

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432
(423) 753-5797
www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 38 No. 12

December 2018



Train activity, fall colors, mountain scenery – a railfan's delight! See "Megan's Manifest" on page 7 for photo details.

November 26th General Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will conduct our monthly General Membership meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, November 26th, 2018 at the Johnson City Public Library, 100 West Millard St. This month's program, "Articulateds in Appalachia", presented by Gary Street, is a 38-minute video highlighting steam locomotives on the B&O, C&O, and N&W. You'll thrill to this fascinating look at the monsters that ruled the Eastern United States for almost a generation. There are also scenes of N&W's "Virginia Creeper" and the Blacksburg Branch's mixed freight and passenger trains.

Happy
Thanksgiving 

Member Notes

by Edna Kay Carter, Membership Chairperson

Please continue to remember all the members who have lost loved ones during the recent months. Keep the following in your thoughts and prayers as they deal with various health concerns. They are Nancy Jewel, Gary Price, Bob Schubel, Gail Zimmerman, Tom Phelps and Sharon Slagle, the daughter of George and Nancy Ritchie. 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 number is (423) 753-5797 or call Edna Carter at (423) 571-4612.

We would like to welcome everyone who have become members during 2018 and look forward to working with you.

Hope each of you will be blessed during the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas season.

WVRHS&M News

2019 OFFICER AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS

The 2019 WVRHS&M election ballots have been mailed out. All Ballots must be received by 12:01 pm, December 8, 2018. A ballot box will be available at the November/December meeting or you can mail yours to Nominating Committee, Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432. The results of the election will be announced at the December 8, 2018 Christmas Gathering.

2019 MEMBERSHIP DUES

The 2019 Dues Notices were mailed out recently. Please return your dues and check ASAP to Membership Chairman Edna Carter, WVRHS&M, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605. You can join WVRHS&M for \$20.00 individual and add each family member at \$5.00 each. If you have any questions, e-mail wataugavalley@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Total WVRHS&M membership is nearing the 400 mark. We now have membership brochures to pass out to anyone interested in joining us.

NOVEMBER 4th GREAT SMOKY MTN TRAIN EXCURSION

Our November 4 GSMR train excursion was very successful. This was the peak leaf change weekend and the weather was beautiful. With weather and the leaf colors, it made our trips the best of the season. We had over 500 happy passengers on a 19-car train with 25 WVRHS&M hosts working the trip.

Web Site

We are updating our web site. If you would like to be part of this project, please call the WVRHS&M office at (423) 753-5797.



**Our annual Christmas Gathering & Meal will be held on December 8th.
Check out the flier attached to this newsletter for details.**



Chuckey Depot & Rail Museum

Since the Museum was opened on October 2nd, 2017, we have experienced several thousand visitors at the depot and hundreds of volunteer hours. We want to thank all 75 WVRHS&M volunteers who have trained to host at the museum. If you would like to be trained to host at the museum, please call (423) 753-5797 and leave a message. We are planning more training sessions in 2019. Everyone is having a good time at the museum; please come and volunteer one day a month for four hours.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT THE SANTA TRAIN EXHIBIT

The WVRHS&M Santa Train Exhibit will be held on December 8th at the Chuckey Depot & Museum from 2 pm to 6 pm. WVRHS&M and the Town of Jonesborough will sponsor the exhibit. Everyone is welcome to come out and bring their children and come aboard the restored Southern Caboose X450 to meet Santa Claus. We will need volunteers to help host the event; duties include helping visitors board the caboose. Please sign up by signing the sheet at the November 26th General membership meeting; e-mailing wataugavalley@gmail.com; or calling (423) 753-5797. This will be some good publicity for us as we are expecting a lot of people to come aboard our beautiful red caboose and depot.

Mechanical Team Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL

We are needing volunteers on the Mechanical Team. We work every Tuesday and Saturday. If interested in performing this critical effort to keep our rolling stock, well, rolling, please call (423) 753-5797.

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539), “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), “Moultrie” diner (WATX 400), “Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): All four cars are at NCTM in Spencer, NC, serving on their “Polar Express” excursion trains.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): After many years on the shop track at our Spring Street Coach Yard, the “Clinchfield 100” is at the beginning of a major restoration project. Plans are to remove the bedrooms; install new windows and mahogany wood panels; new carpet; upgraded plumbing and electrical work; and interior painting. This car is 108 years old and is the queen of the fleet. Please stay tuned for progress each month.

Important 2018 and 2019 Dates ...



DECEMBER 8, 2018: Annual WVRHS&M Christmas Get-together, Food City Banquet Room, Johnson City. Details attached to this newsletter.



MARCH 30, 2019: The Watauga Valley 2019 excursion season will start on Saturday, March 30, 2019 through the Great Smoky Mountains. More details will be available in the coming weeks.

In the News ...

White Pass & Yukon Sold

[Your editor really dropped the ball on this item, first published in June but only now coming to my attention. From *Trains.com*]

Carnival Corp., owners Carnival Cruise Lines and Holland America Princess Alaska Tours, will acquire White Pass & Yukon Route Railway from its owners, TWC Enterprises Ltd. The acquisition includes White Pass' port, railroad and retail operations in Skagway. The transaction is scheduled to close July 31, 2018.

The 3-foot gauge WP&Y links Skagway with Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Passengers are ferried by ship through the Port of Skagway to the trains. The railroad began construction in 1898 during the Klondike Gold Rush. It was completed in 1900 and remained in operation until 1982, carrying significant amounts of ore and concentrates to Skagway to be loaded into ships. With the increasing popularity of cruise ships traveling to Alaska, WP&Y was revived in 1988 as a heritage railway operating excursions between Skagway and White Pass Summit. The active line was extended to Bennett in the 1990s and to Carcross in 2007.

WP&Y equipment includes 20 diesels, 69 restored and replica passenger coaches and two Baldwin steam locomotives: 2-8-0 #69 built in 1907 and 2-8-2 #73 constructed in 1947.

Amtrak Rate Increases Threaten "New River Train"

[Chase Gunnoe, *Trains News Wire*. ED. NOTE: This decision impacts WVRHS&M directly as car leasing is a significant source of revenue.] West Virginia's annual New River Train could come to a halt because of Amtrak plans to increase private car rates and tighten policies. The 52-year-old annual excursion through West Virginia's spectacular New River Gorge completed its 2018 schedule days before Amtrak outlined plans for mileage rate increases and new policies, effective Jan. 1, 2019.

On Friday, the passenger railroad confirmed that new mileage rates will require private car operators to pay \$3.67 per mile per car, with additional cars costing \$2.81 per mile. The rates are the second increase for private cars initiated by Amtrak this year.

New River Train officials say their budgets are already stretched, citing Amtrak's mileage rates and elimination of Huntington, W.Va., as a switching point, the excursion train's originating location for its trip to Hinton, W.Va. Eliminating Huntington as a switching point required the non-profit New River Train to pay for a costly equipment deadhead move between Chicago and Huntington and return. The train runs 30 cars long.

After Amtrak announced it was exiting the charter and excursion business in early 2018, the October New River Train was the only Amtrak excursion train to operate in 2018 and it only came about after U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., stepped in. He says the train contributes about \$5 million annually to the West Virginia economy.

Additionally, the excursion train operator is concerned about Amtrak changing terms and rates at its discretion, making it difficult to plan excursions when the railroad has the ability to change those conditions with only 60-days notice.

"Amtrak has traditionally adjusted its private car rates annually on Oct. 1, but now, the rail-road seems to be changing those rates randomly without explaining its reasoning," New River Train Assistant Executive Director Joe Rosenthal says. For the New River Train, these unexpected price increases and the inability to pinpoint future costs is likely to put the excursion train out of business. "We feel

like we aren't customers any longer," Rosenthal says. "Price increases and limiting how and where we can make our moves with just 60-days is disappointing considering we're customers who contribute to Amtrak's bottom line."

Rosenthal wants Amtrak to explain rate increases to allow the private car industry and rail-road to allow the two groups to work together and to identify areas of cost savings. "Not only are we Amtrak customers, but we're supporters and we've always had a good working relationship with Amtrak that allows us to tweak our business and work together with the railroad," he says. "I don't think any other business with a monopoly like Amtrak would have the capabilities to increase its rates as drastically as what we've experienced with Amtrak in less than 12 months," Rosenthal adds.

News Wire reached out to Amtrak to ask the passenger railroad how it calculates its car rates, what scales or models are used, and to explain why private car rates have increased twice in a 12-month period. "The guidelines for private cars on Amtrak indicate that Amtrak's primary objective is to operate its core scheduled train service safely, punctually, and efficiently. We participate in non-core services such as private cars if they provide a positive financial contribution to the bottom line, provide strategic value, and don't distract from or impede our core activities," Amtrak spokeswoman Kimberly Woods tells News Wire. "The recent price increases and adjustments to terms and conditions support these requirements and incorporate suggestions and improvements proposed by the leadership of the major private car advocacy organizations," Woods adds.

News Wire reached out to the Railroad Passenger Car Alliance for comment on involvement with Amtrak and private car policies, to which RPCA President Roger W. Fuehring declined comment and directed Trains to the organization's most recent newsletter. In the newsletter, Fuehring confirms Amtrak did recently invite him to visit Philadelphia to discuss policies regarding the movement of private cars, car inspector requirements, and insurance requirements, as well as safety, rates, and fees.

Fuehring says the conversations were well received and there were several suggestions, revisions, and verbiage that was removed, added, or better defined.

"It's crucial to understand that several employees of Amtrak have worked very hard to develop a policy within the parameters set forth by the management of Amtrak. The goals set forth included efficiencies within the network, cost, risk management, labor and availability of equipment," Fuehring's letter. "It may not be the desired outcome, and some owners will follow others in shutting down their operations based on cost," Fuehring says. "For others, they will take the time to evaluate the new parameters and develop their operations accordingly."

Rosenthal says these price increases and new adjustments will require the organization to increase its ticket prices, which he believes would price them out of the market and result in less ridership. Coach tickets are currently \$179 per person; premium seats are \$279; and business class is \$600 per person. Currently, about 4,800 passengers ride the New River Train during its four day-long excursion dates each October.

New River Train, an arm of the C.P. Huntington Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, declined to share costs or its agreement with Amtrak, but the group did confirm that despite these challenges, it is still making its request to operate in 2019.

NS Moving HQ to Atlanta ...

[Atlanta.curbed.com, by Sean Keenan] Norfolk Southern plans to build \$575M HQ on Midtown's West Peachtree Street; The new location would be about a mile south of the railroad company's current Atlanta office

Applaud it or hate it, the Atlanta City Council's approval of the Gulch agreement this week appears to have secured railroad giant Norfolk Southern's HQ move to Midtown.

The company threatened to take its business elsewhere if the deal didn't clear a council vote on Monday. The CEO initially said Norfolk Southern would ditch its plans for an Atlanta home base

because, without the Gulch deal's passage, it wouldn't be able to unload a key piece of Gulch property that it currently owns.

But now, according to an Invest Atlanta document, the company knows where it wants to build its new headquarters.

On a site between 3rd Street and Ponce de Leon Avenue on Midtown's bustling West Peachtree Street, a \$575 million HQ building is slated to rise.

Norfolk Southern's new HQ is slated to span some 750,000 square feet of office space and infuse 850 new jobs into Atlanta, in addition to the 2,000-plus employees already here. (The company's current office is about a mile north of the proposed project site, near the Arts Center MARTA Station.)

According to the Invest Atlanta inducement resolution fact sheet, the new HQ could have an \$811 million economic impact and could come in tandem with a \$600 million lease purchase bond.

Norfolk Southern is expected to close on the property in the beginning of 2019.

Practically next door, CA Ventures is moving forward with a 27-story building for 699 Spring Street marketed toward students, near the Varsity and just south of the Coda project.

And just up West Peachtree Street, John Portman and Associates has three contiguous office projects in the works that would join its tech-hub Coda, which is nearing completion. Atlanta bond deal to finance new Norfolk Southern headquarters put on hold.

... but not so fast

[WVEC-TV, Norfolk, VA] It's still undecided if Norfolk's only Fortune 500 company headquartered in Norfolk may head to Atlanta, but Mayor Kenny Alexander said it might not happen as fast as people think. "There is a commitment that Norfolk Southern has made with the city that they will be here until 2026 in some form or another," Mayor Alexander said.

On Monday, Atlanta's City Council voted to approve the Gulch Deal. Norfolk Southern owned some of the land involved in the deal, and now that it is approved the company can now afford to move everyone to Atlanta.

Mayor Alexander said he watched the proceedings. "The developer has to buy the property that Norfolk Southern owns in Atlanta, and there are some other conditions that must be met, and I'm not sure if all those conditions will be met," he said.

If Norfolk Southern moves to Atlanta, the new building would serve as the North American Corporate Headquarters of the company, and it would be located in Midtown Atlanta. Norfolk Southern would create around 850 new full-time positions and retain about 2,000 jobs in the city of Atlanta.

On Thursday, Atlanta's Development Authority met and discussed the possible move and planned to vote specifically whether to give \$600 million in bonds to help build the \$575 million new headquarters. Invest Atlanta's Vice President for Marketing and Communications Matt Fogt said the vote didn't happen Thursday. He said the Development Authority ended up referring the conversation to one of its committees. The meeting is expected to happen at a later date.

"If the transition happens we will certainly be very helpful with Norfolk Southern if they decide to move a significant number of jobs to another city such as Atlanta," said Mayor Alexander.

Visit us on our Facebook page for great photos and videos.

Megan's Manifest

by Megan Kegley

This year we have had some pretty fall colors in the region. I took the cover photo in Big Stone Gap at the end of last month. On the bridge in the photo is NS 79K waiting on the mainline to get permission to proceed to Andover Yard. You cannot see the locomotives in the photo which were a standard cab SD70ACU in the lead and a Dash 9 trailing the consist. Although there are no locomotives in the photo, I still wanted to share this pretty photo with everyone.



At left is NS U41 making its' move out of the Andover Yard and into Appalachia, VA. I was heading up to the Lonesome Pine Model Railroad Club (I know, shocker LOL) and I saw U41 coming out by the Ice House; I went up to the club for a bit then came back out to get this shot with my best friend Anna going with me to see it. As soon as we got back to Appalachia, I bet it wasn't 3 minutes later that the U41 started to pull out. I managed to snap this picture in the low evening light. When the train started pulling

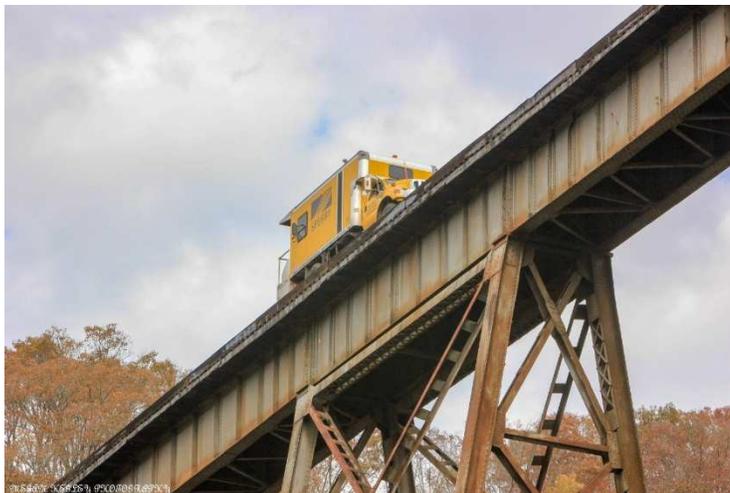
out the crew gave us a nice horn and bell show, so a thank you to the friendly crew! As we sat there and watched all the coal cars come by us slowly, Anna then began to ask me questions about the train, and of course I answered them thoroughly. After asking me several questions she then said "you just need to work on the railroad." It was a great way to end the evening for sure!

At right we see NS 744 heading southbound at Slant on the Clinchfield [aka CSX] on 11/7/18. I has been ready to catch the Q692 that was coming north from Kingsport as I had caught wind that it had a SD70MAC leader on it. After I left Hill Station and came on up the Clinchfield, I ended up passing train 744 coming south so I turned around in the road to beat it back to Slant. With literally 10 seconds to spare, I pulled up, got my camera out and managed to get this photo of the 744. Meanwhile, the Q692 was right behind me in the siding at the north end of Starnes, (aka Slant). After I got the two trains meeting here, I then ventured on up the Clinchfield and got the Q692 again at Ft. Blackmore.



On 11/8/18 here I go out railfanning yet again. I heard traffic coming out of Big Stone Gap on the radio and figured I would go see what it was. I hadn't really been able to get out and get many train photos this fall due to having so much going on in my life but I guess you could say I have made up for it. Pictured on the next page coming across the Copper Creek Trestle is NS 72A. I ended up getting that shot and a few others back toward Gate City. As

I was sitting listening to the Broadcastify [a smartphone-based app that is a source of scanner radio communication streams] feed through the speakers in my car, I heard the defect detector go off at milepost 77 on the Clinchfield. I knew there wasn't a train because the ATCS was not showing one there (that doesn't always mean anything, but it's correct 99% of the time). So, I kept watching and the next thing I know a Sperry truck was coming across the top trestle. Pretty cool to see because, I am usually not in the right place to see any sort of maintenance vehicles on the railroad.



I decided at the last minute with very little light left in the evening to go catch this KT24 at Wildcat. I was at my dad's house and I heard the KT24 blowing from down at Cadet. It doesn't have to be any sort of special units or special train for me to go after it. As long as I am trackside and have a train in front of me, I am happy!

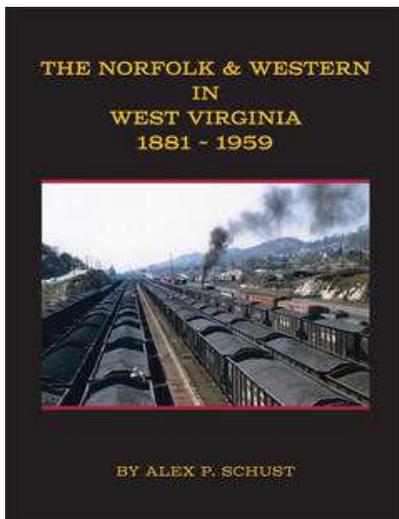


Photo Gallery ...



Charlie Plantholt of the NRHS Baltimore Chapter caught ex-N&W 4-8-0 #475 at the point of "The Strasburg Express" roaring west at Groffs, PA. The train is passing a mixed train waiting in the siding before it too heads west. The activity occurred on October 24, 2018 during a Carl Franz charter on the Strasburg Railroad. The #475 was built by Baldwin in 1906 as part of the N&W's first order of Class M Consolidated locos

numbered 375-499. It is the only known 4-8-0 operating in North America and is Strasburg Railroad's oldest steam locomotive. Sister #433 is on static display at the Virginia Creeper trailhead in Abingdon, VA.



Alex Schust has used his usual detailed and complete research to complete his newest book. The Norfolk & Western in West Virginia ~ 1881 - 1959, is a hard-cover, 9 X 12 book using 496 black/white pages, 120 maps, 300 pictures and sketches, 100 N&W drawings and plans, and 75 charts and tables to tell the story of the 201 miles of main line railroad operating from near Glen Lyn, Virginia to Kenova, West Virginia, and the approximate 150 smaller branch lines and spurs off of that main line. (Note: The Bluestone, North Fork, Tug Fork, Dry Fork, and Buchanan Branches are not covered in this book, but Potts Valley Branch is.) The book actually starts in 1872 with the New River Railroad, Mining and Manufacturing Company and its plans to reach the Flat-Top Coalfield and goes to 1959, just prior to the N&W-Virginian merger.

The book uses period correspondence, construction records, track charts, ICC Valuation records, newspaper articles and the Norfolk and Western Magazine to tell the who, why, what, when, where and how of the construction of the railroad from Glen Lyn to Kenova by both the Big Sandy and Twelve Pole routes. It also tells about the reconstruction of the railroad from a curvy, low-speed mountain railroad into a double tracked, high speed, low curvature main line. It discusses decisions made and not made and the reasons for the decisions. It discusses the building of the Bluefield, Eckman, Vivian, Williamson and Kenova Yards. It also discusses how the N&W became one of the biggest coal land owners in West Virginia. Now available from NWHS commissary at

<http://www.nwhs.org/commissary/new.html>.

Whistle Stop

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TIME VALUE MATERIAL

***WATAUGA VALLEY RHS&M
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS GATHERING and MEAL
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8th, 2018***

It's time for the WVRHS&M annual Christmas Meal. This year's event will be a little different from years past as food will be prepared by the Kitchen at The Depot at Food City; all you have to do is show up and enjoy a great meal. We will gather at The Depot at Franklin Commons (Food City), 920 North State of Franklin Road, Johnson City, TN 37604. The menu will consist of roast beef au jus, turkey with sage dressing, rosemary roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables with citrus butter, along with salad, rolls, dessert, and choice of drink – all for \$10.00 per person. What a deal!!! There will be good food and good fellowship! Don't miss it! Arrive by 11:30 AM; the serving line will open at 12 noon.

As an added treat, Gary Price, our Chapter Historian (and former Norfolk Southern Maintenance of Way employee) will share photos and stories of his railroad adventures from his 21 years with Norfolk Southern. Gary has been a member of the Watauga Valley NRHS/RSHM for 29 years; he will discuss how he turned his hobby into a career. As his journey unfolds, he will touch upon the ups and downs of Camp Car life, life on the road, and places he has visited. If you have ever been around Gary you know that he loves to talk trains, especially his beloved Norfolk and Western.

To make reservations, please mail the form below along with your payment to:

Watauga Valley RHS&M Annual Christmas Meal
P.O. Box 432
Johnson City, TN 37605-0432

Reservations must be received by Saturday, December 1, 2018.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Number attending _____ X \$10.00 PER PERSON = Total Enclosed \$ _____

PLEASE NOTE: RESERVATION DEADLINE Saturday, December 1, 2018. RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENT MUST BE MADE BEFORE THE EVENT; WE CANNOT COLLECT MONEY AT THE DOOR.

YOU'LL see US at the Christmas Gathering!