

# Whistle Stop



**Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society &  
Museum**

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

**(423) 753-5797**

***www.wataugavalleynrhs.org***



**Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage**

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Les Billings posted this haunting photo of NS 126 eastbound on our Facebook page. Les complains about the conditions not being conducive to a closeup but they certainly helped create this ghostly image.

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

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Our program this month features Millie Longcrier who was a conductor on the former Clinchfield Railway (now CSX). Millie was with us at the grand showing of the new exhibit a couple of weeks ago at the Chuckey Depot. You will love to hear all of the railroad stories that she has to share while working for the railroad. This is a program you do not want to miss. Bring a friend out and enjoy a great evening of railroading.

## Member Notes

Please remember Gary Price, Tony King, Fred Pfohl, and Don Findley in your thoughts and prayers for various health reasons.

If anyone knows of a member that needs a card, thoughts for various concerns, or 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](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or [railfan04041961@gmail.com](mailto:railfan04041961@gmail.com).



If you have a friend or know of someone interested in railroads, please hand them a New Membership Brochure. We have the brochure available at the general membership meetings.

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### WATAUGA VALLEY UNIFORMS NOW AVAILABLE

The Watauga Valley uniforms are available. Order your new uniforms now for these beautiful uniforms. If you want an order form sent to you, please email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) requesting one.

### PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2023

Howard Orfield and Brad McCroskey, WVRHS&M program directors, are looking for General Membership Meeting programs for 2023. Please call (423) 753-5797 or email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) if you have an interest in offering a program this year. We are looking for speakers interested in

## WVRHS&M Rail Events



Watauga Valley's Great Smoky Mountain Railroad trip on May 20<sup>th</sup> has sold out. We have a full complement of passengers on this trip. The next GSMR trip will be held on Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup> powered by steam!



### *Dinner on the Diner*



Plans for Dinner on the Diner have been finalized. Lunch will be served at 12:00 pm on Friday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and dinner will be served on Saturday, June 24<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm. All meals will be served in WVRH&M's vintage dining car, the *Moultrie*, followed by entertainment from an authentic railroad storyteller. Tickets are \$60.00/person for dinner and \$35.00/person for lunch, must be purchased in advance, and are available at the Jonesborough Visitors' Center, located at 117 Boone St.; by calling (423) 753-1010 between 9 am and 5 pm; or purchased online at [www.jonesboroughtn.org](http://www.jonesboroughtn.org). Refunds are not available. Diners may choose a table for two or four; however, due to a limited number of smaller tables, parties with fewer than four may be seated with other diners. As there is limited parking at the rail yard where the dining car is parked, all patrons will park cars at the Jonesborough Senior Center, 307 E. Main St., and be shuttled a short distance to and from the dining car at no charge.

## *Mechanical Department Report*

### *by Art Devoe*

#### GENERAL

All work sessions at the Spring St. Coach Yard, 210 Spring St., Jonesborough, are planned each Tuesday every month; please show up at 9:00 am if you can help.

#### ROLLING STOCK

**“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400)** and **“St Augustine” coach (WATX 500)**: are back in Jonesborough (arriving in the dead of night!), receiving upgrades.

**“Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539)**: is in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum.

**“Crescent Harbor” sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351)**: is at the Jonesborough Spring Street Coach Yard In airbnb service. To view its listing, go to [www.airbnb.com](http://www.airbnb.com) and search on “Crescent Harbor Train Car”



**“Clinchfield 100” office car (WATX 100)**: is at the North Carolina Transportation Museum receiving new K type bearings and new wheel sets on the car. The trucks will have some major upgrades as well. More information will be available in the next newsletter.

## *Chuckey Depot / Museum*

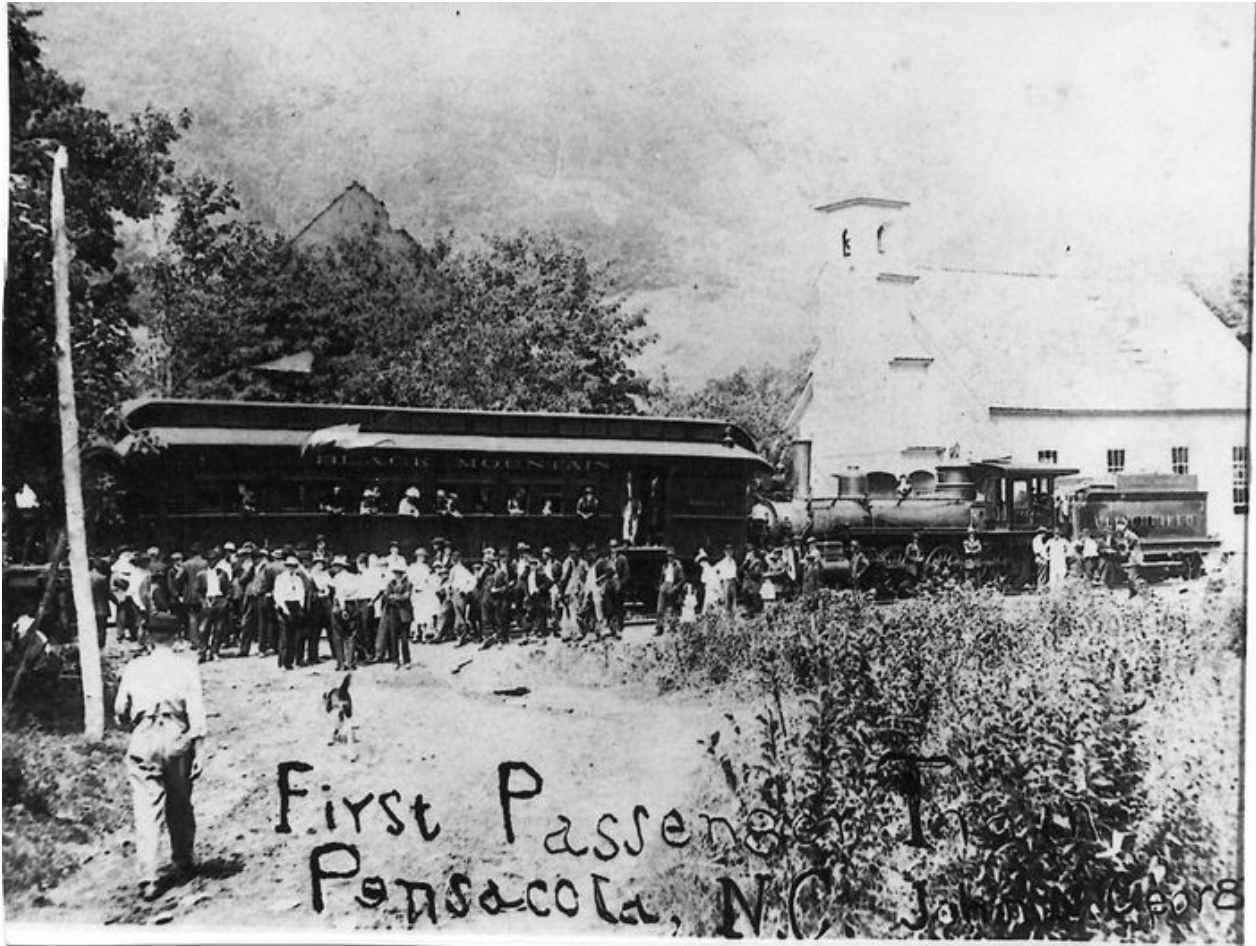
Attendance at the Chuckey Depot is starting to climb each week as the weather is getting better. If you would like to be trained as a host, please email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com). All of our hosts enjoy volunteering at the depot.

View the Depot's Virtual Railfan Cam by visiting either [www.wataugavalleynrhs.org](http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org) or <https://www.youtube.com/> and searching for “Jonesborough Rail Cam”. Also, we now have three live NS radios operating at [www.wataugavalleynrhs.org](http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org) and the one on Holston Mountain in Carter County at [www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/354350](http://www.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/354350). You can hear and see all the action on the NS A Line and on the former Clinchfield (CSX).

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**TRAIN TRIVIA:** By 1916, the US had a quarter million miles of railways. According to the FRA, what was the approximate mileage of the US freight network (discounting commuter lines) existing in 2020? a.) 120,000 miles b.) 140,000 miles c.) 160,000 miles d.) 180,000 miles.

## *From the Photo Archives: CRR No. 1*



The 1915 postcard photo above commemorates the inaugural run of the Black Mountain Railroad's passenger train into Pensacola, NC. Close inspection of the locomotive and "CLINCHFIELD" painted on the tender indicates that the engine was none other than the venerable CRR "One Spot". But what is it doing on a "foreign" line?

The Black Mountain Railroad began construction in 1910 to primarily serve a lumber mill in Yancey County, NC with a connection to the Clinchfield at Kona (formerly Black Mountain Junction), first serving the mill in 1911, then the towns of Burnsville in January, 1913 and Pensacola, NC in March of that year (as a mixed train). The Clinchfield assumed control of the line in 1915.

Built in 1882, the locomotive was purchased second-hand by the (Clinchfield predecessor) Ohio River & Charleston Railway in 1890 where it was numbered 5. Seven years later, #5 was sold to the Black Mountain Railway in Burnsville, NC, where it was renumbered #1 and the tender subsequently re-lettered "BLACK MOUNTAIN".

With the forests depleted, the line to Pensacola was abandoned in 1927. The section towards Burnsville survived into the 1980s, in the end as the Yancey Railroad. Today, little evidence if any of the line remains. (Even the bridge over the North Toe River is gone.) The No. 1 experienced a better fate, enjoying restoration and excursion service on the CRR in the 1970s and now resting peacefully on static display at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore, MD. [Sources: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill photo collection; Yancey History Association; [https://locomotive.fandom.com/wiki/Clinchfield\\_No.\\_1](https://locomotive.fandom.com/wiki/Clinchfield_No._1) ]

## *In the News ...*

### *Tours of Norfolk & Western 611 Offered*

[TRAINS News Wire] The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, in partnership with the Virginia Museum of Transportation, is offering specially designed tours of Norfolk & Western Class J 4-8-4 No. 611. The engine is currently stored at the Museum until it returns to its home base in Roanoke next month.

Now through May 14<sup>th</sup>, the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania is offering 90-minute tours that discuss the history of No. 611, including how and why it was saved, an in-depth look at its restoration to operating condition, the impact it has on the railroading community and how it has become an ambassador of steam in partnership with various railroad museums and tourist railroads.

Also included is a tour of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania restoration shop. The 611 tour is offered Wednesday through Saturday at 11:30 am and Sunday at 1:00 pm. It is limited to 12 persons ages 12 and over. The cost per person per tour is \$25.00, in addition to regular Museum admission.

Visitors may call (717) 687-8628, extension 3003, to book tickets or purchase them when they arrive at the admissions desk. Tour goers are advised to wear safe shoes and otherwise dress accordingly for the outdoor yard and restoration shop.

No. 611 was constructed by the Norfolk & Western at its Roanoke Shops in 1950, one of 14 Class J 4-8-4s built for passenger service. It is the sole surviving Class J. The locomotive is on exhibit at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania until May 14<sup>th</sup> in collaboration with its owner, the Virginia Museum of Transportation.

### *Steamtown Announces 2023 Excursion Schedule*

[TRAINS News Wire] Steamtown National Historic Site ( <https://www.nps.gov/stea/index.htm> ) has announced its schedule of train rides for 2023, with trips ranging from 30-minute trips exploring the park's rail yard to full-day excursions through the Poconos.

The seasonal rides resume May 11<sup>th</sup>, with tickets on sale online as of April 1<sup>st</sup> for excursions in May through August. Excursions in September and October will be released 90 days in advance of the trip date. Tickets for the short rides, the *Scranton Limited* or *Caboose Experience*, are only available on-site the day of the visit.

The *Scranton Limited* or *Caboose Experience* rides begin May 11<sup>th</sup> and will operate Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, as staffing permits, with departures at 10:30 am, 11:30 am, 1:15 pm, and 2:30 pm. Tickets are \$6, or \$1 for kids ages 5 and under. Seating is first-come, first-served. The *Caboose Experience* is offered in place of the *Scranton Limited* on the days of longer excursions, as staffing permits.

Steamtown, located in downtown Scranton, PA, is open from 10 am to 4 pm daily, and will be open from 9 am to 5 pm daily beginning April 24<sup>th</sup>.

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**TRIVIA answer:** b.) 140,000 miles. [source: [railroads.dot.gov](http://railroads.dot.gov)] According to [statista.com](http://statista.com), the state of Texas led the nation in mileage with 10,400 miles of track.

## *Display in the Block*

### *By Les Billings*

#### **Happy Spring!!**

Hope everyone is having a nice spring. We all are looking forward to good weather to go railfanning and photograph some trains. But as May unfolds, I will step back a few months to January. January 21<sup>st</sup> that is. I started out, taking a drive to Jonesborough and ended up in Bluff City. I made half of the day out of it and had the afternoon to look over the photos I had taken. Below are a few I photos I will share.

[Right] As stated above I started out in Jonesborough as I had heard on the scanner that NS 126 had stopped because of a loss of air pressure. He had stopped near MP 31.8 which is at the Spring St/Mill Springs Rd crossing. When I arrived, I found the frost had covered the trees and the ground. The temperature was around 29 degrees. The conductor was walking back to the lead unit after being let out by an NS official. He did not have to walk back from the bad car. I am sure he was thankful since it was cold. Soon 126 was ready to go.



I was shivering as I waited for him to pass for more shots. As the end of the train came, with its Autoracks it was capped by a pusher unit #4540.

[ Right] Then I jumped in my car and chased it to Johnson City, where I parked up off McKinley Rd. to get a bird's eye view as it passed beside the old Burlington Industries plant. He was heading downhill towards the downtown area. This is a good area to see the train stretched out and get a sense of its length.



[Left] Moving on to the Watauga area, I caught NS 278 just before it crossed the Watauga River on its uphill climb to Piney Flats. He would wait in Piney, while two westbound's passed. I would catch up with him again later.



[Left/Right] Just before noon I moved on to the Bluff City area. I noticed that a couple of trains were preparing to leave Bristol. So, I found a place to park off Pleasant Grove Road to do some waiting. So, I called my wife to let her know where I was located and that I had a few more trains to



see. I had not set out to go all that way to Bluff City. Soon, I could hear a distant horn as NS 13Z was approaching heading west. As he rounded the curve, I got a shot of him heading straight in my direction. He was blowing hard for the crossing just a few hundred yards ahead.

[Right] As the noon hour arrives, I moved a little east to grab this photo. It is an open area off Pleasant Grove Road. I found a pull off place that had a lot of No Trespassing signs and made sure I did not go beyond them. No sooner then I got there than I saw a car pull out of the farmhouse and headed in my direction. It did turn out to be the landowner but when he found out what I was doing, he told me to move and go anywhere I needed to get a good shot. This is NS 201 rounding the bend, westbound, with its double Stacks and Mixed freight.



[Left] Moving on to my last train of the day, I moved on to the bridge crossing the South Fork Holston River, in Bluff City. These bridge/river shots are some of my favorites. As you can see NS 278 has left its siding in Piney Flats and is traveling through Bluff City. As you recall, I first caught this train outside of Johnson City. I am sure he was eager to get to Bristol after waiting on 13Z & 201 to pass.

After a good morning of Railfanning, I headed back home to look over my photos with hopes of having a few good shots. **See you around the Museum.** 🚂

# *Whistle Stop*

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P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432  
[whistlestop.editor@gmail.com](mailto:whistlestop.editor@gmail.com)

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**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**



# Historic Spencer Shops Train Show

**May 20 & 21**

The Historic Spencer Shops Train Show features vendors with railroad memorabilia of all types: model train dealers, model train layouts, collectors, and more. The show takes place at the former Southern Railway Spencer Shops steam repair facility, a historic railroad location perfect for a railroading event!

Take a train ride around our 60-acre historic site, ride on restored railroad maintenance motor cars, and enjoy more fun for all ages.

## **Historic Spencer Shops Train Show Features:**

Model train and railroad collectible vendors  
Model train layouts – multiple scales  
Railroad motor car rides provided by Red Springs & Northern  
Museum passenger train rides  
Museum exhibits and programs  
Special photo opportunities

### **Saturday, May 20**

Museum Open with Train Show 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Train rides at 10 & 11 a.m. and 1, 2 & 3 p.m.

### **Sunday, May 21**

Museum Open 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Train Show open 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Train rides at 1, 2 & 3 p.m.

### **Admission Pricing**

Adults: \$8  
Seniors/Military: \$7  
Children (3-12): \$6  
Free for Members & Children under 3  
**\*These prices do not include taxes or fees.**

### **Train Ride & Admission Pricing**

Adults: \$16  
Seniors/Military: \$14  
Children (3-12): \$12  
Free for Members & Children under 3  
**\*These prices do not include taxes or fees.**