

Whistle Stop



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



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Despite an overcast sky, there's enough morning sunlight to capture ex-SOUTHERN 2-8-2 #4501 as it roars past the former Kingsport, TN CLINCHFIELD depot. With trackage rights over what was then CSXT-predecessor SEABOARD SYSTEMS, this early 1980s Southern Steam excursion train is headed north to Appalachia, VA. [Photo by Fred Waskiewicz]

January 28th Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will conduct our first regular meeting of the new year on Monday, January 28th, 2013 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will feature the November 2012 "Georgia Autumn Special" operated by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum and the North Carolina Transportation Museum Foundation. The DVD was produced professionally by Blue Ridge Video with footage on and off the train. Many WATV members can be seen on the train helping passengers and performing their duties. (The DVD will be available to WATV members in the near future.) Come out and see this beautiful video.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewell

Use of the old phrase "No news is Good news" covers this month's notes concerning our members, families, and friends. However, there must be someone who would welcome a card or a call to make their day. PLEASE call the office phone at (423) 753-5797 or Nancy Jewell at (423) 282-0918 to help us keep in touch. Happy New Year!

DUES RENEWAL NOTICES

The Watauga Valley dues renewal notices were mailed BACK IN DECEMBER. If you have not sent in your dues, your membership expired 12/31/2012. Please mail your form in ASAP so you will not miss a copy of the Whistle Stop and other member benefits. Over 85% of the 2012 members have already mailed in their dues. Get yours in today.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

We want to thank everyone who attended the WATV Annual Christmas Dinner. We had right at 100 attendees at the dinner that enjoyed excellent food and fellowship. We want to thank Helen Calhoun for all the hard work in putting the event together.

FUTURE STEAM EXCURSIONS - SAVE THE DATES

Steam is returning to the Tri-Cities on Saturday, March 9th and Sunday, 10th 2013 when the "Twenty First Century Steam" excursion train is tentatively planned to operate out of the area. On March 9, steam engine #630 will do the head end honors for a trip from Bristol/Abingdon, VA to Radford, VA and return. On March 10, the train will operate Bristol/Johnson City, TN to Bulls Gap and return. Note these trips are not one way trips; the train will return to Bristol each day.

As soon as the final approval comes (these trips still have to be approved by NORFOLK SOUTHERN), WATV will send out an e-mail to everyone explaining where tickets can be purchased. We will also put the information on the WATV answering machine (423) 753-5797 for those who do not have e-mail. If you want to ride this train, do not hesitate. Call ASAP when the tickets go on sale as we expect an overnight sell out.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

By Bob Yapple

ROLLING STOCK. The WATX 539 & 500 coaches are now back in the yard for a short time. They will go back out in service on March. It has been requested that the cars be winterized - protection from freezing during normal operations. This means putting them back to their original manufacture - but without the benefit of steam heat. In addition, we are working on several items of wear and tear from normal operations. We also have incurred more bent floor plates caused by coupling to cars with anti -overturn couplers. These are on tank cars and covered hoppers.

MOULTRIE. All repairs on "wear and tear" items have been completed. No major update work will be started at this time.

CRESCENT HARBOR. Work on a long list of "small" items to finish restoration continues.

Linwood Yard

By Gary P. Price

As railfans, we always tend to look at the shinier side of railroading, glorifying colorful locomotives, and trying to capture those once in a lifetime experiences. Often we turn a deaf ear to bad experiences that do occur within the non-railroad community, those who mostly see the industry as more of a nuisance than a something to admire. This is one of those Big Bad Wolf stories from my early youth. I am writing this article solely from my memory as I remember it from 1984 when I was 13 years old.

I grew up next door to the church that I attended until I was 18. My father was involved with every aspect of the ministry at that church, and often the pastor relied upon our family for friendship and advice. A very well liked pastor had just left to take a church in Florida, the family had 4 children, and I was close to all of them and hated to see them leave. A new pastor was appointed to our church; he was from Albemarle, NC. His children were already grown and gone, so it would just be he and his wife moving into the church parsonage.

In order to protect the innocent, we shall just refer to the pastor's wife as Sister B. She had a motherly, school type persona, with a P.H.D. (Pentecostal Hair Do). She loved kids, and quickly took a liking to me, only one thing, she knew my love of trains and ... she hated the SOUTHERN RAILWAY!!!! Why? Because of Linwood Yard.

She told me that her family originally owned the land that the yard was built on, and could remember the day that the SOUTHERN officials showed up to offer a substantial price for the land. As in most cases, her family rejected the offer. She told me of the beautiful farmland that spanned as far as she could see in every direction. There was a large pond where they swam and fished during the hot days of summer, I can still hear her say, "Oh, how I loved that land".

Then came the lawsuits, the eminent domain, and the eventual outcome of the SOUTHERN RAILWAY emerging victorious. She described to me about the day the heavy equipment came in and began stripping the farmland that she loved; they filled in part of the pond. She said that they actually split the family farm in two, and they still owned tracts of land on either side of the yard. They lived on the south side, and they still tried to farm some on the north side of the yard. The SOUTHERN built her family a large tunnel that looked like a steel culvert underneath the yard so they could reach the other side of their property. Linwood Yard officially opened for business in 1979.

As time passed, the family sold the land and moved out of the area. Pastor and Sister B moved back to North Carolina, and we lost contact with them, but I will never forget the bad taste in her mouth for the SOUTHERN RAILWAY.

In December, my orders were changed at the last minute. We were headed to begin work in Norfolk, but management needed some work in Linwood Yard. I had never been there before (passed it several times during our excursions), but as I worked the tracks located there, the words of Sister B kept resounding in my mind, bringing back old memories. I rode through the culvert-like tunnel that was placed there for her family. I saw the remains of the pond of which she spoke so fondly. Mother Nature had taken over the rest of the land around the [continued on next page]

yard. There is no doubt that Linwood Yard is vital part of today's NORFOLK SOUTHERN, and I was amazed at the amount of traffic that is handled throughout the yard.



One final note, there are some dinosaurs roaming Linwood Yard. While I was there for seven days, I witnessed several former NORFOLK AND WESTERN SD40-2s in yard service, 45 years old and still doing what they do best - hauling freight.

In the News

A restoration project is underway by the town of Abingdon, VA on its former N&W railroad station that will result in the building receiving a new slate roof, a restored roof profile with finials, dormers, skylights, and a translucent glass ceiling. The end result will be that the station will look very much as it did in the 1950s except for the original passenger platform and shed. The project is being funded by a TEA-21 [Transportation Equity Act] grant administered by the Town of Abingdon and is expected to be completed in February, 2013.

The brick passenger station, the town's third throughout its history, was constructed in 1909 – 1910 by the N&W. On March 30, 1970, N&W train #18, "The Birmingham Special" had the dubious distinction of being the last regularly scheduled passenger train to stop at Abingdon. The station remained in N&W service until September 1, 1981 when it was closed, and subsequently sold to the town. It was briefly occupied by the Chamber of Commerce, and later, until 2001, by the Abingdon Police Department. Since March 2002, the Station has been home to the Historical Society of Washington County.

When the Town purchased the station it had a slate roof, dormers, skylights and glass ceilings in the waiting rooms. And, the sharply peaked roof had decorative finials. All of these unique features were removed in the 1980s to reduce maintenance and heating costs.



Photo by Mike Piery, Jr.

[Information and photos courtesy of the Historical Society of Washington County, VA]

In the News (continued)



NORFOLK SOUTHERN acquires additional F-units. NORFOLK SOUTHERN has acquired an additional three F7 locomotives. The three units are located at two National Railway Equipment facilities in the Midwest. Former CANADIAN NATIONAL EMD F7A #9177 is located at NRE Dixmoor, Ill. Two additional units, former COE RAIL (an excursion and freight line running in Michigan) F7A #407 and former CANADIAN PACIFIC F7B #1019 are reportedly at NRE's Mt. Vernon, IL facility. #9177 has reportedly been re-lettered SOUTHERN #9177 at Dixmoor. (*Trains Newswire* via the "Interchange", Baltimore NRHS)



F units in revenue service. The GETTYSBURG RAILROAD, which operates from Gettysburg to Mt Holly Springs, PA on the ex-READING Gettysburg Branch, no longer operates excursion trains but is very busy with new freight customers, and for the past 3 months has operated ex-ALGOMA CENTRAL F9A #1755 in freight service frequently on its daily train that departs from Gettysburg. The opportunity to see an F9A leading a short line freight train is a treat, and with the GETTYSBURG's parent company, Pioneer Rail, also operating F7A's on its PEORIA & WESTERN, this may continue. The ALGOMA CENTRAL F9s on the GETTYSBURG were originally planned for their excursion trains and were only used when one of the freight units was down for maintenance. #1755 was used on the daily freight throughout October and into November. Other engines on the GETTYSBURG include ex-PRR GP9 #107, ex-PRR #7005 and ex-ILLINOIS CENTRAL GP10 #1001. The #107 was built in 1955 so it certainly is historic as well. If you wish to follow the GETTYSBURG, the best way to do so is to be in Gettysburg around 8 am at Mummasburg Road. The GETTYSBURG interchanges with CSXT in Gettysburg and NORFOLK SOUTHERN in Mt Holly Springs. ("The SUSQUEHANNOCK", Central PA NRHS)



Good news for the Rural Retreat, VA Depot. A check was written and the payment was made to satisfy the note for the historic former N&W Rural Retreat Depot. The transaction culminated an intensive year-long community-wide effort to buy the depot in order to save it from further deterioration or destruction. The depot was taken out of service by the N&W years ago and sold to a local company that used it as a warehouse. A little over a year ago, concerned citizens formed the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation with the mission to buy the depot and restore it as a historic landmark and community resource. Generous donations and commitments from the community and from friends across the country, including a \$30,000 gift from the Town of Rural Retreat, made the \$90,000 purchase price a reality. The Foundation has already started to look to the future and is developing plans for revitalization and obtaining the necessary funds for restoration. The group plans to restore the exterior to its historic appearance and to create a functional community resource inside, but significant structural repairs will be required.



Craggy Mountain video. Kati Phelps passes along a link to this informative YouTube video clip highlighting the restoration work over in the Asheville area on the CRAGGY MOUNTAIN LINE RAILROAD. To view, go to <http://tinyurl.com/b25fad>.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT SPRING STREET COACH YARD

With our equipment getting ready to depart for the excursion season, we need volunteers to help at the Spring Street Coach Yard in various ways including cleaning. To volunteer, please call the chapter office at (423) 753-5797, leave a message, and we will call you back.

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P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432

wataugavalley@embarqmail.com

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum
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