

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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The Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, often abbreviated as the C&TSRR, is a 3 ft narrow-gauge heritage railroad that operates on 64 miles of track between Antonito, Colorado, and Chama, New Mexico, in the United States. This month's meeting program will be on this scenic Railroad. [Photo courtesy of Facebook]

February 24th General Membership Meeting

The next WVRHS&M meeting will be held Monday, February 24, 2025 at 6:30pm at the Chuckey Depot Museum, 110 South 2nd St, Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Mark your calendar so you will not miss this meeting; The program will be on the wood burning steam locomotive on Cumbres and Toltec Railroad. Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading with your fellow railfans.

Member Notes

Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers: Gary Price, Lois Tilley, Mike Jackson, Dona Lewis and Don Royston in the loss of his mother. 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.

WELCOME ABOARD! No new members this month.

NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME

If you have a friend or know of someone interested in railroads, please hand them a New Membership Brochure. We have the brochure available at the general membership meetings and at the Chuckey Depot/Museum.

2024 WVRHS&M MEMBERSHIP DUES

Last dues notices were recently sent out to all members that have not renewed for 2025. Please act fast and get your dues notices mailed back to WVRHS&M P O Box 432 Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432. Time is running out and your name will be removed from the membership list soon. Watauga Valley has a big year planned for 2025, please do not miss out. Dues are as follows: Individual Membership \$20.00, Family Membership \$5.00 per family member. Checks should be made out to WVRHS&M and mailed to P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432.

Rail Excursion Spring 2025

On Saturday, May 3rd, 2025, the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will sponsor a Spring Blossom Train Excursion - a ride on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad through the majestic mountains and beautiful countryside of western North Carolina from Bryson City, NC and on to the Nantahala Gorge, NC and return back to Bryson City, NC. Nantahala (nan-tuh-HAY-luh) Gorge Excursion will depart west from Bryson City, first following Alarka Creek and Fontana Lake. The Fontana Trestle then takes you across the serene reservoir and into the beautiful Nantahala Gorge. Onboard dining is available in First Class; and Crown, Coach, and Gondola guests can pre-purchase a lunch to make this a unique dining experience. Arrive at our destination at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in the heart of the gorge for a layover where you can relax by the river, grab a snack, and enjoy sightseeing! This trip covers a lot of the current operating trackage of the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad.



The track follows the route of the former Southern Railway's "Murphy Branch Line" from Bryson City, NC, to the Nantahala Outdoor Recreation Center. The line was established in 1891, with a maximum 5.8 percent grade and many bridges. Much of the route hugs the banks of Little Tennessee, and Nantahala Rivers, and crosses Fontana Lake on a trestle standing 100 feet above the lake with a span of 780 feet. For tickets visit the WVRHS&M website, www.wataugavalleynrhs.org

Chuckey Depot / Museum

Things are ticking at the Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum at Jonesborough. Even though the cold and rainy weather has been around the last couple of months. Attendance at the museum has been good. We had record number visitors during the month of January.

If your interested in volunteering one day a month, please call Mike Tilley at 423-753-5797 or e mail wataugavalley@gmail.com



New Exhibit Coming to The Museum

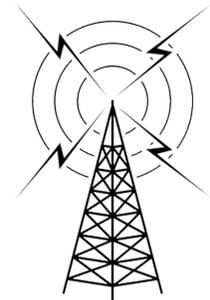
The Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum will present a new exhibit opening Saturday, March 8th, at 10:00am.

"American Railroad Freight Cars: Past and Present" will describe the invention, evolution and current uses of freight cars in America. This new exhibit will offer vintage photos, histories and models of seven categories of freight cars: gondolas, hoppers, tank cars, boxcars, spine/well cars, autoracks and flatcars.

"American Railroad Freight Cars, Past and Present" will run through September 2025.

Railroad Scanner

We are happy to announce that the radio scanner on Holston Mtn which is 4400 ft over looking the Tri Cities is up and running again. This radio picks up dispatchers and trains on the NS A-line from Morristown, TN to Radford, VA and on the Ole Clinchfield, We have heard Dispatchers talking to trains from Elkhorn City, KY to Spartanburg, SC. If you want to hear all kinds of railroad action, please turn the radio on at your computer at home at no cost. To listen, go www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/listen using US Zip Code 37604 scroll down to find feeds, click on the listen arrow and your there. Thanks to Bob Mushet and Thomas Pittman for keeping the radio going in the bad weather, hope you enjoy.



WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM FACEBOOK PAGE

Please visit the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum Face book page and enjoy all the items on the page. Historian Gary Price does an excellent job keeping the page up and going. We now have 2.1K members for the page and growing daily. Share your photos on this page.



Photo by Emily Shay Price

Mechanical Department Report

by Art DeVoe

GENERAL

The Watauga Valley mechanical team is looking for more volunteers. If you're interested in joining us, please email us at wataugavalley@gmail.com or call the Watauga Valley office at (423) 753-5797 and leave a message that you are interested in volunteering. Work days are Tuesdays 9am to 5pm.



ROLLING STOCK

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400) and **“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500)**: both cars are in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum In Spencer, NC.

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum In Spencer, NC.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): At the Coach Yard for upgrades.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum In Spencer, NC.

History

In March and April of 1950, Pullman-Standard produced ten 36-seat dining cars with the following names: Atlanta, Birmingham, Cordele, Fitzgerald, Greenville, La Grange, Moultrie, Plant City, Talladega, and Tarboro. In May of that year, the RF&P received the 36-seat diner Henrico completed by the same car builder. Also in 1950, the Florida East Coast Railroad took delivery of two P-S built diners of the same series, the Fort Ribault and the Fort Drum. The body shell for one additional car of this type was built by Pullman- Standard in 1957. This work was completed at Atlantic Coast Line shops in December 1959 and the car was named Naples.



The Moultrie, originally owned by the ACL, operated on New York to Miami trains until 1971. With the formation of AMTRAK, the diner continued Florida service until 1981 when AMTRAK sold the car to a short-line dinner train operation in Virginia. The Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS purchased the car in 1989, completely upgrading the mechanical systems to AMTRAK standards and fully renovating the interior. It was assigned AAR reporting mark WATX 400.

In the News

Gorge Reconstruction Update

Chestoa-Work trains are now entering the Nolichucky Gorge from the North and are hauling fill material as far as the 142 milepost. Contractors have forged through to Lost Cove and are trying to close the final few miles to Poplar with access road construction.

Poplar-A roller compacted concrete pug mill has been put into operation on the west side of the river at Poplar for what we expect to supply concrete for the raising of the Toe River Bridge piers and also for construction of the many retaining walls that will be required to rebuild the roadbed throughout the Gorge. Contractors are also beginning the sourcing of rock on the hillside above the Toe River Bridge. It appears that the salvaged spans have been repaired and await pier preparation.

Green Mountain- work has begun by NCDOT contractors to rebuild the highway bridge at Green Mountain. The completion of this bridge will open up a critical highway access point to the damaged railroad that otherwise cannot be easily accessed anywhere between Relief and Forbes outside of the narrow winding road down Whitson Branch. It does appear that the road has been rebuilt around the south end of Green Mountain, which will likely segway into work beginning on the rail bed above.



Continuing south towards Forbes, some of the washouts and scour has been repaired along the embankment around the Red Hill Sibelco Pump Station. Work also continues around Brush Creek Tunnel on what appears to be the daylighting of the tunnel. Contractors have removed more earth and rock around the entire length of the hillside around the outer edge of the tunnel.

Loafers Glory- progress continues on the big washout here and a few sections of panel track have been placed. Kona- work trains are now dumping rock about a half mile north of the North End of Kona.

The first revenue train to Spruce Pine operated north from Bostic on January

17th to work US Gypsum at Flotation/Altapass and Quartz Corp at Minpro/Spruce Pine. Trains have reached the 142 milepost from the North and the 172 milepost from the south. [Courtesy of Thomas Pittman]

Derailment

[Trains.com] STEARNS, Ky. — McCreary County Heritage Foundation officials, owners of the Big South Fork Scenic Railway right-of-way, have confirmed the Jan. 28 derailment of a locomotive was the result of a runaway incident. No one was injured in the incident. No one was injured in the incident on the 14-mile tourist railway [see [“Big South Fork Scenic locomotive derails ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Feb. 6, 2025].



Ray Moncrief, chairman of the foundation, says in [an article in the *McCreary Journal*](#) that the incident took place while the train crew was returning to Stearns, Ky., after performing a routine track inspection. While headed back to the shop, and about a mile from Stearns, EMD SW9 No. 106 encountered a mechanical issue and shut down on the railroad's steep grade. The crew applied the SW9's handbrake and wheel chocks and radioed to a nearby shop worker to pick them up so that they could return to the shop and ready the railroad's other locomotive — a recently acquired ex-U.S. Sugar EMD GP11 — to retrieve the disabled switcher. But upon returning to the site with the second locomotive, the switcher was missing.

Scenes From the Past

A Few Depots From Days Gone By:



Bluff City



Jonesboro



Limestone



Bulls Gap

Display in the Block

by Les Billings



[Left] Here we see a rare CSX train heading north from Erwin. It had emptied it's rocks for the Gouge rebuild and was heading back to Kingsport. For the most part, Rock trains are the only traffic on this section of CSX track-age.

[Right] This train was moving slowly thru Jonesborough like it was going to stop soon. I thought it may stop before reaching Sand Valley. Sure enough that is what happened. I caught 15T holding at Judge Vines Road.



[Left] This little EMD Switcher was caught in Jonesborough. It was a former Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority unit. It came through on westbound 15T. It was a complete surprise as I just about missed seeing it.

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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL