

Whistle Stop

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

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

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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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CSXT recently unveiled the 20th locomotive in its *Heritage Series* honoring the CLINCHFIELD RAILROAD, a GE ES44H numbered 1902 which recognizes the roots of the CRR. An exciting treat for area railfans and historians will be the engine's visit to Erwin on November 21st prior to its powering this year's "Santa Train".

November 25th General Membership Meeting

The next WVRHS&M meeting will be held Monday, November 25th, 2024 at 6:30pm at the Chuckey Depot Museum, 110 South 2nd St, Jonesborough, TN. Our program this month will be on the CSXT "Santa Train". We will also be discussing our 2025 train excursions. Bring a friend out and enjoy a great evening of railfanning.

Member Notes

Welcome Aboard! Please welcome our newest member: Nancy Acker – Johnson City, TN. See you around the Depot!

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 or wataugavalley.membership.com.

Note to Members: If anyone’s Address, Phone number or email address has changed please contact Les Billings at wataugavalley.membership.com for correction. This will make it better so no one misses mailings, phone calls or emails. Thank You

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

If you know of someone interested in railroads, hand them a New Membership Brochure; brochures are available at the General Membership meetings.

2025 OFFICER AND BOARD NOMINATIONS

At the October General Membership Meeting, Nominating Committee Chairman Les Billings asked for nominations from the floor. As there were no nominations forthcoming, it was voted to close the nominations. The following are now presented as candidates for office:

Officers

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

* **Please Note:** As of 2025, the Historian will not be an Officer position. It will be an President appointed position.

Board of Directors (vote for 3)

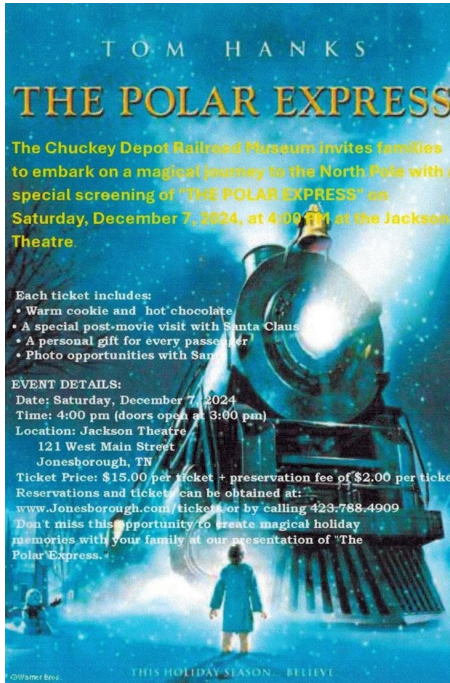
Art Devoe – Incumbent, Ralph Clarke – Incumbent, and Bob Hand – Incumbent

Ballots were mailed out recently and must be returned by 12:01 pm, December 14th, 2024. A ballot box will be available at the November meeting, or you can mail to Nominating Committee, Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432.

2025 WVRHS&M DUES

The 2025 Dues Notices were recently mailed out. 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 member at \$5.00 for each member. For questions, email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

Mechanical Report



ST. AUGUSTINE COACH (WATX 500), MOULTRIE DINING CAR (WATX 400), POWHATAN ARROW COACH (WATX 539), CLINCHFIELD 100: all cars in service at the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer for their Polar Express Excursion trains.

CRESCENT HARBOR LOUNGE/SLEEPER (WATX 2351): at the Spring St Coach Yard receiving upgrades.

Chuckey Depot / Museum

Since the Museum was opened on October 2, 2017, we have had several thousand visitors and hundreds of volunteer hours. We want to thank all the WVRHS&M volunteers who are trained to host at the museum. If you would like to be trained to host at the museum, please call (423) 753-5797 and leave a message. We are planning more training sessions in 2025. Everyone enjoys a good time at the museum; please consider volunteering one day a month for four hours. To volunteer, please call our office at (423) 753 5797 or email wataugavalley@gmail.com.

WVRHS&M VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT THE SANTA TRAIN EXHIBIT

The WVRHS&M Santa Train Exhibit will be held on December 21st at the Chuckey Depot from 3pm to 6pm. The Museum and the Town of Jonesborough will sponsor the exhibit. Everyone is welcome to come out and bring their children to our restored Southern caboos X450 and meet Santa Claus. We will need volunteers to help support the event by staging visitors around the caboos. Please volunteer by signing up at the November 28 General membership meeting, emailing wataugavalley@gmail.com or calling (423) 753-5797. This event offers great publicity for us as we are expecting a lot of people to visit our beautiful red caboos and depot.



In the News



CSXT SANTA TRAIN ON SCHEDULE for 11/23



[WCYB-TV] It's official: The CSX Santa Train will make its 82nd run on Saturday, November 23.

Following its traditional path taken through Appalachia since 1943, the train will embark on a 110-mile journey from Shelbiana, KY, to Kingsport, TN, spreading an abundance of holiday cheer while delivering more than 15 tons of toys, gifts, and winter accessories to thousands of families, CSX announced today.

"The CSX Santa Train is a cherished longstanding tradition and a significant part of CSX's history," CSX CEO Joe Hinrichs said in a statement today. "Strengthening the communities in which we serve is central to ONE CSX, and we are grateful for another year of giving back and delivering the magic of the CSX Santa Train."

"We are inspired by the powerful and heartwarming stories of families who have gathered for this special event for generations as well as the immense support it receives from well-wishers across the country," said Bryan Tucker, vice president of stakeholder engagement and sustainability at CSX. "We look forward to celebrating the CSX Santa Train tradition for many years to come."

For more updates, route inquiries and additional information regarding this year's event, follow the CSX Santa Train on **Facebook** and **Instagram**.



CSXT Holiday Train at Erwin on 11/21



Not only will CSX Transportation continue its tradition with the 82nd running of the Clinchfield Santa Train on Saturday, Nov. 23, the railroad is also operating a separate, one-time-only Christmas-light-decorated holiday train that will visit Erwin, TN, on Thursday, Nov. 21 — two days before the Santa Train.

In social media posts today (Thursday, Nov. 7) on sites including **Facebook** and **x.com**, CSX announced it will stage a train adorned with holiday lights and pulled by the railroad's recently released GE ES44AC Clinchfield Railroad heritage locomotive No. 1902 in the Erwin Yard. The event will feature a music performance by Drew Holcomb.

"The devastation across the region has been heartbreaking, and all of us at CSX want to try to bring some joy to our neighbors in Erwin, Unicoi County, and the surrounding region," CSX CEO Joe Hinrichs said in a press release. "Our team has been busy providing water and other relief since Hurricane Helene and we will continue to support the community in the months ahead"

CSXT Recovery from Helene

[The following copied from a Facebook post by member Thomas Pittman]

A few updates on the rebuild. Yesterday was the first opportunity that I had to get out north of Penland. I would've liked to get the drone out in a few places but we didn't have the time.

Spruce Pine- Another bungalow on a stand and radio tower has been installed alongside the new intermediate (super side note, the number plates on the intermediate have been installed on the wrong side). Tanner speculated that the new tower was a PTC tower. You folks that know hardware better than I do can judge for yourselves, but I have been speculating PTC will probably be installed during the rebuild. Also, the ballast has been conditioned on the mainline through town and the track is looking really good. The rock train was loading at Explosive Supply but it looked to me like they were winding up loading rock there as there wasn't anywhere near the material stockpiled as in times past. The rock train was utilizing both side dumps for rip rap and ballast hoppers.

Penland- There is still a flurry of activity and a big pile of rip rap here. This appears to be the base of operations now from the southern front. Lots of trucks and equipment are getting on and off the track here. I've had a handful of reports that the rock trains are nearing Boonford/MP 177.

Toecane/Loafers Glory- B&P has just launched a big campaign here. Probably 4 or 5 trackhoes were at work and trucks were bringing in material to begin stockpiling. The Cane Creek Bridge is passible now (and will be an incredible photo spot once trains get rolling again) but there's still a whole lot of eroded roadbed north and south of there. I haven't seen a pic of it yet but the riverbank is completely washed away and the track is in the river on the outside of the curve in the small gorge just north of Cane Creek below Hwy 226.

Forbes/Green Mountain- Corman Crews were busy between Brush Creek and the Forbes Crossing. Rip Rap was being stockpiled at Forbes and a few machines were filling in around the old overpass directly beside it (yes, there's an old overpass in there!). A lot of clearing out on the old CCC RoW at Brush Creek Tunnel has made it super visible. If someone gets by there with a drone next little bit, they need to snag a photo of it. They had a rock hammer parked there and crews were working to repair the roadbed. I've been hearing that the tunnel may not be daylighted now and there wasn't any evidence to suggest that Corman was doing anything more than clearing an access road or mining rock for fill. Hopefully I'll get to check back in here later and be able to tell for sure.

Contractors Injured during CSX Restoration Work

[WJHL-TV] Two contractors working for CSX were injured and evacuated by a medical helicopter on [Nov. 13] in Unicoi County. On Nov. 14, CSX provided new details regarding the incident. According to CSX, the two contractors were "working on the restoration efforts in the Blue Ridge Subdivision" when they were injured around 1:36 p.m. CSX said in a statement that the contractors were cutting rail north of the Chestoa Pike crossing in Erwin. Both workers sustained non-life-threatening injuries, according to CSX. They were medically evacuated as a precaution, CSX stated.

"CSX appreciates the quick response of the local first responders," the statement reads. "The cause of the incident is currently under investigation." The Blue Ridge Subdivision refers to a portion of the CSX railway stretching from Unicoi County into North Carolina. The subdivision sustained heavy damage from Hurricane Helene.

Disaster and Strike Financial Impact on CSX

[**SUPPLYCHAINDIVE**, November 7] Hurricane Helene pummeled the Southeast, particularly North Carolina, in late September, killing more than 100 people while damaging major highways and railroads.

Although CSX was still evaluating the scale and timing of the capital expenditures needed to fund its post-storm rebuilding efforts at the time of the Q3 earnings call, Pelkey said related costs will likely exceed \$200 million, with construction stretching into next year. He also added that the company is still aiming for \$2.5 billion in capital expenditures overall this year.

“Obviously, we have some significant capital cost to rebuild the network, but that’s people working together with a spirit and a motivation,” Hinrichs said.

Helene was not the only major storm to hit the Southeast this fall, but CSX executives did not mention any impact from Hurricane Milton on the earnings call. However, the railroad did note a modest impact from the three-day International Longshoremens Association strike in early October.

“But those were some lost days that we would expect to recover through the rest of the quarter but it did impact us on a near-term basis,” EVP and Chief Commercial Officer Kevin Boone said.

Prior to the strike, CSX saw cargo shift toward the West Coast, lifting its transcontinental interchange businesses to the East, Boone added.

The railroad has also played a role in mitigating other supply chain disruptions this year, including deploying additional train capacity to combat freight congestion after the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in late March.



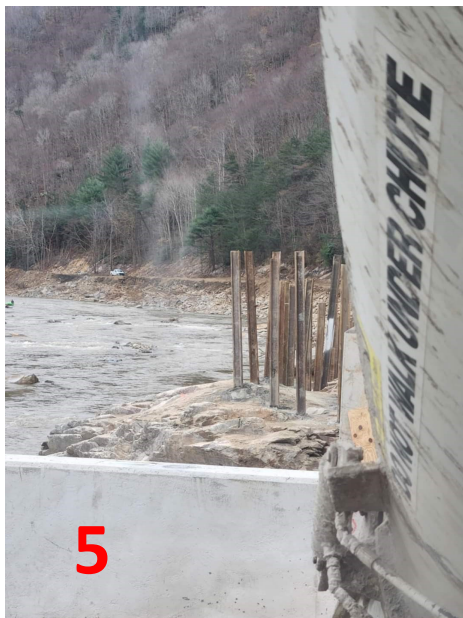
CSX Hurricane Recovery



Photos 1 and 2 depict the monumental recovery effort facing work crews. What's amazing in #1 is how far off of the ROW the track was moved by the river.



Photos 3-4 (Poplar, NC) and 5 (State Line) show bridge work underway.



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