

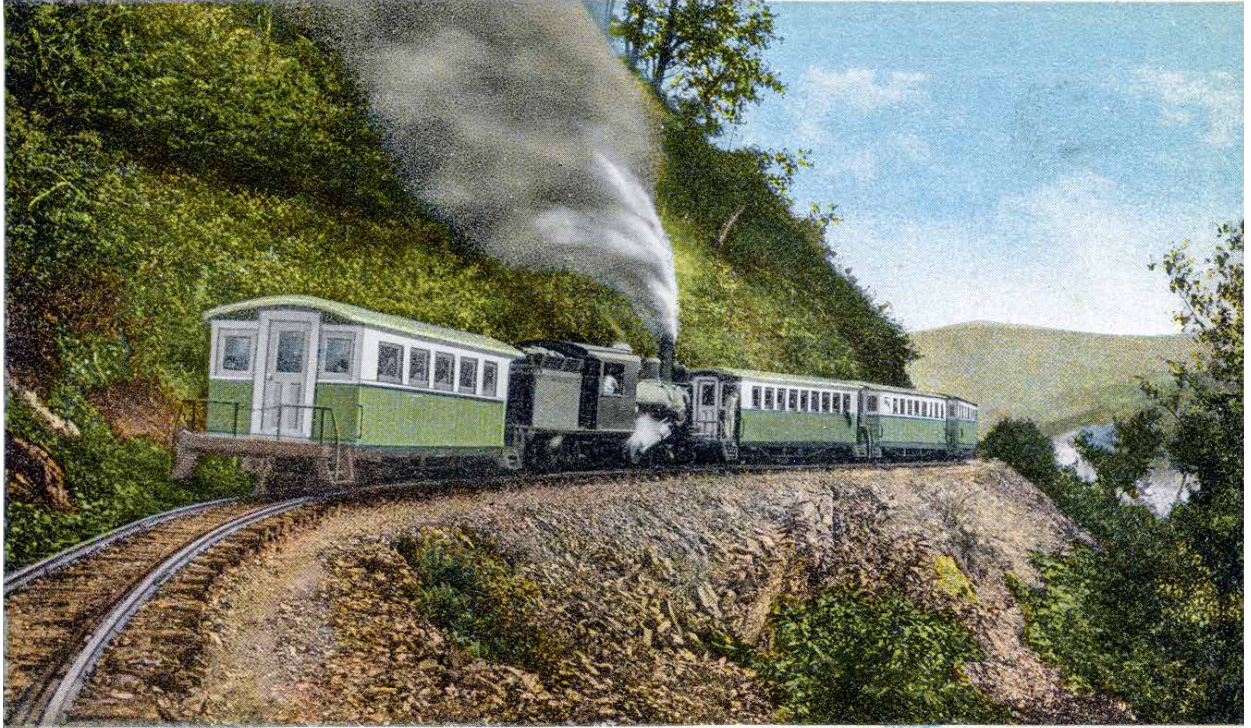


**Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc.**  
**Southeast Chapter**  
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*Southeast Limited*

## Mount Mitchell RR

By Donald R. Hensley, Jr



*Mt. Mitchell R. R. Train at Rainbow Gap. En Route on the Greatest Scenic Railroad in America*

This all started out on eBay, due to a purchase of a couple of postcards a month ago. They depicted a narrow gauge Climax locomotive and small homebuilt excursion cars climbing the highest mountain in the Eastern United States at 6,711 feet. Intrigued, I purchased a few more cards and did some digging into the story about this railroad.

This railway was built by the Dickey & Campbell Lumber Company, to reach the virgin timber in the Black Mountains of Western North Carolina. Construction started in 1911 at Black Mountain City, NC and climbed 21 miles of three foot gauge track up the ridge using sharp curves and nine switchbacks with a maximum grade of 5.25 percent. D&C built a large band mill at Black Mountain City which was served by Southern Railway.

The Perley & Crockett Lumber Company (of Williamsport, PA) purchased the mill, railroad and lands of the D&C on November 17, 1913 and rebuilt the mill to handle up to 110,000 feet of lumber a day. There was over 300 million board feet of timber available on their tracts, with Spruce and Balsam being the most important. Around 1914 the railroad had climbed to Camp Alice, which was located near the summit of Mount Mitchell. The logging line used two Shays and five Climaxes while the standard gauge mill trackage was switched by an ancient Cooke 0-4-0.



Early on, the P&C company found that they could run excursions over their railroad for the paying vacationers who ventured to the mountains during the summer to get away from the hot conditions of the flat lands. These trains operated every summer until 1918, when the war effort, meeting maximum production of Spruce lumber, forced their cancellation. Spruce was used in the manufacturing of fighter planes. The excursions returned in 1919.

The State of North Carolina stepped up pressure on the company in an effort to save some of the scenic forest for a state park. P&C stopped lumber cutting in 1920 and sold their railroad and equipment to the Mount Mitchell Scenic Railroad. This railroad had a short life, shutting down after the 1921 season in favor of a toll road. The rails and equipment were sold to nearby logging operations.

The toll road was built mostly over the former narrow gauge railroad which was only wide enough for one car. This road had to be operated one way up the mountain in the morning and one way down the mountain in the afternoon.

#### Roster

|                         |                                                                                         |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Shay Lima 2512 /1912  | 36" Gauge New. Sold to Rapides Lumber 1                                                 |
| 2 Shay Lima 2568/1912   | 36" Gauge New. Sold to Natwick Nixon Co.                                                |
| 3 B-35 Climax ? ?       | 36" Gauge                                                                               |
| 4 B-42 Climax ? /1913   | 36" Gauge new to Blackwood Lbr Co., East LaPorte, NC                                    |
| 5 B-42 Climax 1235 1913 | 36" Gauge new to Suncrest Lbr #4 Sunburst NC,<br>to Blackwood Lbr Co., East LaPorte, NC |
| 6 0-4-0 Cooke 1056/1879 | Std Gauge used to switch mill                                                           |
| 7 Climax 1319 /1914     | 36" Gauge New. Sold to Blackwood Lbr Co.                                                |
| 8 Climax 1321 /1914     | 36" Gauge New. Sold to Suncrest Lbr Co.                                                 |







Here is the actual photo that was used as the basis of the color postcard on page 1. Note that the cars were redrawn and the brakeman completely removed from the postcard version. These cars were built by the Southern Railway's shops at Asheville just for the excursions over the logging railroad. (Mac Connery Collection)

This photo shows the one of nine switchbacks used on this mountain line. Note the sharp downgrade on the left. All these cars are marked Mount Mitchell RR and the picture dates from 1921 when the line was operated for excursion only. (Mac Connery Collection)





# Postcard Souvenir Book



Southern Railway train at the Black Mountain depot is meeting the Mount Mitchell Scenic Railroad Train.

The Mount Mitchell Scenic RR train is leaving Black Mountain Town for the long climb to the top of Mount Mitchell.



The Climax is negotiating one of the nine switch-backs.



Arriving at Mount Mitchell.  
Highest Peak East of  
the Rocky Mountains.

At the Pinnacle, near  
the summit of Mount  
Mitchell.



At the summit of  
Mount Mitchell,  
In the “Land of the  
Sky”

# Railroads beating oil price slump

*Reprinted with the Permission of the Associated Press.*

*By Josh Funk , 1/3/2015*

The stunning collapse in oil prices over the past several months won't derail the railways' profit engine even if it does slow the tremendous growth in crude shipments seen in recent years. Carloads of crude oil spiked well over 4,000 per cent between 2008 and last year – from 9,500 carloads to 435,560 – as production boomed and the cost for a barrel of oil soared into the triple digits.

Those prices have tumbled severely, to just above \$50 (U.S.) per barrel Friday, and that has rattled some of the investors who have plowed money into companies such as Union Pacific, Norfolk Southern and CSX. All three of those companies have seen their stock prices slip over the past month, along with major U.S. stock markets.

But even with oil prices falling off a cliff, industry analysts and railway executives point out that crude shipments still make up just a sliver of the overall freight delivered by rail. What's more, because fuel is such a huge cost in the industry, railways are a direct beneficiary of those falling prices.

Crude oil shipments remain less than 2 per cent of all the carloads major U.S. railways deliver. Sub-\$60 oil might force producers to rein in spending but railways – which spend hundreds of million of dollars every quarter on fuel– will see their costs fall away.

Those falling energy prices have also proven to be the equivalent of a massive tax cut for both consumers and businesses, and railways stand to benefit from that as well. Fueled by a rebounding employment as well as rising consumer and business confidence, U.S. economic growth reached a sizzling 5-per-cent annual rate last quarter, the government reported this month. The rebounding economy is likely to drive even greater demand for shipping.

Edward Jones analyst Logan Purk says the importance of crude oil shipments by rail seems to have been inflated by investors. "It seems like whatever loss in business they see will be offset by the drop in fuel costs," Purk said.

The crude oil business has provided a nice boost for railways at a time when coal shipments were declining. Profits at the major U.S. railways have been improving steadily along with the economy, reaching \$13.4-billion in 2013, up from \$11.9-billion in 2012 and \$10.9-billion in 2011. Officials from Union Pacific Corp, Norfolk Southern Corp., CSX Corp. and Canadian Pacific all tried to reassure investors about crude oil shipments during their latest investment conferences.

"I don't think that we are going to see any knee-jerk reaction. I don't think we are going to see anything stopped in the Bakken," said Canadian Pacific CEO Hunter Harrison said of the massive oil and gas fields that stretch from North Dakota and Montana into Canada.

The Bakken region is one of the places where railways are hauling the majority of the oil because pipeline capacity hasn't been able to keep up with production. Through the fall, North Dakota oil drillers remained on pace to set a sixth consecutive annual record for crude oil production.

Justin Kringstad, director of the North Dakota Pipeline Authority, said the lower prices will prompt oil companies to look for ways to reduce costs, but he's not yet sure how much of an effect it will have on production in the region. "It's still a little early to make any firm assessments," Kringstad said.

It helps that the cost of producing oil in the Bakken region is lower than in other places, so oil producers can still profit even when oil prices fall, said Don Seale, Norfolk Southern railway's chief marketing officer. "Oil is being produced. The oil will have to move, and the assets have been invested in tank cars, loop tracks, infrastructure to support crude by rail," Seale said during a recent investor conference call.

Regardless of what happens with oil production, there are reasons to believe that railways will continue hauling oil from places like the Bakken that only recently began producing in large quantities. The railways – which are now delivering 59 per cent of the roughly 1.2 million barrels of oil produced each day in North Dakota – expanded capacity quickly to handle the surge.

Because the price of oil varies by market, railways provide one of the best avenues for buyers and sellers to get crude to places where the price makes it economical. "Rail is definitely required to get all of the Bakken's production out to market," said Jonathan Garrett, a senior analyst at Wood Mackenzie senior, even if falling prices cut into the margins for producers.

## Record-Breaking Chicago Blizzard in 1967!

By Bill Howes, Southeast Chapter Chairman

Just a few days ago SE Chapter President, Bill Howes, was talking with Southeast Chapter member, Henry Deutch, about the snow blizzard that was heading toward New York and the North Eastern States. That discussion reminded Bill about a blizzard he lived through many years ago. He was agreeable to sending his story to our Southeast Chapter members. Enjoy and stay warm!



***“Even trains are stopped by heavy snows.”***

*National Weather Service Collection*

As I listened to the Weather Channel this morning forecasting a major blizzard for your area tonight and tomorrow, it dawned on me that it was exactly 48 years ago - January 26-27, 1967 - that I was snowbound aboard a train during a record-breaking blizzard in Chicago, northwest Indiana and western Michigan that dropped 23 inches of snow in 29 hours.

C&O Train #7, the overnight Mail & Express to Chicago left Grand Rapids as scheduled shortly before midnight EST on the 26th. Normally, the single coach in the consist was lightly patronized on this nocturnal run due in Chicago at 4:15 AM CST. But the deteriorating weather had shut down airports in the region and #7 was filled to near capacity. The storm was raging and the train was already an hour late when it made a special stop about 3:00 AM EST in New Buffalo, Michigan to pick me up.

We made reasonably good progress until reaching the Rock Island trackage used by C&O and B&O through South Chicago. Drifting snow, frozen switches and signal outages forced C&O #7 to a halt. As night turned to morning, prospects for moving the train anytime soon looked dim. Hunger set in among the increasingly anxious passengers.

Fortunately, B&O Train #9, the Washington-Chicago Express, running way behind its early morning scheduled arrival in Chicago pulled up close behind C&O #7. It was a welcome sight. For while there was no food service on the C&O M&E train, B&O #9 had a well-stocked food-bar coach. Arrangements were made for the food and beverages to be shared. In addition, as the storm eased, one family living near the tracks cooked chickens for the stranded passengers.

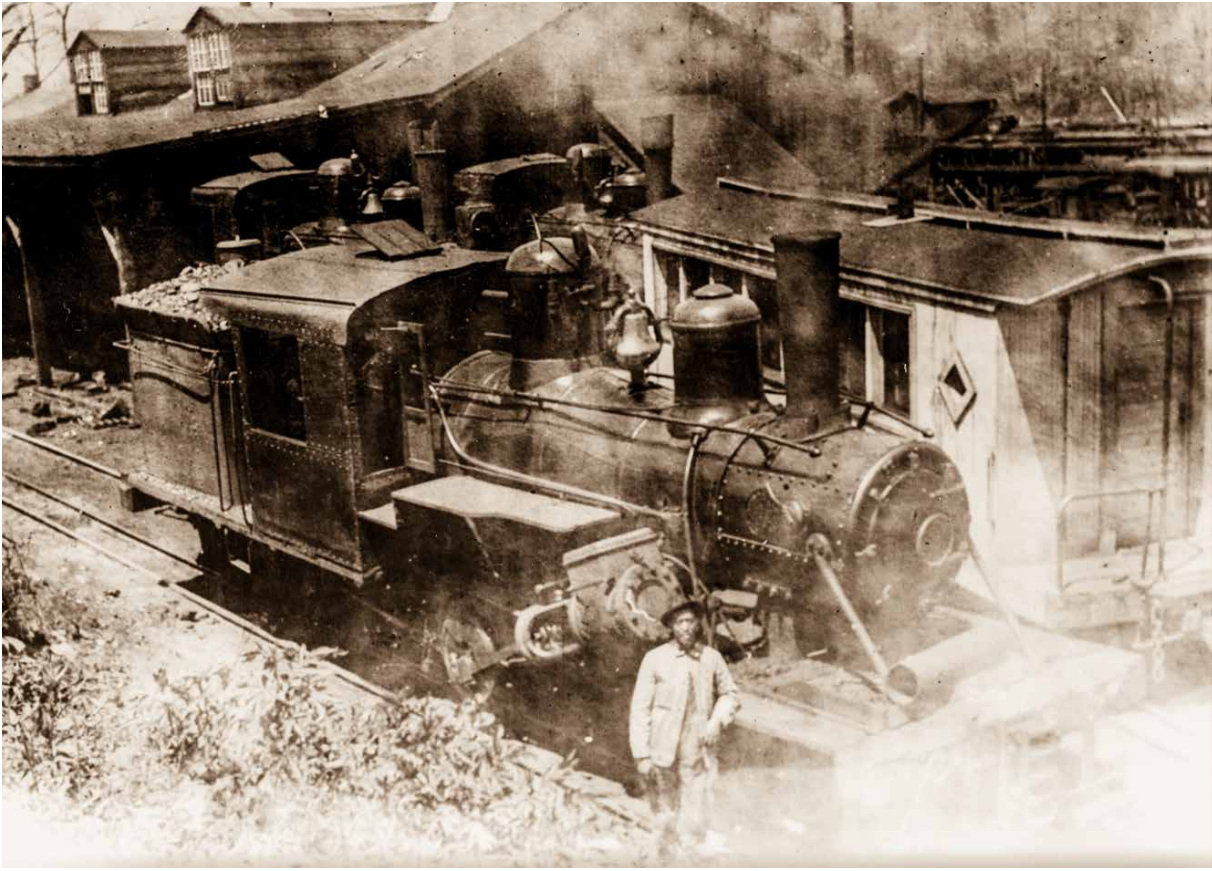
By early afternoon a path had been cleared for the two trains, and they made their way to B&O's Grand Central Station. For the weary folks aboard C&O #7, arrival was ten hours late. My intention had been to take that evening's Capitol Limited back home to Baltimore. Although its departure was delayed, I finally settled into a comfortably warm roomette and B&O #6 - with fully-stocked bar car and diner - struggled eastward through deep snow in the Midwest and snowy Alleghenies more than six hours late.



*“I believe there is a train under here somewhere!”*

*Credit: Collection of Dr. Herbert Kroehl, NGDC*

*National Weather Service Collection*



The shop area of the The Perley & Crockett Lumber Company near their mill at Black Mountain, NC circa 1918. These Climaxes were used on the Mount Mitchel Railroad. (Mac Connery Collection)

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## **Southeast Chapter R&LHS Annual Banquet**

Nineteen Southeast Chapter members, spouses, children and friends gathered for great food, good fun and nice prizes at our annual banquet held again at the home of Larry Shughart on Saturday, January 17. Participants began arriving in mid-afternoon to catch up with the latest additions to Larry's spectacular S-gauge layout and spend some time at the controls. The creative chefs in the group contributed a wide variety of delicious eats and Larry conducted a challenging trivia contest for prizes. A good time was had by all.

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## **Announcements:**

- February 12th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX headquarters
- February 14th - Golden Spike Train Show at the Prime Osborn Center, Jacksonville, FL
- March 12th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX
- April 9th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX
- April 11th - Florida Rail Fair at Volusia Fairgrounds, Deland, FL
- May 14th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX

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### **SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS**

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|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>William F. Howes Jr.</b>  | <b>Chairman</b>                |
| <b>Steve Baxendale</b>       | <b>Vice-Chairman</b>           |
| <b>Stephen J. Vertescher</b> | <b>Secretary and Treasurer</b> |
| <b>Cliff Vander Yacht</b>    | <b>Webmaster</b>               |

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