

# 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**

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Will Jordan found our October 30<sup>th</sup> northbound "Autumn Leaf Special" with P40DC #822 on point cleared to return to Spencer with 1000 happy people on board. Passengers enjoyed downtown Toccoa's Fall Festival with over 160 vendors, a visit to Toccoa Falls and the Civil War Museum.

## *November 28<sup>th</sup> Membership Meeting*

Our next General Membership Meeting will be held November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 6:30 pm at the Johnson City Public Library, 100 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. TN. Our program this month will be presented by Mike Noonkester on NORFOLK SOUTHERN 611 climbing Old Fort Mountain back in the spring of 2016. This is a program you do not want to miss. We will also be discussing the Autumn Train Excursions. Bring a friend out and enjoy a great program.

## *Member Notes*

*by Edna Kay Carter*

Our sympathy is extended to Jim Calhoun in the death of his brother.

Please keep the following in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns: Gary Price, George Ritchie, Bob Yapple, Dennis Calhoun, Nancy Jewel, Jim Calhoun, Suzie Tilley, Richard Baker's mother and Kati Phelps. As always, let us know of any member, friend or family member to whom a card might be sent or a phone call made. The office phone number is 423-753-5797 or call Edna Carter at 423-571-3226.

Hope everyone is enjoying this beautiful fall season.

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### *2017 Officers and Board Members Ballot*

The 2017 WVRHS&M election ballots were mailed out mid-November. All ballots must be received by 12:01 am December 9, 2016. 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. Election results will be announced at the December 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas Gathering.

### *Membership Dues*

The 2017 Dues Notices were mailed out and sent electronically via e-mail recently. Please get your dues and check back to Membership Chairman Edna Carter, Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. You can join the WVRHS&M for \$20.00 individual, adding family members at \$5.00 each. Any questions e-mail wataugavalley@gmail.com.

### *2016 AUTUMN TRAIN EXCURSION A BIG SUCCESS*

Everyone will agree that out of the ten years of operating the Autumn Train Excursions out of Spencer, 2016 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 2017. The following e-mail was sent out to all the WVRHS&M volunteers who worked the train.  
**THANK YOU !!!!!!!!!!!**

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, everyone really seemed to enjoy both days. Great customer service is key in our business and thanks to each of you for showing our passengers special attention.

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

Thanks again!

Marcus Neubacher  
North Carolina Transportation Museum Foundation

Mike Tilley  
WVRHS&M

## *"POLAR EXPRESS" - ANOTHER GREAT SUCCESS*



Ticket sales for the Polar Express on the GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD WERE another great success this year! It was our first time in running a trip like this but a lot of fun. Thanks to everyone who volunteered to help on the trips from Bryson City to the North Pole (Whittier, NC).

### *WVRHS&M Annual Christmas Meal and Gathering*

It's time for the WVRHS&M annual Christmas Meal and Gathering; once again we plan to meet at the McKinney Center, 103 Franklin Ave., Jonesborough, TN. Details and a reservation form are attached to this newsletter.

Franklin Avenue is off of Main Street and dead ends at the entrance to our coach yard on Spring Street. The Center is just above the coach yard and is on the left if you're coming down hill towards the yard.

### *Volunteers Needed at the Santa Caboose*

The WVRHS&M Santa Train Exhibit (see page 4) will be held on December 10<sup>th</sup> at the Chuckey Depot Museum in Jonesborough, TN on Second Street from 2 pm to 6 pm. WVRHS&M and the Town of Jonesborough are sponsoring the exhibit. Everyone is welcome to come out and bring their children and come aboard the restored Southern Caboose X450 and meet Santa Claus. We will need volunteers to help with assisting visitors boarding the caboose. Please sign up by signing the sheet at the November 28<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting or e-mailing [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or calling (423) 753-5797. This will be some good publicity for us and we are expecting a lot of people to come aboard our beautiful red caboose.

## *Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report*

*by Jim Magill*

"Powhatan Arrow" coach (WATV 539): Will be in Spencer for the Polar Express Excursion trains out of the NCTM.

"St Augustine" coach (WATV 500): Will be in Spencer for the Polar Express Excursion trains out of the NCTM

"Moultrie" diner (WATV 400): Will be in Spencer for the Polar Express Excursion trains out of the NCTM.


"Crescent Harbor" sleeper / lounge (WATV 2351): Is in winter storage at the Coach Yard. The Mechanical Team will be performing some mechanical upgrades during the winter months.

"Clinchfield" business car (WATV 100): Is in winter storage at the Coach Yard.

## *In the News*

### ***BREAKING NEWS: COAL RETURNS TO THE "CLINCHFIELD"***

[Reported by Tony King] I have good news for a change. I have information from two reliable sources that CSX has decided to re-route coal to Duke's Cliffside steam plant down the Clinchfield again! This traffic turns left [east] at Brice, about 14 or so miles south of Bostic. Just two minutes ago, a 110-car loaded CSX coal train came through Big Stone Gap headed to Frisco, Kingsport, Erwin, and on to Brice. The train was loaded at Lynch 3, on the Poor Fork Branch near Cumberland, KY. After the "purge" last year, this traffic was routed down the A line (former ACL main line), and then over to Hamlet, Bostic, and then down to Brice. That's a long, long way to get there, plus the extra coal traffic was just causing delays on the A line.

 Restoration of the Chuckey Depot Museum at Jonesborough, TN is moving along at a fast pace. The proposed grand opening date is set for May 1st, 2017. The Watauga Valley RHS&M will need volunteers to serve as museum guides. Volunteer sign up sheets will be available in the near future. Also, if you have anything to display in the museum, please contact WVRHS&M at (423) 753-5797 or Mike Tilley at (423) 335-1100.

### ***COME AND SEE SANTA IN HIS RED CABOOSE***

The historic SOUTHERN RAILWAY caboose at the Chuckey Depot / Museum in Jonesborough, TN will be open for everyone to see Santa Claus on Saturday, December 10 from 3 pm to 6 pm. Occurring prior to the annual Jonesborough Christmas Parade, this visit with Santa offers a perfect opportunity for photos as he greets guests and talks with children; refreshments will be provided. Miss Historic Jonesborough will also be on hand to greet everyone.

The caboose will also be open prior to Santa's visit on the same day from 2 pm to 3 pm for tours of this historic piece of railroad equipment. Many railroad enthusiasts in the area are likely familiar with the Santa Caboose Car as Southern Railway X450, used for many years on the SOUTHERN's tracks traveling through Jonesborough. X450 was built in 1970 and ran the rails for over 22 years before it was donated to the Town of Morristown, TN, from which it was purchased 12 years ago by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum. It was moved to Jonesborough in 2005 and stored at the Spring Street Rail Yard. It was restored recently to its original status and was moved in October to its new home, the museum's site on Second Street.

There is no charge for either event. Plenty of parking at the depot parking lot will be available. Please note that the Chuckey Depot / Museum at Jonesborough will be closed for this event as the museum's restoration continues.

This will be a unique opportunity for both young and old to visit Historic Jonesborough, see Santa, step aboard this historic railroad car and attend the Jonesborough Christmas Parade. This will be a memorable event for the whole family for years to come. Visits with Santa and the historic train car are sponsored by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum. For information call Jonesborough Visitors Center at [\(423\) 753-1010](tel:4237531010).

## *From the Vault ...*

### *The Spartanburg Tunnel*

[*ACL News*, July/August 1963, provided by Bob Klemptner] June 27, 1963 marked the addition of a brand new facility for rail operations in Spartanburg, SC, and the culmination of an idea that started over 50 years ago. A \$2.5 million tunnel was dedicated in ceremonies before nearly 500 people, including officials of state and local governments, civic and industrial leaders and top representatives of the three railroad responsible for its construction: ATLANTIC COAST LINE, CLINCHFIELD, and PIEDMONT & NORTHERN.

Construction of the 800-foot tunnel and its approaches (totaling 6,500 ft) began in April 1962, three years after the Interstate Commerce Commission approved the project for the Spartanburg Terminal Co. which had been organized by the three railroads. The city council had previously granted rights but for a number of years opponents of the plan, principally the SOUTHERN RAILWAY, had blocked it by legal maneuvers. The tunnel passes under the main line of the SOUTHERN and ends the necessity of switching changes estimated \$500,000 annually in making north-south connections for the ACL, CLINCHFIELD and P&N.

For the dedication, dignitaries and honored guests were taken by special train containing flat cars on which benches were fastened, complete with podium and a public address system. Speakers for the railroads were W. T. Rice and W I Rankin, Presidents of the ACL and the P&N respectively; D. C. Hastings, Gen Mgr of the CLINCHFIELD; and L. S. Jeffords, President, Spartanburg Terminal Co. Greetings from the City of Spartanburg were expressed by Mayor Pro Tem Robert Carlisle. Miss South Carolina ceremonially released the blue cloth covering the tunnel. Luncheon followed at the Cleveland Hotel. Many pictures were taken with Miss SC in front of newly painted CLINCHFIELD F7A #813.



LEFT: The Jonesboro Depot in the late 60's. While impossible to see in this photo, there's a notice from SOUTHERN announcing station closing on the door. [Wayne Manning collection] RIGHT: John Livingston shared this shot of SOUTHERN's Chuckey Depot prior to its removal and restoration.

# Excursion Photos ...

The following photos serve as a testament to the fact that it takes a lot of hard work to pull off a successful rail excursion with 1000 passengers, but from the smiles on faces it's apparent there were no worker complaints (nor were there passenger complaints!)



## Upcoming Events



**DECEMBER 3-4:** “Candy Cane Express”, Virginia Museum of Transportation, Roanoke.



**WEEKENDS IN NOVEMBER & DECEMBER:** “Polar Express Train Ride” at NCTM. For dates and info:  
<http://www.nctrans.org/Events/THE-POLAR-EXPRESS-Train-Ride.aspx>



**DECEMBER 10:** WVRHS&M Annual Christmas Meal and Gathering, Jonesborough, TN.



**DECEMBER 10:** 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Christmas Toy Train Show, Nashville, TN.  
<http://dixiedivisiontca.com/category/events-music-city/>

## For Your Viewing Pleasure ...

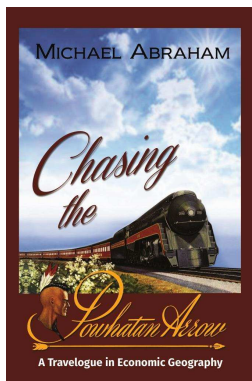


NCTM promo for their “Polar Express: train: (you may have to scroll down to find it):  
<https://www.facebook.com/nctrans/videos/10153767751526653/>



A sentimental video from AMTRAK promoting holiday travel (no audio; you may have to scroll down to find it): <http://tinyurl.com/zhcauhj>

## Santa's Helper ...



### Chasing the Powhatan Arrow Book Now Available!

Author Michael Abraham has released his new book, *Chasing the Powhatan Arrow*. Pulled initially by the magnificent Class J steam locomotives that N&W manufactured at its Roanoke Shops, the *Powhatan Arrow* provided fast, luxurious, and memorable service for three decades before passenger service was discontinued. The corridor traversed by the *Powhatan Arrow* is a wonderfully complex, geographically fascinating, socially diverse, and economically mixed path through Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio. With railroads no longer carrying passengers, Michael Abraham duplicated the route as closely as possible by car, motorcycle, bicycle, and even canoe, gathering each area's history and culture in this enlightening, humorous look at a swath of America's past, present, and future. *Chasing the Powhatan Arrow* makes a great holiday gift. Visit <http://shop.vmt.org/books-and-dvds/> to order your copy!

**NOTE: THE WATAUGA VALLEY CHRISTMAS MEAL ON DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> WILL REPLACE OUR DECEMBER GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING DUE TO THE HOLIDAYS.**

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Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum  
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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



**TIME VALUE MATERIAL**



# WATAUGA VALLEY RHS&M



## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS GATHERING & MEAL



SATURDAY,

DECEMBER 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016

It's time for the WVRHS&M annual Christmas Meal; once again we plan to gather at the McKinney Center, 103 Franklin Ave., Jonesborough, TN. WVRHS&M 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 by 11:30 a.m. as the serving line will open at 12 noon.

**SPECIAL TREAT!** We are happy to announce that we will have the State Street String Band on hand for entertainment. This great band will sing some old-time country/bluegrass train music, bluegrass, and a few Christmas tunes. Becky Wise, one of our members, is in this group.

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 in your reservation to our office phone at (423) 753-5797, hand in your form at the November 28<sup>th</sup> General Membership meeting, or email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com).

There will be good food and good fellowship! Please have your reservations in by Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

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

.....

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

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

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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