



# The ET TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ET&WNC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

October 2017  
Volume 19  
Number 2

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## Railfan Weekend 2017: Two Engines, Two Centenarians, Two Reunions

Tweetsie Railroad's 2017 Railfan Weekend featured familiar surroundings, old friends and a few surprises. Locomotives and crews made the most of their runs with 12 pulling former East Broad Top coach 5 and 190 on the park train. Number 12 featured "modified" ET&WNC lettering on Saturday. Members of the Alexander Chapter NRHS were in attendance assisting with passenger loadings for #12's train as well as providing transportation for two special guests for this year's event. The 100-year-old number 12 was joined by another centenarian – a 1917 Ford Model T truck displayed under a canopy at the Pavilion. Under the same cover was a very special guest – ET&WNC Motor Car number 2. It was the first time both number 12 and the motor car were together since at least 1952 in Elizabethton. Tweetsie Railroad provided a special "birthday cake" to honor number 12's birthday.

An even bigger surprise awaited on Sunday. Number 190, as you know, dons Ghost Train garb this time of the year, but on August 27th she brought a real ghost from the past back to life again. As fans gathered to watch both engines blow out their cylinders for the morning's doubleheader, they heard the voices of TWO ET&WNC whistles. The crews carefully replaced 190's normal hooter with that of 12's long departed sister, number 9. This

would be the first time since engine 9 was retired in 1946 that this whistle felt the warm rush of steam from a locomotive boiler to make her speak again. So, on both the doubleheader and in the afternoon with the special and the park train, one could hear two high-pitched Baldwin whistles echoing off the mountains. Visiting fans were treated to ticketed cab rides, a shop tour, photo run-bys of two trains running on close headway and many chances to shoot the trains crossing Dead Horse Trestle. On the 190, long time engineer Matt had a very special fireman – his son Morgan.

Kudos to Chris Robbins and the folks at Tweetsie, the train crews, Matt Bumgarner and the June Bug Chapter, members of the ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society and the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum. 🚂



# News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

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

*Society Vice-President Jerry Turbyfill sends the latest from Newland –*

Now that the heat of summer has given way to cooler weather, Jerry Turbyfill has been working on the cupola of the caboose. He has been taking the old siding off and the old windows out so he can get new materials. Everything will look like new again. Also, the interior old structure seems to be in good shape. The Museum Depot is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 am-3 pm. Phone 828-733-0680. [www.averymuseum.org](http://www.averymuseum.org)

## Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

*Matt Bumgarner has this news from Newton –*

In October the museum will acquire and move the Clinchfield cupola caboose from the Orchard at Altapass. The Museum provided ET&WNC motorcar number 2, the Model T and engine 9's whistle for Railfan Weekend. Alexander Chapter NRHS members assisted in moving the equipment to and from Tweetsie Railroad. The museum is located in Newton, NC and is open Fridays and Saturdays from 9 am-4 pm.

[www.newtondepot.com](http://www.newtondepot.com)

## News from the Historical Society Modeling Committee

The HO<sub>N3</sub> TOFC (trailer on flat car) is ready for test shots. Look for it to be ready for sale on Shapeways by mid-November if sales of the other cars pick up. The Mount Blue ET&WNC 32 ft gondola/wood car/flat car is coming soon (end of 2017). A note to fellow modelers – other projects are in the works for the future. When we see them produced depends on US! Shapeways is paying for new productions out of profits from existing purchases. So the more we expand our fleet of rolling stock, the quicker we'll see more unique ET&WNC "signature" cars. Check Shapeways website here:

[www.shapeways.com/shops/wr?li=pb](http://www.shapeways.com/shops/wr?li=pb)

## ET&WNC RR Wall Maps Still Available

Chris Ford has produced an absolutely gorgeous wall map of the entire ET&WNC Railroad area, roads, connections and lots more. Attendees at the 2017 convention were able to see and purchase them. If you haven't gotten yours yet, they're still available. This new map is an expansion of the ones Chris produced for John Waite's Blue Ridge Stemwinder book and magazine series. It is offset printed in full color on magazine-quality coated paper, contains much added material, and is 49-1/2" wide by 24" tall. It will be a fine addition to your layout room or office. Created from the 1916 ET&WNC surveys and many other sources, it's the most accurate reference available.

A "must have" for any serious ET&WNC fan, the price is \$35.00 plus \$4.50 shipping. For more info and to order yours, click on the "maps" icon on Chris' website. [www.cfordart.com](http://www.cfordart.com)

## George L. Carter Railroad Museum at ETSU

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

Work on the museum's 5,000 sq ft of model train exhibits continues through the efforts of members of the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders and the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS.

As to the "Tweetsie" side of the museum, Mike Buster and Gregg Mundkowsky have put in lots of hours planting "trees" and scenicking the hillsides between tunnels 1 and 3 while finishing touches have been added to the Cranberry Mine section of the layout. A brass 2-truck Shay has been purchased to bring lumber from the sawmills east of Cranberry to its lumber yards. The HO<sub>N3</sub> Northwest Shortline Shay – too small for a sound system and DCC – will have that hardware installed in a bobber caboose that is being scratch-built to provide proper engine noises for the locomotive. The Shay will haul lumber to the yards around the Cranberry Mine from sawmills further to the east. The historic oddities of a magnetic iron ore mine providing room for a tennis court have come to life with the addition of such a recreational area on our layout, which will soon be populated by tennis players in sporting clothes of the 1920s. John Edwards is using the museum's LaserKnife to cut out the wooden pieces that will constitute the Roan Mountain Depot and that structure will soon stand along the layout's mainline.

Plans are to make the creation of Elk Park the next big township project on the layout and work will commence on it by the beginning of October. When Elk Park is in place the layout will be basically complete from the east end of the Cranberry Mines to the east end of Roan Mountain.

The museum is open every Saturday from 10 am-3 pm and we invite ET&WNC RR Historical Society members to come and tour the museum and see our ET&WNC RR layout. We also urge you, if you have photos that have not been published in any books on the railroad or in the Society's publications, to share them with us. Photos are the best way we have to attempt to model the past glory of the railroad and to capture it with as much historical accuracy as possible. Additionally, if you have ET memorabilia and/or artifacts that we can display in the museum on loan, or through your donations to the museum, we welcome them.

And did I mention that your financial donations to assist the museum in its construction and maintenance of exhibits, such as the ET&WNC layout, are not only welcomed but encouraged! [www.memrr.org](http://www.memrr.org)

## Combine 15 at Spencer Shops

Combine 15 marks its 100th birthday on October 25th (that's the day the builder's photos were taken at Jackson and Sharp). Unfortunately she'll probably celebrate the occasion alone as she's undergoing a slow restoration at the NC Transportation Museum at Historic Spencer Shops. Gil Williams heads the woodworking part of the project. [www.nctrans.org](http://www.nctrans.org)

Watch the Yahoo! Tweetsie Email Group for when Gil announces upcoming work days. Join the email group here:

[www.groups.yahoo.com/group/Tweetsie](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/Tweetsie)





***This fall marks several bittersweet anniversaries.*** On Monday, October 16 it will have been 67 years since engine 11 made the final revenue trip of the narrow gauge. Also, it's been 50 years since the ET&WNC lost General Superintendent Clarence Hobbs, and shortly afterward "went diesel". Here's Ken's story...

Fall of 1967 there was a lot going on in the steam train world in our part of the mountains. Tweetsie Railroad was running full blast, even with the hideous stack thing and birdhouse headlight on the little 12. "Albert" was chugging around over at Cherokee, NC with his train of converted sugar cane cars before Monsieur LaSalle banished him to Cedar Point, and up the road in Maggie Valley two little Heislars held forth on the Highlander Railroad. Up the new highway in Wytheville, VA, a place called "Dry Gulch Junction" operated the world's most worn out Shay. Plus an old wood-burning 2-6-2 and a standard-gauge Heisler were on the property. The Graham County Railroad in Robbinsville was talking up a passenger operation with the old logging Shays they had, and Loest & Stanley was grading the old narrow gauge roadbed in Doe River Gorge for Joe McCloud to open an amusement park on the railroad from Hampton to Blevins Station. Plus the old standby engines 207, 208 and the "Pot" worked at least six days a week and sometimes two shifts on the standard-gauge to Elizabethton.

Number 208 had a questionable boiler from day one. Jim Dowdy and the other brakemen would ride the front steps between the plants and Johnson City because of the leaky condition of the sheets. Andy Kern said she was dangerous, but Mr. Hobbs was the boss and he called the shots. I personally think if Mr. Hobbs had thought she was dangerous she wouldn't have been in service. He got a lot of good days out of her, but she was tired. Andy said she ate rigid stay bolts like candy, and he put lots of coppers in the flexible bolt caps every time she was out of service. Her front boiler course and front sheet were just barely above condemning limits. She was tired.

Number 207 had her problems too, but they were all below her waist. Her frame had been broken numerous times and she waddled around everywhere she went, but her boiler was solid.

They were just old.

In October of 1967 the throat sheet fractured on the 208 in downtown Elizabethton. Bad enough to put the fire out. Brownie and Mr. Vest were the engine crew that day, and William S. Young of

"Steam Locomotive and Railroad Tradition" magazine was with them. They dropped the train on the V&SW and made a dash for the water tank to get the pressure down with cold water.

Donnie Palmer was in the shop and got the call. Engine 207 was hot as she was coming on the next day and he and Uncle Festus took her to Bemberg, brought the lame 208 back to the shop, then the crew went back to Cowtown and finished the day's work with the ALCO.

K. E. Wilhoit was General Manager of the whole company at the time. He was driving in the parking lot and saw the 207 shoving the crippled Baldwin into track two. He stopped and got the story.

Mr. Claytor, the president of the Southern Railway, had it bad for those two old engines. Before Mr. Hobbs died he had cut a deal to bring one of them to Roanoke for a foamer convention. Wilhoit asked Mr. Hobbs for a price to go to Roanoke for it and he told him twelve thousand dollars. Wilhoit got thirty thousand, in cash, delivered to 132 Legion Street in a Southern Railway station wagon the next day.

Wilhoit called Claytor again and was assured that a deal could be made. The 207 worked the rest of that week but that weekend the Southern sent an ALCO S-4 to Johnson City. Donnie called Andy and they dropped the banked fire on the 207 and put her on track two ahead of the 208, which they shoved into the machine shop where heavy repair was done. Andy had retired and had no interest in coming back, and I don't blame him.

The S-4 was too light for the job. The handwriting was on the wall. Brownie Allison did not eat a bite for two days, and Earl Vest went ahead and retired. Brownie worked until 1970 but I can guarantee you he never enjoyed one more day on the railroad.

The S-4 was replaced by a Central of Georgia RS-3 and it worked out fine.

Frank Coffey from Tweetsie Railroad came and bought the wheel lathe, bolt machine, and the crankpin lathe. He also got a lot of parts that were not pertinent to the Consolidations. Paul Brock and Bill Purdie came up and looked the engines over from the Southern.

They got a boxcar and loaded up a load of parts for the Birmingham steam shop, plus took the main rods

down and eccentric rods off the steam engines and got them ready to go. Claytor and Wilhoit worked out a trade for two different ALCO RS-3 engines, ran them through the Chattanooga shop and paint shop and lettered them as the ET&WNC number 209 and 210. They showed up the first week of December along with Cecil Bowden, general road foreman on the Southern, who was to stay a few days and teach the narrow gauge men how to care for them.

December 8, 1967 the 209 gathered up the two steamers, the S-4 and spare RS-3 and the boxcar of parts. Lots of people were there to see them leave, including me. I didn't go to school that day and came over with my Uncle Sam Lewis. Mr. Crumley and his son Jim were there with H. Reid. Sherman Pippin was there in rare form. He brought Chester and Corrie Ford. All the shop and crew men were there including Brownie Allison, who just cried and cried. It was a very sad day. Brownie did not work any that week. The people from the newspaper were there, Jimmy Ellis made pictures, and Channel 11 had it on the news. Whole bunch of Southern people were there and maybe even Mr. Claytor himself.

The train was dragged out to the main line and shoved down to the Southern. They were taken away to Knoxville in a special movement train, then on to Birmingham. The 207 was placed into service immediately with only a paint job bringing her back as the 630. Number 208 had a lot of work done and didn't get out for a year or so, then she returned as the green 722.

Engine 630 is in fine shape today at TVRM, along with 209. The 210 got scrapped a few years ago, and 722 rests in pieces over in North Carolina.

— Ken Riddle





## Happenings at Tweetsie Railroad *Next up – fall colors and Christmas Trees*

By the time you read this, the Ghost Train will be in full scream. As 190 is dressed for the macabre and only comes out in the dark, number 12 normally pulls the park train during daylight hours. This is an excellent time to photograph 12 on the trestle with fall colors on the hillsides. As always, mechanical issues can change the plans, so be advised.

As part of Tweetsie's 60th year, something truly new will happen in late fall – A Tweetsie Christmas. The event will be held Friday and Saturday evenings, November 24-25, December 1-2, 8-9, 22-23 and 29-30 from 5-10 pm. Please note the

time, this will be a night event. If you want photos in daylight, take them as soon as you arrive as it will be getting dark after 5 on these days. There will be Christmas tree sales, bunting, wreaths and other holiday decor in the parking lot through December 23. Visit Santa in his Ginger Bread House, enjoy a live Christmas show in the Tweetsie Palace, warm up to a campfire at the Hacienda, see the lights on Main Street and visit the shops. The park's rides are closed but a carousel will operate at Tweetsie Junction. Remember – it gets COLD in the mountains after the sun goes down this time of year (not to mention the possibility of snow). The train's cars are open to the weather. Please dress warmly and enjoy the evening.

[www.tweetsie.com](http://www.tweetsie.com)



## Photos from Tweetsie Railroad's Railfan Weekend 2017

*All photos in this issue courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.*

