



The Coal Road

+++++

The Monthly Newsletter of the George L. Carter Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
Volume 1, Number 10, November 2011



The DRAWBAR OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

. Welcome our newest member, **Ken Shelton**, who lives in Johnson City. Ken we all look forward to meeting you and hope to see you at the November meeting. Welcome aboard!

November is a busy month for our NRHS chapter as we will be electing officers to help guide us through our second year of existence and we also will be paying our annual chapter and national dues. Our nominations committee has put together a slate of officers and ballots for their election have been mailed to all our members. Note that we currently have no nominations for the most important position of **secretary**. If you are willing to serve in this post we need you and will help you get oriented into the duties of Chapter Secretary. Just write your name into the blank space on the ballot and return it, or if you can persuade a member to become nominated for the position, with their permission please write their name on your ballot and deliver it to Harriet Swank. Please note that all the nominated positions are open for write-in candidates, so if you wish to be a nominee, or to nominate someone (please secure their permission first) you can do so by placing their name in the appropriate blank space on the ballot. All ballots must be returned to Harriet Swank either by mailing your ballot back to her (see instruction on the ballot itself) or by hand delivering it to Harriet **prior to 14 November**. Thank you for your votes on the candidates and a special thank you to each of our members who have indicated their willingness to serve as elected officers for the next year. I truly appreciate your support for the club through your service as a leader for the G.L. Carter NRHS.

Annual Membership Dues for the Carter Chapter NRHS and for National are due by the end of November. Please renew your membership and encourage any of your railroading friends to join as well as new members. You can be a member of several chapters of the NRHS by paying each local chapter's dues in addition to paying your National Membership Dues only once. So, if you know non-members you can recruit or members in other chapters who may like to share membership in several NRHS chapters please encourage them to consider us as well. **Make your check out to: George L. Carter Chapter NRHS** for the total invoice (Chapter and National dues combined) and mail it to: **Harriet Swank, 1763 Sylvan Hill Road, Elizabethton, TN 37643**. Only one check is necessary as the Chapter will then send your National dues in with the membership report that is required. Thank you in advance for your continued membership in the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS.

The Mountain Empire Model Railroader Club (MEMRR) will be helping the George L. Carter Railroad Museum celebrate its 3rd Anniversary in mid-November as well as National Model Railroad Month and National Take-a-Toy-Train-to-Work Day (Friday, Nov. 18th). You are invited to come to the Carter RR Museum any Saturday and join in the festivities with us. The Carter Railroad Museum will be celebrating the Christmas Holiday Season with an annual Holiday Party in December and members of the Carter Chapter NRHS and MEMRR are all invited to attend and participate. The date and location, along with details of the event, will be circulated to both club memberships ASAP. Please plan to join us for a social evening of food, gifts and merriment.

The ETSU Research and Development Committee is still reviewing our proposal for funding for the continuation of our Oral History-Storytelling Project. I expect to receive their decision sometime this month, perhaps by the time you are reading this newsletter. If funded, Delanna Reed, ETSU Graduate Storytelling Program, and I will organize more interviews with local folks who have personal 'Tales of the Rails' to tell us that we will record to preserve some of the history of our local Appalachian railroads that will otherwise never be recorded. We will also submit a grant proposal for funding this project to National NRHS, but their deadline for grant consideration is not until April of 2012, so we have plenty of time to get this one in. I'll keep you posted and once funded we will need your help in conducting the interviews. If funded, if any of you want to help with transcribing the recorded interviews into hardcopy text, a critical method of preserving these recorded stories, we will have funding to pay you to do so and Delanna will be willing to train you in the transcribing process.

We will, as discussed in the October Business Meeting, plan to begin our work with the Boy Scouts of America on the railroading merit badge sometime after the first of the year. Vice-President Jim Pahr is coordinating that program which will involve our Chapter, the MEMRR and the Carter Railroad Museum to cover the 3 major areas required by this badge. It should be a lot of fun working with the local Boy Scout troops on this and we will be providing a service to the community as well.

Programs are one of the mainstays of our monthly business meetings. Please let our officers know if there are programs you would like to present so we can schedule them. They can be on any aspect of railroading, local, national or international. You can bring

commercial DVD's to show, a disk or flash drive with your own digital pictures of a railroading trip you took (I have the equipment to project both kinds of hardware), or you can present a live presentation on a railroading subject of your choosing. The Carter RR Museum has a small, but growing collection of DVD's with prototype and model railroading themes that are available for possible programs as well. Just let us know what you would like to see or to present and we will be happy to schedule you. We will try to limit our programs to around 30 minutes, but will be a flexible as possible with program time limits. Thanks for considering presenting or for letting us know what you would like to see. Don't forget to invite your friends to our chapter meetings as well.

Check out the December Newsletter from National NRHS as it will include a small article and photo of our recent trip to the Cass Scenic Railroad and Elkins, WV. Our little chapter is getting national and international press!

Lastly, I wish to thank our membership for their dedication to our new chapter in its first year. There is plenty of opportunity for everyone to participate at whatever level in the organization you wish to from member to officer. I especially appreciate the support and guidance you have provided me as your elected president for this inaugural year. To my fellow officers I value the responsibility you have undertaken this year on behalf of the chapter and the cooperative manner in which you have carried out your duties. Your extra efforts have served the chapter well and have given it a good start and we put down our first spikes in some new trackage towards the future. I look forward to our second year and all the opportunities it will bring. We have made a good, solid beginning and we have a great membership to take us onward. Hear the whistle blow in the night and dream of all the destinations yet to come.

Fred Alsop
President, George L. Carter Chapter NRHS
Director, George L. Carter Railroad Museum

George L. Carter Chapter NRHS
Minutes of the General Meeting on October 17, 2011

The meeting was brought to order at 6:43 P.M. by President, Fred Alsop.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fred began the meeting by asking the officers for their respective reports.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

A motion was made by Gary Emmert and seconded by Bill Beagen to skip the reading and accept the minutes of the September meeting as published in *The Coal Road*. Motion accepted by all.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Duane Swank reported the financial status of the Chapter which was accepted by all.

EDITOR'S REPORT

Bill Beagen continues to do a good job publishing The Coal Road and is asking for articles to enhance the publication. Charlene McLeod asked that their email address be corrected as their old email address is still being referenced.

VICE-PRESIDENT/NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Jim Pahr is will be going to the Fall Conference in Delaware at the end of October. Jim also mentioned the possibility of the 2013 Convention being held in September in Anchorage, Alaska, which would be after the new By-Laws go into effect at the 2012 Convention.

LIBRARIAN

Gary Emmert checked with a gentleman who will copy a VHS tape to DVD format at \$3.00 per copy on a CASH ONLY basis. The 400-1000 photo negatives that Dick Conger donated will be taken to a shop on Bristol Hwy. If the photos are of local interest, they will be archived; if not, Dick Conger is okay with selling them or trading them.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A trailer to haul the Cope layout became available for \$2500 which has a tool box on the tongue and a drop down tailgate and a side door. Donations were requested to help pay for the trailer as the foundation account had only \$1000 in it. Members of both the Chapter and the MEMRR were very responsive to the request. There will be enough money left after paying for the trailer to put the Museum and the Geo. L. Carter logo on the sides of the trailer. The trailer has not yet been received as the paperwork is still being processed through ETSU and will be finalized hopefully by the end of the week. Fred thanked all those who donated to this cause.

Fred asked for volunteers for an Elections Committee. Those volunteering and subsequently being appointed were: Bill Hensley (chairman), Harriet Swank, Paul Haynes and Gary Emmert.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Boy Scout Merit Badge Program – Jim Pahr regrets that the program once again must be delayed due to conflicts and the upcoming holidays. It has been decided that the 3rd Saturday of January (1/21/12) will be the date of the first program. Notices are to be sent out to Wes Miller with the Boy Scouts with the cutoff date for registration of the class to be January 7, 2012. The class size to be 20. February 18, 2012, will be the date for another class if there are too many for the January class. Fred will arrange for a room with 20 chairs.
2. Chapter Logo – Duane contacted the supplier of the MEMRR shirts & patches, for an estimated cost for shirts with the Geo. L. Carter logo. There would be a one time set up fee of \$60 for the logo. Jim Pahr made the motion for the Club to pay the \$60 dollar set-up fee out of the Chapter funds. Gary Emmert seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously. Duane will get a sample of each of the two selected grey shirts and have them at the November meeting.
3. Chapter Secretary - The nominations committee was unable to find anyone willing to fill this position. Gary Emmert reported that he has a person who may possibly be interested but as yet she is not a member of the Chapter and therefore can not be put on the elections ballot.
4. Storytelling – Fred has written a proposal to ETSU for a grant of \$1500. The committee meets in October and results should be known in November. Jim Pahr also has mentioned grants available from NRHS for up to \$5000 which have to be requested by April 30th. Trains Magazine also has grants available up to \$10,000 and requests are due in by October 30th. This money would be used to pay the transcribers, interviewers and transportation costs related to the storytelling project.
5. National Dues – National Headquarters will be mailing invoices reflecting the National NRHS dues and the local dues. Upon receipt of these invoices, please do not mail them to the ETSU P.O. Box as will be indicated on the invoice. Either hand deliver them to Harriet Swank or mail them to her address: 1763 Sylvan Hill Rd., Elizabethton, TN 37643. Make one check for the total amount of the invoice payable to George L. Carter Chapter NRHS. Do not make any checks out to NRHS.
6. New Members – November is the 4 year anniversary of the Geo. L. Carter museum, National Railroad Days and Take a Train to Work Day. Therefore, November would be an ideal time to publicize our

Chapter in the local newspapers as well as the Student Newspaper explaining what our Chapter is about to try to recruit new members. Fred will check in to having an article published.

NEW BUSINESS

1. *Christmas Party* – Jim Pahrís suggested that the MEMRR Christmas Party be changed to the George L. Carter Museum Christmas Party to incorporate all persons involved with not only the MEMRR but also the Museum and the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS. A formal motion was made by Jim Pahrís, seconded by Dan McLeod and unanimously accepted by all.
2. *Election of Officers* - Ballots for the election of officers for the coming year will be mailed out by November 1st and are to be returned before the November 14th meeting so results can be announced at that time. The ballots will remain unopened until 1/2 hour prior to the meeting when the Elections Committee will gather to count the votes.

PROGRAM – At 7:55 P.M., a video of Cass Scenic Railroad was presented by Fred Alsop.

ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned after the program.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14th, SAME TIME (6:30 p.m.) AND PLACE (ETSU Campus, Brown Science Hall, Room 312). PLEASE TRY TO ATTEND.

SECRETARIAL DUTIES

The Secretary shall keep records of the proceedings of the regular and called Chapter meetings and regular and called Board of Directors meetings, conduct correspondence as directed by the Board and maintain the Policy and Procedures Manual. At any meeting the Secretary is unable to attend, the President shall appoint a member of the Board of Directors to serve as Secretary for the meeting.

In addition to the above, the Secretary will work closely with the President in preparing agendas, sending out meeting notices, and any other duties the President may need assistance with.

Some little known History

Train Station Watches Were Just the Beginning

If you were in the market for a watch in 1880, would you know where to get one? You would go to a store, right? Well, of course you could do that, but if you wanted one that was cheaper and a bit better than most of the store watches, you went to the train station!

Sound a bit funny? Well, for about 500 towns across the northern United States, that's where the best watches were found.

Why were the best watches found at the train station? The railroad company wasn't selling the watches, not at all. The telegraph operator was. Most of the time the telegraph operator was located in the railroad station because the telegraph lines followed the

railroad tracks from town to town. It was usually the shortest distance and the right-of-ways had already been secured for the rail line.

Most of the station agents were also skilled telegraph operators and that was the primary way that they communicated with the railroad. They would know when trains left the previous station and when they were due at their next station. And it was the telegraph operator who had the watches. As a matter of fact they sold more of them than almost all the stores combined for a period of about 9 years.

This was all arranged by "Richard", who was a telegraph operator himself. He was on duty in the North Redwood, Minnesota train station one day when a load of watches arrived from the east. It was a huge crate of pocket watches. No one ever came to claim them.

So Richard sent a telegram to the manufacturer and asked them what they wanted to do with the watches. The manufacturer didn't want to pay the freight back, so they wired Richard to see if he could sell them. So Richard did. He sent a wire to every agent in the system asking them if they wanted a cheap, but good, pocket watch. He sold the entire case in less than two days and at a handsome profit.

That started it all. He ordered more watches from the watch company and encouraged the telegraph operators to set up a display case in the station offering high quality watches for a cheap price to all the travelers. It worked! It didn't take long for the word to spread and, before long, people other than travelers came to the train station to buy watches.

Richard became so busy that he had to hire a professional watch maker to help him with the orders. That was Alvah. And the rest, as they say, is history.

The business took off and soon expanded to many other lines of dry goods.

Richard and Alvah left the train station and moved their company to Chicago -- and it's still there.

Richard Sears and his partner Alvah Roebuck!

Editor Remarks

I just found out yesterday that the meeting is this Monday so I had to get this newsletter out in a hurry. So, here it is! That's what I get for not reading the minutes before I publish them!

We are in need of articles for the newsletter and would like to hear from you if you have anything you want to contribute to the Coal Road, please send it to me, my e-mail address is rbill@embarqmail.com. Thanks for your help.

MEMBERSHIP

Nothing new to report at this writing. However, we encourage anyone who knows someone interested in railroading to please encourage them to join our organization.

Keep those rails clicking.

Harriet Swank,
Membership Chairman

The next scheduled meeting is Monday, November 14th on ETSU Campus, Brown Hall Building, Room 312, at 6:30 p.m. Please try to attend and bring a guest.

Chapter Officers:

President - Fred Alsop (*fredjalsop3@earthlink.net*)

Vice President/National Director - Jim Pahriss (*pahrissj@embarqmail.com*)

Secretary - vacant

Treasurer - Duane Swank (*duaneharriet@charter.net*)

At Large Directors - Bill Hensley and

Dan McLeod (*chardanmcleod35@centurylink.net*)

Appointed Positions:

Editor – Bill Beagen (*rrbill@embarqmail.com*)

Librarian - Gary Emmert (*jbox1015@comcast.net*)

Membership Chairperson - Harriet Swank (*duaneharriet@charter.net*)



The George L. Carter Chapter NRHS

The Monthly Meetings are the Monday preceding the third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 PM in room 312 of Brown Hall, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN. The room is on the Third floor entering from the northeast entrance doors. For more information, please write to the Chapter at 1763 Sylvan Hill Road, Elizabethton, TN 37643.

The George L. Carter Chapter NRHS Newsletter is prepared and distributed monthly prior to the meeting. Opinions expressed by the writers are not necessarily the views of East Tennessee State University and its employees, the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS, and its members, officers, and board of directors and the National Railway Historical Society. Contributions are welcome. For permission to use the material in this newsletter, please contact the editor, Bill Beagen. Contributors are Fred Alsop, Jim Pahriss and Harriet Swank.