

# Whistle Stop



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

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Photo by Bob Harvey.

In 1971, the Clinchfield purchased its first non-EMD diesels due to their “manufacturer-of-choice” not being able to deliver the SDs they sorely needed. CRR bought and received seven 3600 horsepower U-36Cs from General Electric and immediately put them into coal service. The U36-Cs were soon receiving complaints from both the road and shop crews. For an eye-witness account of this particular locomotive having a “bad day,” go to the Clinchfield Railroad site at

<https://tinyurl.com/5wmmk3yk>

## *April 22<sup>nd</sup> General Membership Meeting*

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). For this month's program we will be entertained by former CSX (Clinchfield) engineer Ralph Clarke, who will share his memories on his circular Amtrak trip starting at Roanoke, VA to Washington, DC, Chicago, IL, New Orleans, back to Washington, DC, and ending back in Roanoke. You will love to hear about this trip. Bring a friend out and enjoy a great evening of railroading.

## Member Notes

Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers: Jim Calhoun, Fred Phofl, Art Devoe, Don Findley, Lois Tilley, Gary Price, and Clare Savil. Also remember the family of Jeff Hensley, who recently passed away, and Frank Gricus, whose brother also passed away recently.

If you know of a member that needs a card, thoughts for various concerns, or to request that one of our members or family be reported for various concerns in the *Whistle Stop*, email a request to [wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com).

**Welcome Aboard!** Please welcome our newest members: Howard Berry, Jonesborough; Michael Brennan, Johnson City; Sharon & Hannah Canella, Beech Mountain, NC; David Lee, Jonesborough; Michael Meighan, Jonesborough; and Jeffrey & Lisa Murray, Johnson City.

### DINNER ON THE DINER CANCELLED

Due to so much mechanical work on our cars, the 100 and *Moultrie*, it has been decided to cancel this year's "Dinner on the Diner" event; we will resume next year.

## Upcoming Railfan Events

The Watauga Valley **Great Smoky Mountain Railroad excursion** on May 4<sup>th</sup> is nearly sold out. The next GSMR trip will be held on Saturday, Sept 14<sup>th</sup> with steam power. To learn more about the May trip and order tickets, go to: <https://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/excursions.php>.

### WATAUGA VALLEY CLINCHFIELD SOUTHEND TOUR

Members of the Watauga Valley Railroad Museum are invited to attend the Clinchfield Southend Tour on Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024. We have rented two 15 passenger vans to explore the Clinchfield right of way. An itinerary is attached to the end of this newsletter. The trip will be led by Thomas Pittman; the cost to cover the van rental, insurance and fuel is \$40 per person. We have very limited seating for everyone in the two vans so get your check in the mail to Watauga Valley Railroad Museum, P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37650 ASAP. Rest room breaks are planned as well as a lunch break at the Countryside BBQ in Marion, NC. **PLEASE NOTE:** We will be driving on some curvy roads; if you get car sick, this could be issue for you in the van. If you like the Clinchfield Railroad, you're sure to enjoy this trip.



Recently purchased by Mike Tilley is the number board from CRR EMD GP38 #2007 (shown at right). Plans for its display are TBD.



## *Mechanical Department Report*

### *by Art Devoe*

All work sessions at the Spring Street Coach Yard, 210 Spring St., Jonesborough, are planned for each Tuesday every month; please show up at 9:00 a.m. if you can help.

#### **ROLLING STOCK**

**“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400) and “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500):** 500 returning to, 400 at the Spring St. Coach Yard. Both receiving upgrades.

**“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539):** in the Spring St. Coach Yard.

**“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351):** in the Spring St. Coach Yard for generator/engine repairs. The two photos below show Jim Sutterlin and Gary Lombardi putting the repaired Gen Set back under the Crescent Harbor. Not shown is Thomas Pittman who was also involved (operated the forklift) and is taking these photos. Heavy, involved work!



**“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100):** at the Spring St. Coach Yard receiving upgrades.

## *Chuckey Depot / Museum*

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot is starting to climb each week as the weather is getting better. We are needing volunteers to host at the Chuckey Depot. If you would like to get trained for host duty, please email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com). Rick Chinouth will hold a 45-minute training class preparing you to start hosting. All of our hosts enjoy volunteering at the depot.

You can hear and see all the action on the NS A Line and on the former Clinchfield (CSX) by visiting the Virtual Railfan Cam at the Chuckey Depot; at <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org>; or <https://www.youtube.com/> and typing “Jonesborough Rail Cam”. Also, we now have three live NS radios up and operating at <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org> and the one on Holston Mountain in Carter County at <http://www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/35435>.

## *From the Vault ...*

### **Former Clinchfield Employee Pleads Guilty to Embezzlement**

[The following article, written by BILL M. JONES, was originally published in the *JOHNSON CITY PRESS-CHRONICLE* on October 15, 1980] One of the three former Clinchfield Railroad employees entered a guilty plea at a federal court arraignment Tuesday [Oct. 14]. The three are charged with taking over \$1.1 million in kickbacks, finder's fees and through paper corporations.

Thomas J. Britton pleaded guilty to embezzlement, and/or stealing money and assets of Clinchfield. He also pleaded guilty to a second charge of violation of the Layton Antitrust Act. The act prohibits a business engaged in interstate commerce to enter into contracts without competitive bidding.

Former general manager Thomas D. Moore, Jr. and former chief engineer Lewis Kerns entered pleas of not guilty to a charge of embezzlement, and/or stealing -money and assets of the railroad. Moore also pleaded not guilty to violation of the Clayton Act and to making false and fraudulent statements to the Internal Revenue Service. The two are scheduled to be tried here [Greenville, TN] Nov. 13. Moore is also scheduled to be tried on the IRS charge Dec. 9.

After Britton entered his guilty plea and prosecuting attorney Guy Blackwell Jr. presented the charges, Judge C. G. Neese told Britton he could remain free under \$1,000 bond while a pre-sentence investigation is conducted. Britton is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 21. The maximum sentence he could receive is six years and a \$15,000 fine.

In reading the charges, Blackwell said that Moore and Britton, along with Carolyn Bailey, established Blue Ridge Equipment Co. in 1974 to be used to receive payments as kick-backs. He said that Kerns later joined the firm as a consultant. Following the establishment of Blue Ridge, Blackwell said that both Pawnee and Tarheel construction companies were told to pad their construction bills on work done for Clinchfield by 10 percent, which was diverted to the defendants. Blackwell said that Pawnee paid \$296,013 and Tarheel paid \$187,388 in kickbacks. He also charged that Samuel L. Phillips, a North Carolina businessman, paid Moore and Britton a total of \$55,000 for securing deeds to three tracts of land from Holston Land Co., a subsidiary of Clinchfield.

Moore and Britton were also charged with receiving \$7,100 from Miller Brothers, of Johnson City, for diverting the sale of Clinchfield scrap metal through them. Blackwell charged that the firm of Burns and Baker paid \$12,000 in kickbacks for purchasing fill dirt from Holston Land Co.

The largest amount of money involved, \$551,117, Blackwell charged, was received through Rock Materials, a company on paper only with no employees, which bought stone from Holston and then sold the stone to Clinchfield at a profit of \$2.55 per ton.

Following the reading of the charges by Blackwell, Judge Neese asked Britton if he was guilty of the charges, and Britton replied "Yes, your honor." Britton is represented by Stanley Yarbrow; Moore by Dick Pectol; and Kerns by James Bowman. All three attorneys are from Washington County [TN].

[ED. NOTE: Moore and his subordinates were summarily fired by parent Atlantic Coast Line and subsequently to this article convicted of embezzlement and income-tax evasion.]

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**Train Trivia:** Which fictional TV character did NOT have model trains? A.) Gomez Addams (The Addams Family); B.) Steven Keaton (Family Ties); C.) Sheldon Cooper (The Big Bang Theory); D.) Howard Cunningham (Happy Days). Answer on next page.

## *More Stuff from the Vault ...*

Pictured below are three railroad relics from the past. Left to right, they are: (1.) Bluff City SOU Depot, 1975, location unknown but possibly along Railroad Avenue; (2.) CRR station at Green Mountain, NC, serving an Olivine Plant. (3.) CRR station at Kona, NC at the interchange with the Black Mountain Railway that went to Burnsville, NC. All three are long gone.



All photos by R. L Harvey Kingsport, TN in 1975.

## *In the News ...*

### **NEW RAILROAD RADIO LINKS ON LINE**

On Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, Thomas Pittman, Tanner Abernathy, and Spencer Landis got a new rail-related feed in the Little Switzerland, NC area up and running. They hope coverage of CSX (ex-Clinchfield) will be from somewhere in the Spruce Pine area to as far as Spartanburg. In addition, they are also monitoring the Charlotte Sub, Spartanburg Sub, C&NL, and possibly more! They hope the railfan community will get a lot of use and enjoyment from these feeds! They thank all the volunteers who helped make this happen, especially Mike Tilley for getting them in the door at the host site!

Here are the [www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/xxxxx](http://www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/xxxxx) links to hear some action.

Kermit, VA to Nolichucky Gorge. Feed off Holston Mountain: xxxxx=41446.

Nolichucky Gorge to Kona, NC. Feed located at Toecane, NC; this feed will be installed in the coming weeks.

Western North Carolina CSX Rail. Lynn Gap/Little Switzerland, Kona NC to Spartanburg SC: xxxxx=42775,

Marion, NC Feed: xxxxx=32310.

Bostic, NC Feed: xxxxx=33332.

Spartanburg, SC Feed xxxxx=41316.

North Carolina Feed: <http://www.carolinarailfanning.com>.

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**Train Trivia answer:** D.) Howard Cunningham (Happy Days).

*Display in the Block*  
*By Les Billings*

This month's "Display in Block" was inspired by Ron Flanary. He has displayed a lot of his Black and White photos on Facebook lately. This has inspired my passion back for some B&W. I have a fondness for B&W because I took a lot of this type of photo back in the early 80's. It is also a good way to relive the old days and has a historical look. I hope you enjoy some of the photos I have chosen.



CSX M692, northbound entering the Yard in south Johnson City. Notice the SD40-2 as the 3<sup>rd</sup> unit.



NS 13Z with its trash containers motoring through Telford. The air suddenly turned fowl on this Sunday afternoon in September.



While driving to my Amateur Radio Club meeting, I was able to get this shot on NS127 on the verge of entering Jonesborough.



[Left] On a lunch hour chase, I shot the East TN Railway switcher as it passed over the old Clinchfield bridge taking some cars to the CSX Johnson City Yard.

[Below] A little trip to Kingsport provided this shot from behind the CSX yard office. Locomotive #808 appears to be waiting on a crew, which had not arrived.



[Above] A snowy Saturday afternoon in Jonesborough, rendered this photo of NS 13Z as it approaches the Salt House. As I recall, it was in the upper 20's. I was sure glad when he arrived.



I wanted to conclude with a tribute to "Hobo Shoestring" (Mark Nichols). Unfortunately, I never got to meet him. I was close by when he was around, but never ran into him. I was able to capture this photo at the right in Piney Flats, where he autographed this crossing signal control box. I will surely miss watching his videos as they were interesting and informative. He will sorely be missed by the railfanning community. **R.I.P Shoestring**



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**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**



Whistle Stop

**WATAUGA VALLEY CLINCHFIELD SOUTHEND TOUR**  
**Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**  
**Itinerary**

- 7:00 a.m. Depart the Chuckey Depot, 110 S. Second St, Jonesborough, TN.
- 9:30-9:45 Spruce Pine Depot
- 9:45-10:00 Drive via Altapass Road to CC&O Caboose on Halltown Road, view Schoolhouse Bridge, Mitchell Lumber, Flotation, Toe River Siding.
- 10:00-10:15 Drive to Altapass, view ex-Henredon Spur, view Ridge Tunnel and ex-Wye Site.
- 10:15-10:45 Drive to Blue Ridge Parkway "North Cove" and "Loops" overlooks to view the Loops.
- 10:45-11:15 Drive Orchard and Pepper's Creek Rd, view Ridge, Camp Two, Baxter, Old Road through Sevier view ex-American Thread Spur trestle.
- 11:15-12:00 Drive via Yancey Road towards Marion, view Catawba River Viaduct, Marion site/Clinchcross, Southern Depot and SCL Caboose, Moodytown.
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch at Countryside BBQ, Marion.
- 1:00-1:45 Drive to Bostic Yard via Thermal/Box Creek Road. View 2 ex-CCC/Southern SB wooden trestles, Thermal Siding.
- 1:45-2:15 Bostic Yard.
- 2:15-2:45 Drive to Cliffside Power, passing Thermal Belt RR, SCL Caboose in Bostic, ex-Southern SB Bridge over Clinchfield.
- 2:45-3:15 Drive to Chesnee via Broad River Viaduct (viewed from 221), view Chesnee Depot.
- 3:15-3:45 Drive to Spartanburg Yard.
- 3:45 p.m. Return to Jonesborough.