each event an overall success.

During the early months of 2011, it was learned that the former SOUTHERN RAILWAY Depot at Chuckey, TN had to be moved, and that the town of Jonesborough, TN was interested in relocating it downtown for use as a railroad museum. The depot was to be disassembled board by board and restored on a site near the NORFOLK SOUTHERN mainline in downtown Jonesborough. A joint venture was made with the Chapter to manage the museum, prompting the Chapter to form the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum, the goal of which is to oversee the museum and serve the community on a local level. The Chapter by-laws were reviewed; redundancies removed; and approved by the membership. By-laws for the new museum were drawn up and agreed upon.

The Link Museum in Roanoke approached the Chapter about sponsoring an original O. Winston Link print. It was agreed upon that the WVRHS&M would sponsor a black and white print that featured a SOUTHERN diesel locomotive meeting a NORFOLK AND WESTERN steam locomotive in Bristol Yard.

In May, Chapter Historian and NORFOLK SOUTHERN employee Gary Price had the honor of traveling to Washington DC to attend the Harriman Award Ceremony as NS received its 22nd consecutive Harriman Award.

The WVRH&M hosted a table at the annual Jonesborough Days event held in July and handed out information about the new museum and future events.

The Railway Historical Alliance was formed as a joint adventure between the WVRH&M and several railroad historical groups to offer better regional service to people interested in railroads in the Atlantic region.

On July 9th the Chapter's 30th anniversary banquet was held in Kingsport, TN with 80 members in attendance, Lois Tilley and Helen Calhoun did an excellent job planning the event. Virginia Museum of Transportation's own Bev Fitzpatrick gave a wonderful talk about railroad restoration and future projects at the museum.

October brought about our annual safety training for excursions. Finally, on December 17th, around 100 members attended the annual Christmas Banquet at the Jonesborough Visitors Center. The membership was also able to view our live steam model SOUTHERN 4-6-2 #1317, which will be on display there until the new railroad museum is up and running. [Continued on next page.]

Mechanical

During the spring and summer months, our mechanical crew, under the watchful eyes of Jim Magill and Bob Yapple, continued to diligently work to keep our rolling stock ready and available for lease. The WATX 500 and WATX 539 spent five months at the TVRM in Chattanooga, TN in preparation for NORFOLK SOUTHERN steam excursions. The interior of WATX 400 hosted a wedding party who wanted their official wedding photos on a train. The main focus of this year was to have the "*Crescent Harbor*" lounge car ready and available for our fall excursions. This was the most complete restoration of a car that our crew has ever attempted. Everything that could be replaced with new or improved components was skillfully accomplished by our Mechanical Crew. The task was completed on October 19th when the "*Crescent Harbor*" left our property for the first time in nine years. The car performed flawlessly on the excursions with paying passengers for the first time in over thirty-two years. A great deal of thanks goes out to all members who sacrificed their time to come to work sessions and keep our equipment rolling.

Excursions

Excursions are always a large part of the year's activities and 2011 was no exception. Our trip committee, led by Mike Tilley, worked hard to bring the public and members unique opportunities to ride trains.

On March 26th, we sponsored a sold-out trip to the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD that consisted of ten tour buses and 475 passengers.

On April 16, Nick White and Gary Price offered a special members-only van trip to visit TVRM on their 50th anniversary and to ride behind newly refurbished SOUTHERN 2-8-0 #630. The TVRM rolled out the red carpet for our 32 members by reserving for us a car near the locomotive; a complete shop tour to visit the 4501; and the opportunity to view up close the restoration progress to get the #4501 ready to be in the 21st Century Steam Program for NORFOLK SOUTHERN. Randy Moore even rode in the cab of the #630.

On July 16th, three buses carried 160 passengers to ride the train around the famous Hiwassee Loop on the Hiwassee River Rail Adventure.

On August 6th, in honor of the Chapter's 30th Anniversary, Nick White and Gary Price offered a very special members-only van trip to Knoxville to ride and dine on the river boat "The Star of Knoxville", followed by a train ride behind WASHINGTON AND LINCOLNTON #203 along the Tennessee river to Marbledale, TN and back. Members were treated to a shop tour at the KNOXVILLE AND HOLSTON RIVER RAILROAD shops, and were able to see work being performed on SOUTHERN 2-8-0 #154.

On October 29th & 30th, the *Autumn Train Excursions* were held as our annual joint venture with the NCTM and Amtrak in Spencer, NC. Both days were a sell-out with around 1,000 passengers riding each day. On Saturday, we once again visited Roanoke, VA. On Sunday, we found great success with a journey to Toccoa, GA. The people of Toccoa greeted us with friendly smiles and an amazing Harvest Festival with the town's streets lined with craft and food vendors. Buses carried 700 passengers over to visit the Toccoa Falls. Thanks go out to everyone who made these excursions a success. [Continued on next page.]

Newsletter

The Whistle Stop newsletter, under the editorship of Fred Waskiewicz, continued to inform members of upcoming events and local news stories. Articles included Mike Tilley's contribution on a CSX derailment that was caused by a mudslide in Fremont, VA that shut down the former CLINCHFIELD lines through our region for several days; a three part series by Thomas Wyman on the Embreeville Branch of the SOUTHERN RAILWAY (reprinted with permission). Chapter Historian Gary Price kept us entertained and informed with his journeys working on a traveling NORFOLK SOUTHERN Tie Gang. Bob Yaple kept members up to date with mechanical projects going on at the yard. Historic and modern photos of trains and structures graced the pages of the Whistle Stop. Thanks to all who contributed in 2011.

Programs

Nick White scheduled programs ranging from the NORFOLK AND WESTERN, CLINCHFIELD, past Chapter events and Amtrak.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Bob Yaple

General.

More work on the box car with building some additional shelving that utilizes otherwise wasted space. We have also installed minimal heat in the main room of the yellow caboose to keep the stored liquids from freezing.

Passenger Cars

The *Clinchfield* coach and the *Moultrie* diner remain at Spencer.

Restoration work continues on the *Crescent Harbor*. The water heater is nearly complete. Both hot and cold water systems have been air tested. Remarkably, the original system was largely intact in spite of mis- and dis-use over its former life. All valves and facets have been rebuilt with new seats, gaskets and packing. A function of the water heater installation was the rework of its closet with a new floor, paint job and a new interior light. A new access panel of hinged clear plastic has been installed for access servicing and monitoring of the A/C system. The upper part of the closet will be used to store tools, oil filters, freon and parts needed for car operation. Most of the wire for the pumps, compressors and heaters has been pulled in place and work on the last of the control panels in the electrical closet is completed.

Changes to our web site are coming!

Changes to our web site, including a new address, are in the design phase to reflect the organization of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum. The new site will also reflect our continued affiliation with the NRHS. When complete, notifications will be emailed. Automatic forwarding to the new site will be implemented. In the meantime, please continue to use and enjoy our current site.

"Scenic Spring Railway Excursion" in March

On Saturday, March 31, 2012 the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will sponsor its "Spring 2012 Excursion" – a train ride on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad through the breathtaking Nantahala Gorge in Western North Carolina." The excursion will feature the majestic Smoky Mountains and the beautiful Spring countryside of Western North Carolina. The excursion route is over the former Southern Railway's Murphy Branch line, established in 1891, with its five percent grade; many bridges; and the whitewater Nantahala Gorge. Much of the route follows the banks of the Little Tennessee and Nantahala Rivers and crosses Fontana Lake Trestle standing 100 feet above the lake and spanning 780 feet. After crossing the Fontana Lake, the train will enter the gorge – a natural wonder.

Passengers can choose to ride in comfort in Coach Class, Crown Class or First Class cars. The Coach Class seats are in restored vintage coaches, featuring windows that open and close for fresh-air viewing, ceiling fans and heat for cooler days. Crown Class Crown Class seating is in restored vintage coaches, featuring larger windows for better viewing and climate control for passenger comfort. First Class travel offers comfort and style in restored 1940s-era bar, lounge cars that feature seating at well-appointed tables and lounge/restaurant style chairs. First Class includes meals served to you at your seat.

Ticket prices for adult Coach Class seats are \$79 and \$58 for child (2 to 12 years). Adult Crown Class seats are \$89 and \$68 for children (2 to 12 years). First Class service Club Car seats are \$135 for anyone 21 years and older.

For more information and to order tickets, go to the [Excursions Page](#) on our web site.

"Cherry Blossom Special" in April

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum and the North Carolina Transportation Museum Foundation are partnering to offer the "Cherry Blossom Special", operating to and from Washington, D.C. on Saturday, April 14 and Sunday, April 15, 2012. Passengers will ride in WVRHS&M cars *Clinchfield* and *Crescent Harbor* behind AMTRAK's *Carolinian*.

Arriving in Alexandria, VA in the afternoon, passengers will unload and board a motor coach to their hotel (included in package) where they will freshen up prior to dinner at Washington's Union Station (meal on your own). After dinner, a bus will take passengers on a lighted night tour of the Cherry Blossom Festival and national monuments This memorable tour around Washington will be approximately 3 hours. The itinerary for the 15th offers a tour of Old Towne Alexandria including many sites and a special stop on the Potomac River Front for viewing Washington. After the Sunday Morning Tour, passengers will arrive back at the Alexandria Amtrak Station to board the *Clinchfield* and the *Crescent Harbor* for the return trip.

Prices vary according to First- or Coach-Class seating and single- or double-room occupancy. Discounts are offered to WVRHS&M, NCTM and RHA members. For more information, including pricing and to order tickets, go to the [Special Events Page](#) on our web site. With only 77 available seats for both Coach and First Class, **we expect a fast sell out!**

In the News – Region

N&W #1776

The Virginia Transportation Museum is seeking funds to complete the cosmetic restoration of ex-N&W SD45 #1776. The engine is best known for its patriotic paint scheme that N&W applied in celebration of the nation's bicentennial.

Initially, the Museum hoped to raise \$10,000 for a cosmetic restoration that would greatly improve the locomotive's appearance. However, with an award of \$10,000 from *Trains Magazine* Preservation Award, the Museum was able to plan for a higher-quality, longer lasting paint job and the replacement of several missing parts.



#1776 was painted in a distinctive red, white and blue scheme in 1974 prior to the celebration. In 1978, the engine was repainted N&W black, and it wasn't until after 1991 when NORFOLK SOUTHERN donated the engine to VTM that it was once again painted in its patriotic red, white and blue.

The Museum still needs to raise approximately \$5,000 to reach their new goal. Work is scheduled to complete by this Fourth of July. To learn more about the restoration and instructions on how to donate, go to <http://tinyurl.com/7cjuwma>.

End of an Era

Track removal of the segment of the EAST TENNESSEE RAILWAY from Johnson City to Elizabethton has begun. The Johnson City Press reported that track removal will begin at the eastern end of the line on State Line Road. However, pundits on the "Tweetsie" newsgroup have identified the work location of an accompanying JC Press photo as Bemberg. Work may be starting there due to the ease and availability of more profitable 112# rail, which begins at the old plant site. (Apparently, the rail is 70# at the east end of town and more difficult to access in places.) The work will continue westward until it reaches the ETRY yard in Johnson City. Elizabethton Police will assist with track removal by patrolling any staging areas to prevent the theft of rails and crossies and assist in the removal of any vehicles parked near the rail bed.

With completion, all that will remain of the storied ET&WNC RR will be the ETRY yard and connecting tracks in Johnson City. Newsgroup sources quoting ETRY management state that the ETRY's business of switching rail traffic between the NS and CSX



Location: Legacy Drive, Eliz. Photo by Rae Augenstein

in Johnson City remains good.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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