



FOUNDED IN 1989

The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Board of Directors

Officers

Chris Ford, *President*
901-497-0809
chris@cfordart.com

Curtis Brookshire, *Vice President*
703-772-7002
curtis.brookshire@verizon.net

Sharon Stewart, *Secretary*
tuttyjane42@gmail.com

Patricia Jennings, *Treasurer*
pjdrgr2006@yahoo.com

Board Members

Johnny Graybeal, *Past President*
Joel Shipley
Dr. Fred Alsop III
Jerry Turbyfill

Newsletter Editor & Society Historian

Curtis Brookshire
curtis.brookshire@verizon.net

Society Website

www.etwncrrhs.org

Address any inquiries to: (note – new address)

ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society

207 North Boone Street, Suite 2000
Johnson City, TN 37604

34th Annual Society Convention Coming Soon!!

It's time to register for this year's convention. We have a block of rooms reserved, B-U-T . . . they will be released 30 days prior to the convention. So call the Carnegie now and reserve your room. Get registered for the Convention with the included Registration Form.

This year you'll see some new things: a new George L. Carter Museum and new track under construction at the Doe River Gorge. Tweetsie is also doing heavy track work and is bringing on-line some new equipment also.

Here's the schedule as of the first of March: Friday, May 24, registration and our business meeting with elections for president and secretary. Saturday, May 25, a full day starting at the Doe River Gorge and ending at Tweetsie Railroad. We can visit the DRG as early as 9 am to get enough time to ride in the gorge, see the new construction that Mark Milbourne talks about inside this issue, and have lunch. We're welcome at Tweetsie after 2pm plus we're planning a shop tour. Then after Tweetsie we'll end up at the Dan'l Boone Inn for our annual family-style dinner. Sunday, May 26 is our chance to really get to see what's going on at the newly moved and improved Carter Railroad Museum in downtown Johnson City. There also may be some operating possibilities depending on how the layout comes together.

Our planned guest speaker at the Business meeting on Friday night is Johnny Graybeal who will give us a preview of his upcoming book on the Shenandoah Central. While a lot of us have a pass-

ing knowledge of the initial preservation of #12, combine 15 and car 11, there's so much more to the story. We don't realize just how close we came to losing these last pieces of ET&WNC narrow gauge equipment had not three businessmen from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley stepped in and by the skin of their teeth rescued a part of history. Come on to the convention and learn some more.

Another important item: the Society's new mailing address for all correspondence: ET&WNC RR Historical Society Treasurer, 207 North Boone Street, Suite 2000, Johnson City, TN 37604.

Curtis Brookshire, Editor 🚂



Bemberg Tank at the Doe River Gorge during our June, 1994 Historical Society Convention. Photo by Chris Ford.

News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

George L. Carter Railroad Museum Inc. dba The Johnson City Railroad Experience

Dr. Fred J. Alsop III, Museum Director and President of the Board sends us this –

A lot of work continues inside the walls of the Taylor Building in Johnson City, TN where the newly-relocated George L. Carter Railroad Museum is slowly taking shape. Many of our volunteers are working hard to reassemble and, in most cases, redesign our major model railroad layouts. The Mountain Empire Model Railroaders have had to accomplish the most significant redesign to reestablish their Appalachian-themed HO-scale layout into the slightly smaller space their layout will occupy in the new museum. Their MEMRR working group has created a completely new design that will give them 60% more mainline track than they had in our previous location on the ETSU campus, even in the slightly more restricted area now afforded to them, and are working hard to bring their new conceptualized layout to life.

The N-scale layout, representing Knoxville, Tennessee has found a new gallery space and is the layout most likely to be in the most complete stage of readiness when we open to the public, probably sometime in May 2024. We will certainly be able to host the ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society during your Annual Convention in Johnson City over Memorial Day weekend, and we look forward to showing you our new museum.

The ET&WNC “Tweetsie” layout, will grow some with an additional 100+ feet of sceniced landscape that will allow the addition of the important western towns on the line with the addition of Elizabethton and Johnson City, Tennessee. We think when these additional sections are added to the layout it will favorably vie for being the largest HO₃/HO scale layout in the world depicting our favorite Appalachian narrow gauge railroad.

We are excited to announce our first staff member hire, Carson Sailor, as our Exhibits Director and Coordinator. Carson will begin his duties on February 19. He has more than 5 years’ experience at the Museum of Appalachia and with the “Horn in the West” outdoor drama. Among his many “pluses”, he is a railroad enthusiast. Our new pathway to becoming a regional museum with many services, both in-house and through public outreach programs, means we will have to be more than just a building housing several model railroad layouts. This will be a major role that Carson will play as he helps us create exhibits that tell the important story of the railroads and their impact on many Appalachian communities including Johnson City’s rich railroad history. We also want people to not only like what they experience on their initial visit to the museum, but to want to come back and encourage their friends to visit us as well. We plan to have dynamic exhibits, some that will be interactive with touch screens, and to rotate our displays as often as possible to keep

the museum experience fresh and exciting.

Our long-awaited non-profit corporation 501(c)(3) federal application was finally approved by the IRS in mid-January and we can now begin to pursue grant opportunities and work to gain corporate sponsors and major donors. The lack of this federal designation has been a setback to potential sources of funding as we waited for more than 4 months for our application to grind its way through the federal system. We look forward to continuing to strengthen our bonds with the city, the university, and the region as we develop the museum.

We are working with the Digital Media Department at ETSU to create an orientation film as an introduction to the museum and to the area’s railroad history. This will be a short 10–12-minute presentation that will be shown in a small theatre setting developed just for this purpose and available to our museum visitors soon after they enter the museum. Combining this video with the many other exhibits currently on site, or planned for the near future, will provide our visitors of all ages with a good grasp of the impact of this form of transportation on the region from the 1850s to the present day.

We will have to monetize the museum with an entrance fee to pay the rent and the salaries of our employees, as well as the other expenses that come with this kind of major enterprise. We will be establishing a schedule of entrance fees covering a range of visitors from individuals to school groups. All of this adds to the complexity of our new operations, as will the greatly extended hours of operation and being open 5 days/week (as opposed to the 5 hours/1 day a week as we were for 16 years on the university campus). These are the pluses and minuses of becoming a regional museum. We are looking forward to the challenge.

For many years we have used our campus address as the permanent address for our model railroad clubs, our NRHS chapter, the museum, and the ET&WNC RR Historical Society. The Historical Society’s Board of Directors has recently accepted the museum’s offer to continue to be the permanent address for all correspondence directed to the Society’s Treasurer. This continued arrangement will provide stability for mailings to this office from its members, including the payment of annual dues. The new address you need to use to send mailings to the Historical Society is: ET&WNC RR Historical Society Treasurer, 207 North Boone Street, Suite 2000, Johnson City, TN 37604. The museum will continue to collect your mail at this central address and forward it on to the Society Treasurer as it has been doing. As you now have the new address for the George L. Carter Railroad Museum, Inc. let me also give you our new website where you can keep up with all the latest happenings at the museum and follow our progress at johnson-city-railroad-experience.org.

We look forward to the grand opening of **The Johnson City Railroad Experience** in a few months and to your visit during the Society’s Convention in Johnson City in late May. 🚂



From the workbench of your Society President—

Well gang, it's come time for some new leadership in this great organization! I've made the difficult decision to step aside as your President and allow the Society to take on some new ideas, some new thinking and some dynamic leadership. I'd like to thank the movers and shakers from our formative days for their wisdom and guidance in getting us to where we are today. It truly has been an honor and a privilege to, in my small way, help lead this fine group for the past 10 years. I thank each and every one of you for your friendship, for your trust, and most of all for your support, which was sorely needed by one who is absolutely not a public speaker. But, we made it through and we have come out stronger and better. At this point I need to move on to other ET&WNC related projects that are on the horizon....no, actually, they are on my workbench and begging to be completed! You'll be seeing me...I'll still be here...give me a call! Thank you one and all for allowing me to join you in this journey of spreading the word about our favorite little narrow gauge railroad!

CFORD

Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

Johnny Graybeal shares this news from Newton, NC –

Everyone at the Newton Depot and the Southeastern Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum are working hard, preparing the 22nd Annual Hickory Railroad Expo, also known as the Hickory Train Show, which will be held at the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Friday April 5th and Saturday April 6th. This event is important to the museum as it provides much of the funding for restoration projects. All of the proceeds from the event go to railroad restoration projects. The hours of the show are 12-7 on Friday and 9-3 on Saturday. There will be over 275 tables of model railroad materials and full sized railroad items too. If you are in the region, this is a great way to support the museum. The museum will also be open those days, so stop by to see what is going on. Please visit our website at newtondepot.com. 🚩

Linville Depot & Caboose 505 at the Avery County Historical Museum

Aneida Johnson sends us this from Newland, NC –

Here's updates on the Linville Depot: Last summer the handicapped ramp to the depot was rebuilt as the old one was rotting and not safe for patrons of the museum. The Avery County Commissioners provided funding for this necessary improvement. The depot was the location for the Christmas Open House on December 3rd. Boone & Church, a rising young bluegrass band, entertained visitors at the Open House. Recently the thermostat for the depot heating and cooling system was repaired due to a malfunction that occurred last year.

The Avery County Historical Museum is open Tuesday through 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. Check out their new website at averycountymuseum.org. 🚩

Tentative Convention Schedule - May 24-26, 2024

Friday, May 24

Convention Registration Opens
Main Ballroom - Carnegie Hotel3 pm

Social Time at the Carnegie

Business Meeting and Banquet –
Guest Speaker - Johnny Graybeal
Shenandoah Central
Main Ballroom - Carnegie Hotel 5:30 pm

Saturday, May 25

Doe River Gorge –
Train Rides and Hiking in the Gorge
Tours of New DRG Rail Facilities
Doe River Gorge Ministries - Hampton9 am

DRG Lunch –
Doe River Gorge Ministries..... Noonish

Leave DRG For Tweetsie Railroad1 pm

Tweetsie Railroad –
Access to the Park for Convention Attendees,
Tweetsie **Train Rides** and Shop Tour
Tweetsie Railroad - Blowing Rock2 pm

Tweetsie Railroad Closes –
Attendees Leave for Dan'l Boone Inn6 pm

Dan'l Boone Inn Buffet Dinner
Dan'l Boone Inn - Boone6:30

Sunday, May 27

George L. Carter Railroad Museum –
Exclusive Access and Tour of New Facilities
The Johnson City Railroad Experience
207 North Boone Street, Downtown Johnson City 9 am

This concludes the Society Convention Sponsored Activities

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, the train rides at the Gorge, plus the cost of three meals (Friday night at the Carnegie, Saturday lunch at Doe River Gorge, and Saturday night dinner at the Dan'l Boone Inn). We really need everyone to register as early as possible so we can provide an accurate headcount to cover our meals. Thank You!

Historical Society Magazine - Every Time With No Complaint

Johnny Graybeal sends us this update –

Work is still ongoing to finish this double sized issue on the early history of No. 12. Unfortunately it is taking longer to get the finished product than we expected. I want to personally apologize for indicating that the issue would be out sooner. We actually thought it would be out by now, but it is still on the way. No more predictions, but we promise that we will get this amazing issue out as soon as possible. It will be worth the wait. 🚧

Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Happy (almost) spring! Milder weather has been creeping in already and summer / camp season (and the Convention) will be here before we know it. We had a lot to report last issue as we closed out 2023 and much of it is still in progress. January had a lot of wet weather which prevented remaining grading work from moving very far, which has delayed the track contractor a bit as well, but work is moving forward again much more lately. Be sure to continue monitoring Ryan Rice's YouTube channel, AboveGroundMedia, as he did another drone pass in early February and possibly will have another by the time you read this.

Ballast making is one thing that has continued through the wetter weather, sometimes lately with two large off-road dump trucks shuttling from across the river, rather than the one smaller standard truck. The piles are continuing to grow!

We had most of the track material needed from Oklahoma, but required a few more switches and alternate smaller frogs which we discovered are very hard to find in 90 pound rail and this has also been some delay to the track crew. But finally located and arriving very soon.

Foundations for the railroad shop are completed and the framing is now up (beginnings of this visible in Ryan's last drone pass) and being skinned as I write. Once the shell is up, track and pit framing will be installed and floor/pit concrete poured.

Grading is also just underway for the loading platform area and adjacent multipurpose structure. The first stages of this have a very tight time frame to get concrete and primary steelwork complete as a big crew from Carpenters for Christ has offered and scheduled to come in early June to do all the framing and drywall work. The resulting elevations for this area are requiring some minor changes to track elevation/grades, but should still work OK operationally.

The new boiler for the first Porter steam locomotive recently arrived. It will need another few weeks to complete on-site details for it and the chassis and then can be set on.

The power lines cutting across the front of main camp need to be moved underground. Conduit for this was anticipated and buried a number of years ago, and now is the time, so preliminary work has been done to locate and excavate the end points and scheduling the pull and changeover.

I have finished going through preliminary prep on the computers that will drive the program soundtrack in the coaches. We've also been finalizing the start and end points

of the trackside displays and from that I've done a lot of work lately using the resulting audio track timing to set and map out the position of each along the track.

So, things continue to move along! We continue to have the goal of opening this year, but are also seeing that weather, supply and labor chains and other factors beyond our control leave a lot of uncertainty. But much, VERY MUCH, has happened since Convention time last year, so there will be much to see this year! The gorge end of the RR has been quiet over the winter, but spring track inspection and repairs will be starting soon. We have probably two "Railroad Interns" for the summer and are still looking for a third. If you know anyone interested, please have them contact me at mark@doerivergorge.com. Visit our website for more info about our activities at doerivergorge.com. 🚧

News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

Latest news is that there will be at least one (maybe more!) ET&WNC related article(s) in the upcoming issue of White River's On30 Annual which should come out late in the spring. We've also see some fine photographs of Ben Meritt's newly released vestibuled coaches as done by Doc Tom Grabenstein and Tim Smith. We're watching to see what's coming next. 🚧

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



After a very busy Tweetsie Christmas event ended on December 30th, Tweetsie Railroad closed to the public but continued many improvement and maintenance projects. An exciting new ride is scheduled to arrive this spring that will replace one of our older offerings. More news on this will be announced soon.

Numerous train and track projects are also keeping the Staff busy. In November, we completed the final phase of the trestle renovation. As I write this, we are about to start the final round of crosstie repairs begun in 2021, with several hundred ties ready to be replaced all around the train loop. The entire stretch of track on Main Street has been dug up in preparation for tie replacement, re-bedding, crossing upgrades, and infrastructure improvements for drainage and electrical service along this section of the route.

Our train car refurbishment project is proceeding on schedule. An all-new excursion car was delivered to us around the first of the year, and should be in service at the time of opening day. One by one, all our older cars have been – or will be – rotated through a complete renovation process.

Extensive drive wheel work on Locomotive 190 is now underway in our shop, along with all the routine off-season locomotive maintenance and inspections. Along with the train-related work, our Shop staff is also upgrading several of the park's rides, and numerous improvements are being made to all the park buildings and facilities. The April 6th Opening Day will soon be here, and we're looking forward to another great Season in 2024. Check Tweetsie's website for the most current schedule and more information at tweetsie.com. 🚧



34th Annual ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society Convention

May 24-26, 2024 - Carnegie Hotel - Johnson City, Tennessee

Convention Registration Form

Your contact information:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

The Convention price this year is again \$95.00 per person. Total cost for you and a spouse would be \$190.00. **This fee covers ALL Convention sponsored activities and includes the Friday night banquet at the business meeting, the Saturday morning train ride and lunch at Doe River Gorge, admission to Tweetsie Railroad on Saturday afternoon, plus dinner at Dan'l Boone Inn in Boone on Saturday evening.** 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 cannot reimburse attendees for any meals that they are unable to attend. Thank you!

| Name | Friday Night Banquet | Lunch at DRG | Dinner at Dan'l Boone Inn | Price |
|------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| | | | | \$95.00 |
| | | | | \$95.00 |
| | | | | \$95.00 |
| | | | | \$95.00 |
| | | | | \$95.00 |

Mail your check and this form *no later than May 1, 2024* to:

!!!! THIS NEW ADDRESS !!!!

ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society Treasurer
207 North Boone Street, Suite 2000
Johnson City, TN 37604

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 pjdrgr2006@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 for Historical Society Convention attendees at the great rate of \$139.00 (plus tax) per night. *Please book early...our block of rooms closes April 23, 2024.* Call 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 hotel accommodations at www.carnegiehotel.com.**