

FOUNDED IN 1989

The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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32nd Convention a Success. Big Plans for Doe River Gorge. Tweetsie Railroad Heritage Weekend Coming Up.

Nearly 50 members enjoyed the 32nd Historical Society Convention over Memorial Day weekend. New features this year included prototype model operations at the Carter Museum HOn3 ET&WNC layout and informative clinics both in Johnson City and at Tweetsie Railroad following another exciting train ride/show expertly executed by the train crew over in Blowing Rock.

Fred Alsop details what went on in Johnson City in his column inside.

After our Saturday evening meal at the Tweetsie Palace, Society member Caleb Reeves presented a scholarly history of the Shenandoah Central and the first three years of the Tweetsie Railroad park. Through his extensive research and collection of rarely seen contemporary photographs, Caleb helped fill us in on events of those years and debunked a few legends that have circulated over the last 60 years.

We were steam-less at the Gorge, but still enjoyed a fine day. Mark Milbourne introduced us to some BIG plans now beginning to take shape to build a Christmas train and railroad facilities that will help keep the Gorge's steam power in shape.

We'll have another chance soon to get together at the end of August for Railroad Heritage Weekend at Tweetsie.

If you're mechanically inclined and enjoy puzzles, the Southeast Narrow Gauge and Short Line Museum has a project that might interest you.

And on the modeling front, there's a new HOn3 model for the end of your first class passenger train.

Read on and enjoy...

Curtis Brookshire, Editor ✪

From the workbench of your Society President –

It was great seeing all y'all at the Convention after a long two-year COVID hiatus. For those who attended, it was (fun) business as usual and a good time to catch up with everyone. For those who couldn't make it, we missed you... please make plans for next year, there's some good stuff planned already!

The Historical Society Convention has always been, and continues to be, an outdoor-themed get-together. From the get-go we've enjoyed getting out on the old right-of-way, whether it was a visit to Cranberry Mine or walking in the Gorge. With the new emphasis on extending the Tweetsie Trail through Tunnel 1 on toward Hampton I think that the outlook for our outdoor railroad related visits will only be enhanced! Stay tuned...it's only going to get better!

CFORD

Time To Pay Your Dues!

News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

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

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

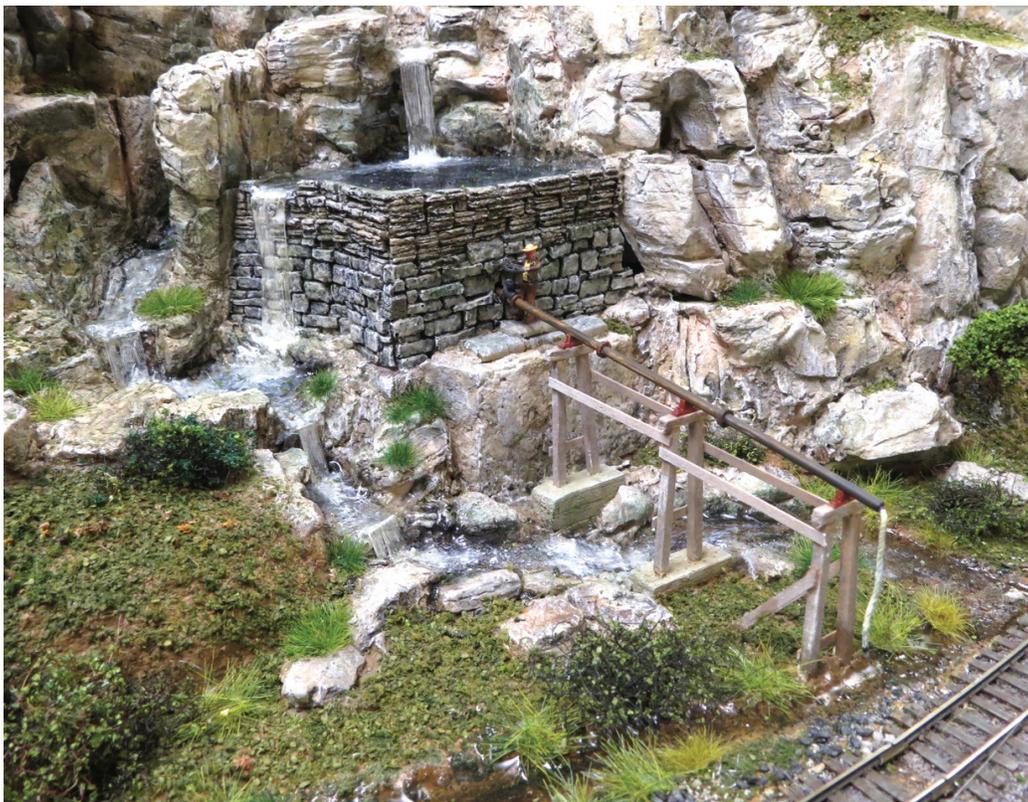
The Carter Railroad Museum had two terrific weeks of activity back-to-back on Memorial Day Weekend hosting the Annual Convention of the ET&WNC RR Historical Society, and the following weekend on June 3-4 hosting our 5th Annual Big Train Show in the ETSU Mini-Dome. The Historical Society provided the opportunity for our museum members to host the first-ever operating sessions on our 1,300 sq.ft. HOn3 ET&WNC layout on Friday and Saturday of the Convention. Our 1-hour running sessions were created by Geoff Stunkard and Frank Fezzie, and a number of the Society members operated the “Tweetsie” successfully from Johnson City to the Cranberry mines and back again over the layout using passing sidings and operating instructions for car pickups and drop-offs, while working against a timetable on the single-lane trackage. Our little trains operated flawlessly over the line through such historic towns as Roan Mountain and Elk Park with the sounds of their whistles echoing off the walls of the Doe River Gorge at Pardee Point.

Two of our members, Geoff Stunkard and Fred Alsop, also presented lectures to the Society members about narrow gauge railroad operations (Geoff) and about how the scenery and buildings were created for our ET&WNC layout (Fred). The finishing details of the little mountain town of Elk Park and the unique water tank in the narrows near Hampton had just

been completed in the weeks prior to the convention and it was a pleasure to show them off to our guests. We had a great time with our Society visitors and look forward to helping host the next Society Convention in 2023.

After a COVID-induced absence for the past two years, we held our 5th Annual Big Train show once more in early June on the ETSU campus. The big Mini-Dome complex provides 64,000 sq.ft. of space and it was filled with more than 320 tables with 35 vendors from 10 states displaying their railroad-themed wares for sale. We had a great food vendor who provided a goodly percentage of their profits to charity, and four operating model railroad layouts, including one using large live-steam locomotives as their motive power. The two-day event attracted approximately 2,000 visitors and the museum uses the profits for its operations and for creating our many exhibits. The numerous tasks of putting on such a big event are through all the efforts of our museum volunteers who see to all the details that are required. The work begins many months in advance of the actual show and continues for many days after the last vendor packs up and leaves for home.

Our museum library now contains over 2,500 hardback volumes of railroad books and we are busy barcoding and cataloging them so they can be circulated to members and others who wish to check them out. While this process is only approximately 45% complete at this time, we were able to identify numerous duplicate copies and provide them for sale during the Historical Society Convention and at the Big Train Show giving them new homes and new readers.



The Hampton hillside cistern, in “the narrows” of the Doe River adjacent to Tunnel 1, is now finished and open for business...to provide water for the thirsty locomotives of a young ET&WNC Railroad. For eastbound trains, the next available water stop won't be until White Rock, after the hard work of climbing the curves of the Doe River Gorge. *Photo courtesy of Fred Alsop.*

The Carter Railroad Museum is much more than just the “Tweetsie” railroad layout as the largest gallery houses our large 44 x 22 foot HO-Scale layout depicting Southern Appalachia in the summertime. This is the layout owned and operated by the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders, the principal docents for the operation of the museum and its many public-outreach activities, including the Big Train Show and several rail excursions during the year. This gallery also houses an N-Scale layout depicting Knoxville, TN and a western-themed G-Scale layout.

The museum is open to the public every Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm and at other times to groups by special arrangement. We look forward to your next visit! For more information contact Fred Alsop via email at alsopf@etsu.edu. Our website can be found at www.memrr.org. 🚂

Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

Matt Bumgarner has this news from Newton, NC –

The second quarter has been relatively quiet at the SE Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum with the exception of our ongoing rebuild of the ET&WNC motorcar #1. As you may recall, back in the winter, we formed a new team and dedicated a work bay for the project. Unfortunately, there was no documentation left behind by the former volunteers who disassembled the car so we are in effect working on a jigsaw puzzle with a thousand parts. Fortunately, we can use operational ET&WNC#2 as our box cover.

The ultimate goal is to rebuild #1 to its original narrow gauge configuration, but at the moment, we are reassembling the car into its standard gauge model. From there, we can make the necessary adjustments back to narrow gauge. The task is tedious and at times confounding, but if you would like to pitch in and help restore this bit of history, feel free to join a work session on the first and third Saturday mornings of the month. If you time it right, you just might be able to hitch a ride on one of the few original operational Alco diesels around as well! Visit our website at www.newtondepot.com. 🚩

Linville Depot & Caboose 505 at the Avery County Historical Museum

Aneda Johnson and Jerry Turbyfill send us this from Newland, NC –

Jerry Turbyfill, our guest speaker this year at the Society Convention business meeting, told us the story of getting caboose 505 lettered. We've seen it and it looks gorgeous. Stop by, visit, and learn some ET&WNC history during your next trip through Newland.

The Avery County Historical Museum is in the process of building a brand new website, so check in from time to time and see how things are going. The museum's summer hours are Monday-Friday, 10-3, and Saturdays by appointment. If you'd like to plan a visit, please call 828-733-7111 to confirm the museum's hours, and continue to watch for their new website at www.averycountymuseum.org. 🚩



ET&WNC Railroad Caboose 505 sports her brand new lettering in May of 2022 at the Avery County Historical Museum in Newland, NC. Photo courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.

News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

3D printing is where things are happening for modelers right now. Ben Merritt at merritt.3d.com has the first in what should be a series of ET&WNC vestibuled passenger cars, starting with the first one the ET acquired: parlor car Azalea. The rest of the story comes from Ben himself courtesy of his website:

Built in the early 1900's and purchased by the ET&WNC Railroad in May of 1912, the Azalea served as a parlor car aboard the line from Johnson City, TN to Boone, NC. The Azalea hosted many excursions for railroad executives along with financial investors. Riding in the parlor car was the true definition of luxury as passengers traveled into the mountains. Over the years, the Azalea became one of the most photographed passenger cars on the railroad and was often found on the rear-end of passenger trains. This 40' narrow gauge passenger coach became an icon and recognizable part of ET&WNC history.

We are proud to announce that this is the first commercially produced model of the Azalea in HO_{N3}. Designed from the drawings of Ed Cass, found in the 2001 September/October edition of the Narrow Gauge Gazette (Cass drawing), this model features details from the unique shape/layout of the Azalea all the way down to the door knobs and rear-platform railings.

Please note the Ed Cass drawings used for this car were for a 44'-6" car, which is what we have modeled, as opposed to 40', the true length of this coach. This is a small issue that would require a complete redesign of the model to fix, at this time there are no plans to redesign the car.

Editor's note: the car comes with handrail and brake staff details and most importantly, a removable floor which will enable modelers to add an interior and most importantly - weights for improved tracking. Not included, trucks, couplers and underbody brake details. Right now available in HO scale only, but modelers in other scales might want to contact Ben directly and see what he has in mind for your scale. 🚩

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



The next big event of Society interest is Heritage Weekend, August 27th and 28th. Communications your editor received from Tweetsie indicate Heritage Weekend events are still in the planning stage. Past year's events included both engines under steam hauling two trains: the regular park train with the Western show and a "mixed" train including historic coach 5. Sunday morning featured double-headed trains. Special displays were featured at the museum in the back room of the pavilion and some independent visitors such as a steam tractor. Your Historical Society shares a table with the Alexander Chapter NRHS to sell coach 5 train ride tickets. It's also a good time for us to spread the good news of the ET&WNC Historical Society to newcomers. Stay tuned to Tweetsie's website for updates as the weekend draws near and we hope to see as many Society members as possible.

Your editor would also like to take a moment to recognize

...See Tweetsie Railroad Happenings continued on page 4

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings continued from page 3...

long-time member and friend Tim Smith who now holds the position of Assistant Director of Engineering at Tweetsie. Tim has definitely “been around the block” in the steam narrow gauge world, having worked at Tweetsie and Dollywood for many years as well as a stint in Colorado working in former D&RGW country. All that makes for a highly experienced railroader and a fine counterpart to Matt Ernst, another long-time friend who has been Engineering Director for the past couple of years. Not only do they and their crew keep one of the south’s premier theme parks running smoothly, they’re also the stewards of two of the finest narrow gauge steam locomotives around. We appreciate all that Chris Robbins and the team at Tweetsie have done over the years to welcome us and we look forward to working with them at the end of August.

Check Tweetsie’s website for the most current schedule and information at www.tweetsie.com. 🚂

Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Camp season is in full swing, having begun June 5, and summer staff arrived for training two weeks prior. Enrollment is fairly good, almost on a par with last year, which wasn’t far off pre-COVID 2019. It was great to have the Society Convention return on May 29 after a two year COVID hiatus and see many of you again.

Much hard work last year and this spring was done to upgrade the track to safely carry the Crown steam locomotive. The track was finally ready and we were looking forward to seeing steam in the Gorge for the convention. Unfortunately when it was test fired for the spring in late April, a flue was found to be leaking and it is now waiting for a tube job. But it was still a lovely day for a diesel-hauled trip and the more relaxed schedule this year made it possible to serve lunch and give an update on the Christmas Train project, as well as invite everyone to view the CT equipment in storage. So as I shared then, the Christmas Train project has regained momentum after being “sidetracked” by COVID with enough funding to begin construction. A press event was held on April 26 to publicly announce the project and the goal is to be operational for the 2023 Christmas season.

As mentioned previously, engineering work has been com-

pleted and the route is now staked out. The engineering firm is preparing the plan to send to the state for permitting and hopefully will be there by the time you read this. Meade Tractor, a large dealer in the southeast, has offered to loan heavy equipment for the grading, and it is hoped that this work can begin in the fall. Planning work is also underway for a locomotive shop adjacent to the existing sawmill shed where all of the CT equipment is presently stored. The anticipated construction as well as the improved COVID situation enabling guest groups to return this fall has led to the decision to NOT offer the “Maze of Life” corn maze/fall festival weekends this year. However it is still possible a fall color event will be offered one weekend – stay tuned.

The train is still busy this year, operating regularly for school groups this spring and presently for our Saturday Lake Day events, as well as for parents dropping their kids at camp. Since the Historical Society outing, the coaches’ paint has been refreshed and work has begun to buff up the faded paint on the diesel.

Camp season has limited time for steam work, but several recent Fridays were able to be spent on the first Porter to finish freeing the boiler for removal. We’ve been blessed with an offer to donate the trucking, and as I write, scheduling efforts to coordinate crane and truck are in progress. Hopefully by the time you read this, it will have been delivered to the contractor fabricating the replacement. Next efforts will be removing the tubes from the Crown and scheduling the contractor to install the new ones.

This summer DRG also has a full-time “RR crew”. Thanks to a designated gift, a summer position/stipend was able to be offered, resulting in Ethan Freeman joining us, along with regular volunteer Rick Paffrath. They were able to help complete all of the spring inspection track items and are now working on other much-needed ROW tasks such as drainage, and rock and vegetation removal. They have also been handling motorcar ops hauling campers up the river for inner tubing. The tie inserter machine, mentioned last time, also made it into service and was some help in completing the trackwork. A “jitterbug” (tamper) set was also recently offered as donation and arrangements are currently underway to take delivery, hopefully by early fall. I’m hoping, once the jitterbugs are here, to give the gorge track a full going over on leveling while tamping up all the extra ties added last year. If you will have some time available this fall to join a work session, let me know! Please visit our website for more info about our activities at www.doerivergorge.com. 🚂



Rail eagerly awaits being put to work on the new DRG Christmas Train project – track loop, shop, equipment sheds and more. *Photos courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.*



One of the two newly acquired Porter engines for the Doe River Gorge’s exciting new Christmas Train project. Both engines are scheduled for boiler replacement.



ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society

PO Box 70697 • ETSU • Johnson City, TN 37614

2022-2023 Membership/Dues Form

Your contact information:

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Thank you for paying your dues in a timely manner! This helps with our record keeping, lowers our costs, and keeps you from missing important Society publications.

Please note that the current "Dues Year" runs from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

Please check your current Membership Card or contact the Treasurer if there is any question about your membership status or if you have a change of home or email address.

The Society thanks you for helping to keep our operating costs low!
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Please Check Which Year(s) This Payment Represents -	
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2023 - 2024	
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Payment Enclosed For The Following -	Amount
Society Membership Dues - \$30.00 per year	
Caboose #505 Donation	
Combine Car #15 Donation	
G. L. Carter Museum ET&WNC Layout Donation	
Motorcar #1 Donation	
Linville Depot Maintenance Donation	
Doe River Gorge Railroad Donation	

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If you have any questions please contact Treasurer Patricia Jennings at pjdr2006@yahoo.com.