

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Bobby Hand took a minute from work detail to catch NS ES44AC cruising past our Spring Street Coach Yard with an eastbound freight.

March 28th Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will conduct our monthly General Membership Meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, March 28th, 2016 at the Johnson City Public Library 101 West Millard St. Johnson City, TN. Our program this month, presented by Bob and Norma Hand, will be Part Two of a DVD on the Swiss railroad which starts in Zermatt, Switzerland and travels up to the Gornergart Mountain at an elevation of over 11,000 feet, the line facing the Matterhorn Mountain with spectacular views. Part One of this DVD was shown a few months ago at one of our monthly meetings. Come out bring a friend and enjoy a great night of railroading with your friends.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewel

Sympathy is extended to the Ralph Clarke family in Jonesborough, in the death of Ralph's Mother-in-Law in February. Thoughts are sent to Alf Peoples who is now at home after spending some time in the hospital.

A reminder to keep the following folks in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns: George and Margaret Holley, Gary Price, Sidney Blankenbeckler, and Bob Yaple.

As always, let us know of any members, friends, 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 needed and always appreciated.

CAR HOST INFORMATION

To all car hosts serving on the **Copper Hill Excursion**: please be at the Johnson City Public Library **5:45 p.m., March 28th** for car host training. We plan to do the training 45 minutes prior to the General Membership Meeting.

To all car hosts planning on serving on the **Lynchburg and Asheville Excursions**: You will receive car host information via e-mail; the date of your car host training session will be included.

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Chuckey Depot / Museum Committee are taking names to help prepare displays for the museum in Jonesborough in April. If you're interested in helping for a couple of Saturdays or during the week, please call the WVRHS&M office at (423) 753-5797 or sign up at the March General Membership Meeting.

For Your Reading and Viewing Enjoyment ...



The March/April issue of Blue Ridge Country magazine is featuring an article covering 13 regional tourist train rides. Our favorite narrow gauge graces the cover of this issue.

Under the circumstances, "interest" is a better word than "enjoyment", a poor choice. A Minnesota state trooper's dash cam captured the terrifying moment as a train slams into a semi-trailer whose driver ignored the red flashing lights and drove onto its path: <http://tinyurl.com/gmu2bee>

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL



Work Crew on March 19 at the coach yard. 24 came out to get the cars ready to roll.

Despite inclement weather, the WATV Mechanical Team has been very busy over the last couple of months; some work days have seen 15+ members helping on the equipment. If you would like to volunteer at the Jonesborough Spring St. Coach Yard, please call the WATV office 423-753-5797 and leave message and the mechanical team will call you back. We are in need of several more volunteers to help on our cars.

YARD EXTENSION

A lot of activity is going on at the Jonesborough Coach Yard. The contractor has been selected to start on construction of the 40 foot yard extension so we can store all five of our passenger cars; two cabooses; the tool car; and still have enough room for two containers and a storage building. This is great news for the WATV Mechanical team, giving them more room to work.

ROLLING STOCK

“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATV 539): Air Conditioning, HEP, and general cleaning.

“St Augustine” coach (WATV 500): Major seat repair, hanging pictures, hanging holding tank and general cleaning have been ongoing at the coach yard.

“Moultrie” diner (WATV 400): Currently in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATV 2351): Had a new air blower installed, updated the electrical system and seats reupholstered.

“Clinchfield” business car (WATV 100): Work on the car continues; some major changes will be seen with the restoration of this car.

In the News



JONESBOROUGH DEPOT and MUSEUM

The Chuckey Depot and Museum at Jonesborough is right on track with its opening date coming some time in the fall. The Museum will be completed in June but it will take several months to move the displays into the building. WE WILL NEED VOLUNTEERS TO MAN THE MUSEUM EACH DAY. PLEASE BE THINKING ABOUT THIS. This is a job for you.



Steam Makes a Triumphant Return to the Smokies!

[GSMR web site] After long awaited anticipation, GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD (GSMR) is excited to announce that the historic 2-8-0 steam engine #1702 will return for the 2016 excursion season! Thanks to the innovative private/public partnership between Swain County Commissioners, Tourism Development Authority Board, and GSMR, #1702 is revived and ready to roll on the rails! Booking is now available!

Steam excursions will depart from the historic Bryson City Depot beginning July 22nd with a variety of options. Throughout the season 39 excursions will follow the Nantahala Gorge route and 22 excursions will follow the Tuckasegee River route. All general excursions will offer the full variety of seating options including their most popular First Class seating. Before departure, passengers may arrive early to enjoy a meet and greet with one of GSMR's star conductors along with the engine crew. As it prepares for its journey, #1702 will be on display allowing for photos opportunities and an up close and personal view of the impressive equipment.

On board, passengers will enjoy interacting with staff and hearing about various historical points and interesting facts about #1702. All steam excursion passengers will receive a commemorative #1702 souvenir ticket and lapel pin to celebrate the locomotive's return to the rails! These items are one of a kind and not sold in their retail store. Upon return to Bryson City, a live demonstration of the turn-table will also be on exhibit. A few lucky guests will be selected each day to be an active participant in the manual turning of the locomotive!

In addition to the regular excursion schedule, #1702 will also be leading six special event trains. The popular, family friendly Fontana Trestle Train featuring BBQ & Brews service and THE POLAR EXPRESS train ride will be operating with the steam engine on select dates! #1702 will also pull two new event trains in 2016: the "*Railroad Reserve*", a wine and rail pairing dinner train; and the "*Photo Special*", an 8-hour roundtrip excursion to the Nantahala Gorge departing from Dillsboro NC, stopping for two run by photo opportunities and a short steam shop tour.

This historic season has been years in the making as official restoration began in May of 2014. Under the guidance of Project Manager Steve Jackson and the official boiler contractor, Robert Franzen of Steam Services of America, GSMR in house shop workers have worked tirelessly to meet the summer deadline. GSMR owner, Al Harper, is personally thrilled to see this massive project reach completion. Harper says, "2016 is going to be a banner year for the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD. Steam is coming alive! Engine #1702 will once again be a super star on our tracks offering numerous excursions for all our guests to ride. The personnel of GSMR have done a tremendous job in making one of my personal dreams come true."

 *Landslide severs portion of Western Maryland Scenic line*

[Chase Gunnoe, TRAINS MAGAZINE] A landslide will keep WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD trains from accessing Frostburg, MD, for more than the first half of the railroad's 2016 season. The landslide, located on tracks between Frostburg and switch no. 9 was discovered during a routine track inspection. According to an article in the Cumberland [MD] *Times-News*, land below the right-of-way has slipped away at an estimated 2 to 4 feet. Damages make the track impassable, WESTERN MARYLAND's newly appointed General Superintendent John Garner, says. "This will hold things up," Garner told the *Times-News*. "We're looking not to reconnect into Frostburg until at the very earliest, July."

The Maryland Bureau of Mines visited the site to begin an investigation. Field-testing of the area is expected to take up to 45 days, according to Garner. If the bureau finds the landslide is mine-related, emergency repairs are expected to take an additional 30 to 60 days. Garner tells Trains News Wire that if the [railroad] is forced to fix damages related to the landslide, "we [the railroad] will have to rethink operations into Frostburg." Garner expects those repairs will not happen in 2016 if the railroad is responsible for the repair costs.

The best scenario is that the Bureau of Mines detects a mine-related issue and takes full financial responsibility to repair the site, Garner told the *Times-News*. In the meantime, the railroad is planning its 2016 operating season and will compensate for the loss of two track miles and turntable at Frostburg by repairing switch no. 9 to create a runaround. In the process, the railroad hopes to create a small picnic-type area at the siding, too. Garner says there will be no interference with trains and that the season will start on April 16 as planned. Garner also says this has no effect on CHESAPEAKE & OHIO 2-6-6-2 #1309, which is currently under restoration. The railroad is still soliciting donations for the project and volunteer hours for rehabilitation work on equipment and track.

 *AMTRAK: National Train Day is done*

[Steve Glischinski, TRAINS.com] After eight years, AMTRAK is pulling the plug on one of its more successful promotions: National Train Day. In an e-mail to *Trains* Correspondent Bob Johnston, AMTRAK spokesman Marc Magliari says: "Since its inception, AMTRAK Train Days/National Train Day has been a popular program, allowing us to celebrate the value that AMTRAK brings to local communities nationwide. In light of the financial challenges we are currently facing, we have chosen not to continue the AMTRAK Train Days program and to prioritize our resources more efficiently. We would like to thank everyone who devoted their time and effort over the years to making these celebrations of AMTRAK and passenger train travel a success."

Magliari says the popular AMTRAK Exhibit Train tour would continue and will make its scheduled appearance at Union Depot Train Days in St. Paul, Minn., April 30-May 1.

AMTRAK started National Train Day in 2008 as a way to spread information to the public about the advantages of rail travel and the history of railroading in the United States. It was held each year on the Saturday closest to May 10, the anniversary of the Golden Spike which marked the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869.

 ***NORFOLK SOUTHERN combines railway operating regions***

[NS Press Release] NORFOLK SOUTHERN announced [March 1] it is consolidating its three operating regions into two, effective March 15. The decision to further streamline railroad operations is part of the company's ongoing execution of its five-year strategic plan, announced in December 2015, to enhance operating efficiencies, reduce costs, drive profitability, and accelerate growth. As previously announced, NS is targeting annual expense savings of \$650 million by 2020.

"We are committed to aggressively controlling costs while delivering the high levels of superior service that our customers value," said Mike Wheeler, executive vice president and chief operating officer. "Consolidating our operating regions will generate productivity savings, not only through right-sizing, but also by leveraging advancements in train dispatch technologies that support more fluid and efficient movement of freight across the network. As we continue to execute on our five-year strategic plan, we are confident that these steps will make NORFOLK SOUTHERN a faster, lower-cost, and more profitable railroad."

Earlier this year, NORFOLK SOUTHERN streamlined division operations by combining the former Virginia and Pocahontas divisions into a larger Pocahontas Division. This became effective Feb. 1, and followed other key strategic initiatives including the reduction from three corporate office locations to two, restructuring of the Triple Crown Services subsidiary, integration of the D&H South Line to increase options for shippers, and idling of certain parts of the 'West Virginia Secondary' line.

NORFOLK SOUTHERN's network spans 22 states in the eastern U.S. The railroad presently manages train operations across 10 operating divisions that are part of three larger operating regions – the Eastern, Western, and Northern regions.

Under the new structure, effective March 15, NORFOLK SOUTHERN's network will be divided into Northern and Southern regions only. The Northern Region will include the Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Dearborn, Lake, and Illinois divisions. Greg Comstock, a 41-year veteran of NORFOLK SOUTHERN operations, will be the region's general manager. The region's chief engineers will be Eddie Otey, maintenance of way and structures, and Mick Ireton, communications and signals. The Southern Region will include the Piedmont, Alabama, Georgia, Central, and Pocahontas divisions. Todd Reynolds, a 22-year veteran of NORFOLK SOUTHERN operations, will be the region's general manager. The region's chief engineers will be Lucious Bobbitt, maintenance of way and structures, and Randall Smith, communications and signals.

Each of the two consolidated regions will support approximately 1,000 daily crew starts for long-haul train operations, connecting customers and communities to global markets with freight rail that moves consumer goods, automobiles, coal, grain, and products essential to U.S. households, businesses, and industries.

VISIT WATAUGA VALLEY ON FACEBOOK

You're invited to visit Watauga Valley's Facebook page, hosted by Gary Price. You get news faster than the monthly newsletter and you'll see great photos for which there just isn't room in the Whistle Stop. To date we have nearly 600 folk who have friended us. Finding us is easy: search for "Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum".

New Railfan Event at Cass Scenic Railroad

This July 16th and 17th, the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association (MSR&LHA) will host a new event called Membership Weekend featuring the "Railfan Express". The new event will include a Saturday evening night photo following dinner and their annual meeting, with the Railfan Express departing Sunday for an all day trip to Bald Knob featuring a turned geared steam locomotive pulling a mixed freight and passenger train! The event will cost \$150 including meals, night photo, and train ride with multiple photo runbys. Membership Weekend is presented in cooperation with the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad, which will operate its own annual trip to "The Great West Virginia Train Race" on Friday and Saturday of the same weekend, making this an excellent opportunity for a mountain railroading summer getaway! While one focus of the event is to strengthen membership, non-members will be welcome to purchase tickets as always. For details, check <http://www.msrlha.org/>

Flying Scotsman Returns

The famed Flying Scotsman returned to action on Thursday, February 25, for the first time in 10 years after a \$15 million rebuild. The occasion was a 189-mile trip hauling a special passenger train from London's Kings Cross Station to York. The trip took the locomotive back to the route it was built to run and set records on in 1923. During the run the locomotive traveled at speeds of up to 75 mph. The locomotive became famous for serving on the first non-stop service from London to Edinburgh and is the first steam locomotive verified to have traveled at 100 mph. The A3 4-6-2 Pacific was designed by noted locomotive engineer, Sir Nigel Gresley (also designer of the A4 Mallard, which holds the world speed record for steam). The Flying Scotsman will be on display at the National Railway Museum in York, the locomotive's owner, in between excursions. You can find many, many videos of the run on YouTube. [Trains Magazine Newswire, February 26, 2016]

Climax Locomotive Restoration Project



MSR&LA photo

Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association's involvement in the restoration of Cass Scenic Railroad State Park's Climax steam locomotive (ex-Moore-Keppel #1551) ended in December, 2015. The new operator responsible for the Park's railroad operation and maintenance, the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad, informed MSR&LHA that its assistance in the project would no longer be needed.

MSR&LHA volunteers have devoted thousands of hours of work and donors have contributed thousands of dollars to the project, which is approximately 80% complete. However, the change was probably inevitable as boiler and steam piping work requires qualified shop personnel and equipment. In addition, much-needed shop space is at a premium, requiring completion in a timely manner (volunteers had been working on an every-other-weekend schedule.) The source of funding to complete the project is uncertain at this time.

Upcoming Events

	<p>APRIL 2: Spring 2016 Scenic Hiwassee River Excursion. Etowah – Copperhill, TN. *** SOLD OUT ***</p>
	<p>APRIL 2: Great Eastern Divide Narrow Gauge Train Show (modeling), 4801 Merriman Road, Roanoke, VA. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. See http://tinyurl.com/zkxzt7h</p>
	<p>MAY 19-22: N&W Historical Society Convention, Hilton Garden Inn, Pikeville, KY.</p>
	<p>JULY 19-24: NRHS National Convention, Denver, CO. See http://nrhs.com/content/2016-convention</p>

#611's 2016 EXCURSION SCHEDULE

- April 9: “The Virginian”, Spencer, NC to Lynchburg, VA
- April 10: “The Blue Ridge Special”, Spencer, NC to Asheville, NC ***** SOLD OUT *****
- April 23-24: “The Roanoker”, Greensboro, NC to Roanoke, VA.
- May 7-8: “The Powhatan Arrow”, Roanoke, VA to Lynchburg, VA
- May 7-8: “The Pelican”, Roanoke, VA to Walton (Radford), VA
- June 4: “The American”, Manassas, VA to Front Royal, VA (runs once)
- June 5: “The American”, Manassas, VA to Front Royal, VA (runs twice)

More Reading ...

Last Pullman Porter

By Brandon Brown

Mr. Virgil Smock reached 100 years old on January 20. He is thought to be one of the last Pullman porters, if not the last, who worked for the Pullman company and served in Pullman sleepers during the golden age of America’s passenger trains. Mr. Smock, a resident of Union City, CA, is a third-generation porter and worked for the Pullman Company from 1937 – 1960, much of the time on SOUTHERN PACIFIC’s “Lark” that ran overnight between Los Angeles and Oakland. Mr. Smock once had the honor of serving President Franklin Roosevelt. "They called us all George," Smock said of the passengers. "But we didn't say anything; we didn't want to sass them." Because the pay was so low, tips were crucial to the porters’ survival. Mr. Smock remembers some of the generous tippers. "Mr. Ford, he was the best tipper," Smock said, referring to auto magnate Henry Ford. "He and Mr. Kaiser," as in Henry J. Kaiser, the industrialist considered one of the most powerful West Coast businessmen during World War II. "They tipped good -- but I gave good service," he said, smiling. You can read more at the following website: <http://tinyurl.com/zrm6shn> [“Contra Costa Times” via “The Timetable”, Washington, DC NRHS]

From the WVRHS&M Archives ...



CLINCHFIELD crew working EMD SW7 #350 on Johnson City yard service in 1975.



Action on the old "T.C.". Mike Tilley caught SOU GP38-2 #5146 as it emerged from a tunnel near Rockwood, TN along the old TENNESSEE CENTRAL during an October 1987 TVRM excursion.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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