

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Twelve WVRHS&M members recently crossed over Sam's Gap to Woodfin (Asheville), NC to ride Craggy Mountain Line Railroad's Bersky trolley #6, where they found the car all decked out in Christmas finery.

*December Meeting **Canceled***

Our December General Membership Meeting has been canceled due to the holidays. See you in January.



Happy New Year 2021 !!!



Member Notes

By Edna Kay Carter

Please keep Jack Maloney (aunt) and David and Lyndell Denny (brother/brother-in-law) in your prayers as they deal with the recent loss of loved ones. Keep the other members who have lost loved ones this year in your prayers.

Keep Nancy Ritchie, George Ritchie, Sharon Slagle, Fred Phofl, Jim Stump, Bob Hand, Scott Wise, Billy Walker, Brenda Cox and Gary Price in your prayers as they deal with various health concerns. As always, let us know of any member, friend or family member 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.

Welcome new members Joy Foster and Avon Guinn to our club. We are always looking for new members.

2021 WATAUGA VALLEY OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS and APPOINTEES

The Nominating Committee reports that the following were elected as 2021 Officers and Directors.

Mike Tilley, **President**; Bob Schubel, **Vice President**; Jeanie Walker, **Treasurer**; Jim Smallwood, **Secretary**; Gary Price, **Historian**. **Directors**: Frank Gricus, Tony King, Scott Wise. Jim Calhoun is a lifetime member of the WVRHS Board

The following have been appointed to positions as noted. Jim Magill - **Mechanical Officer**; Art Devoe - **Asst Mechanical Officer**; Jack Maloney – **Spring St Yard Maintenance**; Edna Carter – **Membership Chairman**; Rick Chinouth – **Chairman of the Subcommittee at Chuckey Depot**; Mike Tilley - **Volunteer Chairman Chuckey Depot**; Frank Gricus – **Virtual Railfan Camera Maintenance**; Bob Mushet - **Broadcastify Maintenance**; Fred Waskiewicz - **Whistle Stop Editor**; Cline Knowles - **Whistle Stop Hard Copies**; Frank Gricus – **Grant Writer**; Mike Tilley – **Excursion Director and Ticket Agent**; Edna Carter – **Cards and Flowers**; Howard Orfield and Brad McCrosksy - **Program Directors**.

We welcome all to their 2021 seats.

DUES NOTICES FOR 2021

The 2021 dues notices were sent out last month; please get your dues and payment sent in before December 31, 2020 if you have not already done so. You can join the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual and add family members at \$5.00 each. Payment may be mailed to Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, ATTN: Edna Carter, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. 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 serving on their Christmas Trains.

“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), “Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351), “Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): All three cars are in Jonesborough receiving upgrades.

Rail Excursions

The Watauga Valley 2021 excursion season will start on Saturday, March 27th with a trip through the Great Smoky Mountains. More details will be available in the next newsletter.

For Your Viewing Pleasure

Trains Under the Christmas Tree

For a nostalgic look at Christmases past when chances were there was an electric train running around the tree or in the department store window, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y3etjc74>. A must see for any kid at heart.



How about a Holly, Jolly, Trolley? WVRHS&M members seen here enjoying a ride on the Craggy Mountain Line Railroad.

Chuckey Depot and Museum



We now have new lights on the Chuckey Depot Rail Cam in Jonesborough. Thanks to Frank Gricus for installing the new lights which makes it easier to view trains at night as they pass the depot. Visit the cam at YouTube and type in Jonesborough Rail Cam. Also Bob Mshet has installed another Broadcastify Scanner called the East Radio. Go to YouTube and navigate to the Jonesborough Rail Cam; the links to the Scanner are below the picture.

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot/Museum in Jonesborough has been very good during the holidays. We have about 87 Watauga Valley members that have taken the training host session to work the depot. We plan on having another class the first quarter of 2021. If you would like to volunteer a day a month at the depot, please email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com or phone 423-753-5797 to get signed up. Everyone who has hosted enjoys volunteering at the depot.

ARTIFACTS NEEDED

The Chuckey Depot Artifact Committee is still looking for ET&WNC artifacts for the March 1, 2021 display. If you would like to loan some of your ET&WNC artifacts for a 6-month showing at the Chuckey Depot/Museum, please call Rick Chinouth (423) 612-7647 or email chinouthhome@yahoo.com. Please notify Rick ASAP.

CHUCKEY DEPOT EVENTS



The "Meet Santa on the Caboose" event on December 5th and 12th was a big hit for the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum and the Town of Jonesborough. We had several hundred attending including parents and children who attended the event in just 3 hours. We want to thank all WVRHS&M members who helped with this event and especially Junior Risner, who was the Santa Claus for the event. We will have another event on Saturday, December 19th.

"BREAKFAST WITH SANTA" at the Chuckey Depot was canceled due to Covid-19 Concerns.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT THE SANTA TRAIN

The WVRHS&M Santa Train Exhibit will be held on December 19th at the Chuckey Depot in Jonesborough at 110 South Second St. from 12 pm to 3 pm. WVRHS&M and the Town of Jonesborough will sponsor the event. Everyone is welcome to come out and bring their children and see Santa on our caboose. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **children will not enter the caboose nor sit on Santa's lap.** Santa will instead be on the platform waving at the children as they go into the Chuckey Depot. We will need volunteers to help at this event. Please volunteer by emailing wataugavalley@gmail.com or calling 423-753-5797. This will be good publicity for us as we are expecting a lot of people to come by and see Santa on the red caboose.

In the News



Amtrak Rail Service could be coming to Asheville, NC

["AVL Today", 12/8/2020] Over the weekend, news broke that Amtrak is expanding its service in the Tar Heel State. The railway's 500+ destinations in 46 states may now include Asheville and Wilmington.

The country's foremost provider of intercity passenger rail service has several projects in development here, including a new route between Raleigh and Richmond, VA (which officials with the NC Department of Transportation say is a priority likely to begin soon). The company also plans to add service between Charlotte and Atlanta, GA. All of this is noteworthy, because the only Amtrak service we have nearby in the mountains are within driving distance in Spartanburg and Greenville, South Carolina, making train travel an option for those who can't drive, as well as those unwilling to travel by plane during the pandemic.

Asheville hasn't had rail service since 1975, when the city's last official passenger train ran a final time. In those 45 years, there have been multiple efforts to bring rail service back to the mountains, including the NC Department of Transportation's 2001 adoption of a phased plan to build and renovate train stations with other community uses.

In 2004, the Swannanoa River crested and overflowed in Biltmore Village after three hurricane systems, including Hurricanes Francis and Ivan, came through the area back-to-back, causing massive flooding and over \$200 million in damage, which ultimately rerouted \$450 million in state money to disaster relief. In 2005, the city and state bought property in Biltmore Village as a site for a future station, but it has not yet been built. In 2008, when lawmakers were set to request state funding for transit and rail service, the economy tanked with the Great Recession, pushing it back once more.



Amtrak posts \$801 million operating loss in FY2020

["Progressive Railroading", 11/24/2020] Just prior to the pandemic hitting the United States in March, Amtrak was on track to break even financially for the first time in its history and achieve record ridership in fiscal-year 2020.

Instead, facing unprecedented challenges related to the pandemic, Amtrak posted a fiscal-year 2020 operating loss of \$801 million on total operating revenue of \$2.3 billion, down 32 percent compared with FY2019 revenue. The national intercity passenger railroad provided 16.8 million customer trips in FY2020, a year-over-year decrease of 15.2 million trips compared with last year.

Amtrak worked steadily over the past fiscal year to prioritize rider safety, advance infrastructure and fast-track technology improvements, even as the pandemic caused unprecedented declines in ridership and revenue, Amtrak officials said yesterday during a press conference.

The railroad pivoted quickly to ensure riders and employees remained healthy, while also continuing to focus on improving intercity passenger rail for the future, they said. A restructuring during FY2019 helped put the railroad in a position to deal with its current pandemic-related challenges, said Amtrak Chairman Tony Coscia. [Continued on next page.]

"Prior to the pandemic and with strong support from our partners, Amtrak set new records for ridership, revenue and financial performance on its path to achieve operational break-even in FY2020, further demonstrating the country's growing need for rail," Coscia said. "We are continuing to make advancements so when customers return, they will find an even better Amtrak."

Business remains at about 25 percent of pre-pandemic levels, Amtrak officials said. Based on the current forecast, ridership and revenue is expected to improve to about 37 percent of pre-COVID levels by the end of FY2021, they said.

"Our dedicated employees continue to work tirelessly through the pandemic to keep this country moving, advance critical infrastructure and update technology and services, and provide safe transportation to customers," said Amtrak President and Chief Executive Officer Bill Flynn.

However, without urgently needed additional funding from Congress, the railroad will be forced to further reduce service, defer critical capital projects and implement job cuts, Flynn noted.

Amtrak officials are hoping Congress will soon pass pandemic relief and economic stimulus legislation, but negotiations on Capitol Hill have stalled. The railroad is seeking up to \$4.9 billion in federal funding to help the railroad get through the unprecedented crisis. Typically, Amtrak receives from Congress about \$2 billion annually toward its operations.

Despite the pandemic, Amtrak did achieve several goals during FY2020, such as:

- completing positive train control implementation on all Amtrak-owned and controlled track;
- implementing initiatives to improve workforce diversity and inclusion;
- advancing testing on its the new Acela trains that are expected to start carrying passengers on the Northeast Corridor by the end of 2021;
- starting to refresh major stations across the country;
- completing infrastructure work early due to reduce train volumes on the network; and
- improving and expanding its website and mobile platforms.

Changes to the CSX Business Car Fleet Names

[CSX Retirees web site via Jeff Hensley] There have been several recent changes to the CSX business car fleet. The cars have been renamed after the former chief executives of CSX and the predecessor railroads of CSX. In addition, the cars are being repainted into a paint scheme that is close to the scheme used by the Baltimore & Ohio from the 1930's to the early 1960's. In fact, paint chips from the old B&O cars have been used to ensure that the colors are a match. In 2018, three business cars were sold. They were the *Mississippi*, *Michigan* and *Illinois*. The *Florida* was scrapped at Waycross about the same time. The new names are as follows:

Waycross	Alfred E Perlman	New York	John T Collinson
Pennsylvania	Michael J Ward	Ohio	John W Smith
North Carolina	Alvin R Carpenter	Greenbrier	Robert R Young
Indiana	John W Snow	Tennessee	E Hunter Harrison
Baltimore	Hays T Watkins, Jr	West Virginia	Jervis Langdon, Jr
Georgia	Prime Osborn III	Louisiana	David M LeVan
Alabama	W Thomas Rice	Kentucky	Champion M Davis



NS Line in Virginia Reopens



Last month's "Whistle Stop" reported a derailment of a NS freight near Glenvar, VA, just south of Salem, causing a bridge collapse. Blue Ridge NRHS member Norris Deyerle received this photo taken by Skip Salmon of the N&WS of the new bridge that spans the Roanoke River. The coal train derailment that completely destroyed the original c. 1909, Virginian-built bridge occurred late in the evening on October 30. Repaired in a timely manner, the railroad line should be good to go for another century.



2021 N&W Historical Society Convention Canceled

The 2021 NWHS convention has been cancelled/postponed until 2022. The plan is to produce the same convention as organized for 2020 and 2021. More details will be published when firm.



C&O #1309 Donations Solicited

[Jim Wrinn, "Trains", January 2021] "Trains" readers have made it possible to steam the last Baldwin-built locomotive for the first time since 1956. Thank you for the donations you've given in the past nine months, including \$50,000 from the John Emery Rail Trust. Because of you, work resumed and is nearing completion.

The focus now is on raising a final \$75,000 to cover the cost of the new firing table, coal for test runs, and labor. If you've already donated, please consider another contribution to cover these costs. It's not too late for first-time donors as well. To help meet these goals, mail a check specified for 1309 to Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, P.O. Box 1168, Cumberland MD 21501-1168 or go to <https://wmsr.com/1309-restoration/>. Your help is most welcomed.



WVRA Files to Acquire BC&G

[Extracted from "High Green", Chesapeake RRE] On November 14, 2020 the West Virginia Rail Authority filed a Notice to acquire by purchase and operate approximately 18.0 miles of rail line (including the real property, right of way and/or easement rights underlying such rail line) known as the Buffalo Creek and Gauley Railroad. The BC&G is currently owned and operated by The Elk River Railroad, Inc. ("TERRI"), a Class III rail carrier, and located between Dundon and Widen in Clay County, WV. BC&G has not carried any traffic in over twenty years. After consummation of the Purchase and Sale Agreement, WVRA will own and operate the line as a common carrier by railroad and will assume all common carrier rights and obligations. The transaction is scheduled to be consummated on or after December 14, 2020. **[ED. NOTE: I am scanning railfan community sources for information on the state's planned usage.]**

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