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# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Board of Directors

### Officers

Curtis Brookshire, *President*  
703-772-7002  
curtis.brookshire@verizon.net

Chris Jessee, *Vice President*  
434-962-2514  
cj8n@mac.com

Rae Augenstein, *Secretary*  
getglowing@gmail.com

Patricia Jennings, *Treasurer*  
pjdr2006@yahoo.com

## Board Members

Chris Ford, *Past President*  
Dr. Fred Alsop III  
Joel Shipley  
Jerry Turbyfill

## Newsletter Editor & Society Historian

Curtis Brookshire  
curtis.brookshire@verizon.net

## Society Website

www.etwncrrhs.org  
Chris Ford, *Webmaster*  
chris@cfordart.com

Address any inquiries to this NEW ADDRESS:

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

## Changing of the Guard, Plus Heritage Weekend Coming Up!

The Society met for our 34th Annual Convention May 24–26th. There was a leadership change which I'll get to shortly and at the banquet we enjoyed a presentation by Johnny Graybeal previewing his upcoming book on the Shenandoah Central. More on that inside. We enjoyed seeing the progress made at the Doe River Gorge for the Christmas Train, had to clear a tree from the right of way to complete our trip up the Gorge, and Tim Smith gave the group a tour of the shop at Tweetsie Railroad before a family-style meal at the Dan'l Boone Inn.

Speaking of making progress, we visited the *Johnson City Railroad Experience*, the new home of what had been the George L. Carter Museum formerly at ETSU. We saw the ET&WNC layout coming back together along with some expansion which will improve some of the areas on the railroad. Mike Hardin has loaned some of his collection for display and we saw that also coming together along with the "broad" (standard) gauge Mountain empire layout. Fred Alsop gives us the full story below.

Now for the "other" news. At the business meeting, Chris Ford announced that he was retiring from the Presidency after 10 fine years of service. Chris steered the boat skillfully and brought our group through the pandemic, organized right-of-way tours and kept the "train of state" on the rails. Thank you Chris for all you do and continue to do. He hasn't retired completely—he still publishes this newsletter and he's working on a model that will fill an important space on the ET&WNC layout at the *Johnson City Railroad Experience*. Chris nominated yours truly to serve as his successor. It's a

great honor and I plan to do the society as proud as my predecessors.

A few weeks ago I got a phone call from one of our past presidents who asked me (only partially in jest) "Well, you've been president a whole week now. What have you done for the society lately?" Several of my goals are to bring and involve more young people in Society activities. There's an energetic group I see each year at Heritage Weekend, running from one location to another for pictures. As part of my quest to stay in contact with more members, I've swallowed my animosity and joined Facebook and Instagram so I can enroll in the groups that our members share. I hope these efforts will bear fruit in the coming months. Since my election opened a vacancy in the Vice President's position, Chris Jessee graciously accepted nomination and election to that job. I look forward to working closely with him to make exciting things happen.

Next item: Heritage Weekend is coming up at Tweetsie on August 24-25. Chris Robbins gives us a preview in his column inside. I hope to greet as many members as possible as well as recruiting some new ones. Finally, we've got some new contributors—Rae Augenstein, who incidentally accepted nomination and election as Society Secretary, as well as publisher of Johnny Graybeal's magazine *Every Time With No Complaint* will share some news of what's happening in and around Johnson City, and Chris Jessee will be talking to us from time to time soon. So let's see what's happening around the Society...

Curtis Brookshire, 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 –*

Our volunteers continue to work on all facets of the railroad museum along with several student workers hired from a grant. We now hope to have a soft opening of the museum sometime in early August. We will certainly let everyone know when we have a firm date for that longed-for event. I want to bring you up to date on the planning and progress for things related to the museum's exhibits, model railroad and otherwise, for the ET&WNC Railroad. Mike Hardin has decided the museum will be the place for his extensive collection of "Tweetsie" memorabilia and we have already received a trailer load with part of his collection to display. We are designating two gallery corners to house some of his collection and are busy designing how they will be presented to the public. One of them will appear as a working office with furniture and other objects from the original Johnson City offices and some of the depots. Included are metal desks, filing cabinets, chairs, radios, telephones, and a ticket holder, complete with railroad tickets, from the Elizabethton depot. The "office" is set off with a window from the Johnson City shops with an enlarged photo of #10 in view through it. We are most grateful to be the repository for Mike's life-long collection and plan to put much of it on a rotating basis to keep it fresh for returning visitors. We feel confident this is the largest single collection of this little "Railroad with a Heart" in existence.

The HO<sub>3</sub> scale layout of the ET&WNC RR that many of you have seen develop over the years at our former museum on the ETSU campus, and that some of you have operated on, is growing in size in its new home. Member Mike Sagers has created a model used to guide us as we extend the bench work to accommodate the town of Elizabethton and Johnson City. Additionally, we have new space for the trackside structures in Hampton and have been able to extend space for Elk Park and for the west end of the Cranberry module providing more room for the yard and for the countryside between it and the Cranberry wye. All-in-all, we are adding more than 100 feet of new mainline trackage and additional yard space for the businesses in Johnson City. Sagers' model shows what we are planning for the layout. The benchwork is color-coded to distinguish between what was already completed, and what is being added to make this perhaps the largest layout of this railroad in its scale to be found anywhere. There are two colors that separate "existing" from "coming soon" on this model. Sections that are uniformly white exist as part of the original layout. Any sections that are edged in yellow are new sections that are being added.

At this writing, all the benchwork has been constructed and we are beginning the process of laying in the track that will be tested and then followed with the creation of the layout's scenery. We worked a couple of days, sometimes more, weekly on the original layout and it took approximately 11 years to get it to the state of completion and operation that we enjoyed prior to moving from ETSU. We plan to have all the railroad track in place and operational prior to our opening later this year. However, scenery takes time, and we plan for it to be of the same museum quality that we established for the original sections.

We have many, many structures to design and create from

scratch. All must closely resemble the buildings that would have been along the tracks of the prototype circa 1925. We will be applying a variety of modeling techniques, materials, and technology in this somewhat daunting task. We plan to use some 3D printing and laser knife cuttings as part of tools to help us get the job done. All of this will take time, several years perhaps, to bring the entire layout to life. In so doing we will be teaching others how each facet of this large modeling project is being accomplished and it will serve as an educational opportunity for the museum. We are most fortunate to have so many period photos to document so much of this eastern mountain narrow-gauge railroad. Additionally, many of the buildings in the towns and cities the railroad served are still standing and available to photograph and measure as we work to create them in miniature. If you have any such photos that you are willing to share with us from any of these towns and cities, please don't hesitate to bring them to our attention, we shall be most appreciative.

There is a lot of work continuing in other parts of the museum as well with new additional displays being created and/or planned. The Mountain Empire Model Railroaders (MEMRR) members are working on an almost entirely new layout in HO scale. The N scale layout is nearing completion and will be the most complete layout when the museum opens. The Little Engineers Playroom is almost finished with a brand new G scale layout encircling the room above our heads. The library continues to receive donated railroad books with approximately 4,000 individual volumes being Library of Congress catalogued and placed online for review by the public. These will be available for checkout by the public except for some rare and/or reference volumes that will have to remain in the library for use there.

We plan to have business hours from 10 am to approximately 4:30 pm daily from Tuesday through Saturday. There will be other scheduled events outside of these hours as needed. We no longer have "free lodging" as we did when we were a part of ETSU and are paying rent as well as salaries. Therefore, we will be establishing a fee structure for individuals, groups, and other entities. We look forward to seeing you in the future and you are welcome to drop by to chat and check us out even before we are open to the public on the work schedule as indicated above. You can check us out at [jcrails.org](http://jcrails.org). 🚂



Mike Sangers' model of the new enlarged layout to help guide in its construction.



## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

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

The museum is pleased to announce that more narrow gauge equipment has been donated by Rick Perry, of Hurtsboro, AL. A crew made another trip down in mid June, and braved 95+ degree heat to load more narrow gauge cars onto a truck for transportation to Newton, NC. This equipment is in the category of industrial narrow gauge of the type that worked in factories all over the US one hundred years ago. This shipment also included a small fireless steam locomotive. The freight cars are all link & pin coupled, and will make an excellent display to educate the public and school groups on the role narrow gauge played in industry long after it fell out of style out on the mainline. Once the summer heat eases, work will begin to prepare the cars for long term display.

Anyone living in the Hickory Metro area is invited to join the volunteer force led by the Alexander Chapter NRHS. The chapter has an active page on Facebook that can inform you of how to join the fun. Please visit our website at [newtondepot.com](http://newtondepot.com). 🚧

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## News of Interest –

It was announced at the ET&WNC RR HS Convention in late May that Johnny Graybeal is working on a new book, this time covering the history of the Shenandoah Central Railroad, the tourist line/museum that preserved No. 12 before it became the foundation for Tweetsie Railroad. The text is almost complete and most of the work on the photos is complete as well. It will be laid out after the coming issue of ETWNC. If you would like to be informed as soon as the book is out, let Johnny Graybeal know at [johnnyg@boone.net](mailto:johnnyg@boone.net).

### Good News for the 208

The railfan world is abuzz with the news that Great Smoky Mountains Railway has sent former Southern Railway 722, former ET&WNC No. 208, to the Strasburg Railroad shops for rebuilding. No word on how long the job will take, but one day soon the possibility of seeing her and 207 reunited and running over their old tracks on the Murphy Branch in western North Carolina will be a reality.

### News from the ET&WNC Region

*Sent from Rae Augenstein–*

The Johnson City Press reports that the Carter County Commission has set in motion a plan to extend the Tweetsie Trail from Valley Forge to Hampton. This extension will stretch from the current end of the trail along State Line Road at Hatcher Lane through Tunnel #1 ending at Green Bridge Park in Hampton. This park is across the Doe River from the former location of the Hampton Covered Bridge, which crossed the Little Doe where the two rivers meet.

Since plans are in the early stages, we don't yet know how much of the former ROW will be used. Some of the new trail will have to parallel and possibly share the road with US 19E in Valley Forge. As many of you know, the original 19E Doe River Bridge leading to Tunnel #1 still exists but is crumbling,

so a new bridge will have to be built there. No news yet as to how the trail will cross the Doe again on the Hampton end to reach the park. The state of Tennessee has provided a \$6.3 million grant to Carter County that will help fund the project. 🚧

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## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

As many already are aware, Shapeways 3D Printing filed for bankruptcy and is most likely liquidating. The good news is that David Kmecik, who separated his 3D printing operation (*3dptrain*) from Shapeways several years ago, is still in business and swamped with orders, and we can still get our ET&WNC rolling stock from him. He's got a big announcement coming soon...check his website at [3dptrain.com](http://3dptrain.com) and watch for details.

*Sent from Ben Merritt of Merritt 3D Design & Printing–*

"I want to first thank everyone who has recently ordered from us for your continued patience. After graduation from ETSU and a move to Oak Ridge to start my career, I have run into some issues with the printers. They did not respond well to the move, and as a result, I have been operating with only one functional printer. Unfortunately, this happens to also be the smallest printer. This has delayed the production of larger products including On3/30, Sn3, and some HOn3 models. I thank you for your patience and I am now awaiting my 3rd shipment of parts to arrive from the manufacturer in China. I look forward to receiving the parts within the next two weeks, making the repairs, and restarting production by the end of this month. With that said, I wanted to present our featured product of the month for those who may not be modeling the ET, but would like a way to capture the railroad's history in your home or office. Together, the ET&WNC and LRRy had four beautiful Jackson & Sharp coaches in their fleet. We are featuring the scale drawings (1/48 scale) of the Jackson & Sharp coaches as this month's featured product! Check my website at [merritt3d.com](http://merritt3d.com) to view more about and to purchase this month's featured product. In the coming months I look forward to modeling combine 15 and I anticipate it will be ready for purchase by the New Year. I am thankful to have such great support from fellow modelers and fans of the ET&WNC. If you have any product suggestions or would like more information on a product, please reach out to me at [benjamin@merritt3d.com](mailto:benjamin@merritt3d.com)."

Still more modeling news–Your editor was made aware of Apogee Locomotive Works at [apogeelocoworks.com](http://apogeelocoworks.com), who offer a 3D printed shell of North American Rayon's fireless cooker #1 in HO scale. It's designed to fit a Bachmann Porter 0-6-0T mechanism. I have a Bachmann 0-6-0 switcher that has more accurate valve gear and will find out how this conversion goes. Also Chris Ford is working on a very detailed Carnegie Furnace model for the *Johnson City Railroad Experience* layout. Those on the ETWNC iO group (<https://groups.io/g/ETWNC>) have been following his progress. We're all familiar with John Waite's S scale furnace model exhibit that his widow Sharon donated to the museum some time ago. Chris' model will be an actual part of the layout providing a destination for the ore coming from the Cranberry Mine. 🚧

## Historical Society Magazine - Every Time With No Complaint

Johnny Graybeal sends us this update –

Rae Augenstein is now working on the next issue of the magazine, which will be another double issue bringing the story of No. 12 up to 1950. No exact promises of when it will be out, but it will be worth the wait. 🚧

## Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

DRG has of course been busy running summer camps. As I write, we've just finished up a busy 2 weeks of staff training and 4 weeks of camp. We get a bit of a break (including time to write this) over the July 4 week doing just food service, lake activities and train rides as we host a Knoxville church doing their own camp, and then 3 days off over the holiday weekend. Then 4 more camp weeks and a final week of hosting two other churches.

Last summer we had designated funding to hire two "Railroad Interns" and this summer we had funding to hire three! We were able to fill all three slots, plus a fourth decided to come as a volunteer. Regardless of Christmas Train work out front, maintenance in the gorge must continue each year. They have already replaced 165 crossties and will easily make the goal of 200, about double what was done last year. We also just finished rebuilding a MOW trailer that can haul ballast and rock/dirt and they are now using it to continue opening up drainage ditches along the ROW. They are also operating the motorcars to shuttle campers up the gorge for tubing the river and assisting with Train Rides on our Saturday Day Quest programs.

It was great to see everyone at the convention. We were glad to show the progress on the Christmas Train project and provide the usual trip up the gorge, this year thankfully in good weather. Here are the latest major progress items since the last installment:

Grading of the main loop is complete as well as the new parking area and entrance roads. All of the adjacent slopes and areas have been groomed and hydroseeded. Now we just need some rain and a break from the summer heat so the grass can start growing. It's been a full year of earthwork and all the dust or mud that comes with and we're looking forward to a grassy, much more completed look soon!

The lead tracks from the coach shed, the wye, and about half of the main loop are laid.

Grading of the extension to the gorge is completed as far as in front of the office. The remaining segment along the lake to reach the tunnel is on hold through camp season, but should be completed in the fall.

The shell of the railroad shop building is up. The concrete service pit is complete, as are sub-foundations under the tracks, poured with embedded steel "ties". Most of the rail has been set in place and welded to the steel. Once the rail work is complete, the floor will be poured around the rails.

The prep work on the new boiler for the first Porter steam locomotive is mostly complete and is expected to be set on the chassis by the end of July. It is also hoped that the lead tracks to the shop are completed enough to move it into its new home by then.

The big push to complete the concrete and steelwork on the new multipurpose building/train-loading area by June was mostly successful and the big crew (80+) from Carpenters for Christ that had been scheduled was able to accomplish a lot of the wood framing work early in the month. Another smaller Baptist group from Alabama took over for a week or so and we expect another group later in July.

The first major part of putting power lines underground was completed (where the new building now is) and remaining portions are in progress.

In spite of all the progress it has become apparent that we will not be ready for Christmas this year and we're now officially saying 2025. Additionally, much of the work, with the new building in particular, has exceeded projected costs. So the extra time is also needed to simply do the additional fundraising. But we are starting to hit the home stretch on this project and we look forward to it's completion! Hope to see everyone at the convention next summer AND again next Christmas! Visit our website for more info at [doerivergorge.com](http://doerivergorge.com). 🚧

## Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



Tweetsie Railroad is now more than halfway through the "regular" 2024 season...and it has been a busy one. A very rainy April and early May fortunately changed to a mostly dry June and (so far) July. On July 4th, the park introduced its newest ride, the "Bullwhip", and it has already proven to be thrilling and very popular. We also enjoyed a large crowd for our annual fireworks show on Independence Day when we celebrate the nation's history and the opening of Tweetsie Railroad in 1957. We have been using the #190 and #12 locomotives about equally, with #12 running most of the early weeks of the season and all through the Thomas The Tank Engine event.

We are also looking forward to Railroad Heritage Weekend on August 24–25. This year, we will be recognizing the 70th anniversary of the final year of the short-lived Shenandoah Central Railroad in Harrisonburg, Virginia – a relatively brief episode (1953 and 1954) in the long history of Tweetsie Railroad's 107-year-old Locomotive #12. For this special weekend we plan retro livery of the locomotive and tender, and special exhibits and presentations that highlight the Shenandoah Central years. Railroad Heritage Weekend is always a fun and informative event, and I hope you can be there. Check Tweetsie Railroad's website for more information at [tweetsie.com](http://tweetsie.com). 🚧



A 2024 group photo rounds out our Historical Society Annual Convention and our Saturday afternoon visit to Tweetsie Railroad in Blowing Rock, NC.