

# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## The ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society Turns 30 This Year!



Back in 1988 a Missouri high school history teacher named John Waite contacted Jim Teese in Charlotte and asked for his mailing list. So out of the ashes of the Friends of the ET&WNC rose a new phoenix – and a society was born. Up until then reference material on the ET&WNC consisted of Mallory Hope Ferrell's *Tweetsie Country*; the July 1981 issue of *Model Railroader*, chapters in *Ghost Railroads of Tennessee, Extra South*, Lucius Bebee's *Mixed Train Daily* and Archie Robertson's *Slow Train to Yesterday*; and a small book called *Tweetsie The Blue Ridge Stemwinder*. Look how far we've come over the years!

Some items of note since then:

- Annual conventions in North Carolina and Tennessee
- Two of the finest society magazines anywhere
- Maps, maps, maps as well as aerial photos to reference where things were
- Seeing #12 placed on the National Register of Historic Places and re-lettered ET&WNC
- Videos of Jack Alexander and Vince Ryan's movies from the 1940s
- Passenger excursions on the East Tennessee Railway
- Many trips around the mountain behind #12 and 190 and the gracious hospitality of the folks at Tweetsie RR
- Going inside the Cranberry Mine
- Saving the Linville Depot and seeing it restored to its Linville River Railway appearance
- Rescuing boxcar 434 from a slow death in New Jersey and seeing it restored to pristine condition
- Tweetsie RR donating combine 15 and its being placed safely at the NC Transportation Museum
- The fireless cooker from North American Rayon being preserved and displayed with another ET boxcar in Elizabethton
- An operating railroad at the Doe River Gorge as well as several seasons with a live steam engine
- ET&WNC ten wheelers being offered in three scales HO, O and G as well as several members showing us ET power in Sn3
- Some really fine layouts in the above mentioned scales
- Laser cut depots from Les Walker and freight car kits from Dave Hoffman opening the door to a variety of commercially available ET&WNC prototype kits
- Great books to learn from - John Waite's *Blue Ridge Stemwinder* and Johnny Graybeal's six volumes (and counting) *Along the ET&WNC*, detailing the world of the ET&WNC
- Seeing the Johnson City Depot restored to original appearance and reborn as a restaurant - ditto for the Clinchfield Depot across the street
- Despite losing rail service and track between Johnson City and

*continued ...*

## Historical Society Turns 30...

Elizabethton, seeing the ET&WNC route preserved as a bike/hiking trail

- Number 12, combine 15 and the Linville Depot turning 100 the same year

This year we'll celebrate with our 30th convention. And just when you thought we've done it all, we have two new events coming up this year. In March Vice President Jerry Turbyfill

plans a leaf-free look at the right-of-way, and during the convention in June, author and Grandfather Mountain expert Randy Johnson plans to lead us over the grades that once hosted logging trains the fed the Shull's Mills sawmill. People used to think turning 30 was starting "over-the-hill". We're just getting started! Come celebrate with us in Johnson City, June 1-3 of 2018. More info in the next newsletter!

*Curtis Brookshire*

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# News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

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## Spring Right-of-Way Hike!

Jerry Turbyfill plans a right-of-way tour for March 17, 2018, with a weather fall-back date of March 24. Both are on Saturday. Why late March? Well, any leaves that may have lingered over the winter have fallen as the trees and bushes ready themselves for spring. Join us for an unusual opportunity and a chance to learn more about our favorite railroad.

*Society Vice-President Jerry Turbyfill tells us more –*

We plan to meet Saturday morning, March 17, at The Old Cranberry High School. There is plenty of parking and some will need to ride together so we can take as few cars as possible. We will leave there by 9:00 am so try to be on time.

From the parking lot we plan to go to Shulls Mills in Foscoe to start working our way back toward Newland with stops along the way. Then it's down Old Toe River Road, stopping along the way and heading back towards Cranberry. Then from Cranberry we'll tour interesting spots back down in Tennessee. We definitely have more things planned than we can do in a day, but we will do as much as we can. It should be a fun, interesting and informative day. Bring your camera!

If the weather does not cooperate and we need to cancel then I will let you know on March 15 and we will try for the next weekend, March 24. As always dress for the cold and make sure your vehicle is equipped for the weather as it can change quickly. I need to get a list together as soon as possible, so send me your phone number and how many are going! Here's my email address... [jerryturbyfill@gmail.com](mailto:jerryturbyfill@gmail.com)

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## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

*Matt Bumgarner has this news from Newton –*

The museum has almost finished restoring West Virginia Midland Baggage Car #1. This is the only southeastern baggage car in existence. They plan to have it displayed by spring. ET&WNC boxcar 434, the car that was used as a storage building at Allaire State Park in New Jersey, will be back on narrow gauge trucks by the end of the first quarter of 2018. From the June Bug Line, Alexander Railroad Alco S3 #6 has been given to the museum and is scheduled to arrive in April. To better display the museum's treasures they purchased an acre of land to the north of the pavilion and will expand the dual gauge yard with an additional 600 ft of track. Make plans to visit the museum soon. Their website is...

[www.newtondepot.com](http://www.newtondepot.com)

## George L. Carter Railroad Museum at ETSU

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

On November 18 the RR Museum celebrated its 10th anniversary with a party and some outside speakers. We have grown our footprint from 2,400 sq ft to more than 5,200 sq ft. Our annual attendance is 7,500-8,000 visitors which calculates to more than 70,000 over our ten-year history (and we are only open 5 hours one day a week). Our train-themed library holds more than 1,100 catalogued hard-back books, many of which are first editions with some autographed by the authors.

Work continues on our 1,300 sq ft ET&WNC RR HOn3 layout. The Cranberry Mine section is 98% complete and work has been started on the west end of tunnel #5, the sand tunnel, and we're working westward on the scenery that will complete the area between tunnel #5 and tunnel #4. Work will soon begin on the Elk Park and Roan Mountain town sections.

The 2017 edition of the *HOn3 Annual* was just published, and for the 4th consecutive year our ET&WNC RR layout was featured with 9 pages of text and color photos. The section that the magazine focused on was the Cranberry Mine area of the layout. The article was written by Mountain Empire Model Railroaders club member Geoff Stunkard, and the photo illustrations were by Geoff and Fred Alsop. The magazine is available from White River Productions in hobby shops, and we have some copies for sale at the museum. Our website is... [www.memrr.org](http://www.memrr.org)

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## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

On the modeling front, the news this quarter continues to come from the world of 3D printing. Shapeways has on its site bodies and underframes for cabooses 505 and 506. This is the first time caboose 506 has been available. Another first is the piggyback car. The trailer it carried is due out in January, 2018. Next up, around mid-February or so, will be the 600 series tank car, also a first time offering. These cars are and will be available in both HO and O scale. The modeler will need to add detail parts as well as trucks and couplers to make them complete. Bill Miller produced a fine article on finishing the 3D printed caboose in the 2017 *HOn3 Annual*. More ET&WNC models are in the works at Shapeways, so stay tuned. If you're a modeler, I believe you'll be pleased with what's coming. As mentioned before, sales will fund continued development and production. Thanks for helping expand our ET&WNC modeling possibilities. [www.shapeways.com/shops/wr?li=pb](http://www.shapeways.com/shops/wr?li=pb)

## A few more words about Mr. Crumley...

I was cleaning up some of my junk and came across a few pages of notes I had taken many years ago after I had spent some time with my old pal Cy Crumley. Frank Angel's daughter Libby Watson and I did a talk a few years back at the Cranberry School. Libby said at the time that Mr. Crumley was "Mr. Tweetsie". I couldn't agree more. I sure do miss all the old boys I knew and spent time with. And the same goes for Libby. What a dear, sweet lady she was.

Mr. Crumley was born on July 8, 1886 in Elizabethton. He was one of seven children, four boys and three girls. The two oldest girls were already married and gone before he was born. One was married to a Williams and she had a son George Q. Williams, who was also a narrow gauge conductor. Some of you may remember Frank and Jack Williams. They were sons of George. Jack was a great piano player and had a band called the "Tennessee Gentlemen" for years. He gave the famous Doc Watson his first professional gig as a guitar player. Jack and Doc were lifetime friends.

Mr. Crumley's father was a shoemaker in Elizabethton. He made everybody in the family one pair of shoes every year. Middle of April each year the shoes came off and stayed off until the first frost. He remembered his mother as a fine Christian lady who read the Bible to the family each night and led them in a prayer "that God would keep them thru the night and wake them safe the next morning".

His father died suddenly in 1897. Mr. Crumley had to quit school in the fourth grade to help the family make it after his daddy died. His first job was at the Doe River Woolen Mills—six days a week, twelve hours a day, twenty cents a day. He stayed there until a fire burned it to the ground in 1900. After the fire he landed a job at the Tennessee Chair Company (Empire Furniture) for about six months, then went on to Island Pants Company—six days a week, twelve hours a day, seventy five cents a day.

The narrow gauge ran beside the garment plant in Elizabethton and he soon got to know the boys in the crew on the yard, who took a liking to him.

He married Edith Pauline Tilson March 15, 1906. He was nineteen and she was fifteen. He had set his mind on

being a railroad man.

He went to see George Hardin about a job. He asked his age and he was two years too young for the railroad. Hardin took a liking to him, and said if he would bring Edith to him she could sign for him and Mr. Hardin would put him on braking and overlook that policy. He did, she did, and he did and the rest is history.

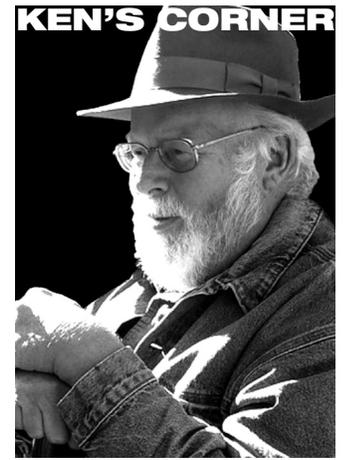
First load he handled was a carload of oil in 55 gallon drums. They spotted on the transfer and had to roll the whole load across the plank from standard gauge to narrow gauge. The crew in that local his first day was J. Scott Dean, engineer, Fuse Jenkins, fireman, Cy Crumley, Charlie Archer, and Garfield Crowe, brakemen, and George Coleman, conductor. His engine was Number 4, and it remained his favorite. He was particularly fond of Mr. Dean and Mr. Coleman, who both took time with him to explain various things that cubs on the railroad have to learn to be successful.

George Hardin liked him too, and said it was because he never once heard him swear, and he always had a pleasant way about him and never turned down a call. Plus he smiled all the time. And he really did smile all the time.

I want to fast forward to 1976. This was prime time for me to be around his house and his daughter Ruth gave me an unpublished manuscript about the men on the railroad that had this paragraph in it. I think it sums up perfectly what a visit there was like. Mr. Crumley was almost ninety, his wife and two of his three children were dead, as were many of his friends and railroad buddies. Yet he still smiled all the time.

"Bonnie Ruth and her father live at 1004 Buffalo Street in Johnson City. When you visit them you leave there with a spirit of inspiration - you actually feel the love that is within this home. Kindness and caring and that feeling that Oh if only this kind of feeling was to be passed to other homes, how wonderful this world would be. They beg you to please come back and you know it is genuine. It is the feeling that these words fully describe Brother Cy Crumley and Bonnie Ruth:

A bell is not a bell until you ring it.  
A song is not a song until you sing it.  
Love is not Love until you give it



As you walk away you can feel the love that has been given you. May every day of their lives be a constant joy of sharing their love for others as it has been in the years that are being recorded in Heaven."

I was with Ruth and Mr. Crumley the day he died. He was in Range Hall in the Johnson City Hospital and had a really bad stroke that morning. He died about two in the afternoon. I showed up about noon and Mr. Crumley was laying in the hospital bed singing loud and long, like a bird, old hymns from his childhood. He seemed happy as he could be, more somewhere else than with us. Singing loud as he could.

And he was smiling....

I always liked that.

We should be so lucky.

Ken Riddle  
December 2017

## Appalachian Trail Hike Accomplished

Back in the July newsletter, I mentioned long-time member Dean Smith's surprise appearance at the convention, being whisked off the Appalachian Trail, and the bigger surprise of him finding his wife Sandy there in Johnson City, courtesy of Sharon Waite. Well, Dean completed his long hike from Georgia to Maine in October. A hearty congratulations to Dean for a job well done! Now he's back in Vida, Missouri doing what all good ET modelers should be doing: working on his layout.

While hiking Dean wrote an online journal of his adventure. It makes for interesting reading, link to it here...  
[www.trailjournals.com/stickinthetwoods](http://www.trailjournals.com/stickinthetwoods)

## A Word from the President

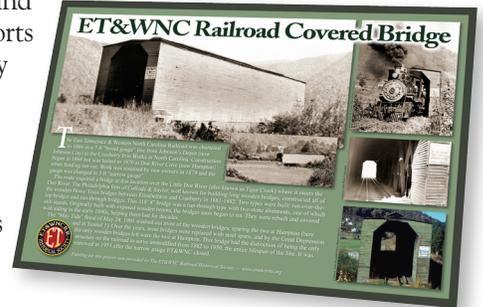
This spring our Historical Society's desire to sponsor a trail marker, similar to markers on the Tweetsie Trail, will finally be realized. Carter County has recently finished construction of a "pocket park" named *Green Bridge Landing* in Hampton at the intersection of the Doe River and the Little Doe River. The primary purpose of this park, located at the site of the green ET&WNC historic covered bridge, is a kayak/raft landing and put-in. While this park serves a community need, it also presents us with the opportunity to showcase our mission.

Several members of our Historical Society Board worked with Kenneth Gough, Chairman of the Carter County Parks & Recreation Board to produce and install the trail marker. The 2 ft x 3 ft marker features photos and historical info about the

bridge and displays our Society logo and contact information.

I think this is a great beginning to some long-needed public outreach that will help educate folks about the historical significance of the ET&WNC Railroad. It's also good PR for our Historical Society and will expand our efforts to keep the memory and history of this fascinating little railroad alive. We need to do some more of these! Let's talk about it!

**CFORD**



*A Tweetsie Christmas, December 8-9, 2017. Photo courtesy Jesse Hoyle.*

*A Tweetsie Christmas, December 22-23, 2017. Photo courtesy Benjamin Burton.*

*Doe River Gorge, December 2017. Photo courtesy Benjamin Burton.*

