

# Whistle Stop



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

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May 2021



WVRHS&M car 100 passing through Marion, NC in 1974 while on Clinchfield excursion service. We've recently received a grant that will assist in our restoration efforts of the car. See page 4 for story. [Photo copyright Ron Flanary. Used with permission.]

## *April 26<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting*

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Our program this month will showcase a unique railfanning experience, a privately-owned industrial short line from Crab Orchard to Rockwood, TN over the former Tennessee Central. The line's motive power are GE B23-7s, high-hood diesels originally built for the Southern Railway.

## *Member Notes*

### *By Edna Kay Carter*

Continue to keep members and their families in your prayers in the loss of their loved ones.

Please keep George and Nancy Ritchie, Sharon Slagle, Gary Price, Jack Maloney and Billie Walker in your thoughts and 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 would like to welcome C. Don Royston as a new member.

Hope everyone will stay healthy and safe.

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### **NEW EXCURSION MAILING LIST**

WVRHS&M has put together a new mass e-mail list for people to receive advance notification of future excursions. Anyone interesting in getting on the advance list, please e-mail your information to [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com).

### **WATAUGA VALLEY UNIFORMS NOW AVAILABLE**

WVRHS&M uniforms are now available. Get your order in now for these beautiful uniforms; an order form is attached to this issue of the *Whistle Stop*. Submit your order form and check to: WVRHS&M, P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432.

### **PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2021**

The WVRHS&M program committee is looking for General Membership programs for 2021. Please call 423-753-5797 if you have a program you would like to show at one of the meetings. We are looking for speakers; also, if you know of someone who would come and present a railroad-related program. And as always, we're looking for DVD and slide programs.

## *May 16<sup>th</sup> Rail Excursion*

Tickets for our May 16<sup>th</sup> GSMR trip are **sold out!**

## *Chuckey Depot and Museum*



Attendance at the Chuckey Depot is starting to climb each week as the weather improves. If you would like to get trained as a host, please email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com). At left we see a smiling group of visitors, obviously enjoying their time at the Depot.

## *Mechanical Department Report*

*by Jim Magill and Art DeVoe*

All work sessions at the Spring Street Coach Yard are planned for each Tuesday every month. Please show up at 9:00 am if you can help.

### ROLLING STOCK

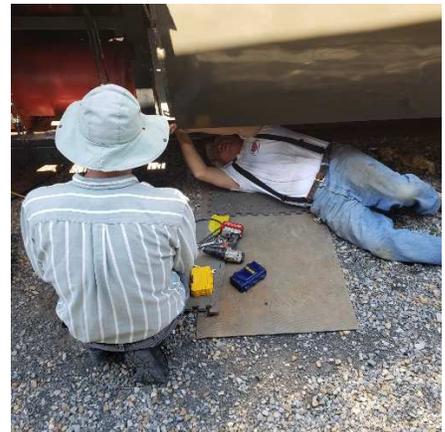
**“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539):** electrical wiring work being performed.

**“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400):** receiving upgrades.

**“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500):** windows are being replaced.

**“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351):** ongoing repairs.

**“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100):** a new air conditioner is being installed. Work continues on the generator. New tables are being installed.



March 30<sup>th</sup> work session photos, clockwise from upper left: Art DeVoe and Gary Lombardi at work on new WATX 500 windows; the new generator for WATX 100, made possible by the grant received (next page); Cline Knowles and Don Findley hard at work on the 100's generator; one of several new tables to be installed on the 100; and visual proof that your editor does find his way over Sam's Gap occasionally.

## *In the News*

### *WVRHS&M Awarded \$10,000 Grant*

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum announced that it is the recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the John H. Emery Rail Heritage Trust. The grant will be used for continued restoration of the Clinchfield 100, a vintage rail passenger car built in 1911. The car is in the final stages of restoration and the grant will be used to purchase and install an air conditioning unit.

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum was established in 1981, originally as a NRHS Chapter, with the mission of preserving the experience of rail travel in Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina through restoration of vintage passenger cars and sponsoring train excursions for our members and the public. Operating the Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum came later.

The Clinchfield 100 was built in 1911 by Pullman and served as the Atlantic Coast Lines #985 coach until 1929 and then served as the dining car "Orlando" until 1951. It was purchased by the Clinchfield Railroad in 1951 and rebuilt over the next two years. From 1953 until 1981 it served on the Clinchfield in their use for excursions as CRR 100. Successor railroad CSX then moved the car to Jacksonville where it was deemed surplus. After ownership by several private parties, it finally served on the Lancaster and Chester Railroad. WVRHS&M purchased the car in 2013 and moved it to Spencer NC at the North Carolina Transportation Museum where it was made road-worthy. Over the ensuing 7 years, our volunteer mechanical team, working at our Spring Street yard in Jonesborough, restored the interior and added a new generator, plumbing and electrical systems.

The John H. Emery Rail Heritage Trust was established by long-time Chicago resident John Emery to preserve equipment and infrastructure to allow future generations to experience what he considered the golden age of rail travel, from 1920 to 1960. It is the largest trust in the U.S. that makes 100% of its awards solely for railroad restoration purposes. Our award is one of 22 grants totaling almost \$325,000 for rail preservation projects in 2021. The awards come from 41 applicants seeking grants totaling more than \$1 million.

Kudos to Frank Gricus for his efforts in pulling together this successful grant application.

### *GSMR Purchases New Coach*



The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad of Bryson City, NC recently purchased an addition to their car fleet from CSX. The car, former CSX Business Car "Michigan", has been renamed "Catamounts" and painted with a school colors purple and gold stripe in honor of nearby Western Carolina University. A WCU logo has also been added. The car is intended for First Class seating, use on the GSMR "Polar Express" train, and is available for rent. The car was originally built in 1951 by Budd for the Pennsylvania Railroad as a parlor car, numbered PRR 7138.

## *March Storm Damages Nashville Steam Shop*

[from Nashville Steam Preservation Society web site, March 28] During Thursday's afternoon storms, a large section of roof from a neighboring building crashed through the upper wall of the Nashville Steam Shop facility. There were three people working at the time of the storm but thankfully no one was injured. Surplus rail equipment parked on the southern side of the shop facility protected the lower wall and prevented further damage to the shop and our equipment and tools. No. 576, though dirtier, is undamaged from the storm and debris. The additional severe weather over the weekend delayed cleanup of the shop but those efforts will resume. As of [March 28], nearly \$12,000 has been donated towards the repairs of the facility and equipment.



The Tennessee Central Railway Museum suffered significant roof damage to their historic main building. The roof on the rear section, which serves as meeting space and a waiting area for their excursion passengers, was dislodged and will more than likely require several months of repair work. The building dates to 1920 and originally served as the master mechanic's office for the Tennessee Central Railroad. It is only one of a few original structures left from the Tennessee Central. Nashville Steam is committed to helping our friends and restoration partners rebuild during this difficult time.

In order to rapidly recover from this loss, they're asking for donations to repair the building and replace damaged equipment while they work with their insurance provider and assess further damage. To donate, go to <https://tinyurl.com/d24w2z63>.

## *New Section Opened on Mendota Rail Trail*

**NOTE: Your editor was tardy in getting this news out. Happens when you're remote.**

[By Joe Tennis, *Bristol Herald Courier* web site. 11/9/2020] Dr. James Lapis hopped onto the Mendota Trail on a recent Wednesday afternoon.

"This leads to a beautiful big trestle," said Lapis, a retired medical doctor and president of the Mendota Trail Conservancy.

The conservancy is a nonprofit group aiming to make the Mendota Trail a 12.5-mile reality. Come Friday [Nov. 13, 2020], it will be halfway there.

With a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a continuous 5.2-mile section will connect Bristol to Benhams, including a freshly built 2.1-mile section featuring the 193-foot-long Trestle No. 3 at Benhams, standing 40 feet above Abrams Creek.

Opening this section is a grand achievement, trail supporters like Lapis say.

But, over the course of two decades, building the Mendota Trail has been like chugging along at the pace of a snail with a broken shell.

After all, it's now been 20 years since the city of Bristol, Virginia, began making plans to build this trail on an abandoned rail line.

Originally, that plan called for stretching the trail from Bristol to the Scott County line for 14 miles. The city spent more than \$600,000 on the property and concepts. But all those plans were eventually tied up in legal wrangles before the city called it quits after 16 years.

Those legal squabbles came from landowners who claimed they owned the long, skinny piece of land that was once the path of an active railroad from the 1890s to the 1970s.

In 2016, the city deeded the property to Mountain Heritage Inc., a nonprofit that went to immediate work on opening the first mile — from Mendota to the North Fork of the Holston River — in 2017.

Next, in 2018, Mountain Heritage volunteers opened a 3.1-mile section that connected Bristol's Island Road to Washington County's Reedy Creek Road.

Along the line, legal counsel Frank Kilgore, of St. Paul, Virginia, took maps into the field and explained to adjacent landowners how this skinny parcel of land weaved its way between farms and private residences.

Kilgore's explanations, he said, were meant to calm landowners who had believed that the trail property reverted to them when trains stopped running in the 1970s.

More recently, in October, Mountain Heritage transferred ownership of the property to the Mendota Trail Conservancy.

Today, horseback riding is not allowed on the Mendota Trail. But it is open to hiking and bicycle riding and cross-country skiing "if we get snow," said Lapis.

Trail user John Iskra, 56, a math professor at Emory & Henry College, lives less than two miles from the trailhead in Bristol, Virginia. But, being close is not the only reason Iskra visits the Mendota Trail nearly every day.

"It's just beautiful," Iskra said. "Along the entire length of the trail, there are a lot of different animals. I've seen deer. And people have horses beside the trail."

Iskra likes the first mile at Bristol, saying the steep climb makes a good workout.

"And people along the trail are friendly," he said.

A court ruling in 2007 declared that the city of Bristol owned the railroad property "in fee simple." That means it's not just a right-of-way but a long strip of land, Lapis said.

Clarifying that issue with the individual landowners is "still ongoing," Lapis said. "I think they really know but they don't want to hear it. But probably, more importantly, the trail users have been very polite. They don't litter and they don't wander off the trail."

When it comes to owners of land adjacent to the trail, Lapis said, "Far more have bent over backwards to help us. We've had land donations."

Four adjacent landowners have donated land to the trail to develop a future parking lot and a future picnic area, Lapis said.

## *WSMR #1309 Fully Operational*



Photo: Steve Bittner, *Cumberland Times-News*

[Greg Larry, *Cumberland Times-News*] Officials with the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad say the massive Baldwin steam engine No. 1309 is fully operational and are confident the locomotive can be cleared for duty this summer.

During the March railroad board meeting, Nathaniel Watts, the scenic railroad's chief mechanic, said he hopes the steam engine will be cleared by the Federal Railroad Administration for operation this summer.

According to Watts, the train can make the run to the Frostburg Depot and back but work is being done to meet railroad administration inspection standards. The WSMR has run excursions from Cumberland to Frostburg since 1986.

"The steam locomotive is 100% operational," said Watts. "We are waiting for a few parts that have to be cast. We had a few leaks. So, before the FRA comes out to inspect it, we want to make sure we are 100% confident that it will pass. We want to be running this summer and we think we can."

Allegany County officials said last week said the county would take over maintenance of the 14-miles of track from Cumberland to Frostburg. The move will take the financial burden off the scenic railroad, which was ordered by the railroad administration to replace thousands of aging railroad ties before it can run.

## *Train Spotters*

### *Local NS Action*

Trains on the A line between Bristol, TN/VA and Bulls Gap, TN:

T23 Limits Greeneville to Bulls Gap local switching 7am to 4pm

T24 Limits Greeneville to Johnson City local switching 8pm to 6pm

15T Allentown PA to Birmingham AL morning train 7am to 11am

16T Birmingham AL to Allentown PA morning train 7am to 11am

22A Intermodal Norfolk VA to Louisville, KY afternoon 4pm to 7pm

23G Intermodal Louisville, KY to Norfolk VA morning Train 6am to 12noon

201 Intermodal New Jersey to Rossville, AL Morning Train 7am to 11am

202 Intermodal Rossville AL to New Jersey afternoon train 3pm to 8pm

127 Roanoke VA to Chattanooga, TN sets off at Radford, VA Bristol, Jonesborough.

126 Chattanooga, TN to Roanoke, VA sets off at Radford, VA Bristol, Jonesborough.

800 series train are coal trains

## *Wabtec Seeks Federal Funding to Help Develop Zero-emissions Locomotives*

[Bill Stephens, trains.com] Wabtec CEO Rafael Santana asked Congress today to help fund a Freight Rail Innovation Institute that will develop zero-emissions locomotive technology to replace the diesel by 2030.

“Wabtec’s goal is to develop the next generation of zero-emission locomotives. Wabtec has a clear path to power new locomotives – and repower existing locomotives – with batteries, hydrogen internal combustion engines, and hydrogen fuel cells,” Santana told the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

The institute will be a partnership involving Wabtec, short line holding company Genesee & Wyoming, and Carnegie Mellon University.

“To accelerate the future of rail within the next decade and at scale, we ask Congress to collaborate with Wabtec, CMU, and G&W to create, coordinate, and co-fund the Freight Rail Innovation Institute,” Santana said.

The innovation institute will fund research, demonstration, and commercialization of technology that can eliminate railroads’ use of fossil fuels that contribute to climate change. The effort, which also would involve research on technology that would improve network logistics and capacity, aims to shift highway traffic to rail, which is currently four times more fuel efficient than trucks.

The new technology, including moving block signal systems and more sophisticated network management software, would permit railroads to handle 50% more freight by better using existing capacity. “By pursuing increased rail utilization and zero-emissions locomotives, we can create up to 250,000 jobs, all while increasing safety,” Santana says.

“By increasing the amount of freight trains on the railroad, we increase the need for yard, maintenance, and manufacturing workers,” Santana says. “Therefore, we believe 80% of the jobs created through our program will be blue collar jobs. This is alongside the jobs created to construct a research institute, as well as build and maintain hydrogen fueling pipelines and stations around the country.”

Wabtec hopes to quickly develop and test battery-electric and hydrogen combustion engines that can replace the diesel engines in existing locomotives. “Each diesel-powered locomotive converted to alternative energy sources can save up to 3,000 tons of [carbon dioxide] per year,” Santana says.

Wabtec’s FLXdrive battery-electric locomotive has been undergoing testing on BNSF Railway between Stockton and Barstow, Calif., since January. “To date FLXdrive has run over 10,000 miles and delivered an average of 10% reduction in fuel consumption across the train,” Santana says.

By boosting the battery power to 6 megawatt hours from the prototype’s 2.4 megawatt hours, fuel consumption and emissions could be reduced by 30%, Santana says.

The combination of green locomotives and shifting more freight to rail would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 120 million tons per year, which is the equivalent of removing 26 million cars from the road, Santana says. [Continued on next page.]

Genesee & Wyoming said the partnership would accelerate the development of green locomotives.

“We believe that G&W working with Wabtec and Carnegie Mellon University on the Freight 2030 Initiative, with support by the federal government, will accelerate the development of zero-emissions locomotives and transform the next generation of rail transportation,” G&W CEO Jack Hellmann said in a letter of support. “With success, G&W railroads will be able to offer our customers both carbon-free and cost-effective transportation, enabling us to expand rail freight utilization and thereby create a virtuous circle that reduces our nation’s carbon footprint.”

The Wabtec-G&W-Carnegie Mellon partnership is the latest example of the rail industry aiming to reduce its carbon footprint. The Class I systems have published science-based targets to reduce emissions over the next decade, and Canadian Pacific is developing a hydrogen fuel cell locomotive that it will begin testing next year.

## Clinchfield Hoppers Scrapped

The April 2020 *High Green* [Chesapeake Railway Association] noted [and mentioned previously in the *Whistle Stop*] the presence of six ex-Clinchfield Railroad hoppers owned by the Maryland Midland Railway in Woodsboro, MD. Jamie Haislip, Roadmaster on the Walkersville Southern Railroad in Maryland, talked to the MMID about buying them and bringing them to the WS, but unfortunately it was not to be. On January 5 Jamie wrote, “There was a little mix up with the railroad and they scrapped the cars.” He added, “They apologized but they had been sold to the scrappers.”



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Friday, April 30, 2021 through Sunday, May 2, 2021

***Whistle Stop***

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**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum  
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