



Whistle Stop

Watauga Valley NRHS
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Railroading – Past, Present and Future

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Photographer Ben Earp captured AMTRAK's GE P42DC #176 leading the Chapter's "Blue Ridge Special" on its westbound climb up Black Mountain at Dendron, NC. For more photos of the trip, visit Ben's web site at www.benearpphotography.com/ and click on "Railroads". We'll also include more photos of the trips in December's Whistle Stop.

NOVEMBER 22 CHAPTER MEETING

The next General Membership Meeting of Watauga Valley NRHS will be held Monday, November 22, 2010 at 6:30 pm at the Johnson City Public Library, 100 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. There will be two short programs presented at this meeting. The first will be a DVD presented by Don Findley on our recent 2010 excursions to Asheville and Roanoke. The second program will be by Richard Baker on the NORTHERN PACIFIC passenger trains. Both are excellent programs; come on out and bring a friend. Also, hear the details of our fall excursions and how successful they were this year.

Member Notes

by Nancy Jewell

Congratulations and best wishes are sent to Jessica Walker and John Hamrick whose wedding took place at Rocky Mount Historical Site on October 10, 2010. Jessica is the daughter of Jeanie and Billy Walker.

Please keep members, families, and friends in your thoughts as they deal with health or other concerns. Jane DeVoe is having surgery and Chris Harmon has had back problems. As always, let us know of anyone to whom a card may be sent or a phone call made to deliver a bit of friendship. The Chapter phone number is 423.753.5797 or call Nancy Jewell at 423.282.0918.



During the rest of November - Thanksgiving month - take a few moments each day to think of just one of many things for which you might be thankful: a colorful leaf, fall flowers, friends, favorite music, train rides, a good book, early morning church service, a get well card and the service men and women who have protected our country through the years. THANK YOU!!

Membership Report

by Suzie Price, WVC Membership Chairman

In addition to their yearly Chapter dues, the following members have made monetary donations to the Chapter: Bob Yapple, Coy and Jo Ann Edwards, Curtis and Beth Stone, Howard Capito, Robert and Carol May, Charles and Ruth Gutierrez, and Ray Masters. The Chapter wishes to thank you for your continued support. For those members who have not paid their dues yet, please remember to pay your 2011 dues as soon as possible.

EXCURSION PHOTOS WANTED!

We'd like to create a photo album of Chapters members working on our recent excursions. If you have any digital copies you'd like to share, please forward them to the webmaster at wataugavalley@embarqmail.com

NO DECEMBER MEETING

Due to the holidays, there will not be a December Chapter Meeting. We hope to see you at the Annual Christmas Dinner on Dec. 4th.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Bob Yaple

Clean-up and organization of the shop area continues. Lack of space in the hand tool cabinet caused the lower section to fail from overload. We purchased a new three section tool cabinet and were able to repair the failed unit. Hand tools are now all spread out in both cabinets making the cabinets lighter and tools easier to find. We have added new lighting to the shop work area.

Rolling Stock. We now have the 539 coach and the diner back from the excursions. The 500 Coach will remain at Spencer for the rest of year. All three cars performed well for the three excursion sponsors with no real problems encountered.

Moultrie WATX 400 Diner. There is an extensive wish list of improvements, mostly involved with the kitchen. One of the items is rework of the ventilation system. We have most of the parts needed. Other items will require planning and funding.

539 Powhatan Arrow Coach. The rework of the a/c/ & heat controls will be completed. Extensive wiring will be done in this car in the coming months.

Crescent Harbor WATX 2351. The generator set is nearly ready to hang under the car and should be done this month. Many things will then be hooked up to get ready for running. Four windows were removed for inspection and have been reinstalled with new outer gaskets. All the remaining windows will also be removed and gaskets re-installed.

THANK YOU EXCURSION WORKERS

Dear Watauga Valley Excursion Volunteers:

Thanks to each of you for two very successful days of fall train excursions! We had two great trips, with close to 1,100 people on [Saturday](#) to Roanoke and 1,000 on [Sunday](#) to Asheville.

The coordination and undertaking of these trips is a large task. The preparation and handling of this many passengers takes an unbelievable amount of work by a lot of dedicated and hard working volunteers and staff. We appreciate all of your time and effort to help make them a success.

We look forward to another year of great trips in 2011 and hope that you will be able to go with us!

Regards,

Mike Tilley, President

Up the Mountain.

by Gary Price

Just the mere mention of Christiansburg brings warm thoughts of a NORFOLK & WESTERN Y6b straining hard to deliver a train of 100 loaded coal hoppers to Roanoke. Or perhaps the rural setting of the "Huckleberry" with the famous M class 475 making the daily run crossing over top of the N&W mainline and delivering passengers and goods to Blacksburg. Yes, Christiansburg is definitely a railroad town and still a favorite place for fans to see NORFOLK SOUTHERN's best in action, and I have a front row seat.

Camp cars may not be the most luxurious way to spend a night after a hard day's work, but one thing is for sure, they give me a front row seat to all the action. Christiansburg is my all time favorite place that NS has for campsites. Our camp cars are set up at the crest of the mountain and I can feel the vibrations of the coming trains as they labor uphill both ways, giving me ample time to step outside and watch the mighty locomotives conquer the mountain and then drift effortlessly down the other side. There are signals that govern the eastbound and westbound movements of trains and I can easily look in either direction to see if a train has the high green through Christiansburg.

Our gang started work on the Main Two track at Singer MP N274 and began working west up the mountain. At Shawsville, many of you may remember MP N280 - the tunnel that was there during our steam excursions to Roanoke. Now it is just a rock cut, day-lighted during the 90s to allow clearances for double stack trains.

Work continued on, struggling uphill, and through the small Virginia towns of Elliston, Shawsville when finally we reached the twin tunnels at Montgomery MP N284.8, a true N&W landmark and a favorite spot for photographers. The eastern portal is rarely photographed; it is only accessible by trespassing on NS property. The right hand tunnel, Main Two track, has been notched at the top to allow clearance for double stack trains. All trains with tall loads are routed through this portal, and there are clearance detectors located well in advance of the tunnel to catch anything that my slip by the yard personnel that put the trains together.



At MP N290 we crested the mountain, passed through Christiansburg, and worked by our camp cars. Located there is two magnificent depots that have stood the test of time. The former N&W passenger depot is now used by NS section forces, and the freight depot of VIRGINIA AND TENNESSEE RAILROAD heritage is privately owned and has a toy store located inside. [Continued on next page.]



Down grade to Vicker MP N295.6 brings back the fondest of memories, with the massive coaling tower stretching over both mainlines like a prehistoric dinosaur and just as extinct. I can still hear the 611 sounding off as she comes barreling by on one of many photo run-bys that we held there on our way back from Roanoke, but for now black diesels keep the old coaling tower company as they pass by taking care of business for today's NS.

My job ended at the New River Bridge at Radford. As I stood on the walkway of the bridge and gazed across the New River at the beginning of the Bristol Line, I sighed and said, "This will be the closest I will work to home all year." ... and life goes on.

Next month: The Steel City.

In the News

RNRH 3305 "Mardi Gras"

Folk recalling the glory days of NORFOLK SOUTHERN's Steam Program will remember Roanoke NRHS's beautiful round-end lounge observation car "Mardi Gras". The car has been stored at NCTM's Spencer shops in semi-retirement as did not meet AMTRAK standards. While in Spencer for the recent excursions, several Chapter members discovered the car being prepared for a move west. Roanoke NRHS has sold the car to Permian Basin Railways for excursion service on two of their lines. During winter months the car will operate on the ARIZONA EASTERN RAILWAY's Copper Spike excursion train (www.copperspike.com). During the summer months, the car will see service on the SAN LUIS & RIO GRANDE RAILROAD (www.coloradotrain.com). The SL&RG operates excursions out of Alamosa, CO to Antonito, where it connects with the CUMBRES & TOLTEC SCENIC RAILROAD. Plans are to repaint the car from N&W tuscan red to its original ILLINOIS CENTRAL paint scheme (see photo above).



In the News (continued)

Johnson City to Move Forward with CRR Depot Grant Application

(Condensed from a Johnson City Press Article by Gary B. Gray; permission to use granted)

When Johnson City Commissioner Phil Carriger learned the exact numbers for the roughly \$1.5 million renovation of the historic downtown train depot were not available, he refused to vote for the chance to garner about \$1.2 million of that from a Tennessee Department of Transportation Enhancement Grant. With Commissioner Steve Darden absent, four voting members were left to decide the issue Thursday. Vice Mayor Jeff Banyas and Commissioner Marcy Walker voted yes; Carriger and Mayor Jane Myron voted no. The hedging came after commissioners learned that the overall construction cost could run about \$100,000 more than originally. However, after reconsideration, the vote to move forward with the grant application passed.



Sketch used with permission of JCDA.

When completed in 1908, Johnson City's CAROLINA, CLINCHFIELD & OHIO RAILWAY Depot was considered an engineering feat. Now, after years of abandonment and neglect, a concerted push is on to return the depot to its former glory and to do so in a way that benefits the entire region through both historical and practical applications.

The site will sit adjacent to a recreational trail linking East Tennessee State University to downtown and eventually connecting with the abandoned rail line [Ed. note: abandonment has not been approved] that runs to Elizabethton. The first floor will house a railroad history exhibit, cafe and spaces for produce and vendor sales. The second floor will be used largely for office space.

Both levels of the existing structure are outfitted with the original wainscoting, wooden doors and transoms that will be restored should the funding plan work as hoped.

The Johnson City Arts Council in partnership with the city and the Johnson City Development Authority (JCDA) intend to establish a business incubator within the former warehouse area, or passenger building, to help spawn small business development for local artists, craftsmen and food sales from locally grown crops.

The market areas will move outdoors under the covered platforms from May through October. These areas also will offer music and entertainment to complement the outdoor cafe and restaurant. [Continued on next page.]

On the building's second floor, management offices will be utilized as well as work spaces for artists. [

The CC&O Railroad Depot is listed on the National Register of Historical Places and also on the city's Historic Conservation Overlay. The depot, also known as CSX Depot, is listed by the Tennessee Historical Trust as one of the 10 most endangered structures in the state.

Johnson City is finalizing an agreement with EAST TENNESSEE RAILWAY and its parent company Genesee and Wyoming that would enable the front of the property to be used as a connecting point for a trail linking East Tennessee State University to Elizabethton. A restored passenger waiting room will be converted to an information center with railroad history displays for the recreational trail with public restrooms, a bicycle repair and rental center, cafe and business incubator.

The match required locally is about \$302,000, and JCDA must cover that cost from TIF (tax increment financing) funds. JCDA also must reimburse the city should it ends up contributing to meet the required match.

Commissioners also approved a procedural matter that officially designates the JCDA as the city's redevelopment authority for the purposes of utilizing TIF funds as required by recently adopted state legislation. The designation allows the JCDA to retrieve about \$212,000 from the bank so work on the depot's roof and stabilization of the structure can begin.

UNSTOPPABLE ...

On November 12, Hollywood came to the rescue of rail fans suffering extreme withdrawal symptoms due to a lack of railroad disaster movies by releasing the action film "UNSTOPPABLE". The movie's plot is described as a rail company frantically working to prevent an unmanned, half-mile-long freight train carrying combustible liquids and poisonous gas from wiping out a city. "The Roundhouse" drew a parallel between the film and a 2001 CSX incident in which an Ohio yard crew allowed a train to drift onto the main line and attain speeds close to 50 MPH. The runaway was finally stopped by a rail veteran who coupled two locos to it, slowing it down enough to allow him to jump aboard and shut the lead unit down.

PROGRAMS FOR 2011

We need programs for our General Membership Meetings for each month in 2011. If you have any programs, including railroad slides, a video, a DVD, or know a possible speaker, contact Nick White, the Program Director, at the November meeting; call the chapter phone 423-753-5797; or e-mail wataugavalley@embarqmail.com.



Photo Section



Mike Tilley took this photo of our “Blue Ridge Special” standing in the NS Asheville yard at Biltmore Village, NC. Amazingly, this photo captures only half of the 25-car train.

Mike Tilley, Jim Magill, Bob Yapple and Nick White traveled down to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga to get some spare parts for our cars. While there, Nick took photos of the steam locomotives that are going to be used in the upcoming TVRM steam program. The photo below left shows Baldwin 2-8-2 (ex-SOUTHERN) #4501 undergoing major refurbishing in TVRM’s shops. The photo below right shows ALCO 2-8-0 #610 (ex-USAX) with #4501’s tender coupled to it as it sits outside the shops. That’s TVRM #630 (ex-ET&WNC #207) ahead of the tender.



To learn more about the restoration of these locomotives and plans for operating them in excursion service, download TVRM’s quarterly newsletter at <http://tinyurl.com/3ynn2st> (a PDF viewer such as ADOBE® READER® is required.)

WATAUGA VALLEY CHAPTER NRHS ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2010

CHRISTMAS DINNER. It's time once again for the Chapter's annual Christmas Dinner, and this year we plan to gather at the American Legion Hall, 409 E. Market St., Johnson City, TN. The Legion Hall was our former meeting place before we went to the Johnson City Public Library several years ago. Please bring your food to the Legion Hall by 11:30 AM as the serving line will open at 12 noon. The Chapter will provide meats, drinks, desserts and rolls. Members are asked to bring either a vegetable and a salad; 2 vegetables; or 2 salads. Please bring enough food for yourself, for your guest(s), and for several others. To make reservations, please cut out the form below and mail to Watauga Valley NRHS Annual Dinner, P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432. You can also call your reservation in to the Chapter's answering service at 423-753-5797; turn in your form at the November 22 Chapter Meeting; or email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com. There will be good food and good fellowship! Please have your reservations in by Tuesday, November 30, 2010.



YOU'LL see US at the *Christmas Dinner*

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Name _____

Number Attending _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

I/we will bring Vegetables _____ Salad _____

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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