



The ET TIMES

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Thank Y'all For A Successful Tweetsie Railroad Heritage Weekend, And Please Enjoy This Great Fall Weather!

Your editor is trying to figure out what happened to September. It seems only a couple of weeks ago we were up at Tweetsie for Heritage Weekend, which by the way went spectacularly as they took a step back in time to celebrate 190's 80th birthday. We sold out most every trip with former EBT Coach 5 and enjoyed meeting all the visitors who stopped by the table and museum displays.

As you'll see in this issue, the Doe River Gorge has been moving a lot of dirt, and the George L. Carter Museum moved some (model) mountains, as they began their move to future new quarters.

We've also began planning our 2024

Convention time which is scheduled over Memorial Day Weekend (May 24-26, 2024). Stay tuned for more on that topic.

You may notice the absence of a column from the Avery County Museum in this issue. We're giving them a break until we hear something new to report. But by all means, please stop by when you're in Newland and see the former Linville Depot and Caboose 505.

Johnny Graybeal has rejoined the newsletter (he was a prior editor some years ago) and he has some news from the Newton museum and more. Read on and see how things are going this fall...

Curtis Brookshire, Editor 📌



Blevins Area - October 1995 - Chris Ford

News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

George L. Carter Railroad Museum with focus on the HO₃ ET&WNC RR layout

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

Fellow members, a lot of things, including some big changes, have happened in Johnson City and with the George L. Carter Railroad Museum since we last met through this newsletter. Please let me tell you about some of the highlights in the following text. Our railroad museum enjoyed participating in the ET&WNC RR Historical Society's 2023 Annual Convention over the Memorial Day weekend by hosting 3 operating sessions on our internationally known HO₃ scale "Tweetsie" railroad layout. These sessions had the added significance of being the last such sessions that our members will ever have on this layout in this location because the museum is moving. The university is demolishing the building the railroad museum has occupied for the past 15 years and not providing an alternate home for us. But, more on that later.

The week following our convention we hosted our 7th Annual Big Train Show on June 1-2, and it was the largest and most successful show to date. We hosted almost 70 vendors from 10 states and more than 2,000 attendees. This annual event is becoming one of the largest train shows in the southeastern United States, and we appreciate all of you who attended and supported our vendors. We are already making plans for the 2024 show on May 31-June 1, so mark your calendars.

A week after we gathered up all the last tables and chairs and returned them to their owners on June 8th, we began the

biggest task we have undertaken at the Carter Railroad Museum; the task of entirely dismantling the layouts, the display cases, and the cabinetry, and packing everything up. Our volunteer members worked 6 days a week for 7 weeks to accomplish this task before the University's September 1st deadline. Commercial movers moved the entire museum's contents into temporary storage where it will remain until we begin the big project of moving all of it into our new quarters, rebuilding the layouts and adding many new exhibits. This is slated to begin sometime in October.

The new beginning of the George L. Carter Railroad Museum came with the establishment of a Board of Directors and the incorporation of the museum as a non-profit corporation independent of the university. We have leased a larger building in downtown Johnson City that will provide the museum with approximately 3,400 sq. ft. more space than we had previously (approximately 8,900 sq. ft.), thus allowing for more exhibit space, a larger library (we have more than 2,500 cataloged railroad books), a larger children's playroom, and an in-house meeting/events/theatre orientation room. Parking for the building will accommodate more than 100 vehicles. We will be open to the public 5 days a week and we will have to charge admission in order to pay our lease. We have created a proforma 4-year budget that, on paper at least, says we can not only do this financially, but we can also eventually hire full-time staff for this regional museum. Both the University and the city are helping us financially during the first few years

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The end of an era. After the tear-down, here's what's left of the room that once housed the Tweetsie layout, looking toward the back wall where the Cranberry mine complex was located. Now, on to bigger and better things! *Moving photos courtesy of Fred Alsop.*



Volunteers dismantle a large display case in the Tweetsie layout room.

of our transition period.

The museum will connect the history of Johnson City, East Tennessee State University, and the region through railroad transportation and preserve that history in its displays and events. Johnson City began with Henry Johnson constructing a water tank to feed the water needs of the new rail line that threaded through its valley in the early 1850s. ETSU's history is tied to the property George L. Carter, the founder of the Clinchfield Railroad, gave to the State of Tennessee in 1911.

We hope to be open to the public with a "Grand Opening" early in 2024, and we will do that with a brand new name as well...the "Johnson City Railroad Experience". In addition to our model train layouts (the ET&WNC layout will be expanded to include Elizabethton and Johnson City) we will have state-of-the-art digital media and hands-on exhibits. Our new address will be 207 North Boone Street, Suite 2500, Johnson City, TN 37604. Watch for the opening of the newest museum in the Tri-Cities and come visit us in 2024 and for many years beyond. Hear the sound of the whistle of the train in the night and dream of all the destinations yet to come. "All aboard"!

For more information contact Fred Alsop at 615-604-8759 or email at alsopf@etsu.edu. Our website and current news and info can be found at memrr.org. ■

News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

From Benjamin Merritt: It has been an extremely busy summer for me with an internship in Oak Ridge, and now an even busier fall with school and the internship continued. I would like to finish up work on the Jackson & Sharp coaches this winter break; however, they have proven to be a challenge to design. Nevertheless, they are still in the works, and they will have a complete interior, including seats, bathrooms (with sinks and toilets), doors, crown molding, windows, etc.

Your editor would like to draw attention to several On30 layouts underway. Dr. Tom Grabenstein's layout is featured in the recently released edition of White River's 2023 On30 Annual. Lee Bishop's layout is featured this month in a publication called Tracksidemodelrailroading. You can find it online at <https://www.tracksidemodelrailroading.com/magazine/past-issues/2023-archive/oct-2023/>. Tim Smith is also working in On30 and we've recently seen how his engine house is progressing on the ETWNC iO group. There's also exploration of dead rail modeling and some fascinating computer generated things that we've been following. If you have anything you would like to draw attention to in this column, please let your editor know so we can tell the rest of the group. ■

Historical Society Magazine - Every Time With No Complaint

Curtis Brookshire sends us this update -

Johnny Graybeal is working very hard on the next issue of the magazine, which has turned into an in-depth look at the life of Locomotive No. 12 during her years on the ET&WNC. The goal is to have it in members' hands by Christmas. Photo work is almost complete, which is the biggest part of the issue. It's been a long wait but it will be worth it. We promise. ■

Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

Johnny Graybeal shares this news from Newton, NC -

Things are heating up at the museum now that the summer heat has abated. One of the projects slated for the fall/winter is applying new siding to the wooden Southern and Clinchfield cabooses on display. The wood has been prepared in a shop and will be painted before being put on the cars. Another goal is to get truss rods and couplers on ET&WNC boxcar 434, bringing that particular project closer to completion. Finally, someone has come forward offering to donate some industrial narrow gauge equipment to the museum. This is particularly exciting as the "critter" runs and the possibility exists to have it operate on the museum grounds.

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. ■

2027 National Narrow Gauge Convention

At the recently completed 2023 NNGC in Denver CO, a bid was made and approved for the convention to return to Hickory in 2027. Of course, plans are still being made, but if you have a home layout within driving range of Hickory, please contact Johnny Graybeal to talk about getting on the tour. With Covid hopefully in the rear view mirror, the Convention Committee will be working to have an even bigger gathering than the 2011 NNGC, which brought approximately 1,600 people from all over the world to Tweetsie Country. Make plans now to attend. ■



Celebrating No. 190's 80th birthday during Tweetsie's 2023 Heritage Days Weekend. Photo courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.

Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

The fall color is just starting to appear and by the time you read this should be well underway. The grading work for the Christmas Train right-of-way which began in the summer is still going strong which is exciting, but also due to all the dirt flying everywhere a public fall-color event has not been scheduled this year. The work hasn't prevented accommodating fall guest groups, which we're also busy with, but a larger public event would be a bit "messy". In the meantime, many families and groups have scheduled their own fall train or motorcar charter, so feel free to call us at 423-725-4010 and schedule a time. And I also frequently recommend coming AFTER the color. Once the leaves have fallen, the river and rocky terrain is much more visible.

Another exciting development on the Christmas Train project is that much rock was found available just across the river on the lower slope of Cedar Mountain to be used for sub-ballast and ballast for the new track. There was an extended permitting process to "quarry" it, but it is complete and a large rock crusher is now on-site and piles of ballast material are starting to accumulate. This will cost MUCH less than having to purchase rock and haul it in. Details have also been settled on the locomotive shop building and work should be starting on that later this fall.

The new boiler for the Porter steam loco is expected to be ready by the end of October and in the meantime David

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



During the last weekend in August, Tweetsie Railroad held its annual Railroad Heritage Weekend with good attendance, decent weather, and a very appreciative audience. We featured Locomotive No. 190, the "Yukon Queen", which is celebrating its 80th birthday in 2023. The locomotive was dressed in livery as it appeared at Tweetsie Railroad in the 1960's and 70's, complete with flared smokestack. Of valuable assistance in various areas of the event were volunteers Terry Blevins, Curtis Brookshire, James Glenn, Johnny Graybeal, Matt Olmstead, and Caleb Reeves. Johnny Graybeal conducted tours of the Locomotive Shop and highlighted ET&WNC restoration projects around the region.

Proceeds from the Coach Car ride donations will be sent to the ET&WNC Historical Society and the Alexander Chapter of the NRHS for their restoration projects.

The park is now winding up the Summer season and moving toward what promises to be a busy fall, with Autumn leaf weekends, Ghost Train in the evenings, and Tweetsie Christmas following almost immediately. This winter, we should complete the large-scale track and trestle refurbishment project that began a couple of years ago. Also in the works is our excursion car rebuilding project. One car has been completed and is in service; the rest will follow in the coming months, and an all-new excursion car is under construction and scheduled to be delivered in a few weeks.

Check Tweetsie's website for the most current schedule and more information at [tweetsie.com](https://www.tweetsierailroad.com). 🚂

Potat has been going thru the chassis and other details such as smokebox repairs and cab modifications to prepare for putting it all back together. Plans are also being made to covert to oil firing; it had been previously operated with propane.

Ryan Rice has been out twice so with his drone to record the construction progress and plans to continue periodic flights. Be sure to check out his YouTube channel "Above Ground" and subscribe to see the updates as he posts them. See the videos at <https://www.youtube.com/@aboveground5052/videos>.

We're glad to report a good camp season this summer, with COVID now mostly a distant memory. We had 9 public Day Quest Saturdays, many with capacity crowds, totaling nearly 4800. So the train was busy, some days making 7 or 8 trips. Our summer right-of-way crew of Rick Paffrath, Ethan Freeman and Evan Black accomplished much, installing 116 crossies, working on drainage, and continuing to cut back vegetation. Ethan has spent additional time here this fall and Rick was back for a week and a half and we used a borrowed chipper to remove the large piles of cuttings that were stacked during the summer. So regular work continues in the gorge as well as all the Christmas Train work. Please visit our website for more info about our activities at [doerivergorge.com](https://www.doerivergorge.com). 🚂

2023 Tweetsie Railroad Heritage Days Photos



A double-header run with number 12 in the lead is headed out of town during Tweetsie Railroad's 2023 Heritage Days Weekend. Photo Courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.