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# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### The ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society

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## Attend The National Narrow Gauge Convention In Hickory September 1-4, 2021

We have plenty to look forward to as we emerge from our Covid cocoons as well as some real news. Please check out what our contributors have coming up. Things are definitely looking better for this summer.

One of the most satisfying parts of being a society member is that the ET&WNC story is far from over. New things are being uncovered and rediscovered. Three examples: Johnny Graybeal has some information that will change our perspective of Caboose 506; member Mike Stagers is researching the water station that stood between tunnel 1 and Hampton; and there's also news of a DVD coming out with a previously unreleased ET&WNC segment.

Speaking of that segment between Hampton and tunnel 1, over the years we've visited that area and found a gate just outside Hampton that we didn't want to cross and find ourselves on private property. We did hike it on the ROW tour in March 2018 including crossing the old highway bridge over the Doe River. If you're on the iO email group you've already seen a post about a possible extension to the Tweetsie trail between Valley Forge and Hampton via tunnel 1 and either a repaired or new crossing of the river where the original road bridge stands today. When I visited there in 2018 the bridge deck had a portion in the middle that collapsed leaving a narrow passage which wouldn't

be recommended to the hiking/biking public. So if you visit before the County closes it off, please be safe. If you want to read more, check out the original story on the WJHL website at <https://www.wjhl.com/news/local/land-donation-makes-key-tweetsie-trail-extension-possible/>.

Have you registered yet for the 41st National Narrow Gauge Convention? If not please go to the website at [www.41nngc.com](http://www.41nngc.com) and sign up! Here's when we can all get together and see each other and all the major venues in Tweetsie Country plus meet a world-wide community of narrow gauge fans. If not being a modeler is holding you back, worry no more. While there are layouts to see both in Hickory and at homes in the region (plus of course the landmark ET&WNC layout at ETSU), there will be clinics about subjects including logging, mining and regional narrow gauge line as well as a chance to re-hear the ET&WNC story – and possibly something new about it too. The vendor's room will have a wide range of products for modelers but also books and other items beyond models.

If you sign up now, you can help fill those buses Johnny and Matt are arranging for the tours. You can make the trip to the mountains from the convention site without having to drive or pay for gas. These tours will be guided, so maybe you can see something you haven't seen

...See Editor's News continued on page 4

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# News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

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## 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 –*

As we warm into spring and more folks have Covid vaccines in their arms, we are seeing an uptick in our visitor numbers on Saturdays. There is lot of activity in both the museum's large galleries with upgrades on our operating layouts in 4 scales (N, G, HO and HOn3). Scores of hard-backed railroad books are being integrated into our museum's library and when this work is completed in a few weeks we will have almost 2,000 cataloged volumes available for checkout. We are not going to be able to host our Annual Big Train Show at the ETSU Mini-Dome venue again this year (Covid-19 canceled the 2020 show) as the university has scheduled major interior renovations for the building beginning in May and lasting until at least September. We hated to lose this event for the second year and have been thinking of having an event focused on the ET&WNC RR over the 2 days we had scheduled for the train show, the 4-5th of June. We have not progressed from "thinking" to "planning" yet, but our thoughts involve clinics, presentations, layout tours of our ET&WNC layout, and other events. If this idea builds into something with more meat on its bones, we will be letting everyone know what is scheduled and invite some of our "Tweetsie" experts to participate as presenters.

The work on our HOn3 ET&WNC Railroad layout continues to progress. Much of the structural work that has been happening has been concentrated on the Johnson City yard and engine/car facilities. To date we have constructed the 3-stall car barn, the carpenter shop, and the oil and sand house. All of these are designed from historic photographs from our archives and from some photos graciously provided

to us by Chris Ford. None of these three historic structures are still standing, and the ability to see them in photographs is invaluable as we attempt to create reasonably accurate models of the prototypes. Because of our own layout space restrictions, the carpenter shop had to be shortened in length and the 3-stall engine house (the remodeled prototype is still standing a full 180 feet in length) also had to have a few feet removed to fit into our yard space. The engine house is still under construction and should be completed in a couple of weeks. Once these buildings are finished a lot of landscaping will go into the yard and the embedded tracks to complete the scenery on this section of the layout.

For those who may be interested in the process from historic photograph to completed model structure, here is a brief description of what takes place. Photographs of the structure are located and parts of the structure of known size (the height of a door for example) are used to scale the rest of the structure to HO scale. This is accomplished with a series of scale pencil drawings of the entire building. The drawings are then converted to a CAD software program that will be used to guide the cutting of the parts with a laser knife. The pieces that are cut to size are then used to create the 3D scale model of the structure with all the necessary painting, staining, detailing, addition of commercial windows and doors (when available), etc. to complete the piece. No one person does all these steps. The end result for us, as we attempt to replicate in miniature structures that were important components of the ET&WNC RR and the communities it served, are one-of-a-kind buildings that help to bring our favorite local narrow gauge railroad back to life. When this part of the layout is completed the next area of attention will be the little mountain town of Elk Park, NC.

The George L. Carter Railroad Museum is free and open to the public every Saturday on the East Tennessee State University campus from 10 am to 3 pm. We can arrange to be open at other times for special groups by appointment. Contact Fred Alsop at 423-439-6838 (office) or by email at [alsopf@etsu.edu](mailto:alsopf@etsu.edu). Information about events and layouts can be found on our website at [www.memrr.org](http://www.memrr.org) 🚂

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## Linville Depot & Caboose 505 at the Avery County Historical Museum

*Anita Johnson sends us the latest from Newland, NC –*

The Avery County Historical Museum is open again Tuesday-Friday from 10-3, and Saturdays from 11-3 based on the Governor's Covid guidelines and volunteer availability. The Avery County Heritage Festival is planned for Saturday June 26th from 9-3 and will feature local authors, genealogy and music. They also plan to have the Linville Depot open, so if you're in the neighborhood please plan to visit. The museum is also looking forward to greeting visitors from the National Narrow Gauge Convention in September.

Jerry Turbyfill is working on having Caboose 505 re-lettered. It's taken a bit longer than expected as the artist was taken ill with Covid and is in slow recovery. More info available on our website at [www.averymuseum.com](http://www.averymuseum.com) 🚂



The 3-stall car barn and the sand/oil house are ready for duty at the Johnson City engine and car facilities, with other structures to follow. *Photos courtesy of Fred Alsop.*



## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

*Matt Bumgarner has this news from Newton, NC –*

The first quarter of 2021 has been busy at the SE Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum as we gradually return to normalcy. Visitorship continues to rise to pre-pandemic levels and restoration work has cranked back up. The biggest news involves the acquisition & move of a very rare Edwards Railcar that was built in Sanford, NC. The Model 10 car served the Yadkin Railroad in Salisbury and was built in 1924. It is one of only around a half dozen Edwards cars still in existence.

Work in the museum's model railroad center has progressed nicely as well, with the tracklaying on the mainlines being completed (HO, Statesville to Hickory, HO/HOn3 Hickory to Lenoir, HOn3 on Ritter lines to Mortimer).

We have ambitious plans to improve the museum in time for the upcoming National Narrow Gauge Convention, including a project to get our dining car operational. Visit our website at [www.newtondepot.com](http://www.newtondepot.com) 🚂

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## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

The HO and O scale freight decals that Johnny Graybeal has been offering in white for some time are also now available in gold leaf and black. This allows for modeling the passenger cars (and "fairly close" for the engines) and also the black lettering on the tank cars and the TOFC trailers. Sets are \$10 each for white and black and \$12 each for gold leaf. \$2 for shipping. Payment by check to Johnny Graybeal, 3978 Callie Court, Lenoir, NC 28645, or contact him at [johnnyg@boone.net](mailto:johnnyg@boone.net) and pay via PayPal.

Johnny also has the Mt Blue boxcars and gondola/flat/wood cars in stock. The 37' and 32' boxcars are \$35 as well as the 37' gondola. The 32' gondola/flat/wood kit is \$25. Shipping is \$5 no matter how many are ordered.

Western Rails now has the conversion kits for On30 AMS Flat cars. From David Kmeick via the website: "For some time now we have seen the need for a print service that caters to the needs of the model railroading community. This spring we have decided it is time to take the next step. It is time to fill this need. We are pleased to announce the launch of our new site 3DPtrain.com, our new marketplace for 3D Printed

Trains and More! Going forward, our products will be available on both our sites, [westernrails.com](http://westernrails.com) and [3dptrain.com](http://3dptrain.com).

We will continue to announce our products on this list and alongside the creators who join us on the 3DP Train mailing list. Most of our advertising and public marketing will be done under the 3DP Train name. We welcome you to join us in this new adventure as a customer or creator. Our goal is to provide you with the best service possible." Check for more info at <http://westernrails.com> 🚂



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## 41st National Narrow Gauge Convention

*Johnny Graybeal - 41st NNGC Chairman*

The 41st National Narrow Gauge Convention will be held in Hickory NC from September 1-4, 2021. This is primarily a modeling convention, but it brings together narrow gauge fans from

all over the world into one place. This convention is held in a different city each year, put on by a committee of volunteers who are dedicated to narrow gauge trains. In 2011 the convention was in Hickory, and we had 1600 people from all over the world come to North Carolina to talk about narrow gauge. For four days people come together to share knowledge, learn new things and new modeling techniques, and spend quality time with people who love narrow gauge trains. Around 45 people will give clinics on modeling and historical subjects, including the ET&WNC and modeling the ET&WNC. A trade show runs the entire convention, bringing together manufacturers of railroad cars and structures, as well as sellers of artifacts and memorabilia. You will be amazed at what you can find at this trade show. The convention will also provide you with the opportunity to go out and see over 25 train layouts in individuals' homes. These modelers are willing to share their techniques and their dreams of owning a railroad in small scale. More and more of us are modeling the ET&WNC in either HOn3 or On30. We have more opportunities now than in any other time in our Society's history. Many of you are not interested in modeling the railroad, but how many of you, using the skills gained by putting together model airplanes as kids, would love to have an ET&WNC accurate train running under your Christmas Tree every year? A great way to remember the railroad and get your grandchildren into the hobby.

There will be special events tied into this convention as well. Tweetsie Railroad will be doing a private afternoon for Convention Attendees on the Thursday afternoon of Convention Week. They will be running two trains, performing photo runbys for photographers, and giving narrow gauge fans the joy of riding a narrow gauge train through the mountains. We are also working with other railroads in the region for special train riding opportunities. We will also have a guided tour bus trip through Tweetsie Country, with someone on board who will point out historical railroad locations. That trip will visit the Linville Depot at Newland, take a train ride up the Doe River Gorge, and visit the HOn3 layout at ETSU. The National Narrow Gauge Convention is one of those events that you will remember for the rest of your life. For more information, visit [www.41nngc.com](http://www.41nngc.com) 🚂

**41st National  
Narrow Gauge Convention**  
**September 1-4, 2021**  
Hickory, NC 28601  
[www.41nngc.com](http://www.41nngc.com)  
[41nngc@gmail.com](mailto:41nngc@gmail.com)

You've seen the ads for years ... but never gone.  
*What are you missing?*

- 45+ Clinics presented by the gurus of model railroading on scenery, structures, rolling stock, motive power, and history.
- 300+ Vendor tables all in one big room. Meet the manufacturers of exciting model railroading items, from craftsman structure kits to rock formations to cars and locomotives to electronics.
- 30+ Home layouts to visit at your own pace, which will take your inspiration to the next level.
- Modular railroads in the vendor hall and a model contest that attracts some of the best scratch builders in the world together.
- Convention week will also include special events at the steam tourist railroads in the region.

Registration is \$100, \$125 after August 1st, spouses & children under 16 free.  
For more information and to register, visit [www.41nngc.com](http://www.41nngc.com)

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## New ET&WNC Color Film DVD Available

Greg Scholl has a new DVD with previously unreleased color film footage of #12 shot by Ted Collins circa 1947, Jim Vail's 1966 film of Mexican NG at San Lázaro (Mexico City), 1954 footage of SPNG #9 in California and D&RGW freight action from 1963-1966. All color, 71 minutes with narration and music. \$29.95 plus \$5.00 shipping. Greg has copies he'll sell in advance of its official release in November. To order now, mail a check, call with a credit card, or email payment info. Greg Scholl Video Productions, P.O. Box 123, Batavia, OH 45103, 513-732-0660, <http://www.gregschollvideo.com>.

If you order online, fill out the order form but don't select a title, and put "Vintage Narrow Gauge" in the comments section. 🚂

## Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



Tweetsie Railroad opened for the season on Good Friday, April 2nd for a 3-day Easter Weekend. The weather was cold but sunny, and the trains were all full – at least to the extent allowed under the State's reduced ride capacity mandates. In any case, it's great to be open again and see happy families on the train. The park is now open Saturdays and Sundays 10 am-6 pm, and we'll begin our 7-day-a-week operation beginning May 29th. Our Guests tell us constantly how much they missed Tweetsie Railroad last year and how happy they are that we're open.

Our first big event of 2021 is Day Out With Thomas in June, and advance ticket sales are brisk. All signs indicate that people are anxious to return to places like Tweetsie Railroad and resume all the normal activities their families have missed. I hope that all our ET&WNC/Tweetsie Railroad enthusiasts will find time to visit this season and be here when the National Narrow Gauge Convention comes to the park in September. Check our website for details at [www.tweetsie.com](http://www.tweetsie.com) 🚂

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## Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Winter was pretty quiet on rails here at DRG, other than a rock that fell at Pardee Point and BROKE a rail. Other rockfalls have bent rails, but this is the first I've seen that broke one. The rock(s) apparently continued into the river, as there was nothing left on the ROW to indicate how big or many came down. There has also been a more significant rockfall in "75 foot cut" just east of the first bridge. These occurrences always take me back to the 1883 timetable reproduced in Tweetsie Country, which has special notes including a six mile per hour speed limit in the gorge and other rockfall risk areas requiring trains to "be kept under perfect control." A few volunteers have scheduled to be here shortly after I write, so by the time you read this, work will be in progress on annual track inspection and repairs, as well as ditch clearing and vegetation cutting.

In addition to having the regular Saturday Day Quest programs and bringing back the fall Corn Maze weekends started last year, we are also continuing to take registrations and recruit staff for summer camp programs which begin on June 1. Covid or no Covid, many want to attend camp. And while we lost all of our spring groups last year, several school groups have scheduled to visit and ride in the coming weeks. So we expect the rails to be well used again in this season!

Spring weather has also enabled work to resume on the Crown, now mostly finishing details. One major item remaining was the boiler jacket which was just fabricated and fitted and is now off being powder coated. The goal is to have it ready for a debut/dedication event this year, both to include and thank the major donors in this project and also to draw attention to the ongoing Christmas Train project. While Covid mostly "derailed" the CT project last year, we are grateful that at least work on the Crown was able to move ahead, as it has been something of a "flagship" for the whole thing.

Since last fall, some fundraising work has also been resumed with the goal of at least being able to restart all of the preliminary engineering and planning work for the extended trackage

and related infrastructure. However, as mentioned last time, safe operation of the Crown in the gorge will require a second crosstie at each rail joint, where the initial track restoration in 2000 only replaced every other tie. So we have undertaken the rather ambitious goal of adding approximately 400 ties this season, which is most of a truckload. A contact in the timber industry already involved in the CT project was able to arrange donation, cutting and transport of the wood. The creosoting process was not donated, but done at a discount and the load was delivered in early March! We have also been able to borrow a small tie inserter machine that has been adapted to both 2 and 3 foot gauges. Using the inserter has been a learning process, and has been much slower going than hoped, as in our case there is no longer an old tie remaining to pull and leave a trench to set the new tie in. So while the machine is a help, it cannot create the needed trench or shove the tie the full distance without it, which means there is still a lot of manual (slower!) labor involved. But we have already been able to add about 40 and the inserter will be a help when replacing existing ties during regular repairs. And as soon as these are completed we'll resume the effort to add as many more ties as we can before the machine needs to be returned in mid-June. Then we will begin tamping and spiking them all. So the track upgrade is a big goal and, while we are still uncertain how much can be completed this summer, we hope to be able to operate the Crown to Pardee Point for the National Narrow Gauge Convention, which has a trip to DRG scheduled for August 31. But, barring anything unexpected, the Crown should at least be able to be a photo-op and run-by, emerging from the tunnel into the gorge.

Some previously unknown (**COLOR!**) ET&WNC film, approx. 9 minutes worth, was recently found and is included in a narrow gauge collection DVD by Greg Scholl, who already offers a large selection of RR videos in all the regular railfan venues. Thought to be shot in 1947, it follows a regular trip of #12 from Elizabethton to Cranberry and back, some chasing and some on the loco. I assisted Greg in confirming the shot sequences were in order and identified the locations (helped beyond my own local knowledge by Chris Ford's maps), and added related background info to help him with the narration. The final segment includes the 204 leaving Elizabethton headed back to Johnson City with the standard gauge cut. I've had a sneak preview and can say that it's a fairly exciting find, being the only other **COLOR** film I've ever seen.

We will again miss seeing everyone this year for the ET&WNC Convention, but come if you can for a Day Quest or Corn Maze event, or with the NNGC! Visit our website at [www.doerivergorge.com](http://www.doerivergorge.com) 🚂

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### Editor's News continued from page 1

before – or if you're a local expert, you can help direct visitors to the many wonders of our favorite railroad. And if you don't feel like talking to your riding neighbors you can always snooze on the way back.

The Carter Museum, Doe River Gorge, Avery County Museum & Linville Depot/Caboose 505, Tweetsie Railroad, and the Southeast Narrow Gauge & Short Line Museum in Newton will all have something special on tap for convention goers. Come on to Hickory and visit for a while.

Curtis Brookshire, Editor 🚂