

Whistle Stop



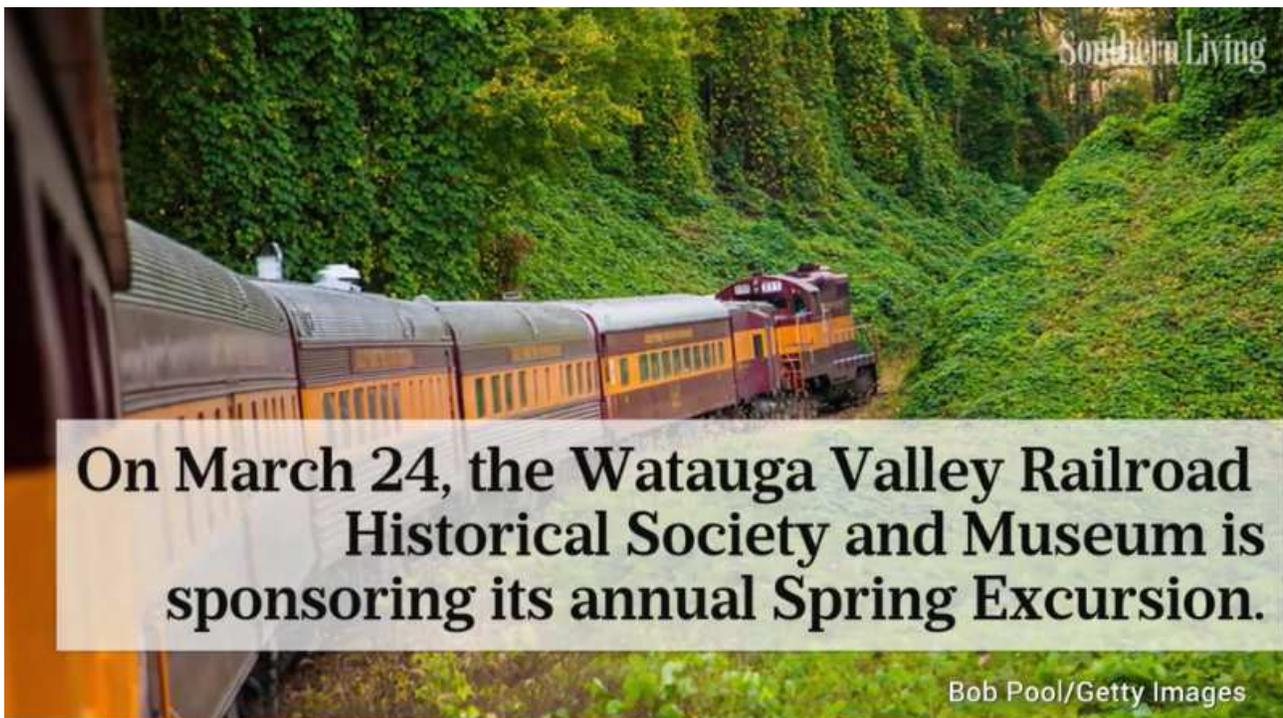
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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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On March 24, the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum is sponsoring its annual Spring Excursion.

Bob Pool/Getty Images

WVRHS&M Excursion Goes Viral

News of our March excursion has gone viral over the internet. See page 6 for details.

February 26th General Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have our regular meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, February 26th, 2018 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Megan Kegley will present this month's program, a DVD featuring North American railroads. This promises to be one of the best programs that we have had for some time. Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading with your fellow railfans.

Member Notes

by Edna Kay Carter

Let's all remember to keep those who have lost ones in your thoughts and prayers.

Please keep the following in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns. They are Bob Yapple, Gary Price, Nancy Jewel and Bob Hand. As always, let us know of any member, friend or family to whom a card might be sent or a phone call made. The office phone number is [\(423\) 753-5797](tel:4237535797) or call Edna Carter at (423) 571-3226.

We have received some much needed rain and I always feel that is a good sign that spring is on its way.

STORAGE FOR WATAUGA VALLEY WHISTLE TRUCK NEEDED



Our Whistle Truck has been on loan to the North Carolina Transportation Museum for a couple of years. It will soon be returning home and we need an indoor building to store it in for a while. If you know of or have a location that you think that might work, please let us know at the next membership meeting or call (423) 335-1100.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN TRAIN EXCURSION SOLD OUT

We are happy to announce that the GSMR excursion on March 24 has sold out. The trip will travel the operating length of the railroad from Dillsboro, NC to the Nantahala Gorge. If you signed up for Car Host Training for the trip at the last meeting, please come to the training session at 5.45 pm on Feb 26th prior to the General Membership meeting. We will be finished before the regular meeting at 6:30 pm. It is very important that you attend this meeting since several things have changed since last year.

CHUCKEY DEPOT ARTIFACTS NEEDED

Every five months we try to change out the artifacts out at the Chuckey Railroad Depot Museum. If you have anything that might be of interest that you're willing to put on loan to the museum, please send a picture to wataugavalley@embarqmail.com of the items. We will see if it fits into the museum and will get back to you. If you have any questions, please call the WVRHS&M office at (423) 335-1100. We're looking forward to hearing from everyone and seeing what you have available.

WVRHS&M FACEBOOK PAGE

Please visit the WVRHS&M Facebook page and enjoy all the items you'll discover there. Historian Gary Price does an excellent job keeping the page interesting and current. Share your Photos on this page. To view the page, go to Facebook and search "Watauga Valley".

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL

All cars are back in the Jonesborough Spring St. Coach Yard. We have a full house with all tracks occupied. It's good to get everything in yard at one time instead of having to leave a car at another location

The Watauga Valley Mechanical Department is looking for volunteers on Tuesdays and Saturdays to help maintain our passenger cars. If your spouse wants you out of the house after a long winter, please call the office and leave message at (423) 753-5797; the line is open 24 hours a day.

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): is having air conditioning upgrades. Also getting a new holding tank under the car.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500): has arrived back at the Spring St. Coach Yard to finish some work.

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400): at the yard getting new electrical work and kitchen upgrades.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): just returned from the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum after wheel repairs. Will be getting some new wiring and upgrades.

CLINCHFIELD OFFICE CAR (WATX 100): receiving some interior upgrades.

Important 2018 Dates ...



MARCH 24: GSMR excursion sponsored by WVRHS&M. **SOLD OUT.**



MAY 17-20: N&W Historical Society Convention, NCTM, Spencer, NC.



MAY 18-20: Cass Scenic Railroad railfan event, Cass, WV. See page 6 for details.



AUGUST 5-12: NMRA National Convention, Kansas City, MO. Info: <http://www.nmra.org>



AUGUST 7-12: NRHS National Convention, Cumberland, MD.



SEPTEMBER 5-8: National Narrow Gauge National Convention, Bloomington, MN. Info: <https://nngc-2018.com/>

Megan's Manifest

[ED. NOTE: Whistle Stop is pleased to announce this new feature, “Megan’s Manifest”, contributions from WVRHS&M’s own Megan Kegley, in which Megan will be sharing her railroading experiences, photos and thoughts. Welcome aboard, Megan!]

On November 18, 2017 the highly anticipated CSX Santa Train departs out of Shelby Yard in the early morning hours to make its journey down the Clinchfield Railroad to Kingsport, TN. At the controls of this popular train is a very familiar engineer, Mr. Tony King. People of all ages come out to see the Santa Train each and every year, but this year’s Santa Train brought an even larger crowd trackside than predicted. Rail and non-rail enthusiasts from all across the United States came out to see the 75th annual Santa Train make its run through the heart of the Appalachian mountain region.



While the passenger coaches shined in their blue and gold paint, the 75th annual Santa Train had quite a variety of power. Powering through the curve pictured, at Boody, Virginia we see CRR #800, a F3 locomotive built by EMD in 1948. In 1957, the locomotive was upgraded to F7 locomotive specifications. Second in line is former Seaboard Coast Line SD45 No. 2024. The former SCL SD45 was built in the 1970s for the SCL. This engine has worn many paint schemes over the years, but for this special occasion the SD45 is appearing as Clinchfield No. 3632. Trailing are former AMTRAK F40PH-2s, which are now CSX No. 9992 & CSX No. 9999.

As always, Santa Claus stands proud on the platform of the West Virginia ready to greet the children from the communities along the Clinchfield Railroad route. Children and Adults from all over attend this once-a-year event to see Santa and his helpers aboard the train. This year one of Santa’s helpers was the familiar bluegrass musician, Mr. Ricky Skaggs. Santa Claus was caught waving at his fans in Speers Ferry, Virginia from the trestle above Interstate 23 as pictured.

The West Virginia passenger car, also known as “Santa’s Sleigh” was originally built as an army hospital car by the St. Louis Car Company in 1953. The car has since been restored with a small lounge, two roomette style sleeping rooms, and a large open room. Throughout the year the car is used as a conference car, but for this once-a-year event, it is transformed just for Santa and all his goodies.

In the News

CHUCKEY DEPOT / MUSEUM AT JONESBOROUGH

Things are ticking at the Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum at Jonesborough. Even though the cold and rainy weather has been around the last couple of months, attendance at the museum has been good. On Saturday February 10th, we had over 400 people coming through the museum. We had seven hosts work that day to assist the crowd.

We now have 47 Watauga Valley members who are trained to serve as hosts at the Chuckey Depot. If you're interested in volunteering one day a month, please call Mike Tilley at (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com

AMTRAK Train 91

Once again we were shocked by news of a horrific train accident. As before, there has been enough national coverage that your editor feels repetition here is unnecessary. Our thoughts, prayers and hearts go out to the victims, especially the two AMTRAK crewmen who died. Even in the 21st century with significant advances in rail safety, railroading remains a potentially dangerous business.

NORFOLK SOUTHERN Closing Local Dispatch

[*Bill Wadell, WFXR, Roanoke*] Officials at NORFOLK SOUTHERN said plans are in the works to close the dispatching operation in Roanoke. Officials said 56 workers at the local dispatching center will be offered a position at the consolidated dispatching center in Atlanta.

STATEMENT FROM NORFOLK SOUTHERN:

Norfolk Southern plans to centralize its train dispatching operations at its Atlanta headquarters. The railroad currently dispatches trains from eight regional offices. Combining dispatching at one location will enable us to manage rail operations from a network perspective vs. from individual locations. In Roanoke, 56 employees who work in NS' dispatching center will be offered dispatching positions at the consolidated dispatching center in Atlanta. In total, approximately 450 employees at dispatching centers in Alabama, Illinois, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Michigan and Indiana will be offered positions in Atlanta. The timing for the move has not been determined. Dispatchers direct the routing of trains across the NS rail network, managing the safe movement of some 1,000 trains and an average of 180,000 rail cars each day across 19,500 miles of track in 22 states.

AMTRAK Upgrading Amfleet Coach Interiors

[*Trains Magazine News Wire*] AMTRAK is upgrading the interiors of its 450 Buddbuilt Amfleet I passenger cars which are 40 some years old in a \$16 million refresh project. The upgrades are being done at multiple AMTRAK shops to get the job done faster, hopefully in 12 months. More cushioning is being added to the seats, imitation leather is replacing fabric for seat covers, and seat back cushions have a slight rounding at the top, instead of being straight. Business class seats are light and dark grey, with a blue accent in the middle top, and coach seats are solid light gray. New LED lights are being installed overhead, in the cove lights above the luggage racks, and in the lavatories. In the café cars, the front counter of the galleys will be made of tougher plastic, which is easier to keep clean.

 ***WVRHS&M Goes Viral***

Living the Chinese Curse (“May You Live in Interesting Times”), WVRHS&M has experienced an interesting example of the power on the internet. A travel writer came upon an announcement of our March GSMR excursion. The article was published on-line, originally on the *Travel+Leisure* site, then picked up by *MSN.com* and *Southern Living*. From there it went viral. While there were some minor inaccuracies, the article has served as a phenomenal promotional piece. The writer fortunately stated that the trip was sold out and added that readers could request being added to our email list for future trips. The result: we’re looking at over 10,000 such requests (and they’re legitimate). This has flooded our inbox; we’re investigating how best to handle and manage this deluge of email. The downside is our inbox is temporarily bogged down and other messages are buried; the good news is we’ve received tremendous publicity. To view the online article, go to <http://www.travelandleisure.com/travel-news/train-ride-through-smoky-mountains>

 ***Chesapeake & Ohio 1309 News***

[*Trains Magazine News Wire*] Once funding is in place, Chesapeake & Ohio 2-6-6-2 No. 1309 can steam in about six months, says the contractor working on the engine for Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. The railroad ran out of money for the project in November and idled the much-anticipated restoration, except for wheel work that had already been started using specialized lathes at Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga, Tenn. There, Gary Bensman is truing the axles and crank pins. He's also installing new rod brass. When completed, No. 1309, the last steam locomotive Baldwin built in 1949 for domestic use, would be one of the largest operating steam locomotives in America, and the only Mallet type in operation east of the Mississippi. Mr. Bensman said that once Western Maryland Scenic raises \$530,000 needed to complete the engine, a crew of four to six people could complete the engine in less than half a year. The engine is on the cusp of being ready for its federally required hydrostatic test of the boiler. There should be no surprises ahead for this project that has been on again and off again in a melodrama of funding and to a lesser degree, running gear issues that were recognized late. "Everything has been looked at and the work had been laid out. The course is pretty clear as to what's needed next and to the end," Bensman said.

 ***3-day Railfan Event Planned at Cass Scenic Railroad***

[*Trains Magazine News Wire*] The Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad's Cass Scenic Railroad will host a three-day rail heritage event on May 18 - 20, 2018. The event begins Friday evening with a special dinner and night photo session at Whittaker Station. On Saturday there will be a daytime photo event to Spruce featuring steam-powered freight and passenger consists. Saturday evening's photo event will feature unique views inside the Cass Shops and an opportunity to take photos of multiple locomotives under steam. On Sunday morning, a special trip will operate north from Cass along the railroad's Greenbrier Line toward Durbin, WV. This rail line remains under construction and is anticipated to connect with the southernmost end of the Durbin line in late 2018. This trip will provide guests the opportunity to explore some of the new track segment. Revenues generated from this event will benefit projects like the Greenbrier Line rehabilitation and restorations of steam locomotives. The cost of the three-day event is \$275 per person. For additional information, <http://mountainrailwv.com/tour/spring-photo-special/>.

CSX Reviewing 8000 Miles for Potential Sale or Lease

[From CSX Illinois Subdivision railfan site] According to the *Trains Magazine* news wire, CSX Transportation is reviewing 8,000 miles of rail lines as potential candidates for sale or lease. The Illinois Subdivision line appears to be one of the candidates as the article states “Most of the former Baltimore & Ohio main linking East St. Louis, Ill., and Cincinnati” as among the routes being considered for possible sale or lease.

People familiar with the situation do not expect all 8,000 miles to go on the block, however they say it is an indication of management’s intent to leave no stone unturned in a drive to cut costs. Last year, CSX executives said everything’s for sale at the right price.

The list of routes under review include the following:

- The former B&O from Greenwich, Ohio, to Baltimore. [UPDATE: CSX has since removed this route from the review list and will retain the line.]
- The former Boston & Albany main and related branch lines in Massachusetts. [UPDATE from the Albany, NY newspaper *Times Union*: CSX Transportation, responding to a report earlier this week from trade publication *trains.com*, said Friday afternoon that a list of lines under review for possible sale was "inaccurate." The list included the former Boston & Albany line between Albany and Worcester, MA, now operated by CSX. "I can definitively say that this line is not for sale," a CSX spokesman told the *Times Union*. The *trains.com* report had led to speculation about potential purchasers and the continued operation of AMTRAK's *Lake Shore Limited* over the line.]
- The former Louisville & Nashville between Cincinnati and Atlanta.
- Most of the former Baltimore & Ohio main linking East St. Louis, Ill., and Cincinnati.
- Former Pere Marquette trackage in Michigan.
- CSX’s cross-border incursions into Canada and related U.S. trackage.
- The railroad’s hard-hit Appalachian coal network, **including portions of the former Clinchfield.**
- Large sections of the Florence Division in the Carolinas.
- The Dothan sub in Alabama and Georgia.
- The Auburndale sub in Florida.
- Branches and redundant trackage scattered around the system, including some in Alabama, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and New York.

Full story at <https://tinyurl.com/y8y6shzp>.

CEO: AMTRAK Won't Run Trains on Non-PTC Track

[*RAILWAY AGE*] AMTRAK won’t operate its passenger trains on tracks without Positive Train Control in 2019 if host railroads fail to meet the deadline for installation of the federally-mandated safety technology.

AMTRAK Chief Executive Richard Anderson also told a House committee hearing that the carrier won’t permit non-PTC compliant equipment on the tracks it owns, mostly on the Northeast Corridor.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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