

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

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N&W Historical Society member Steve Hutchison caught this wonderful reunion of N&W #611 and our N&W #539 coach at a recent night photo shoot at NCTM. It takes very little imagination to picture both racing towards Cincinnati along the N&W main line. [Photo used with permission.]

October 26th General Membership Meeting

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, October 26th, 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 on the last train east bound on the Old Fort Loops. Another great program you do not want to miss. We will also be discussing our 2021 Spring excursions Bring a friend out and enjoy a pleasant evening with your fellow railfans.

Member Notes

By Edna Kay Carter

Please keep Fred Phofl, the family of Nancy Jewell and Harold Smitter in your thoughts and prayers as they deal with the 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 but will soon be time to renew your dues for 2021.

Hope everyone will get out and see the beautiful fall colors.

Rail Excursions



Our GSMR November 1st train excursion sold out in a couple of days. This is the peak leaf change weekend and we are hoping that the weather will be beautiful. With weather and the leaf colors, it makes this trip one of the best of the season. Social distancing and mask requirements have been working out well on past trips.

We are working on the 2021 excursion season now.

WATAUGA VALLEY CHRISTMAS DINNER

The Board will make a decision on holding this year's Christmas Dinner very soon.

DUES NOTICES FOR 2021

The 2021 Dues Notices will be mailed out very soon. After receiving your notice, please get your dues payment back into the Membership Chairman Edna Carter ASAP. Return to Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, ATTN: Edna Carter, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. You can join the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual and add family members at \$5.00 for each member. Any questions, email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

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

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539), “Moultrie” diner (WATX 400): Both cars are at the NCTM in Spencer awaiting service on their Christmas Trains.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), “Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): Both cars are in Jonesborough receiving annual upgrades.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): Is in Jonesborough continuing to receive upgrades. The photos below portray the installation of the car’s new Gen Set.



Chuckey Depot and Museum

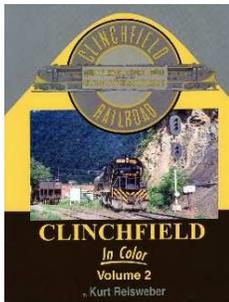
Since the Museum was opened on October 2, 2017, we have had several thousand visitors at the depot and hundreds of volunteer hours. Your Board wants to thank all 90 WVRHS&M volunteers who have been trained to host at the museum. If you would like to host at the museum, please call 423-753-5797 and leave message or email wataugavalley@gmail.com, asking for training. Everyone is having a good time at the museum; please come and volunteer one day a month for four hours. REMEMBER WE SOCIAL DISTANCE AT THE CHUCKEY DEPOT AND EVERYONE WEARS A MASK. SAFETY IS OUR MAIN CONCERN.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE SANTA TRAIN EXHIBIT AT THE CHUCKEY DEPOT

The WVRHS&M Santa Train Exhibit will be held on December 12th at the Southern caboose in Jonesborough at 110 South Second St. from 2 pm to 6 pm. WVRHS&M and the Town of Jonesborough will sponsor the event. **Due to COVID-related restrictions, this year's event will take the form of a drive-by rather than boarding the caboose and sitting on Santa's lap.** Everyone is welcome to come out and bring their children and enjoy Santa waving to all cars during a drive by of Santa on the restored Southern Caboose X450. We will need volunteers to help man the event, getting visitors' cars lined up to drive by Santa on the caboose. You can sign up to volunteer by signing the sheet at the next General Membership meeting, by calling 423-753-5797, or e-mailing wataugavalley@gmail.com. This will be good publicity for WVRHS&M as we are expecting a lot of people to come by.

For Your Reading Pleasure

Clinchfield in Color, Vol 2



[Review by Tom Dixon, C&O Historical Society] This is another of the really great books authored by long-time C&OHS member and author Kurt Reisweber. He has been writing/preparing some of the best books that Morning Sun has done recently, in my opinion.

Clinchfield (Clinchfield, Carolina & Ohio Railroad) is one of those small railroads that gets a great amount of attention. It is of interest to C&O fans, of course, because of its direct connection with C&O's Big Sandy line at Elkhorn City, Ky. It served for many years as a conduit for fast freight out of Chicago over C&O, up the Big Sandy and thence to the Southeast via the bridge-line aspect of the Clinchfield.

Like the Virginian, it was built late in the era of new railroad construction, so it is sort of a monument to engineering. Also, just because of its location in the Appalachians, it has superb spectacular scenery. It seems that no matter where you took a picture on the Clinchfield, it had a great backdrop of wonderful scenery. This book tends to prove that!

The pictures in this book are really excellent in composition, and they very clearly illustrate how the Clinchfield operated as well. Kurt always uses a very clear, well organized, and cogent introduction, followed by good, informational captions. This elevates this book far beyond the usual ho-hum "another slide show" aspect of many color books. His is much more than that. There are plenty of great action photos, as well as some good equipment shots, all supplemented with track/profile charts, maps, and timetables. **Morning Sun Books; hardbound; 128 pages; about 250 color photos. \$69.95.**

In the News

TSA Ruling Could Impact Railfans

[*Trains News Wire*] Railfans should note that watching railroad or transit operations, or taking photographs, may in some instances be considered a security threat. Part 1570 of the [TSA security] regulations includes as examples “taking photographs or video of infrequently used access points, personnel performing security functions (for example, patrols, badge/vehicle checking), or security-related equipment (for example, perimeter fencing, security cameras).”

“Loitering near conveyances, railcar routing appliances or any potentially critical infrastructure” may also trigger the interest of security officials. “Observation through binoculars, taking notes, or attempting to measure distances” are cited in the regulation as suspicious activities.

WMSR to Restart Operations in 2021

[wmsr.com/2020/09/operations-announcement/] COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on Allegany [MD] County’s most visual, audible, and ground-shaking community drivers: The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad (WMSR). Like many businesses in the region, the WMSR has endured an abrupt shutdown and subsequent restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic disease.

As the railroad studied how guidelines and precautions could be implemented into its operations, it invested in a new website and ticketing system, acquired several vintage passenger cars, and restarted the restoration of No. 1309 steam locomotive. With the task of restoring 1309 entering its final phase, the railroad has decided to reopen again in 2021.

Any pre-sold ticket holders may contact the railroad to reschedule their trip for 2021, donate their presold ticket value to the nonprofit organization, or speak with a reimbursement representative.

The 2021 operating season features family-friendly offerings and signature events such as the Polar Express train ride.

“We have pooled resources within the historic railroading community from across the country to enhance the experience and identify solutions for a refreshed Western Maryland Scenic Railroad come 2021,” said John Garner, WMSR Executive Director. “This same group of enthusiastic preservationists has spearheaded fundraising strategies that have kept No. 1309’s restoration rolling ahead during the railroad’s downtime. Also, 1309’s long-anticipated rebirth is being managed by shop forces and regional craftsmen, which shall bring this project to completion.”

This summer, No. 1309 was re-wheeled and test-fired as part of the massive, 322-ton machine’s meticulous restoration process. Following these milestones, No. 1309 will be test-fired sporadically during the next quarter to verify its reliability and make adjustments in anticipation of a busy 2021.

Additionally, track, grade crossing, and railroad infrastructure improvement projects are underway to enhance the railroad’s operations. The communities of Cumberland and Frostburg will continue to benefit from the presence of the WMSR as No. 1309 will capture the imagination and excitement of tens-of-thousands visitors when Maryland Thunder journeys up the mountain.

 ***Norfolk Receives \$20 Million for Rail Expansion***

[*Trains News Wire*] The Virginia Port Authority will receive \$20.2 million in Port Infrastructure Development funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation to complete rail expansion at its Norfolk International Terminals. The *Suffolk [VA] News Herald* reports the money will support building two new four-track sections for its rail yard, adding more than 2 miles of track. The project will also include a working area for transferring and staging containers. The project will double the capacity of the existing yard, currently 368,000 containers annually, and is projected to generate \$112.1 million in total economic benefits.

 ***Railway Age Announces Women in Rail 2020 Honorees***

[*Railway Age*, October 13] Established in 2017, the annual awards are presented to rail industry women in the United States, Canada and/or Mexico for their outstanding leadership, vision, innovations, community service involvement, and accomplishments.

“We are proud to present our fourth annual Women in Rail awards to such a distinguished group,” *Railway Age* Publisher Jonathan Chalon said. “Their achievements show that they are leaders in the industry - from freight/passenger to engineer/builder/supplier and government/regulatory.” They will be featured in *Railway Age*’s November 2020 issue.

The program received more than 60 strong nominations this year. The judges were Barbara Wilson, President and CFO, RailUSA LLC; and KellyAnne Gallagher, KAG Strategic Advisory and Founding Executive Director, Commuter Rail Coalition.

 ***FreightCar America: Closing Shoals, Ramping Up Castaños***

[*Railway Age*, October 13] FreightCar America says it has completed key steps in its “manufacturing repositioning and business transformation strategy,” which includes closing its Shoals facility in Cherokee, AL, by first-quarter 2021, and starting railcar shipments from a new production facility in Castaños, Mexico, by the end of 2020.

The car builder has finalized early termination of its Shoals lease, accelerating the expiration date from Dec. 31, 2026, to Feb. 28, 2021. Shoals was FreightCar America’s only domestic railcar production site to have survived after earlier closures in Roanoke, VA, and Danville, IL. It is expected to stop production at the end of this year. (With headquarters in Chicago, the company still has a parts processing facility in Johnstown, PA, and a facility in Shanghai.)

FreightCar America has also completed Association of American Railroads (AAR) certification audits for its new Mexico facility, currently a joint venture with Fabricaciones y Servicios de México that was estimated to cost \$25 million. The facility, which completed its first railcar in early September, is awaiting AAR final certification and approval to start shipping cars. The car builder is now readying itself for full production in 2021.

 ***NS Donates Gondolas to VMT***

Norfolk Southern Corp. has donated three gondolas to the Virginia Museum of Transportation’s 611 program. The three cars, formerly NS 200340, NS 200298, and SOU 66538, will soon be re-stenciled as VMTX equipment where they will support future movements of the Norfolk & Western Class J 611.

Amtrak to Congress: We Need \$10B

[*Railway Age*, October 8] Amtrak, updating its forecast for fiscal year 2021, anticipates needing up to \$4.857 billion to support the company and employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, as Congress considers programs for stimulating the economy, Amtrak has identified \$5.193 billion in additional need as part of an economic recovery proposal to help the nation recover from the impacts of the pandemic. The combined requests total \$10.05 billion.

In an Oct. 8 letter to Vice President Michael Pence, in his capacity as Senate President, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, President and CEO William J. Flynn formalized the \$4.857 billion funding request. He noted, “We have seen that our ridership is not returning as quickly or at the levels that we had hoped for.”

According to Amtrak, business remains at about 25% of pre-COVID levels, and FY 2021 ridership and revenue are forecast to improve to about 40% of pre-COVID levels - “weaker than anticipated.”

The funds would be allocated as follows:

- \$3.227 billion to “preserve Amtrak’s services and capital program in response to the dramatic loss of revenue due to the pandemic.” Of that figure, \$1.704 billion would be used for the Northeast Corridor (NEC), \$413 million for the Amtrak share of State Supported services, and \$1.11 billion for Long-Distance service.
- \$1.63 billion to “support Amtrak RRIF/debt payments, state and commuter partner payments that are payable to Amtrak under PRIIA Sections 209 and 212, the costs of any congressional workforce or service directives, and added revenue risk beyond our current projection.”

To read the full article, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y6dqttkd>.

The photo below is a screenshot from a video posted on our facebook page by Gary Price taken at the same NCTM night shoot shown on the cover page. If you haven’t visited our facebook page, you need to do so – a lot of terrific railfan material!



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whistlestop.editor@gmail.com

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