

WHISTLE STOP

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

P. O. Box 432, Jonesborough, TN. 37659

(423) 753-5797

www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 46 No. 4

April 2026



A piece of local rail history has left the area. Story on page 4. [Les Billings photo.]

March 23rd General Membership Meeting

The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society and Museum will have our next General Membership Meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, March 23rd, 2026 at the Chuckey Depot, 110 South Second Ave., Jonesborough, TN. The program will be on freight operations on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad in 2024. (This is the same program that we planned in February but due to technical issues had to postpone.) Come out, bring a friend, and enjoy a great night of railroading with your fellow railfans. It's always great to have guests at our meetings.

MEMBER NOTES

Prayers and thoughts go out to Gary Price, Lois Tilley, Dona Lewis and Jim Sutterlin. If you wish for one of our members or family member to be reported for various concerns in the *Whistle Stop*, email a request to wataugavalley@gmail.com or wataugavalley.membership@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Last dues notices were recently sent out to all members that have not renewed for 2026. Please act fast and get your dues notices mailed back to WVRHS&M, P. O. Box 432, Jonesborough, TN, 37659. Renewals can also be made using the [online membership application](#) which is available on our web site under the Membership tab on the home page. Time is running out and your name will be removed from the membership list soon. Watauga Valley has a big year planned for 2026; do not miss out!

PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2026

Howard Orfield & Brad McCroskey, WVRHS&M program directors, are looking for General Membership Meeting programs for 2026. Please *email* wataugavalley@gmail.com if you have an interest in offering a program this year. We are looking for speakers on a railroad-related subject. And as always, we're looking for DVD and slide shows.

LIBRARY DONATIONS

Our library collection in Jonesborough is growing fast. We appreciate all the donations that have been made. Please bring your railroad book donations to any membership meeting or call the office at (423) 753-5797. If you are finished reading or just want to donate, put your books to good use.

CHUCKEY DEPOT

After a 56 year absence, visitors to Jonesborough can once again inspect a semaphore in an authentic railroad setting. The original was removed from the former Jonesborough Depot in 1970. Its replacement, seen here, looks grand on an appropriate site with the Chuckey Depot in the background.

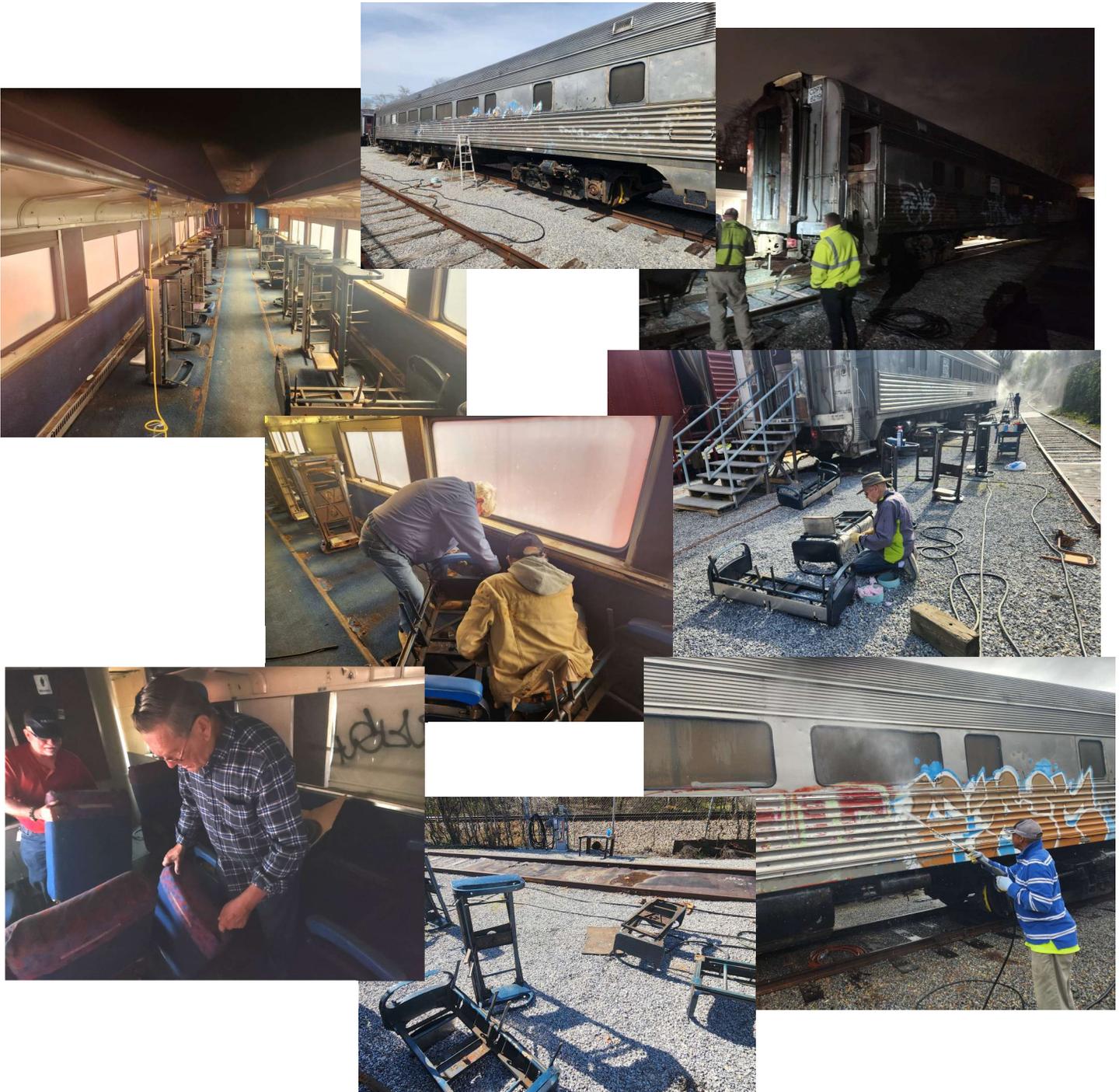
Hats off to Howard Berry, David Billings, Art Devoe, and Gary Lombardi for their fine work in adding this piece of railroad history to the Depot site.



MECHANICAL REPORT

BY ART DEVOE

We are happy to announce that the 1947 ex-Seaboard Air Line 62-seat Budd coach purchased by WVRHS&M in 2025 has finally arrived at the Spring St. Coach Yard. Designated WATX 6219, all seats have been removed and general clean up has begun. Immediate plans are removing graffiti, repairing floor damage, painting, and window replacement. You're invited to be part of this unique restoration project by signing up at wataugavalley@gmail.com.



IN THE NEWS ...

— *East Tennessee Railway Donates Engine to TVRM*

ETRY has donated their EMD SW1200 engine to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum which has left the ETRY yard recently for the trip to Chattanooga. Originally built for MOPAC in 1964 as their #1179, the engine was sold to Rail Switching Services. By 2000 it was operating in Johnson City as ET #214 where it served primarily in switcher service.

— *Dollywood Locomotives Swap Coal for Oil*

[by Hope McAlee, 2/25/2026, WATE TV, Knoxville] This upcoming season, *Dollywood* will no longer be home to coal-powered trains. This change is expected to make the locomotives closer to how they were historically without impacting the experience for riders of the *Dollywood Express*.

No. 192, affectionately called *Klondike Katie*, and No. 70, known as *Cinderella*, are being converted to oil-fired steam engines. Both locomotives from the World War II era have previously been oil-fired steam engines but were converted to coal-fired steam engines before they were obtained by the park.



Although coal-fired engines have a nostalgic value, for park visitors, these engines also meant that the trains were unable to run on especially hot, windy or dry days as flying embers have a risk of causing fires and other environmental damage. The smell of the smoke throughout the park is also something many guests and locals remember fondly.

Dollywood officials shared that for guests riding the *Dollywood Express*, the experience will be basically the same, except for the fact that riders won't have to worry about getting cinders in their eyes or on them.

According to Dolly Parton's website, *Klondike Katie* was built in 1943 and *Cinderella* was built in 1938, making the trains approximately 82 and 87 years old. Both trains were built by Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia during World War II and transported troops and lumber on missions in Alaska before they were purchased from the Army.

Parton's website explains that *Klondike Katie* arrived in Pigeon Forge in 1961 and provided Smokies visitors at the *Rebel Railroad* attraction with a five-mile journey through the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. After several changes in ownership, that attraction, including *Klondike Katie*, was purchased by Jack and Pete Herschend in 1977. The Herschends owned *Silver Dollar City* in Branson [MO] and renamed [this] park to *Silver Dollar City*, Tennessee. In the same year, the Herschends also acquired *Cinderella*. The park later became *Dollywood* in 1986.

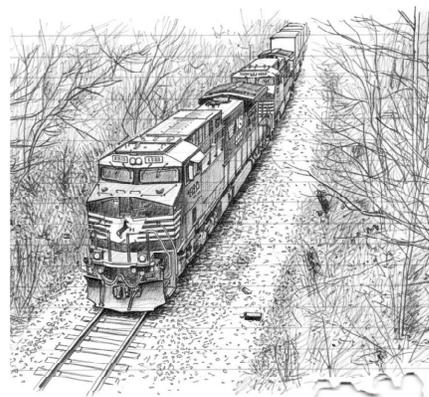
"For the many locomotive enthusiasts who visit the park, as well as the *Dollywood* hosts who work alongside them every day, each has its own personality. *Klondike Katie* originally was built for speed, while *Cinderella* had more power and torque to pull heavier loads. In addition to the visual cues, the engines sound very different; especially as they begin their climb out of the *Dollywood Express* Train Depot for the 20-minute roundtrip experience," Parton's website explains.

DISPLAY IN THE BLOCK

BY LES BILLINGS

Happy Spring!

In this month's Display in the Block I am going to present a little something different. I ran across a new creative tool inside of Google Photos app. It is AI based. There are various new tools that have some cool results. I thought I would share one of the these that I found a great interest in. They are pencil sketches of some of my latest shots. I hope you find them as interesting as I have.



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Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 432, Jonesborough, TN 37659

whistlestop.editor@gmail.com

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TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL