



Whistle Stop

Watauga Valley NRHS
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Railroading – Past, Present and Future

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The year was 1966 when Howard Robins snapped this shot in Atlanta of the Chapter's sleeper / lounge car *Crescent Harbor* in revenue service on SOUTHERN's "Crescent". In 1970, SOUTHERN inaugurated the all-SOUTHERN route "Southern Crescent", offering service between Washington, DC and New Orleans through Atlanta, by combining the "Crescent" and "Southerner" into one service.

June 27th Chapter Meeting

The next **General Membership Meeting** of the Watauga Valley Railway Historical Society & Museum will be held Monday, June 27, 2011 at 6:30 pm, at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. A program will be presented by Chapter member Nick White on the passenger operations on the ATLANTIC COAST LINE, SEABOARD AIR LINE, FLORIDA EAST COAST and the SEABOARD COAST LINE in the 1950s and 1960s. If you like passenger trains, you will enjoy this program. Bring a friend!

**REMEMBER OUR 30th ANNIVERSITY DINNER ON JULY 9.
MAKE YOUR RESERVATION ASAP! (SEE PAGE 3.)**

Member Notes

by Nancy Jewell

Member Jim McCabe was hospitalized in late May. We hope he had a rapid recovery and is feeling well again. Please remember Jim, as well as other members, families, and friends who are dealing with health and other concerns.

Please let us know of any folk who could use a card or phone call to add a bit of cheer to their day. Chapter phone is (423) 753-5797 or call Nancy Jewell at (423) 282-0918. Help us keep in touch.

Have a happy and safe summer!

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Bob Yaple

Starting in June, the mechanical crew will meet an additional day each week. This will accelerate production somewhat and compensate for reduced attendance due to the vacations.

400 Moultrie Diner. The car is being checked out for routine maintenance, including brakes in preparation for the excursion season.

Crescent Harbor. All systems are being worked on with some nearing completion. Part of this has been removing and repairing all of the exterior windows-all 18 of them. Included is installing the new rubber gaskets on the outside that seals the car from the weather. In the lounge six windows are sporting their new wood sills- a remarkable improvement. Installation of the decorative stainless trim over the new paint job is will under way.

The 500 and 539 are both out in excursion service until September.

If you want to volunteer at the coach yard on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Saturdays, please call the chapter office at (423) 753-5606.



National Narrow Gauge Convention 2011

September 7-10, 2011

Hickory, NC

For information, go to:

<http://www.tarheelpress.com/ngc/>

Chapter Notices

JONESBOROUGH DAYS

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have a booth set up at Jonesborough Days to promote the new museum coming to Jonesborough. We will need Chapter members to man the booth for July 2nd and 3rd. Please sign up at the May Chapter Meeting or call the Chapter office at (423) 753-5797 to volunteer.

WATAUGA VALLEY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY BANQUET

Happy Birthday! Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum. Come celebrate our 30th Anniversary on Saturday, July 9, 2011, 11:00am at the Food City Corp. Banquet Room, 1205 North Eastman Road, Kingsport, TN. Guest Speaker will be Mr. Bev Fitzpatrick - Director of the Virginia Transportation Museum, Roanoke, Va. Cost: \$15.00 per person Get your reservations in now! Call the Chapter at (423) 735-5797. **Get your reservations in now!**

RAILS & SAILS SUMMER 30TH ANNIVERSARY FIELD TRIP

Messrs. Nick White, Mike Tilley and Gary Price are proud to announce Watauga Valley's 2011 "Rails & Sails Summer 30th Anniversary Field Trip", scheduled for Saturday, August 6th.

Again leave the driving to us for another fun-filled trip to Knoxville, TN. We will be cruising down the Tennessee River aboard the paddle boat "Knoxville Star". On the 1-1/2 hour cruise, we will enjoy an all you can eat lunch buffet. (Cash bar on your own will be available.) After cruising down the Tennessee River, we will board the "Three Rivers Rambler" pulled by ex-WASHINGTON & LINCOLNTON Consolidation type (2-8-0) steam locomotive #203. We will end our day with a diesel/steam shop tour of the KNOXVILLE & HOLSTON RAILROAD. Come join our fun-filled day for \$65 per person. Cost includes transportation from Jonesborough (PARSONS TABLE PARKING LOT) to Knoxville and return; lunch cruise w/ gratuity; train ride ticket; and shop tour. LIMITED SEATING - SO SIGN UP EARLY.

To reserve a seat and arrange payment, contact Nick White on his cell phone at (276) 759-4498 or send an email to him at nickwhite_@hotmail.com. Make checks payable to Nick White. ABSOLUTELY NO REFUNDS! ALL PAYMENTS DUE NO LATER THAN THE JULY 25th MEMBERSHIP MEETING.

LIBRARY DONATIONS

Thanks to Rick Longoria for his donation of several books to the Chapter Library. Please bring your railroad book donations to any membership meeting or call the chapter office at (423) 753-5797. Our Railroad Section at the Jonesborough Library is growing everyday. If you are finished reading or just want to donate, put your books to good work. We have plenty of room to add more books!

Number one in safety ... again!

by Gary Price

Imagine my surprise back in February when a company Dodge Durango pulled up to a road crossing near where my gang was working, and my supervisor was summoned to the vehicle for a meeting. We all recognized the vehicle, and knew that the driver was the third in command in the Engineering Department, but why was he here? The next thing that I knew, I was being summonsed to a meeting, I immediately wondered, "uh-oh, what did I do now?", but to my surprise he informed me that I was picked to represent the Engineering Department in Washington, DC as NORFOLK SOUTHERN received their 22nd consecutive Harriman Award. Needless to say, I was humbled and honored to be asked to this most prestigious event.

The E. H. Harriman Memorial Awards were founded in 1913 by the late Mrs. Mary W. Harriman in memory of her husband, former president of the UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD, and a pioneer in the railroad industry. The awards are presented to railroads for their outstanding performance in safety and as a stimulus for continued improvements. The awards are now sponsored by the E.H. Harriman Memorial Awards Institute, with support from the Mary H. Harriman Foundation. This year's ceremony was held on May 18, 2011.

I arrived in D.C. on Tuesday May 17, 2011 and checked into the plush J.W. Marriott hotel located on Pennsylvania Avenue. I could set in a comfortable chair and admire the Washington Monument from my third story window. Twenty three NORFOLK SOUTHERN employees gathered in the lobby that evening around 5 p.m. and we headed to a local restaurant for a first class meal. The Washington Chop Shop is housed in a former bank building and the private dining room is located downstairs in the old vault. The decor was like that of the Prohibition Era and I joked that it still smelled like old money. I was disappointed to learn that Mr. Moorman [Wick Moorman, NS CEO] could not attend, as I had many things that I had hoped to discuss with him.

After a satisfying dinner, the employees were treated to a guided tour of Washington D.C., and a refreshing climb to the top of the Lincoln Monument to see ole' Honest Abe up close. Then it was back to the hotel (after a quick trip to Starbucks in the lobby) and onto a good night's sleep in preparation for the next days event.

11 a.m. and all dressed in our suits, my fellow employees and I boarded the bus for the Awards ceremony that was to be held at the *Newseum*, a museum dedicated exclusively to the history of media and the news. While waiting to be seated, Mr. Moorman and his entourage arrived from Norfolk and began greeting people. He saw me standing across the room, and immediately came to me and exclaimed that he wanted to have lunch with me. As he shook my hand, he asked how the *Crescent Harbor* restoration was coming. This led into discussions of the steam program, and other steamers that he was considering for next year. He did caution me that he did not want to saturate the market with trips, because he felt that was one of the factors of the downfall of the original program.

But alas, he was whisked away to sit at the head table with the other dignitaries for the ceremony. The call to order was made by Tom Simpson, President of Railway Supply Institute, followed by a welcome from Ed Hamberger President and CEO [continued on next page]

Association of American Railroads. The keynote speaker for the events was Obama's appointee to the National Transportation Safety Board, the Honorable Deborah Hersman. She praised NORFOLK SOUTHERN for leading the safety process, and congratulated all the railroads for achieving the safest year ever in railroad recorded history. When announcing NORFOLK SOUTHERN as the winner of the 2010 and 22nd consecutive Harriman Award, she used references to the Kentucky Derby when describing the tight race that was run this year between NS and CSX. They assured CSX that they were not going to re-name the award the *Thoroughbred Award*, as many had joked throughout the day.

Also given out this day was the Harold F. Hammond Award presented to an individual railroad employee for outstanding safety achievements. The 2010 award went to John Kirwan, a machinist for UNION PACIFIC.

After the ceremony, a NORFOLK SOUTHERN group photo was made with the United States Capitol building in the background, as well as individual photos of employees with Mr. Moorman and the Harriman Award. I will share my copy with the editor of the Whistle Stop as soon as I receive it. I am proud to work for a company that will allow a regular employee like me to be treated like an executive for a couple of days and be allowed to attend such a prestigious event such as this.

In the News - Region

Turntable TIMES (Roanoke NRHS) reports that an early morning EF3 tornado on April 28th destroyed the 600 foot long ex-N&W Abingdon Branch Bridge #7 (now *Virginia Creeper Trail Trestle #7*). The elaborately built structure, between Abingdon and Alvarado, is not repairable to its original state. A temporary trail connection where the original structure stood is now underway, with completion planned for early June. There is no scheduled date for a replacement trestle like the original. The *Virginia Creeper Trail Guide* reports that Trestle #8 was also damaged by the storm.

Chuckey Depot



The Chuckey Depot project has moved into another stage with approval from NORFOLK SOUTHERN to remove the station from their property. At this point, it looks like the depot will be coming to Jonesborough in early August. The location will be announced in the near future.

FALL EXCURSION CAR HOST ASSIGNMENT REQUEST FORM

THE WATAUGA VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM AND THE NORTH CAROLINA TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM FOUNDATION WILL HOST TWO DAY TRIP EXCURSIONS TO ROANOKE, VA. AND TOCCOA, GA. THIS FALL. THESE TRIPS ALLOW PASSENGERS GREAT VIEWS OF THE FALL COLORS COMBINED WITH THE ROMANCE OF RIDING THE RAILS TO A GREAT DESTINATION.

THIS FORM SERVES AS THE CAR HOST ASSIGNMENT REQUEST FORM FOR THESE TWO EXCITING EXCURSIONS.

I/WE WOULD LIKE TO SIGN UP AS A FIRST CLASS CAR HOST(S) ON THE SPENCER, NC TO ROANOKE, VA ROUND TRIP EXCURSION ON OCTOBER 29, 2011 AND THE SPENCER, NC TO TOCCOA, GA ROUND TRIP EXCURSION ON OCTOBER 30, 2011.

CHAPTER MEMBER _____

PHONE (_____) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

CHAPTER MEMBER _____

PHONE (_____) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

THE CHAPTER WILL PROVIDE FREE TRANSPORTATION TO SPENCER, NC, AND BACK TO JONESBOROUGH, TN. WE WILL LEAVE JONESBOROUGH AT 7:45 AM ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28. TRANSPORTATION BACK TO JONESBOROUGH LEAVES ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30 AND ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 31. YOU ARE ALSO WELCOME TO DRIVE DOWN TO SPENCER IN YOUR OWN CAR IF YOU WISH.

ALL CAR HOSTS MUST MAKE THEIR OWN HOTEL RESERVATIONS AT THE SALISBURY SUPER 8 AT A SPECIAL RATE OF \$54.95 PER NIGHT. YOU WILL NEED TO CALL (704) 738-8888 AND ASK FOR THE "WATAUGA VALLEY NRHS SPECIAL RATE". PLEASE MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATIONS NO LATER THAN AUGUST 22, 2011. YOU WILL NEED ROOMS FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28 AND SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29. STAYING ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30 IS OPTIONAL.

ALL CHAPTER MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO SIGN UP FOR THIS GREAT TRIP TO SERVE AS A CAR HOST. PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AT THE JUNE OR JULY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS OR MAIL IT BY JULY 30 TO: EXCURSION WATV, P.O. BOX 432, JOHNSON CITY, TN, 37605-0432. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL THE CHAPTER OFFICE AT (423) 753-5797.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY'S LONG-ABANDONED EMBREEVILLE BRANCH

By Thomas S. Wyman

[Originally published in May-June 1993 TIES Magazine. Reprinted with author's permission. Thanks to Bob May for providing an issue suitable for photocopy.]

[Continued from last month.] Because of the waning traffic volume, SOUTHERN RAILWAY applied to abandon the Branch. Proceedings began on September 14, 1935, and it might have been an open-and-shut case but for the vigorous opposition of the Embree Iron Company which had just blocked out commercial manganese deposits. The presence of manganese had been recognized since the early-1900s, but commercial development did not occur until the lead and zinc deposits approached depletion.

Compelling evidence was offered to the Interstate Commerce Commission at hearings on January 20 and 21, 1936, showing that abandonment of the Branch would force closure of the mine just as it was entering a new production cycle. Area timber interests also testified to their reliance on rail to get their lumber to market. In protesting SOUTHERN's abandonment, counsel James H. Epps Sr., stressed that Embreeville ". . .their whole life - their very blood depends on this railroad." Thomas Wyman, who became manager and vice president of the Embree Iron Company in 1929, testified that:

"We are entirely dependent upon the movement of our ores for the continuation of our operation at Embreeville. If we do not have railroad facilities, it will be virtually a death blow to our present activities. . . . [These] activities that are carried on by the Embree Iron Company are the means of livelihood of at least 105 employees and their families. In the event the mining industry were not carried on there, these people, owing to the isolated condition of the country, would find it very difficult to find other employment, particularly at these times."

After hearing all the evidence, the ICC denied the SOUTHERN RAILWAY's application on October 19, 1936 and stipulated that it continue to operate the Branch for another two years before it resubmitting its application for abandonment. So once again, the fortuitous discovery of new ore reserves, and the availability of rail transportation, gave the community renewed life.

Thomas Wyman died unexpectedly two weeks later. Without the vigor and leadership of the young 46-year-old engineer-cum-geologist, the ongoing mineral exploration program essential to the continued operation of the mine languished.

The first shipments of manganese were made in 1935. Manganese deposits are a relatively rare occurrence in the United States, and the importance of this particular mining operation is reflected by the fact that in 1939 the Embree Iron Company was the nation's largest producer of metallurgical-grade manganese concentrates with an output of over 7,300 tons. Manganese is a metal that, when alloyed with iron, produces a tough, wear-resistant steel essential in making, for example, rock crushers, excavation equipment and frogs of railroad track turnouts.

In spite of the shift to manganese production, rail traffic did not increase. The ore bodies which had been blocked out were quickly depleted, and the SOUTHERN RAILWAY resubmitted its abandonment application on January 18, 1939. The ICC approved the abandonment in March, and it became effective 30 days later. [Continued on next page.]

For a few years thereafter, sporadic attempts were made by various interests to return the mines to commercial production, but even those efforts were eventually abandoned.

Today, virtually all traces of the mining operation have disappeared under a dense covering of trees and brush. The route of the railroad can be traced only with difficulty by noting the occasional cuts and fills which were made when the railroad was built over a century ago. The concrete bridge piers remain as solitary monuments to mark where the railroad once crossed the Nolichucky River.



The SOUTHERN RAILWAY operated its Embreeville Branch for 48 years. Although a marginal and perhaps submarginal operation at times from the viewpoint of the SOUTHERN, its continued operation provided a lifeline to a small industrious community which would otherwise have faced a meager existence indeed.



SOUTHERN switch engines captured at Embreeville Junction, known locally as the "wye section", about a mile and a half southwest of Johnson City. Timeframe is the late 1930s. On the far track is a Class Ks Consolidation, serving as the Johnson City yard engine, while in the forefront is the Embreeville Branch locomotive, Class G Consolidation #154. This engine is notable on two counts. First, she was originally built by Schenectady in 1890 as ETV&G #466, about the same time that the Embreeville Branch was constructed. Secondly, the engine survives, having been restored and currently serving as motive power for the "Three Rivers Rambler" out of Knoxville, TN. [R.T. Crawford photo; Ken Marsh collection.]

About the author: Thomas S. Wyman, born in Johnson City, is the son of Embree Iron Co. Manager and Vice President Thomas N. Wyman.

PROGRAMS FOR 2011

Programs are needed for our General Membership meetings. If you have any program material, including railroad slides, a video, a DVD, or know of a possible speaker, see Nick White, the Program Director, at any meeting; call the Chapter at (423) 753-5797; or e-mail wataugavalley@embarqmail.com



Photo Section



Bob May sends along this photo of SOUTHERN's northbound *Tennessean*, taken at the Jonesborough depot in 1960. At point is EMD E8A #2927.

Mike Tilley provided this shot of the Chapter's *Crescent Harbor* while in service on the "Southern Crescent". The photo was taken in Atlanta sometime in the 1970s (the yellow / green herald and markings were added in 1972).



Howard Robins photo. Used with permission.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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