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# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Looking Forward to the Convention and Warmer Weather!

This issue we have good news, sad news, plans, and some hopeful news. We'll mention the saddest news first. As many already know, our friend and fellow society member, Matt Bumgarner, passed away on January 26th. He was a major force in the narrow gauge preservation movement in the southeast, as well as a whole lot more that we'll talk about shortly. With Matt's passing, news from the Narrow Gauge and Short Line Museum will not make its usual appearance in this issue.

Let's move on to our normal focus in the winter newsletter— our upcoming Convention. Our 2023 Annual Convention will again take place over Memorial Day weekend, Friday May 26th through Sunday May 28th. This will be our last chance, as a Convention group, to visit and operate on the renowned HOn3 ET&WNC layout at the George L. Carter Museum at ETSU. Dr. Fred Alsop will tell us more in his column.

We also plan a couple of clinics and maybe a visit to Cranberry on Saturday,

and Chris Ford has some ideas to discuss in the president's column. No convention would be complete without visiting Tweetsie and the Doe River Gorge and we're really looking forward to how things are shaping up in Hampton. Here's how our proposed schedule looks as we write this in late January—

Friday May 26: Operating sessions at the Carter Museum, registration at the Carnegie with our business meeting and dinner.

Saturday May 27: Clinics, possible Tweetsie Trail hike/bike, more operating sessions on the layout, visit to Cranberry, Train ride and evening meal at Tweetsie.

Sunday May 28: Visit Doe River Gorge. We're again praying for a ride behind steam, Good Lord willing and the creeks don't rise.

Also in this issue, Ben Merritt has some happy and hopeful news on the modeling front...

*Curtis Brookshire, Editor* 🚂



ET Railway Enginehouse, February 2003 – Chris Ford



# 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 –*

The new year found a number of notable happenings at the G.L. Carter Railroad Museum on the campus of East Tennessee State University. Our 2023 Museum Calendars were published in November and are available to the public for \$8.00. We can mail them for whatever the additional postage charge may be by USPS. Our address is – The Carter RR Museum, PO Box 70697, ETSU, Johnson City, TN 38614.

The long-awaited 2022 edition of the HOn3 Annual arrived and our 8-page color illustrated article of our modeling of Elk Park, NC begins on page 30. This is the 9th consecutive year our ET&WNC RR layout has been featured in this quality magazine. Johnny Graybeal also has an article about some of the “Tweetsie” locomotives in this issue. We have issues for sale to the public if you can’t locate one nearer to you.

We are off and highballing in our 15th year on the university campus, but it will be the final year in our present location. Building plans at ETSU call for the demolition of the building that has been our only home on campus and we are still looking for a new, and much larger facility nearby, but off of the campus and more centrally located in Johnson City. We shall be the perfect fit for the city that owes its origin to the coming of a railroad and the initiative of Henry Johnson to build a water tank to serve the needs of the locomotives. Stay tuned as our current lodging begins to come to the ground in a few months.

The photo of the Cranberry mine buildings has a new structure. The flat-topped shed with the light-gray tarpaper roofing is newly constructed and placed covering two of the tracks near the stone retaining wall. This is a modification to our original model as I did not have the elevation or the space to render the new tipple and its approach from the power plant just behind it in accurate detail. When I created the original mine structures I could not see the details in the west-facing side of the large, complex separator building. The only photograph we had showing that side was from an angle that draped most of that side of the buildings in dark shadows. The acquisition of a photograph recently that shows that side of the building in full light revealed a plethora of details not previously seen...thus the new addition to our model. This new view reveals a mostly flat-topped shed spanning two tracks. Topping the shed is a tipple with a chute penetrating the shed roof. We believe that the considerable accumulation of ash from the power house coal-fired boilers was being wheeled in carts along an elevated walkway that ran from a double door on the power house to the tipple to be stored. Its contents would be later dumped through the shed roof into hoppers or gondolas set below for transport to some distant dump away from the mines. Whatever its function, we have now added this bit of additional structure to our model. We continue to try to

bring the little narrow gauge “Railroad with a Heart” back to life in miniature form.

Work continues in our larger gallery in the museum where new scenery and structures are being added to the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders HO-Scale layout, and the N-Scale layout representing Knoxville, TN is getting a scenery face lift with lots of old degrading lichen materials being replaced with bright foam “foliage”.

We remain open on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and can make accommodations for club visits at other times. Most work goes on Thursday afternoons and evening beginning around 4:00 p.m. and we are happy to have you drop in at this time to visit and join in the fun. Come see us!

For more information contact Fred Alsop via mobile phone at 615-604-8759 or email at [alsopf@etsu.edu](mailto:alsopf@etsu.edu). Our website can be found at [www.memrr.org](http://www.memrr.org). 🚩



This is a view of part of the Cranberry Mine complex as we have modeled it circa 1925. The structure in the foreground is the separator building where ores and overburden materials were physically separated and loaded into gondolas for transporting. The building in the background on the raised earthen bench behind the stone retaining wall is the coal-fired power house full of boilers producing steam that powered most of the machinery in the mine buildings. That steam also ran large air pumps that supplied the compressed air that powered the ore drills deep in the mine. The flat-topped, gray-roofed structure with the small tipple on its roof is the new addition to the mine complex. *Photo courtesy of Fred Alsop.*



## Matt Bumgarner – 1966-2023

Society member, narrow gauge preservationist, author, publisher and good friend Matt Bumgarner “caught the Wesbound”, as Ken Riddle is so fond of saying, on Thursday January 26th. He was diagnosed with a rare and extremely aggressive cancer only a week earlier. By the time this reaches you, many of us will have gathered at the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum in Newton for a celebration of Matt’s life.

Many of us attended Matt’s annual train shows at the Hickory Metro Center, even if we never actually saw the “dancing girls” that were usually advertised. Matt and Johnny Graybeal organized and co-hosted the 31st and 41st National Narrow Gauge Conventions, also held in Hickory. Many of us in the society attended and supported both highly successful conventions.

Matt ran Tarheel Press, which published Johnny Graybeal’s “Along the ET&WNC” book series and his “Railroads of Johnson City”, along with books on the Lawndale, Watauga and Richmond and Danville. Matt authored books on the Carolina & North-Western and Southern Railway’s Saluda Grade, and wrote the Foreword to the re-publication of the story of the Southern’s response to the 1916 floods in the Asheville area. He also published Johnny’s magazine for our Historical Society, “Every Time With No Complaint”.

Matt was instrumental in saving the Newton depot and founded the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Short Line Museum. Thanks to his actions, we can see several pieces of ET&WNC and Lawndale equipment preserved and restored among the museum’s growing collection, including ET&WNC boxcar 434 and motor cars 1 and 2.

Matt was also a mover and shaker with the Alexander Chapter of the NRHS and in that role played a part in Tweetsie Railroad’s Annual Heritage Weekends for many years. Your editor shared space at the table selling tickets for rides on coach 5 and always enjoyed visiting with Matt and all who stopped by the table.

Your editor is sure there are many other of Matt’s accomplishments not included here. This newsletter will sorely miss Matt’s column giving us the latest news from the museum in Newton. Matt leaves big shoes – make that big work boots – to fill. Our condolences go out to Matt’s wife Dawn and his family. Your editor asks that we help support the causes and activities that Matt worked so hard with and loved so much. Please visit the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum website at [www.newtondepot.com](http://www.newtondepot.com). 🚩

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

*Jerry Turbyfill send us this from Newland, NC –*

The Avery County Historical Museum’s website is currently under renovation. Check any of the Avery County websites for information about activities and events in the area.

The Avery County Museum is open from Tuesday thru Friday from 10 am to 3 pm, and Saturdays from 11 am to 3 pm. If you would like more information or to plan a visit, please call 828-733-7111 to confirm the museum’s hours, and continue to watch for their new website at [www.averycountymuseum.org](http://www.averycountymuseum.org). 🚩

## From the workbench of your Society President –

We’re still making plans for the 2023 Annual Society Convention. But it looks like the Spring Hike is a no-go for this year...maybe there’ll be more interest next year. For this year’s Convention I had tentative communications out to possibly get us in the Cranberry Mine since it’s been awhile since we visited. But, due to complications with the new ownership of the property, a visit is not going to be possible this year – but not ruled out for next year! As we always should, make plans accordingly as we never know when our next visit to the mine might be our last one to that famous reason for the very existence of the ET&WNC.

Speaking of making plans, those of you who are coming to the 2023 Convention...and I hope you ALL do...be sure to reserve your room at the Carnegie! And of course, thank y’all for participating in spreading the word about our favorite little narrow gauge railroad!

CFORD

## Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

*Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –*



Tweetsie Railroad finished up its annual Tweetsie Christmas event on December 30th after entertaining thousands of visitors over the holiday season. This very popular event was expanded to 27 nights in 2022. For the first time in six seasons of Tweetsie Christmas, the park missed one scheduled night – just before Christmas Eve, frigid temperatures (nighttime lows up to 12° below zero F and high winds) forced us to cancel that evening’s event.

The park will open for the 2023 season on Saturday, April 8th. At that time, we’ll be operating on a weekend-only schedule until late May, when we begin a five-day operating week (closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays). The park will be opening some all-new rides this Spring, with an official announcement to be released soon.

Railroad enthusiasts will want to know that our train improvements plan is moving forward. Several hundred more crossties will be replaced in the coming weeks, and the wooden trestle underwent a major rebuild this past fall. Our excursion cars are being fully restored and upgraded one-by-one, and an all-new sixth excursion car is also being constructed. This will enable us to continually rotate cars through the shop for routine repairs and maintenance.

See you here at Tweetsie Railroad in 2023. Check Tweetsie’s website for the most current schedule and more information at [www.tweetsie.com](http://www.tweetsie.com). 🚩



Tiger Valley School, February 2003 – Chris Ford

## Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

Happy New Year! The turn of the calendar changes our perspective a bit. Last season has mostly faded from the rear view mirror and our attention turns to the coming camp (and railroad) season. And we realize it will be upon us quickly and there is much to do to be ready! Late fall leaf and vegetation removal was done as usual and, in December, a few more charters including two night trains...one for a group and one for our summer staff Christmas Party/Reunion.

Since then we've mostly been huddled up trying to keep warm and there has been little traffic in the gorge, other than a few visitors and clearing fallen trees. But spring guest groups are already on the schedule, many of them with train rides, as well as some school groups which all seem to want to come in early May.

Also, in the late fall the electric motorcar got some deferred TLC in the late fall with repairs and improvements to the electrical system including the regen braking. The re-tubing work on the Crown was also completed just ahead of freezing weather in time for a hydro and signoff by the state, but not in time for a test firing, so that will have to wait until spring. Spring track inspection and repairs will likely be underway before the next update. We also have received funding again to offer some "railroad internships" for the summer to continue track and ROW work and also assist with operations. If you know a ministry-

minded young person with interest in this opportunity, please have them contact me via email at [mark@doerivergorge.com](mailto:mark@doerivergorge.com).

On the Christmas Train project, with every recent update it seems we think the engineering work is complete and we're ready to move dirt. At year-end we thought we were there, but in early January, in discussion with a potential grading contractor, some new issues were identified, which took some time to sort through options and send back to engineering. And then just prior to me writing this (Jan 27), we sent back some additional tweaks and one larger change we realized would be beneficial. So again, the delays have also given opportunity to end up with a plan that we really like. And hopefully, by the time you read this, we'll have all the changes back from engineering. In the meantime, conversations with potential grading contractors are ongoing as well with a track builder, but they want the final engineering before bidding. And *some* physical work *has* begun with grubbing out of vegetation and removal of debris along the proposed ROW. Preliminary design work on a shop building is also mostly complete.

So, spring will be here before we know it, and if you have the opportunity, come out for a hike or motorcar charter *before* the foliage grows back in. The views and overall experience is better than during summer and the usual timing of the convention visit. In the meantime, stay warm and hope to see many of you in 2023.

Please visit our website for more info about our activities at [www.doerivergorge.com](http://www.doerivergorge.com). 🚩

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## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

If you haven't got your copy of the 2022 HOn3 Annual, why not? It contains two great ET&WNC articles – one on Elk Park as modeled at the Carter Museum and the other by Johnny Graybeal on modeling a large industry served by a narrow gauge railroad using the Bemberg rayon plants as his subject. Two fascinating subjects even if you're not an HO modeler.

On the 3D printing scene, Ben Merritt is working on the Jackson & Sharp vestibuled coaches and has the Azalea and motor car 1 available in several scales:

### Released during winter 2022/23:

#### Motorcar #1

- HOn3, Sn3, On30
- Optional LED lighting
- Optional wheels included
- Static Model

#### Azalea #10 Parlor Car

- Existing product in HOn3
- New release in Sn3, On3/30

### Upcoming Releases:

#### Jackson & Sharp Vestibuled Coaches

- HOn3, Sn3, On3/30
- Full Interior Detail
- Prototype coaches #16, 17, 19, & 20

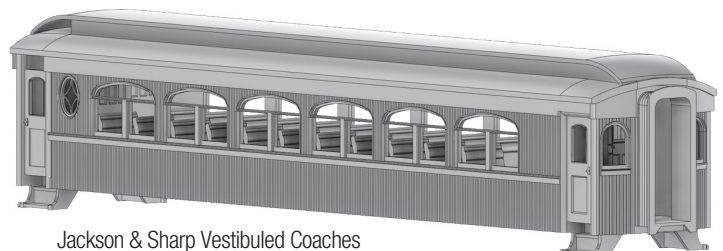
Ben feels that these are exciting times for anyone modeling the ET&WNC and looks forward to hearing back from you! Contact Ben at 423-735-8961 or [benjamin@merritt3d.com](mailto:benjamin@merritt3d.com). Check out his website at [merritt.3d.com](http://merritt.3d.com) 🚩



Motorcar #1



Azalea #10 Parlor Car



Jackson & Sharp Vestibuled Coaches