

# 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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CSX C322-26 Breezes past the SE of Miller Yard and peers through Town's Tunnel in Dungannon, VA on a Dreary New Year's day. Passage and Photo by Thomas Pittman. More railfanning with Thomas can be found on page 6.

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

The next WVRHS&M meeting will be held Monday, January 26, 2026 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 a Freight train on the Durango and Silverton in 2024. Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading with your fellow railfans.

## *Member Notes*

### *Les Billings, Membership Chairperson*

Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers: Fred Phofl, Lois Tilley, Dan Freeman - loss of his wife Judy, and Paul Haynes Death. 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).

**NEW MEMBERS:** Micheal, Donna & Norm Brice - Chuckey TN, Kayla Scarberry - Castlewood, VA and Mike & Nancy Hopson—Johnson City — **WELCOME ABOARD!**

## 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.

## 2026 WVRHS&M MEMBERSHIP DUES

Late dues notices will be sent soon to all members that have not renewed for 2026. Please act fast and get your dues notices mailed back to WVRHS&M P O Box 432 Jonesborough, TN. 37659. Time is running out and your name will be removed from the membership list soon. Watauga Valley has a big year planned for 2026, 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, Jonesborough, TN 37659.

## 2026 Officers and Board of Directors and Appointees

### Officers:

President: Mike E. Tilley  
 Vice President: Howard Orfield  
 Secretary: Harold Wilson  
 Treasurer: Jeanie Walker

### Directors:

*Howard Orfield - COB*  
 Art Devoe  
 Frank Gricus  
 Rick Chinouth  
 Les Billings  
 Jim Sutterlin  
 Ralph Clark  
 Bobby Hand  
 Tony King  
 Harold Berry

### Appointees:

Art Devoe, Mechanical Officer  
 Don Findley, Asst Mechanical Officer  
 Fred Waskiewicz, Newsletter Editor  
 Les Billings Asst Newsletter Editor & Circulation Whistle Stop  
 Jeff Forrester, Webmaster  
 Mike Tilley, Trip Director  
 Frank Gricus, Grant Director  
 Les Billings, Depot Camera Director  
 Robert Mushet, Broadcastify Director  
 Mike Tilley, Chuckey Depot Advisory Board  
 Rick Chinouth, Chuckey Depot Advisory Board & Sub Committee Chairman  
 Jim Sutterlin Nominating Committee

## Chuckey Depot / Museum



Things at the Chuckey Railroad Depot Museum in Jonesborough are going great. Most volunteers are working around one day a month at the depot. We will have another training session for host in February, if your intersected to sign up please e mail [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or call the office at 423-753-5797.

### Programs Needed for 2026

The WATV program director Howard Orfield and Brad McCroskey are looking for General Membership programs for 2026

Please call 423-753-5797 if you have an interest in showing a program or let us know at the next General Membership Meeting. this year. We are looking for speakers also if you know someone that would come and present a railroad related program. And as always were looking for DVD and slide programs.

## Chuckey Depot Coffee Mug

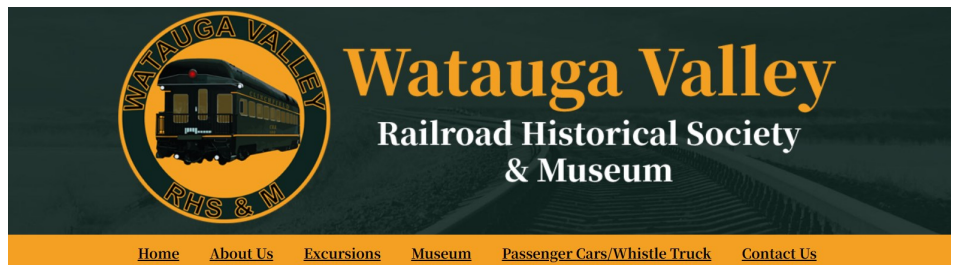
WVRHS&M members are invited to purchase our new Chuckey Depot logo mugs! They are priced at \$20 to the public and are going to be sold at the Jonesborough Visitors Center. However, WVRHS&M members can purchase this beautiful colorful mug for \$15. Contact Mike, Rick or Les to order your mug. They will also be available at our January club meeting.



## WVHS&M Website

WVHS&M is correctly looking into ideas of updating and revising the our Website. If there are things you would like to see

let us know. These ideas will be presenting to the board at the February meeting. Present you ideas to Mike T. ([Wataugevalley@gmail.com](mailto:Wataugevalley@gmail.com)) or Les B. ([Wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com](mailto:Wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com)).



## New Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum Exhibit

The upcoming Chuckey Depot exhibit is scheduled to open on Thursday, March 5 th . The new exhibit is entitled "The Clinchfield Railroad's Influence on Industries of the Region". Displays of Clinchfield Railroad artifacts will be featured, as well as items representing the many businesses that grew primarily due to the presence of the Clinchfield. Industries included will be from Erwin, Johnson City, Kingsport and the southwest Virginia area.



## Mechanical Department Report

by Art DeVoe

### GENERAL

The Watauga Valley mechanical team is looking for more volunteers. As most of you know, WATV mechanical team is composed of volunteers with all kinds of different experiences. We now have six operating passenger car and it takes a lot of manpower to keep the equipment up and running. We need volunteers to help with all kinds of projects, even if they do not have any experience. The WATV mechanical team is all volunteers and most of them are retired and many still working. The team is a great bunch of guys enjoying working together to keep our equipment up and running on the rails. If

you're interested, please e mail us at [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or call the Watauga Valley office at 423-753-5797 and leave a message that you are interested in volunteering at the Jonesborough Coach yard. Workdays are Tuesday's 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 12 noon (after April 1). If you're tired of lying around the house during the winter months, please call and let us know and we will get you scheduled to see what you can do to help.



### ROLLING STOCK

**“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400)** : Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum the past couple of months. Car will return back to our coach yard in Jonesborough soon.

**“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500)**: Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum the past couple of months.

**“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539)**: Has been in excursion service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum the past couple of months. Car will return back to our coach yard in Jonesborough soon.

**“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.

**WATX 6210 Coach**: This car is in Oak Ridge TN having upgrades to the trucks. We expect the car to return to Jonesborough in the near future.

## Rail Excursions 2026

The Watauga Valley Excursion Committee is working on several Excursions in 2026. The dates and destination of trips are as follows.

May 16, 2026: Hiwassee River Gorge Trip

October 24, 2026: Summerville GA with Steam Engine 4501 or 630



## *In the News*

# ***BIG BOY IS COMING FOR AMERICA – COAST TO COAST IN 2026!***

(Source: Facebook) The wait is almost over: Union Pacific just confirmed Big Boy No. 4014 – the largest operating steam locomotive on Earth – will make its first-ever coast-to-coast tour in 2026 to celebrate America's 250th birthday! CEO Jim Vena dropped the bombshell this week (January 2026). Full schedule drops soon after the record-breaking 2024 Heartland Tour and 2025's teaser runs. This could be the most epic Big Boy journey ever – potentially roaring all the way to the East Coast for the first time since she rolled out of ALCO in 1941! The proposed UP-Norfolk Southern merger (filed Dec 2025, STB review ongoing) might just pave the way.



Legend status unlocked:

- One of only 25 massive 4-8-8-4s built in 1941 for WWII freight over the Wasatch
- 1.2 million pounds, 133 feet long, articulated frame for killer curves
- Retired 1961 → reacquired 2013 → back under steam 2019
- 8 survive today – she's the only one still running

## **CREW HEADQUARTERS MOVED TO ERWIN.**

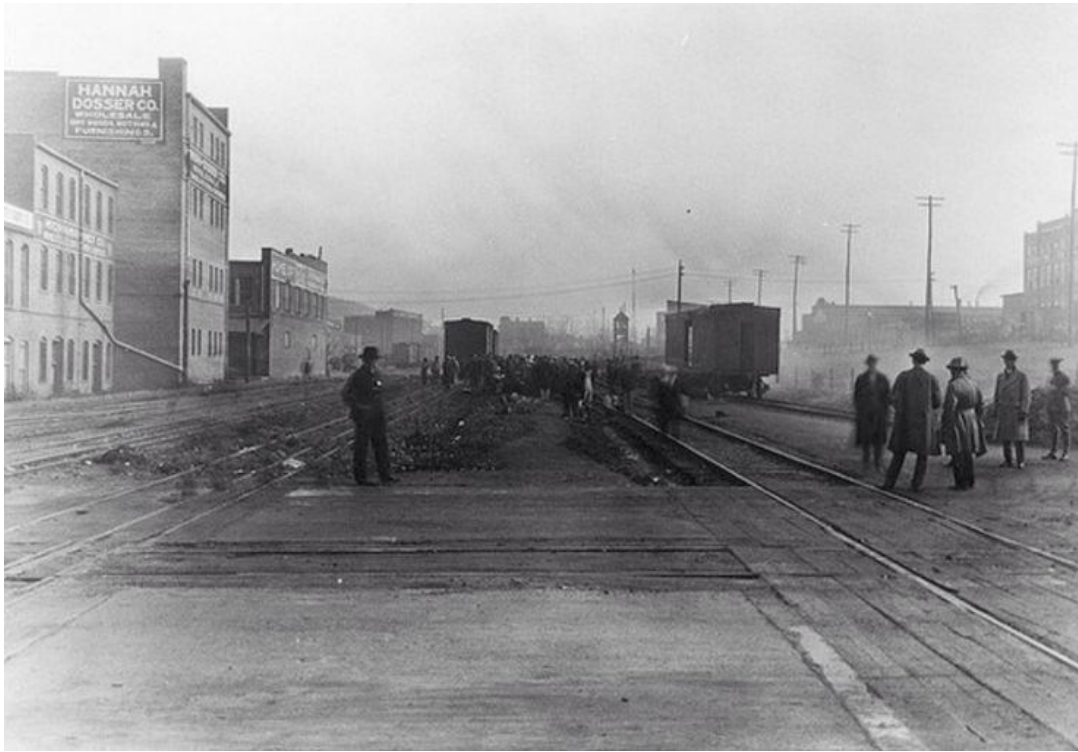
After 10 years of crews reporting on the Blue Ridge/Kingsport sub, CSX has decided to move the Crew Headquarters to Erwin TN from Kingsport. Trains from Spartanburg/Bostic and Shelby will terminate in Erwin



## **Union Pacific vows to press on in effort to acquire Norfolk/Southern**

Hours after the U.S. Surface Transportation Board rejected Union Pacific's application to acquire Norfolk Southern as "incomplete," the Western Class I vowed to press on in its effort to create the first single trans-continental railroad.



*Historical*

**Johnson City:** Looking east from Buffalo St. down the Clinchfield tracks. Notice the Hannah Dosser building to the left. This is where State of Franklin Rd. now sits. Undated.



**Jonesborough:** Looking east at the 2nd Jonesboro Depot. The foundation can still be seen standing. Dated 1958 with semaphore and passing track.

## *Railfanning with Thomas Pittman*

CSX decided to run 3 daylight southbounds out of Shelby Yard on New Year's Day. And since I had a commitment free day off, I decided to venture out of my normal stomping grounds in Western North Carolina and try to get some photos on the north end of the old Clinchfield.



The first train out of the gate was Unit Coal Train C322-26. I've been told from multiple sources that the signals at Miller Yard are the next original Clinchfield Signals slated for replacement, and I've had it on my mind to get this shot through Town's Tunnel of a Southbound knocking down the South End Signal at Miller Yard. There's a few elements here that make it a unique scene. This tunnel, along with the next one north (Shannon) and south (Starnes) of here, are the only three on the Clinchfield to feature the "horseshoe" shaped wall, owed to the unstable

geology in the immediate area. CC&O engineers implemented this stronger style of tunnel to help prevent cave-ins and cut down on maintenance.

Also of note here is the "shaved" shields of the Clinchfield-Era signal that allowed it to be placed closer to the track, which increased visibility of the signal through the tunnel for northbound trains. To my knowledge, the only other spot along the CRR with shaved shields was the long gone southward signal at the north end of what used to be Ridge Siding, just beyond (Blue) Ridge Tunnel.

After nabbing C322, next up to bat would be X653-01. I had plans of catching this train at Boody, but road work on Rt. 65 forced me to retreat back to Dungannon for a ground and drone shot at Osborne's Curve. The ground shot is of another endangered signal at the namesake intermediate, and the drone shot of the same train features the old store building and farm on the outside of the curve.



The third train of the day would be another coal train, C410-29. I missed my drone shot at Fort Blackmore, but was able to get back ahead of them to get another drone shot of them at Copper Creek. I had intentions of a different shot, but the sun coming out at the end of the day changed that.

Sadly, this very photogenic section of the Clinchfield only sees 1 or 2 daylight trains per day on average at current traffic levels. I was

very blessed to have the opportunity for 3 and for nothing to go sideways on the railroad (like a stall) to get everything fouled up! It was a very productive day of railfanning!

# Display in the Block

by Les Billings

Happy New Year!!

In this months of "Display in the Block: I have created a collage of some of my photos taken with a new camera. I have gone back to a DSLR type of camera that I started Railfanning with. The jury is still out on whether I will be keeping it or sending back to Amazon and return back to my Phone. You can say what you want, but I have had very good luck with my phone. Most of my photos displayed in this newsletter have been with the phone. It is possible it will have been sent back as of the newsletter comes out or not. It may take getting used to the DSLR again.



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**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**