

# 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

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There's quite a variety of rail traffic to be seen when viewing the Historic Chuckey Depot live webcam. Here we see Norfolk Southern's Geometry Train, with unit NS 38, commonly known as "The Brick", and research car NS 36 in tow. Colorful beams of light from the bottom of the cars take a digital profile of the track which is then used for future maintenance and upgrades.

## *August 24<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting*

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St. Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). The program will be presented by Howard Orfield. To safeguard everyone's health, face masks will be required and chairs will be spaced 6 feet apart to practice social distancing; also, the depot is cleaned during operating days and the building doors will be open. Mark your calendar so you will not miss this meeting and enjoyable evening with your fellow railfans.

## Member Notes

Please keep Fred Phofl, the family of Nancy Jewell and Harold Smitter in your thoughts and prayers in their recent loss of loved ones.

Keep George Ritchie, Gary Price, Art Devoe, Mike Dowdy and Billy Walker in your prayers as they deal with various health concerns. 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. We welcome anyone who wants to join our club.

Hope everyone is having a good summer.

## September 2020 Rail Excursions

As most of you know the Great Smoky Mountain train excursions that were planned for March 28<sup>th</sup> and May 16<sup>th</sup> had to be canceled due to the coronavirus outbreak and have been rescheduled for September 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. The trips were moved from Dillsboro to Bryson City and all bus service had to be cut out which meant that no hosts were needed for this trip. We found out that we were going to have to make some modifications to the trip with no dining car and half capacity in all the cars. Thus, we had to issue several refunds; however, the trip is back on the market and selling well. Tickets are on sale at <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org>.

## For Your Viewing Pleasure ....



"Pullman: America's Hotel on Wheels" is a new DVD from *Classic Trains* and producer Rich Luckin. This program covers the full range of activities that comprised the Pullman Company and its related firms. The enterprise was part heavy industry, part fine hotel chain, and part vehicle for social change. This DVD includes:

- Travel on Pullman cars.
- Pullman-built rail cars and accommodations.
- How African American Pullman porters advanced the cause of civil rights.
- Pullman's factory and company town near Chicago.
- Interviews with passenger-train experts.
- Preserved Pullman cars.

Kalmbach HOBBYSTORE is taking order reservations now. Expected release date is October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

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## 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*

As always, we are in need of volunteers to work at the Spring Street 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](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com).

### ROLLING STOCK

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



In the photos above we see the “Moultrie” during its service life. Upper left: on the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad. Middle: on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Upper right: builder’s photo from Pullman.

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

**“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100):** The Clinchfield 100 is showing some signs of life as the Mechanical Crew starts putting it back together. Below are the projects that have been completed at press time.

1. Holding Tank installed.
2. Overhead Heat installed.
3. New remodeled Rest Room.
- 4 Side Marker lights installed.
5. Platform hand railing extended higher.

## *Chuckey Depot and Museum*

### CHUCKEY DEPOT IS OPEN!!!

The Chuckey Railroad Depot Museum is open for business and we feel things are going well with social distancing, mask wearing and the Host office being restricted. If you would like to volunteer at depot please email [wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com). The depot is open most Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 1 pm to 4 pm.

## In the News

### 2020 Santa Claus Train Cancelled



[Chris Anderson, *TRAINS Industry Newsletter*] The CSX Santa Train, an Appalachian tradition for more than seven decades, will be sidelined this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, at least in its traditional form.

CSX and the Kingsport, Tenn., Chamber of Commerce announced Thursday that the Santa Train, held annually the Saturday before Thanksgiving in Eastern Kentucky, Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee, will not operate across CSX's former Clinchfield Kingsport Subdivision due to concerns with the escalating pandemic.

The Chamber says that, rather than Santa riding the rails to deliver gifts at more than a dozen designated stops, gifts will be distributed in a drive-through process from retail stores along the route operated by regional grocery giant Food City, one of the event's primary sponsors. The new plan is being billed as a "reimagining" of the Santa Train. The decision halts a 77-year-old tradition of Santa riding the high iron to deliver gifts to Appalachian communities.

"The health and safety of our employees, volunteers, attendees and the community is always our top priority when we are planning the Santa Train.

We decided it was in the best interests of all parties to rethink this year's event amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," CSX Corporate Communications Vice President Bryan Tucker said in a statement. "We worked closely with our partners and are pleased to be able to provide a safe alternative to the traditional Santa Train that will bring joy and lift spirits during this challenging time."

CSX spokesperson Cindy Schild tells Trains News Wire that the change in format is specifically for this year amidst the ongoing pandemic. She says the decision is "not cancelling the train, it's not cancelling the tradition." Schild also says the railroad is committed to putting the Santa Train back on the tracks in 2021 if it is safe to do so.

"This is a decision that is being made for this year," Schild says. "The Santa Train has been running for 75 years and right now, there are no plans to end this long-standing tradition. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to reimagine how this train is experienced to spread some holiday cheer along the route in a safe way. That was the nature of the decision for this year and we're glad we're still able to spread some cheer and hand out some gifts on the route."

The Santa Train tradition was started in 1943 by Kingsport Chamber and the Clinchfield Railroad. The train's modern-day route extends from CSX's Shelby Yard in Pikeville, Kentucky, south along the Kingsport Sub. Along the 100-plus-mile route to Kingsport, the train stops in several communities and draws massive crowds which gather in tight proximity at the rear of the train in an attempt to catch soft gifts tossed from Santa and others.

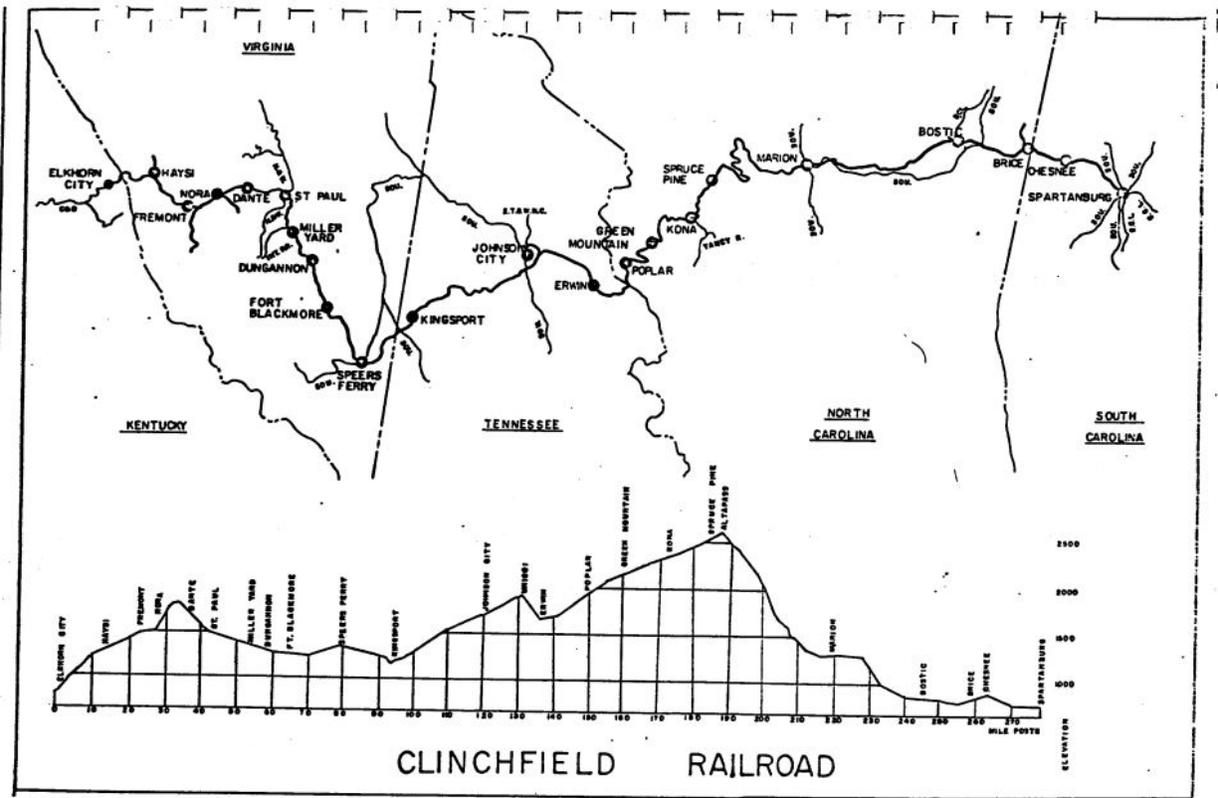
Last year, the train ran in rainy weather pulled by CSX's F40PH2 locomotives. On the rear of the train, Santa stood and tossed gifts from the former Clinchfield office car No. 100, owned and restored by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum in Johnson City, Tenn. The train's 75th running in 2017 featured restored Clinchfield Railroad No. 800, an EMD F7 which was the Clinchfield's first diesel-electric locomotive, and Clinchfield SD45 No. 3632 led the train. Also memorable was the 1992 Santa Train, which featured Union Pacific 4-6-6-4 Challenger steam locomotive No. 3985, dressed up as "Clinchfield No. 676." It led the Santa Train and several other trips over the former Clinchfield route.


**CSX News**

## CSX REBUILDING THE CLINCHFIELD

CSX MOW crews are working in full force in upgrading the former Clinchfield Railroad. This past month, they have been working from Russell, KY to Kingsport, TN. At press time the crews are working from Kingsport south to MP 100. The schedule shows the crews will continue working south to Bostic, NC until the end of September. We hope this is a sign that the Clinchfield will come to life again.

For those not familiar with the CLINCHFIELD, the track map below, extracted from a 1982 publication of the Chief Engineers Office, gives a rough overview of the line.



## KINGSPORT YARDMASTER CHANGES

The Corbin, KY Yardmaster has been moved to the Kingsport Yard Office recently. Rumors are floating around that all Yardmasters will be moved to Jacksonville in 2021.

 Kalmbach HOBBYSTORE is offering "CSX at 40", a special issue of TRAINS, commemorating the 40th anniversary of one of North America's seven big Class I railroads. Take a look back at the creation, evolution and operating practices of the 21,000-mile railroad, its locomotives and people! This 100-page special issue includes:

- An Overview of CSX - See where CSX is today, 40 years after its formation.
- System Maps - 1979 to Today: Take a look at the routes CSX covers.
- CSX Family Tree - Look back at the Chessie System, Seaboard, and Conrail networks and trace CSX back to one of the first railroads in America, the Baltimore & Ohio.
- **The Santa Train** - Roll through Appalachia with the Santa Train delivering toys, food, and school supplies to the families along the route from Shelby, Ky to Kingsport, Tenn.

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P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432  
[whistlestop.editor@gmail.com](mailto:whistlestop.editor@gmail.com)

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