

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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WVRHS&M member Les Billings captured CSX AC44CW #509 entering Unicoi County with southbound train Q693-22 on a beautiful late spring day.

June 28th General Membership Meeting

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, June 28th, 2021 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). The program for June will be on the Holston Valley Railroad, a railroad that operated in the early 1900's out of Bristol toward South Holston Lake which did not survive long. Hope everyone can make the meeting this month. Come out see this great program and hear about some of our upcoming events.

Member Notes

By Edna Kay Carter

Please keep the Ritchie family in your prayers and the other members who have lost loved ones.

Continue to keep Nancy Ritchie, Gary Price, Jack Maloney, Fred Phofl, Lois Tilley and Billy 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.

Welcome new members Donald Voncannon, Karyn Brown and Steven and Sheila Bible.

Hope everyone is enjoying this summer weather and staying safe.

OFFICIAL CHANGE IN MEETING LOCATION

The Johnson City Public Library recently notified the Watauga Valley Railroad Museum that they were opening up but with major changes. They told us that the meeting room that we always met in would not be available for the months of June and July due to library events. Also, we could not book a year in advance as we have done in the past. We could only book for three months and on the fourth month, someone with the library foundation would be in line to rent it before us. With this in mind, having to go from one facility to another during the year would not work. We have decided to keep meetings at the Chuckey Depot on 2nd St in Jonesborough due to these changes at the library.

WATAUGA VALLEY UNIFORMS

Several members have asked about ordering uniforms. We will be sending out a new order from very shortly.

LIBRARY DONATIONS

Our library collection in Jonesborough is growing fast. We appreciate all the donations that have been made. Please bring your railroad book donations to any membership meeting or call the chapter 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!

Train Excursions

The Watauga Valley Railroad Museum is planning on putting the sale of our September 11th Great Smoky Mountain Excursion tickets on line on our web site on July 17th. More details about the trip will be in the next newsletter. We are also planning on running a Hiwassee Gorge Special on October 23rd. Details about this trip to come out soon.

Whistle Truck

We're still working on rentals for the Whistle Truck. Interest has been slow due to the pandemic causing event cancellations during the past year.

Chuckey Depot

The Chuckey Depot Museum in Jonesborough will host a reception for its newest exhibit "*As Fast As Birds Can Fly: The ET&WNC (Tweetsie) Railroad*" on Saturday, June 26th from 1:00 - 3:00 pm. The ET&WNC RR ran from Johnson City through Elizabethton on its way to North Carolina. This narrow gauge line only lasted from the 1880s through 1950, but it made a lasting impact on the region.



The exhibit includes several artifacts from the ET&WNC's storied history (for example, artifacts worn by Conductor Cy Crumley shown at left) as well as photographs taken by people who worked on and for the railroad line. The exhibit originally debuted in March, but due to Covid 19, the museum was unable to have an opening reception. Now, we're ready to celebrate the exhibit and the history. Come out between 1:00 - 3:00 pm on June 26th for interesting history and refreshments!

You can visit the museum anytime from 1:00 - 4:00 pm on Thursday, Friday and Sunday and from 11:00 am - 5:00 pm on Saturdays. The ET&WNC exhibit will be on display through August this year.

Mechanical Department Report

by Jim Magill and Art DeVoe

We continue to need volunteers to work at the Spring Street Coach Yard on every Tuesday from 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): receiving wiring upgrades.

"Moultrie" diner (WATX 400) and **"Crescent Harbor" sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351):** both cars receiving upgrades.

"St Augustine" coach (WATX 500): new window glass being installed.

"Clinchfield 100" office car (WATX 100): new air conditioning system (below left) installed and being hooked up. New tables are being installed (below right). Wiring upgrades continue.



In the News

Fate of the "Mardi Gras"

The November 2010 issue of the "Whistle Stop" included an "In the News" article on the sale of RNRH 3305 "Mardi Gras". Folk recalling the glory days of NORFOLK SOUTHERN's Steam Program (and Watauga Valley-sponsored trips) will remember this beautiful round-end lounge observation car owned by Roanoke NRHS gracefully bringing up the rear of excursion trains. The news at that time was that Roanoke NRHS had sold the car to Permian Basin Railways, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Iowa Pacific Holdings, for excursion service on two of their lines, one being the RIO GRANDE SCENIC RAILROAD operating out of Alamosa, CO over the SAN LUIS AND RIO GRANDE RAILWAY. The new owners repainted the car from N&W Tuscan red to its original ILLINOIS CENTRAL paint scheme. Legend has it that this was the car in which the song, "The City of New Orleans", was written. [Trivia: Arlo Guthrie was not the original recording artist nor the composer.]



On a recent trip out west, your editor discovered the "Mardi Gras" sitting forlornly among the entire side-tracked passenger car consist in Alamosa. Apparently the RGSR ceased operating excursions following a wildfire that damaged some of their facilities, as well as the SAN LUIS AND RIO GRANDE RAILWAY entering Chapter 11 bankruptcy in late 2019. With the car and others (over a dozen) baking in the Southwest Colorado heat, we can only hope that a new owner can be found to either reopen the excursion line or rescue the "Mardi Gras".

Nashville Steam Successfully Lifts No. 576

[by Joey Bryan, The Nashville Steam Preservation Society, June 17] Thanks to help from project sponsor Clark Crane, FMW Solutions, and Nashville Steam volunteers, No. 576 is one major step closer to returning to operation. After a few weeks of prep work, two cranes lifted the 220,000-lb steam engine approximately ten feet in the air to provide enough clearance to remove the wheels for inspections and repairs. The whole process took a little less than 3 hours. "We can't thank Clark Crane enough for their help and support in lifting No. 576," said Nashville Steam Communications Manager Joey Bryan, "their expertise and attention to details made the whole experience very easy."

While the locomotive was airborne, the trailing truck, driver wheels, and pilot wheels were



removed one at a time. Each driver wheel was dragged using a telehandler rather than rolled due to the lack of side rods acting as a balance to the counterweights. The engine was then lowered onto four steel pedestals. The driver wheels will be sent to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga where they have the special machinery needed and FMW Solutions will perform the repairs and needed maintenance.

For a video of the operation, go to <https://tinyurl.com/etuaz76p>.

Amtrak's New Acela Trains Delayed a Year

[trains.com] Debut of Amtrak's next-generation *Acela* trains will be delayed by a year because of modifications needed to make the train compatible with Northeast Corridor infrastructure, the *Washington Post* reports.

The first of the 28 new Alstom trainsets had been expected to enter service this year, but the debut is now projected for spring 2022 as a result of modifications to the catenary system. The train's pantograph would lose contact with the catenary wire and could not reach top speed, according to an official involved with the project. Modifications to solve the problem have required additional testing, computer modeling, and simulations. Those tests "have been an extended affair," says Larry Biess, Amtrak assistant vice president of mechanical, adding several months to the timeline to deliver the equipment.

The aging, curvy nature of the Northeast Corridor has presented problems that the *Avelia Liberty* trainsets not faced by their European counterparts, he said. Pandemic-related problems have also added to the delays.

Amtrak announced a \$2.45 billion deal with Alstom to build the new trainsets in 2016. The first completed trainset exceeded the planned top speed of 160 in testing in Colorado; the second began testing on Amtrak lines in the Northeast a little over a year ago.

41ST NATIONAL NARROW GAUGE CONVENTION

Hickory N.C - September 1-4, 2021

Welcome to the home of the 41st National Narrow Gauge Convention (<https://41nngc.com>). We have a lot planned for convention week, more than even the typical narrow gauge convention. We all lament the cancelled convention in St Louis in 2020, but we look forward to Hickory and the other future conventions. If you have never attended a National Narrow Gauge Convention before, you are in for a treat. Check out all of our web pages and the only question you will have left afterward will be... Where do I sign up!

A National Narrow Gauge Convention is primarily for model railroaders, but all modelers have a love for the real thing. The Hickory convention brings the best of modeling and the best of rail fanning together into four+ days of celebrating steel wheels on steel rails. A narrow gauge convention draws the best model railroaders from around the world to one place to share their knowledge with others in clinics, compete in model and photography contests, purchase high quality kits and equipment directly from some of the best cottage manufacturers in the industry, see the work of others in home layout tours and in modular railroads set up at the convention, and establish friendships that will last for decades.

Above and beyond the regular events of the convention, the Convention Committee has arranged with the tourist railroads in the region for special activities open to convention attendees. See the

Steam Railroad Activities page for more information on these special events. The National Narrow Gauge Convention is a four-day event, but many people come to the area for a full week in order to be able to take in all the things to see and do. This is not your typical train show. It is a destination event that has become the prime vacation week for model railroaders for four decades now. We welcome all fans of trains both large and small. Don't let the term Narrow Gauge hold you back. Narrow gauge modelers are some of the most detail oriented in the hobby, so no matter what era you model or rail fan, narrow gaugers can teach you something. A National Narrow Gauge Convention is not put on by an organization like the NMRA. It is run by a group of individuals, just like you, who have a love for trains. We guarantee after you attend a National Narrow Gauge Convention, you will go home with stories and experiences that you will remember for the rest of your life. Check out our pages, and then sign up to attend. Y'all Come!

NS Signal Discontinuance or Modification Request

Under part 235 of title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and 49 U.S.C. 20502(a), this document provides the public notice that on January 6, 2021, Norfolk Southern Corporation (NS) petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeking approval to discontinue or modify a signal system. FRA assigned the petition Docket Number FRA-2021-0004. Applicant: Norfolk Southern Corporation, Tommy A. Phillips, Senior Director—C&S Engineering, 1200 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30309

Specifically, NS requests permission to discontinue a traffic control system (TCS) on the S line, from milepost (MP) S146.0, control point (CP) Craggy, at Murphy Junction, to MP S228, CP New Line, at Morristown, on the Gulf Division. This includes CPs at Craggy, Volga, Ivy, Nocona, Walnut, Hot Springs, French, Del Rio, Big Creek, Bridgeport, Huff, Leadvale, Lilac, and Douglas, and 20 automatic signals. The main track between S146 and S228 will be converted to NS Rule 171 operation. [Where designated by bulletin or special instructions, use of the main track will be authorized by issuance of a Mandatory Directive, under the direction and over the initials of the Train Dispatcher.] An automatic signal at MP S226.5 will be converted to an operable approach signal. The signaled sidings within the application limits will be made non-controlled, other than main track. NS states the reason for the proposed discontinuance is that operations no longer require TCS.



WVRHS&M member Frank Gricus demonstrates the Advanced Train Control System (ATCS) at the Chuckey Depot. The ATCS is one of many reasons for a visit to the Museum.

Photo Gallery

WVRHS&M member Les Billings has been quite busy with his camera these days, proof of which can be seen in the photos below. Fellow railfans should get some good ideas on action photo spots from these pictures.



CN #5705 providing assistance on NS train M27 in downtown Johnson City at Roan Street.



BNSF #6855 awaiting a train NS 126 crew change in front of the Chuckey Depot.



VGN heritage unit passing Chuckey Depot with NS train 201.



CSX #5412 leading train Q693 over the Embreeville Road crossing in Johnson City.



NS #7589 pulling train M26 into Piney Flats.

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whistlestop.editor@gmail.com

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