

**Mountain Empire Model Railroaders Club &  
George L Carter Chapter of NRHS Newsletter**

**THE SIGNAL BRIDGE**

**AND**

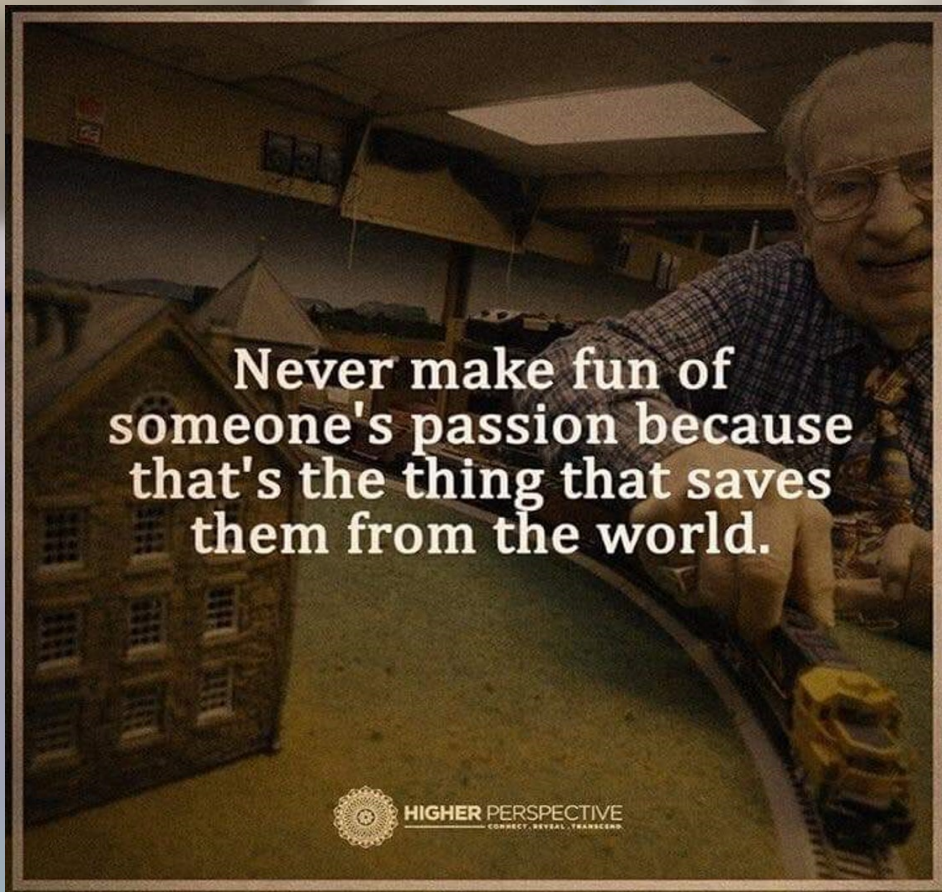
**THE COAL ROAD**

Volume 27 – Issue 7 July 2020

**LOSE TRACK OF TIME**

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## The View from the Engineer's Side of the Cab & The Drawbar



We have reached mid-July and it has been 4 months now since we have had the Carter Railroad Museum open to the public, since we have had a work night in the museum and since we have been able to gather together for a club meeting. COVID-19 continues to change all of our lives and continues to surge in infection rates throughout our part of the world. I hope all of you are safe and well, donning your masks, practicing social distancing, and doing all the CDC recommended things to try to isolate you and your family and friends from the virus.

**Fallen Flag Member:** We lost a valued, long-time member with the passing of **Gary Woods**. The announcement of his death follows: *"Gary James Woods, age 89, passed away on Tuesday morning, July 7th, 2020 in Four Oaks Health Care Center, Jonesborough, TN. He was born March 24th, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio to the late Mayme and Dale Woods. He is predeceased by his brother Donald and his wife, Jean. Gary is survived by his wife, Lois A. Woods; his brother, Richard (91) and his wife Bobbie of Mims, Florida. Gary is also survived by two daughters, Barbara Woods Ryon, Jonesborough, and Virginia W. Allsbrook of Florida; one grandson, Steve Elledge; one grand-great-daughter, Sophia Beamer."* Dillow-Taylor Funeral Home and Cremation Services will have a Celebration of Life memorial service when his family can come into the area to celebrate together with his friends. Meanwhile, memories and condolences can be shared at [fias-mimi@gmail.com](mailto:fias-mimi@gmail.com).

Gary was a steady, participating member of the Mountain Empire Model Railroad Club for many years prior to declining health conditions that caused him to spend less time with MEMRR and the hobby he loved. He had wonderful electronic skills as a carryover from his career with NASA. He often helped troubleshoot many problems on the museum layouts and was a valued worker on the ET&WNC RR layout. Gary always had warm greetings for everyone. His bright smile and good humor will be missed by all. Our sincere sympathy to Lois and Gary's family.

**Museum News:** I had a long Zoom meeting with ETSU President Brian Noland on Tuesday, July 7 to discuss a cadre of topics related to the university with the Carter Railroad Museum being one of them. I am free to open the museum as I see it advisable and safe to do so because of the trust he places in me as the director. I directed our webmasters to distribute a notice to all members on July 10 that I was returning the museum door keys to the lockbox on the outside entrance door of the Campus Center Building for **members only use** beginning the next day, Saturday, July 11. The combination code to open the box remains the same as it was before we locked down. Members are asked to wear masks (they are now mandatory on the ETSU campus) if other members are in the museum (family members are an exception if you are working together), to maintain 6-foot social distancing, to limit the maximum number of members in the museum at any time to 10 persons, with no more than 5 in the Alsop Gallery and 5 in the Ken Marsh Gallery on the other side of the hallway. Wash your hands often and use the provided hand sanitizers to wipe down door knobs and other surfaces that are in common use. I would like to know when you plan to be in the museum in order to let you know if others are already there, or are planning to work or run trains when you plan to be present. Suggested work blocks are mornings, 8-noon, afternoons 1-5, and evenings 6-whenever. You can contact me via my cell phone at 615/604-8759. I encourage you to come to the museum and run your trains, work on your modules and exhibits and to enjoy the facilities the museum has to offer. Just please do so with everyone's safety in mind.

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# The View from the Engineer's Side of the Cab & The Drawbar

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**There are currently no immediate plans to open the museum to the public before the end of August.** The university is making plans to open for the 2020 Fall Semester, but because of the continuing spike of the COVID-19 virus, no one knows what that might be like. Before opening the museum to the public we will have to placard it with safety guides and limit the number of visitors we can have in the museum at any one time based on university and CDC guidelines. At present none of the university museum directors plan to have their museums open prior to August 24<sup>th</sup>. ***My current tentative plans for a first reopening date to the public for the George L. Carter Railroad Museum is Saturday, August 29, 2020.*** But, please don't set this date in stone, because when we open, and how we open, will be guided entirely on being safe, and what the university administration's decisions about public building openings on campus are in late August.

**Club/Chapter Meetings:** The university, state, and CDC guidelines for the coronavirus require public meetings to be held with a maximum of 10 people, with recommendations that meetings with fewer than 10 are preferred. Because we have been holding our monthly business meetings in ETSU buildings, and because those buildings have been under university lock-down since mid-March, we have not been able to meet. I have had some suggestions that we might be able to hold Zoom meetings using our computers, or on our smart phones. I am open to trying to hold some meetings via this technology, but I am also aware that some of our members may not have the technology to join these long-distance meetings, or the technical skills required to participate in them. Therefore, we have had no meetings, but have attempted to keep all our members up-to-date via emails as warranted. Our monthly newsletter has become the prime medium for keeping our members informed and connected and I wish to thank our **Newsletter Editor, Cathy Smith**, for the outstanding job she has been doing to keep our monthly newsletter coming to our homes via our many electronic devices. I also wish to show my appreciation to our webmasters, **Ben Merritt and Bill Smith**, for distributing my email announcements and the newsletter to our members. Good job everyone!

Until we can be sure we are able to meet together in a safe and responsible way that protects all participants, we will not be having our monthly club meetings. Stay safe and stay well!

**Cancellations, cancellations and more cancellations:** The 2020 New Year began with enthusiasm and promise. Our museum was averaging more than 100 visitors every Saturday with much higher numbers than in previous winters. Our monthly Heritage Day Events were well received and our 2020 Carter RR Museum calendar was doing well with sales and was filled with all the events planned for the new year. But, in mid-March ETSU was forced to lock down its campus buildings and tell students not to come back to campus from their Spring Break. Our lives changed at home, at work, at social gatherings, and at the Carter RR Museum. We cancelled our activities at the railroad museum; the work nights, the Saturday openings to the public, our monthly business meetings, our monthly coordinator's meetings, and our monthly operating sessions. The Spring Fling was cancelled. The rail excursion on the 3-Rivers Rambler RR and the luncheon excursion scheduled for May was cancelled. The June 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Big Train Show that was continuing to grow with each year was cancelled. That was followed with the cancellation of the Labor Day Weekend rail excursions in Chattanooga, TN and Blue Ridge, GA. There will be no annual fall picnic for the first time in many years. The NRHS cancelled their RailCamps, their annual summer convention in California, and their October meeting that the Carter Chapter NRHS was set to host in Johnson City. The ET&WNC RR Historical Society cancelled their annual convention in Johnson City. The last casualty is the planned rail excursion on the Smoky Mountain Railroad in Bryson City, NC that we had planned for our guests in late October. It has been a year the likes of which none of us have ever experienced before in our lives.

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# The View from the Engineer's Side of the Cab & The Drawbar

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***Enjoy your hobby:*** Many of us have never spent this much time at home with family unless we were already retired. We have the opportunity to work on home layouts, build new structures, plan layouts, or plan modifications to your module on the club layout at the Carter RR Museum. Weather some cars, locomotives, structures, etc. Try your hand a building trees and shrubs for landscaping. Put figures into those passenger cars that will demonstrate that your miniature railroad is making money with its passenger runs; fill those empty seats. Get into the articles in the model railroad magazines you subscribe to, or read that railroad book that has been on the shelf or bedside table for months. Check out the thousands of sites about model and prototype railroading on your computer. Many are filled with ideas you may wish to try as you explore your hobby of railroading 1-1 scale or smaller. I look forward to getting back to some form of normal, to seeing you all and working with you again. Stay busy and enjoy one of the world's greatest hobbies.

Here the sound of the whistle of the train in the night and dream of all the destinations yet to come.

Stay safe and stay well!

*Fred J. Alsop III*

Director, George L. Carter Railroad Museum, ETSU

President, Mountain Empire Model Railroaders

President, George L. Carter Chapter NRHS

# **CLUB NEWS**

## **THE "RULES" FOR NOW FOR THE CARTER RAILROAD MUSEUM: as of July 11, 2020.**

- A). The total number of people in the museum at any one time cannot exceed 10, with no more than 5 persons at a time in either the Alsop or the Marsh galleries.
- B). Face masks are to be worn at all times. The only exception being if you are in the museum alone.
- C). Social distancing must be practiced with no two people (except family members) being within 6 feet of each other.
- D). Use hand-sanitizer (museum supplied) to wipe down common items that you have touched, i.e., museum keys, lock box, club throttles, door knobs, etc.
- E). Schedule your time with me (Fred) so I can let you know if there is empty space with a headcount low enough for you to enter the museum. Please base your desire to be in the museum on these time blocks: Morning (8:00 a.m. --noon),  
Afternoon (noon--5:00 p.m.),  
Evening (6:00 p.m. to "time to go home" around 9:00 p.m.)

Please contact me via email [alsopf@etsu.edu](mailto:alsopf@etsu.edu), or my cell phone 615/604-8759, and tell me the time block and the date you wish to be in the museum and I will confirm your schedule and whether or not that block is available.

I know this is not the best news, but it will get us back into the museum and provide us with limited interactions with each other. Please look on this as the "New Normal" until we can all safely resume our lives without the fear of infecting ourselves or others. Many of us, myself included, are deemed to be "high risk" to this virus based on our age, our immune compromised conditions, or a combination of these factors. Please don't come to the museum if you are sick or running a fever, coughing, or have other symptoms. Please don't come to the museum if you have any discomfort at being there. Please stay safe and stay well.

# **CLUB NEWS**

## **Hopson, Tennessee and Modeling the Lacey Home**

by Fred Alsop

"My coat was red" 105-year-old Gladys Lacey remarked as she looked at the small figure in 1/87 scale standing on the loading dock in front of the scale model of the general store and post office we had constructed on our HO-scale HOn3 narrow gauge layout representing the ET&WNC Railroad in the George L. Carter Railroad Museum. The figure of a small girl in a blue coat was taken from a black-and-white photo taken in 1915 when she was 5 years old. The photograph includes her mother, father, older sister and younger brother, all standing in front of the general store and post office built and operated by her father at the rail siding at Hopson, Tennessee. The small community was later known as Blevins Station after the summer of 1889 when John W. Hataway and J.W. Hopson built a structure as a depot beside the railroad tracks where the ET&WNC RR had built a passing siding. Their depot, built at their own expense, was the only station on the railroad to have an upper story and they agreed to turn it over to the railroad to operate and maintain for the sum of one dollar. The hope was that if the little community had a store/post office and a rail depot, the area would grow into a town along the tracks. That dream was never realized for Blevins.

Gladys was visiting our railroad museum for the third consecutive year having traveled from Atlanta, Georgia with relatives to attend her family's annual reunion in Carter County. On her two previous visits, we did not have our models of the Blevins depot and her family's store on the layout. We were delighted to have her see our work and have her critique of our attempts to model this little piece of her personal history. They happily met with her approval -- with the exception of the color of her coat. I had modeled the scene, including the small figures that represented her and her family, from that one monochrome photograph. Ted Bleck-Doran who had painted the little figures after I had styled them with clothing resembling their 1915 portrait, but having no clue as to what their actual colors were, had done the best he could to represent the darks and lights of the cloth with colored paints.

We all realized that little coat must have been very special to Gladys for her to remember its color, red, one hundred years later! But, we found that Gladys had the spunky nature of a pioneer lady of the Appalachian Mountains after learning more about her life from a newspaper article that featured her, which was given to us by her niece. We learned that she had ridden the Tweetsie railroad almost daily as a passenger when she worked at the rayon plants in Elizabethton, Tennessee. When she had saved enough money to purchase an automobile she expressed her desire to her father, Robert. He said, "No". Soon afterward Gladys rode the train to Johnson City, TN and walked to a nearby car dealership where she purchased a car. Having never driven a car, she got the car salesman to give her a driving lesson and drove her new car back home to Blevins. She stated that she was the first woman in Carter County to own her own automobile. In the 1930s her family moved to Florida where her father was working to teach young military would-be aviators how to fly. Gladys expressed her desire to her father to take flying lessons. He said, "No". She secretly took flight instruction and became a private pilot in the same period that Amelia Earhart was making national headlines as a woman aviatrix!

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# CLUB NEWS

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It was an honor to meet Gladys and to be able to show her the region of our Tweetsie layout that represented her childhood home. She got to see the store and the depot and to see our model 10-wheelers pass by the structures, and we got to see her smile in appreciation. Sadly, we could not read her thoughts of any memories that our efforts may have stirred in her heart. She did tell us that the day that the photograph was taken of her family, she did not want to be in the photo with them. So, the photographer told her that if she stood up on the loading dock to the right of her family she would not be in the picture. Reluctantly, she agreed. Upon seeing the photograph some time later, she told us, the photographer, "lied to me". We are so grateful that he did, and that we got to meet Gladys Lacey and some of her family on the occasions she visited us to tour the railroad museum and see the Tweetsie layout.

I had hoped to complete the little scene at Hopson/Blevins with the Robert Lacey house tucked in behind the store and to be able to show that to Gladys and the Lacey family on their next visit the following year. But, the family was only able to provide me with one photo of the house, taken from the west side, and leaving me to guess what the remainder of the structure would look like. It was better than no photo at all, but not what I would have liked to have to study before attempting to create the model. I waited several months hoping for additional photographs of the house to be discovered and forwarded to me, but none were forthcoming. Sadly, in the winter of that year Gladys passed away.

Using the single photograph of the Robert Lacey home at Hopson/Blevins, TN, I begin to create a model to represent their home. I felt strongly that in order for our little diorama to be complete that little house had to be incorporated into it. Two structures were needed; a storage shed and the house. The little storage shed, with one side open, was constructed first and placed on the east side of the store. Once completed, I began to model the house.

The following photos provide some of the steps that I took to build the shed and the house from one photograph, and adding some artistic license, I created the "Lacey home". I measured the space for the house and found that the footprint for the structure was larger than the space I had to place the finished building on. Something had to give, and the compromise that I made was to create the part of the house that stood nearest the store and the tracks and to provide a false-front for the second part of the house that would be nestled into the backdrop scenery. The shape of the house was that of two rectangles. Think of one rectangular block touching the other, similar-sized block, with the right rear corner of the first touching the front left corner of the second. The two blocks were tied together with an L-shaped porch running the length of the adjacent two walls. It was the second rectangular block that I did not have enough space for on the layout as its location on the bench work was just not deep enough for the entire structure to fit into.

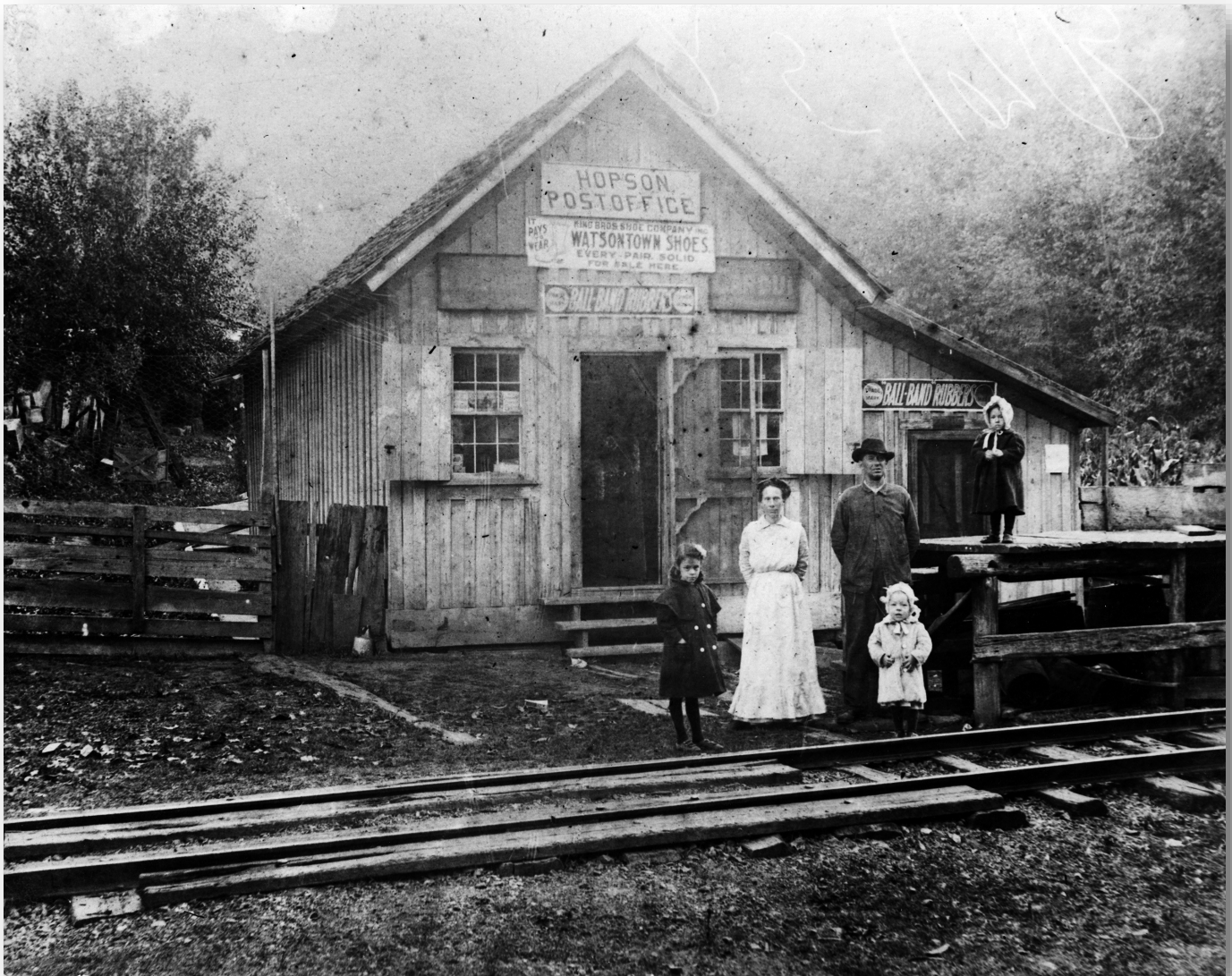
As we attempt to create an historical-based narrow gauge model railroad layout that represents a local part of Appalachia that existed circa 1925, we are very dependent on period photographs of the railroad and structures that existed along the right-of-way. Some photos are readily available as many have been published in various books and magazine articles about the ET&WNC RR. But, many are discovered only through the kindness of our visitors to the museum who have personal connections to family and friends who lived in the area when it was being served by the Tweetsie. Their help with securing needed photographs to base our models on has been critical to our success in our efforts to create structures, some of which still stand, but also many that have vanished years ago. My thanks to all who have provided the resources we have required in our quest to recreate a vanished railroad and way of life along the 3-foot gauge tracks of the "little railroad with a heart".

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# CLUB NEWS

Photographs and legends: Hopkins, Tennessee and Modeling the Lacey Home,  
article and all models and model photographs by Fred Alsop

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Hopson 1915 Photo. Robert S. Lacey's General Store and Hopson Post Office on the old Tweetsie Railroad, Hopson, TN, 1915.

L to R: Martha, Nannie, Robert, Robert Jr., Gladys Lacey. (photo provided by Lacey family)

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# CLUB NEWS

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Completed scene of Lacey homestead area with northwest view of the house.

Note: the red coat on "Gladys" standing on the loading dock.

Model of Lacey family in front of the Hopson Post Office and general store.

Note that Gladys Lacey's coat is blue (the little girl on the loading platform).



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# CLUB NEWS

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The assembled wooden shell of the Lacey house. Wood pieces cut out with the museum's laser knife by John Edwards.

Note: the right front is the false front representing the second part of the house.



Wooden shell sprayed inside and out with gray spray paint to prevent warping and to provide sub-coat for later paint coats. Porch roofs have also been added.

Brick foundation (plastic laminated to wood under-base) added. Structure with antique white outside paint.



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# CLUB NEWS

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Brick has been weathered and main porch steps have been added.

Cutout into the blueboard landscape created to accept the rear of the structure.



Weathered tin roof has been added.

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# CLUB NEWS

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: View of the east side of the house with stoop steps and details (no photo of this side of the house was available, so this is “artistic license imagination building”).



House fitted into the landscape.

Northeast view of the Lacey homestead area scene.



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# CLUB NEWS

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Historic photo of the train stopping at the Blevins depot just west of the Lacey general store. (photo provided by Archives of Appalachia, ETSU)

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# CLUB NEWS

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General store/post office and Blevins depot in place prior to the adding of the shed and Lacey home.

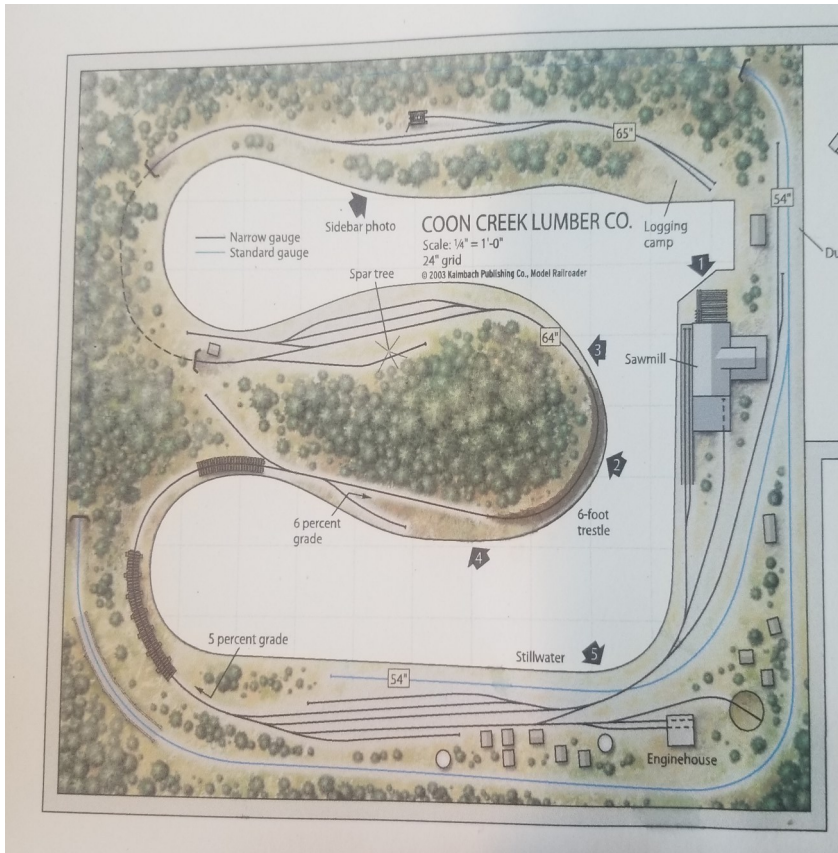
Gladys Lacey, age 105, with cousin Dawn Lacey ( a former MEMRR member who worked on the Tweetsie layout) in 2015 viewing the Hopson/ Blevins section of the ET&WNC RR layout at the G.L. Carter Railroad Museum.



# LOSE TRACK OF TIME

## My New Layout: article and photographs by Bill Smith

While I have been staying home during the COVID 19, I've been working my best, albeit slowly, on my new layout. It is a 12 x 12 HO gauge and is based on the Coon Creek Lumber Company.



I will be modeling the layout as a late 1890's to 1920's Eastern Logging operation. The initial layout height is 48 inches with the highest track elevation topping out at 59 inches with both standard gauge, dual gauge and narrow gauge track.

I started bench work in February with first attaching to the wall.



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# LOSE TRACK OF TIME

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Feb 2020 Layout Left Front

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# LOSE TRACK OF TIME

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I completed the swing bridge in May.

The layout now has most of the plywood base down with the cork roadbed down for the standard gauge track.



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# LOSE TRACK OF TIME

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The next project is to start laying the standard gauge track and build the freight yard containing dual gauge and narrow gauge track.



# LOSE TRACK OF TIME

## Rail Fanning: article and photographs by Robert Sullivan

Recently I, along with club members Dave and daughter Danielle, went on a vacation. Our trip began with a six hour drive to Louisville KY, from Bristol TN. Our first train was spotted in "J" town suburb to Louisville KY. Our goal was to visit real trains and model trains. This is part one of the trip. With the covid 19 situation at hand, traveling is at your own risk, with that being said, there comes a time when you say, I really need a vacation and that is why I went. Lots of railroad tracks and railfan activity. In part two of my traveling, I'll explain la Grange KY, (a virtual reality). Just across the water from Louisville KY is New Albany Indiana. Another great spot for railfan activity. A huge Park, at the same time that you are watching real trains, tug boats are moving freight on the water way. This trip was fun and very budget friendly. This journey is only a six hour drive from Johnson City TN.



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# LOSE TRACK OF TIME

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**Mountain Empire Model  
Railroaders Club**

Location:



George L. Carter Railroad Museum  
East Tennessee State University

**Business Meetings**

Held monthly on the  
3rd Tuesday at 6:30pm.  
\*

**Weekly Work Nights**

Thursdays from 4pm until ?

**MEMRR Club Officers**

- **Club President & Director of George L Carter Railroad Museum, ETSU:** Fred Alsop  
alsopf@mail.etsu.edu
- **Vice President:** John Carter  
carterjohn92@gmail.com
- **Treasurer:** Gary Emmert  
jbox1015@comcast.net
- **Secretary:** Mike Tarter  
miketarter06@gmail.com
- **Webmasters:**  
Logan Heaton  
Ben Merritt  
Bill Smith  
memrrwebmaster@gmail.com
- **Newsletter Editor:**  
Cathy Smith

**George L. Carter**

**Chapter NRHS Officers:**

- **President:** Dr. Fred J. Alsop
- **Vice Pres:** Jim Pahriss
- **Secretary:** Carl Hacker
- **Treasurer:** John W. Dodge
- **Historian:** Carolyn Gregg
- **National Representative to the NRHS:** Charlotte Pahriss

# George L Carter Railroad Museum and MEMMR

The many colorful multiple railroads of the Midwest are featured at the George L. Carter Railroad Museum, located in the Campus Center Building of East Tennessee State University. The region encompassing Chicago, Detroit, Louisville, Milwaukee and St. Louis was the true epicenter of American commerce between east and west during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Literally dozens of railroads large and small provided service throughout Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and the upper midwestern states, all service as links to the chain.

Between passenger and freight operations, the railroad were crucially important in the era before widespread air travel and interstate highways. This was especially true during the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> World Wars. Whether it was perishables like produce and livestock or raw commodities such as coal and ore, everything from store goods to Studebakers came from this region. Since so many models of these trains remain popular, icons of streamlining and strength, it is planned to have excellent Midwestern representations in operation by volunteers on the museum's 24x44 foot HO scale layout. The Carter Railroad Museum is open on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, and includes model railroad layouts, a special child's activity room, and ongoing programs. There is no admission fee but donations are welcome for its upkeep. The museum is also seeking artifacts for display, including the newest addition dedicated to the long-defunct, but well-remembered 'Tweetsie' line, the East

In addition to the displays, there is also a growing research library, and an oral history archive being established as part of the museum's programs. Info can be found online at '<http://etsu.edu/railroad/>' or '<http://johnsonsdetpot.com/>' or '<http://www.stateoffranklin.net/johnsons/glcarter/cartermuseum.html>'

Members of the George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders (MEMRR) club coordinate the exhibits. Visit '[www.memrr.org/](http://www.memrr.org/)' to learn more about MEMRR, or visit '<http://glcarternrhs.com/>' to learn more about Carter Chapter, which helps demonstrate and maintain the model layouts, museum exhibits and other projects.

Membership opportunities are available to adults, and include special benefits and model railroading enjoyment.

The museum can be identified by a flashing railroad crossing signal at the back entrance to the Campus Center Building. Visitors should enter ETSU's campus from State of Franklin Road (at green light) onto Jack Vest Drive and continue east to North Dossett Drive (then left) to John Roberts Bell Drive at end, then right then left on Ross Drive(176) to end, adjacent to the flashing RR crossing sign.

- *For more information about Heritage Day, contact Fred Alsop at 423-439-6858 or [alsopf@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:alsopf@mail.etsu.edu).*
- *For disability accommodations, call the ETSU Office of Disability Services at*