

Whistle Stop



**Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society &
Museum**

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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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In past newsletter issues your Editor has included countless articles on the over-schedule and over-budget restoration effort of C&O 2-6-6-2 #1309 being undertaken by Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. I am pleased to offer this photo as proof of WMSR's perseverance in successfully returning this magnificent machine to regular operation.

July 25th General Membership Meeting

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, June 25th, 2022 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Our program this month will be on CSX at Thurmond, WV. Bring a friend out while enjoying a visit to the Chuckey Depot/Museum.

Member Notes

Please keep Gary Price, Lois Tilley, Robert Anderson, Jack Maloney and Claire Salvail in your thoughts and prayers for various reasons. To request that one of our members or family be reported in the Whistle Stop, email a request to wataugavalley@gmail.com.

2022 WVRHS&M Rail Events

SEATS STILL AVAILABLE FOR TVRM MEMBERS' TRIP

We are happy to announce that we had great response for our Saturday, August 20th, 2022 Watauga Valley members trip to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga, TN. We are now asking everyone that signed up to go ahead and send your check to Watauga Valley Railroad Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. If you did not sign up yet, we still have room for you on the motor coach. What a great time we will have riding behind either 4501- or 630-powered excursion train and visiting the Tennessee Valley Railroad displays and shop area along with the drive around tour of Chattanooga. This is a one-day trip; more information included with this newsletter on page 9.

GSMR TICKETS NOW ON SALE

On Saturday, September 17th, 2022, the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will sponsor a beautiful train excursion - a ride on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad through the majestic mountains and beautiful countryside of western North Carolina from Bryson City, NC and to the Nantahala Gorge, NC with a return back to Bryson City. This trip covers a lot of the current operating trackage of the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad. Patrons will have two choices in getting to the Bryson City train station. Patrons can either drive directly to Bryson City or board a motor coach out of Johnson City, TN. For complete trip description including meal choices and bus information, and to order tickets, go to <https://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org/excursions.php>.

HIWASSEE LOOP. The next Hiwassee trip near Etowah, TN is scheduled for October 15th, 2022.

Whistle Truck Storage / Rental

While the Whistle Truck has found temporary storage after losing its previous long-term storage, we are still in need of a more permanent storage solution. The truck has to be stored in a facility which is inside, not at an outdoor lot. If there is anyone who has or knows of a place to store the truck, please get in touch with President Mike Tilley at our office at 423-753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com. In the meantime, the Whistle Truck is available for lease; please email wataugavalley@gmail.com for a quote.

So,



is there a problem here?

Mechanical Department Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL



Looks like summer is knocking on our door and we can finally get some work done. The weather has been good to the Watauga Valley Mechanical Team and there have been a lot of good working days at the yard over the last several weeks. If you would like to help out at the Jonesborough Coach Yard on Tuesdays between 9 am to 5 pm or Saturdays 9 am to 12 noon, please call our office at 423-753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

ROLLING STOCK

“**Clinchfield 100**” office car (WATX 100): has received several upgrades including a new water system along with a new, higher capacity fuel tank.

“**Moultrie**” diner (WATX 400): receiving some electrical repairs in its kitchen.

“**St Augustine**” coach (WATX 500): new windows are being installed.

“**Powhatan Arrow**” coach (WATX 539): at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum receiving a paint job.

“**Crescent Harbor**” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): receiving upgrades.

Chuckey Depot / Museum

We have been getting up to 50 plus visitors a day at the Chuckey Depot/Museum. With the warm weather more people are being brought out to see our beautiful Depot/Museum. May was a record month. We had another record month in July by our involvement with “*Jonesborough Days*” on July 2nd and 3rd.

TRAINING SESSION IN THE PLANS FOR THE CHUCKEY DEPOT

The next host training session for the Chuckey Depot will be in September; get involved and volunteer at the depot/museum one day a month. Please email our office at 423-753-5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com to get your name on the training list. We are needing more hosts as the hours of the depot have been extended.

CHUCKEY DEPOT ARTIFACT UPDATE

The next artifact exhibit will focus on the Norfolk & Western Railway. We will be changing out the current artifact displays and are needing N&W artifacts for August. The museum will be closed from Sunday, August 21st until Thursday, September 1st for the changeover to the new exhibit. A big reception day celebrating the new display will be held on Saturday, September 10th. If you have any N&W-related artifacts you would like to loan to the museum for a six-month period, please email Rick Chinouth ASAP at chinouthome@yahoo.com. Our members have some great artifacts; please share them with the museum.

In the News ...

BLET Votes to Authorize National Strike

[*trains.com*, July 12, 2022] By a resounding margin, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen have authorized a strike — a move that could come as soon as Monday, July 18. [ED. NOTE: it didn't; see below.]

The union — which represents more than 57,000 U.S. rail employees — reports 99.5% of its members voted to authorize a strike if such an action becomes legal and “necessary to secure a contract worthy of their consideration,” BLET National President Dennis Pierce said in a statement issued Tuesday. It was the union’s first nationwide strike vote since 2011.

Railroads “used and continue to use their economic strength to steamroll their employees, their customers and the nation, all for the sake of their bottom line, and it is clear that they have no intentions of changing,” said Pierce, who also asserted that in the third year of the national contract negotiation process, “the rail carriers have never made a contract proposal to our union that their employees, our members, would accept.”

Unions and railroads are currently in a 30-day cooling-off period mandated under the Railway Labor Act that began after the two sides failed to reach an agreement in talks before the National Mediation Board, and unions turned down an offer of binding arbitration.

The cooling off period ends July 18, at which point the union could legally strike — unless, before that date, President Joe Biden names a Presidential Emergency Board to investigate the dispute and make recommendations for a settlement. That would block a work stoppage for another 60 days — 30 days while the board investigates and makes its report, and 30 days after the report issued. [ED. NOTE: that occurred on July 15th.]

The National Railway Labor Conference, the association which includes the railroads’ bargaining group, has said on its website that it expects such a board to be named, and business groups including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have asked Biden to intervene. “It is imperative that the administration act to prevent any disruption to America’s rail service,” Chamber CEO Suzanne Clark said in a letter to Biden earlier this month.

In his statement, BLET’s Pierce said carriers “hide behind the provisions of the Railway Labor Act to save them from having to treat their employees fairly. ... rest assured our Brotherhood is now prepared to take the next steps in the process, as we fight to reach a contract settlement that our members will accept.”

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NS Trains Strikes Industrial Switcher

[*trains.com*] The Norfolk Southern train that derailed [July 11th] in Columbia, SC struck an already derailed industrial switcher on a track adjacent to its main line, according to NS. (continued)

The newspaper “*The State*” reports it was told by NS spokesman Connor Spielmaker that the locomotive — a yellow end-cab switcher visible in some photos of the accident — had been operating on a parallel track but derailed and “encroached on the Norfolk Southern train’s right-of-way. ... We’re still investigating what the [NS] train hit, but it was not another Norfolk Southern train.”

Three locomotives and three articulated container well cars derailed following the collision about 8:20 a.m. Two crew members were injured; no update on their condition was available. The accident also led to a fuel spill that was contained by authorities.

Update on New River Valley Passenger Service

[trains.com] The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and Norfolk Southern have completed financing on the agreement which will expand passenger service to Roanoke, Va., and extend service southwest into the New River Valley.

The Western Rail Initiative Agreement sets the stage for the launch of a second daily Amtrak round trip between Roanoke and Washington, D.C., set to begin July 11th. It includes Virginia’s purchase of 28 miles of right-of-way including existing track between Christiansburg and crossovers in Salem, VA, an easement between those crossovers and the Roanoke station; track and signal improvements between Manassas and the New River Valley, and a new station planned for Bedford, VA, as well as in the Christiansburg area. The \$257 million deal was originally announced in 2021.

“The closing of the Western Rail Agreement is great news for Virginians as this is a big step forward in our mission to expand passenger rail to the New River Valley,” DJ Stadler, executive director of the passenger authority, said in a press release, adding that “the improvements will also increase our economic opportunities by enhancing freight rail service through the Commonwealth.”

Mike McClellan, Norfolk Southern senior vice president and chief strategy officer, said, “Together, we have reached an agreement that expands access for passengers and preserves an important link in the supply chain for businesses that rely on freight rail to ship base materials and finished products.”

N&W #611 Update

The Virginia Museum of Transportation is pleased to report that work on Norfolk & Western (N&W) 611 is progressing well. Per the Federal Railroad Administration regulations, we have completed the required five-year inspection. This work included removal of all jacket and insulation on the firebox, combustion chamber and cab, to allow access to the flexible staybolt caps.

Former N&W 611 has 2,537 flexible staybolt caps that all require removal, allowing access to the flexible staybolt to ensure that it is not broken. During this time, each staybolt sleeve, (where the staybolt is retained) is cleaned and inspected for any defective conditions. The inspection also included the threaded cap which is cleaned and resealed in the sleeve using a new copper gasket as a seal. This inspection cycle included machining all new caps from code material to allow for long term reliability during future inspections. The staybolt cap project was recently completed with final inspection being a successful test fire on June 14th, 2022, Flag Day. Scheduling for insulation and reassembly is currently being developed.

Photo Gallery

Below you'll find some photos taken of our recent "Dinner on the Diners" event. A fun, enjoyable and tasty treat for all!



Display in the Block
by Les Billings

This month I will concentrate on the CSX (Clinchfield). I think I have neglected it some as I have been displaying mostly NS work. The old Clinchfield line is what I grew up watching the most since it was only a stone's throw from my house. I would hear the coal trains from miles away and would take out running down the road, across a field to get a glimpse. This is only a memory since there are practically no coal trains, there are houses on the field, and I can't run any more. Traffic has also dwindled down to mostly freight. We can only hope that things will pick up.



(Left) My wife and I took a little trip to Unicoi on a November afternoon last year to catch a southbound Q693, a manifest train, as it rumbled through the little community. As you may know my wife sits in the car and reads a book while I am out railfanning. She's a bookworm. On this day Q693 was being led by CSX 3413, a GE ET44AC unit. Q693 originates in Russell, KY and terminates in Rice Yard in Waycross, GA, working Kingsport yard and several more.

(Right) After watching and photographing Q693 in Unicoi, I jumped in the car and raced south where I caught it as it was passing through Erwin behind the old Clinchfield office building. The trains seem to move very slow through here as I have seen this happening several times.



(Left) Standing on the bridge on Boone Rd, in the Boones Creek community, we see a rare coal train as it makes its way south down the main past C.P. NE Boone (MP Z111.1) probably heading to Duke Power. It is being led by CSX 7007 with a 2nd unit and a DPU mid-way back.





Traveling through the deepest cut on the Clinchfield route, we see CSX 3079 and 2 other units pulling a southbound manifest. I was standing looking north on the West Market Street Bridge in Johnson City with the fallen leaves blanketing the grade on both sides.

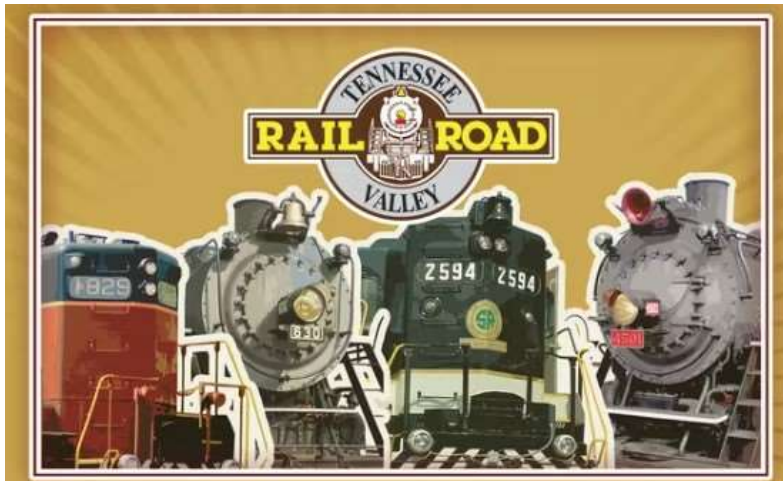


The area Local, "Yellow Dog" seen passing under West Walnut overpass with a few cars heading to the Johnson city yard, Erwin Yard and possible Spruce Pine.



On a little trip to Kingsport one Saturday morning I was able to catch a Southbound working the yard with CSX 262 and CSX 375 setting on the side. I'm sure this yard has picked up work since Erwin yard closed.

Details of WVRHS&M Member Trip to TVRM



The Watauga Valley Railroad Museum is sponsoring a Summer Motor Coach trip to Tennessee Valley Railroad in Chattanooga TN on Saturday, August 20, 2022. The cost is \$80 per person which includes the motor coach trip along with all tickets at Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum and a tour of Chattanooga. The trip will include a luxury motor coach ride from Lowe's Parking lot in Jonesborough to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga. On arrival at Chattanooga, we will board the Missionary Ridge Steam Excursion (either 4501 or 630) at Grand Junction Station; the steam excursion will take passengers over four bridges and through the pre-Civil War Missionary Ridge Tunnel. The trip is 60-65 minutes long and includes a turntable demonstration and tour of the TVRM restoration shop in East Chattanooga. Breakdown of the 6-miles round trip experience on the Missionary Ridge Local includes a tour guide providing local history throughout the experience.

You will also have a chance to visit the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum exhibit building which includes the many passenger cars on the grounds, exhibit on the 2nd floor of the depot, and access to the new exhibit building on Turntable Drive. The special exhibits will be located in TVRM's new exhibit building and include "TVRM's First 60 Years," a Railroad Post Office car display, and two exhibits by sponsor Scale Trains. This is the first use for this important addition to the TVRM Cromwell Road Campus.

After we leave Tennessee Valley Railroad, we will go and have lunch then a drive-by tour of the famous NS Debutts Hump Yard. Next a visit to Chattanooga Choo Choo, then depart back home.

Depart Jonesborough Lowe's	7:00 am
Arrive TVRM	11:00 am
Tour the railroad exhibit building	11:15 am to 12:10 pm
Depart on Steam Excursion	12:30 pm
Depart to eat	1:40 pm
Tour Chattanooga	2:40 pm
Depart to Jonesborough	3:00 pm
Arrive Lowe's in Jonesborough	8:00 pm

With gas prices the way they are today, this trip is a deal. Please click on the following video showing the train you will ride: <https://youtu.be/ecA64e850rc>.

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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL