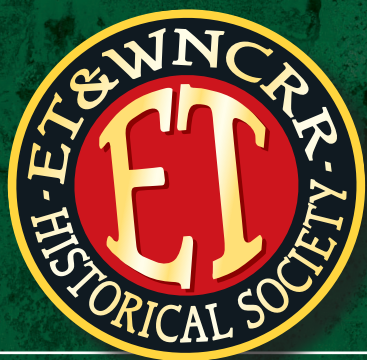




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Convention Success and a Surprise Artifact Surfaces!

The 37th annual ET&WNCRRHS Convention was a bit earlier this year running May 15-17. Friday evening Doc Tom Grabenstein gave us a fabulous presentation at the annual meeting on his On30 ET&WNC railroad focusing on how he works to make scenes believable. His work is amazing and shows how well he uses the space he has to build an O scale world that looks so much larger. During the business meeting members present re-elected yours truly and Rae Augenstein as president and secretary. A couple of unexpected things had everyone's attention. Vice President Chris Jessee asked to retire early due to ongoing health issues. Ben Merritt stepped forward to volunteer to serve the remainder of Chris' term and was immediately approved by acclamation. We also signed a "Get Well" T-shirt for Johnny Graybeal who was in a Winston-Salem hospital recovering from a major heart attack he suffered 11 days before the convention. Another Chris was also absent, this one named Ford, who was traveling overseas and missed only his second convention since they started in 1989.

Saturday saw how far the Johnson City Rail Experience had progressed on their layout, Fred Alsop has the details below. We also hiked about 3 miles of the Tweetsie Trail from JC through Miligan College. Tweetsie Railroad gave us another outstanding photo run and Dean Smith held the group spellbound with the story of the Mega-Mouse on his

Vida Division. As we left the park in the evening darkness, strange music could be heard over the park's speakers. It sounded like "mouse music."

Sunday we visited the Doe River Gorge and noticed grading to connect the new Christmas train loop to the gorge track. More to look forward to in the future. Many thanks to everyone who made our 2026 Convention a success.

On June 12th, Society Treasurer Dean Smith received a phone call from his friend Sam Nicastro who works at the Colorado Railroad Museum. Among a bunch of items left at the Museum's gate during the COVID pandemic was a builder's plate with "J.C. Tenn. Aug 23, 1940" on the back. The plate showed Baldwin Locomotive works construction number 39697 from April 1913. It turns out this is the builder's plate from ET&WNC's former Kentwood and Eastern 2-6-0 number 28. Sam told Dean that the CRRM was interested in donating the plate to the ET&WNCRRHS. We immediately said YES! and on June 18th Colorado resident and Society member Tuhr Barnes picked up the builder's plate from Jeff Taylor at the CRRM. Tuhr plans to transfer the plate to Johnny Graybeal at the Narrow Gauge Convention next month. We're planning to have it join other ET&WNC artifacts at the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Short Line Museum in Newton, NC. The Society will retain ownership of

Convention Highlights/News continued on page 3...

Time To Pay Your Dues!

News From Around the ET&WNC Preservation Community

The Johnson City Railroad Experience

Dr. Fred J. Alsop III, Museum Director and President of the Board sends this –

The Johnson City Railroad Experience is doing well this summer. We had the most successful Annual Big Train Show hosted at East Tennessee State University's "Mini-Dome" with more vendors and more attendees than ever before. This is our largest annual fund-raiser for the museum and was held the last Friday and Saturday of May. Plans are already being made for the 2027 show, so mark your calendars for the first Friday and Saturday of June 2027.

Johnny Graybeal paid us a visit with a photographer friend in mid-July to photograph some of our ET&WNC railroad locomotives and rolling stock for an article he is working on for a model railroad magazine. Our "Tweetsie" layout is getting additional national publicity.



Work is continuing to progress on our large HO_{n3} ET&WNC layout. I have completed all of the layout's new sections at Cranberry, on both ends of Elk Park, and at Hampton. In the next few weeks work will begin in earnest on modeling the Tennessee town of Elizabethton, the first large town along the tracks east of Johnson City. Parts of the Doe River with the covered bridge as it appeared in 1925 are in place. A siding has been created for the placement of the town's Tweetsie depot and the downtown merchant section along Elk Avenue has been drawn on the layout's benchwork citing the location of the city's buildings. The first structure to be created will be the landmark Lynnwood Hotel. Scale plans will be drafted from photographs and will be placed into a computer that will guide the etching of the component structural parts by a laser knife. Many of the commercial buildings of the period being modeled are still standing and will serve as accurate models for their creation in 1:87 scale. When Elizabethton is completed the work will continue westward to begin the modeling of the headquarters city of the narrow-gauge railroad; Johnson City.

Chris Ford made the long drive from his home in Memphis to deliver the latest models he had created of the 1890s Cranberry Blast Furnace that was located and operated by the owners of the ET&WNC on the northeast side of Johnson City.



He brought to the museum this latest section featuring outstandingly detailed models of the blowing engine house, tall smokestack, and the stoves that delivered the necessary heat to the furnace to melt the iron from its rock. They are now in place alongside the boiler house, the first building of the complex that he created more than a year ago. Chris is a master modeler and his meticulous work is bringing this blast furnace, whose last fire was extinguished in 1929, back to "life" in HO scale. He still has several important pieces to create to complete this large modeling project, but you really need to pay the museum a visit to see these marvelous one-of-a-kind-models for yourself.

We continue to work on the cataloging of our museum's railroad library which now contains more than 7,000 hard-back volumes. The collection covers many of North America's railroads as well as others from around the world. It will not only serve the casual reader, but contains many reference books as well. We hope to soon be at a point that will allow us to put them into circulation. For the present, readers who are not club members have to enjoy them in the confines of the museum.

Our two in-house clubs, the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders (MEMRR) and the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS are doing well. The MEMRR is working to complete the third and final leg of their large HO-scale layout and adding some details to the existing scenery. The NRHS chapter sent one of our younger members to the NRHS National Rail Camp in June.

Come visit the museum when you can and check out the latest happenings on our website, as well as a new post on YouTube about the museum that features the "Tweetsie" layout. The Johnson City Railroad Experience is at 207 North Boone Street in downtown Johnson City and open Tuesday-Saturday, 10 am to 4:30 pm. Information and upcoming events are on our website at johnsoncityrailroadexperience.org. 🚂



the builder's plate and have it on loan to the museum. The 28 served the Kentwood and Eastern's 31 mile narrow gauge section in eastern Louisiana from 1913 until that part of the



railroad was shut down in 1918. The ET&WNC acquired the locomotive in August 1918 for \$11,530.39. In the

sequence of locomotives on the ET, number 28 arrived six months after number 12 and about 16 months before number 14. Since the ET fol-



lowed railroad superstitions about locomotives numbered 13, this 2-6-0 retained its original number: 28. The 28 was transferred to the Linville River Railway after the arrival of the 14 and joined the 4, 5, 6 and 9 on the LR roster. She served in a variety of jobs during the 1920s but fell victim to declining traffic and was taken out of service on February 6, 1930. Number 28 was taken off the books on October 31, 1936 and was scrapped in November of that year. (28's historical information is courtesy of Volume 1 of *Along the ET&WNC* by Johnny Graybeal.) We are truly fortunate to have recovered this precious piece of ET&WNC/LR history. Our thanks to all involved and the unnamed parties who saved and stored the builder's plate over the years.

Coming up August 29-30 is this year's Heritage Weekend at Tweetsie Railroad. With number 12 still under restoration, trusty World War II vet #190 will handle the duties. Tweetsie plans the usual photo train and an additional shop tour on Saturday. Plans are to also have former EBT coach 5 on display. More details are inside from Chris Robbins. We hope to see as many of our members there as we can.

Vice President Ben Merritt recently announced the Society's facebook page: [facebook.com/ETWNCRRHS](https://www.facebook.com/ETWNCRRHS). We hope to share society information, activities and historical information. Please check it out and join us. And finally we have a "save the date" for our next convention: May 21-23 2027. Please plan to attend.

Curtis Brookshire, President & Editor

Doe River Gorge

Mark Milbourne reports from Hampton, TN –

As usual it was great to see many of you at the convention. Since then it's been a very full summer camp season, as usual. Last day of camp is July 31, so likely by the time you read this we'll have wrapped things up and be catching our breath a bit. Again most campers rode the rails to access the river for inner tubing and/or the Via Ferrata challenge course. And the Saturday Day Quest program continues to the end of August with many families, church groups and company picnics coming for the day for the lake activities and train ride.

A very visible change for the gorge train ride is a new loading platform. The standalone platform on the lake side was removed, and on the hill side the deck from the Sidetrack Cafe was extended with matching decking, railings and light fixtures. For the past several years, we've been blessed to have a volunteer construction group from Alabama come for a week each June, and this is one item they tackled this year.

Those that came to the convention also saw that a switch had been cut in between the platform and tunnel to make ready for the connector track from the new loop. And after much delay for weather and availability of crew, our grading contractor has finally been able to do the re-profiling of the grade. This was done to provide a level section in front of the office so we have the option to place a loading area there.

The summer RR crew has been busy in the gorge.

There was some extra focus in early summer on ditch work to not just maintain, but improve drainage and then they got busy with tie replacement, with a few weeks to go, expecting to install 150+ ties. Last issue we mentioned a pending donation of ties for the connector track. CSX made a pile of used ties over in NC available to us, so the summer RR crew spent a week there sorting and bundling and were able to glean a full flatbed load of usable ties. Use of the truck was also donated. We've also for some time been looking for rail needed to complete the connector, which has been difficult to find at a reasonable cost as market price has gone way up. But we finally have a very promising situation shaping up and hope to report success on that next time!

The shop crew has had plenty of seasonal non-steam items to handle, but not so many to prevent progress on the Porter. Some test runs in the late spring went well, but also identified a couple of items to improve. The throttle linkage and the oil burner are being reworked along with the airbrake system.

I was able to make some progress on the railbike build during the spring, but the rush of camp season and other items that popped up prevented further work until recent weeks. Some needed design changes had also become evident, so it was back to the drawing board for a bit, but that work is now mostly complete and we expect to resume actual fabrication in the coming weeks.

While camp season is always busiest, we are also blessed in recent years to have much fall guest-group business keep us busy. Between this and Christmas Train construction activity, we've not had much room to plan a fall color train event. But many groups do come for their own charter and for families and small groups, motorcar charter is very reasonably priced. So if you're looking to come for a fall color a ride, there are still options! Just give us a call. And Happy Fall, Y'all! Please check out our schedule at doerivergorge.com. 🚂



Switch outside tunnel 2 for the connector track from the new loop.
Photo courtesy Curtis Brookshire.

Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum

Terry Blevins shares this news from Newton, NC –

My thanks to Terry Blevins for this information. During a cold snap in January 2025, museum crews had to babysit their operational diesel switcher, former Alexander RR ALCO S-4 #6 to keep it from freezing. Serious discussions ensued as to how to best protect equipment from the elements. The decision was made to have Champion Buildings Inc. of North Wilkesboro construct a rail yard garage. Champion's proposal was a 50'x75'x22' metal building that included two tracks capable of housing the diesel locomotive along with up to three additional railcars. The design also provided floor space to accommodate storage of the museum's 1919 Ford Model T and Hack and a 1937 REA box truck. On May 25, 2006, after more than a year of planning and preparation, Champion started to erect the building. The primary structure was completed on June 2, 2026 and at the same time Ballard Roofing replaced the flat roof on the storage building that is attached to the new garage. Windows and garage doors have been ordered and electricians are at work on the building's electrical service. Following work includes installation of exhaust fans and gas infrared tube heaters as well as track connecting the garage with the museum's pavilion. The garage will be a welcome addition to the museum both for safe storage of vulnerable equipment and a weatherproof location for restoration projects. Visit our website to check on our progress at newtondepot.org. 🚧

Tweetsie Railroad Happenings

Chris Robbins sends this from Blowing Rock, NC –



We know the main question from the ET&WNC community is the status of locomotive #12. Work continues, although the pace is deliberate due to the complexity of the tasks and some tasks are underway outside of Tweetsie Railroad. The new firebox is still under construction by subcontracted specialists, and we are informed that it will be ready to ship to Tweetsie Railroad soon. Once completed, the firebox will be delivered in pieces and the BoilerWorks crew will weld it together inside the boiler. Then the process of installing 800+ staybolts can begin ... which will obviously take quite some time. The remainder of the locomotive reassembly should be straightforward, with many new and rebuilt components being added as part of the process. The locomotive has not seen this level of disassembly since its construction in 1917.

Railroad Heritage weekend is August 29-30, and the #190 "Yukon Queen" will be the focus of the weekend's events, with tribute being given to its service during WWII. However, event attendees will be able to see #12 in progress, with shop tours scheduled on both days. Johnny Graybeal is planning on delivering presentations focusing on the history of #12 in its transition from the post-Shenandoah-Central years to Tweetsie Railroad. Evening photo run-bys will, of course, also be on the agenda. Visit <https://tweetsie.com/special-events/railroad-heritage-weekend> for the most current details. Keep up with us and our complete schedule on our website at tweetsie.com. 🚧

Photos from the 2026 Historical Society Convention

Courtesy of Curtis Brookshire.



Number 12 goodies removed during her ongoing renovation in the Tweetsie Railroad shops.



DRG passengers saving some steps and some time getting to the top of the Gorge.



New trackage at the Doe River Gorge in anticipation of the coming of steam.



Number 190 lookin' good on her photo runby.