



# THE SIGNAL BRIDGE

NEWSLETTER OF THE MOUNTAIN EMPIRE MODEL RAILROADERS CLUB  
JANUARY 2012 - MEMBERS EDITION

Volume 19 - Number 1

Published for the Education and Information of Its Membership

## CLUB OFFICERS

**President:**  
**Fred Alsop**

**Vice-President**  
**John Carter**

**Treasurer:**  
**Duane Swank**

**Secretary:**  
**Hobie Hyder**

**Newsletter Editor:**  
**Ted Bleck-Doran**

**Webmaster:**  
**Bob Jones**



## LOCATION

**ETSU Campus**  
**George L. Carter**  
**Railroad Museum**

## HOURS

**Business Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Meetings start at 7:00 PM in:**

**Brown Hall**  
**Room 312**  
**ETSU Campus,**  
**Johnson City, TN.**

**Open House for viewing every Saturday from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm.**

**Work Nights are held each Thursday from 5:00 pm until ??**

## THE VIEW FROM THE ENGINEER'S SIDE OF THE CAB.



Happy New Year fellow MEMRR members!!!! If you have not renewed your membership dues for 2012 I hope that to do so was one of the New Year's resolutions you are going to keep and we surely want to keep you on board as a full and active member, so get out your checkbook and send your dues to our club treasurer, **Duane Swank**, at 1763 Sylvan Rd, Elizabethton, TN 37643. Make the check out to "MEMRR". Dues are the same price as last year and for several years now, one of the few things in life that has not seen inflation; \$30 for full membership, + \$5 for each adult

household member; or \$12 for associate members.

We had a great time at the first annual George L. Carter Railroad Museum Christmas Party with members from both the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS. Our special thanks to **Jim Pahrts** who coordinated our Holiday Party event and to the elves who helped by decorating the place before the 40-or-so members and their guests arrived. They were **Dan & Charlene McLeod, Duane and Harriet Swank, Jesse Kittle, Gary Emmert** and **Fred Alsop**. The foods were plentiful and delicious. The socializing and merriment were outstanding and the visit from "Dirty Santa" was fun and not nearly as dirty as in some years past. Perhaps Santa is mellowing with age? Newsletter editor, **Ted Bleck-Doran** read us a Christmas Truce story in the form of a soldier's letter from WWI that had special meaning as our troops come home from Iraq this Christmas season. The highlight among many for the evening event held at Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site, was the drawing for the little N-Scale winter layout that several members had converted from a run-down donated landscaped winter scene into a beautiful, sparkling white winter holiday treasure was won by **Janet Slaughter** from Kingsport. Janet and her mother picked it up at the museum the next day and are thrilled with it. They plan not only to use it for decoration in their home, but also to add to it and perhaps it will spark a hobby. Janet says she and her family are regular visitors to the Carter Railroad Museum and that they really love watching our trains and marveling at the wonderful miniature worlds that our club has created for them to run through. Thanks go to **Allan Morton, Gary Emmert, Jesse Kittle, Tod Eaton, Ted Bleck-Doran**, and **Fred Alsop** for doing the work on this project; to **Jim Pahrts** for his idea that got the project started and for providing the registration cards; and to **Bob Barrett** of HobbyTownUSA for donating the locomotive, rolling stock and transformer.

The business meeting was brief and our new secretary, **Hobie Hyder**, has a report that will be his first column as a club officer to be found elsewhere in this edition of the newsletter. Some coming events for January will include the planning of the club calendar for 2012 and helping the Carter Chapter NRHS working with the local Sequoia Council Boy Scouts of America to administer the requirements for the railroading merit badge on Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>. **Jim Pahrts** will be coordinating this event at the Carter RR Museum. Our club is asked to work with the scouts who will be participating with the model railroading aspects of their badge requirements by answering their questions as they view the layouts. Member **Dave Doughty** will be presenting the Operation Life Saver part of the requirements in room 102 (reserved for the day) and **Gary Emmert** will work with the boys on the prototype railroading aspect of the badge, also in room 102. Mark your calendars for a good turnout of members for that day so we can serve our visitors as well as the Boy Scouts who will be additional guests. We may need a little more help than usual.

ETSU is working on getting an official state license plate for the RR Museum trailer and will assume insurance and maintenance liabilities for it. We need to get a couple of our members who have experience with trailers to check this one out and make suggestions for anything we may need to do to get it ready to transport the Cope Traveling Layout and any other cargos we may wish to haul in the future. If anyone fits this bill and is willing to inspect the trailer some Saturday with me I shall be happy if you would let me know who you are and we shall get this done.

On Wednesday, December 21, 2011, ETSU Provost, **Bert Bach**, and President, **Paul Stanton**, approved my request to hire a part-time employee to be the Station Master for the coming year in the Little Engineer's Room of the Carter RR Museum. This person will be trained by the staff of the ETSU Child Study Center and certified in CPR/first aid to be the person who will work every Saturday with the children who come to play in that most popular room. We will begin advertising the position and will expect to hire very soon after the first of the year. The position will be for the calendar year and will serve as a pilot program that hopefully will be renewed in 2013. We will have the benefit of having a person trained to work with young children as a weekly presence in our playroom and **Dave Doughty**, who has worked so long and faithfully with the families whose children visit this room, will have the option to continue to work with the kids when he want to do so, or to run his trains with the other members, or whatever he wishes to do when he is in the museum. We all need to express our special appreciation to Dave for all the countless hours he has put into the little engineers in the Little Engineer's Room that not only has created a wonderful bond with these families, some who visit regularly, but by doing so he has allowed those of us who just want to run trains and build scenery the time to do so. Thank you David!!!!

A second, pre-Christmas "gift" was bestowed on Wednesday, December 21, 2011, by ETSU. The chairman of the Research Development Committee emailed me to congratulate me on being funded by his committee on a small grant proposal I had submitted with **Delanna Reed**, instructor in the Graduate Storytelling Program and an Honorary Member 2012 of the MEMRR. The grant is to support for the spring, January to June 30, the collection of oral railroad histories that we began at the RR Museum in the fall of 2010. The funds will be used to pay interviewers to collect these stories from local people who remember the early railroads of the region including the Tweetsie, Southern and the Clinchfield, and to pay transcribers to take the recorded stories and convert them to hardcopy form for preservation. This project will be undertaken by the Carter Chapter NRHS, but some of the interviews may be conducted in the RR Museum as they were before. However, this funding will also allow some of the

interviewers to travel to the homes of the storytellers and to conduct longer interviews than we were able to do in the past. If you have knowledge of people you think we should contact for interviews as part of this preservation program, please let me know who they are. So, Wednesday, December 21, 2011, was a very good day for the museum and the two clubs that call it "home".

Looking back down the tracks of 2011 we had another very good year. Our club membership remained around 90 members and we attracted several new members with their special talents and diverse backgrounds. We sustained several big projects that still will move towards completion in 2012 in the HO freight yard project, the HO rewiring project, and the Tweetsie project. The ETSU Centennial Locomotive project was also successfully completed with the addition of funds for the work accomplished being placed in the museum's foundation account to be used on the ET&WNC project. We got enough member donations in a 48 hour period to purchase a great 6 x 12 trailer for our use and to get our distinctive museum logos on it. A lot of things got finished and we had modules that got new owners and modules that are still moving towards completion, but are showing good progress. Our coordinator's meetings have helped us move towards better planning and organization and will be continued in 2012. **Geoff Stunkard's** creative idea for the monthly Heritage Day Events has been an overwhelming success, not only providing new energy to our museum displays and the opportunity to run some special trains on special Saturdays, but also to infuse the public to come and visit the museum. The monthly publicity generated by the news releases for these events have been widely distributed by the local media and the Carter Railroad Museum, the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS have all benefited by the wider community recognition we have received as a result. We already have voted to continue this Heritage Day Event program in 2012. The view from the right side of the cab is very good indeed and you all are the reason for it.

Now 2012 is here. Winter has set in and it is a good time for model railroading. The club is solid in both membership and its elected officers. We have a great facility to call our home. 2012 may well be our best year yet. Be a part of it with your energies, your special talents, your passion for model railroading and the companionship and teaching that a club of the size of the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders can offer. Hear the whistle blow in the night and dream of all the destinations yet to come. **Happy New Year!**

*Fred Alsop  
President, Mountain Empire Model Railroaders  
Director, George L. Carter Railroad Museum, ETSU*

**Minutes**  
**Mountain Empire Model Railroaders -**  
**George L. Carter Chapter NRHS**  
**Tipton Haynes State Historic Site**  
**George L. Carter Railroad Museum**  
**Christmas Party**  
**December 20, 2011**



Museum Director, Fred Alsop, who also serves as the president of both organizations, called the group to order at 6:00 p.m.

Ted Bleck-Doran opened the meeting with a reading of the Christmas Truce.

A special thanks was given by President Fred Alsop to Gary Emmert, Jim and Charlotte Pahriss, Jessie Kittle, Duane and Harriet Swank and Dan and Charlene McLeod for all their help decorating for the Christmas party.

President Fred Alsop then introduced Hobie Hyder to the membership as the new Secretary for the MEMRR.

There was no old business.

New business; Gary Emmert brought up the idea of having our annual Christmas Party catered next year. With no motion being brought forth his suggestion may be raised at a future meeting.

Volunteers for the Saturday operating sessions were selected as follows:

- December 31<sup>st</sup> - Gary Emmert, Duane Swank and Larry Fraser;
- January 7<sup>th</sup> - John Carter, Ed Champion and Gary Emmert;
- January 14<sup>th</sup> - Gary Woods, and Geoff Stunkard.

Paul Haynes brought a copy of the December NRHS Bulletin and President Alsop pointed out to the group a picture of all

those attending Cass Scenic Railway and Elkins, WV this past Labor Day that was published in it.

President Alsop informed the group that members of the NRHS and MEMRR will be helping the Boy Scouts of America with meeting the requirements for their Railroading Merit Badge on Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>.

He also informed the group that the George L Carter Chapter, NRHS is applying for two grants to help support their collection of local oral histories of the railroads.

President Alsop continued to inform the group about the new club trailer. The trailer has now been lettered with the museum logo and is ready for transporting the Cope layout and other cargos as needed.

At the January meeting of the MEMMR we will be planning the 2012 calendar of events. President Alsop gave special thanks to Geoff Stunkard for his idea to start the Heritage Days at the museum. Since the once a month special day has been deemed a success, they will continue for another year with the first one in January being dubbed Tennessee Mountain Railroading. President Alsop pointed out this would be a great opportunity to come run your Shay Locomotives.

He also told the group about his meeting with University President Stanton concerning acquiring a full time staff person for the Little Engineer's Room to help out with potential safety and legal issues as well as to give Dave Doughty a much needed rest and opportunity to run some trains on Saturday. It was pointed out that during the past nine weeks the kids room has been used by 167 children and their families. A full time staff member would be asked to work a seven hour day and the suggested pay would be \$10/hour with a full calendar year commitment. Bridging the Carter Railroad Museum with the Child Study Center was thought to be a good idea and one that would benefit all.

Duane Swank, Treasurer, informed the club to date only 40% of MEMRR dues have been renewed for 2012 and 90% for the NRHS group dues have been paid.

The last item of new business was the drawing for the N-Scale layout. The winner was Janet Slaughter of Kingsport. Thanks to everyone who helped with that project. Great idea and fundraiser for the club.

Meeting was adjourned by President Alsop at approximately 8:30 P.M.

*Minutes prepared and submitted by  
Hobie Hyder,  
MEMRR Secretary*

## MEMRR Coordinators Meeting 8 December 2011

Fred Alsop called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in room 235 of the Campus Center Building, ETSU. The reports of the coordinators present follow:

**Sales: Duane Swank.** Status quo on shirts, patches and hats. Plenty in stock. We have been selling battery-powered Christmas train sets that Jim Pahrís obtained from HobbyTownUSA. We have sold 11 of the 12 sets we had on 2 Saturdays at the Carter RR Museum. It was agreed to pick up 12 more sets.

**Webmaster: Bob Jones.** Getting all member email addresses up to date. The Honorary Members will only get *The Signal Bridge* and not the automatic club reminders.

**Displays: Jim Pahrís.** The December Heritage Day will feature the New York Central RR and associated northeastern railroads. The museum event will be on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Dec. instead of the last weekend of the month because of the Christmas holidays. Jim and Geoff Stunkard will start changing out the display cases to feature the NYC tonight and continue on Saturday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Other Announcements:** (Jim Pahrís). 1) Our annual Christmas Party RSVPs are coming in slowly, but all arrangements have been made. 2) Tom McKee donated several New Haven RR deco prints to the Carter Museum and has dropped them off. 3) We will be helping the local Boy Scouts of America council's scouts earn their railroading merit badge on January 21<sup>st</sup> at the Carter RR Museum with some of the training being held in room 102 just down the hall. We will need members to help on that Saturday.

**MEMRR Secretary: Hobie Hyder** has agreed to serve as the club secretary for the coming year (thank you, Hobie !!)

**Publicity & Events: Hobie Hyder.** The club has one more Heritage Day scheduled for this year, but due to their popularity with the public the coordinator for these special days, Geoff Stunkard, has planned with the club's assistance a full slate of Heritage Days for 2012. Hobie plans no special railfan outings until the spring. If members know of upcoming train shows please pass that information on to Ted for inclusion in the newsletter.

**Newsletter Editor: Ted Bleck-Doran.** There will be masthead changes with the January edition of *The Signal Bridge* to reflect the elected club officers for the next year. The editor requests materials on model railroading, railfanning and other grist for the newsletter.

**HO-Scale: Electrical: Bill Hensley.** 1) The siding on the window side of the room from Larry and Rich's modules to Fred's module has turnouts that are not DCC friendly. His group is working to correct this. Only 4 modules still need wiring work to complete Phase I. 2) Switch #1 on the Switch-8 machine on the new staging yard is losing its memory. Bill will check with the manufacturer, NCE, to see if they have a recommended fix for the problem. 3) Recently a derailed locomotive in the yard Y caused damage. This problem is being studied and will be fixed. 4) Currently our computer is not 'talking' to the Digitrax system.

**Large Scale: Jesse Kittle.** Improving the locomotives and rolling stock operation with routine maintenance of cleaning wheels and repairing couplers. We arrived to find a leak in the AC unit in the ceiling between the G-Scale and the N-scale layouts had caused a ceiling tile to collapse onto the G-Scale layout, but caused no damage. The AC unit had iced up and the ice was melting into the room. A waste basket was placed under the drip and contained the water. Neither layout sustained any damage (we were lucky). **Note:** *Fred got ETSU maintenance on site early the next morning and the unit was repaired and ceiling tiles replaced. Apparently this unit was still set by its wall thermostat on 'cool' and the cold temperature inside and outside the building had caused the icing problem. Please check during the winter months at all 3 thermostats in room 113 are set to 'heat'.*

**N-Scale:** (Jesse Kittle reporting in Tod's absence). Inventory indicates 117 freight cars operational and many more on the RIP track. Plans to create a roster of operational locomotives and their operating characteristics (some get hot after a few hours and quit running; some start slow and race when they warm up, etc.) to provide an operator's guide for smoother operation of the layout.

**Treasurer's Request: Duane Swank.** Each coordinator working with the MEMRR's budgeted funds for purchases is asked to estimate their section's expenses for the coming year so that monies can be earmarked and encumbered by the treasure to cover them. It is assumed there will be unexpected expenses during the year, but some of our projects on the HO-scale layout (the only layout in the museum funded with MEMRR monies) can have costs for the year estimated and having this information will help the treasurer better plan the funding, or partial funding, for them. In a related subject, the club is asked to continue to gather surplus model railroading items and place them in room 110 so they can be inventoried, priced and offered for sale to club members or for sales and swap meets outside the club.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:25 p.m.

**WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN:**  
**THOUGHTS ABOUT SAM INSULL'S EMPIRE**

Photos and Commentary By  
 Eric Bronsky



It was long ago when Chicago's interurban and rapid transit companies were under common ownership. Both the North Shore Line and the Chicago Aurora & Elgin were physically connected to the "L," enabling passenger and parcel express cars to traverse all three roads. Of course, no such physical connection or compatibility existed between the 600-volt DC third rail lines and the 1,500-volt DC overhead wire South Shore Line ... but it's fun to imagine what might have been!



The first attached image shows the Randolph & Wells Loop "L" station during the IRM Snowflake Special on 2/24/1974, composited with a photo of CSS&SB freight locomotive 803 taken at Gary Station on 6/16/1977. Oddly enough, a group of four retired CTA 4000-series "L" cars was temporarily stored in Michigan City at the CSS&SB Shops during the mid-1970s. As the other two photos will attest, these were within sight of the 800-class locomotives. I believe the "L" cars later went to museums, as did 802 and 803.

We can only speculate how 803 might have looked and sounded screeching around the tortuous curves on the "L."



**IT'S IN THE DETAILS:**  
**TWO ADDITIONS FOR THE FOREGROUND**

(An Occasional Column for 2012)  
 Photos and Narrative By  
 Ted Bleck-Doran

The first kit featured this month is the **1950's Red Farm Tractor with Loader (#60-005)** by GHQ. It is a finely detailed model cast in soft pot metal. The kit comes with excellent assembly instructions with tips on painting and assembly options.



The tractor can be assembled with the bucket up or down as well as with the arms up or down as shown in the pictures. The leftover part can go in the scrap bin for use later (more about that below). A cast driver is included as well.

The casting come with a surprising little flash and mold lines to tough up. A good jeweler's file will take care of what's visible. Care with handling the castings is advised. The pot metal is soft and will deform with rough handling. Some of the pieces may need aligning having been bent during packaging or shipping.



I opted to model the tractor with the bucket arms up and the bucket empty. I also decided that I would leave out the driver since one anticipates a vehicle to move with the driver included.



Assembly is straight forward though care must be taken in selecting the proper arms, positioning the arms on the axles, and choice of the guides (uprights at the front of the tractor). I used Hobbytown fast setting CA glue with gap filler.

Painting makes the model. I chose Bright Red acrylic, Black, Burnt Siena (rust), Silver and Brown for mud. The body and wheel hubs were painted with a base coat of red. The tires received a coat of black. Piston armatures and guides got silver accents. Then everything got a wash of black – you’ll be surprised at how the details pop out at this stage, Then I finished the model off with dry brushed accents of mud and rust. I wanted the tractor to look well used and worn.

The second model has been around for several years. It is a Woodland Scenics **Old Time Truck with Flatbed Trailer**. Like the red tractor the model is cast pot metal. Woodland Scenics castings show their age with much more flashing and mold lines. There was even some noticeable warping evident in the larger pieces. A good file and a Dremel grinding bit or abrasive block will take care for the flashing and mold lines. Slight finger pressure will take care of most of the warping.



Assembly instructions are adequate though some testing and fitting of the subassemblies is required. Woodland Scenics has provided suggesting for weathering and detailing the model.



Painting was a breeze. Turn of the century equipment could be fairly uncomplicated and straight forward. A basic brown truck and trailer body color was an obvious choice for a rundown tractor trailer. I painted the trailer decking a light grey. The tires got basic black. Everything then got a wash of black to bring out the details.



The model then got highlights of rust and mud just like the red tractor.

What makes the model are the pallets and detail parts. The truck comes with 5 pallets, several empty – a couple with loads. After filing of the flash and mold lines each got a coat of grey followed by black wash and dry brushing of mud and rust. I added some of the part from the red tractor kit and a set of oil barrels and a variety of trash items from the scrap box.

I have just the right spots for each of these models. I have no doubt that they will be highlights to the scenes.

Why not drop me a line and a couple of pics and tell the club about your latest project? As you can see – it doesn't have to be elaborate.

**GARY EMMERT'S PUZZLE**  
**CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE LOCOMOTIVE TYPE?**



*"The Rock Island Line is a very good line  
 The Rock Island Line is the line to ride..."*



Gary drove engines for the Rock and he wants to know what type of locomotives are depicted in the photographs above. I think he knows but isn't telling. Who wants to try a guess?

**FROM THE SCRAP LINE**  
**Photos from the Cass Excursion**  
 Photos by Gart Emmert

The members of MEMRR and the George L Carter Chapter NRHS enjoyed the Labor Day weekend of 2011 at Cass WV. There they toured the setting of the Cass Scenic Railroad. Here are three photos from Gary Emmert showing items on the scrap line at Cass.





First is an Industrial Brownhoist 150 ton crane. It's in sad condition. It would make for an interesting model for the club layout since contemporary wrecks are now handled by contractors who usually bring dozers and cranes to a wreck site.

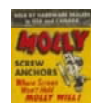
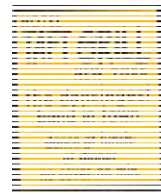
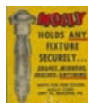
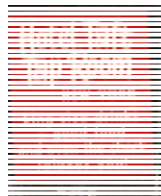
Second is the frame, boiler and piping from a cannibalized shay. Keystone Locomotiveworks makes a nice model of a shay for a static display. The pot metal kit would be a great starting point for duplicating this scene.

### Period Billboards and Posters

#### Matchbook Art for the Layout

Courtesy of Geoff Stunkard

Formatted for O and HO Scale





## THE SIGNAL BRIDGE

### Volume 1 Number 1



THE SIGNAL BRIDGE  
The Newsletter of the  
Mountain Empire Modular Railroaders  
Gray, TN

Vol. 1

December, 1993

No. 1

Welcome to the first edition of The Signal Bridge. This is the monthly newsletter of the newly formed Mountain Empire Modular Railroaders, an HO scale modular group presently forming at Gray Elementary School in Washington County, Tennessee and serving rail modelers in both Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. Our first meeting on November 16 was an unexpected, but hardy, success. Of the 24 announcements sent out about our initial meeting, 17 modelers showed and several others sent notice of interest but, were pre-committed to a rail historical society meeting in Bristol. Since then our roster has added 11 more names and addresses. The response has been unbelievable!!!

#### 1994 Calendar of Events

At the first meeting a majority of those present felt that the second Thursday of each month was a good evening to meet for business and another day will be selected later for a running session each month. So here's 1994 at a glance:

* Jan. 13	* Apr. 14	Jly 14	Oct 13
* Feb. 10	May 12	Aug 11	Nov 10
* Mar. 10	Jun 9	Sep 8	Dec 8

\* Washington County School Board Policy states that in the event of hazardous weather conditions and the forced cancellation of school, all events in the buildings are also cancelled.

#### Officers Elected for First Year

The following people agreed to serve as club officers for this first year:

President - Bob Helms, Blountville, Tennessee  
Vice President - John Carter, Gray, Tennessee  
Secretary - Bob Swartz, Johnson City, Tennessee  
Treasurer - Dean Odiorne, Kingsport, Tennessee

#### At This Month's Meeting ( December 9 )

The officers met December 2 and will present for your input and eventual approval:

Proposed Bylaws  
Standing Committees  
To incorporate or not to incorporate; That is a

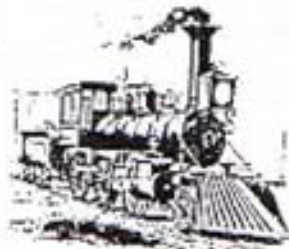
Question.  
 A Survey of NMRA Module Specifications  
 Videos (Ho, Ho, Ho 1)  
 Doors will open at 6:30 P.M. (and remain unlocked until  
 after we've adjourned. Sorry about the problems last time).

HELP!!!

We need help in providing the goodies and drinks at  
 our meetings. Last month some generous individuals  
 contributed \$11.00 to the cost of mailing etc. but that will  
 not cover the eats. Let's see if we can work something out.

SEE YOU THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9  
 GRAY SCHOOL SHOP  
 7:00 P.M.

THE SIGNAL BRIDGE  
 1205 Woodside Drive  
 Johnson City, TN 37604



Henry Rowland  
 101 Newington Street  
 Rockledge, Virginia 22151

Courtesy of Fred Alsop