

FOUNDED IN 1989

# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## 32nd Convention Canceled - Maintaining ET&WNC Interest in Viral Times

By the time this reaches everyone, a certain contagious virus will be old news. Needless to say its effects are everywhere. Your Board of Directors was scheduled to meet on March 21st to plan out the 32nd Annual Convention. We communicated electronically and decided in the interest of safety to add our annual gathering to the list of all the other cancellations and postponements. Your editor (and Society VP) doesn't know if we'll look at something later in the year or just set our sights on 2021. Our host, the Carnegie Hotel has been most gracious and understanding and made things easy.

So, being limited by social distancing and shelter-in-place, what can we do to keep the ol' ET Spirit alive? If you're connected online, there is plenty. First of all, consider joining the io chat group at <https://groups.io/g/ETWNC> where we discuss anything from history and old stories to modeling. In fact, Lee Bishop and Tom Grabenstein have been giving us some mouth watering vignettes of their respective On30 layouts, and Tim Smith recently showed off his modeling skills. Just remember when you search for the io site...NO AMPERSAND, just ETWNC.

How about the Johnsons Depot site at <http://www.stateoffranklin.net/johnsons/index.htm>? This gives us links to some Johnson City history, the George L. Carter Museum and Ken Riddle's site—The Cy Crumley Scrapbook with an extensive library of photos (and a few tales too).

Remember, digital copies of *The Stem-*

*winder* and other fine items are available from our Society President Chris Ford, and if you're behind on *Every Time with No Complaint*, Johnny Graybeal has most back issues available. And that's not even close to a complete list, so please keep your spirits up and, of course, wash your hands. This newsletter will be a bit shorter than what we've been able to present to everyone, but we have a surprise inside. So read on...

Curtis Brookshire, Editor 🚂

### From the President—

These are unprecedented times for our communities and our Society. Out of an abundance of caution, and in an effort to protect the health and safety of our Society members and members of the community, we have followed the lead of many other organizations. We'll watch carefully as events unfold and make our future plans accordingly. *Suggestions from members are always welcome!* Please check for updates in our Newsletters, and of course, we will post any tentative plans on the "groups.io" site as well. Newsletters and lots of other ET&WNC related info is available on our website at [www.etwncrrhs.org](http://www.etwncrrhs.org). Catch up on your reading under the "Histories and Links" tab.

The Historical Society is still alive and open for business, albeit all electronic at the moment. Thanks to everyone for helping us keep going and helping to keep the memory and the spirit of the ET&WNC Railroad alive.

CFORD



# News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

## George L. Carter Railroad Museum at ETSU focused on the ET&WNC RR HO<sub>n3</sub> layout

*Fred J. Alsop III, Director of the museum, sends us this –*

In the weeks leading up to the initial concerns about COVID-19 coming to our Appalachian mountain region of East Tennessee life at the George L. Carter Railroad Museum on the campus of East Tennessee was proceeding at a normal pace. We had many Saturdays with more than 100 visitors touring the museum, we were hosting many children's birthday parties and we were working on exhibits and holding monthly operating sessions. The MEMRR's HO layout was getting a greater variety of track routing and the wiring to make it all work, the "Tweetsie" layout continued to have scenery added and I was working on creating two more buildings for the layout; the Johnson City Depot and the Lacey House at Blevins.

The world began to change for our model railroad club, our chapter of the NRHS and the Carter Railroad Museum during the second week of March. The university announced that the students who were about to depart for their Spring Break would have that break extended through April 13th and that faculty should begin to prepare to deliver their classes for the next few weeks online. We closed the railroad museum to the public on March 14, canceled all pending birthday parties, canceled our March club meetings and the meeting of the Big Train Show Committee and planned to use the time to continue to work on our museum layouts and exhibits. On March 20, the university announced as of March 24 all university buildings would be under lockdown and I advised all of our members to remove any personal items they wished to have access to for the foreseeable future to collect them and take them home ASAP. So, we are currently closed and practicing social distancing and self-quarantining and working on our hobbies at home.

In addition to more scenery being installed on the ET&WNC RR layout in the region of tunnel #1 and Hampton's covered deck bridge two important structures were



Lacey store and post office in front of the Lacey House at Blevins. Photo courtesy of Fred Alsop.

completed or nearly completed; the Lacey House at Blevins (Hopson) and the large ET&WNC & Southern Railway combined depot in Johnson City. The small Lacey House is a two-part dwelling set behind the Lacey store/post office just east of the Blevins depot. The small structure is elevated on a brick wall foundation and the second section of the house connected by a long porch had to be constructed as a false front because of lack of space for its footprint on the layout. It is nestled beneath the trees and surrounded by other shrubs and terrain that allows it to fit nicely into the landscape. This structure makes the store, outbuilding and station look much more interesting and the area much more "lived in".

The Johnson City Depot (now White Duck Taco and YeeHaw Brewery) is a rather large, architecturally-complex building that is taking quite a great number of hours to scratch build. The photo I have supplied shows it about 85% complete. Since this picture of the model was made I have added custom-built chimneys and canopy bracing under all the covered

decking around the building and two hanging signs stating in bold lettering "Johnson City". Some detailing of the interior remains to be done before it is installed on the layout.

Hopefully, we will be open to the public soon and will be able to continue working on our exhibits. The 5th Annual Big Train Show is still on-track for June 5-6, at least for now. When all of this pandemic has run its course we hope to see you all back at the Carter RR Museum and to show you with pride our modeling of our favorite narrow gauge railroad.

Stay safe and stay well. Information about events and layouts can be found on our website at [www.memrr.org](http://www.memrr.org) 🚂



The nearly completed ET&WNC Railroad/Southern Railway combination depot in Johnson City. Photo courtesy of Fred Alsop.

## Linville Depot & Caboose 505 at the Avery County Historical Museum

*Jerry Turbyfill sends us the latest from Newland, NC –*

The Avery County Museum is currently shut down due to the Corona virus. I am working on the ladder on the front end of Caboose 505 and have also put hand rails on the platforms.

We recently learned of the passing of Dick Johnson who took many photos of the Historical Society events. Dick covered both the move of the Linville Depot to Newland and of ET&WNC Caboose 505 as it traveled through Roan Mountain to its new home behind the Linville Depot at the Avery County Museum. Dick passed away in September of 2019.

Find out more about the Museum by visiting their new website at [www.averycountymuseum.com](http://www.averycountymuseum.com) 🚩

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## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

*Matt Bumgarner has this news from Newton, NC –*

The SE Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum in Newton has been quiet during the first part of the year due to the colder temperatures. We have spent much of this time getting to know our operational Alco S-3, Alexander RR #6, and training a pool of qualified engineers. We regularly fire up and exercise the locomotive once every two weeks to keep the batteries charged and the machinery well-lubed and limber. We also started back on the restoration of our Southern Railway caboose X2715, with about 60% of the interior being complete at this time. We were pleasantly surprised at the condition the “bones” of this cab were in after removing much of the exterior siding and interior sheathing. The NC Railroad Expo has been postponed to June 13th in Hickory. Find more about us on our website at [www.newtondepot.com](http://www.newtondepot.com) 🚩

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## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

There’s nothing new to report from the modeling committee. That’s not necessarily bad news as what’s been offered is still available. What are you modeling? Let us know through the ETWNC “io” group at <https://groups.io/g/ETWNC>. 🚩

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## Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

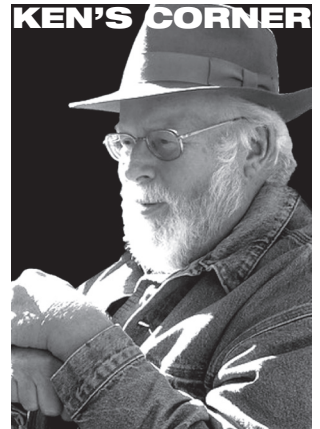
*Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –*



Tweetsie was scheduled to open on April 3rd. However, we’re postponing the park opening date to adhere to the current recommendations from the CDC and the State of North Carolina. We will continue to monitor the situation with guidance from public health professionals to determine when the park will open. That having been said we’ll still mention some scheduled events planned for the season: Day out with Thomas, June 12-21st; Fireworks Extravaganza, Saturday July 4th; Cool Summer Nights, July Saturdays 11, 18 and 25th; Railroad Heritage Weekend, August 29-30th.

Please check the Tweetsie website for the latest updates.

Visit our website at [www.tweetsie.com](http://www.tweetsie.com) 🚩



I knew several people who had the flu in 1918-1919. My grandfather, whose name was Dewey Riddle, was roundhouse carpenter for the Clinchfield RR. He went to work in 1917 and he worked until 1965. Grandpa got drafted in the army on November 10, 1918 and the war ended the next day, so he didn't have to go. But he did catch the Swine Flu. That's what they called it around here. It originated with one hog in Fort Riley, Kansas. Fort Riley was decimated with it, and people took it around the country...Fort Dix, Camp Gordon, GA and the Navy Pier in Philadelphia. Philadelphia was nearly completely wiped out by it. On this side of the mountains we called it the swine flu. In North Carolina it was called the Spanish Flu because Spain, being neutral in the war, reported accurately about the spreading flu.

Grandpa caught the flu right after he went in the Army in November 1918. He and two of his brothers had it. All three of them survived. He said he'd never been so sick. He was sick for two weeks. That was before my father was born. He was born in 1922, but if your father had the flu, you couldn't get it. It skips a generation. I got it when it came back some years ago. I was sick for several days, couldn't even stand having a sheet on in bed. It was pretty wretched.

You look at the ET&WNC in 1918, they were making money. They had bought the line to Pineola and were putting in track over Linville Gap trying to get to Shulls Mills. They were getting the track fixed up and they ran three round trips a day out of Cranberry to end of track. Chester Ford was engineer and they used that Climax that had the star on the number plate that they got from Ritter and that engine would go over that light rail down to the band saw mill. They'd go down with construction materials and come back with lumber. There was three things that happened that was out the ordinary during that flu. Now remember, they only ran to Shull's Mills, they didn't run into Boone until 1919. First thing that happened, you know that picture of the 9 with combine 15 hanging over a washout, that happened. They had a wooden bridge and were making a steel bridge over the Watauga River when they were upgrading everything. Well they brought the 10 over to make steam for the steam hammers to drive the rivets on that bridge. Cap Allison was superintendent of the railroad and he was in charge. Tighteye Simmerly was called out on an extra movement ticket to tend to the 10 and make steam. He was promoted on the 5th of May 1916 so he was a promoted engineer. That was unusual to call an engineer and not a fireman to make steam. Cap kept having Tighteye come down and help with that steam hammer and they let the 10 go dry. It melted the soft plugs out of the crown sheet. It's a thousand wonders it didn't blow up. That happened on a Saturday and they were doubling crews because they had so much business. They didn't have the men to drag the 10 back to Johnson City to fix it. So they made the decision to wait until Monday morning. Ford left that Climax on the siding at Foscoe, and they were going to use the Climax to take the 10 to Johnson City, it was a stout engine and stout enough to get it over Linville Gap. BUT, they left the Climax there, and left the cab full of rich pine to get the fire going on Monday morning. Well, a hostler came in to fire the thing back up and found the thing on fire! A local farmer, mad at the Linville River because he thought he should have gotten more money for its right-of-way decided to get even and lit the thing on fire. Well, the cab was wood and filled with rich pine, which burns like gasoline, and it ruined the crown sheet in the boiler. Come Monday morning they got two dead engines on the main line. Ford went to work at Cranberry and the only engine they had left was the Black Satchel, a class A Climax left over from Ritter and that engine wouldn't pull the slack out of that train. So they telegraphed Johnson City, apprised them of the situation and requested another locomotive. They sent them number 4. The 4 had to make two trips to get that stuff back to Cranberry. Well, back to having only one man on the 10, Brownie Allison came in with the number 4. He came in sick with the flu and spent the next two weeks in the Blue Goose Hotel in Shulls Mills trying not to die. He credited Miss Mamie Shull with saving his life. Evidently she was immune to the flu as she had several people in the hotel sick with it. Monk Bayless, here was there and so was Chick Farrell. They thought Chick was going to die, but he didn't – he had too much alcohol in him. Ol' Chick could really put it away. Miss Shull was still alive when I was working for Tweetsie, and Brownie always said that if it wasn't for Miss Shull's peach pie he would have died. All he ate for two weeks was

...continued on page 4



## Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Since the last newsletter the continued mild winter has permitted a few more days work on the Crown with plans to start on annual track inspection and repairs after Easter. We had a wet February, but no significant drainage issues. The upgraded culvert at Clark's seems to have easily handled the runoff. But DRG is feeling the effects of the COVID-19 crisis with our spring guest groups canceling or rescheduling. Last year was chock full of school groups for train rides, outdoor education and adventure activities. But with schools closed and the rest of the academic year in jeopardy, we are waiting to see what will happen this year. Please pray with us that this crisis will pass soon enough for summer camps to operate. Many of you have heard about *The Christmas Train* project. Though overshadowed by the current crisis, this is really big, big news and it has progressed to the point where we can share more about it.

### The Christmas Train

*This project was shared with those riding the DRG excursion at the 2019 Historical Society Convention. While we are continuing to share this with the DRG community, it is still not publicly announced. Please do not mention it publicly or on social media and other online venues.*

Several years ago, DRG began to explore new ways to expand its impact during the non-summer season and generate revenue to operate and sustain the ministry. In 2013 we learned of Dry Gulch USA, a camp near Tulsa, OK, that had created an event called *The Christmas Train*. This event shared the true story of Christmas with thousands of people while generating significant revenue. Director Terry Maughon and a few board members visited Dry Gulch during the 2013 Christmas season. The train traveled thru 40+ large murals and a few 3-D displays, synchronized to audio narrative in the train, which depicted the Christmas Story and shared the Gospel. The event was very popular, selling out as many as 60,000 tickets each season!

Further research was done to see if an event similar to *The Christmas Train* would work at DRG. In spring of 2014 we made the decision to implement it, realizing it would take 5-10 years to acquire equipment and expand track and infrastructure. By the fall of 2014 the Crown steam locomotive had been acquired. That Christmas season, Terry and I and two other staff members attended the event to learn more from Dry Gulch staff.

Dry Gulch was visited again in 2016 and we learned that the decision had been made to sell the camp, not due to lack of success, but rather a change of focus by the owning church. Knowing of DRG's desire to implement a Christmas Train and wanting to see it continue intact, the church was willing to sell the entire package to DRG for a fraction of its value! However, as 2017 unfolded, one potential buyer of the camp wanted the train as well, leaving DRG in a holding pattern until early the next year, when the eventual buyer was one that did not want it.

In the spring of 2018 the train was finally available. Phil Raynes and I traveled to Dry Gulch with a DRG pre-purchase inspection team. In August of 2018 the DRG board, taking a very big step of faith, approved the purchase of the Christmas Train package! This included 2 Porter steam locomotives, 10 cars, 1.7 miles of track, RR shop tools and supplies, the murals and lighting, as well as all related decorations, costumes and furnishings used during the event. The contract was phased over a full year to accommodate fundraising and the logistics to move everything. A RR contractor took up the track, but many hands were needed to pack and ship all of the decorations, costumes and other non-RR items. Sixteen of us went out for a week in February for this task, and planning for moving the RR equipment.

Considering property, it was realized that the best expanded track layout would include the former sawmill property between DRG and the highway. This 15 acres had gone into a trust upon the recent death of the owner and the trustee was not open to any reasonable offer. DRG was then looking at ways to expand the track without the property. Just as arrangements were being made to ship everything and find a place to store it, things suddenly changed and the property was offered with very favorable terms. It is often said around DRG that God is rarely early, but never late!

Spring and summer was EXTRA busy for all the DRG staff and volunteers, preparing for "The Arrival." The former mill shed on the new property, while needing some repair, was well-suited to store the equipment and, with upgrades, to become the permanent "Train Shed." With a big hustle to clean it out and lay track, 4 tracks were ready for the coaches in late June and one more for the locomotives in mid-August. There were a total of 57 truckloads of trains, track, RR shop items, a water tower, mural frames, and decorations!

The acquisition phase is complete and now DRG is fundraising and planning for the construction. "Some assembly required!" The target date for the grand opening of the 2021 Christmas Season is November 27, 2021, the first Saturday after Thanksgiving. Grading has been proceeding over the winter. DRG has many influential and prominent Tri-Cities area people behind the project and serving on the fundraising committee. The capital campaign is on hold during the COVID-19 crisis and may delay the project. An online version of the fundraising brochure and related material is in progress and should be live soon at [www.christmastrain.com](http://www.christmastrain.com).

Along with *The Christmas Train* program, the expanded facilities will enable more public scenic rides into the gorge during the other three seasons of the year. The sawmill property, with direct access from the highway, has space for public parking and boarding away from the camp center. Scenic trains can pass through the camp center to the gorge without the security, logistical and access issues of the current boarding location.

This is by far the biggest project in DRG history. And in many ways it is bigger than the initial effort to start the DRG ministry. It is very exciting, but also at times rather overwhelming! Please keep us in your prayers as this project continues. Visit our website at [www.doerivergorge.com](http://www.doerivergorge.com) 🚂



Mark assists in the unloading of one of the steam engines into the new facilities.



Trackplan of the new project. The Ministry is at the lower right with Hwy 19E on the left.

### Ken's Corner continued from page 3

three pieces of peach pie Miss Shull made.

Miss Shull was almost 100 when I'd take Brownie to see her. She lived in a little trailer behind her son's house right there at Hound Ears. But I don't think I've ever seen two people more happy to see each other than Brownie Allison and Mamie Shull. I got Robe Shull's phone number and I'd call him and tell him I was going to bring Brownie over, and whenever we got there, there'd be a peach pie. Miss Shull made the finest peach pie I ever did eat. She lived to be 105. She was a great old lady, she really was. Her mind was as clear when she was 15 as when she was 105. While Brownie was laying there sick, that's when the washout happened under the 9. Cranberry was overcrowded by all those people working in the mines. The flu got into those people and just decimated the children. If you go through the Cranberry cemetery, there's probably 100 graves of kids between the ages of 2 and 12 that died in the flu. There was 17 died in one night. There was so many dying they couldn't bury them all. A trip through that cemetery will really bring it home to you how many of those kids died. There's a whole bushel of them. I just hope this flu doesn't turn out like that one did. Scot Dean is buried there. He's the first engineer they ever got. Dallas Mackie too, the only agent the railroad had in Cranberry. He died just a week after the last run in October 1950.

Ken Riddle 🚂