

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society &
Museum

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

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www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Photographic proof that Santa is a railfan. [Mike Tilley photo]

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!!!

No December General Membership Meeting

Don't forget that there is no General Membership Meeting in December due to the Christmas holiday. Our next regular Membership Meeting will be held on Monday, January 23rd, 2023. See you in the new year!

Member Notes

We sadly note the passing of Lou Myrtle. Lou was a WVRHS&M member who volunteered at the depot. Fred Phofl is in our thoughts and prayers as he recovers from illness.

To request that one of our members or family be reported for various concerns in the *Whistle Stop*, email a request to wataugavalley@gmail.com.

2023 OFFICER AND BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

We welcome the following as 2023 Officers and Director:

Officers

President -----	Mike Tilley	Incumbent
Vice President -----	Howard Orfield	Incumbent
Secretary-----	Connie Hunt	
Treasurer-----	Jeanie Walker	Incumbent
Historian-----	Gary Price	Incumbent

Board of Directors

Les Billings

Rick Chinouth

Bob Mushet

2023 WVRHS&M DUES

The 2023 Dues Notices were mailed out last month. Please return your dues and check back to the Membership Chairman ASAP at Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. You can join the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum for \$20.00 individual and add each family members at \$5.00 for each member. For questions, email wataugavalley@gmail.com.



WATAUGA VALLEY CHRISTMAS GALA

Great food, fun and fellowship were had by all at the Watauga Valley Annual Christmas Dinner on Saturday, December 10th at the Food City Depot Banquet Room in Johnson City. There were approximately 70 plus attendees packing the house. President Mike Tilley conducted a short business meeting. Gary Price and Mike Tilley presented a program on one of our past Norfolk Southern Excursions in the 90's. If you missed this event, you missed a good time.

2023 WVRHS&M Rail Events

Our 2023 Spring Excursion on the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad has been scheduled for late April. Visit our web site, www.wataugavalleynrhs.org, for more information and to purchase tickets, which will go on sale on that site on January 15th at 6 pm. We will be signing up hosts for the trip at a later date.

Mechanical Department Report

by Jim Magill

GENERAL

If you would like to volunteer at the Spring Street Coach Yard on Tuesdays or Saturdays, please call 423-753-5797 or email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com. There are projects for everyone; hope to hear from you.



ROLLING STOCK

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400), “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), and “Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539): All three cars are at the NCTM in Spencer, NC serving on their annual “Polar Express Train”.

“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351): At the Coach Yard for upgrades.

“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100): Also at NCTM for the “Polar Express Train”. The 100 will receive extensive truck repair during the first quarter of 2023 at NCTM.

Chuckey Depot / Museum

CABOOSE/DEPOT SANTA EVENT



The December 17th Santa Caboose/Depot event was a big hit for the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum, Heritage Alliance, and the Town of Jonesborough. We had nearly 200 attendees come to see the depot and visit with Santa on our caboose. We want to thank all WVRHS&M members who helped with this event. A special shout out goes to Junior Risner, who was this year’s Santa Claus.

CHUCKEY DEPOT EVENTS

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot/Museum in Jonesborough has been very good during the holidays. Many Watauga Valley members have taken the host training session to work the depot. We plan on having another class in January and already have several signed up for

it. If you would like to volunteer a day a month at the depot, please email wataugavalley@embarqmail.com or phone 423-753-5797 to get signed up. Volunteering at the depot is a good way to start out 2023. Everyone who hosts enjoys volunteering at the depot.

Display in the Block
By Les Billings

The Christmas season is upon us once again. I hope Santa will be good to everyone this year. A new year will be with us in a few days with new railfanning activities and events.

*Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year*



On a bright sunny Saturday afternoon in August, I took a little trip to locate Frisco Yard in Virginia. But as I turned on Yuma Road in Weber City I stumbled on Yuma Yard which, to my surprise, I found some switching going on. The switching was being performed by a crew out of Bulls Gap. I was able to talk to the conductor a little and ask a few questions. He was very nice and friendly. I was able to walk around and

take a few photos I would like to share.

P.S. I never made it to Frisco Yard. Maybe another Saturday afternoon.



[Above] Signaling at C.P. Yuma (MP43.8TC), 2.5 Miles down the track will take you to Frisco Yard.

[Below] Conductor setting a Covered Hopper's brake preparing it for car kicking.



[Above] Locomotive's "4383" & NS "1205" are working today, switching cars in the yard back and forth from one track to the other. One of the tracks is an Eastman Track. There are 7 – 8 tracks for car holding. It wasn't a full yard today.



[Above] Pulling up to C.P Smith (MP42.0TC) allows the Conductor to realign and throw the switch to position the next car for dropping. This happened several times while I was photographing. I'm sure the conductor was glad when he finished. It was HOT.



Among the cars being switched, was this Southern SOU 92230 Covered Hopper. As you can see it is pretty weather beaten.



Here we have a Tank Car owned by the Eastman Chemical. I am sure there are many of these cars coming through this yard.



Two Covered hoppers, SOU & NW rolling into track #1.



Box Car MWCX500834 heading down into track #2. Owned by Midwest Railcar Corp.



There is an orange windsock hanging in the yard. I am still trying to figure this out. As you can see, there was no wind blowing.

In the News ...



Class I Railroads Split on Redeploying Conductors

[By Bill Stephens , *trains.com*, December 16, 2022] The big six Class I railroads are not of one mind regarding taking conductors out of the locomotive cab and redeploying them to pickup trucks.

Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern told the Federal Railroad Administration this week that they are negotiating with unions about testing the concept, which would involve having conductors assist trains in specific territories.

BNSF Railway tells *Trains News Wire* that it, too, is on board. “BNSF has been in negotiations with SMART-TD for some time now on a workable transition to ground-based conductors, and could initially include pilot locations,” railroad spokesman Zak Andersen says. “We remain optimistic that we can reach a progressive agreement that creates a better work-life balance for our employees through predictable schedules, enhances service to our customers, and sets BNSF up for future success.”

In 2014 BNSF became the first railroad to propose engineer-only operations on lines protected by positive train control. It reached a tentative agreement with the SMART-TD union covering BNSF routes in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest that would have created a ground-based master conductor position. But the rank and file rejected the deal. CSX Transportation is not considering using ground-based conductors and is not talking to rail labor about the concept, a spokeswoman says.

Representatives for Canadian National and Canadian Pacific did not respond to requests for comment regarding their interest in ground-based conductor positions.

But on CP’s earnings call in July, CEO Keith Creel seemed skeptical of one-person operation anytime soon, given how frequently trains encounter problems on the main line. Until pull-aparts and other mechanical issues become exceptionally rare, Creel says one-person operation doesn’t make much sense.

“When you put a train together there’s a lot of moving parts. And those moving parts historically have created some challenges. So if a train separates and it’s 10,000-foot long and you don’t have a man or a woman to assist the engineer, that can get complicated,” Creel told investors and analysts. “That’s something I’m very sensitive to.”

Once technology and components allow safe, efficient, and reliable service, railroads should be allowed to operate trains with one person in the cab, Creel said.

Any shift to engineer-only operations in the U.S. would require two things: Approval from the FRA and labor unions. Both are obstacles for the Class I’s considering a fundamental change to the way they operate.

The FRA is considering a rule that would mandate that railroads operate with two people in the locomotive cab. The regulation would allow railroads to apply for exceptions, but the Association of American Railroads say the hurdle is set impossibly high and would effectively bar taking the conductor out of the cab.

If the rule ultimately is adopted, it's likely that the railroad industry would mount a legal challenge.

Leaders of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and the SMART-TD union that represents conductors oppose taking conductors out of the cab. They argue that it's not safe despite the positive train control system that's designed to prevent collisions and overspeed accidents.

The railroads advocating for ground-based conductors say the move would improve safety and service. They also say that ground-based conductors would have better quality of life because they would work set shifts with scheduled days off and be able to return home every day. And that, they say, would make it easier to recruit and retain conductors.

Crossing Guard Work Party ...



The crew unloading the crossing guard, ready for erection.



Jim Sutterlin and John Filippone putting the finishing touches on the base support.



A hearty "Well Done!" to the installation crew, standing in front of their finished work. The crossing signal lights were donated by Rocky Hollyfield of Asheville. The pole and crossbucks were donated by Jack B. Gaut, Jr. in memory of his father who was a long-time engineer for the Southern Railway.



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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL