

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

**THE SIGNAL BRIDGE**

**AND**

**THE COAL ROAD**

Volume 27 – Issue 10 October 2020

**LOSE TRACK OF TIME**

**Inside this issue:**

Club News	6–14
President's Msg	2–5
Lose Track of Time	1
Meeting Minutes	15
O S Tower Call	
Club Information	16



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



I hope everyone is safe and well as the pandemic is still with us and that we continue to practice social-distancing and mask wearing as we attempt to go about our daily routines; many of which are not so routine anymore. I must take full credit for your October newsletter being a little late as our editor, Cathy Smith, has been waiting patiently for me to get my column to her. I can make many excuses for my editorial tardiness, but shall choose to spare you any or all of them. However, I do wish to thank you for all you continue to do for our railroad clubs and

for our railroad museum. You are the best!

Despite our individual concerns with our health and other matters, one cannot help but to enjoy the nature around us in this beautiful part of the country that we all call home. The changing of the colors of the foliage from their deep summer greens to the artist's pallet of reds, yellows and oranges that we encounter at every turn from our yards, our neighborhoods and to the mountains beyond, radiate their colors into our daily lives and lift our spirits. Autumn is a wonderful season of the year with its color, its blue skies, cool days and cooler nights. I hope you are being able to get out and take in some "nature time". Now, back to our railroading hobby and our organizations.

**Membership:** As always, we welcome our new members, and one of the latest to join the MEMRR is *Dan Hall*. Please get to know him and get him involved in whatever aspects of our model railroad club that he has an interest in. Welcome aboard, Dan!

**Membership Dues:** November is fast approaching and with it the opportunity to renew your membership for 2021 in the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders club (pay treasurer, Gary Emmert), or the G.L. Carter Chapter NRHs (pay treasurer, John Dodge), and if you are a member in both please anti up to both treasurers. Our dues payment period extends for several months in both organizations, but expect our treasurers to begin to remind you that your dues ARE DUE!! In both the clubs, and the NRHS national organization, the membership dues have not been increased and, therefore remain at the levels we have enjoyed for several years. With your membership you have unlimited access to the G.L. Carter Railroad Museum 24/7, a great monthly newsletter, discounts on some museum purchases, a voice at monthly meetings and events, and participation with a wonderful assembly of people with a passion for their hobby coupled with skills and experiences to help you with all things to do with model railroading and prototype railroads. You get a lot with us for just a few dollars annually, so please renew your membership sooner, rather than later.

**Sick Bay:** Several of our members are not feeling well lately and we wish to extend to them our wishes for quick and speedy recoveries, and to their return to our company as soon as possible. Our friend, *Ruth Berry* is waiting for a surgery to be scheduled and will be in our thoughts and prayers as she undergoes that operation and comes out the other side. *Jim* and *Linda Hoit*, and their two daughters, are recovering from COVID-19 and continuing to self-quarantine. We look forward to having our RIP Track guy back with us soon.

(continued on page 3)

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

(continued from page 2)

**Social Gatherings and COVID:** In response to covid, we have been operating under CDC and ETSU guidelines, and will have to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

**Carter RR Museum:** The Carter RR Museum has been open on Saturdays every week since August 29th and our visitor attendance has been steadily increasing to approximately 40% of the weekly visitors we were experiencing before our lockdown in mid-March. We are up to 50+ adults and 10-12 children the past few Saturdays. Our member volunteers have been numbering 15-19 each week, enough to keep everything running smoothly. We have been able to be back in the museum on work nights (Thursdays) since early July and that is also running smoothly, with lots of work being done on our layouts during these evening work sessions. Thanks to everyone for continuing to support our clubs and the museum in this way.

**Monthly Business Meetings:** In September we began a combined meeting for the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS using an electronic format. We have used **Zoom** for the September and October meetings in order to be able to resume our business meetings in a format that allows us to see and speak with one another. These meetings have been both enjoyable and successful. I encourage you to join us for the November meeting if you have not done so already. They are easier than you may think and you can either join via computer or on your smart phone from the comfort of your home. They are also covid-safe. **Ben Merritt**, one of our Web-Masters, has provided the link to join the meetings in the meetings announcements that have been emailed to all members of both organizations that we have email addresses for, and the response from members has been good. If you have questions regarding how to access the meetings with your computer or smart-phone, please contact Ben and he will skillfully guide you through the process. Ben has been emailing highlights of each meeting to our members following each meeting to keep you up-to-date. Thank you Ben!

ETSU Covid-policy is still limiting the number of students in the classroom, and people in social gatherings, to 10 persons/room. That prevents us from holding our regular business meetings in any university rooms as we did in the past because of the number and the social-distancing that would be necessary to even seat 10 people in the same room. So, for the coming months we will continue to try to hold our business meetings via electronic formats. For the same health reasons, we have discontinued the **Monthly Coordinator's Meetings** until further notice. However, any member with club layout, publicity, or library needs should continue to make them known to a coordinator, or to me, and we will attempt to address the issue as presented.

**Regular Social Gatherings:** We normally have had 3 social events annually for members and spouses or significant others. These are the Spring Fling in March, the Annual Picnic in September, and the Annual Christmas Party. All have been long anticipated and well attended events with great food and wonderful, friendly comradery. The first two for 2020 had to be cancelled, and I fully expect that we will not be able to have our Christmas party with our special guest, Dirty Santa, this December because of the pandemic.

(continued on page 4)



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

(continued from page 3)

**Bright Spots Worth Celebrating:** We are back in the Carter Railroad Museum working on our exhibits and having fun interacting with each other and with our visitors. Most everyone has thus far avoided contracting COVID-19, and we are beginning to have business meetings once more!

**6<sup>th</sup> Annual Big Train Show:** Under *Roger Teinert's* leadership, we are in full-mode planning for the June 4-5, 2021 Annual Big Train Show. The invitation to vendor's form have been printed and are being mailed out. The roll-up banners for the show are being printed along with 7,000 flyers that will be distributed far-and-wide. We will keep you all informed as to how things progress and begin to have meetings as necessary via electronics to keep things progressing. We are thinking positive thoughts that this will happen next June, and we are planning for it, but we all know that a virus will be the final determining factor as it was in 2020.

**2021 Museum Calendar:** *Geoff Stunkard* has assembled a beautiful calendar for 2021 that will be our 3<sup>rd</sup> museum-produced calendar. As with past calendars, Geoff has included some of his photographs, and some from our members, to highlight prototype railroads and models from our own club and museum layouts. The calendar is oriented to the club and chapter events with all meetings, Heritage Days, and other special events highlighted each month. The calendars are at the print shop with 400 being printed, and should be available to us in a very short time. I know all of us will want one of our own (members will get a price discount) and they make good gifts for the holidays. Be sure to get one or more. Some, will be used to publicize the museum, the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS, and will be distributed to local businesses, ETSU administrators, and train show vendors.

**HOn3 Annual:** As you are aware, the White River Productions company, the company that publishes and prints several monthly model railroad magazines, a number of railroad historical society magazines, and some narrow-gauge, model railroad annual magazines, has once more invited us to submit an article on our ET&WNC RR layout for the 2020 *HOn3 Annual*. Once again, *Geoff Stunkard* went to work, and with the help of some of our other members, produced in short order a 3,000+ word manuscript along with captioned photos. All of which were submitted prior to the 2-week deadline we had to work in. We have now seen the galley-proofs of the article and for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year we will have 8 color pages highlighting some of the excellent work that our little museum produces. Copies should be available to us in November, and I have ordered 50 copies for our sales desk. Members, as always, will be able to purchase copies at a discounted price. What an exciting tribute to the outstanding modeling our members do in the Carter Railroad Museum. National and International publicity that is coming from Johnson City where the "Tweetsie" originated.

**Library Computer Upgrade:** *Gary Emmert, Bill Smith* and *Wallace Shealy* have been working very hard to catalog our growing hardback book library collection. To date approximately 1,200 books have been catalogued and placed in the library for checkout and use by our members. We still have in storage approximately 750-800 uncatalogued books by best guesstimate that have been donated. They have the task of sorting through these boxes of volumes and cataloging any that are not titles already in the library, and then making the duplicates available to purchase by our members, or placed on a sales table at the next Big Train Show.

(continued on page 5)



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

(continued from page 4)

Some, in the past, have also been donated to local libraries. We fully expect that there are other library collections that will continue to come our way as donations.

The old Gateway computer, itself a donated machine, is the backbone for recording all of these holding, and it is in need of replacement. I have been asked to replace it with a newer machine with a windows-10 operating system. I am in the process of exploring ways through the university to make this happen. I shall keep you posted.

**Heritage Day Event for October:** This month we are celebrating the railroads of the south, particularly the southeastern United States. So, this month is the *"Super South—Southeastern Heritage Day"*. Passenger and freight trains of all ages, steam and diesel, are welcome. So, bring them on and show them off! We will get a press release out to all local media. You get your trains ready to roll for Saturday, October 31st; the Halloween Special rolls down the tracks again!!

**Election of Officers for 2021:** It is a usual practice in October at our business meetings for the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS to for nominating committees to present the respective organizations with a slate of officers to be presented in November and then voted on by ballot. Because of the disruptions to our business meetings for many months now, our access to each other has been limited, but your current officers have continued to fulfill their duties and keep our organizations moving forward with a lot of support from our fellow members. I presented a question to the Zoom audience in attendance at the October business meeting as follows. In lieu of trying to organize two nominating committees, I have asked each of the current officers now serving in the MEMRR and the G.L. Carter Chapter NRHS, if they would continue to serve in their current elected office for the 2021 year, if they were elected again by the membership. Every one of them enthusiastically agreed to do so! Those attending the October meeting unanimously agreed to this suggestion. Therefore, I have asked Ben Merritt, as webmaster, to put together a ballot for each of the two organizations that will carry the office, and the name of the nominated officer, along with a corresponding blank space where a write-in candidate's name can be placed. These ballots will then be email (or where necessary US Postal Service mailed) to each member to cast their ballot and return it within a deadline for the election of our 2021 officers. If you decide to write-in a nominee of your own, please do so only after you have secured that person's permission to place their name in play for election to an office. You are also free to self-nominate.

I want to join my fellow members in thanking each of our officers in each of our clubs for the time and effort they provide to all of us through their service to the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS. I am most proud of the outstanding work you do to make our organizations work and move forward.

Stay safe and stay well! Enjoy the beautiful season and the fall weather while it lasts. Listen to the sound of the whistle of the train in the night and dream of all the destinations still to come.

*Fred J. Absop III*

Director, George L. Carter Railroad Museum, ETSU

President, Mountain Empire Model Railroaders

President, George L. Carter Chapter NRHS

## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

While between projects for the yard facilities in Johnson City focus is moved back over to Hampton where the rock work that follows along tunnel #1 is given a bit of color and shadowing for depth of the rocks and cliffs connecting up with the previous work done around the tunnel portals on both ends





## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

With the Johnson City depot now complete focus is now moved to the yard facilities of Johnson City such as we see here with museum director Dr. Fred Alsop taking the old cardboard mock-up we had of the engine shed and using it along with other pictures and reference materials to draw up the designs of the permanent engine sheds to take place of the cardboard stand in.



(continued on page 8)



# Club News

## Tweetsie Layout Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

(continued from page 7)





## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

Although not a big update, still some great progress has been made with both Johnson City and tunnel #1 getting some additional work done with foliage being expanded from the coal ramp towards the wye in Johnson City. While tunnel #1 also gets more trees, flowers and other foliage being put in above where the recent rock work was done.



(continued on page 10)



## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

Johnson City is not the only place to get some work done. Hampton also has been getting a lot of work done with the foam being built up where the hole in the side of the mountain was as the start of the natural spring that feeds into the water tank starts to take shape including the retaining wall is put in for the tank.





## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

It is safe to say with today's update an incredible amount of progress has been made in Johnson City has been made. Not only has more detail work been done around the station such as ballasting the mainline for the standard gauge and part of the narrow gauge but the progress doesn't stop just at the station. The work continues towards the coal ramp where along with foliage between the station and tracks and the surrounding area moving towards the wye but activity around the ramp is really coming together with coal being emptied into the stalls under the tracks or into the narrow gauge cars below along with crews shoveling it into the trucks. This and so many other details can be seen in this area so please check through our latest photos with this update.





## Club News

### Appalachian Rail Fest Heritage Day Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

We would like to thank everyone for coming out to see us last weekend during our Heritage Day event for Appalachian Rail Fest. We had a great turn out for both guests and crews keeping the main line on our layouts busy with many trains and operations seen throughout the day. Here we have a few photos of the various scenes during the event. Enjoy!! (continued on page 13)





# Club News

## Appalachian Rail Fest Heritage Day Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

(continued from page 12)

(continued on page 14)





# Club News

## Appalachian Rail Fest Heritage Day Update: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

(continued from page 13)





## Meeting Minutes

### MEMRR & George L. Carter Chapter of NRHS Monthly Business Meeting Minutes- 9/15/20

Note: Meeting was conducted via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM by President Fred Alsop.

Members Present: Fred Alsop, Gary Emmert, Bill Smith, Don Beck, Wallace Shealy, Mike Tarter, Logan Heaton, Amy Merritt, Rick Mulholland, Ben Merritt

Fred mentioned that the Little Engineers room is open, by reservation. Logan and Ben are running the online reservation system, via our website and Facebook. Amy says we had 14 youngsters last Saturday (9/12/20), and that the museum had about 40 guests. She also told us the university had delivered a permanent hand sanitizer.

After these initial remarks, Fred called for Officer Reports.

**Secretary's report:** No report as there was no August meeting (none since February)

**Newsletter editor:** Cathy Smith is not in attendance, Bill Smith notes that The Signal Bridge and The Coal Road has been published each month despite covid. Articles and photos from members are always welcome.

**Membership:** Fred welcomed a new member, Rick Mulholland. Fred also mentions that a MEMRR member, John Faucett, passed away on Sept 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Treasurers' report:** Gary Emmert reports we have money and are solvent. He adds that the Library is adding tapes and books. He reminded us that dues for 2021 will be due soon, and he is accepting payments for 2021.

**Webmaster report:** Bill Smith reports that the website is up to date. Ben Merritt shows us on the Zoom screen the Facebook page for reservations to tour the layouts. Fred notes that reservations are requested, but not required if we are not oversubscribed with guests.

**V.P. report:** John Carter was not on the Zoom meeting..

#### **Presidents report:**

Fred says there is no update for moving to a new location. Per the ETSU President, there should be no change for about 2 years.

However, the renovation of Lamb Hall is set to begin soon. This will impact the museum because of parking.

ETSU is limiting on campus gatherings to 15 people in a room - thus the need for Zoom Business meetings.

Donations: Vivian Chaffey has donated a 1 foot gauge engine. Ernie Moltin donated ( or loaned ?) a engine bell from Tweetsie #6. Mike Allison has donated (or loaned ?) the number plate and throttle for engine #9.

(continued on page 11)

# Meeting Minutes

## Minutes of MEMRR And George L. Carter Chapter of NRHS Monthly Business Meeting 9/15/20

(continued from page 10)

- Logan brought up that he has a photo of his Great Great Grandfather standing next to a Clinchfield engine, and will possibly donate a copy of the photo to our library.
- Fred said the museum reopened to the public on August 29<sup>th</sup>, and the Little Engineers Room two weeks ago. Amy spoke up and requested adding to our reservation a note about “no birthday parties”. Ben says he will update the website and reservation page.
- 2020 calendars are still in stock/ available. Fred suggests selling 3 for \$10 to clear inventory. He said Geoff has told him he is aiming for completion of the 2021 calendar soon.

### Old Business:

2021 Train show committee; Roger Teinert is not logged into the meeting. Fred reports plans are progressing well, he confirms we have the venue reserved. Fred and Roger continue sending out calendars and flyers with the display invite, to prospective vendors and media. There is discussion – Logan brings up that vendors such as Scale Trains and Scenic Express may be interested.

Fred reminded us that Saturday, the 26<sup>th</sup>, is Heritage day, it’s theme is Appalachian Rail Fest.

Coordinators meetings: no meeting was held for September.

### New Business:

Fred brought up that the possible revision of our Bylaws will be revisited in future, it’s not forgotten.

Fred also informs us that White River Productions is inviting us to contribute an article on the continuing development of the Tweetsie layout. This is of interest because of the previous articles they have run about the Tweetsie, and because this is after their usual cutoff date for submissions.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42.

Respectfully submitted;

Mike Tarter, Secretary



**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:** Roger Teinert
- **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://johnsonsdspot.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 [asopf@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:asopf@mail.etsu.edu).*
- *For disability accommodations, call the ETSU Office of Disability Services at 423-439-8346*