



# The Coal Road

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The Monthly Newsletter of the George L. Carter Chapter, National Railway  
Historical Society, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee  
Volume 4, Number 8, August 2014

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## The Drawbar

Fellow Chapter members, Jo Ann and I are just back from a much-needed 2 week vacation in Alaska and we managed to get in some proper rail time while in our huge 49<sup>th</sup> state. I got to ride the Yukon and White Pass RR for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time and it is still as wonderful as it was when I rode it twice in consecutive years back in the mid-80s. What an outstanding feat of engineering to take the first 20 miles of that narrow gauge railroad from sea level to the summit of 2,865 feet at White Pass using back-breaking labor of pick and shovel and 450 tons of black powder. We also road the Alaska Railway from Seward to Anchorage and the leg from Anchorage to Denali National Park was on the ARR's scenic cruise train with its double-decked coaches with vista domes. I am back home and recharged and ready to begin the fall semester at the university, resume my duties as Carter RR Museum director, and my honor of working with an outstanding NRHS chapter. We have a lot to do for the remainder of 2014!

The Board of Directors has taken your vote for a fall rail excursion on the Smoky Mountain Railway in Bryson City, NC for October 25<sup>th</sup> and we have moved ahead with reservations for the train and the bus transportation. We will be discussing this event in more detail at the August business meeting of the Chapter on the 18<sup>th</sup>. It takes a lot of work and planning to organize and conduct these rail excursions as our outreach program for the community and each and every one of us has to make a personal commitment to be engaged so that our teamwork helps to create our success and provides us a great experience as we are making it happen. **Jim Pahr** and I have been working on the transportation (buses and train) and **Charlene** and **Dan McLeod** have volunteered to do the heavy-lifting with all the paperwork that is involved with taking our guest's reservations and getting them their confirmation letters in the mail. We will be putting together all the forms in a few days and organizing the publicity necessary to announce the event to the public. I will be making as many publicity arrangements and press releases as possible through the ETSU Office of University Relations as in the past. This is a big year for the National NRHS and we are uniquely involved in some of its future. This is the election year for the National President and we all got our official

ballots in the mail in June with specific instructions for filling them out and mailing them back. The deadline for doing so was in early August so I hope we all followed through and voted. We were united in our desire for a change at the top and time will tell when the official results are announced if that has happened or not. The National NRHS has a lot of their future riding on the outcome of this election and all of our members have discussed the pros and cons regarding the current administration and the continued loss of members, of chapters and of stable revenue for the organization's operations. We must hope that whomever emerges as the president of the NRHS after this election that they have the vision, the will and the help from the society to put the NRHS back on the right track and grow it back into the body we all envision it to be and that we can be proud to be members of.

Our second major involvement with the National NRHS will be through our hosting of their Fall Convention here in Johnson City headquartered at the Carnegie Hotel on State of Franklin within easy walking distance of our Carter Railroad Museum. We have already made lots of plans for the convention including Friday field trips that will take our visitors and our chapter members to Natural Tunnel and the Copper Creek viaduct near Duffield, VA; a trip to visit Kenny Fannon's railroad museum and, after lunch at Tupelo Honey Café, a ride into the Doe River Gorge on the roadbed of the ET&WNC RR. The Chapter has selected a number of railroad books, highlighted by those of railroads of the region, to sell at the convention, and as NRHS members we will be able to attend the banquet and a number of their business meetings during the convention. As members of our Carter Chapter NRHS we will need everyone's help with the continued planning and organization for the convention and as many of you as can should register for it as convention attendees. We may never get to host a national meeting of the NRHS again in Johnson City in our lifetimes, so please take this opportunity to make the most of it and let your gray shirts and hats be prominently displayed during the time our guests and visitors are here with us in November.

**Jim Pahr** has started the ball rolling for our annual Carter RR Museum picnic that will once more be hosted by Kim and Tom McKee at their lakeside home. Tom will have his G-scale garden railroads running and there will be lots of great food and conversations as we and our spouses or significant-others, enjoy each other's company on the grounds. Be sure the date of Sunday 14 September is on your calendar and the starting time of 4 p.m. and start planning what special dish you are going to bring to share. These social events with the members of the MEMRR are always one of the highlights of the year and you really don't want to miss it. Besides, Tom will let you drive one of his trains if you ask him to let you do so.

We successfully wrapped up the NRHS funded grant that was supporting our Tales of the Rails program of collecting oral histories of regional railroading from some of our areas more senior citizens. **Carolyn Gregg** and **Dr. Delanna Reed** did most of the heavy-lifting on this by getting out and following up contacts, or making new ones, and recording many interviews for the program. We have much of their work transcribed and will be funding the remainder of the necessary transcriptions from foundation monies from the Carter RR Museum. This work of preserving these railroading memories is very important as they currently exist only in the minds of the folks who personally

experienced them or from tales told to them by other family members. We must save them and share them while we have the opportunity to as they are critical to our understanding of the impact of the early railroads to the isolated people of Southern Appalachia. We will strive to continue to gather more stories as we can and will soon begin to plan how best to share them with everyone. I have made my final report on the grant and on how we used the funds to the Heritage Committee of NRHS.

We still have a little bit of summer left. Some will still take vacations in the next few weeks, but for most of us who are still working a regular schedule it is time to once more take up the routine tasks for which we are paid. The first day of the fall semester is 25 August and there will be many planning sessions for me as a university professor with my colleagues prior to the first student stepping into the classroom. I am sure that many of you are back from summer breaks and engaged in your professional life as well. It is sometimes easy to forget that we all have lives outside of the Carter Chapter NRHS or the Carter Railroad Museum, but we all do. It is with amazed gratification that I observe all that you do through your passion for railroading, railroads, trains, railroading history, etc., that you give to our chapter to make it work, and work well. Thank you all for giving of yourselves so that the collective body that is the Carter Chapter NRHS is alive, has the vision and the boldness to carry out activities that many larger organizations would not attempt. We have a lot to do before we wrap up 2014. I look forward to doing it with you. Listen to the sound of the whistle of the train in the night and dream of all the destinations yet to come.

**Fred J. Alsop III**

President, George L. Carter Chapter NRHS  
Director, George L. Carter Railroad Museum, ETSU

**George L. Carter Chapter of the NRHS**  
**Minutes of July 14, 2014 meeting**  
**Brown Hall, Room 312**  
**On the ETSU Campus**  
**6:30 PM**

The meeting was called to order by the president at 6:35 PM. Members present: Fred Alsop, Bill Beagen, John Dodge, Carolyn Gregg, Paul Haynes, Paul Markey, Dan McLeod, and Jim Pahriss.

**Announcements**

Fred announced he will be out of town on vacation during late July and early August.

**Officers Reports**

There were no reports from the President, Vice President, National Representative, Treasurer, or Secretary. It was moved and seconded to approve the Minutes of the June meeting as distributed in *The Coal Road*. The motion passed. Mention was made that two members have recently renewed their membership. There was no report from Directors-at-Large. The Editor of the newsletter apologized for late publication, and promised more timely publication in the future. The Librarian has informed the president that he is working on a list of book holding to be placed on the new computer. The Historian showed drafts of oral histories with illustrations. Nearly the entire NRHS grant was expended within the one year time limit.

### **Current/Old Business**

2014 ET&WNC RR Historical Society Convention. Fred wrote a lengthy report published in *The Coal Road*. Fred thanked all who participated and made the convention a success. The Society intends to hold the 2015 convention in Johnson City. Discussion regarding a larger and longer train show in conjunction with the convention. It was agreed that at least two days would be appropriate. The Society formed a committee to consider the pros and cons of affiliation (or other association) with the Carter Museum. Several Chapter members are on the committee.

Jonesborough Days. The event was successful. Jim requested the same space be available for next year. Fred and Jim expressed their thanks for the assistance provided by members.

Voting for National NRHS officers & District board members. Ballots are due by August 1. Members were reminded to vote, and of the general dissatisfaction with the current president of the NRHS.

Carter RR Museum summer picnic: 14 September at 4 p.m. hosted by Tom and Kim McKee. It was moved and supported to pay 30% of the cost of the picnic from Chapter funds. The motion passed.

GLC Museum Volunteers. Fred reminded us of the continuing need for museum volunteers.

### **New Business**

Hosting the Fall 2014 NRHS Conference. Two registrations have arrived. Jim urged all members to actively participate in the event. Books from Morning Sun and TLC will be on sale, and members may purchase at a 30% discount. Notify Jim of choices for purchase.

Plans for October 2014 rail excursion. Discussion of possible trips for fall. It was moved and supported to host an excursion at Great Smokey Mountain Railroad at Bryson City, NC on October 25. The motion passed. Bill will check on the date and possible conflicts with neighboring groups and availability of seats on the railroad. Dan and Charlene

McLeod will handle the registration and ticketing. Fred will contract with Greene Coach Lines for the 2 buses required for the trip to Bryson City.

Ideas for recruiting new members Fred led a discussion of ways to recruit members. Each is encouraged to invite others to meetings and excursions.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15. Sound problems prevented showing a DVD for evening program. An online video of the making of *The Lone Ranger* with its Iron Horse was available online.

Next GLCC Business Meeting August 18. Those wishing to join us for dinner at 5:00 p.m. meet and eat at the Simply Delicious Deli on State of Franklin in Johnson City.

Respectfully Submitted,  
John Dodge  
Secretary *Pro Tem*

MEMBERSHIP

2014 Business Meeting Dates

Monday – 1/20/2014	Monday – 5/19/2014	Monday – 9/15/2014
Monday – 2/17/2014	Monday – 6/16/2014	Monday – 10/20/2014
Monday – 3/17/2014	Monday – 7/14/2014	Monday – 11/17/2014
Monday – 4/21/2014	<b>Monday – 8/18/2014</b>	<b>12/16/2014 – Christmas Party –Choo Choo Cafe</b>

**The next scheduled general meeting is Monday, August 18th, on ETSU Campus, Brown Hall Science Building, Room 312, at 6:30 p.m.**

**ETSU's cafeteria "The Market Place" on the 3rd Floor of the Culp University Center is closed for the summer, so we won't be able to use it for the pre meeting meal.**

**Editors Note**

I don't know how others feel, but as a member of the G.L. Carter Chapter I am glad to be a part of "keeping the stories alive" and how our railroads grew in this area. I grew up on the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad in a small town in NJ. My father worked for that railroad for 38 continuous years and when I graduated high school I expressed a desire to go to work for the PRR. At that point my father told me that would be a bad idea and I asked why that was. He said "The railroads are no longer run by railroaders, they

are run by corporations who have no idea what a railroad is for.” I heeded his words and never went to work for the railroad. To this day I am glad I didn’t, otherwise I would probably never made it to this beautiful area and met so many great people.

I would be remiss if I didn’t also tell you that I just looked at the railroad as a means of getting from home to the Jersey Shore (we never had a car until I was 17) and to New York City. When I was headed off to High School, my older Sister made sure I went to a Prep School instead of the local high school and so I was able to take the train everyday for the next 4 years from Iselin to Newark. I rode the 7:39 each morning and the 3:32 every afternoon for 4 years. As I look back at that time, I only wish I had the foresight to take as many pictures as I could and get just as many memories written down. The vagaries of youth didn’t allow me to see that what I was doing was living in a world where everything would change dramatically in the near future. By the time my Dad retired (1965), the PRR and the New York Central had merged to become the Penn Central, one of the worst mergers ever created. The philosophies of those two railroads were totally incompatible and the combined railroad was a mess.

The old station in my hometown was closed down and Metropark was opened and was the station of choice, no longer Iselin and a part of the announcement the conductor would make as he wound down the aisle of the train. It was now Metropark and a little part of PRR history died.

So it is with this in mind that I again say, our club had the foresight to have these people recall what went on, how they were part of the railroads in my now adopted hometown and through the actions of our club, these pieces of history will be preserved.

Bill



***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 :

George L Carter Chapter NRHS  
P.O. Box 70697  
East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN 37614

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. Contribution of articles are welcome and encouraged. For permission to use the material in this newsletter, please contact the editor, Bill Beagen (rbill@embarqmail.com). Contributors are Fred Alsop, Jim Pahr, Mark Woomeer and Harriet Swank.