

FOUNDED IN 1989

The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Historical Society**
207 North Boone Street, Suite 2000
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Upcoming Convention Schedule and News!

We're looking forward to our 35th Annual Convention starting on Friday May 30th, 2025! As of the first week in April, we have the following schedule planned: on Friday May 30th, early arrivals can visit the train show that will be taking place over at the mini-dome on ETSU's campus across the street from the Carnegie Hotel, and can also visit the Johnson City Railroad Experience (JCRE). Dr. Fred Alsop's column has more details. Convention Registration will open around 3:30 and we'll have our business meeting at 5:30. This year we vote on Vice President and Treasurer, and I'll bring everyone up to date on what's happened with our society leadership in the last year. The meeting is immediately followed by our annual "boo-fay" dinner. Our guest speaker is scheduled to be Tim Smith, who is both a long time member and the assistant shop foreman at Tweetsie. Tim will give us details of a topic looming big on our minds: the project underway to get #12 back into operating condition.

Saturday morning will begin with a clinic courtesy of member Dan Stenger who will discuss his National Narrow Gauge Convention award winning Fn3 model of ET&WNC #2. We'll also have another chance to visit the JCRE before heading over to the Doe River Gorge for lunch and a train ride. As we'll see, there's been a lot of things coming together since our last visit. Read more from Mark Milbourne's column. Saturday afternoon we can head over to the other end of "Tweetsie Country" and see what Tim Smith will discuss at the

Tweetsie Railroad engine shop before having our photo run behind 190 and a dinner catered by Dan'l Boone Inn at the Tweetsie Palace.

Sunday (and probably Friday and Saturday too), we'll have an opportunity to participate in a scavenger hunt being prepared by VP Chris Jessee. He'll tell us more at the Friday meeting.

Your convention registration form is included with the newsletter. Convention registration fee this year is \$100.00 which includes the banquet at the Carnegie on Friday, Saturday lunch and train ride at the Doe River Gorge and dinner at Tweetsie, and your admission to the Johnson City Railroad Experience. IF a miracle happens and the DRG has operating STEAM(!), it will cost \$20.00 for that ride. Even though this is in no way assured, we might want to have something in our pocket to cover the cost, just in case.

Time to turn the page. At the end of March, we finally got our business in order with PNC Bank and Dean Smith now has the tools he needs to perform the Treasurer duties. We're getting things up to date with VP Chris Jesse and Secretary Rae Augenstein, and our Board of Directors are working on improving how we manage our membership and mailing rosters. We'll have more to share at the convention. We look forward to seeing everyone there and plan to have a great weekend. Now, time to check in with our columnists...

Curtis Brookshire, *President & Editor* 🌟

News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

The Johnson City Railroad Experience

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

Things have been growingly busily since the Johnson City Railroad Experience opened its doors to the public on October 3, 2024, and we have tallied more than 5,000 visitors through March 2025. Much work has continued in almost all areas of the new museum, and we are still expanding our footprint. We will soon have a new 900 sq. ft. room just inside our entrance door that will house our relocated orientation theatre with an additional space for public meetings, public lectures, railroad “movie night”, additional railroad gallery art space and much more. We are very excited about the potential programs and exhibits this space will allow us to create. This additional innovative space will also allow us to create a new O-Scale layout where our original orientation theatre was located providing us the opportunity to exhibit a “new” model railroad scale for the public that has been, for many children, the first train set they got from Santa operating around the Christmas tree.

The Mountain Empire Model Railroaders have had the additional manpower and initiative to make extensive progress on their HO-Scale, Appalachian-themed layout. This museum-quality layout is being landscaped and has been pushed forward with many long hours of creative work to a point that, while not yet finished, the club members can now do realistic operation sessions on it. Its “E-shaped” configuration, combined with its several track levels has made it a real attention grabber for both the club and our visiting public. Its creation in its new home, and with its innovative track plan, has made it a real standout layout that is so much better than the original layout the club used for much of its 30+ years of existence. It has become one of the stellar attractions in the museum. The club members and their leaders can be most proud of what they have accomplished.

Work on our HO/HOn3-Scale ET&WNC layout is progressing in several stages and at opposite ends of the state of Tennessee. Chris Ford is working diligently at his Memphis home to create a scale model for the layout of the Cranberry Furnace that once operated in the east end of Johnson City, processing the magnetic iron ore mined at the Cranberry mines in western North Carolina. He is posting updates of his progress on a chat group dedicated to the “Tweetsie” railroad. We very much look forward to being able to display his finished scale display on our layout in the coming months. Here in Johnson City, the cork roadbed for the new large 60+ foot section of this layout, Johnson City to Elizabethton, has been cemented into place and member Frank Fezzie is currently installing the track, most of it dual gauge, over the new roadbed. With the addition of several new sections of benchwork at Hampton, and on both sides of Elk Park, the entire layout has grown by approximately 140 linear feet waiting for new scenery to link them with the existing modules. The layout received only minor damage in its two moves between ETSU, storage, and to our new museum,

and those are quickly being repaired and covered with new scenery. After these repairs are completed, our attention will turn to the twin tasks of creating the rural mountain scenery of this Appalachian-based landscape on the new sections, and the more time-consuming task of researching the buildings that existed in Johnson City and Elizabethton, Tennessee.

The time period we have established for our version of the ET&WNC is 1925, when the “little railroad with a heart” was perhaps in its heyday hauling passengers, produce, raw materials, and products. Many of the buildings of that era are still standing in both towns and will provide the prototypes for modeling. However, many are long since demolished and the research is on to find photographs from that period that provide the images needed to recreate them in miniature. To establish a sense of time, it will be important to also create the signage, billboard art, vehicles, and the fashion of the day that will be sported by the citizens “inhabiting” our 1925-modeled world. They say Rome was not built in a day and neither will our larger addition of “Tweetsie Land” be quickly completed for all the reasons listed above. But give us a year or so and the sections will slowly change from baseboard, plaster cloth, and hydrocal rock castings into green forested mountainsides, lush fields, rushing streams, imposing rock faces, and miniature towns. We have a new laser knife with a much bigger cutting stage, and it will soon be cleaving out the shapes of buildings complete with door and window openings in wood and plastic. Each visit you make will reveal these changes, some small, and some more dramatic. For those of you for whom the ET&WNC Railroad has a special place in your heart, come visit as we bring it back to life in 1:87 scale.

Our railroad museum is much more than model train layouts. It also houses railroad artifacts, including much of the Michael Hardin ET&WNC collection with more to come. We have a 4,000+ volume railroad library, a children’s playroom, and a train simulator where you can be the engineer of a locomotive and its consist. There are information stations and large posters with railroad information, and a scavenger hunt that will lead you throughout the museum. Want to have a birthday party for a child in a railroad environment? We have you covered.

We are also working with local schools promoting a S.T.E.A.M.

Program and we have week-long summer camps already planned. The museum will host the Spring Meeting of the National Railway Historical Society the first 3 days of May and the ET&WNC RR Historical Society will have their Annual Convention here in Johnson City at the end of May. We invite you to come to the museum to see our progress and to try your hand at running a little 2-8-0 or 4-6-0 Tweetsie locomotive down the line. Our museum-sponsored Annual Big Train Show will be happening in the mini-dome at ETSU the last Friday and Saturday

of May as well. We look forward to seeing you in Johnson City. We are open Tuesday-Saturday, 10am to 4:30pm. Check our website at johnsoncityrailroadexperience.org to keep posted on all our happenings. “ALL ABOARD”! 🚂





Dan Stenger will present a clinic about his NNGC award-winning Fn3 model of ET&WNC #2 on Saturday morning at our upcoming Convention at the Carnegie.

Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

Johnny Graybeal shares this news from Newton, NC –

The Southeastern Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum had a busy winter keeping their ALCO S-3 healthy. Cold, cold weather required volunteer crews to stay late into the night with the engine, monitoring the block heater, and starting the engine on many occasions to keep the water from freezing. As spring has now sprung, the emphasis shifted to the Hickory Train show, which occurred April 4th and 5th. This is one of the biggest fund raising events for the museum and its full size restoration projects. The museum will have several special events for National Train Day, which will be on Saturday May 10th. Make plans to join us that day for many outdoor rail related activities. Please visit our website at newtondepot.org. 🚂

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



Tweetsie Railroad is looking forward to opening for the 2025 season on our Saturday-and-Sunday schedule, beginning Saturday April 5th. Our “full schedule” begins May 24th, when we’ll be open five days a week (closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays). The Locomotive No. 12 rebuild project is well underway, and a North Carolina-based boiler company has been engaged to rebuild the firebox and fabricate other components while the locomotive is totally disassembled. Not surprisingly, this project will take a few months – so we’re looking to the No. 190 to bear the load this season. We’ll keep everyone posted on the progress of the No. 12 project.

Multiple other train projects are underway or completed. Our train car refurbishment program is now finished, with five excursion cars totally updated and a brand-new sixth “spare” excursion car now on site. Around the track loop, a section of track in the large cut before Fort Boone was recently rebuilt. This is in addition to the significant portion of the track that was rebuilt in October – courtesy of an unscheduled Hurricane Helene-generated mudslide. It won’t be long before the full schedule of events will be posted on our website for Railroad Heritage Weekend, August 23rd and 24th. We’ll keep you posted in this newsletter and online as news becomes available. Check our website for more information at tweetsie.com. 🚂

Tentative Convention Schedule - May 30-June 1, 2025

Friday, May 30

Convention Registration Opens –
Main Ballroom - Carnegie Hotel 3:30 pm

Social Time at the Carnegie

Business Meeting and Banquet –
Guest Speaker - Tim Smith
Engine #12 Restoration Project
Main Ballroom - Carnegie Hotel 5:30 pm

Saturday, May 31

Clinic –
Dan Stenger
Fn3 Model of ET&WNC Engine #2
Meeting Room - Carnegie Hotel 9 am

The Johnson City Railroad Experience/Carter RR Museum –
207 North Boone Street, Downtown Johnson City 10 am

Doe River Gorge –
Train Ride, Lunch and Hiking in the Gorge
Doe River Gorge Ministries - Hampton 11 am

DRG Lunch at the Gorge Noonish

Leave DRG For Tweetsie Railroad 3 pm

Tweetsie Railroad –
Tweetsie Shop Tour and **Train Ride**
Tweetsie Railroad - Blowing Rock 6 pm Sharp!

Dan'l Boone Inn Catered Dinner
Tweetsie Palace - Tweetsie Railroad 6:30

Sunday, June 1

Scavenger Hunt –
Chris Jessee
QR Code with Details at Registration..... Johnson City All Weekend

This concludes the Society Convention Sponsored Activities

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

Your Registration fee of \$100.00 will cover all Historical Society Convention Sponsored Activities including our Society admission to the Johnson City Railroad Experience, Tweetsie Railroad, and the train ride 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 Tweetsie Palace). We really need everyone to register as early as possible so we can provide an accurate headcount to cover our meals. Thank You!

Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Spring is springing officially this week as I write, with upper 70s now, in spite of a light frost this morning. By now we are pretty much into high gear trying to finish up projects and prep for camp season. As reported last time, the rails for the new loop were approaching closure and this happened right at the end of February. So that is one very major milestone in the ongoing Christmas Train project! Two spikes were left undriven for some kind of commemorative event, date/details TBA. The contractor is now focused on the ballasting, leveling and tamping.

As mentioned pending last time, final profiling of the grade for the spur to reach the gorge track is now underway, as well as final grooming of the new slopes so that grass can be planted ASAP. As always, keep an eye on the DRG YouTube channel. A progress video from mid Feb is now available and another one in the works soon, likely available by the time you read this.

Also by the time you read this, a test firing on the Porter likely will have been done, as has continued in earnest since the last update. Red Oak was recently donated to finish the

cab and Jerry Turbyfill, who did such a lovely job on the Crown cab, has “dove right in” on this one too! So we still seem to be “on track” to operate it for our fundraising banquet in late April. If there are no issues found then and during May, we have made preliminary plans to operate it for the Convention! Fingers (and toes) crossed!!

Last time we mentioned a project to begin offering railbike tours and the expected preliminary railbike arrived middle of February. While there was much to like about it, we are having second thoughts about the overall form factor and have put the project somewhat on hold while we explore an alternate design.

We are still looking to fill 3 summer RR internship positions. We have two returning, but still taking applications for the third slot through late April. This is primarily ongoing maintenance and operations on the gorge section. If you know of a young person who might be interested, they can contact me at mark@doerivergorge.com. Hope to see you all at the Convention! Visit our website for more info on our schedule at doerivergorge.com. 🚂

News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

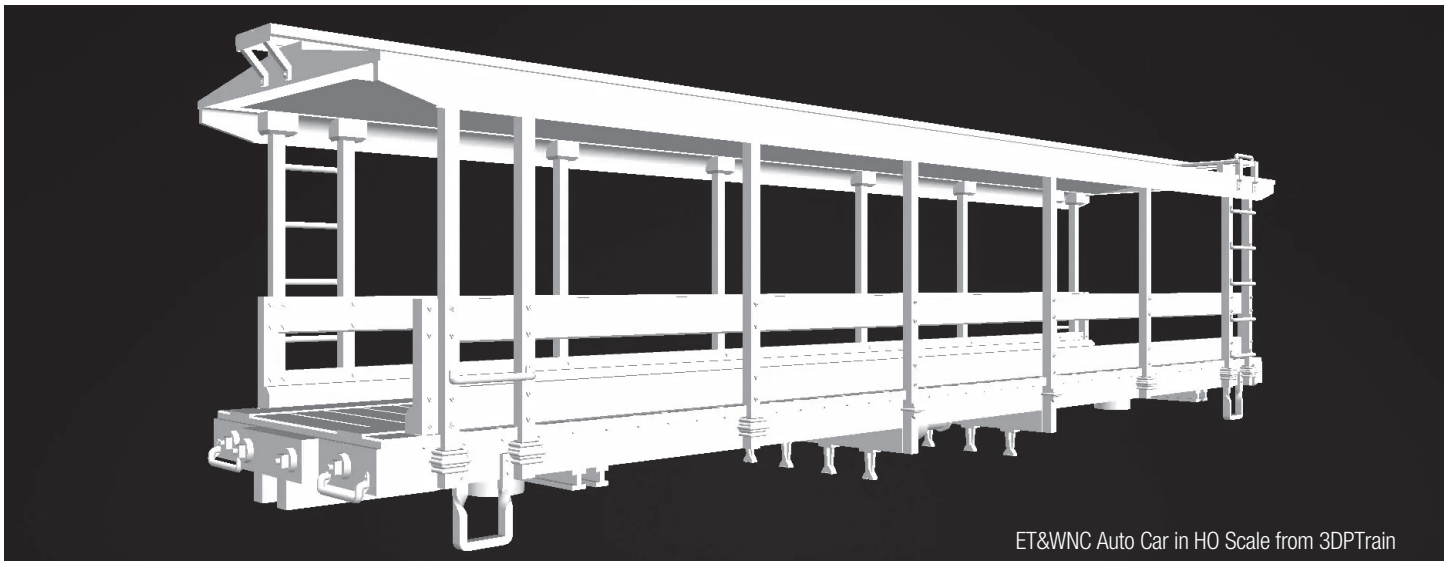
Want to see something intriguing from David Kmeick at 3dptrain.com? Two rare cars to consider: A ghost car on the Tweetsie! A legend in letters of old, an unspoken hero of the news. Model T's on excursion cars? New Fords fresh from the rail yard? 60+ Carloads of autos delivered to Boone beginning in 1923? All documented, but how was it done?

These are all questions that Mike Sager set out to answer. Working with Johnny Graybeal he began digging into history to find the truth behind these legends and stories. While nothing concrete was found, some evidence did exist, namely 3 photographs, none of a complete car, or close enough to make out full details, but enough to start a sketch from. Using these three images and knowledge of other cars the Tweetsie built a sketch was drawn and the ghost car slowly material-

ized. While the two partial images show what we know as “Bonnet Cars”, a third image showed in the background a grainy image of what appears to be a house car, but with modifications that could allow Autos to ride upon it. Here is believed to be our ghost car, the elusive ET&WNC Auto Car!

Working with Mike Sager and pulling Johnny Graybeal in for some final consultation we were able to take Mike's drawing and make this car available to run on your layout today! ET&WNC Auto Car - <https://3dptrain.com/products/wrc-fa01>.

Also available is the Bonnet Car. While only one of these cars is documented to have existed, we modeled this car as it is the basis for our ET&WNC Auto Car. Pre-announced item: Bonnet Car - <https://3dptrain.com/products/wrc-la01>. These are currently available in HO scale. 🚂



ET&WNC Auto Car in HO Scale from 3DPTrain



35th Annual ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society Convention

May 30–June 1, 2025 - Carnegie Hotel - Johnson City, TN

Convention Registration Form

Your contact information:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

The Convention price this year is \$100.00 per person. Total cost for you and a spouse would be \$200.00. **This fee covers ALL Convention-sponsored activities and includes the Friday night banquet at the business meeting, admission to the Johnson City Railroad Experience Museum, the Saturday train ride and lunch at Doe River Gorge, admission to Tweetsie Railroad on Saturday afternoon, plus Dan'l Boone Inn Catering at Tweetsie Railroad 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	Sat. Dinner at Tweetsie RR	Price
				\$100.00
				\$100.00
				\$100.00
				\$100.00
				\$100.00

Mail your check and this form *no later than May 1, 2025* to:
!!!! THIS ADDRESS !!!!

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

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.**

If you have any questions please contact our new Treasurer - Dean Smith - at smithfive@embarqmail.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 **\$149.00 (plus tax) per night. Please book early...our block of rooms closes April 28, 2025. 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.**