



FOUNDED IN 1989

The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Annual Convention – May 26-28 Make Your Plans Now!

We're looking forward to seeing everyone again in Johnson City over Memorial Day Weekend. There are so many things happening, you'll want (maybe) to take notes!

Lots of work is going on at the Doe River Gorge. You'll see construction on their Christmas Train ride and up in the Gorge. Keep your fingers crossed that we'll experience **STEAM** in the Gorge for the first time in 20 years.

Tweetsie Railroad has also been busy building new rides. Of course we'll get to enjoy "the same old ride" we go there for in the first place. We look forward to another fine visit and another fine show from our good friends in Blowing Rock.

Modelers take note: we'll have three chances to operate on the Carter Museum's layout with the crew there. It will be our last chance to run on one of the finest narrow gauge layouts in the world in its current location. It will also be one last opportunity to take photos and admire the fine details we see each year in the HON3 Annual. We've got a couple of fine clinics

planned as well as a hike or bike along the original ROW. So make your reservations and register and we'll see you real soon.

Curtis Brookshire, Editor 🚩

From the workbench of your Society President –

It's that time! Make your plans now, especially any Hotel reservations! I'm ready to actually see folks that I usually only get to talk to via email! Lots of news in here... read on! Be sure to check the Convention Registration form that's included with this Newsletter. Now don't shoot the messenger...but you'll notice that we had to go up on our registration price, mainly due to increased meal costs. We discovered that our Convention price has not been covering our actual costs. Our group likes to eat, so we'll just have to grin and bear it. Thank you one and all for participating in spreading the word about our favorite little narrow gauge railroad!

CFORD



Historical Society at Tweetsie Railroad – Group Photo 1994 – Chris Ford

News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

George L. Carter Railroad Museum at ETSU with focus on the ET&WNC RR HOn3 layout

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

The George L. Carter Railroad Museum on the campus of East Tennessee State University is looking forward to the upcoming ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society's Annual Convention in Johnson City. We plan to have our doors open on Friday afternoon as well as on our regular Saturday hours to host all of the convention participants who want to visit us while you are in town. We plan to once again host convention visitor operating sessions on our HOn3 "Tweetsie" layout for those members who wish to be engineers and conductors on Friday afternoon, and again for several runs on Saturday. We will announce operation session and sign-in times at the convention.

On June 2–3, 2023 we will be hosting our 7th Annual Big Train Show in the 64,000 sq. ft. ETSU Memorial Center "Mini-Dome". This train show has been growing annually and now hosts more than 65 vendors from at least 10 states with more than 350 tables of wares ranging from model railroad trains and accessories, to model railroad structures, railroad art, railroad collectibles, railroad jewelry, books, clothing, and much, much more. The two-day event is becoming one of the largest in the southeast and we hope you will place it on your calendar and come and enjoy the extravaganza with us. If you are interested in becoming a vendor or providing a model railroad display, please contact train show coordinator Roger Teinert at 423-791-4937 for information and registration forms.

If you would care to join us for a rail excursion in 2023 we have a couple planned. We will be hosting a 3-day Labor Day weekend trip to Chattanooga, TN and Blue Ridge, GA to ride several trains and to visit some of the other attractions in the area. We depart from the ETSU campus via modern motor coaches with all accommodations and some meals included in this rail package. In October we will be riding the rails on the Smoky Mountain Railroad from Bryson City, NC and touring their big Lionel Railroad Museum as part of our excursion package. This fall-color trip is a one-day event. Again, all transportation is from the ETSU campus in Johnson City. If you are interested in joining us please contact John Dodge at econguy2000@hotmail.com. The proceeds from these rail events go to supporting the Carter Railroad Museum and the activities of the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS.

Work to improve the model railroad layouts in HO, N, G, and HOn3 scales in the museum is continuous and you will see a number of changes since your last visit, particularly if you are dropping by once a year as an ET&WNC RR HS participant. The adage that model railroads are never finished is proving to be true as we make changes to the parts of the layout that our viewers can see along the tracks. What cannot be seen is all the work that it takes beneath the layouts and behind the scenery to keep all the trains and their consists operating as flawlessly as possible. We have a group of dedicated volunteers who put in countless hours to make our little trains in their miniature landscapes operate dependably in true imitation of the prototypes. With the completion of the Elk

Park, NC section of our ET&WNC RR layout little additional scenery work has been done. The area around the Johnson City engine and car facilities is the last remaining section that is in need of some scenery details, but that is currently on hold.

One of our college-age members, Ben Merritt, has been furnishing us with some outstanding, highly-detailed, 3D-printed water tanks and rolling stock for the ET&WNC that have never before been available to modelers and I have turned my attention to completing some of these kits for our layout. We now have both versions of the "Tweetsie" water tanks trackside along the right-of-way and I have just completed the model of the #503 caboose. Ben is printing all these kits in several popular model scales, not just the HOn3 scale that we need for our narrow gauge layout. See his website at Merritt 3D Printing and Design – merritt3d.com – for detailed information and ordering information. The #503 caboose kit contains the superstructure as a single printed piece, and the floor as a second separate printed piece. Two 3D printed ladders, railings, and a selection of grab irons complete the kit. Couplers (Kadee #714 recommended), trucks, decals, and a brake wheel are not included in the kit and must be purchased elsewhere. The kit is very well designed and the parts fit together well. "Dimples" in the caboose body indicate the points that have to be drilled to install the metal grabs. Painting is easy and it does not take many hours to have this little caboose ready to ride the rails and dress up the end of the train. I have included a couple of photos of the model I assembled, painted and detailed so you can see what a very nice model it is. With this caboose added to our ET&WNC roster, I am now beginning to assemble Ben's new kit of the ET&WNC parlor car #10, the Azalea.

As mentioned in the last edition of this Newsletter, the Carter Railroad Museum will have to move sometime prior to September 1, 2023. The building we have been housed in for the past 15 years is one of the oldest remaining buildings on campus and is slated to be replaced by a new, larger academic structure. We have been looking for a new larger home for almost 2 years now, and within the past few weeks a new, slightly larger, possible home has been located. The university



3D printed ET&WNC Bobber Caboose #503 produced by Ben Merritt, built and painted by Fred Alsop. *Photos courtesy of Fred Alsop.*

administration, the city of Johnson City, and the new potential landlord are all initiating negotiations that are the path to a contractual agreement that must be approved by all. If this can be successfully completed, we will be moving the museum around July 1st to a location in downtown Johnson City adjacent to a new city park. The building and the location are extremely attractive and there is more than ample parking. Some important changes to the current museum operation will be the monetizing of the museum, longer operating hours including possibly being open 5 days a week, some full-time staff, and more self-interpretation for visitors. Museum certification will be one of the goals as we move to a new operations model.

By the time you read this column in the July Newsletter after the Convention all of this will be settled and hopefully we will be busy getting ready for a grand re-opening. Come see us. The G. L. Carter Railroad Museum is open to the public every Saturday, 10 am to 3 pm, and for special groups by appointment at other times. For more information contact Fred Alsop at 615-604-8759 or email at alsopf@etsu.edu. Our website is www.memrr.org. 🚩



Unfinished 3D printed shell of caboose #503 with grabirons installed.

News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

More 3D printing projects are in the works, so stay tuned for upcoming announcements. In the meantime, check out Ben Merritt's ET projects on his website at merritt3d.com. Also check David Kmecik's 3DP Train website and ET products on his site at 3dptrain.com to catch up on what's available now. 🚩

Linville Depot & Caboose 505 at the Avery County Historical Museum

Jerry Turbyfill sends us this from Newland, NC –

The Avery County Historical Museum's website is currently under renovation. The Avery County Historical Museum is open from Tuesday thru Friday from 10 am to 3 pm, and Saturdays from 11 am to 3 pm. If you would like more information or to plan a visit, please call 828-733-7111 to confirm the museum's hours. Watch for completion of their new website at www.averycountymuseum.org. 🚩

Tentative Convention Schedule - May 26-28, 2023

Friday, May 26

Convention Registration Opens
Main Ballroom - Carnegie Hotel 3 pm

First Operating Session - Carter Railroad Museum
ETSU Campus 3 pm

Business Meeting and Banquet –
Guest Speaker - Terry Maughon
Doe River Gorge
Main Ballroom - Carnegie Hotel 5:30 pm

Saturday, May 27

Dr. Mick Whitelaw Presentation –
**A Role in Rock History -
Geology of the Appalachians and Tweetsie's Useful Purpose**

The geography of the region was crucial to the railroad's purpose. This will focus on the areas of the line that meant so much to its success – the ore mine at Cranberry, the scenic beauty of the Doe River Gorge, the quarry at Milligan, and coke and coal for the furnace at Johnson City, which came from regional sources as well.

Lower Level Room - Carnegie Hotel 9 am

Second Operating Session - Carter Railroad Museum
ETSU Campus 10 am

Lunch On Your Own –
Yee-Haw Brewing / White Duck Taco Shop - Johnson City Noonish

Third Operating Session - Carter Railroad Museum
ETSU Campus 1:30 pm

Chris Jessee Presentation –
Layout Design

There are many well documented structures along the ET that played key roles in supporting the railroad while forming the towns and cities the railroad served. As I create my model railroad of the ET&WNC I'll build many of these structures, first digitally and then physically in miniature. This presentation will show how to model some of these structures in context so we can learn about and preserve their cultural heritage.

ETSU Campus 2 pm

Leave For Tweetsie Railroad 4 pm

Tweetsie Train Ride, Dinner Catered by Dan'l Boone Inn, and a Short Presentation - **Development of the ET&WNC Layout** by Dr. Fred Alsop –
Tweetsie Railroad - Tweetsie Palace 6 pm

Sunday, May 28

Tweetsie Trail Hike / Bike Tour (Weather Permitting) –
Tweetsie Trail - Johnson City 9 am

Group Lunch, **Steam Train Rides** and hiking in the Gorge –
Doe River Gorge Noon

Note: Presentation topics, times and locations are subject to change.

Your Registration fee of \$95.00 will cover all Historical Society Convention Sponsored Activities including our Society admission to Tweetsie Railroad and the train rides at the Gorge, plus the cost of three meals (Friday night at the Carnegie, Saturday night at Tweetsie and Sunday lunch at Doe River Gorge). We really need everyone to register as early as possible so we can provide an accurate headcount to cover our meals.

Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

Curtis Brookshire shares this news from Newton, NC –

Our friends in Newton are carrying on despite the loss of founding member Matt Bumgarner. All of the displays and the developing model railroad depicting the Carolina and North Western are open and welcoming guests. The bad news is we're working on a new spokesperson to keep our little newsletter up to date with the latest developments. I expect by the summer issue, we'll be able to again share what's happening. Your editor strongly recommends a trip to Newton in conjunction to your visit to other ET&WNC venues during the upcoming convention. We'll talk more about what's happening at our meeting at the Carnegie in May. Please visit their website at www.newtondepot.com. 🚧

Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Spring is springing at DRG and the pace has already picked up in terms of projects and preparations for summer camp, which begins first Sunday in June. Guest group traffic is also picking up and school groups are beginning to schedule their field trips that will keep the train busy during the first two weeks of May. From there summer staff will be arriving for training, and in the midst of that we're looking forward to seeing many of you on Memorial Day weekend.

Some vegetation removal work has already resumed on the gorge ROW and track inspection and repairs will begin shortly after Easter. We're also pleased to report that the two summer "railroad internship" positions mentioned last time are already filled. This is thanks to some designated funding we're looking forward to getting further ahead on track and ROW maintenance again this year.

Keeping fingers crossed, 2023 may finally be the year **STEAM** returns to Pardee Point. The Crown was able to pop through the first tunnel for the 2021 Narrow Gauge Convention, but the needed track upgrades weren't quite complete to safely go further. Then last year the track was ready, but the Crown developed a leaky tube. So, the Crown re-tubing job was completed late last fall in time for a hydro test and sign-off by the state. But freezing weather prevented a test firing, so we're now waiting to get beyond last probable freeze and then it will get a heat cycle to check the tubes while hot. Then all the "cinder control" baffles and screen will be reinstalled in the firebox, so barring any further issues (third time lucky!) the Convention should be able to witness the official "return of steam" into the gorge! 2003 was the last season Opryland's "Rachel" operated, so 20 years is a good year for it to happen.

In sadder news, long-time DRG volunteer Mike Dowdy passed away Feb 4. He was son of original ET&WNC crewman Jim Dowdy so with that connection, it became our custom for Mike to crew the engine for the convention trip each year, which will make him particularly missed this time. Mike seemed to have knack for showing up when things really needed to get done and would dive right in and help. DRG was honored to be asked and able to host the Celebration of Life service on March 12.

The Christmas Train project continues to move forward. Engineering work for grading is **FINALLY** complete and has been out for bid, with one already in hand. ROW clearing work that had begun then was recently completed. This work turned out to be quite extensive but was greatly expedited by loan of a large track hoe

from Meade Equipment, grubbing out all vegetation and removing many trees. In addition to the ROW itself, the entire rear section of the former sawmill property was cleared, removing not just vegetation, but lots of junk and a zillion old tires (!) that came with the property. This included the area around the mill shed where the new rail equipment is stored and where the loco shop will be built adjacent. Preliminary design work for the shop included a field trip to Tweetsie last fall to see their shop and service pit. This was then recently quoted, but unfortunately at much higher than expected cost, so alternate, perhaps phased, options are now being considered. Looking forward to seeing y'all at the convention and hearing the whistle blow! Please visit our website for more info about our activities at www.doerivergorge.com. 🚧

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



Winter in the mountains of North Carolina hasn't slowed down the staff at Tweetsie Railroad. Opening day is set for April 8th, and construction crews are diligently working to install three all-new amusement rides at North Carolina's First Theme Park. We are very excited to add three new rides this season – a mini swing; a spring ride drop tower; and a family spinning coaster. The exact opening date of each ride is dependent upon the weather, but earth is being moved, concrete pads are being poured, and our goal is to have the rides ready for Guests at opening in April or shortly afterward.

The 12-seat Mini Swing is designed for younger visitors, and was custom painted in Italy by manufacturer SBFVisa to feature a No. 12 Tweetsie locomotive motif. It will be placed on Miner's Mountain, next to the playground that was completely renovated last year. Children who are at least 4 years old and between 32 and 59 inches tall will enjoy the thrill of the ride's flying chairs.

At the end of last season, Tweetsie Railroad's very popular Free Fall ride was retired. But it is being replaced with a 12-seat spring ride that is taller than the previous unit...and spins as it drops! Also manufactured in Italy by Moser's Rides, the new drop tower is almost 50 feet high. The ride will be located in the same section of Country Fair as the previous drop ride, where guests take in a birds-eye view of the park while spiraling up and down the tower.

The ground above Country Fair is currently being prepared to accommodate Tweetsie Railroad's third new ride, a family spinning coaster. We asked the manufacturer, SBFVisa, to custom make this ride to look like old oak barrels to fit the Wild West theme of the park, and we have appropriately named it *Barrels of Fun*. With the capability of accommodating riders at least 36" tall, this figure-eight coaster can be enjoyed by adults and children.

Guests can expect to see a lot of construction and renovations going on all around the park this year. Our goal is to add new and updated attractions while maintaining the classic and traditional feel of the park. After all, Tweetsie Railroad is a blast from the past and we want to keep it that way. Tweetsie Railroad will be posting regular updates on these and other park projects on its social media pages: [Facebook.com/tweetsie](https://www.facebook.com/tweetsie), [Twitter.com/tweetsierr](https://www.twitter.com/tweetsierr) and [Instagram.com/tweetsierr](https://www.instagram.com/tweetsierr). The staff is looking forward to greeting members of the ET&WNCRR Historical Society and enjoying another evening of train riding, photography and good company. Also, keep Railroad Heritage Weekend of August 26th and 27th on your calendars. See you here at Tweetsie Railroad in 2023. Check Tweetsie's website for the most current schedule and more information at www.tweetsie.com. 🚧



33rd Annual ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society Convention May 26-28, 2023 - Carnegie Hotel - Johnson City, Tennessee Convention Registration Form

Your contact information:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

The Convention price this year will be \$95.00 per person. Total cost for you and a spouse would be \$190.00. **This fee is for ALL Convention sponsored activities and includes the Friday night banquet at the business meeting, admission and meal at Tweetsie Railroad on Saturday night, plus lunch and the train ride at Doe River Gorge on Sunday.** Give us the name of each person attending the Convention so that name badges can be made. Please mark which meals each person will be present for so that we can get an accurate headcount and have meal tickets ready for you. Please understand that we can't reimburse attendees for any meals that they are unable to attend. Thank you!

Name	Friday Night Banquet	Meal at Tweetsie	Lunch at DRG	Price
_____				\$95.00
_____				\$95.00
_____				\$95.00
_____				\$95.00
_____				\$95.00

Mail check and this form **no later than May 1, 2023** to:

**ET&WNC RR Historical Society Treasurer
PO Box 70697
ETSU
Johnson City, TN 37614**

Total Enclosed _____

Please make checks payable to:
ET&WNC RR HS

You may also pay by credit/debit card*** Visa____ MasterCard____ AmericanExpress____ Discover____

Name on card _____

Card number _____

Expiration Date: Month____ Year____ Billing Zip Code _____

Security code number on back of card _____

*****Note - There is a 3.5% plus 15 cents processing fee added to this transaction by the card processing company. Your card will be charged \$98.48 per person.**

If you have any questions please contact Treasurer Patricia Jennings at pjdrj2006@yahoo.com.

Don't forget to make your reservations at the beautiful Carnegie Hotel in downtown Johnson City, Tennessee. There is a *limited* block of rooms available just for our Historical Society Convention attendees at the great rate of \$129.00 (plus tax) per night, *so please book early*. Make your reservations by calling the Carnegie Hotel toll-free at **866-757-8277 and be sure to tell them you are with the **ET&WNC RR Historical Society**. View the accommodations at www.carnegiehotel.com.**