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# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# 2022 Convention To Be Held Over Memorial Day Weekend

You *KNOW* it's winter when there's snow on the ground in normally warm Eastern North Carolina where your editor lives. It's cold now, but we hope that—as I am—you are thinking about the next ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society convention which will be held in a warmer time, May 27, 28 and 29th. That's Memorial Day weekend, so you may have Monday the 30th off and can maybe spend more of your Sunday with us in Tennessee.

We talked about our plans last newsletter and things are beginning to come together. We plan several authentic timetable operating sessions at the Carter Museum's outstanding ET&WNC layout. We'll be able to operate right along with the layout's regulars. Even if you're not a modeler, here will be a chance to see how the ET&WNC operated as a railroad, albeit in 1:87 scale. If you haven't been to the layout in a while, you'll also be impressed at the progress that's been made in completing different areas. We plan to have several "clinics" hosted by ETSU Faculty about topics relevant to the ET&WNC and its relationship to the local area. We also plan a guided tour of the Tweetsie Trail, which was the "Bi-Focal" line that ran both narrow and standard gauge equipment. It's also the last portion of the line beyond Johnson City operated by the ETRy. We'll have our usual Satur-

day evening at Tweetsie Railroad with a chance to ride and photograph... and eat. Sunday we'll visit the Doe River Gorge and have the Gorge to ourselves... and we'll keep our fingers crossed that we'll see and hear steam operating. Once again the Carnegie Hotel in Johnson City will be our hosts and rooms are available to reserve *NOW*. We'll meet Friday night at the Carnegie for a nice meal, our business meeting and a guest speaker. There'll be more specific info in the next (April 2022) Society newsletter.

There's something else for y'all to think about, and that's the Southeast Narrow Gauge and Short Line Museum in Newton, NC. Matt Bumgarner has the latest news inside this issue and there's so much more there. You'll find artifacts from the ET, the C&NW, the Lawndale and the Alexander RR, as well as a small steamer and a dining car that's "not from around here", but someday we hope to enjoy a meal inside of. The Alexander Chapter of the NRHS works hard to provide an interesting experience. You can see the fully restored Southern/C&NW Newton Depot, and a couple of doors down the street is a fine HO layout based on the C&NW and more. The museum is just over an hour from Tweetsie Railroad and with the extra day provided by the holiday weekend, we hope you can pay a visit.

*Curtis Brookshire, Editor* 🍷

# News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

## George L. Carter Railroad Museum at ETSU with focus on the ET&WNC RR HO<sub>n</sub>3 layout

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

Happy New Year from the G. L. Carter Railroad Museum. Our 2022 Calendar is available with a great cover shot of an ET&WNC locomotive taking on coal at the Elizabethton Coal Chute in HO/HO<sub>n</sub>3-scale from our “Tweetsie” layout. We also have the 2021 Edition of the HO<sub>n</sub>3 Annual available that features 8 pages on this layout with a focus on the coal, water, and sand facilities that kept the iron horses of this little narrow gauge line running.

Member, Ben Merritt, has just 3D printed “Tweetsie” water tanks in two styles, larger and smaller, and has them for sale in several scales. See the Modeling Committee article in this issue for more information.

The HO, G, and N-scale layouts have all seen upgrades with new features and details added over the holiday period. Our railroad library has added more donated volumes of railroad books bringing our hardback collection to more than 2,400 cataloged books ranging from historical, geographical, and short stories to many volumes on particular railroad lines. Members can check out many of them, and guests are welcome to read them in the library but cannot check them out at this time. There are many great railroad reference books in the collection that will not be available for circulation.

Most of the focus on the 1,300 sq ft ET&WNC layout has been on the little mountain town of Elk Park, NC. In the small space provided for this village I have been able to construct more than a dozen structures as they may have appeared in the early 1920's. There is a bank, several mercantile stores, a post office and barbershop combination, an ice and cold plant, and a blacksmith shop. Burgie's mercantile store advertising everything from stoves and carpets to caskets and coffins in big painted signs on its outside walls, is one of the most interesting to me. It stood on the south side of the tracks with a commanding view of the downtown main street and the depot. Relatives still operate the Burgie drugstore on G Street

in Elizabethton. As I completed building after building, all designed from current and historic photos, I realized how many of the structures were made of brick. Several are more than one story with one reaching three stories. I wondered how all that heavy brick got to this little once isolated community? Was it over the poor, pot-holed, dirt and gravel roads, or did it more conveniently arrive by rail? Did all of that brick come from Johnson City to Elk Park on “Tweetsie” rails?

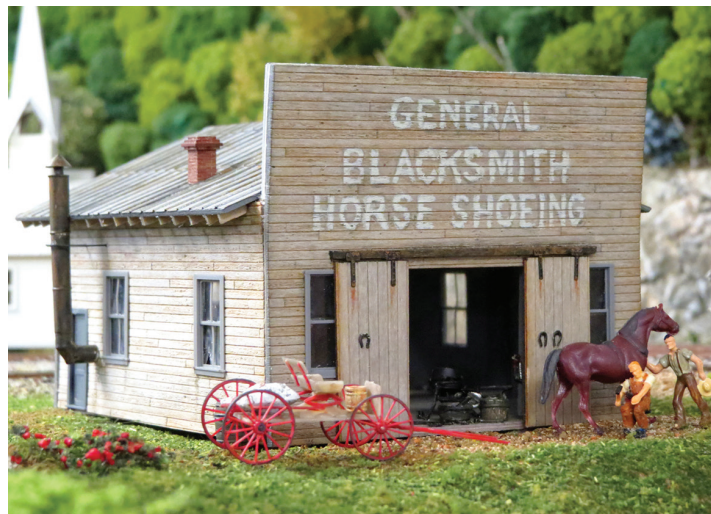
The first week of January was spent at “Elk Park” planting miniature trees, landscaping the hills, creating the roads, sidewalks, wooden bridges, and providing the details of barrels, kegs, boxes, and “little” people needed to bring the scene to life. Because visitors to our ET&WNC layout will be viewing Elk Park from the back of the buildings due to the layout configuration, we have arranged for the town to also be seen from its front, right down Main Street. Frank Fezzie, our electrical guru, has installed two small cameras on either side of the front street, perpendicular to the tracks, that allow us to see the depot and main street alternately as the view switches back-and-forth. Now Elk Park can be seen from all angles almost simultaneously. Some detailing work still needs to be done on the little village, but it is ready for visitors to enjoy seeing the trains run through the town and stop at the station several times during each Saturday operating session.

The next big project will be the area of the layout at Hampton where we will be working to bring the railroad's unique rock cistern water tank to life. Watch for photos of this hillside stream captured in natural and man-laid rock formations to provide water to the tenders of the “Tweetsie” locomotives. Drop by soon and watch as this part of the layout takes shape.

The G. L. Carter Railroad Museum is located in the Campus Center Building, 176 Ross Drive, at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. We are open to the public on Saturdays from 10-3 and there is no admission charge. For additional information please contact Fred Alsop at 423-439-6838 or at [alsopf@etsu.edu](mailto:alsopf@etsu.edu). We hope to see you soon. Information about events and the layouts can be found on our website at [www.memrr.org](http://www.memrr.org). 🚂



Historically accurate Burgie mercantile store in Elk Park showing all the painted signs of some of the merchandise he is selling. *Photos courtesy of Fred Alsop.*



The blacksmith shop, with the smithy shoeing a horse, is another building built from historic photos and an accurate replica of the real structure that once stood in Elk Park.



## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

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

The past few months have seen some renewed energy on a couple of projects at the SE Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum (SENGASM). Of special interest to ET fans is the rekindled effort to restore motorcar #1 to her narrow gauge operational status (standard gauge sister #2 is restored and operative). Number 1 has had a rough life. After being converted to standard gauge and repowered in the 1950s, she served the railroad until the late 70's/early 80's when she was sidelined with some transmission and rear end problems and parked in the Johnson City engine house for the better part of two decades. In the early 90's, she was donated to a different, but well-intentioned, preservation effort in Tennessee which unfortunately led to her being disassembled and sitting outside in the weather for another fifteen or so years. She came to the Alexander Chapter-NRHS and the SENGASM in 2008 where an assessment was made of what was needed to restore her and figure out what parts had been lost over the years. Unfortunately, the weather had taken a toll on the exposed engine, the roof being removed allowed the wooden body to rot, and several key pieces had been damaged by previous repair and restoration efforts. With that being said, the good news was that the chassis, wheels, and most of the ingenious parts like the "Hobbs Reversing Gear Box" were intact. We also were fortunate to have #2 to act as a guide for re-assembly. The museum spent over five thousand dollars on a series of activities that included a replacement engine and transmission; the wheels were turned, machined, and heat-treated; bearings were renewed in the "Hobbs Box"; and the rear axles were shortened to narrow gauge.

Unfortunately, the project came to an effective standstill until last year when all of the parts were brought back to the museum and housed under one roof. At that point, we made a decisive and concerted effort to make Number One a top priority of ours in the coming year. To that end, we cleared out



The reassembled frame of ET&WNC Motorcar #1 and some of its precious pieces await further attention in its newly prepared "shop". *Photo courtesy of Matt Bumgarner.*

two bays and added new wiring and lighting to the motorcar "shop". At the end of December this task of having a dedicated "home" was complete. As of this writing in late January, an inventory of the disassembled car is being completed and the frame has been reassembled. When the car came to the museum, it was in hundreds of pieces, and using the Number Two is akin to using the box cover to put together a giant jigsaw puzzle. We have long road ahead of us, but with a dedicated work space, some new and re-energized volunteers, and some funding, Number One should be back on the rails within the next 18-24 months. Visit our website at [www.newtondepot.com](http://www.newtondepot.com). ■

## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

3D printed models dominate modeling news this edition. Ben Merritt is pleased to announce that he is producing an ET&WNC water tower series in N, HO, S and O scale! Ben writes:

This water tower is perfect for any narrow gauge or shortline modeler looking for a small tank to fit their layout. These tanks, originally found on the ET&WNC railroad, were known for their small size and iconic 'Tweetsie spouts'. There were two types of tanks on the ET&WNC, sharing similar tank styles while having differing supports and bases. We have designed these tanks based on drawings from Jack Alexander (Cranberry Tank) and Mike Sagers (Bemberg Tank). The Cranberry style was believed to have been used at tanks located in White Rock, Roan Mountain, Cranberry, and Linville. The Bemberg style of tank could be found at Bemberg, Elizabethton, and Crabtree.

Other locations where engines could stock up on water included Johnson City Yard (standpipe), Hampton (hillside water cistern), near Buchanan, Newland, near Snakeden Ridge, near Rocky Knob, and south of Boone. We are looking for any information regarding which types of tanks were at each of these locations, so if you have any clues or photographs, please let us know! We have two versions of ET's bobber cabooses 200, 202 and 205. Early versions feature three windows on each side, late versions two windows. Also available is cupola-less caboose 203 that also served as a crew dorm in Boone.

We recently launched a website to allow us to accommodate more orders and offer better customer service to our customers at <http://merritt3d.com>.

Dave Kmecik at 3DPTrain is reissuing the TOFC cars with trailers in HO and O scale in high resolution resin. He's offering both the 24' and 28' trailers/flatcars. (The website indicates 14' trailers, excuse the misprint.) Trailer-On-Flatcar pioneer ET&WNC had two cars to accommodate 24' trailers and one for 28' trailers. Check out Dave's website for other models being reissued at <https://3dptrain.com>.

Johnny Graybeal's ET&WNC narrow gauge steam locomotive series in the Narrow Gauge and Short Line Gazette is complete with the late ten wheelers in the Jan/Feb 2022 issue. Check out our October 2021 newsletter for a list of the rest of the series. Back issues of the Gazette are available through White River Productions and can be ordered at their website <https://shop.whiteriverproductions.com>. ■

## Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



What a difference a year makes. Even though the pandemic is still with us, Tweetsie Railroad enjoyed a very good year in 2021. After being shut down for most of 2020, this past year we were able to return to a full schedule. We enjoyed very good attendance from families who were delighted to be back at Tweetsie Railroad. Decent weather helped... it was generally a dry year, and good weather held out all the way through a near-record warm December.

Our fifth Tweetsie Christmas event saw its highest attendance ever, and it continues to be our most popular annual event. Right now, our crew is busy taking down all the Christmas lights and decorations – in between snows. This winter, we are continuing a substantial program of upgrades to the tracks and trestle.

Opening Day for 2022 is Saturday, April 9, beginning as a weekend-only schedule. As in 2021, we'll be operating on a 5-day week during the heart of the summer season, with the park closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I know a lot of ET&WNC Historical Society folks are looking forward to Railroad Heritage Weekend, which will again be held the last weekend in August. See you here at Tweetsie Railroad in 2022! Check our website for the most current schedule and information at [www.tweetsie.com](http://www.tweetsie.com). 🚂

## Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

One would think that winters at DRG are slower and offer time to catch up, but lately that seems much less of the case. Yes, RR operations still mostly cease and the Crown steam loco is winterized, but we've still been busy. Now that the calendar has flipped and we've turned the corner into 2022, any slackening of the pace begins to pick up again as we know that camp season will be here just too soon. And the Historical Society Convention will finally return this year on Memorial Day weekend, this time just *BEFORE* camp season, hopefully with a little **STEAM!!**

As we mentioned in the last issue, we would like to complete track upgrades in time to run the Crown up the gorge by the Society Convention Weekend. For the National Narrow Gauge Convention last fall the track just wasn't quite up to snuff for the much heavier loco leaving it confined to just above tunnel #2. So it got *INTO* the gorge, but not *UP* the gorge. The small section gang tie inserter machine we bor-

rowed was a huge help on the first round of upgrades last spring, so I've been on the hunt for one of our own. These particular machines haven't been made in a long time and are hard to come by, but I've located one and have a trip planned soon to take delivery. It has been stored for 20+ years and will likely need a full overhaul/servicing, but we're getting it soon enough to hopefully have it in service in time for spring trackwork. It will help expedite the process, but we still need able bodies too, so if you have some energy and time available in the spring to help with this project, drop me a line!

There has also been some exciting progress on the Christmas Train! While we still have a ways to go on fundraising, gifts have been coming in and include several significant ones. Rather suddenly, it seems, there is now enough in hand to actually begin work on various aspects. Engineering work had already been resumed, so in the past month there has been a flurry of activity to nail down details of the track expansion in order to finalize the engineering drawings. And along with what has already been received, there has been an offer to loan all of the heavy equipment needed for grading, which reduces the needed balance still further. In addition, three more loads of crossties are arriving this week to stockpile for the project. As with the first two loads last year, the timber, the cutting and the hauling have all been donated with DRG having to pay just for the creosoting! Thus it seems very probable that dirt will start being moved this year!

Other items also being looked at to kick off are the loco shop and the restoration of one of the Porter locos. COVID reset everything, but since then, Christmas season of 2023 has been the new goal to be operational. That still may be a little ambitious and suddenly it's already 2022, but DRG does seem to be on the way, so stay tuned! We've seen God provide in so many ways already and have no reason to doubt that He will continue to do so.

In the meantime, Happy New Year from DRG and we hope to see y'all on Memorial Day Weekend! Please visit our website for more info about our activities at [www.doerivergorge.com](http://www.doerivergorge.com). 🚂

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

Aneda Johnson and Jerry Turbyfill send us this from Newland, NC –

The museum is operating on winter hours, subject to weather conditions in the high country. If you'd like to plan a visit, please call (828) 733-7111 to confirm our hours, or check our website at [www.averymuseum.com](http://www.averymuseum.com). 🚂



The latest addition to the G. L. Carter Museum ET layout is the town of Elk Park, with most of the landscaping in place. The visitor's view is the back of the main businesses with the ET tracks visible on the other side of the green and red depot in the center of the shot. Photo courtesy of Fred Alsop.