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# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Welcome to a New Year of ET&WNC History and Happenings!

We're working on returning to our correct Newsletter schedule. Unfortunately, we didn't take into account what happens right after the Christmas holiday – Chris Robbins, our contact with Tweetsie Railroad, takes a well-deserved vacation. We'll catch up with Tweetsie Railroad in the March issue.

In this issue you'll see that lots of things related to the ET&WNC Rail-

road are happening in Johnson City, the Doe River Gorge, in Newton, North Carolina, and especially on the modeling front.

Plus, we're not too far from seeing the next BIG issue of our Historical Society magazine publication – *Every Time With No Complaint*. Now, let's see what all is going on in ET&WNC land...

*Curtis Brookshire, Editor* ✦



Chris Ford... "I love this photo of Number 12 at Tweetsie Railroad from back in December of 2017, and think it is most appropriate for this time of year. Stay warm!" *Photo by Jesse Hoyle - Tweetsie Railroad.*



# 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 –

The information in our last column was focused on the packing up of the Carter Railroad Museum that had been on the campus of East Tennessee State University for the past 16 years. Our museum was on the ground floor of a university building that was slated for demolition that began in earnest in September 2023. For four months all our disassembled layouts, locomotives, rolling stock, library books, furniture, and other belongings have been in storage with the museum members meeting only at the regularly scheduled monthly business meetings. Our railroading hobbies were definitely on hold, but planning was moving forward for the possession of a larger building in downtown Johnson City that would bring new life and focus, allowing us to tell the origin story of the birth of Johnson City – both as Henry Johnson's depot and the beginnings of ETSU as a normal school on land gifted and financed by George L. Carter, the creator of what became the Clinchfield Railroad.

In mid-December commercial movers, contracted by the university, began to move our three largest model train layouts into our new building as its remodeling phase was winding down. There will be space to accommodate the N scale layout that is modeled after Knoxville, TN. The MEMRR "Appalachian Summertime" HO scale layout must fit into a slightly smaller space and there is a committee working to reconfigure it so that it gains trackage and will operate over a design that will be more prototypical. The HO<sub>N3</sub> ET&WNC "Tweetsie" layout will become the showcase museum layout and it will be extended to include more area between Elk Park and Cranberry, and to be able to include Elizabethton and Johnson City with approximately 100 ft of additional mainline trackage. Watch for the published section of the Hampton Water Tank in the 2023 issue of the HO<sub>N3</sub> Annual.

Also planned is a visitor's orientation theatre with a video introduction to the museum and the area's railroad history. Adjacent to this space will be an events room for meetings, birthday parties, and other gatherings. One of the exciting historical displays we are planning will be the exhibition of much of Mike Hardin's ET&WNC railroad memorabilia in a special gallery section dedicated to his father. Also planned are many other new exhibits, some with "hands-on, immersive" interactive features for the enjoyment and education of our visitors. We are creating a workspace that will allow visitors to watch our work, to interact with our modelers as they learn about the modeling facets of the hobby, and where we can conduct hobby-related clinics.

Our railroad library will occupy a larger space with more shelves holding more books. Our hardback book collection already exceeds 2,500 Library of Congress cataloged volumes and we have promises for more donated editions. This may easily become the largest railroad-themed library in Tennessee. We plan to have a gift shop and to enlarge our children's playroom. Our operating hours will be extended with a permanent salaried staff. We will now have to be monetized, for we will have rent and salaries to pay, but we will be open five days a week and will be able to serve school groups, senior groups, and other organizations.

We will become a regional museum and attraction that we plan to open sometime in the spring, perhaps as early as March of 2024. We will send everyone word of our Grand Opening date later in the year. There's a lot of work ahead of us with many of our members working as volunteers, and an excellent Board of Directors guiding our work. We are currently advertising for our first full-time staff position, an Exhibits Director and Coordinator.

Our new address is 207 N. Boone Street, Suite 2500, Johnson City, TN 37604. At this time we don't have a telephone, but you can contact us and follow our progress at [johnson-city-railroad-experience.org](http://johnson-city-railroad-experience.org).

We now have our newly printed 2024 Carter RR Museum Calendars, featuring lots of ET&WNC material in prototype and model form. Mail your order to Carter RR Museum, PO Box 70697, ETSU, Johnson City, TN 37614. Price is \$8 + S&H for a total of \$10.

We look forward to the day our doors are open and we welcome you to come and join us in **The Johnson City Railroad Experience**. For more information contact Fred Alsop at [alsopf@etsu.edu](mailto:alsopf@etsu.edu). Our website and current news and info can be found at [memrr.org](http://memrr.org). 🚂



## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

The news in this issue comes from our exciting 3D printing community. David Kmecik at 3DPTrain.com, is working on a conversion kit to produce On30 ET&WNC #4, 5 and 6. It will fit over a Broadway Limited On30 2-8-0 mechanism.



David also has several other projects in the works, that will definitely be of interest to many ET modelers. We're not at liberty to divulge details right now, but stay tuned to his website for a formal announcement at [3dptrain.com](http://3dptrain.com).

Big news also at [merritt3d.com](http://merritt3d.com) from Ben Merritt who sends us the following:

Greetings from the Valley Beautiful, Erwin, Tennessee where we have been cooking up some great new products for ET&WNC modelers and fans alike. I am happy to share that the ET&WNC Jackson & Sharp series launched on New Year's Day of this year with the release of ET&WNC coaches 16, 17, 19, & 20 in Nn3, HOn3/30, Sn3, and On3/30! These beautiful kits are 3d printed resin with a separate roof and car body to allow easy access to the coach's stunning interior. The models are complete with a full interior, including bathroom details, seating, stoves, crown molding, doors, wood paneling, and more! The outside packs even more detail with beautiful double-arched and oval windows, doors, wood paneling, trim,

and underbody detail including truss rods printed as a part of the model. These kits include parts for grabirons, diaphragms, and window inserts. Additionally, I can include the couplers for whatever scale you model.

These kits are incredibly detailed, and it is with thanks to Johnny Graybeal for providing me with photographs from his private collection to ensure both the interior and exterior design of the coaches was as



Merritt3D Designs and Printing



## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

*Johnny Graybeal shares this news from Newton, NC –*

Work is continuing this winter on preparing siding to further restore the Southern and Clinchfield cabooses on the museum grounds. Both of these are rare wooden cabooses. Efforts have also been made to make the facility more secure, with added fencing and security cameras. Someone has been found that will be making truss rods for ET&WNC boxcar 434. Detailed measurements have been made to get this project underway.

Volunteers are always welcome, and several young ET&WNC fans are coming to help preserve history at this growing museum. As always, anyone who lives in the central North Carolina area who wants to get their hands dirty and work on 1/1 or 1/1n3 rolling stock is welcome to join us in these restoration projects. No expertise required! Please visit our website at [newtondepot.com](http://newtondepot.com). 🚂

historically accurate as possible. His pictures show two types of coaches, one with and one without a partition dividing the coach about a third of the way through the length of the interior. We have determined coaches 16, 19, and 20 were built with a Jim Crow partition, and coach 17 was built without a partition. There are a few other differences including the addition of a single arched window for an extra seat in place of the second stove in coach 17. Each car had connections for steam heat, however stoves were still used anytime the coaches were being pulled behind a freight car, which did not have connections for steam heat. These coaches have great history behind them, with two being built in 1917 for the ET&WNC (16, 17), and two being built for the Linville River Railway in 1919 (19, 20).

Kits can be purchased online at [merritt3d.com/etwnc-coaches](http://merritt3d.com/etwnc-coaches). Additionally, we are producing a limited run of 1/48th scale drawings for coaches 16 & 19, which can also be purchased on the website. There are more things to be looking forward to in the future from Merritt3D Designs and Printing as we anticipate the future release of Combines 15 and 18. It is my pleasure to continue creating models from the beloved Tweetsie, and I cannot thank this group enough for the tremendous support I have received over the years. I look forward to continuing my work as time allows between classes and work. Propitiously, I will be graduating from East Tennessee State University this May with my Bachelors Degree in Computing and will be joining the workforce full-time this summer. These last few days of college are shaping up to be an exciting time, and I hope you are excited as well for what's to come. 🚂



## Historical Society Magazine - Every Time With No Complaint

Johnny Graybeal sends us this update –

We are pleased to announce that Rae Augenstein is making great progress on laying out her first issue of *Every Time With No Complaint*. Just to wet your whistles, it will be a double issue telling the life story of locomotive No. 12. Well, part of the story. Volume 14 Nos. 1 and 2 will cover from 1917 to 1938. A second double issue, hopefully out by the ET&WNC RR HS convention in late May, will cover from 1939 to 1950. Watch for the first issue to appear in your mailbox very soon after you read this. 🚧

## Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Happy New Year! Turning the corner into the new year always seems to bring summer camp season (and the convention) into view and both will be here before we know it! One big item to mention is that for the third year, thanks to designated funding, we will again be able to offer “Railroad Internships” to help with both maintenance and operations. If you know anyone who would be interested, please have them contact [mark@doerivergorge.com](mailto:mark@doerivergorge.com).

2023 was a big year at DRG, here are the latest progress items:

- Grading of the new ROW, as well as relocated lower entrance road and additional parking has been ongoing, with much done and completion expected early spring.

- The track will require MUCH “ballast” and, as reported last time, we’ve been blessed to find a very large deposit of appropriate rock onsite just across the river from the main camp area, and then have loan of a full-scale rock crusher. Since then, quarrying has been ongoing with as many as three excavators at times (lately some perched partway up the hill) keeping a very large dump truck busy shuttling rock to the crusher out front. And by now rather huge piles of ballast have accumulated! This has been an unexpected huge savings against the usual (and significant) cost to purchase and haul in this material!

- All of the coaches and locos need the airbrake systems gone through, so in late November, David Poteat, Matt Kellerman and myself made a trip to Strasburg, PA with a selection of removed equipment. Their shop spent a day with us, servicing two pieces of it while teaching us how to do it, and providing copies of all relevant service documents. Next stop was the East Broad Top to discuss a lease of their tamper (for all that ballast we just mentioned!) and they are willing to do so in early spring.

- The track-building contractor has been onsite already with some preliminary work done by this past Christmas, and now back again since New Years, expecting to finish in March.

- A modern, welded replacement boiler for the first Porter steam locomotive is completed and certified! In the meantime, the smokebox needed much repair, which was done by Allied Metals in Johnson City. It has been shipped to the boiler contractor in Minnesota who will assemble it to the boiler and then ship it all back here.

- Materials for the railroad shop building were delivered and foundation work is now in progress. We really need this sooner than later as all the Porter work until then is in the very makeshift spot under the old mill shed.

- Engineering and preliminary logistics are about complete for a loading platform and adjacent station/multi-purpose structure to be built early summer. The RR grade clearing process resulted in over 100 large logs, which local timber industry friends helped assess and source milling of these logs into posts and boards to be used for this new building. They have also networked with their contacts in the region to procure the donation of timber, milling, and hauling for many of the thousands of crossties needed to lay the track, with DRG paying only for the creosoting process. The remaining ties needed are expected to be in process soon.

- Repair/refurbishment of about 40 billboard-sized picture board frames is completed, aided by a nearby tech/welding school. Engineering work is underway for posts and mounting.

- Acquisition of computers and apps to drive the soundtrack in the train. Each coach has its own audio source to be kept in sync with the trackside displays using about a dozen cues triggered by RFID tags in the track. Additionally a GPS-aided progress display for the engineer to maintain the right speed.

As mentioned last time, Ryan Rice is periodically flying his drone to capture our progress. One more video has been posted since last time and another probable soon after if not by the time this hits your mailboxes at [www.youtube.com/@aboveground5052](https://www.youtube.com/@aboveground5052). Also a great new VIDEO about DRG and the Christmas Train is recently out...see it at [www.doerivergorge.com/christmas-train](https://www.doerivergorge.com/christmas-train).

Thanksgiving weekend began the one year countdown to the hoped-for opening, now THIS year, 2024, and we are starting to feel the “crunch” already. There has been a huge amount accomplished, but some timelines have been slipping and others have little room for delays. And there are many, many more details and hurdles still to be handled. But in any case, there will be MUCH new to see this year at Convention time!

Please visit our website for more info about our activities at [doerivergorge.com](https://www.doerivergorge.com). 🚧



Narrow gauge track laying at Doe River Gorge - 2023. Photo courtesy Mark Milbourne.