

# Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum  
P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432  
(423) 753-5797  
[www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org](http://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org)



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 32 No. 11

November 2012



RHA member Jim Sheppard captured the northbound "Georgia Autumn Special" as it stands ready in Toccoa for its return trip to Spencer. This photo provides an excellent perspective on the length of the three locomotive / 25 car excursion train. There are more photos of our November excursions inside this month's newsletter.

## *November 26<sup>th</sup> Membership Meeting*

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will have our regular meeting on Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will showcase all of the excursions and activities of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum. See just how busy WVRHS&M has been in 2012. The program will be presented by Don Findley. Bring a friend out for a relaxing evening with your fellow members.

---

## *Member Notes*

By Nancy Jewell

Our sympathy is extended to Steven Clark in the death of his mother, Diane Clark, on October 15, 2012, in Johnson City.

As always, please let us know of any member, family or friend to whom a card might be sent or a phone call made. The office phone number is 423-753-5797 or call Nancy Jewell at 423-282-0918. Hope to see many of you at the annual Christmas Dinner at the Jonesborough Community Center in December.

---

## *2013 WATAUGA VALLEY OFFICERS and BOARD ELECTIONS*

The ballots for the Watauga Valley officers and Board of Director election have been sent out. The nominating committee request that all ballots be postmarked no later than 12:01 pm on December 12, 2012. The following are on the ballot:

Mike Tilley – President	James Smallwood – Secretary	Historian – Gary Price
Bob Schubel – Vice President	Jeanie Walker – Treasurer	Board of Director – Art Devoe

## *DUES RENEWAL NOTICES*

Watauga Valley dues renewal notices have been mailed. Please respond with your renewal soon. Your Watauga Valley membership expires 12/31/12.

---

## *Kudos: Appomattox VA and Toccoa, GA Excursions; November 3&4, 2012*



The Watauga Valley / NCTM excursions out of Spencer were very successful for 2012. Even though ticket sales started out slow, the Appomattox, VA trip sold out and the Toccoa, GA trip was very close to a sell out. The Watauga Valley Board of Directors wants to thank all members that worked the train. It could have not been done without your help!!!! HATS OFF TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS ON THE TRAIN.



## **LETTER FROM THE NCTM FOUNDATION**

Watauga Valley Members:

Appreciate all that you do to help support the excursion trips and the operation of the Museum. You are good friends and I am honored to have met you and have the opportunity to work with all the fine folk in your organization. We have a busy Spring facing both of us with the planning of the Spring excursions, but I know that we can do it as a team!

Have a great weekend!

**KELLY ALEXANDER**  
**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**  
**NORTH CAROLINA TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM FOUNDATION**



## *Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report*

By Bob Yaple



### GENERAL

Extensive track work is being done as this report is being written. A railroad contractor is installing 25 switch ties to satisfy NORFOLK SOUTHERN requirements for sidings and 25 regular ties plus re-alignment of our yard track. This will put us in good shape for track for several years.

### ROLLING STOCK

With the exception of Roanoke [Ed. Note: Nov. 10/11 excursions], the excursions are over. Our cars have done their job very well. The *Powhatan Arrow* coach became a victim of flat wheels when the hand brake not released. The railroad quickly

remedied the damage and there was no loss of income. The excursions also gave us an opportunity to evaluate the performance of the *Crescent Harbor*.

The *Crescent Harbor* will be in the Roanoke Excursion and then return to the Jonesborough Coach Yard. The *Moultrie* diner will also return very soon. The two coaches will remain in Spencer for the immediate future.

## *WVRHS&M "Coalfields" Field Trip* *Saturday December 8, 2012*

Mark your calendars for an exciting and educational tour of the Appalachian Coal Fields! Experience for yourself this unique area where coal is mined and shipped by rail **AND LEAVE THE DRIVING TO US**. Planned for this tour are visits to regional towns, coal camps, mines and TRAINS ON BRANCH RUNS and the POCAHONTAS MAINLINE!!! The itinerary will include Buchanan County, VA; Pike County, KY; Mingo County, WV; McDowell County, WV; Mercer County, WV; Tazewell County, VA; Bluefield, VA; and Bluefield, WV.

The cost is \$50.00 per person. (Meal stops are planned but all meals will be on your own.) The trip duration is 12-14 hours. Boarding will be at the Parson's Table in Jonesborough, TN. Departure time is 7:00 am **sharp!**

For the full itinerary, go to the **Special Events** page on our web site at:

<http://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/specialevents.php>

To make reservations, or for more information, call Nick White at (276) 685-2386 or email him at [nickwhite\\_@hotmail.com](mailto:nickwhite_@hotmail.com). **PAYMENT MUST BE MADE BY THE NOVEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING!**

\*\*\* WARNING! THIS IS A VERY LONG TRIP WITH VERY CURVY, MOUNTAIN ROADS. PLEASE CONTACT NICK WHITE FOR TRIP DETAILS! \*\*\*

## WATAUGA VALLEY RHS&M ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MEAL SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2012



It's time once again for the our annual Christmas Meal, and this year we plan to gather at the Jonesborough Visitors Center, 117 Boone St., Jonesborough, TN. Please bring your food to the Visitors Center by 11:30 AM as the serving line will open at 12 noon. Watauga Valley will provide meats, drinks, deserts and rolls. Members are asked to bring a vegetable and salad (2 vegetables or 2 salads). Please bring enough food for yourself, for your guest(s), and for several others. To make reservations, please mail the form below to Watauga Valley RHS&M Annual Christmas Meal, P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432. You can also call your reservation in to our office phone at 423-753-5797; turn in your form at the November 26 Membership Meeting; or email it to [wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com). There will be good food and good fellowship! Please have your reservations in by Saturday, December 8, 2012.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Number Attending \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

We will bring 2 - Vegetables \_\_\_\_ 2 - Salads \_\_\_\_ Vegetable and Salad \_\_\_\_

**PLEASE NOTE: THE CHRISTMAS GATHERING WILL SERVE AS OUR DECEMBER MEETING. WE WILL NOT HAVE A MEETING ON DECEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> MONDAY).**

### Invitation to the Hobo Luncheon

The Alexander Chapter NRHS invites you, your family, and friends to our annual Hobo Luncheon on December 1st at 12 pm. Come view our restoration projects; the largest narrow gauge freight collection in the SE; and the only southeastern narrow gauge baggage car still around. There is NO cost – we just ask that you let us know that you're coming and with how many. The more the merrier!! Our shops are just a mile or so off of I-40 in NC, so we are very easy to find ... 1605 Norfolk PL SW, Conover, NC 28613. Contact Kati Phelps at [rha.kati@charter.net](mailto:rha.kati@charter.net) to RSVP or for more information.







# November Excursions: Trains



In the shots above, Garland Harper (Blue Ridge NRHS) captured the eastbound excursion train on a beautiful Fall day. Upper left: crossing Cotton Mill trestle. Upper right: the first passenger train to stop at Appomattox in over 30 years.



No safety violation here. The train is stopped at the station in Appomattox.



Passenger trains are not a novelty in Spartanburg. However, one of this length with beautiful coaches certainly is.



Head-end power executes a runaround in Toccoa in preparation for the return trip to Spencer.



Watauga Valley's beautiful, shining Southern Railway lounge / sleeper "Crescent Harbor" in the Roanoke NRHS excursion train heading back to Roanoke from Bristol on November 10. [Mike Tilley shot taken from the cross walk at the Abingdon train station.]





# November 2012 Excursions: People



Well, only a few of the many hard-working volunteers and happy passengers. If you don't see your photo, we didn't receive one. SEND US A PICTURE! We'll publish it in a future newsletter.



RHA President Lester Collins with passengers Ethan Hayes and Jamarius Gill.



Keeping a train running smoothly sure makes a man hungry!



Mary Ann Guier; Kati & Tom Phelps; David Crabtree.



Art Patterson getting his ticket punched by "Conductor" Bob Majors.



Passengers enjoying a rare 21<sup>st</sup> Century treat of fine dining aboard a passenger train (on the "Moultrie".)



Harold Smitter in deep concentration (or updating his status on his Facebook page.)



Jonah Blevins and Casey Price.



Jim & Helen Calhoun.



Sunday passengers and sisters Betty Wilson and Mary Williams, retired school marms who love to ride the rails.



Communications Director Walter Byrd maintains the radio system, providing a critical link between car hosts and their safety directors.

*November 2012 Excursions: A Special Gift*

*Rule Book*

By Gary Price

Every time that we take to the rails each fall on our Amtrak excursions we are making a little piece of history, whether it be restored coach riding on its home rails again, or an destination that hasn't seen a passenger train since the 1970's. But on the November 4th trip to Toccoa, a piece of history was handed to us.

First thing that Sunday morning, I was busy working on a seating situation in the Crescent Harbor when Bob Schubel keyed up the radio and requested me to come to car 24. I politely told Bob that I had a situation, and I would be there as soon as I could. After I got free, I expected the worst as I made my way to the Hollywood Beach. After some of the strange things that happened the day before, I didn't know what to expect, but figured it was a seating problem that needed my attention.

[Continued on next page.]





As I walked through the door, I caught Bob's attention, and could tell by the look on his face that this was a good situation! He brought me to the middle of the car and introduced me to Ken and Linda O'neil from Mooresville, NC. Bob explained to me that the O'neils had something special that they wanted to donate to our new museum. Linda's stepfather was a railroad man. He worked as a conductor on the Frisco Railroad. His daily run was from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Monet, Missouri. They wanted the WVRHS&M to have her stepfather's 1957 Frisco operating rules book. The Railroad Operating Rule book is

commonly known as the "Railroaders Bible". Every railroader has one with them at all times while on the job. It covers the rules for every situation facing a railroader during his daily duties. This rule book was in excellent condition, and we discussed how he carried it with him every time he went to work. It even had an authentic coffee stain on it, giving it some personality.

We gladly accepted this generous offer, and enjoyed having the O'neils on board car 24. Linda's smile lit up the entire car. I personally thanked them for their donation. It will be a nice addition to the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum when we get things up and running. As I thumbed through the 1957 rule book, there were full color explanations of signals, lantern procedures, and other rules pertaining to steam locomotives lost to today's railroading. The one thing I was amazed at was how several of the rules that I read were identical, word for word, to the rules still in place in my 2010 Norfolk Southern Operating Rules. What especially caught my attention was the General Notice, which reads :

"Safety is of the first importance in the discharge of duty"

"Obedience to the rules is essential to safety"

"To enter or remain in service is an assurance to obey the rules"

"The service demands the faithful, intelligent and courteous discharge of duty"

"To obtain promotion, ability must be shown for greater responsibility".

It amazes me how that for more than 50 years, many different railroads still abide by the same rules of safety. We are constantly reminded that each rule was written in blood. A particular rule was put into effect because somebody was either hurt badly or killed. My Norfolk Southern rule book is much larger than the 1957 Frisco rule book, a strong statement of modern day railroads' commitment to my safety. I am thankful for a safety minded railroad company. That means that I can come home safely to Suzie, Casey, and Emily each week.

Ironically, when I returned to work after the excursions, I was greeted with my annual Norfolk Southern Operating Rules test.... Did I pass?? I think so!



## *November 2012 Excursions: Media Coverage*

Our 2012 excursions generated some excellent media coverage, focusing on the positive impact we had on the communities the trains visited. Here are a few samplings:

Lynchburg: <http://tinyurl.com/cytzodc>  
Appomattox: <http://tinyurl.com/cyfgkjq>  
Spartanburg: <http://tinyurl.com/c8s36vl>

## *Railfan News*



Al Harper of the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD reported on October 29 that they are presently exploring the process of creating a support foundation for Steam Preservation at the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad and hope to have a "Friends of Steam at GSMR" association very soon. Steam Locomotives #1702 and #722 are in storage at their Dillsboro Locomotive Shop and a full inventory of mechanical parts is underway. With their recent announcement of the rebirth of steam they have been contacted by and have been reaching out to Steam Mechanic Specialists to assist with the rehabilitation project once all funding is in place. They are continuing the search for a steam engine to lease to provide limited steam engine rides during the peak months of June, July, and August for the years 2013 and 2014.



The East Broad Top Railroad may operate in 2013 after missing the 2012 season, according to Joseph Kovalchick, owner of the historic narrow-gauge railroad. The East Broad Top Preservation Society operates the railroad and the Friends of the East Broad Top perform restoration work on railroad equipment and structures. Kovalchick told members of the Friends on October 6 that the Preservation Society believes funds are on the way, which would mean the railroad could reopen next year. Kovalchick reiterated that his family would not run the railroad. "Given the condition of the current equipment and the risks versus rewards, it won't operate under my auspices," he stated. In a phone interview Kovalchick said the Preservation Society continues to seek public and private funding to renovate and run the railroad, which has operated as a tourist attraction since 1960. Officials of the Preservation Society, which is not affiliated with Kovalchick, have not returned calls for comment.

[Trains Newswire.com via several NRHS chapter newsletters]



A quarterly electronic publication for and by the modelers of the SOUTHERN RAILWAY will be sponsored by the Southern Railway Historical Association. The electronic publication will be called the "Southern Modeler" and will only be produced in PDF file format. The first issue is projected for the first quarter of 2013. You can receive an automatic publication announcement by sending an email to [SRHAModel@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SRHAModel@GMAIL.COM). You do not have to be a member of SRHA to access this publication.

**Don't forget the Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> Christmas Gathering!**

***Whistle Stop***

Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum  
P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432  
[wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com)

Opinions or viewpoints are those of the writer and may not necessarily reflect those of the organization members, officers or directors. Items of interest are welcome and will be credited to the author; however, because of space constraints, all submissions are subject to editing. Permission to reprint *Whistle Stop* articles with the exception of photographs is granted if proper credit is given. Reuse of photographs must receive permission by the editor and the photographer.

Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum**  
**P.O. Box 432**  
**Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**TIME VALUE MATERIAL**