

# 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 34 No. 11

November 2014



## *A View from "The Top"*

Tunnel outside of Lynchburg, VA. One of many terrific sights enjoyed by those lucky (and quick!) enough to secure dome car seating on our excursions. [Gary Price photo]

## *November 24<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting*

The next General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held on November 24<sup>th</sup>, starting at 6:30 p.m., and located at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will be offered by Steve Little, mayor of Marion, NC who will present a program on his book "Tunnels, Nitro and Convicts". This true story that started in 1875 is a vital part of the history not only of McDowell County, NC but for the entire state of North Carolina. The Civil War ended 10 years earlier and the golden spike completing the trans-continental railroad was hammered 6 years earlier ... but the long-planned major trunk-line railroad through North Carolina to link the western mountains with the Atlantic coast was still not built! "Tunnels, Nitro and Convicts" tells the story of what was done about it, and who did it! This will be a program you do not want to miss!

*Happy Thanksgiving!!!*

## *Member Notes*

*By Nancy Jewel*

It is so good to report that Bob May has received an organ (kidney) transplant and is presently at home recovering from the surgery. Please keep Bob in your thoughts as well as the following folks who deal with various concerns: Carrie Denny, Walter Byrd, Bob Yaple, Lois Tilley's sister, Grace Brink, and Sidney Blankenbeckler.

As always, let us know of any member, friend or family 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. Your help is appreciated.

---

### **2015 WATAUGA VALLEY OFFICER AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS**

The 2015 WVRHS&M election ballots were mailed out in early November. All Ballots must be received by 12:01 am November 30, 2014. A ballot box will be available at the November meeting or you can mail to Nominating Committee Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum P O Box 432 Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432. The results of the election will be announced at the December 6 Christmas Gathering.

### ***DUES NOTICES FOR 2015***

2015 Dues Notices will be mailed out and sent electronically via e-mail. Please get your dues and check back into the membership chairman Suzie Price ASAP at Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. You have several options to consider in renewing: (1) joining the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual, adding family members at \$5.00 each; (2) the National Railway Historical Society, which raised dues by \$11.00 to \$70.00; (3) the Railroad Heritage Alliance for \$35 plus \$5.00 per additional family member. For questions, e-mail [wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com).

## *Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report*

*By Bob Yaple*

**ST. AUGUSTINE** coach (WATX 500), **MOULTRIE** dining car (WATX 400), and **POWHATAN ARROW** coach (WATX 539) will be at NCTM, Spencer, NC for the Polar Express Excursion trains.

**CRESCENT HARBOR** lounge /sleeper: is in winter storage at the NCTM. The Harbor is scheduled to operate on the "Cherry Blossom Special" to Washington, DC in March 2015

**CLINCHFIELD 100** business car: the WVRHS&M mechanical team has started working on the wiring of Clinchfield 100. Several special events are scheduled for the month of December for the 100.

**NOTE: THE WATAUGA VALLEY CHRISTMAS MEAL ON DECEMBER 6 (SEE PAGE 8) WILL BE OUR ONLY MEETING IN DECEMBER ON ACCOUNT OF THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.**

## ***2014 AUTUMN TRAIN EXCURSION A BIG SUCCESS***

Everyone will agree that out of the eight years of operating the Autumn Train Excursions out of Spencer, 2014 was the best yet. All the comments from the passengers and volunteers were very positive. If you missed these great trips, please start planning for 2015. The following e-mail was sent out to all the WVRHS&M volunteers who worked the train. !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! T H A N K Y O U !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dear WATAUGA VALLEY RHS&M VOLUNTEERS:

Thanks to everyone for two great trips this past weekend! Everyone did a fantastic job and our passengers appreciated all your assistance and help.

Both trips ran very well and despite the cold and damp weather on Saturday, everyone really seemed to enjoy the days.

Great customer service is key to our business and thanks to each of you for showing our passengers special attention.

Hope everyone gets some rest and gets ready to do it again next year!!

Thanks again!

Mike Tilley, President  
WVRHS&M

Kelly Alexander, Chief Operating Officer  
NCTM Foundation

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT THE SANTA TRAIN EXHIBIT IN JONESBOROUGH**



WVRHS&M and the Town of Jonesborough are sponsoring the Santa Train Exhibit to be held at our Spring St. Coach Yard in Jonesborough on December 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> from 3pm to 5pm each day. Everyone is welcome to come out and bring their children to come aboard Clinchfield 100 and meet Santa Claus on the rear platform. We will need volunteers to help board visitors. Please sign up at the November 24<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting or by emailing [wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com) or calling (423) 753-5797. This event will be great publicity for WVRHS&M as we are expecting a lot of people to attend.



Limited edition hats with official cloth CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD logo and CRR 100 emblem are available for purchase at a special price of \$13.00 for "walk-in" orders. If mailed, postage will be an additional \$5.00. All proceeds from the sale of these beautiful hats will go towards the restoration of Car 100.

**Get yours while they last!**

## *In the News*



**CSX / CP MERGER TALKS END.** According to the *New York Times*, exploratory merger talks between CSX and CANADIAN PACIFIC have ended. If completed, a deal would have united two of the biggest railroad operators and would help relieve congestion by streamlining certain crucial routes at a time when rail traffic in North America is soaring because of the energy boom, snarling AMTRAK traffic and tying up other freight. With minimal geographic overlap, the two companies would have had a huge combined footprint. But there are potential obstacles to a deal. CSX shareholders would most likely expect a significant premium for their shares. And consolidation is difficult in the railroad industry with the United States Surface Transportation Board (STB) responsible for reviewing any proposed merger. It is unclear, however, whether any proposed merger between a Canadian company and a United States company could come under review for national security implications. No reason was given for ending the talks, although CP hinted that concerns about objections from regulators might have played a role.



**611 UPDATE.** The new flues arrived and are waiting to be installed. The team of steam specialists will next install the rear flue sheet. Once it is installed, the tubes, flues and superheaters will be re-installed into the massive boiler. The flexible staybolt inspection and cap project is practically complete. The mechanical team will make repairs to less than 10 sleeves which, when repaired, will complete this required and important portion of the 1,472 day inspection. Work also continues on the stoker screw, the tender deck and appliance repair on the hot water pumps. The team has also re-chromed various pieces for the 611. The cab valve handles, throttle quadrant, injector quadrant, hand rail stanchions and other key pieces have been re-chromed so that the 611 looks just like she did when she rolled out of the shops in 1950. [From FireUp611!]



**PRICE TAG FOR ROANOKE PASSENGER SERVICE INCREASES.** The projected price to start up AMTRAK service between Roanoke and Washington has grown, up to \$95.8 million from an earlier figure of \$92.7 million given in January, *The Roanoke Times* reports. The startup price includes a passenger boarding platform, maintenance and cleaning facilities, and upgrades to the Roanoke's underground infrastructure to support the project. The new service is expected to open sometime in 2017. AMTRAK already runs Washington - Lynchburg service with a connecting bus to Roanoke. That connecting bus averages 42 round trip riders daily, according to officials from its operator, Valley Metro. AMTRAK expects to add a second round trip to Lynchburg in 2017 as well. A 23-minute video of Virginia's announcement of this service can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/kurc6ah>. In related news, other Southwest Virginia communities are eyeing the expansion to Roanoke in 2017 and asking how the same can happen for their area. The New River Valley Planning District Commission is estimating how many passengers might take the train from the New River Valley were the service expanded someday, Mitchell said. There is believed by state officials to be too little demand to create a stop in Bedford.



**NRHS NEWS GOES DIGITAL.** The financially-strapped NRHS has moved from paper to electronic publishing of its bi-monthly *NRHS NEWS*. Going digital (PDF) means cost savings regarding postage and getting the *News* into member hands in a more timely fashion. The NRHS is considering publishing a limited number of paper copies for those not having internet access.





**ASHEVILLE ROUNDHOUSE TO BE RAZED.** Attempts to save Asheville, NC's historic roundhouse have failed and demolition is moving forward. Citing health and safety concerns, a NORFOLK SOUTHERN spokesman said that the railroad is demolishing the 90-year-old building as "[it] is obsolete and deteriorating, so we're taking it down because it's just not safe to be in anymore". A grass roots effort spearheaded by The Preservation Society of Asheville & Buncombe County to save the structure, one of only two remaining roundhouses in North Carolina, was unable to garner enough local support. One factor contributing to the failure of saving this and possibly other historic structures in the state is North Carolina's plans to let a tax credit that helped people rescue historic businesses and homes expire January 1, 2015.



Photo: Tom Phelps



### **NEW AMTRAK ELECTRICS ENTER SERVICE ON "KEYSTONE" CORRIDOR**



AMTRAK has begun operating its new Cities Sprinter ACS-64 electric locomotives on its Keystone Service between New York, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg. The first revenue train to be pulled by the new locomotives was train No. 605 from Philadelphia to Harrisburg on Monday, October 20. AMTRAK and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania share the revenue and operating and equipment maintenance costs of the corridor. AMTRAK is acquiring 70 of the new locomotives replacing older AEM7, AEM7AC, and HHP-8 electrics on the Northeast and Keystone corridors.

More than a dozen ACS-64 units are now in service with the remainder to be delivered through the end of 2015. Ridership on the Keystone Service has grown to more than one million riders annually, up 60 percent since more than \$145 million worth of infrastructure improvements were made under the Keystone Corridor Improvement Program in 2006. The upgrades have enabled faster speeds and more frequent departures for Keystone Service trains. The locomotives are being built by Siemens and assembled at its facility in Sacramento, CA. [Edited from Trains News Wire via Lancaster NRHS "Dispatcher"]

---

We are still asking members receiving paper copies of the Whistle Stop to switch over to the electronic version. The electronic version is in glorious color, the quality is so much better than the printed copy, and you can take advantage of live links to referenced sites. This also helps us financially as it defrays postage costs. Call the chapter office (423) 753-5797 and give us your e-mail address so you can start receiving your newsletter online. You will not go back to the printed copy once you see what you've been missing.



**THE ROANOKE RACES?** When a concerned citizen called to report that a NORFOLK SOUTHERN train was speeding in downtown Roanoke, VA, Josh Zimmerman had to smile. No speeding had occurred: What the person had witnessed on that day in early May was a train moving through newly improved Randolph Street tracks. During three weeks in April, NS Engineering Department employees modernized and streamlined the matrix of track, switches, and signals at Randolph Street, enabling trains to double their pass-through speed to 30 mph from 15 mph. For the complete story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/o4zqgtr>.



**WARNING: RUMOR. CP AND NS MERGER?** [From The Globe and Mail, Toronto, Canada] Norfolk Southern Corp. led gains among U.S. railroads after activist investor Bill Ackman said Canadian Pacific Railway Ltd. may pursue a rival to one-time target CSX Corp. While Ackman didn't name Norfolk Southern in remarks yesterday at the Invest for Kids conference in Chicago, he described the possible takeover target in relation to CSX. CSX "is not the only potential railroad we can merge with," said Ackman, a Canadian Pacific director and founder of hedge fund Pershing Square Capital Management LP. CSX and Norfolk Southern rank as the two dominant railroads in the eastern U.S. A Canadian Pacific combination with either one would create a transcontinental North American carrier. Breanne Feigel, a spokeswoman for Canadian Pacific, declined to comment. Rick Harris, a spokesman for Norfolk Southern, said: "We don't comment on speculation and rumors."



Lerro Productions is offering seats on its chartered photo trips of WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD's 2-8-0 #734 in action during two days in January 2015. The Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> session will offer a full day of runbys, featuring actors and props to be used to enhance scenes. Jan. 14<sup>th</sup> will feature runbys throughout the afternoon and evening, including a night session at the Frostburg Depot and the #2 bridge. After the 2015 season is over, the #734 will be out of operation for an undetermined amount of time while C&O #1309 takes over passenger service. For more information, go to <http://www.lerroproductions.com/wmwinter2015>

## *For Your Viewing Pleasure*



As railfan John Sery was setting up to record the move of 2-6-6-2 C&O #1309 on CSX train L341 from the B&O Museum in Baltimore to its restoration destination at the WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD in Cumberland, MD, a lumber load crossing the tracks cut too sharply and the middle of the loaded trailer hit the grade crossing signal, knocking it over onto the two Eastbound tracks! Westbound L341 was unable to stop in time, running over the signal and causing a lot of excitement but fortunately minimal damage. To view, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GNaCOMSstA>



Check out this 1983 video clip of the Santa Train as its last run of CLINCHFIELD train at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhQPCLmto9I> Great shots of the F units! [Thanks to Kati Phelps for forwarding this link and Tony King for discovering it!]



A dramatic 27-minute PBS video on the problems and hazards of clearing the Donner Pass of an avalanche can be viewed at <http://video.pbs.org/video/2365218614/>. Featured are remarkable scenes of a snow rotary in action and a stranded train.



## Photo Section



That so few photographs of our excursions were taken is testament to the hard work and fine service put in by our volunteers who were far too busy with their duties to take time for a camera. That said, a few snapshots did capture the attractions and good times had by all. Upper left: Gary Price found the 611 under restoration in Spencer. Gary and Emily Price and David Crabtree and family are all smiles. Left: Emily Price captured the beautiful fall colors as the train passed over the James River. The ex-C&O branch line to Lexington, VA, which is now a nature trail, can be seen at the far right.



Photographer Mike Pierry, Jr, found the ex-N&W Green Cove station blanketed by snow on a glorious autumn day.

# Upcoming Events



Santa's 72<sup>nd</sup> annual 110-mile rail trek through the mountains of Appalachia, complements of CSX, beginning in Shelby, KY on the morning of November 22<sup>nd</sup> and ending in Kingsport, TN. Accompanying Santa is this year's celebrity guest, singer Amy Grant. The train's schedule is as follows:

November 20	DP: Erwin, TN	0600	November 22	DP: Shelby, KY	0630
(Dead head)	AR: Kingsport, TN	0800	(Santa Train)	AR: Marrowbone, KY	0645
	DP: Kingsport, TN	1230		AR: Elkhorn City, KY	0725
	AR: Shelby, KY	1630		AR: Toms Bottom, VA	0805
				AR: Haysi, VA	0827
				AR: Clinchco, VA	0900
				AR: Fremont, VA	0928
				AR: Dante, VA	1028
				AR: St. Paul, VA	1108
				AR: Dungannon, VA	1213
				AR: Ft. Blackmore, VA	1253
				AR: Kermit, VA	1348
				AR: Waycross, TN	1430
				AR: Kingsport, TN	1508
			(Dead head)	DP: Kingsport, TN	1730
				AR: Erwin, TN	1900



## WVRHS&M ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MEAL



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2014

It's time once again for WVRHS&M's annual Christmas Meal, and this year we plan to gather at the Jonesborough Visitors Center, 117 Boone St., Jonesborough, TN. We'll 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 the Visitors Center by 11:30 am as the serving line will open at 12 noon. To make reservations, cut out the form below and mail to Watauga Valley RHS&M Annual Meal, PO Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432. You can also call your reservation in to the our office phone at (423) 753-5797; turn in your form at the November 24<sup>th</sup> meeting; or email [wataugavalley@embarqmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@embarqmail.com). There will be good food and good fellowship! Please have your reservations in no later than Monday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

**YOU'LL see US at the *Christmas Gathering!***

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

I / we will bring 2 Vegetables \_\_\_\_ 2 Salads \_\_\_\_ Vegetable and Salad \_\_\_\_



# CALLING ALL MEMBERS!

We are in need of help in all areas of our organization! No matter your skill level or work experience we have an opportunity for you to get involved. Please fill out the form below telling us about yourself: Work experience, skills, and what you are interested in doing to help our organization. We want everyone to be a bigger part of the group! Examples Include:

**Office Support:**

Clerical  
Computer/ Tech. Support  
Courier- Checking the mailbox  
Newsletter Printing & Distribution  
Ticket Sales  
Organizer

**Yard Crew:**

Yard Clean-up & Maintenance  
Car Washers  
Car Interior Cleaners

**Mechanical:**

Heating & Air Conditioning  
Plumbers  
Welders  
Fabricators  
Electrical  
Painters  
Woodworkers  
General Labor

**Membership & Public Events:**

Organizers for Membership and Public Events such as Dinners, Parties, Community Relations, Yard Tours, etc.

Please print and fill out the following form and return to Nick White by one of the following means.

**Mail: Nick White, 328 West Main Street , Marion, Virginia 24354**

**Email: [nickwhite@hotmail.com](mailto:nickwhite@hotmail.com)**

**Cell: 1-276-685-2386**

**Fax: 1-276-783-1461**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Education:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Vocational or Trade Training:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Work History / Positions Held:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special Skills:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are you interested in doing to help Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (continue on back if needed)

**THANK YOU**

## *Whistle Stop*

Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

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

[wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.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**