

# Whistle Stop

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

P. O. Box 432, Jonesborough, TN. 37659

(423) 753-5797

[www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org](http://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org)



**Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage**

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Watauga Valley is proud to announce our first excursion of the 2026 season on the Hiwassee River Railroad through the Cherokee National Forest and the famous Hiwassee Loop. See page 3 for further information.

## *February 23<sup>rd</sup> General Membership Meeting*

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have our next regular General Membership Meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 at the Chuckey Depot, 110 South Second Ave., Jonesborough, TN. The program will be on freight operations on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad in 2024. Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading with your fellow railfans. It's always great to have guests at our meetings.

## *Member Notes*

*Les Billings, Membership Chairperson*

Please keep Jim Calhoun, Jack Maloney and Lois Tilley in your thoughts and prayers for various reasons. To report one of our members or their family, email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) to place a notice in the *Whistle Stop*

**Note to Members:** If anyone's address, phone number or email address has changed, contact Les Billings at [wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com) for correction. This helps to ensure no one misses mailings, important notices, phone calls or emails. Thank You.

### **2026 WVRHS&M DUES**

Renew your membership before it expires March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026 by returning your dues ASAP (check only) to the Membership Chairman at Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Jonesborough, TN 37659. You can join the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual and add each family member at \$5.00 each. For questions, email [wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com).

**Benefits:** 12 issues of the "*Whistle Stop*", Watauga Valley's newsletter.  
Membership in the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum.  
Participation in all Museum functions and events.

### **NEW MAILING ADDRESS**

Due to the Johnson City Post Office being moved, we changed our Post Office Box to Jonesborough, TN **effective January 1, 2026**. For that reason, send all mail correspondence to us at Watauga Valley Railroad Museum, PO Box 432, **Jonesborough, TN 37659** (same PO Box number but different post office.)

### **HISTORIC JONESBOROUGH TRAIN SHOW 2026 IS MOVING LOCATION**

Watauga Valley is moving our 2026 TRAIN SHOW, scheduled for Oct 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, to a much larger location than last year's. The new venue will be the Jonesborough Elementary School at 720 North Cherokee Street. Save the date.

### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

February 23, March 23, April 27, May 18, 6:30pm: General Membership Meeting, Chuckey Depot, Jonesborough. Note that the May meeting will be moved up one week on account of Memorial Day.

March 9, April 14, 6:30pm: Board of Directors meeting, Chuckey Depot, Jonesborough

May 16: Hiwassee River Gorge Excursion.

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## *Railroad Magazines and Books Available to Members*

Lou Modica is offering his collection of railroad magazines and books **for free** to any member who would like them. The magazines are: (1.) *NRHS Bulletin*, 1984 to present; (2.) *Locomotive and Railway Preservation*, the complete run of that magazine, #1-63, 1986-1997; and (3.) *The Arrow*, Norfolk and Southern Historical Society Magazine, Volumes 34 and 35, (8 issues), 2018-2019. The books are *Highball, a Pageant of Trains*, by Lucious Beebe, 1982 edition, and *The American Heritage History of Railroads in America*, by Oliver Jensen, 1975 edition. If interested, email Lou at [modicalouis@gmail.com](mailto:modicalouis@gmail.com). Please note that all items are available for free pick-up only in Jonesborough; **no shipping available**.

## *Hiwassee River Gorge Excursion*

This coming May 16, Watauga Valley will offer the experience of one of the most scenic train rides in the Southeast on the Hiwassee Loop, a 4.5-hour, 50-mile round-trip rail journey through the breathtaking Hiwassee River Gorge in southeastern Tennessee. This unforgettable excursion features sweeping river views, forested mountain slopes, historic bridges, and the famous Hiwassee Loop—an impressive railroad engineering achievement where the track spirals and crosses over itself near Farner, Tennessee. Departing from Delano, this relaxed daytime train ride will offer comfortable, climate-controlled vintage railcars, engaging onboard narration, and ever-changing scenery that makes it a favorite for nature lovers, photographers, railfans, and guests seeking a memorable, un-hurried adventure by rail.

This continuous excursion is designed for guests who want to relax, settle in, and fully enjoy the scenery without a layover. As the train gradually climbs and descends through the gorge, riders will experience sweeping river views, forested mountain slopes, and changing perspectives throughout the ride—many guests say the views feel different on every stretch of track.

The route follows the historic rails of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad's Atlanta Division, once connecting Etowah, Tennessee, to Marietta, Georgia. Today, this well-paced, immersive experience is known for its combination of dramatic scenery, knowledgeable onboard narration, and the chance to truly unwind while the landscape unfolds outside your window.

A complete description, fares, and information on how to order will appear soon on our website at <http://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/excursions.php>. In the meantime, the few photos below are offered to whet your appetite.



## *Mechanical Report*

Two of the Watauga Valley passenger cars will be back to the yard soon. A lot of work is needed on the cars as they have been on the road for over 6 months. Inclement weather has again taken its toll on the Watauga Valley Mechanical Team efforts at the yard over the last several weeks, but hopefully the weather will turn around, and we can get all of this planned work done that was planned for the spring.

If you would like to volunteer at the Jonesborough Spring St. Coach Yard, call our office at (423) 753-5797 and leave a message or email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com); the mechanical team will respond quickly. We need several more volunteers to help with this planned work.

### **Rolling Stock**

**St. Augustine** coach (WATX 500) and **Clinchfield 100**: both in service at the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC on their "Polar Express" trains.

**Powhatan Arrow** coach (WATX 539) and **Moultrie diner** (WATX 400): returning to the Yard.

**Crescent Harbor** sleeper/lounge (WATX 2351): at the Coach Yard receiving upgrades.

**WATX 6219** coach: being prepared for its move to Jonesborough on NS.

## *Chuckey Depot / Museum*

### **CHUCKEY DEPOT ATTENDANCE / HOSTING OPPORTUNITIES**

The Chuckey Railroad Depot and Museum is coming alive as we approach Spring. Attendance over the last several weeks has been very good, especially on the weekends, with over 50+ visitors coming to see the beautiful depot. If you have not visited, come on down and see the new exhibits. Hours are Thursday, Friday and Sunday 1pm to 4pm; Saturday 10am to 4pm. Closed Monday through Wednesday. The new exhibit featuring the Clinchfield Railroad will be on display starting March 5<sup>th</sup>.

### **CHUCKEY DEPOT VOLUNTEERS**

We are looking for more volunteers to be trained for hosting at the Museum. The next training session will be held soon, If interested in hosting, email us at [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com). You're encouraged to sign up for this opportunity to enjoy your depot..



Goodbye, Winter!

Bobby Hand posted this photo on our Facebook page of NS 64 (with a geometry car in tow) sitting in Bristol on a sunny (but we expect cold) winter day. This should be the last snowy photo in *Whistle Stop* for quite a while. (We hope!)

## *In the News*



### *UP 4014 to Begin Country-wide Tour in March*



[Via the *Union Pacific Steam Club*] Union Pacific will join the nation in celebrating 250 years of American independence and innovation this year with its first-ever coast-to-coast steam tour led by the legendary Big Boy No. 4014. The first leg of the tour starts Sunday, March 29, with the Big Boy and several historical passenger cars from Union Pacific's Heritage Fleet traveling west to California from Cheyenne, Wyoming, the steam locomotive's homebase. This first leg of the tour ends Friday, April 24, in Cheyenne.

A daily schedule with additional stops along with a map of the route will be released closer to the tour's launch. The eastern leg of the tour, **anticipated to start in late spring**, is still being finalized and will be announced soon.



### *Happy Birthday, Horseshoe Curve!*



[Photo and text from "*The Automatic Block*", Western Maryland NRHS} On February 15, 1854, the Pennsylvania Railroad completed a marvel in rail construction, the famous "Horseshoe Curve." It was opened outside of Altoona PA by the Pennsylvania Railroad. Accomplished via a 12-mile track through the Allegheny Mountains, this landmark was the first linking by rail of the East Coast and the Midwest.

## ***NORFOLK SOUTHERN Milepost Listings***

Many of our readers has asked for a list of the signals that the trains call between Bristol and Morristown, TN and beyond. Bob Mushet has installed a scanner radio on top of 4400 ft high Holston Mountain in Carter County. Listening to this radio is a must for railfanning on Norfolk Southern's A Line. This list includes station mileposts, signal mileposts, detector mileposts including stations and radio transmitters. Centralized Train Control and Track Warrants (CTC) are noted. All track warrants have been discontinued off the radio and went to onboard computers recently. Go to [www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/35435](http://www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/35435) to listen to all the action. Radio towers between Bristol and Bulls Gap are 160.56 Channel 1 and 161.40 Channel 2.

MP 0	A-LINE STARTS STATE STREET (CTC TO PINEY FLATS)	MP 35.9	SAND VALEY SIDING CTC (SIDING 2 MILES LONG) EAST END
MP 0.3	FORD	MP 37.9	TELFORD SIDING CTC (SIDING 2 MILES LONG) WEST END TRACK WARRANT TELFORD TO JONES SIDING.
MP 3.4	UNIVERSAL (APPROACH SIGNAL TO BRISTOL/FORD)	MP 40.3	WASHINGTON COLLEGE (ALSO DETECTOR LOCATED AT SIGNAL) APPROACH TO TELFORD
MP 4.2	VOICE Detector	MP 43.7	LIMESTONE
MP 6.0	VANCE	MP 46.5	CHUCKEY
MP 8.8	UNNAMED	MP 49.5	AFTON SIDING EAST END
MP 11.8	BLUFF CITY	MP 50.6	AFTON SIDING WEST END
MP 12.9	DETECTOR	MP 52.3	GREENEVILLE IRON METAL
MP 13.7	CURTIS	MP 52.9	DETECTOR
MP 15.7	PINEY FLATS (TRACK WARRANT PINEY FLATS TO SAND VALLEY)	MP 54.3	OLE PIGGY BACK TRACK
MP 18.5	WATAUGA (APPROACH SIGNAL TO PINEY FLATS)	MP 56.5	GREENEVILLE DEPOT
MP 20.9	UNNAMED	MP 62.3	RADAR SIDE TRACK
MP 23.3	JOHNSON CITY CHEMICAL	MP 64.4	JONES SIDETRACK
MP 24.0	CARNIGIE YARD (INTERCHANGE WITH ET RAILWAY)	MP 66.8	MOSHEIM DETECTOR
MP 26.3	WEST SIDING (BEHIND CARNIGIE HOTEL)	MP 76.0	BULLS GAP
MP 27.2	DETECTOR (BELOW JC MEDICAL CENTER)	MP 79.0	WHITESBURG DETECTOR
MP 29.6	JOHNSON CITY IRON AND METAL	MP 87.1	MORRISTOWN DETECTOR
MP 31.7	JONESBOROUGH (1.2 MILES EAST OF WATV COACH YARD) APPROACH TO SAND VALLEY	MP 89.0	PICKENS START OF DOUBLE TRACK TO ALPHA
MP 32.5	WATAUGA VALLEY COACH YARD		

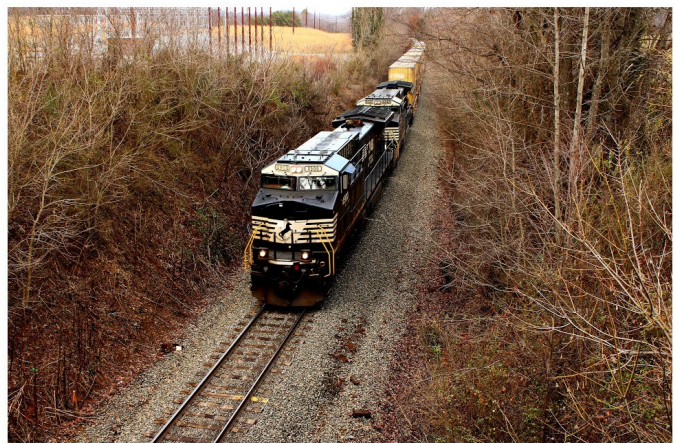
## *Display in the Block*

*by Les Billings*

With this month's installment of *Display in the Block*, I will state that I did keep my new camera and did not send back. Moving back to a DSLR took a little learning curve. I used my phone for several years.

With that said I will get on with this month's photo display. With winter upon us now, I do not get out as far as I would like. So most shots are close in home or from near the Depot. With Spring on the horizon, longer days hopefully I can broaden out..

Below is a few shots taken in the last month or two.



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**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**