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# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Maybe Some Good News? Also, A Sad Anniversary

We're starting to see some signs of activity as places (cautiously) begin limited openings. Tweetsie Railroad now has limited operations. Heritage Weekend is still on the calendar, so make your plans - BUT - keep watch on their website for any changes. What they can do is dependent on North Carolina's phased reopening program which could change with the number of Covid infections.

Doe River Gorge in Tennessee is also conducting limited activities, but trains are running. See their columns in this issue.

The Southeast Narrow Gauge and Short Line Museum and Avery County Museum are absent this issue as they've both been closed. We recommend following their respective websites for updates on potential openings.

Also in this issue: Dr. Fred Alsop has the latest from Johnson City and Ken Riddle tells us a story about a locomotive even smaller than those on the 3 foot gauge. He tells me this is how he got started. By the way, keep Ken in your thoughts and prayers. He recently suffered a pretty bad knock on the head from a 10-pound sledgehammer and is still recovering. We wish him a speedy recovery and can't wait to hear more stories.

We've also been informed that the next double issue of *Every Time with No Complaint* is being laid out for publication. We'll keep our eyes open another fine chapter in the ET&WNC story.

Last year we celebrated the 100th an-

niversary of the railroad's arrival in Boone. Next month (August) we sadly mark the 80th anniversary of when it ended. In a story most of us are familiar with, the enormous flood from an Atlantic hurricane that rained itself out over Western North Carolina on August 13, 1940 dealt a fatal blow to the Linville River Railway. That morning the regular train, powered by either number 9 or 14, left Boone and cautiously made its way through the growing deluge. As they attempted to return from Johnson City, the train was stopped by a washout near Cranberry Gap and was stuck there by another behind them until a repair crew freed the train. The cost to repair the line was sufficient to convince ET&WNC owners not to rebuild. Stranded at Boone were at least 13 freight cars. Superintendent Hobbs sent motorcar 1 to Boone to switch the yard and trucked the cars to Cranberry over the next several weeks. Abandoning the Linville River was a business decision based on how little traffic remained on that segment of the narrow gauge. The big sawmills had been gone for 15 years and the Cranberry mines had been closed for 11. Weekend excursion trains were popular, but not enough to justify the cost of rebuilding.

Let's keep Linville River Ry memories alive remembering the good and bad times of this line serving Watauga and Avery counties. We'll remember another even sadder anniversary next issue.

*Curtis Brookshire, Editor*

**Time To Pay Your Dues!**

# News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

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

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

The George L. Carter Railroad Museum at East Tennessee State University closed its doors to the public and to its volunteers on Saturday, March 14, 2020, when the university locked down all of its buildings because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic also caused the cancelling of two rail excursions the museum co-sponsors with the G.L. Carter Chapter NRHS that were scheduled for May and for the Labor Day weekend. Additionally, the 5th annual Big Train Show the railroad museum hosts in early June also had to be cancelled. Currently, some of the campus buildings are slowly and carefully opening back up. I plan to let our volunteers begin to come back into the museum to work on exhibits only beginning in mid-July, but under CDC guidelines that will require them to wear masks and social distance when more than one person is present in the building and to keep our individual numbers down to 10 or fewer at all times. I have no date in mind for reopening our doors to the public at this time, but like the other museum directors on campus, plan to see what happens to the infection rate for COVID-19 in the coming weeks.

The university still has not announced how we will begin classes in late August as they, too, are monitoring the level of the virus in our area and pondering what is the safest way to bring students, staff and faculty back to campus. As you can imagine, all of our museum volunteers are anxious to be able to come back to the Carter Railroad Museum to work

on their model train layouts and our other exhibits, to operate their model locomotives and their consists, and to be engaged with their fellow club members. As with all other social interactions, this will have to wait on the virus to plateau and drop in our region before we begin to re-engage in our “new normal”.

One bright highlight for the museum was the donation by Mrs. Vivian Chaffey, the widow of Bill Chaffey, when she made a gift of the 1-foot gauge custom built F7 Southern Railway diesel locomotive and its 3 freight cars and Southern caboose along with its 170 feet of track and accessories. Mr. Chaffey, a Tennessee Eastman electrical engineer, built the train for his children, and later his grandchildren to ride on the track laid in his front yard more than 50 years ago. He passed away about 10 years ago. The locomotive and cars are to-scale replicas of the prototypes they represent (the tank car bears Tennessee Eastman logos and markings) and are still in good running condition having been stored in his home workshop for almost all of its life. The donation is valued at approximately \$15,000. Accompanied by several of our museum volunteers, we acted as gandy dancers on a sunny Saturday in May and removed the track from its roadbed in the Chaffey yard, re-landscaped the yard and took everything into storage at the university until such time we can relay the track and run the train for a new generation of children.

I plan to begin working on our ET&WNC model layout in the coming days. We have new rock faces around tunnel #1 to color to reflect the rocks of the prototype location and

scenery to add to blend it into the existing landscape. The Johnson City Depot will soon be detailed and landscaped into place with supporting structures added to fill out that end of the layout. I hope you will be able to visit us in the fall when we expect to be open on some kind of public access basis. In the meanwhile, stay safe and stay well. Information about events and layouts can be found on our website at [www.memrr.org](http://www.memrr.org) ■



Photo of the late Bill Chaffey with the Southern F7 locomotive he built many years ago. His widow Vivian donated the operable replica, along with freight cars, a caboose and many other accessories to the Carter Railroad Museum. Photo courtesy of Fred Alsop.

## Member Obituary

Charleston, South Carolina –

Peter Stabovitz passed away on December 24, 2019 at the age of 90. Pete was a longtime Historical Society member and had a lifelong love of trains. ■

## From the workbench of your President—

Y'all, I heard a story the other day that the property upon which the Cranberry Mine lies sleeping for all these years has a new owner. Don't yet know the ramifications of this in regards to Historical Society access in the future, but I suspect that maybe reaching out to the new owner and offering knowledge of the history of his new acquisition might go a long way to help insure a good relationship and the possibility of continued visits to this all-important Historical Society destination.

I write this today in mid-July as the temp here in Memphis hits the high 90s with a heat index on the north side of 110. The weary weather today made me think back fondly to one early morning last month when it had been relatively mild under a lightly overcast sky – pleasantly cool for early summer with a light breeze. Just really, really nice... and somehow familiar. Made me wonder why it felt so familiar, and it dawned on me that the morning felt just like other mid-June mornings we have enjoyed in the ET area at our annual conventions over the past 30 years. Duh! Of course...I was jonesing for a trip over there to enjoy the weather and the camaraderie of the convention! It was that time! And yet it wasn't to be.

It's funny how just something like the weather can conjure up memories of past experiences. Driving all night to be in Johnson City or Boone on Friday morning...early trips to the mine when we had free reign to explore...hikes on new-to-us portions of the right-of-way...field trips to Spencer and Edgemont...walking in the soon-to-be improved Gorge...riding behind 12 at Tweetsie for the first time...great, new long-lasting (and long-distance) friendships. Heck, EVERYTHING was new then and it seemed like WE had discovered something no one else had ever seen. Good times! Actually, great times! I, for one, miss it tremendously. There's no bringing back those heady early days when everyone was a new friend and everything was an adventure, but we can't let those memories fade! If I had smelled coal smoke that early morning last month...I might have cried.

C FORD

## Linville Depot & Caboose 505 at the Avery County Historical Museum

Jerry Turbyfill sends us the latest from Newland, NC –

The Avery County Museum is currently shut down. Find out more about the Museum by visiting their new website at [www.avermuseum.com](http://www.avermuseum.com)

## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

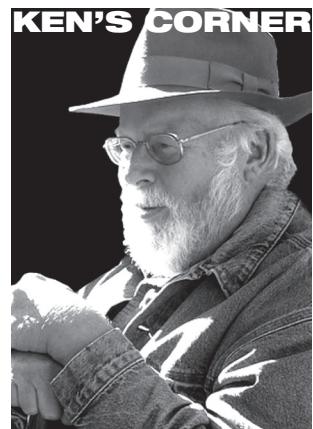
Matt Bumgarner has this news from Newton, NC –

The Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum is currently shut down. Find more about us on our website at [www.newtondepot.com](http://www.newtondepot.com)

## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

Nothing new to add this time. Johnny Graybeal still has kits available and you can order 3D printed equipment from Western Rails. Your editor directs your attention to posts on the ETWNC "io group" from some of our modelers with more mouth-watering views of their latest efforts. Please keep them coming. Let us know through the ETWNC "io group" at <https://groups.io/g/ETWNC>.

*Editor's note: Ken wrote this for the June 2020 edition of The Boilerwash, a newsletter for his live-steam group, The Canton, St. Paul & Pacific Railway in Georgia.*



**W**hen I was a boy, way back when the earth cooled, I would get hand-me-down Trains magazines and Freeman Hubbard's Railroad magazines from my uncle. I was familiar with Live Steam as my neighbor was Lynn Lowe, a Clinchfield Railroad engineer who operated a 1904 Cagney locomotive around his house.

Inside the magazines there were usually two small advertisements, one for Little Engines in Lomita, California and one for Winton Engineering in Danville, California. Both supplied parts for building live steam locomotives in various gauges. I was quite taken with the Winton 2-6-0 design and every year I would tape four quarters to a piece of paper (Winton Brown's instructions) and send away for a Winton catalogue.

I grew up, raised a family, worked hard, and retired. I had built a few live steamers and when I retired I wanted to find a Winton to adopt. The company was still around but really was not able to supply parts in order to build one from scratch. I saw a couple for sale but I was not really satisfied with them. I finally got wind of one in the Sacramento area that was the real article. It was number 8, built by Winton Brown himself in the mid-1960s. It was owned by a fellow in the Sacramento club and he wished to sell it. With a LOT of help from some of the California guys I was able to complete the sale. Here is how she looked when bought her...



She was quite the Christmas ornament, all red and green and gold. Marty Carapiet was the President of the Sacramento club and located a fellow up at Train Mountain who was coming my way and he brought her to me. I was thrilled to get her to say the least!

I didn't fire her up right away. She was an oil burner and I changed that first. She also was in need of a good boiler wash. She got eight of them.

Cody Cagle was a huge help to me on the job. There were several things I did not like about her design, the most obnoxious one being her boiler which had plenty of washout plugs but only one which you could successfully remove to wash her out.

*...continued on page 4*

## Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



As of July 13th, we're going to open to Season Pass holders this coming (July 17-18-19) Friday-Saturday-Sunday, with very limited operations: Wild West Train ride and Main Street only. Capacity limits are in place, and Guests must reserve a train ride time in advance. We'll open to the general public the following weekend with the same restrictions, unless the state imposes another shutdown. Although we've had to cancel several special events, the Heritage Weekend is still on the calendar for now.

Please check the Tweetsie website for the latest updates. Visit our website at [www.tweetsie.com](http://www.tweetsie.com) ■

## Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

As one can imagine, the pandemic has had a great impact on Doe River Gorge. It was perfectly timed to cancel all of the spring guest groups and school groups (most of which do train rides) and of course we missed having the ET&WNC RR HS here for the convention. And as we now know, it did not pass in time to hold summer camps. Although Tennessee did not extend the stay-at-home order beyond April 30 and in May was releasing guidelines for various businesses to reopen, overnight camps were definitely not something that could re-open in the first phase. And when the state finally released guidelines for camps later in May, we could make many adjustments to activities, food service and meetings, we simply did not see how we could safely do housing. So overnight our regular camp programs are cancelled, but the state guidelines more easily permit our Saturday Day Quest programs which of course includes train rides. So DQ began on schedule June 13 and this year is every Saturday through the end of August. And some guest groups are still coming for overnight stays, those that feel safe enough to do so within their own constituency. In addition, family camp/retreat offerings are in the works for July and August. Plans are also in the works for increased fall family activities, such as a corn maze and related "Fall Festival" items and of course train rides. So a very different and challenging year (particularly financially) for Doe River Gorge, but we are sure we will see God provide in many additional and different ways than He normally does!

The last newsletter announced DRG's exciting Christmas Train project. Fundraising and engineering work for the construction phase had been started, only to be put suddenly on hold when the pandemic hit. However, work on the Crown steam locomotive has progressed extensively. Ironically this has been through pandemic-related circumstances that made several workers available regularly for a number of weeks. Final details in the firebox are complete and the ash pan is almost finished. The boiler piping is complete and a hydrostatic test was done. Drypipe, petticoat and related other work in the smokebox is nearly complete. The only major remaining item is the brake system which is in progress.

However, at this writing, work has mostly fallen off again due to present other obligations and circumstances with most of the workers. In the meantime other regular work has also been ongoing. Thanks to a few other workers visiting for about

two weeks in May, annual track inspection and repairs were carried out in May. Spraying weeds on and along the ROW has been done, as has some cutting back of larger vegetation.

So the ET&WNC RR at Doe River Gorge is open despite the pandemic. Come ride the Gorge on a Saturday Day Quest, or charter a motorcar ride any other time of the week. With no camps this summer, DRG is more open than usual for scheduling visits and rides. Visit our website at [www.doerivergorge.com](http://www.doerivergorge.com) ■

## Ken's Corner continued from page 3

Her tiny firebox door was a problem as well. She steamed great when I took her to the track but was not as lively as she should have been. The boiler washout issue and a few other problems led me to decide I needed more help than I could do so I called in my friend Marty Knox. Marty is the best boilermaker I know and we speak the same language. He took on the job of making her a new boiler and redesigning some of the things Winton had on her such as:

- Conversion of piston valves back to slide valves. The area inside the exhaust chambers of the outside admission piston valves was not large enough to not bog down the engines when running at track speed. This helped her performance immensely.
- New ball valve throttle in the dome. Much better than the old throttle. Plus a better throttle control
- Removed the crosshead pumps
- Added a Keim steam pump. I can't tell you what great pumps he makes
- Redesigned the entire backhead and installed it
- New grates
- Redesign and fabrication of the boiler. It's a true keyhole boiler and added much more heating surface
- Changed the bell and installed a great Mike Venezia whistle
- Trammed the wheels, boxes, and rods
- Added automatic cylinder cocks
- Repiped the water supply system from the tender
- And probably fifty other things I can't remember

People who know our hobby have asked me was it worth all the trouble and expense. Damn right it was!!! Thanks to Marty and everyone who helped me out with her!

Ken Riddle ■



Ken's reworked and completed Winton Engineering 2-6-0. Photo courtesy Ken Riddle.