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41st NNGC Wrap-up *plus* 32nd Historical Society Convention Plans

I want to first offer hearty thanks and congratulations to Johnny Graybeal, Matt Bumgarner and all fellow members of the staff who made the 41st National Narrow Gauge Convention a success! Over 800 people attended the five-day event based at the Metro Convention Center in Hickory. Thanks also to this newsletter's contributing activities, all of which welcomed convention guests. And of course thanks to the members of our Society who were present and helped spread the gospel of the ET&WNC.

Society members Jerry Ledford and Dean Smith led clinics, along with Convention Chair Johnny Graybeal. Early birds to the convention visited "Tweetsie Country" via an all-day bus trip covering the entire length of the line, from Boone to Johnson City. I had the honor of leading the group on the first bus, with Johnny shepherding the second group. We stopped at the Avery County Museum and Linville Depot, where the second group participated in dedicating Caboose 505. We saw **STEAM** at the Doe River Gorge (more on that in Mark's column inside), and visited the George L. Carter Museum and HOn3 layout at ETSU, hosted by Dr. Fred Alsop III. Fred also came away with two contest awards with his model of the Coal Chute.

The convention followed hot on the heels of Tweetsie's Heritage Weekend, August 28-29, and I offer a special

thanks to the staff and train crew at Tweetsie for both a great show Heritage Weekend and for introducing Blue Ridge Mountain Narrow Gauge railroading to our visitors from the Narrow Gauge Convention on September 2. Matt Ernst and the crew had both locomotives primed and ready. We were happy to see #12's stack restored to its original length (seems it was getting a bit shorter in recent years). It was also great to see Tim Smith back at Tweetsie and long time Society member DJ Romine, who practically grew up at Tweetsie, promoted to engineer. Most of our convention guests had their first experience with Tweetsie and they all came away impressed. Once again my thanks and praise to all involved.

OK then, so what's next? We're making plans for the 32nd ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society Convention, so we hope you're making plans to attend. Convention dates are May 27-29, 2022 which falls over Memorial Day weekend. In addition to our usual visit and train ride at Tweetsie, we have some special events planned that we hope will cover all phases of interest. We plan to incorporate clinics from Dr. Fred Alsop's "Tweetsie Time Celebration"; several formal operating sessions at the Carter Museum's ET&WNC layout; walking and biking tours of the Tweetsie trail be-

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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 –

Lots of Fall events are happening at the G.L. Carter Railroad Museum. We co-hosted a rail & sail excursion to Knoxville October 30 with 168 participants who rode the 3-River Rambler Railway and had a luncheon cruise on the paddle wheel ship The Star of Knoxville. This was our first rail excursion since COVID shut down these popular public activities in spring of 2020 and we were sold out!

We were happy to participate in the 41st Annual National Narrow Gauge Convention with a table at the convention in Hickory where we distributed information about the museum and our affiliated organizations including the ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society. The convention brought two bus loads of conventioners to visit the Carter RR Museum with other participants coming on their own with a total of 94 folks touring our facility and seeing our operating layouts. The major focus was on our HOn3 “Tweetsie” layout and we got lots of questions and positive comments regarding it. Our model of Coal Chute took 3rd place and a special award in the “structures” category of the model contest.

The museum is just publishing its 4th Annual Railroad Calendar 2022 Edition that is available at our museum and we are expecting to see our article on coal, water, and sand on the ET&WNC in the forthcoming 2021 edition of the HOn3 Annual from White River Productions. This will be the 8th consecutive year our “Tweetsie” layout has been featured in this great narrow gauge model railroad magazine.

Model railroads are never complete and each of the four layouts in our museum have some work going on. For most of them these are scenery upgrades with work being done on the sections closest to the entrance of our largest gallery on the HO scale layout. A depot and industrial complex with a highway overpass are being constructed at one corner while a mountain with a timber/logging area is being created on the other one. Both will greatly enhance the first view visitors will have of this gallery as they enter our front door. The large N scale layout



Here's a few of the freshly constructed and painted structures in the town of Elk Park. About a dozen buildings face the Elk Park Depot and tracks and all will have a front row seat when an ET&WNC train rolls into town. *Photo courtesy of Fred Alsop.*

continues to get old “lichen” shrubs replaced with new, brighter foam vegetation that is giving it a real visual uplift.

Two areas of focus on the ET&WNC HOn3 layout are the water feature at Hampton, TN, and finishing the little railroad town of Elk Park, NC. The railroad's water “tank” at Hampton was a rather unique one for any railroad. The company took advantage of a flowing stream on a rock wall and created a cistern water tank by using cut stone to create an L-shaped wall against the rock face, thus damming part of the stream and creating a “natural” water tank fitted with an 8-inch pipe to carry water to trackside where a hose delivered it to waiting tenders. The pipe had a shut-off valve to control the water flow to the locomotive tender.

Elk Park is being scratch-built using available photos circa 1925. The ten buildings that fronted the depot have now been created and are being landscaped into the layout. Several more buildings have been laser-cut from scale drawings and will complete the little town. Because the structures all face the depot, visitors will see only the backs of the buildings from the aisle. So, we have installed two small cameras and a 15” monitor that allows viewers to simultaneously see the fronts of the buildings and the train as it comes into town. The completion of Elk Park will finish the area between Cranberry and Hampton before we turn our attention to the Johnson City area.

Please plan on visiting the Carter Railroad Museum next time you are in Johnson City. We are located on the campus of East Tennessee State University and are only open on Saturdays from 10-3. The address is 176 Ross Drive for your navigation system to help you find us and admission is free. Information about events and layouts can be found on our website at www.memrr.org ■

News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

Western-Rails has new semi trailers for the TOFC car. There is the original version, plus the longer version as well, in HO, S, and O. Check for more info at <http://westernrails.com>

Watch for the upcoming release of the HOn3 Annual. White River Productions is taking advance reservations on their website at <https://shop.whiteriverproductions.com>

The Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette has been running a series featuring ET&WNC locomotives, with articles and photos by Johnny Graybeal and plans by David Fletcher. Articles have run in the following issues:

- Sept/Oct 2020, 2-6-os #1 (2)
- Nov/Dec 2020, 2-8-0 #3
- Jan/Feb 2021, 2-8-os #4 (5 & 6)
- Mar/Apr 21, 0-8-0 #7
- May/June 21, 4-6-0 first #8
- Jul/Aug 21, 4-6-0 #9
- Sept/Oct 21, 2-6-0 #28
- Nov/Dec 21, 4-6-0 second #8

We anticipate a final article on 4-6-os #10-14 in the Jan/Feb 2022 issue. Back issues can be ordered from White River Productions at their website above. ■

Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

As of the last newsletter, Doe River Gorge was wrapping up its summer camp season and grateful to have a nearly “normal” one with enrollment nearly equal to 2019, after losing 2020 season to COVID. The Saturday Day Quest programs continued through the end of August with very strong attendance, requiring more trains than usual per day, usually 6 or 7. DRG also hosted a private company picnic for Nuclear Fuels and squeezed in 8 trains for them. Since camp season we’ve been grateful to have many retreat and guest groups and be fairly back to “normal” there as well, with many groups making a train ride part of their visit.

As soon as camp wrapped up in early August, in between the Day Quest Saturdays, we focused on preparation for the National Narrow Gauge Convention visit on August 31, with the goal of operating the Crown steam loco up the gorge. We were able to spike up all of the additional crossties inserted in the spring and work continued on the Crown itself, with a few more test firings to fix and verify various items. And the state boiler man was able to visit and sign it off! So the Crown was ready for the big day, but in the end the track was not quite. The additional ties were definitely needed, but after looking everything else over one more time, it was decided that quite a few crossties (now 21 years old), while OK for the small diesel loco, were just too marginal for the much heavier Crown. This was something of a disappointment after the huge effort to be ready for NNGC, but it was the right decision. The Crown was still able to put on something of a show for the two busloads that attended. After viewing it poised and ready at the main camp, attendees gathered just above the tunnel as it steamed up through, popping out and stopping there for photo ops. Attendees then boarded the diesel-hauled train just above the tunnel for the trip to Pardee Point and then motorcars to see the upper gorge. We were also blessed to have friends of DRG bring a third motorcar to haul a third trailer and thus have enough motorcar seats to handle the full busloads in rotation with the train.

The RR mostly took a break in September with myself taking overdue vacation and others catching up on other responsibilities and employment, but has been very busy since, with the Maze of Life corn maze and Fall Festival season, which ran 6 weekends from September 26 to October 31. Many groups came on Wednesday evenings, and, unlike last year due to COVID, many school groups came on weekdays. There are still a few operations scheduled for groups in November, which will essentially wrap up the season.

Most of two weeks is scheduled for ROW work to blow leaves off (which prevents decaying vegetation from affecting the ties) and to replace ties needed for the Crown. We don’t know yet how many ties we’ll need to replace, but we expect it to be less than what was added this year. With any luck 2022 is the year for “steam in the gorge”. We’re hoping this can take place in time for the HS convention,

so keep your fingers crossed. If you can contribute a day or two of labor, drop me a line and we’ll put out a few more ties!

Some activity has been able to resume on the Christmas Train project, primarily fundraising. The next step is engineering, some of which has resumed and will continue over the winter. After all the COVID setbacks, the goal now is to try to have this in place for 2023. Visit our website for more info about our activities at www.doerivergorge.com ■

Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

Matt Bumgarner has this news from Newton, NC –

The past few months at the SE Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum has been a tale of busy beavers as we prepared for the 41st National Narrow Gauge Convention that was held in our backyard. We spent the summer months cleaning and touching up the paint on our steam locomotive, Virginia-Carolina #50. We mounted the half-ton pilot/coupler/step assembly on the front of the engine and decked her out with her jewelry (headlight, number plate, etc).

We washed all of the older equipment in our pavilion, and spent an extra dose of time mounting ET&WNC boxcar #434 on a proper set of narrow gauge freight trucks that were donated anonymously a couple of years back. To do so, we had to extend Track #2 a couple of rail lengths and pull the Carolina & North-Western #434 as far out as we could so that the trucks could be placed between her and the 434. We then rolled 434 out, and with a big forklift we raised the boxcar body up, and rolled the shop trucks out from under her. We then rolled the new trucks under 434 and carefully sat her down on the trucks, lining up the bolster bearings and king pin assemblies. I would like to say it went smoothly, but the forklift operator ran over my foot, causing me to miss the following weekend’s festivities at Tweetsie’s Heritage Weekend! Fortunately, the rest of the volunteer staff was able to assist our friends at TRR after the convention and a great time was had by all.

We are grateful not only for the history we are able to save, preserve, and restore, but also for the fellowship and the opportunity to see old friends and make new ones in this greatest hobby of all. 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 –

The museum was proud to welcome attendees from the 41st National Narrow Gauge Convention on August 31. Visitors toured the restored Linville Depot and ET&WNC Caboose #505. We held a dedication to all who worked to restore the caboose.

The museum will hold an Open House Saturday, December 4 from 10-3 to coincide with Newland’s Annual Christmas Parade. There will be music, refreshments and a reading of “The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree”, a book by local author Gloria Houston. Please plan to visit if you can. More info is available on our website at www.averymuseum.com ■



The Crown awaits her departure at Doe River Gorge during the NNGC visit in August. Photo courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



The Tweetsie Christmas event will be held on Fridays, Saturdays and select weekday evenings from November 19 - December 30. The park opens at 5 pm. The dates are November 19-23, 26-27; December 3-4, 10-11, 17-23, 26-30. Note: Dates and Hours may be subject to change. You will enjoy a dazzling Holiday light display and Holiday sing-a-long music during a 3-mile train ride through the Blue Ridge Mountains in an open-air train car pulled by a historic narrow gauge steam locomotive. Dress warm!

Visit Santa in his Gingerbread House, spin through the night on four classic amusement rides, warm up to a campfire and toast s'mores at the Hacienda, enjoy the lights on Main Street and the Christmas trees, and visit the shops. Tickets can be purchased online or by phone at 1-877-TWEETSIE (1-877-893-3874). Please note there is a \$2.00 per ticket processing fee for tickets purchased by phone. This fee is waived for Season Pass Holders. This year, Season Pass holders receive 50% off one admission and train ride to Tweetsie Christmas!

Advance tickets are required due to reduced park capacity. We anticipate that many nights will be sold out well in advance and that no tickets will be available at the door on the night of the event. We strongly recommend that you purchase your tickets in advance in order to assure entry. When you purchase a ticket to Tweetsie Christmas, you will select a specific night and train ride time.

Families and friends will be able to tour Santa's Gingerbread House and visit with Santa. Groups will be properly socially distanced and a protective plexiglass barrier will be between guests and Santa at all times. Guests will be able to speak with and pose for a photo (in front of the plexiglass) with Santa.

Children are encouraged to bring a letter to Santa to place in the mailbox.

After Christmas Santa retires to the North Pole for some much-needed rest. He turns the gingerbread house back over to Mr. & Mrs. Gingerbread who will be available for photos with guests. Enjoy the taste of the holidays with specialty fudge, s'mores, and hot food items in the Cowboy Cantina and Tweetsie Palace.

Wind, rain, snow and other conditions are possible in November and December. Check the weather forecast prior to your visit and dress accordingly. Portions of the event will take place outside, so if it is raining or snowing please bring appropriate outerwear. Tweetsie Christmas will operate as scheduled unless noted on our website. Check our website at www.tweetsie.com 🚩

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tween Johnson City and Elizabethton; and, if possible, looking over the Trail section in Valley Forge that may become part of the Trail Extension.

Additional opportunities will abound at the Doe River Gorge. Our convention takes place before the Christian Camp summer programs kick off, so we should be able to have the place to ourselves on Saturday May 28. This will allow for more train trips and more time to explore the gorge.

We'll discuss the HS Convention in more detail in the January 2022 newsletter. *HOWEVER...*the Carnegie Hotel in Johnson City has already reserved a block of rooms for us, so if you want to reserve a room, now sounds like a good time. Please plan to attend our first face-to-face meeting in two years coming next May (and if needed we do have "official" ET&WNC N-95 face masks available).

Curtis Brookshire, Editor 🚩

2021 Heritage Days and Narrow Gauge Convention Photos



The Crown exits tunnel 2 eastbound at Doe River Gorge with a plethora of smoke and applause from the crowd.

Dan Stenger scratchbuilt this excellent Fn3 model of ET&WNC wood car #111 for the National Narrow Gauge Convention model contest in Hickory. All photos courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.



Coal Chute, modeled in HOon3, will reside on the G. L. Carter Museum's narrow gauge layout. Built by Fred Alsop, it won two awards in the NNGC model contest.

Number 12 leads a flat car and coach #5 across the wood trestle at the 2021 Tweetsie Railroad Heritage Days.

