

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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Special Collections Department, Pullen Library, Georgia State University

SOUTHERN RAILWAY shows off its stylish, newly inaugurated Washington, DC – Memphis service, named the “Tennessean”, at Jonesborough, TN sometime during 1941. There were so many people that showed up to inspect the train that it was delayed getting into Johnson City. [Photo: SOUTHERN RAILWAY Public Relations Office.]

September 22nd General Membership Meeting

The next General Membership Meeting of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will be held on September 22nd, starting at 6:30 p.m., and located at the Johnson City Public Library, 101 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. This month's program will be on the SOUTHERN RAILWAY, a fun and informative DVD. Also, hear about the details about the upcoming fall excursions to Charlottesville, VA and Toccoa, GA. Bring a friend out for a relaxing evening with your fellow members.

Member Notes

By Nancy Jewel

Our sympathy is extended to Wannetta "Nita" Johnson in the death of her son, Harry R. Johnson, on August 19, 2014. Please keep the following folk in your thoughts as they deal with various concerns: Sidney Blankenbeckler, Carrie Denny, Art DeVoe, George Holley, Bruce King (Tony King's father), Bob May, Bob Yapple, and Grace Brink (Lois Tilley's sister).

As always, let us know of any member, friend or family 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. Your help is appreciated.

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

By Bob Yapple

All cars have a busy fall schedule ahead of them.

St. Augustine: work is progressing including work on seats, wiring and minor touch up work.

Powhatan Arrow: at Spencer NC getting a new paint job.

Crescent Harbor: new generator work completed.

Moultrie: wiring work continues.

Clinchfield 100: there is an ongoing study to decide if we can put this car in AMTRAK service. Jim Magill has ordered structural drawings per the request of the AMTRAK inspector.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT COACH YARD

With our equipment getting ready to depart for more excursion work, we need volunteers to help at the coach yard in various ways including cleaning. Please leave a message at the WVRHS&M office at 423-753-5797; we will call you back.

FALL EXCURSIONS

The WVRHS&M / NCTM Fall excursions are now on sale; please go to www.nctrans.org for information and details. This is our eighth year of hosting the first class section of the train. Destinations this year will be Spencer to Charlottesville VA on November 1, and Spencer to Toccoa, NC on November 2. As our train will be bigger and better than ever, we are in need of more member/volunteers to staff the train. If you're interested in volunteering for these trips, please mail the form attached to the end of this newsletter to WVRHS&M by September 22nd or bring your completed form to the September meeting. We need volunteers in all areas of the excursion. Please sign up.

In the News



4501 Returns to Steam

[TVRM Press Release] Ex-SOUTHERN 2-8-2 #4501 made its public debut at TVRM's "Railfest" on September 6 and 7, capping a three-year restoration effort. The locomotive, which last ran in 1998, was given a complete overhaul. The locomotive restoration specialists at TVRM began the project in 2011 and it has continued nonstop since then. The 4501 rolled out of Soule Shops in East Chattanooga looking better than ever. After testing and various final adjustments, the locomotive was certified for its public debut at the "Railfest" celebration.

"This is a dream come true," said TVRM spokesperson Steve Freer. "Many of us at TVRM grew up riding behind 4501 (often simply referred to as "the 01") and loved every minute of it. With the diminishing demand for main line rail excursions in the 1990's, large locomotives were relegated to storage or display. However, 4501 is returning to active operation. It is a great day for TVRM and we are thrilled to make this example of living history available to the public."

"Railfest" is an annual celebration of railroading at TVRM, which includes train rides, special exhibits, interesting displays, model railroads, children's activities, live entertainment, and more. The public debut of Locomotive 4501 featured a public dedication at "Railfest".

#4501 has an interesting history: She was built for the SOUTHERN RAILWAY in 1911 and worked for 37 years before being forced out of service by a wave of modern diesel locomotives. Instead of being scrapped as so many other steamers were, #4501 was sold in 1948 to the KENTUCKY & TENNESSEE RAILWAY in Stearns, Kentucky, to haul coal from mines served by the K&T. After 16 years serving the K&T, #4501 was sold to Chattanooga railroad enthusiast Paul Merriman in 1964. Merriman was a TVRM founder and president at the time, and brought #4501 to Chattanooga for display and possible operation. This is just what the fledgling museum needed, as #4501 was a highly visible symbol of steam railroading. Shortly thereafter, SOUTHERN leased the engine from TVRM to be used throughout their system as a roving ambassador and to pull public rail excursions, which continued until 1994. Back in home in Chattanooga, TVRM was able to operate the locomotive until its boiler certification ran out in 1998. Since other steam locomotives were operating at TVRM at the time, 4501 rested in semi-retirement until 2011 when NORFOLK SOUTHERN inaugurated their "21st Century Steam" program, a program of excursions for NS employees and the general public, utilizing steam locomotives on a limited number of trips on NS rail lines. TVRM's locomotive #630 has been participating in the programs since 2011, and now with the help of many contributors, including NORFOLK SOUTHERN, 4501 will join the program in 2015.

4501 Video

If you have about 20 free minutes to spare, there's a nice video of #4501's return on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/pyd7fw>.

 ***NS Steam Specials Suspended Until 2015***

NORFOLK SOUTHERN has suspended the remainder of its 2014 steam specials, citing lack of road crews and an increase in freight traffic. The railroad expects to resume operating steam trips in spring 2015.

 ***611 Update***

Bob Yuill, a former NORFOLK SOUTHERN General Foreman for Steam, is tasked with inspecting and repairing all 60 of the 611's superheaters. The Elesco Type E superheater units re-heat the steam generated by the boiler, increasing its thermal energy and giving the 611 more efficient power. Bob inspects each superheater carefully, looking for any defects or thin spots in the steel tubes. After the superheaters are inspected and fixed, Bob fills the superheater with water and hydrostatically tests the units. If a superheater does not pass the test, Bob rebuilds the unit to its original design specifications.

A requirement of 611's 1472-day inspection is the inspection of each staybolt. To perform the inspection the cap must be removed, bead blasted and have its pressure bearing seat ground. The bolt is tested and if it is not broken a new copper washer is installed and the cap is reinstalled. With over 2,200 flexible staybolts the job is time consuming for the 611's mechanical crew.

 ***Change in Cass Scenic Railroad Ownership?***

Social media reported in July that employees of the CASS SCENIC RAILROAD met with Frank Jezioro (WV Dept of Natural Resources Director), Emily Fleming (Chief of WV Parks) and Brad Reed (District Admin) to discuss the takeover of the CSRR operations by the DURBIN & GREENBRIER VALLEY RAILROAD (D&GVRR) as no other entity has showed interest in taking it over. The takeover is slated to occur in November. As official information regarding the sale could not be found at the time of Whistle Stop publication, this news should be treated as RUMOR (albeit a wide-spread one).

 ***C&O Mallet 2-6-6-2***

WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RAILROAD will open its shops in Ridgley, WV, (near Cumberland, MD) to the public during its Steel Wheels Festival September 26 – 28. The tours will provide the opportunity to view and photograph progress on the restoration of C&O Mallet 2-6-6-2 No. 1309. More information is available at www.movingfullsteamahead.com.

 ***GHOST TRAIN STAYS BUSY AROUND THE REGION***

WVRHS&M's Ghost Train (Whistle Machine) participated in the July 4th Bristol parade where thousands of people got to hear it sound off. In August, the Whistle Machine was at Green Cove, VA for the 100th anniversary of the Virginia Creeper Station. Next, the machine was at NCTM's Train Days in Spencer, NC. On August 30th the WATV Whistle Machine blew for the grand opening of the Tweetsie Trail in Elizabethton. Next event for the Whistle Machine will be Old Fort North Carolina for the Railroad Days event on Saturday, September 20th. If you know of someone that would like to lease the Whistle Machine, please have them call the WVRHS&M office at 423-753-5797.

*From Al Weber, the New NRHS President ...*

Date: Sat, 30 Aug 2014 15:20:48 -0500

Subject: Re: Trains Blog... [Ed. note: see <http://tinyurl.com/mbap62u> on the future of the NRHS]

All;

I have had many emails and phone calls about the John Hankey article. His view point is interesting, while some of his ideas are on target but some of his ideas do not support our new business model. As a academic, historian and museum director he has a good background on a railway organization but maybe not the NRHS as the board does.

I was not going to comment on his piece but since it was brought up.....

His count of the ballots sent out is off, real number 9708 vs 12,000 and it should be compared to the percentage of returned ballots in past election cycles. From memory this time we had about the same as last time we had a vote. In a general election here in St Louis that would not only be a good turnout but the election would be considered a very good success. The margin was well over half of the received ballots. I think that those that sent in their ballots were committed to supporting the future of the NRHS.

His mention of the last complete major reorganization that caused a significant insurgency in the membership and that it was badly framed and poorly managed falls back on the us the current board. I think we did not ask and get the sign in of the membership before that major reorganization. We seemed [sic] to tell the members that this is what we are going to do and just take it as we know what is best. We, the board really shot and I quote John "Genuine goodwill and spirit of shared purpose" of the members and the chapters.

John states the NRHS is a traditional organized mid 20th century model of a club-like special interest group. And he states there is nothing wrong with that. I believe that also.

He also state that the NRHS is essentially insolvent. How does he know that? Did one of us tell the world? We have all been told that we OKed spending more than we take in for the future. Did we as management blow that?

Most chapters are OK if not well off financial in my District 6. Which differs from what John indicates. Chapter finances are holding there own and most are getting a few new members each year. The larger chapters are doing well. I belong to most of the District chapters along with several others in other districts and get their news letters. None as talked about a financial problem that I can remember. Many talk about the way (us) the national treats them. They ask where their dues money is going.

Chapters are voting with their feet by leaving the national but we still have over 120 chapters. Some of our chapters supported me and some supported Greg in the last election. Now healing that divide falls to me and the board. Chapters feel that we on the board have left them out of decisions after passing the current bylaws. We need those members so we on the board must make a extra effort to hear their concerns I think. Else their comment to rail history and preservation will go elsewhere.

Some of the comments on what we spend our cash on are on point. We need to tell everyone where the cash goes. Many members have no idea of what our expenses are. The comment that we treat the chapters as a annoyance really hit home.

I really appreciate that Bob Hevenrich took the time to put in a comment.

Al

Logging Along the Laurel Fork – Part 3

Fred Waskiewicz

[This article first appeared in Volume 63 #1 (1998) of the *NRHS Bulletin*. Since then, new information has come to light which corrects errors in that original publication.]

Other evidence of L.D. Gasteiger's strategic vision is found within the "Manufacturers Record" of December 8, 1910, which reported that "construction of a railroad from Elizabethton has begun to Hampton, Boone and Wilkesboro, NC." This suggests that he planned on giving the ET&WNC a run for its money by invading its territory by rail. Although a quote from an "official letter" in the periodical's next issue refuted this claim, the threat of the Laurel Fork extending into the Linville area - which would have diverted lumber traffic from the Linville River Railway (the ET&WNC's feeder line) continued to cause enough concern to be mentioned in the ET&WNC's 1913 annual stockholder's meeting. However, the report for the following year told a different tale as "...all talk of Flynn's (sic) Road extending into this area (had) ceased." This is due, undoubtedly, to 1914 proving to be a dismal year for Pittsburgh Lumber Company. Lack of demand caused 12 million board feet of lumber to lie stacked in the yards. This led to the closing of the mill, a layoff of 3,000 by the end of the year. The picture became so bleak that the Forest Service was approached for possible purchase of the company's property. Although the mill was to resume operation in February 1915, with some 200 employees, and 1916 was good enough to rate a ten-percent pay increase, the death knell was sounded for any dreams of expansion beyond the Laurel Fork watershed. For the rest of its existence the Laurel Fork would remain confined to Carter County. In fact, Laban, the LF's incorporated terminus, was never reached by rail.

Logging railroads were doomed to extinction by the very nature of the limited commodity they were built to haul and the harvesting methods employed. The Laurel Fork was no exception; however, its demise may have been premature. By 1924, the original tract of land had been fairly well cut over. Most of the railroad spurs and the mainline beyond Frog Level had been pulled up, leaving 15 miles of rail left. In February of that year, Gasteiger again approached the Forest Service concerning the sale of much of its acreage. (All of the property was not included in the offer as the lumber company wished to retain rights to four reservations along the creek for a possible power project.) This action coincided with the death of Senator Flinn that month and the subsequent transfer of family interests to A. Rex Flinn. Although resources within the original tract were depleted, the mainline grade still existed that thrust towards Beech Mountain where large stands of timber presented the potential for renewed lumbering.

An unexpected natural disaster, however, dashed the hopes of any further expansion of the lumber operation. That event (which would spell doom in later years for two other area railroads as well) was torrential rain. On June 13, 1924, a heavy storm transformed the otherwise tranquil Laurel Fork into a raging river, washing away all trestles, a portion of the track and roadbed, and stranding equipment. The line was rebuilt where necessary to retrieve equipment, but by then A. Rex had lost heart. On November 7, 1924, he filed with the Interstate Commerce Commission for abandonment of the entire line from Elizabethton to Frog Level. This request was granted, effective in February of the next year.

Despite ICC approval for abandonment of the railroad, milling continued into 1925, when the Big Flats area was being finished and some small stands near Braemar were logged. The fatal blow that sealed the fate of the logging operation, a most ignominious one, was dealt as warm weather returned to the mountains. A trestle timber containing a large drift bolt found its way into the mill pond and was loaded by mistake onto the conveyor feeding the mill's solitary band saw. The saw was destroyed when the bolt was struck. It was not replaced and all milling ceased. Flinn had given up. A single bolt, not a depleted resource, wrote the final chapter to the Pittsburgh Lumber Company.

Although the mill was closed, the Laurel Fork continued operation for some time. Its final chores included hauling rails and equipment out of the mountains, moving the remaining lumber from the yards and assisting in dismantling the mill. Rails were straightened in Elizabethton by a Texas contractor and sold for scrap. The disassembled mill was sold to another regional lumber operation. The commissary and offices were converted to private ownership and exist to this day. As a result of the mill closure, the residents of Braemar and Hampton lost their electric service, which would not be restored until several years later.

As railroad activities were diminished, engines No. 1 and 3 were placed on the selling block by late 1925 (No. 2 had been transferred in 1922 to another Flinn operation in western Virginia). While waiting for buyers, the two engines assisted in dismantling activities. The two Shays were sold by 1927, signaling the end of railroad activity.

All is quiet among the glens and glades of the Laurel Fork now. The sounds of the iron horse haven't echoed in its mountain hollows in over 70 years, and the rhododendron grow where Shays once roamed. Nonetheless, the Laurel Fork Railway has left a legacy. Some 9,000 acres of the Pittsburgh tract were sold to the Forest Service and incorporated into the Cherokee National Forest. Most of the mainline above Braemar, where chestnut ties are surprisingly still found, is now part of a system of hiking trails. The Appalachian Trail uses that portion of the grade that climbed past beautiful Laurel Falls into Dennis Cove, although hikers aren't afforded the luxury of a trestle across the gorge - the floods claimed it back in the '30s. The hidden cove along the creek that once was a wilderness rail yard and busy Camp No. 4 at Frog Level is now a serene, secluded sportsman's paradise. Spurs from the original mainline have become side trails beckoning exploration, where rotting, moss-covered log piers and earthen loading ramps can still be spotted by the discerning eye. Yet despite the calm that now exists along the Laurel Fork, it doesn't take much imagination to envision the solitude being broken by the scream of rails under the weight of a log train and the shrill whistle of a smoke belching Shay.

POSTSCRIPT

Research has yielded the names of a few of the first employees of the railroad: Bill Peters, engineer; Bill Johnson and D.O. Johnson, firemen; brakemen George Long, Pearl Smith and A.B. Johnson; and log loader Beryl Smith.



A view of the mill from the mill pond looking northwest towards Elizabethton. The silhouette of a log loader is barely visible to the left of the mill.

Graniteville, SC.

By Gary Price

During my numerous journeys as an employee of Norfolk Southern, I have shared many exciting stories, and behind the scenes adventures of my job. I have been from one end of the system to another, and have seen some of the greatest railfan sites. I have stood in the footprints of many famous railroad authors and photographers, closed my eyes and just imagined what it would have been like to see a mighty steam locomotive thundering down the tracks to its next destination, a sight and sound forgotten to today's generation. This article is not one of those moments

When you mention the tiny community of Graniteville, South Carolina in the midst of the railroad community, January 6, 2005 will always dictate the conversation that follows, and day that changed the way that all railroads operate in dark territory or non-signalized territory. When I saw this tiny town's location appear on my 2014 schedule, I couldn't help but shudder, but duty calls and that day came.

What happened there? Just shortly before 3 a.m. on Thursday January 6, 2005 Norfolk Southern train 192 westbound to Columbia, SC. encountered a misaligned switch and was rerouted directly into a standing train, Norfolk Southern local P22, that had been tied down for the night in a siding that served local textile plant Avondale Mills. Things got worse from there; train 192 was carrying 42 railcars including several loads of highly toxic cargo, of those cars, sixteen derailed including tanker cars that were transporting chlorine gas, a chemical that is deadly if inhaled. Unfortunately one of these cars ruptured releasing its poison into night air. The majority of the gas was carried in a northerly direction toward the Avondale Mills Plant. Hearing the accident and coming outside to see what was going on proved deadly for six night shift employees as the gas overtook them, they were found dead at the scene, a truck driver at the dock was found in his cab, one man was found in his home nearby, the engineer of the train died at the hospital, and a man that drove by the site a few months later from the exposure. Over 250 people had to be treated for inhalation exposure, and a one mile radius had to be evacuated and quarantined for two weeks before the residents were allowed back to their homes.

The Federal Railroad Administration stepped in and ordered all railroads to adopt a new practice of ensuring that switch alignments in dark territories were protected from accidents like this from happening again. In addition to the standard Track Authority issued by Railroad Dispatchers to train crews or maintenance crews and new SPAF form was initiated to be used in non-signalized territories, the form is an acronym for Switch Point Awareness Form, it requires the operator of any switch to sign the form and confirm with the Railroad Dispatcher that all switches thrown by said employee have been lined and locked for mainline use after all the work has been completed. Norfolk Southern has recently been installing switch point lights to help ensure the safety of their trains operating in dark spots and yards.

Now back to me, the morning before my work gang entered into the town of Graniteville, our supervision instructed us to do our job, professionally and efficiently, and get on out of town as safely as possible, he told us that there is still a lot of ill will toward Norfolk Southern because of all that transpired and to mind our own business. Being at the front of the gang, I was one of the first to arrive at the sight; I kept my head down and worked steady until I arrive at the switch where this happened. I had to back my machine down into the very sidetrack where the accident occurred, as I dismounted my machine, I was struck with the heaviness in the air around me. As I stood there and surveyed the surroundings, it's almost like I could feel the sadness around me. I looked at the factory, now standing empty and thought about the men who never got the chance to clock out and go home and the truck driver who never woke up from his sleeper. I walked down the sidetrack about 100 feet to a cross by the track erected by the family in memory of Chris Seeling, Norfolk Southern engineer who made his last run that night. Across the track and road was a large stone monument with a brief story of the accident and the nine names of those who perished. [cont'd]

I finished my work, pulled my machine out of the siding, threw the switch back to its normal main line position, and as I knelt down to replace the lock on the switch, I thought about the former employee that forgot to do this basic daily routine, and I said a prayer of healing for the community, and asked God to protect me from something like this from ever happening.

Upcoming Events



SEPTEMBER 20: Old Fort (NC) Railroad Days. WVRHS&M "Ghost Train" will be present. See <http://www.oldfort.org/festivals.htm>



OCTOBER 4, 11, 18, 25, 26 and NOVEMBER 1: Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum's "Summerville Steam Special"

Southern 2-8-0 #630 or 2-8-2 #4501 leads a trip from Chattanooga to Summerville, GA.

More information: <http://www.tvrail.com/pages/summerville-steam-special>



OCTOBER 10-12: Cass Scenic Railroad Fall Photography Workshop. Classroom teaching, night photo session, and special photo trip to Whittaker Station - Cass, West Virginia. More information: <http://www.cassrailroad.com/dinner.html>

OCTOBER 18, 19, 25, 26: "New River Train"

The Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society is once again presenting the world-renowned New River Train excursions through the beautiful New River Gorge in southern West Virginia. As one of the newest national parklands, the "Grand Canyon of the East" along the New River is majestic and breathtaking in fall colors in mid to late

October. It is during this peak autumn foliage time that our train traverses the former Chesapeake & Ohio mainline from Huntington, WV to Hinton, WV, allowing for a front-row seat to some of the most spectacular scenery in the country. See

<http://www.newrivertrain.com/nrt.shtml>



NOVEMBER 1st and 2nd, 2014: The very popular **Autumn Train Excursions**, co-hosted by WVRHS&M in conjunction with NCTM.

Saturday, November 1, the train will travel from Spencer, NC to Charlottesville, VA and return. On Sunday, November 2, a roundtrip from Spencer to Toccoa, GA for their Fall Festival is scheduled. .

Details can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/8bhqjhn>

Always Struggling to Find Rail-related Information?

Are you always struggling to find information related to rail-related current events, history, locomotive details, museums, and the like? Check out the WVRHS&M site at <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/links.php>, which serves as a portal to sites providing precisely that. (And if you know of sites that should be added, please let us know!)

Whistle Stop

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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.

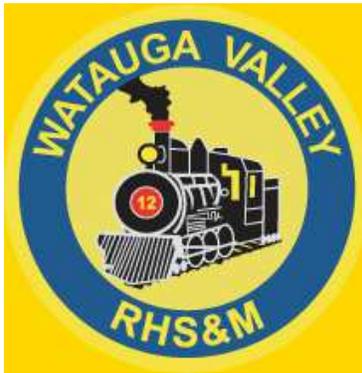
Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE MATERIAL



CAR HOST ASSIGNMENT REQUEST FORM
for
NOVEMBER 1st and NOVEMBER 2nd, 2014 EXCURSIONS

MEMBER _____ PHONE (_____) _____

MEMBER _____ PHONE (_____) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

I WOULD LIKE TO SIGN UP FOR FIRST CLASS CAR HOST ON THE SPENCER, NC, TO CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA ROUND TRIP EXCURSION ON NOVEMBER 1, 2014 AND THE SPENCER, NC TO TOCCOA, GA ROUND TRIP EXCURSION ON NOVEMBER 2, 2014.

WVRHS&M WILL PROVIDE FREE TRANSPORTATION TO SPENCER, NC, AND BACK TO JONESBOROUGH, TN. WE WILL LEAVE JONESBOROUGH AT 7:30 AM ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31. YOU ARE ALSO WELCOME TO DRIVE DOWN TO SPENCER IN YOUR OWN CAR IF YOU WISH. THE CHAPTER WILL PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION BACK TO JONESBOROUGH ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3.

ALL CAR HOSTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAKE THEIR OWN HOTEL RESERVATIONS AT SALISBURY SUPER 8 AT A SPECIAL RATE OF \$54.95 PER NIGHT. YOU WILL NEED TO CALL 704-738-8888 AND ASK FOR WATAUGA VALLEY NRHS SPECIAL RATE. PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS BY SEPTEMBER 30. YOU WILL NEED ROOMS FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31 AND SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1. STAYING ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2 IS OPTIONAL.

ALL WVRHS&M MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO SIGN UP FOR THIS GREAT TRIP TO SERVE AS CAR HOST. PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AT THE SEPTEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING OR MAIL IT TO: EXCURSION WATV, P.O. BOX 432, JOHNSON CITY, TN, 37605-0432, BY SEPTEMBER 22. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE 423-753-5797.

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