

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Chuckey Depot's web cam not enough action for you? Then add a window on your computer screen or screen on your smart TV and follow TVRM's Railfan (web) cam at <https://www.tvrail.com/tvrm-railfan-cam>. Above their 2-8-2 Mikado class steamer #4501 passes below a NS freight with the Lehigh Valley Heritage engine in lead.

July 27th General Membership Meeting

The next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, July 27th, 2020 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St. Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Mark your calendars so you will not miss this meeting. The program will be presented by Howard Orfield on operating a locomotive. Hope you can make it; we're going by all guidelines of the TN Health Department and will have chairs spaced out 6 feet apart; everyone is asked to wear a face mask while in the building. The June meeting was held at the depot and a good time and program was enjoyed by all. Please see pictures of last meeting on our Facebook page.

Member Notes

Please keep Fred Phofl in your thoughts and prayers in the recent loss of his wife. Continue to remember Gloria Sims in the loss of her son.

Please continue to keep the following in your prayers as they deal with various health concerns. They are George Ritchie, Anita Johnson, Nancy Jewel, Gary Price, Billy Walker, Art Devoe and Mike Dowdy.

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 have no new members at this time but welcome anyone who would like to join our club.

I hope everyone is having a good summer in spite of the pandemic.

September 2020 Rail Excursions

We are very happy to announce that the September 12th and 13th Great Smoky Mountain Train Excursions will operate as scheduled but with some major changes. As it has been determined that we cannot practice social distancing on the motor bus coaches, all bus service has been eliminated for this trip. Also, we are moving our train boarding location from Dillsboro, NC over to Bryson City. All passengers (and volunteers) will now be required to drive to Bryson City for boarding for their own safety. The train will still travel to Nantahala Gorge but now will return to Bryson City. Watauga Valley members who signed up to volunteer can still ride the train but they must drive over to Bryson City. Please let Mike Tilley know at the General Membership meeting or by phoning (423) 753-5797 if you want to ride the train so he can get you on the boarding list. We are very sorry for these changes but we must meet the COVID-19 guidelines set forth by Tennessee and North Carolina governors in order to safely operate the train.

Chuckey Depot and Museum

Things at the Chuckey Depot / Museum have been very busy for the months of June and July since we opened back up. We are having better than expected crowds visiting the depot. The safety plan that has been put together for our hosts is working out very well in keeping everyone safe. If you're tired of being cooped up in the house, come on out and get trained for depot hosting. If interested in getting trained, call (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

If you want to hear the action from Knoxville to Bristol on the A line of Norfolk Southern on a device with a web browser go to <https://www.broadcastify.com/listen/ctid/2517>.

LIBRARY DONATIONS

Our library collection in Jonesborough continues to grow. We appreciate all the donations that have been made. Bring your railroad book donations to any membership meeting or call the office at (423) 753-5797. If you are finished reading or just want to donate, put your books to good use. We have plenty of room to add more books!

Mechanical Department Report

by Jim Magill

We continue to need volunteers to work at the Spring St Coach Yard on every Tuesday 9 am to 5 pm. If you want to get involved in our great projects, please call (423) 753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539), “Moultrie” diner (WATX 400): both cars in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), “Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): both cars at the Jonesborough Coach Yard with the *St. Augustine* receiving upgrades.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): work is underway for major upgrades to the interior of the car.



[Upper left] The 100's original marker lights, donated by Tony King, are being installed. [Upper right] Frank Gricus is rebuilding the blinds.

“Most travel, and certainly the rewarding kind, involves depending on the kindness of strangers, putting yourself into the hands of people you don't know and trusting them with your life.

--- from *“Ghost Train to the Eastern Star”* by Paul Theroux

In the News

W Va's 2020 Autumn Colors Express Cancelled

[Digital communication sent to subscriber list]

To Our 2020 Autumn Colors Express Passengers -

It is with extreme sadness that the team at Rail Excursion Management Co. today announces the postponement of the 2020 Autumn Colors Express. Last week, the State of West Virginia mandated that large gatherings be limited in size to no more than 25 people. That decision by the state, coupled with the cancellation of the Hinton Railroad Days Festival, effectively ended any hopes of Autumn Colors Express happening this year.

We wanted to inform our ticketed guests of this decision before issuing a public statement - our goal was to come to a decision three months before the event, in order to give you ample time to make alternate travel plans in the event of a postponement. It's because of your loyalty and belief in our mission that we're able to bring this great event to the New River Gorge each fall. We can't wait to see you on the rescheduled Autumn Colors Express, held October 21-24, 2021.

Your reservations for this year have been automatically applied to the 2021 dates, and no further action is required on your part. Over the next few days, you'll receive an email with your updated reservation information. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us either by email or phone [see <https://www.autumncolorexpresswv.com/>] - we're here to help!

1309 To Steam this Fall?

WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD officials said they hope to have the No.1309 steam engine ready for the fall foliage season. They cautioned that any further setbacks from the coronavirus outbreak could impact the operation. "If we are allowed to operate, we want to," said Frostburg, MD mayor Bob Flanigan. "But we want to do it as safe as we possibly can. There are a lot of people who want to come see her. We know the financial impact it will have and we want to give that back to Allegany County." WMSR general manager John Garner said, "As long as the money holds out – and that, of course, is the wild card – we are 10 to 12 weeks to starting our break-in runs. After that, we hope to be running regular excursion trips – that is if COVID -19 doesn't come back to bite us." [Cumberland Times-News via *The Automatic Block*, Western Maryland NRHS]

Judge Turns Down Durango & Silverton Request

[*Trains News Wire*, July 16] A federal judge has denied the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad's request to resume fire-mitigation efforts along its right of way, as well as its repairs on a bridge washed out during heavy rains earlier this summer. The Associated Press reports the railroad's request came after the U.S. Forest Service sent a cease-and-desist order to stop tree clearing along the railroad's right-of-way on May 27, then ordered work to stop at a washout roughly 5 miles from Silverton, Colo., that has cut off the railroad's ability to reach that mining town. [See "Forest Service orders Durango & Silverton to stop fire mitigation efforts," *Trains News Wire Digest*, July 5, 2020, and "Washout cuts Durango & Silverton access to Silverton for eight to 16 weeks," *Trains News Wire Digest*, June 22, 2020]. Judge Robert E. Blackburn hearing a lawsuit filed by the Forest Service to recover costs from the 416 fire, which [continued on next page]

burned more than 54,000 acres in 2018, rejected the railroad's plea to resume the work because it is unrelated to that case. John Harper, general manager of D&SNG owner American Heritage Railways, said it is unclear when work might resume: "We have never in the history of the railroad needed to ask the Forest Service for permission to repair our own tracks. So this is unfamiliar territory."

Appropriations Bill would block Amtrak service reductions

[Trains News Wire, July 9] Amtrak and public transportation would receive at least \$26 billion in emergency aid under the fiscal 2021 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development funding bill proposed by the House Appropriations Committee — but the money for Amtrak would be tied to a requirement that the passenger railroad cannot discontinue or reduce frequencies on any of its routes. In a press release, Jim Mathews, CEO of the Rail Passengers Association, said the bill shows "Congress is really listening to Americans and recognizing the critical role passenger rail and public transit have always played in economic resilience." The bill would allocate \$2.05 billion for Amtrak as part of its core appropriation, maintaining the \$1.3 billion for long-distance trains, while the emergency provisions would include \$5 billion for the Northeast Corridor and \$3 billion for the national network.

For Your Viewing Pleasure

Amtrak's New Acela - Rare Mileage Testing on the Keystone Corridor!



[posted on *YouTube*] Amtrak's future of high speed travel is soon here! On May 28, 2020, Amtrak tested the Avelia Liberty - the name given to the new Acela built by Alstom in Hornell, New York - for the first time under its own power to Thorndale [PA]. The next day they ran again to Lancaster Station on the Keystone Corridor,

Amtrak's Mainline between Philadelphia and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This is perhaps the only time in history Amtrak's new Acela will run on this track, so we took full advantage to capture the move on our new 4K 60p camera in Ronks and Coatesville, Pennsylvania, mileposts 59.2 and 38.6 respectively, at the former Irishtown Road crossing and the stone arch viaduct, aptly named the Coatesville High Bridge. As a bonus, Norfolk Southern local H84 was on its way up from Coatesville to W&N Junction while we were awaiting the Acela, so we catch them returning eastbound at Downingtown Station.

This video is posted on *YouTube* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbl7U46Bco8> by Central Penn Rail Productions. There's also some good explanation of train movement operations accompanying the movement of the NS freight.

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