

Introducing the Linville River & Eastern Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad

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Running from Johnson City, Tennessee, to Boone, N.C., a distance of 66 miles, we find the Eastern Tennessee & Western North Carolina and Linville River Railroad. These two roads, while having separate names, are operated as one and are narrow gauged. Yes, I said it – “narrow gauged.” Don’t laugh and make a fool out of yourself as I did when I landed in Johnson City on February 5, and to my dismay discovered the fact that the tracks of this railroad were only three feet wide. I say “dismayed,” for I was really and truly “stumped.” I did not know whether to turn back or not, but as I had my ticket bought and paid for when I made the discovery, and remembering an old saying that “we cannot always judge things by their outward appearance,” I decided to, like Columbus, take a chance, so in place of chartering a boat and a faithful crew of sailors, as Columbus did, I clamber toward the little toy looking three-coached passenger train, the conductor of which was crying, “All Aboard!” Imagine my surprise when I found that with the exception of being narrow gauged, the three-car passenger train I was boarding was as modern as any Mr. Man’s railroad train. Everything one could find or expect on the most modern passenger train for the safety and comfort of the passengers I found on this train.

Right on the dot and without all the customary jerking and slamming about that causes one to wonder whether or not one can possibly live through it (all so common in the starting and stopping of the average passenger train) we glided away from the Johnson City depot. After two hours – that were only a few minutes to me – of very slowly and laborously winding and climbing around curves as high as 15 degrees and grades of 4 and 5 per cent and through the most beautiful mountain scenery I have ever seen (apologies to the Denver gang, but if they will take a tip from me they will make a trip through these mountains and see some real mountain beauty), we landed on top of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the world. There at Newland, N.C., almost six thousand feet above sea level, I was met by the most enthusiastic bunch of Maintenance of Way men it has been my pleasure to meet in many moons, every man employed in the Maintenance of Way Department of the Linville River Railroad being present.

We immediately repaired to the school building at Newland (in point of altitude the highest school building east of the Rocky Mountains), there I found that none of those present or any of the men on the two railroads were members of our Organization or knew anything about it, but I also found that everybody present was raring to learn about what the Organization was all about, and in less than two hours I had explained to their entire satisfaction just what they could expect of the Organization and what their duty to the Organization was and had collected \$7.50 semolians from every one of them and in turn gave them their stamps, which was all that was lacking to make them 100 per cent union men.

On February 14 we held another meeting at Newland and at this meeting all the Linville River and a good majority of the E.T. & W.N.C. men were present. All the E.T. & W.N.C. men were just as anxious as their brothers from the Linville River to learn all about the Organization and it didn’t take but a few minutes to line them up.

Then we proceeded to install a Lodge that will henceforth be known as “Booster Lodge” – a real honest-to-goodness live set of officers were elected, headed by Brothers T.C. Odom as President, and T.H. Aldridge as Secretary-Treasurer. You can just bet that Brother Odom will see to it that things hum around Booster Lodge in the future, and that Brother Aldridge will hand out a sufficient number of stamps each quarter to keep these two roads lined up 100 per cent.

The Journal Agent, Brother Dewey Stout, after being elected, stated that he would, through the columns of the Journal, let the world know from time to time what Booster Lodge was doing. He is the one who proposed the name Booster, and boost he will.

Brothers T.H. Aldridge, S.J. Bowling and Dewey Stout were elected a committee of three and instructed to forthwith prepare an agreement on wages and working conditions and arrange conference with the management and not to stop until they had an agreement signed up. To these Brothers let’s all say, “Good luck” – we’re with you. I bet they do just what they are told to do. These men have the spirit that will get them what the men they are representing are entitled to and they have the whole-hearted backing of every man employed in the Maintenance of Way Department of these two roads.

The only thing narrow about this railroad is its gauge and Maintenance of Way Employee’s wages and working conditions, and now that the men have lined up in our Organization and are going to stick to it, they will soon standardize their wages and working conditions. Then we will all be happy, for who cares whether the gauge is three feet or four feet eight and a quarter, as long as she is standard in all other respects.