

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

# THE SIGNAL BRIDGE

AND

# THE COAL ROAD

Volume 27 – Issue 12 December 2020

## LOSE TRACK OF TIME

### Inside this issue:

Club News	6–11, 13
President's Msg	2–5
Lose Track of Time	1, 12
Meeting Minutes	14–17
O S Tower Call	
Club Information	18



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



Season's greetings to one and all. May you and your family have the Merriest of Christmases and a Bright and Happy New Year!! I share with you the feeling that the year 2020 cannot end soon enough, and that with the hope the new vaccines bring, we will work our way back to some recognizable state of "normal" in 2021. I know that several of our members, and members of their families, have been directly affected by this virus, and I share with you our joy that all have recovered. I am afraid that this coronavirus will be with us, and on our minds, for many months to come.

**COVID-19** has also had an effect on our railroad clubs and the G.L. Carter Railroad Museum. We have not been able to meet in person for our business meetings since the spring. But, we have been able to keep the meetings going through technology from the comfort of our homes using Zoom. The Zoom meetings have allowed us to discuss issues, make reports, and conduct the business of the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS. Our railroad museum was locked-down in mid-March when East Tennessee State University responded to the pandemic by shutting down the entire campus and sending students, staff, and faculty home. We reopened the museum to our members to work on projects and operate the layouts in June; but not to the public. The last Saturday in August was our first opening to the public on a limited basis with all the safety measures we could employ in place. We were happy to see our visitors, young and old, come back in modest numbers. Having only 25-35 visitors on any given Saturday was welcome. Not only because they wanted to spend some time in our railroad museum, but we felt somewhat more at ease with the smaller numbers of visitors we were having. This is especially true in light of the visitor numbers we were getting on a regular basis prior to the March shutdown, when it was not unusual to have more than 100 people come to see our museum on a Saturday.

My wish for all of us is to stay safe and stay well. With this in mind I began to think seriously about shutting down the museum temporarily during the Christmas Holidays. I discussed this with several of our officers and asked them to see what other members, who were at the museum over several work nights and Saturday operations, thought of the idea. We got unanimous feedback that this was a good idea for everyone's sake and safety. I had planned to keep us open for the Saturday after Christmas day, December 26, which is also a Heritage Day "Fallen Flags" event day, and then close the museum to the public for the month of January.

Last night, Sunday, December 20, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, made a special television announcement focused on the spiking covid cases in our state. He restated the now familiar precautions we should all be taking with wearing masks, social distancing, and frequent hand-washing. But he also requested that we limit our social activities and the size of group gatherings, especially indoor activities. Tennessee has become the number one hotspot for the virus in the country, and we all need to do whatever we can to help get it under control and to protect ourselves and others.

*(continued on page 3)*

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

*(continued from page 2)*

In response to this concern from our chief elected officer, I immediately decided that we will shut down the Carter Railroad Museum to the public now, and not wait for the last Saturday in December to arrive. To this end, I have sent an announcement to every member with an email address via our webmasters. In addition, I have sent a press release to ETSU's Office of University Relations, and to WETS Public Radio, asking them to distribute this announcement to all media ASAP.

**G.L. Carter Railroad Museum Shutdown:** *The George L. Carter Railroad Museum will be closed to the public beginning Saturday, December 26, 2020 and shall remain closed to the public until at least the end of January, 2021.* However, this does not prevent any member in good standing (dues paid up to the end of January 2021, or having renewed their dues for the 2021 year) from entering the railroad museum at any time during this period. You may still come to work on your modules, museum exhibits, club layouts, museum layouts, operate your locomotives, break in that new locomotive that Santa left under the tree, etc., as you wish. **We just will not be open to the public.** I personally plan to continue to work in the museum on several projects on the ET&WNC RR layout during this period, and will be happy to see others of you there as well. We will also continue to have our regularly scheduled monthly combined club business meeting the third Tuesday of each month, beginning on January 18<sup>th</sup>. I will use the emails distributed by our webmasters to keep everyone posted.

**Members/Officer Honored:** We held our annual election of officers in November and those results have been shared. All of our officers who ran for reelection were once again voted into their posts and I look forward to continuing to work with them. However, during those elections write-in ballots were cast for members to be honored as "Member of the Year" and "Officer of the Year". This is a special selection that allows our members to think about the dedicated services that are provided to our clubs, our museums and to our members by those we elect to conduct the business aspects of our organizations, but also to recognize those members who may take on special responsibilities that make us all better for their efforts. It is one of those nice, "thank you" things that we do for some of our folks every year. In a "normal" year we get to make the announcement of those we have chosen to honor at our Annual Christmas Party, and have the opportunity to applaud them and congratulate them for being so selected. This year we will not be able to share our gratitude with them in person in a social gathering, but will do so individually. As in past years each will receive a plaque recognizing our respect for them and thanks for their service, and each will have their name engraved on our permanent display plaques in the railroad museum. Our collective thanks go to:

**Member of the Year 2020:** *David Doughty and Ben Merritt* (We had a tie in the votes cast.)

**Officer of the Year 2020:** *Gary Emmert*

Congratulations to each of you and our thanks for all you have done, and continue to do, for our clubs and for the George L. Carter Railroad Museum. Your dedication to our hobby is important, but your tireless efforts to make each of us have a better time in our hobby, coupled with your friendship, has earned you the respect of your fellow members. Well done gentlemen, and well deserved. Thank you!

*(continued on page 4)*



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

*(continued from page 3)*

**Calendars and HOn3 Annuals:** Just a reminder that we have copies of our custom printed **Carter Railroad Museum Calendar** available at a discounted price to members, and that they also make great gifts. You may have a friend who is showing a little interest in our hobby and this would be a good gift that will let them know something about our clubs and our museum. Only a \$5 investment on your part might be all it takes to get them down the tracks to becoming a new member.

Our ET&WNC railroad layout is once more featured (7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year) in the national/internationally distributed **2020 HOn3 Annual**. You can't purchase it at your local hobby shop, but we have them for sale at a discounted price at the Carter RR Museum. It is really special to be able to show family and friends some of the model railroad layout your club has created that is being published in an outstanding model railroad magazine. Get your copy while we still have some in stock.

**Dues are DUE!!:** The window for renewing your annual dues is growing shorter. We begin our renewal efforts in November and **that will end on January 31, 2021**. We have not raised our dues in several years, and this year is no exception. They remain the same for the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders (contact Treasurer Gary Emmert) and the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS (contact John Dodge). Your dues not only support your club (and in the case of the Carter Chapter, the National NRHS), but they grant you access 24/7 to the G.L. Carter Railroad Museum, voting rights at club meetings, social events (they will come back), a great newsletter, the opportunity to wear some neat club shirts and logos, and access to a great group of people who share your hobby and who have a range of special talents and experiences that make our hobby one of a community, not of individuals. We are able to share so many things that we don't have to learn all by ourselves, because we have individuals who can teach us electrical wiring, track laying, tree making, weathering, locomotive coding, scenery skills, etc. All of these opportunities that club membership provides make our hobby much more fun and interesting. At the end of January, 2021 the key code on the lock box containing access keys to the museum will be changed and if you have not paid your dues you will not have access until you do renew. So, don't delay. Pay those dues and retain your membership in a great organization.

**Work Around the Museum:** Lots of activities continue in a lot of different areas of the railroad museum. The old adage that "a model railroad is never finished" allows us to continue to improve and make changes on our layouts. **MEMRR HO Layout:** Electrical work is still progressing and there has been a protective shield placed around the lift bridge accessing the layout. Progress is also being made on the depot area and connecting roadways on the club module to the west of the bridge. Additionally, some work is being directed at the mountain being constructed that will eventually hold the logging operation and be the first module visitors see as they enter the gallery. **ET&WNC Layout:** Lots of trees have recently been planted to the west of tunnel #1 and in the Valley Forge area. Work is beginning on the landscaping of the hilltop on the Rabetoy layout at the tunnel entrance of the yard. Drawings for the engine facilities at Johnson City are being converted into software to run the laser knife. Soon it will be employed to cut out the pieces for these 4 large structures that will include an engine house, car shop, carpenter shop, and sand and oil house. The large concrete structure called the Coal Chute is being created from photographs and builders notes. **Museum Library:** A new computer has been purchased and installed that will soon be used to help integrate a lot of newly catalogued volumes into our growing railroad library. This does not cover all of the happenings, but hopefully, it gives you the idea that a lot of work is continuing, even with the limitations we have to work under with the present health concerns. There is a lot of opportunity to lend a hand and share your skills on these and other projects.

*(continued on page 5)*



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

(continued from page 4)

**Retirement:** After 48 years of teaching, research, and service to ETSU as a biology professor, **Fred is retiring.** My last day as a professor will be 31 December, 2020. However, I will not be leaving the university; at least not just yet. I have discussed several options for my future with my departmental chair, my dean, and with President Noland. I will be staying on as Professor Emeritus to continue to direct the EagleCam program that I began 6 years ago. This project live-streams daily from the nests of two local Bald Eagle pairs to the world. And, I will continue to be the Director of the George L. Carter Railroad Museum, as I have been for the 13 years of its existence. *Therefore, for the Carter RR Museum and for our clubs, nothing has changed!! You will not notice any difference in our day-to-day activities.* I will continue to do my best for the railroad museum and for you, and to make plans with the university, and city and county administrators, for a bigger and better future for the museum.

*Have a great Holiday Season and a wonderful New Year!!! Stay safe and stay well. Listen to the sound of the whistle of the train in the night and dream of all the destinations yet 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 by Logan Heaton, photographs by Ben Merritt

Things have really changed around tunnel #1 going into Hampton as museum director Dr. Fred Alsop has been hard at work filling up the hills and mountains with trees, rock work and additional foliage that is really starting to bring the area together and making some spectacular scenes along the railroad.





## Club News

### New Members for 2020!

During 2020 we have been fortunate to have people from all over our area join the club.

Please make them welcome!

Bollman, James	Elizabethton	TN
Hall, Dan	Chuckey	TN
Hall, Elizabeth	Chuckey	TN
Kowalski, Larry	Johnson City	TN
Messimer, Benjamin	Bristol	TN
Miller, Roger	Bristol	TN
Mulholland, Rick	Mountain City	TN
Phillips, Jake	Talbott	TM
Williams, Alex	Johnson City	TN

We would love to know more about you!

If you would like to share your story with fellow club members in a future newsletter, please send via email to our editor at [cathysmithmemrr@yahoo.com](mailto:cathysmithmemrr@yahoo.com).





Your Membership to the  
**Mountain Empire Model Railroaders**  
**Is About to Expire!!**



**Don't be the last car on the train...Renew Today!**

Make checks payable to:

**MEMRR**

**P.O. Box 70697**

**East Tennessee State University**

**Johnson City, TN 37614**

\$30.00 Full Membership and \$6 for each additional family member

\$18 Student

\$12 Youth

\$12 Distant Remote

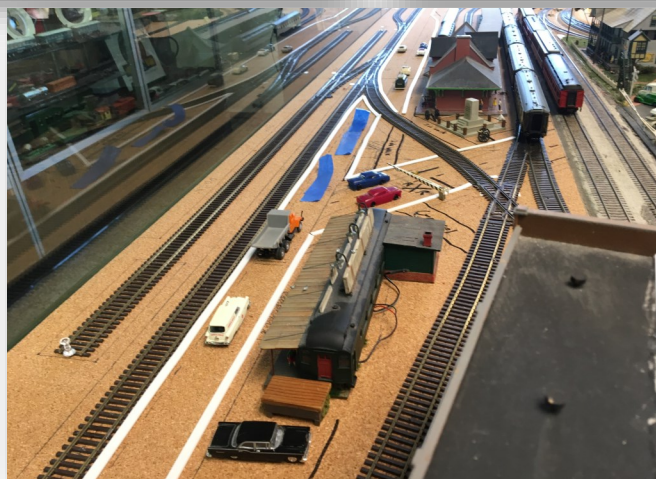
**Annual Dues are Required by January 31st, 2021!**



## Club News

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

MEMRR Layout Update: work is moving forward between the outskirts of Rogersville leading up to Johnson City with grass and dirt being put in closer to Rogersville moving towards the station while between the station and new facilities the lines for the road have been laid down to start pouring the plaster for the road. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!





## Club News

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

With the area around the covered bridge and tunnel #1 being finished up the work flow continues on into Valley Forge moving towards Elizabethton as rock work, trees and even dirt soon line the hillsides as this area nears completion under the watchful eyes of museum director Dr Fred Alsop. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



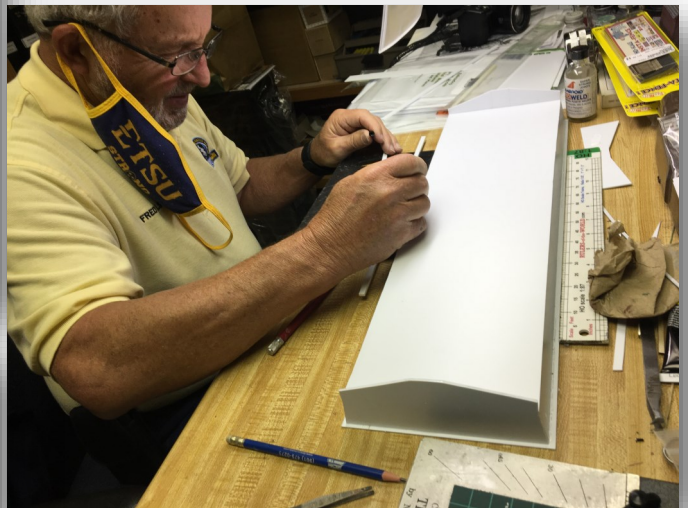
(continued on page 11)



## Club News

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

As progress continues from Hampton into Valley Forge and approaching Elizabethton work begins on the massive coal chute that would be near the city limits. Here we see museum director Dr. Fred Alsop beginning the assembly of the main structure building up the walls to close in the pit where the ramp would go over. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!





Lose Track of Time!



# The 2020 HOn3 Annual is complete!

The Tweetsie layout has AGAIN been featured in this edition, with 8 pages focusing on the newly completed coal transfer station.

***Copies are available for \$20 each  
Get yours now!***





## Meeting Minutes

### MEMRR & George L. Carter Chapter of NRHS Monthly Business Meeting Minutes- 11/17/20

Note: Meeting was conducted via Zoom

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

**Members Present:** Fred Alsop, Gary Emmert, Don Beck, Wallace Shealy, Logan Heaton, Amy Merritt, Rick Mulholland, Ben Merritt, Ted Bleck-Doran, Bob ??, John Dodge

President Fred Alsop reminded the group that this is a joint meeting of the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders and the George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. After initial remarks, Fred called for Officer Reports.

**Secretary's report:** The club Secretary, Mike Tarter, was not logged into the Zoom meeting. These notes are transcribed from a video recording. President Fred Alsop noted the September meeting minutes were included in the October Signal Bridge, and invited a motion to accept the September minutes as published. Ben Merritt made a motion to approve the minutes, this motion was seconded by Logan Heaton. The motion was passed unanimously. Any corrections or additions to the meeting notes are always invited – please discuss any during our next business meeting.

**Treasurers' report:** Gary Emmert; Reports we have money and are solvent. He reminded us that dues for 2021 membership are due as of Nov. 1st, and he is accepting payments for 2021, many members are paying, producing a favorable balance. Adding to the balance was a \$625 posting correction found by Gary. Gary says he will inform Ben of current paid membership, to update our mailing lists. Fred adds that the dues payment timeframe extends until the end of January.

John Dodge reports for the Carter Chapter of NRHS Treasury that there is no change since last month - this group also has a sound financial position. Dues for this chapter are also due as of Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Newsletter editor:** Cathy Smith was not on the Zoom call. Fred reminds us that articles and photos from members are always welcomed, and that we are sharing the newsletter with the Carter Chapter of NRHS members.

**Webmaster reports:** Bill Smith was not on the Zoom call. Ben Merritt informed us that election ballots for both MEMRR and the Carter Chapter have been sent out. The completed vote are returned via email to the webmaster. Fred added that the returned ballots are anonymous, and the software allows only one vote per member. Ben says email communications are going out just fine. He was able to send out meeting notices, as well as a few other things since we've met last just to keep club members updated.

**Membership report:** Robert Sullivan was not logged into the Zoom meeting.

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

Fred noted the Carter Chapter officers and historian are also not logged into the Zoom meeting.

(continued on page 15)

## Meeting Minutes

### MEMRR & George L. Carter Chapter of NRHS Monthly Business Meeting Minutes- 10/20/20

(continued from page 14)

#### **Presidents report:**

Fred notes that this is the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the railroad museum open to the public. Our attendance is back up to about half the pre-Covid number of visitors, about 30 visitors last weekend and about 20 members (not all at the same time). Fred was pleased to report the museum is open to the public in a safe way – by taking temperatures as people enter, wearing masks, maintaining distancing and directing visitor traffic. He laments that there was no traditional summer picnic, birthday parties, or Christmas party this year, but is hopeful we can do a spring fling in March. BYW- November is National Model Railroad Month.

The ETSU campus will be on Fall break as of Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Classes will resume online after break, but students will not be returning to campus this year. So, there will be less parking congestion for awhile, but fewer student visitors. Almost 80% of the classes have been and likely will be taught online for a while.

#### **Old Business:**

2021 Big Train Show is cancelled. The University will be renovating the auditorium/sports building from May until September. This timing is fortunate, since the facility will be basically vacant due to Covid concerns, and means future train shows are less likely to be bumped for renovations. Our preparations were well underway, and Roger Teinert is notifying the prospective vendors. We will return in 2022!

2021 Calendars; we have 400. Prices are \$8 for visitors and \$5 for members. Really nifty photos on each month, and the meeting reminders are really helpful. Terrific Christmas presents – hint –hint. The calendars were produced by Geoff Stunkard – WELL DONE! – again.

HOn3 Annual (White River Publications) magazines are in. We have 50 copies available for purchase. The Tweetsie layout is AGAIN in this edition, 8 pages focusing on the newly completed coal transfer station. Fred thanked Geoff Stunkard for his production of the article. This is the seventh consecutive year the Tweetsie layout is featured in this annual publication; a tribute to the superb craftsmanship and attention to detail, truly museum quality. And HOn3 seems to be growing in popularity.

Coordinators meeting: no meeting was held in November. Fred suggested last month that we let him know of any Club or museum needs.

(continued on page 16)

## Meeting Minutes

### MEMRR & George L. Carter Chapter of NRHS Monthly Business Meeting Minutes- 11/17/20

(continued from page 15)

#### New Business:

November is also our annual election of officers (normally). Since we cannot meet face to face due to Covid risks, Fred has asked all existing officers if they would continue in their present roles for continuity in 2021. All MEMRR officers have confirmed they are willing to continue to serve, but ballots will be produced with a write in candidate line for each position anyway. Please first check with the person you nominate if writing in a name. Thank you, Ben, for making this a simple process to either confirm a vote or type in a candidate. BTW- each electronic ballot has a 'validation code'. And again, this is anonymous. So the, the code simply indicates that you are authorized to vote. You were an actual voting member and it will tell us the number of ballots we're getting back but it won't be tied to a name or to your computer address or anything like that.

The Carter Chapter has two members who are not returning to their roles; Carl Parker who was Secretary, and Paul Marquis a Director at Large.

Fred also mentioned the nomination and voting for Member of the Year and Officer of the Year awards. Although we won't be able to present these at the traditional Christmas party, we will recognize the winners with a plaque in the Carter Museum.

The new computer, complete with display and keyboard has arrived, awaiting setup. A new Ethernet drop is on request for the Library.

Gary Emmert brought up during his Treasury report a suggestion that since the club has a Presidents Train, how about putting together a Clinchfield passenger train? Perhaps pulled by a couple of RS3s. Fred suggested he discuss this with other club members to see if there's interest in this.

Wallace Shelby has been helping catalog donated books and materials being added to our reference library. He has cataloged the ones which are in both locations, and will be updating the library catalog to allow multiple avenues of search for materials. After Thanksgiving, while the campus is less busy, he and Gary will be integrating the new donations on the shelves.

Gary adds that he could use help to sort the donations at Valley Brook. There are too many donated train books and materials to shelve all at once, and that he expects more donations. So let him know if you are interested in helping sort and shift books.

(continued on page 17)



## Meeting Minutes

### MEMRR & George L. Carter Chapter of NRHS Monthly Business Meeting Minutes- 11/17/20

(continued from page 16)

Although there was no Coordinators Meeting in November, Fred provided an update on some progress on the Tweetsie layout. He has drawings for buildings in the Johnson City freight yard. He brought to our attention a glitch with the computer controlled laser cutter, a software problem that prevents operation. Ben and John Edwards are working on the problem, since the vendor Micro Mart no longer supports the equipment, and Corel (the software company) no longer has Corel Laser available. If we have to replace the unit, that will likely have improvements like a larger working area than the 9 by 9 inch present one.

On the HO side, Fred mentions that the corner module (owned by the club) closest to the entrance is under construction adding a mountain and logging camp. While interesting, this needs to be a gem to attract attention. Mike Tarter is working on adding Lexan protective panels to each side of the lift bridge. The largest side will be on the outside to keep folks from lifting it by the bridge itself.

Logan Heaton brought up that the Presidential train consist and video was successful, and mentioned a problem with trains slipping on HO tracks. Ben had additional examples. Discussion ensued over whether there was buildup on the tracks, how to clean them, or whether the modules needed leveling.

Logan also reminded us that Saturday, the 28<sup>th</sup>, is Clinchfield Heritage day.

When John Dodge joined the meeting, there was discussion of membership in the Carter Chapter of the NRHS and it's dues (\$70-\$72 per year). There is a possibility of the NRHS annual meeting in Johnson City in April 2021.

Ted Bleck-Doran gave a short very interesting clinic/presentation on brick scenery work.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35.

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*