

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432
(423) 753-5797
www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 33 No. 6

June 2013



Like a faded beauty queen who has lost her lustre, ex-CLINCHFIELD Business Car 100 sits forlornly at the L&C RAILROAD yard in Lancaster, SC. But a happier fate awaits this once beautiful piece of rolling stock. With its purchase by WVRHS&M, our Mechanical Crew will once again perform their "magic" in restoring the car to its former grandeur. Follow its transformation in future issues of the Whistle Stop.

June 24th General Membership Meeting

This month's General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held at 6:30 pm on June 24, 2013 at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will be a special guest speaker, Mr. Don Purdie, the son of Bill Purdie Jr., Master Mechanic of Steam for the SOUTHERN / NORFOLK SOUTHERN Steam Program (bio on page 4),.

Don will be bringing a slide show and sharing some of his fondest memories of his father. THIS IS ONE MEETING YOU DO NOT WANT TO MISS! It promises to be one of our best steam-related programs ever.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewell

Our sympathy is extended to Art DeVoe in the death of his wife, Jane, on June 6, 2013, in Johnson City. Please keep members Jim Calhoun and Bob Yaple in your thoughts as they deal with health concerns.

As always, let us know of any member, family or friend to whom a card might be sent or a phone call made. The office phone number is 423-753-5797 or call Nancy Jewell at 423-282-0918. Thank you for your help.

Funeral Service for Jane Devoe will be held 9:30 am Sunday, July 14, at the Cross of Grace Lutheran Church located at the Jonesborough Senior Center, Persimmon Ridge Road, Jonesborough, TN.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

By Bob Yaple

GENERAL

A much needed replacement of the treads on the steps to the C&O caboose has been completed. Yard capacity expansion is still in the discussion stage and the only solution so far is extending the railroad gate about 20'. This has not been explored.

ROLLING STOCK

CLINCHFIELD Business Car. WVRHS&M's newest piece of equipment is being prepared to move from Lancaster, SC in the coming weeks. The CLINCHFIELD will be a special piece of equipment for the WVRHS&M. [Ed. Note: More information about our new office car will be in future Whistle Stops. In the meantime, to view a photograph of the car in its "glory" days, navigate to: <http://www.rrpicturearchives.net/showPicture.aspx?id=1427196>.]

MOULTRIE Diner. Interior work and wiring diagrams continue.

ST. AUGUSTINE Coach. The seats have been removed and the bottom foam cushions are disintegrated. They will be replaced and the seats recovered. Upon removing the floor carpet, we found the original Pullman floor complete with the decorative design in the aisle. We now have engineering drawings and pictures in case the design gets replaced. A window that must have been leaking for years has ruined the window sill, two sidewall panels and a large section of the concrete floor. All carpeting above the floor will be replaced. We have procured modern ballasts for the aisle lighting and the whole light wiring system will be replaced. Maybe the lights will stay on. A section of the floor under the B-end door has been repaired.

POWHATTAN ARROW Coach. This car is now in the Jonesborough yard. The holding tank has been drained, flushed and sweetened. No car evaluation has been done since it has been back home.

CRESCENT HARBOR Sleeper / Lounge. Work continues on the GenSet and wiring for the auto-start and source interlock systems has been started.

In the News



200+ old Official Railway Guides are now available on Google Books. You can find them at <http://www.naotc.org/oldguides/index.html>, complements of timetabletrust.com and the National Association of Timetable Collectors.



First Section of EAST BROAD TOP RAILROAD sold. The East Broad Top Preservation Association has purchased its first section of the fabled EAST BROAD TOP RAILROAD, according to Association President Larry Salone. The first segment includes the standard gauge trackage from the NORFOLK SOUTHERN main line to Route 522 in Mount Union, PA, including the yard in Mount Union. Salone says the next phase of the acquisition will include the railroad from Route 522 to the Aughwick Creek Bridge, and he hopes this will be completed in the next 30 days. "This is the first step in hopefully the Association's purchase of the entire railroad. If we can complete the remainder of the purchase as expected, we would hope to resume tourist operations in 2014 on a full schedule," Salone says. Workers have begun brush removal and track repairs in Mount Union with the hope of starting freight service to support the tourist operation. Salone acknowledges the seller of the EBT, the Kovalchick family of Indiana, PA, noting that the family has supported the operation of the EBT since it was reopened as a tourist line in 1960. Joseph Kovalchick and his family, Salone says, "have kept this railroad intact so a future is possible for many more generations to enjoy. Their preservation work has been ongoing since 1960, and we are proud to be able to hopefully carry this railroad's heritage into the future for a long, long time." [Trainsnewswire.com, June 4 via "The Susquehannock", Central PA NRHS]



Deputy tracks down men cutting and stealing railroad tracks. [Salisbury, NC] It was a sight that disturbed an engineer on board a NORFOLK SOUTHERN freight train as he noticed three men who appeared to actually be cutting up railroad tracks, something that could have caused him to derail the train. A deputy who was in the area went to investigate, pulling into a nearby parking lot and walking to a wooded area by the railroad tracks.

The deputy reported finding three men using tools and a generator, cutting up rails on a track that were beside the main line. In the report the deputy notes finding one man operating a skid-steer loader with the forks of the machine under the railroad tracks. The deputy found 258 feet of rail that had been cut with a value of more than \$20,000.

One of the men told the deputy that the property owner had given him permission to take the rail. He said the property owner was selling the property to "some Italians," and wanted it cleaned up. The rails that were being cut were not part of the main line, but part of an old railroad siding that went to a now abandoned plant.

Deputies seized the equipment, including the skid-steer loader, and a Ram truck and trailer. Police from NORFOLK SOUTHERN charged the men with trespassing, felony larceny, and interfering or tampering with the operation of the railroad. Each man was jailed under \$10,000 bond. ["The Piedmont Flyer", Piedmont Carolinas NRHS]



Historic Spencer Shops Model Train Show. NCTM has scheduled the annual show on August 24 and 25 of this year. NCTM hosts this show for model trains, railroading collectibles and much more. For more information, go to NCTM's event site at <http://nctrans.org/Home.aspx>.

Railfans: For Your Viewing Pleasure



Kati Phelps found this 33 second video of our Whistle Machine and truck:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68CqSODJu7I>

Upcoming appearances of the Whistle Machine will include:

July 4: Kingsport TN, Independence Day Parade.

July 27: Cradle of Forestry (near Brevard, NC on US 276).

October 5: Greenville SC, the Textile Convention.



Lots of locomotives and cars in this 1940's RR safety film produced by the GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqpayZ2JqIU>



GRAHAM COUNTY RAILROAD circa 1960s. Home video is slightly blurred but still worth the view - about 5 minutes. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhIghVP8bZQ>

Bill Purdie, Jr.



Bill Purdie Jr. hired on with the SOUTHERN RAILWAY in 1936 and was promoted to Shop foreman at SOUTHERN's Pegram Shops in 1952. He was very knowledgeable of steam locomotives and an avid railfan. He was also a member of the Atlanta Chapter NRHS and oversaw the operations of their steam locomotive, the SAVANNAH AND ATLANTA #750. After a chance meeting with W. Graham Claytor Jr. during a #750 excursion, Bill made such an impression on SOUTHERN management that in 1968 he was invited to SOUTHERN Headquarters in Washington D.C. There he was offered the prestige title of Master Mechanic of Steam over all of the SOUTHERN Steam

Program. His first chore of duty was to evaluate and restore two very familiar locomotives to the WVRHS&M, EAST TENNESSEE AND WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA's two steam locomotives #207, and #208. They were to be returned to steam as their former heritage of SOUTHERN #630 and SOUTHERN #722. Bill even had the task to decide which locomotive would be painted green, and which would be black. #630 was in best shape, and since the SOUTHERN #4501 was already green, the #630 emerged in the traditional SOUTHERN black freight paint scheme. The #722 followed later in SOUTHERN's passenger green color scheme.

Bill lovingly took care of the #750 and the #4501. He took part in the resurrection of the #630; #722; briefly babysit-ted the SOUTHERN PACIFIC #4449 on the Freedom Train while on SOUTHERN rails; and after the popularity of the steam program accelerated, and larger locomotives were leased, he oversaw the mechanical operation of TEXAS AND PACIFIC #610, as well as CANADIAN PACIFIC #2839. With the NORFOLK AND WESTERN and SOUTHERN merger came responsibilities for the rebirth of NORFOLK AND WESTERN #611. Bill retired from a long and successful career with SOUTHERN / NS in 1982 and passed away July 22, 2012.

VOLUNTEERS NEED AT COACH YARD! With all the activities at the coach yard, we need you on a Tuesday or Saturday to volunteer to help; we have a project for everyone. Come on down to Jonesborough one of the two days or call the office at 423-753-5797 and let us know your interest.

Fall WVRHS&M Rail Excursions

Once again, the North Carolina Transportation Museum and Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum are teaming up to offer two wonderful railroad excursions in the Fall.

Spencer and Greensboro, NC to Charlottesville, VA Saturday, October 12th, 2013

Departing Spencer at 7 a.m., Saturday's "Virginia Autumn Special" will offer a second passenger pick-up at the Greensboro Amtrak Station at 8 a.m., allowing those living in the Triad a more convenient boarding opportunity. Passing through the North Carolina cities of Thomasville, High Point and Reidsville, and the Virginia cities of Danville, Lynchburg and Oak Ridge, passengers will experience beautiful views of the Piedmont and rolling hills of the Carolinas and the western part of Central Virginia.



In Charlottesville, travelers will have nearly three hours to explore the historic downtown area. A short walk takes you to the downtown outdoor mall, considered one of the finest urban parks in the country. Unique shopping and dining opportunities can be found in boutiques, specialty wine, coffee and tea shops and outdoor dining spots. Travelers may also enjoy relaxing walks under a lush, leafy tree canopy. Departing Charlottesville at 3 p.m., the train will arrive back in Greensboro at 6:45 p.m. and Spencer at 8 p.m.

Spencer, NC to Asheville, NC Saturday, October 13th, 2013



The "Blue Ridge Special" will travel through the western Piedmont into the foothills and on to the Blue Ridge Mountains. Departing Spencer at 7 a.m., the train will roll through the cities of Statesville, Hickory, Morganton, Marion, Black Mountain and Swannanoa. The train will climb the famed "loops" of the Blue Ridge Mountains and pass through several tunnels before arriving in Asheville at noon. Passengers will have nearly three hours for an outing at Biltmore Village. (There will not be enough time to visit the Estate itself.)

Established in the late 1890s as a planned community near the entrance of the Biltmore estate, Biltmore Village offers shopping in unique, locally-owned boutiques. Passengers can dine in restaurants and take walks along brick sidewalks that parallel tree lined streets. All of this will be enjoyed alongside spectacular views of the North Carolina mountains. Departing Asheville at 3 p.m., the "Blue Ridge Special" will return to Spencer at 8 p.m.

Ticket Prices and Ordering Information

TOURIST CLASS: \$150.00
DELUXE COACH: \$190.00

FIRST CLASS: \$265.00
DOME CLASS: \$295.00

To order tickets, go to NCTM's event site at <http://nctrans.org/Home.aspx> or call (704) 636-2889.

MEMORIES OF BEING FORCED UP-THE-ROAD FIFTY YEARS AGO – Part 3

by Abram Burnett © March 23, 2013

Our Accommodations

"Accommodations" for a Dog Towner who landed in Glade were spartan. The Comp'ny furnished an old wooden box car with a door and several windows cut into it, placed a quarter mile west of the depot and on the north side of the main line. [ED. Note: see April 2013 Whistle Stop for map.] It was painted M-of-W green and white. It sat on a track that was "depressed" in a ditch about three feet below grade; a large wooden gang-plank had been laid up to the door. The door was locked with a brass switch lock. The engine storage track was adjacent to our "Hotel Glade Spring". These tracks were immediately west of the switch where the east leg of the wye entered the passing siding.

There were six army surplus metal-frame bunks in an over/under configuration in this "facility," and the "mattresses" were horsehair seat cushions from cabooses. One brought his own blanket. No one brought sheets or pillows.... You folded the blanket in half lengthwise and put one half under your body and the other half on top. One fellow brought a sleeping bag. There were also six wooden lockers built into the bunk area where one could stow his gear. If you were sent "up-the-road" to Glade, this was your accommodation. Sometimes an extra list operator was shipped from Roanoke to cover a vacancy at the station, and he would also put in at this seaport and bunk with us.

The car was partitioned, the east end having the bunks and the middle being the "kitchen." The west end of the car had been partitioned off, with a locked door by one of the car inspectors for his own little room. The kitchen was equipped with an oil stove which both heated the car and provided cooking. As for utensils, the fellows had brought a few pots and pans, and that was it. You either purchased some groceries and heated them up or you walked to the town restaurant for your meals. None of us ate well. We carried in water from a pump to wash our dishes. The only heat for the entire car was the stove in the kitchen area. The toilet was a wooden outhouse. As you can imagine, our "lodging facility" was as hot as blazes in summer, and as cold as Alaska in winter!

If one wanted to wash up after work at Glade Spring, there was a very small brick building a few feet east our "wooden hotel," which served as the enginemen's register room. I think it was a building left over from the old Glade Spring main line coal wharf. This building was only large enough for a desk for the enginemen's register, a grungy shower and a toilet. Save for these marvelous amenities, one was on his own when "forced up the road to Glade."

I should add that living in a converted box car was not standard for the N&W trainman who got bounced around from assignment to assignment. In most places he would spend his time between runs cooking and sleeping on the caboose as was the case when assigned to the locals working out of Radford, Bristol and Bluefield. But at Glade Spring there was only one caboose and it was used by both the First and the Second Saltville Shifters, and therefore was unavailable for bunking arrangements.

In the town itself, there were only three things that a Dog Towner needed. One was a little barber shop, across the town square from the depot. Haircuts cost a quarter. The second was the town's very small grocery store. The third was The Eagle Diner, located in a [continued on next page]

tumble-down old brick building situated directly west of the depot and across the grassy plot where the new "tin" station building was later built. The Eagle was run by a very pleasant older lady whom everyone called "Granny Norris." The fare was humble (breakfast items, hamburgers, beans, soda,) and for less than 50 cents one could get a better meal that he could wrestle up in the Comp'ny's "Glade Spring Box Car Hotel". Granny's big vice in life was collecting coins, and she carefully studied every coin which was given her in payment for a meal. If one were feeling cosmopolitan, he could purchase a copy of the area's newspaper, the Saltville Progress, a weekly, which sold for a nickel. There was also a bank on the town square, where I opened an account since I had no idea how long it would be before I could get back to Roanoke,

The Station

Several times I have been asked about the old station at Glade Spring as of the time of my hiring. As of 1964, only the west end of the truly massive earlier brick station remained. The "freight warehouse room" had been torn off the east end of the building, probably due to the fact that the roof leaked and the railroad had exited the Less-Than-Carload (LCL) business a few years earlier and no longer needed a warehouse for freight shipments.

Located in the remaining western portion of the structure was one large room which housed the "Telegraph Office" (although the telegraph was no longer used) where the operator worked and several desks for the clerks who did the waybilling and kept the accounting records. (The station at Saltville had been closed earlier, and all waybilling for cars out of Saltville and Plasterco was done at Glade Spring.) I think the station agent had a small private office off east side of the main Telegraph Office area. There was also a ticket window on the east side of this room, and passengers would come to this window to purchase their tickets. The operator's desk was on the west side of the building, facing the tracks, and he had levers for the mechanically operated train order semaphore signals. The Train Register for train crews going on duty was located on a small shelf in the Telegraph Office.

After the demolition of the warehouse portion of the station building, there had been no attempt to cover or close up the demolition damage, and the bare timbers were exposed on the remaining portion of the building. The only thing which I got out of the old structure was the old brass Adams Express Co. wax sealer, which I found in the drawer of an old desk and which I will make sure goes back to Glade Spring someday. I think its impression says "Southern Express Co."

The Agent's name was William Hill, and I think he was a 1941-hire. He always met No. 41, the early morning passenger train, and sometimes No. 46, and then was often out on business for the rest of the day. His father (Lester by name, as I recall) was a Norfolk Division passenger conductor who held one of the three "sides" of the Monroe-Bristol crew assignment on No. 41, which meant his westbound train came through Glade Spring every third morning. Lester was a 1917 or 1918-hire, as I recall. Bill Hill was always on hand when his father's train came through.

There was an operator on duty in the depot around the clock. The only operator I recall by name was the second trick man, Cotton P. Belcher (pronounced "Belker," following the German origin of that surname.) I have vivid memories of Cotton being out on the platform each evening with his green and white kerosene lanterns, to "flag" No. 18, the eastbound Birmingham Special. Glade was a "flag stop" for No. 18, and the train would only stop "on signal" (which meant being flagged with a green and white flag by day, or a green and a white lantern by night.) This notwithstanding, I do not recall a single night that No. 18 did not make a stop at Glade. [Continued on next page.]

In the following year, 1965, the last portion of the old Glade Spring station was torn down and a much smaller new tin building was constructed immediately west thereof, housing the operator, agent, ticket window, perhaps a clerk, and the Train Register for crews. I do not have any memories of the new tin building being built. It just suddenly appeared, and the old station disappeared. It was not unusual for a Roanoke Extra List brakeman to spend most of his time working "on the river," i.e. the runs to Bluefield, and to get down the Bristol Line only occasionally, and I was simply on the wrong part of the division when the old station was torn down.

In 1964, six passenger trains per day stopped at Glade Spring: Nos. 17-18, the Birmingham Special; Nos. 41-42, the Pelican; and Nos. 45-46, the Tennessean. Every road freight in both directions stopped to pick up and set off at Glade Spring, and these were westbound time freights 95 (which occasionally ran in two sections, First 95 and Second 95); 51 (which occasionally ran in two sections, First 51 and Second 51,); and eastbound time freights 88 (which occasionally ran in two sections, First 88 and Second 88) and 52 (which almost always ran in two sections, First 52 and Second 52.) There was also a daily local freight each way, six days per week, between Radford and Bristol, which I think was numbered 101 and 102. All of the time freights invariably "worked" (set off/picked up) at Radford, too, and usually they "worked" at Pulaski as well. If a time freight crew had "no work" at Pulaski, they felt lucky. [To be continued.]



From Gary Price, June 1, 2013. On a sunny Saturday morning, NORFOLK AND WESTERN J-class 611 was pulled out of the Roanoke Transportation Museum for the first time in over a year and placed on another track to do wheel bearing tests. I had a special invitation to be on hand at the museum and help with the procedure. I cannot speak about what all is going on at this time, but I can tell you that she passed this test! There will be an announcement coming soon. Follow the journey at www.fireup611.org.

Railfan Report: ALASKA RAILROAD's "Hurricane Turn"

by Fred Waskiewicz

I wanted to share with you what was undoubtedly the greatest diesel-powered rail trip I've ever experienced: ALASKA RAILROAD's "Hurricane Turn".

The ARR promotional photographs I've always seen feature their two premier trains, the "Denali Star" and "Coastal Classic", with their beautiful blue-and-gold train sets (what you don't see are the less attractive private cars owned by the cruise lines). Although traversing beautiful country (once past Wasilla on the northbound, that is), sightseeing is relegated to coach and dome cars with only a few small viewing platforms on some cars. These trains hold to very tight schedules, probably due to aligning with cruise line schedules. A railfan is going to enjoy the scenery, but little else.

The "Hurricane Turn", on the other hand, is a railfan's delight. One of the last flag stop trains in North America, the 110-mile roundtrip journeys over much of the best scenery plied by the "Denali Star". The difference is that passengers are encouraged to hang out in the vestibules or, better yet, view from open baggage car doors (amply protected by safety nets). Rather than racing against the clock, you get to enjoy the incredibly rare experience of the train stopping anywhere en route to pick up and drop off hunters, hikers, campers and local residents. Railfans will thrill to the sounds of the line's GP40-2s working the grades and blowing for crossings. All will enjoy the sightseeing. Again, the scenery matches the "Star" with magnificent views of Mt. McKinley (Denali) and the Susitna River - except this train stops long enough for passengers to get that perfect photo. The "Turn" can do this as its only scheduling demand is to get to the siding in Hurricane in time to open the single-track main for the southbound "Star". I was told the "Turn" has even stopped long enough to allow passengers to view wildlife. Or how about its standing for several minutes in the middle of the 300-foot-high Hurricane Gorge Bridge to allow ample time to soak in nature's wonders? The train actually stopped to allow me to get off and photograph a rotary snow plow along the line. How many times has that happened to you?



Hunters disembarking at their wilderness camp site.

Capping this incredible experience is the "Turn's" conductor: Warren Redfern, a 40-year veteran of the line and local resident (not a summer employee from, well, wherever). Warren is filled with fascinating stories of the road's history; local lore; knows the area by the back of his hand (hunts and fishes at many spots along the line); and, of course, can actually talk railroading. And there's the opportunity to chat with other local residents as well to better understand the Alaska experience. (How about real homesteaders in the 21st century?)

Leaving Talkeetna, the "Turn" operates Thursday through Sunday from May 16 to September 15. If you aren't driving, you could take the "Star" to Talkeetna to catch the northbound "Turn". You'll have to stay overnight in Talkeetna, which is a fun little town in itself, before returning south by rail. If a trip to Alaska is in your future, I'd stake my reputation (well, what little I have) on this trip. However, I'd advise against putting it off. The ridership on our train was light, and there's always the danger that the bean counters will step in and, as the case elsewhere, end what is truly a great American rail experience. For more information and some nice photos, check out: <https://www.facebook.com/HurricaneTurn>.

Whistle Stop

Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

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

wataugavalley@gmail.com

Opinions or viewpoints are those of the writer and may not necessarily reflect those of the organization members, officers or directors. Items of interest are welcome and will be credited to the author; however, because of space constraints, all submissions are subject to editing. Permission to reprint *Whistle Stop* articles with the exception of photographs is granted if proper credit is given. Reuse of photographs must receive permission by the editor and the photographer.

Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum
P.O. Box 432
Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE MATERIAL