

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

**THE SIGNAL BRIDGE**

**AND**

**THE COAL ROAD**

Volume 28 – Issue 7 July 2021

Cover photograph of Norfolk & Western 611 – by Paul Haynes

**Lose Track of Time!**

After reaching an impasse during negotiations, the Northern Association of Model Engineers and the Southern Federation of Model Engineers agree to settle their differences in the traditional manner:



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



Things seem to be getting somewhat back to normal with regard to our lives and COVID-19, but it is too early to let our guard down. The new Delta variant is more easily transmitted and is sending more people to the hospital. Even some few folks who are fully vaccinated have been contracting the virus, but the effect is not nearly as bad for them as for those who are not vaccinated. Please, if you are not yet vaccinated do so soon for your health, your family's, and for the rest of us. We want you with us for a long, long time.

The MEMRR and the Carter Railroad Museum welcomes our new members, and we look forward to getting to know you better.

**Sick Bay Notes:** Mike Buster and his wife, Pam, are still having some medical difficulties as is Gregg Mundkowsky. Paul Haynes underwent shoulder surgery on July 15<sup>th</sup> and my wife, Catherine, underwent full knee replacement on July 16<sup>th</sup>. We wish all of these valued members a speedy and full recovery, and we extend the same wishes to any of our other members who may be hurting with medical conditions we don't know about. Get well soon and we look forward to seeing you back at the Carter Railroad Museum.

**ETSU; classes, construction, and covid:** The university administration has announced that they plan for the university to be back to normal schedules in the 2021 Fall Semester that begins in late August. Already, all employees are back at their jobs on campus and all classes that normally meet in-person will be conducted in that manner in the fall. Athletics has announced that all athletic events can have full fan participation without social distancing or mandated mask wearing. The university will not mandate students or employees be vaccinated against the covid virus or that they wear masks indoors; however, both are recommended. Construction has begun on the remodeling of neighboring Lamb Hall that will continue for approximately the next 2 years and we now have almost no parking area next to the entrance of the Carter Railroad Museum. We are all having to walk a little further to get into our building, the Campus Center Building, but just think of it as a little needed exercise. When the work is completed on Lamb Hall, the building we occupy will begin to be brought down.

**Club/Chapter Business Meetings:** I regret the cancellation of the July join MEMRR and Carter Chapter NRHS business meeting, especially on short notice. My wife, Catherine, had just undergone knee replacement surgery a few days prior to the scheduled meeting and my attending to her medical needs prevented me from being present to open up the room at ETSU for the meeting to take place. Please note that all the meetings for the MEMRR and the Carter Chapter NRHS will resume on their regular schedules in August with the Carter Chapter meeting on the third Monday nights at 6:30 PM and the MEMRR meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday nights of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting room will be the familiar 223 in Brown Hall (the science building) on the ETSU campus. We will continue to have "hybrid" meetings for the near future with both in-person meetings at the university that will also be zoomed for those who care to attend via that electronic media from their homes or elsewhere.

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

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**Fall Rail Excursion & Luncheon Cruise:** The George L. Carter Chapter NRHS is planning a fall rail excursion and luncheon cruise on Saturday, October 30, 2021. COVID-19 shut down these popular chapter and museum co-sponsored events early in 2020, but we are now bringing them back. Very soon the information you need for you, your family and friends to join us will be posted on the club & chapter websites, the museum website and available in hard copy at the Carter Railroad Museum. Additionally, it will be distributed to local media including WETS Public Radio. So, mark your calendars for **Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup>**, and plan to join us for a day of fun and adventure while supporting the Carter Chapter and the Carter RR Museum. We will meet on the ETSU campus for an early morning ride to Knoxville, TN aboard modern restroom equipped Premier Transportation buses. In Knoxville we will board the 3-Rivers Rambler train for a ride from west Knoxville along the Tennessee River to its origin where the Holston and French Broad rivers form it. The train will return us to the docks of the Tennessee Riverboat Company's paddleboat *The Star of Knoxville* for an approximately 1.5-hour luncheon cruise down the Tennessee River before returning us to our motor coaches for the return drive to Johnson City. This is one of our most popular excursions and an easy one-day trip. **Seating will be limited so make your plans early and come and join us.**

**Around the Carter Railroad Museum: Museum Library**—A lot has been happening in the Carter RR Museum Library thanks to the work of **Wallace Shealy, Dean Small, Gary Emmert** and a few other members. All of the books that have been stored at Valleybrook have been transported to our library and the work to integrate them into the collection has been undertaken. Duplicate volumes are being segregated and reviewed to determine which copy is the best one to keep and catalogue, or if we need duplicate copies in some cases. Those duplicates that are determined not to be needed will be priced and offered for sale at a discounted price to our members as soon as their status can be determined. A standard cataloging system is being discussed with the help of the ETSU Library staff. One goal, in addition to cataloging the growing collection (approximately 2,400 volumes and counting), will be to determine which books can be circulated to borrowers, which reference books must remain in the library for use, and which are so rare that they must be protected as display items only. Please be patient with us as we work on getting the library back to a functioning asset as it is not possible to use it now with all the books being sorted and many of them in great stacks on every available space. **Gary Emmert**, who has been filling the important role of Museum Librarian since its beginning, has decided to step down from that position and **Dean Small** will become the new Museum Librarian. Please take a moment to thank **Gary** for all the terrific work he has done for us in this position.

**MEMRR HO Layout**—Several members continue to improve their personal layout modules and the upgrades and changes are evident to the eye. Perhaps the most noticeable changes are happening on the two corner sections at the entrance of the **Alsop Gallery** that are MEMRR club sections. **Jonathan Gilliam, Logan Heaton** and others have continued to work on the left corner modules where the depot and the highway overpass are located. This section is much improved as is their work, along with that of **Ben Messimer**, on the cityscape near the diesel yard facilities. **Rick Mulholland, Paul Haynes**, and **John Carter** have continued working on the mountain logging scene on the righthand

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

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corner of the layout. With the most noticeable recent addition being the module extension on the southside that will add several square feet of much needed area of real estate for the logging facility and trackwork being planned for this section. **N-Scale Layout**—Working under the direction of N-Scale Coordinator, **Mike Tarter**, this crew is giving the rock outcroppings and the vegetation a fresh new look. This layout was beginning to show its age with the accumulation of dust over time and the fading of the lichen “vegetation” that was originally used for much of the landscaping. New foam foliage is being added along with a new forest of N-Scaled trees being created by our “Tree Man” **Ken Harmon**. This project, like the work preceding on all our model railroad layouts, is a big project and additional volunteers are always welcome to join in with any of these crews to speed them along. **ET&WNC Layout**—At long last the bare legs of the benchwork beneath the “Tweetsie” layout are about to be covered. **James** and **Carolyn Gregg** have made all the necessary measurements on those sections that don't have cabinets supporting them and **Carolyn** is undertaking the task of Master Seamstress to sew the panels that will be the “skirts” draping the modules from fascia to floor. The bolts of dark green cloth that will be used have been ordered and as soon as they arrive the hard part of the project will get underway. With the Elizabethton Coal Chute and the 5 buildings that constitute the engine and car facilities in the Johnson City yard now completed, work has turned to the Elk Park, NC section of the layout. **Ben Merritt** has a fulltime job this summer at the Doe River Gorge Camp, but he has managed to fine the time to laser cut 3 of the dozen or so structures for that little railroad town out for me to assemble. I created the original scale drawings from historic and current photographs of the major buildings in the little town and **Bill Smith** then converted my drawings to CAD software programs that are used to guide the laser knife to cut out the major parts of each building. **Ben** then uses the wood or plastic materials I provide specific to each building and cuts out the pieces. I then do my best to create a miniature structure that faithfully mirrors the prototype. The end results that now are populating the landscape around the layout represent the actual buildings, extant and long gone, that add to the realism of the project of recreating as much of the actual railroad, and its scenery, as possible in HO/Hon3 scale. **Little Engineers Room**—**Amy Merritt** has done a great job this summer as our Station Master. With most of our ETSU students away for the summer, we have had no student help in the children's playroom, and **Amy** has not only fulfilled her role supervising the playroom, but she has been the unofficial greater for everyone entering the museum, taking temperatures, chatting with them and giving them a brief orientation of the museum, keeping volunteer attendance roles, and operating the small gift shop. Whew!! Students will be returning to fall classes in late August, and we already have several student applicants for our FWS and APS funded positions. Help is one the way at last! Give **Amy** a big “THANK YOU” next time you see her for a multi-tasked job well done. **Carter Railroad Museum on the Move**: The approximate projected timeline for work to begin on the Campus Center Building where our railroad museum has been housed is 18 months with the clock beginning to tick in early July. I have been fortunate to work with city leaders and local businessmen that are most interested in our railroad museum and its future. There is substantial development taking place on West Walnut Street, both by the city of Johnson City and several business folks. We are becoming integrated into their vision of what that section of the city will become with art galleries, museums, music venues, restaurants and breweries. There is a lot of excitement about what is happening there and what will continue to happen.

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

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I have very positive encouragement from some of these important shakers, movers, and developers; rugged entrepreneurs, that we will be part of their planning with a new, much larger venue for the G.L. Carter Railroad Museum. As I learn more, I will keep you informed. All I can say for now is that the museum's future looks much brighter in the month of July than it has in the preceding many months.

**National Narrow Gauge Convention:** Reminder; the National Narrow Gauge Convention is in Hickory, NC 1-4 September, 2021. Some of the participants will be visiting our railroad museum on Saturday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. You can checkout the convention details at [www.tweetsie.com](http://www.tweetsie.com) .

***Getting back to normal?*** It has been a long pandemic and we are not done with it, but it has now shifted to become a pandemic for the unvaccinated. Please talk to those you know who have not yet taken the shot to encourage them to trust the scientists and get the protection the vaccines provide. Our visitor count at the museum is steadily increasing and it is good to see so many of our volunteer members back with us on Thursday nights and Saturdays. Your skills, talents, experience and enthusiasm for our hobby is greatly appreciated. There are always many things happening at the Carter Railroad Museum and with our clubs. Please continue to enjoy the experience and if you have not been to the railroad museum lately, come see us. I think you will be pleasantly surprised at all the changes we have made since your last visit. 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***

Director, George L. Carter Railroad Museum, ETSU

President, Mountain Empire Model Railroaders

President, George L. Carter Chapter NRHS

## Club News

### MEMRR Layout Update: Article & Photographs by Logan Heaton

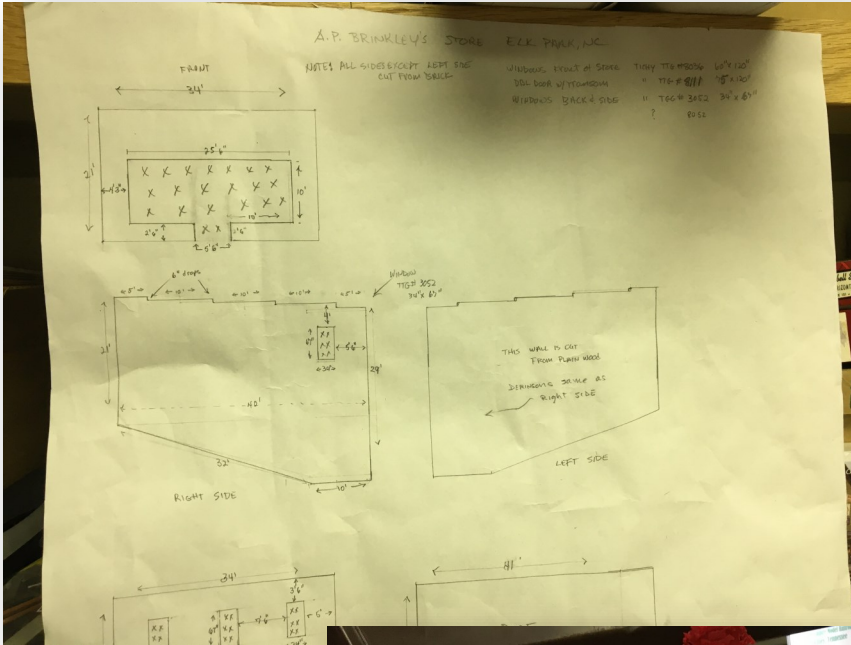
Some big changes are coming to the module where the logging area is being worked on above the northeastern tunnel and with these changes an expansion is coming to the module. Over the past week the new framework has been put in for the new addition which extends out to be flush with the Johnson City extension. With this new base in work will begin which we will keep you all up to date while the area develops. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update Elk Park A.P. Brinkley's Store: Article & Photos by Logan Heaton

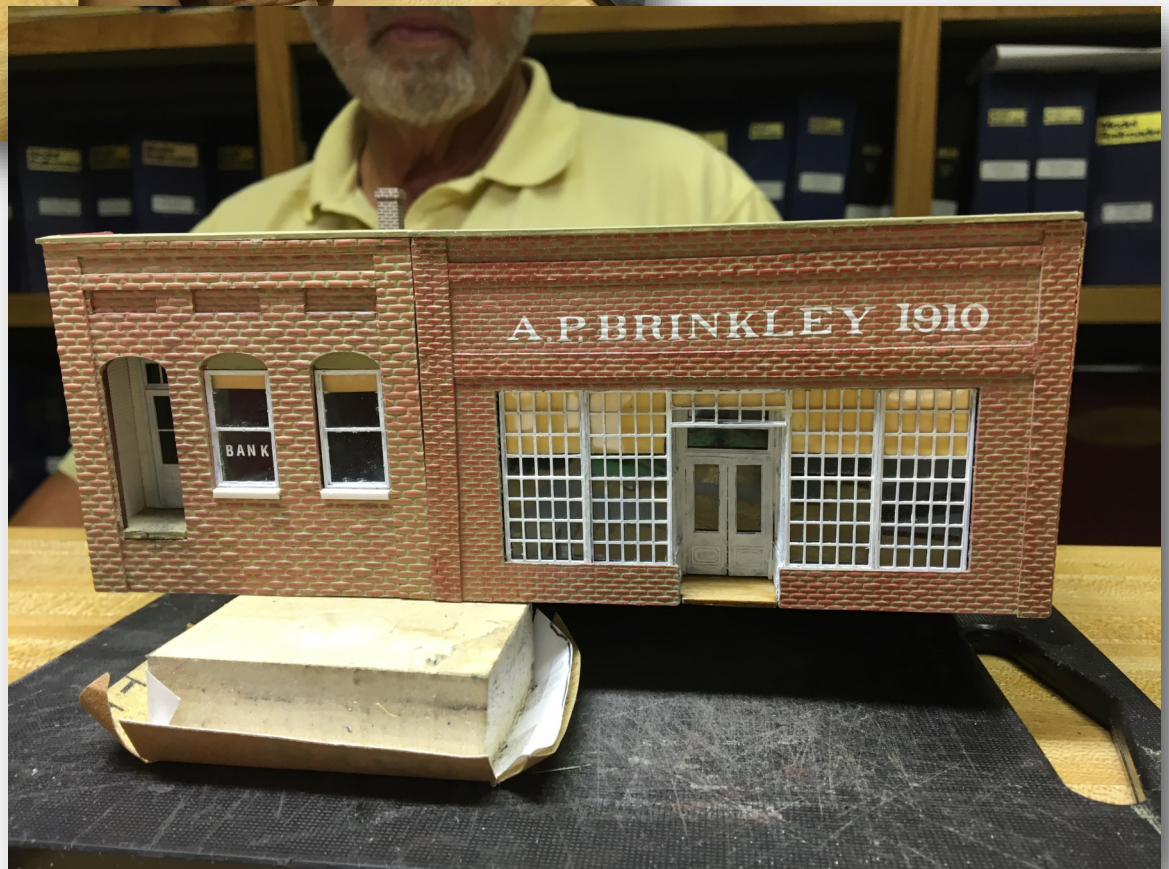
Work picks back up in Elk Park with the next building now on the workbench which is the A.P. Brinkley's Store. The store was cut out during the previous week and now assembly has started. When finished the building will be connected and share a wall with the bank next door before being put in place back on the layout behind the station. For now though, some great starting progress on this new addition. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update Elk Park A.P. Brinkley's Store: Article & Photos by Logan Heaton

The A.P. Brinkley's Store for Elk Park is close to being finished and being prepared for when it is connected with the bank. Dr. Fred Alsop has been hard at work finishing up the next building of Elk Park, putting up the final exterior walls, even putting in some interior walls for the shop and putting some advertising on the outside wall. The roof was also finished and installed once assembled. There are some last details left to be put on but getting that much closer to completion. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!





## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update – Elizabethton Coal Chute: Article and Photographs by Logan Heaton

Progress is moving along over at the Elizabethton coal chute where Dr. Alsop has been hard at work landscaping the area. A new dirt road is put in running parallel to the tracks going into the forest which also gives an access road going to the ramp. Additionally a small farm is being put in with a cornfield and a small shed with a small dirt driveway leading up to it from the road going over a drainage ditch as the final touches continue in this area. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update JC Coal Bunker & Water Standpipe: Article & Photos by Logan Heaton

A quick follow up over in Johnson City where beside the three stall engine house the latest additions to the yard have been added with a loaded coal bunker and a water standpipe being installed near the rear of the sheds after being quickly assembled, painted and weathered by Dr. Fred Alsop. With these now put in, the last bit of work to do with the yard will be mostly landscaping and track work such as painting the rails to look more worn and adding in ballast. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

### New Members for 2021!

Please make our new members feel welcome!

\*Alan Sandidge renewed his membership after being absent last year.

\*Ronald Green from Afton TN

We would love to know more about you!

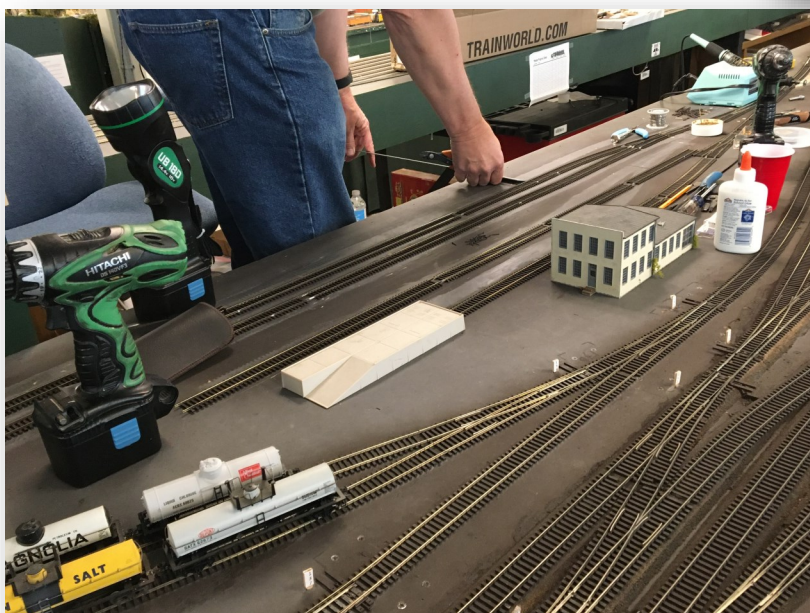
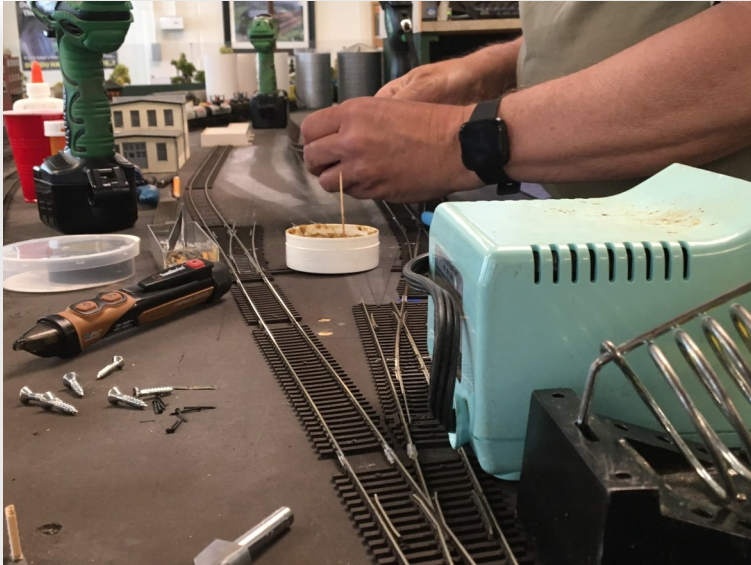
If you would like to share your story with fellow club members in a future newsletter, please send via email to our editor at [cathysmithmemrr@yahoo.com](mailto:cathysmithmemrr@yahoo.com).



## Club News

### MEMRR Layout Update– Main Yard: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

Work nears completion in the yard where the new freight house is going in. With the track now adjusted from the main switch leading into the area to allow space for the new building the process of relaying the rest of the sidings began. All five sidings were set in place and then spiked down after being connected with the switches. With all the track now back in place the only thing left is to reinstall the tortoise machines to change the powers and power the tracks along with installing the new freight house finishing the area for now. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

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

Steady progress is being made across the MEMRR layout and even though not one area has made what may be considered a large amount of progress like prior updates, these still show that we are continuing to work and update our layouts to both improve and also give something new for our guests to see when they visit. Starting in Johnson City at the new machine parts industry where more additional pieces have been added including some hard working staff in the process of making parts which will then be taken downstairs by the forklift to be loaded onto waiting boxcars. Moving up the track to the mountain above the northeast tunnel the area that was cut down prior has now been covered in plaster and smoothed out giving an even surface to work on for both the future track work and the logging camp that will operate from that area. Going back through the valley we then go to Little Cheyenne where progress continues on the hill with not only some grass being applied to the top of the hill but a radio tower and quonset hut have also been added overlooking the yard from one side and the engine facilities behind it giving a great point of interest that can be seen from different areas of the layout. Finally we take this tour to Blackwater where with warmer weather comes car show season as local residents line their cars along the street while local law enforcement keeps the road clear enough for traffic to pass as everyone views these custom rides. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

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

Heading back out to Little Cheyenne work continues on "the island" as it has been called by both crews and visitors. This time the work has consisted of rock work being down the back side closer to the maintenance shops and once in place the rocks have been painted to match the ones along the front. At the time of these photos the process of putting on the sealant has been applied to the rocks and then left to dry. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



# Club News

## Wreck It Wednesday Geoff Stunkard Coal Train

What can we say? It happens.



## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update—Elizabethton Coal Chute: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

The area around the coal chute in Elizabethton has been completed!! With the last of the corn field's put in on both sides of the dirt road the final bit of track leading up the ramp and along the main line has been ballasted. Even the fields have been fenced off while an old red truck passes on the dirt road. Top it all off with the final details and this area is ready for operation!! Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!





## Club News

**Wreck It Wednesday:** Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

Gotta watch which way those switches are set!



## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update—Elizabethton Coal Chute: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

Detailing has been finished on the Elizabethton coal chute with the railings now installed including fire barrels added in at the end of the ramp. With all this and additional crews and ladders fitted between the rails the chutes are ready. Some additional scenery work has also been done mainly behind the chutes and ramp coming up behind the structures with more trees and grass furthering the progress on this area. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

### Tweetsie Layout Update-Elk Park Bank, NC: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

The bank building of Elk Park is in!! After some final adjustments and doing some detail work with the windows the Elk Park bank is now in place on the row of buildings behind the station. Part of the original foam has been cut out to sit the building in as it as was some of the other buildings in the row were built on the hill so part of the terrain will be reworked as more buildings are completed but for now a good start to the new project. Stay tuned for more updates coming soon!!



## Club News

### Doe River Gorge Trip 06/06/2021 — Article and Photos by Logan Heaton

We had a lot fun heading out to Doe River Gorge this morning with friends, members, guests and even members of neighboring clubs. A beautiful ride through the gorge by both the train and by speeders followed by a hike along the track seeing all the beauty and thinking this may have been what was seen by passengers and engine crews of the ET&WNC regularly operated with the 2-8-0s and ten wheelers with the chuffs and whistles echoing through the gorge. We would like to say 'thank you' Doe River Gorge Christian Ministry Camp for the ride and everything they did to make this ride possible.



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## Club News

### Doe River Gorge Trip 06/06/2021 — Article and Photos by Logan Heaton

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# Heritage Days!

## Doe River Gorge Trip 06/06/2021 — Article and Photos by Logan Heaton

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# Heritage Days!

## Midwestern Memories — Article and Photos by Logan Heaton

During our Heritage Day event on Midwestern Memories members of the museum along with the public were invited by the Chuckey Depot Museum to see their new exhibit on the ET&WNC along with getting a chance to stop by their rail yard and seeing the many pieces of rolling stock on their roster. We would like to thank the Chuckey Depot for inviting us and for anyone who would like to see some incredible exhibits on the railroad history of our region and fantastic rail equipment certainly go out and see this awesome group and the work they are doing out in Jonesborough.



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# Heritage Days!

## Midwest Memories: Article and photographs by Logan Heaton

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The Midwest came out in style with all sorts of magnificent steam and diesel locomotives coming out to participate in the event with everything from streamliners to slow freights all on full display for our guests to see and enjoy. During the event we also caught many scenes of these trains in action. We hope you all enjoy!!





# **The 2020 Hon3 Annual** **and** **2021 All Aboard Calendars** **are Available Now!**

Our new beautiful *All Aboard 2021* calendars remain available. Get yours soon so that your discounted price gets its full benefit of all 12 months of events and reminders. Remember too, that we have a limited supply of the recent *2020 Hon3 Annual* published by White River Productions. This issue bears a color-illustrated 8-page feature of our ET&WNC RR layout. This marks the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year our Tweetsie layout has been featured in this collector's magazine; an outstanding accomplishment and a tribute to the quality of work to be found throughout our railroad museum. Be sure to get your souvenir copy while we still have some in stock. A few editions for the previous year's *Hon3 Annual* remain available at our sales table.



## Club News

### Museum Update: Article and Photographs by Logan Heaton

Recently the parking lot in front of the museum has been fenced off blocking a majority of our parking. This event coincides with the renovations on Lamb Hall which is estimated to take two years and afterwards will set its sights on the renovation of the building we currently reside in so the parking lot is being used for staging of the equipment on these projects. We want to just reassure you that we are still open but our parking has been severely cut down so there may be a bit of a walk up to the museum. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause and do hope you all still come out to see us.



## Club News

### Museum Update: Article and Photographs by Logan Heaton

The museum received some great new additions on loan to display in our ET&WNC exhibit. The first of which is the Johnson Bar off of ET&WNC #6 ((not currently pictured while working on display)). The next item is the number plate off the front of ET&WNC #9 which we currently have on display at the entrance to the ET&WNC Exhibit Hall coming through the work room. These are some amazing additions to the museum and hope all will enjoy seeing these new pieces of our region's history. Stay tuned for more updates and videos coming soon!!



## Meeting Minutes

### MEMRR & George L. Carter Chapter of NRHS Monthly Business Meeting Minutes- July 2021

No updates this month... Stay tuned for the August newsletter.

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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:** Roger Teinert
- **Secretary:** Mike Tarter
- **Treasurer:** John W. Dodge,  
econguy2000@hotmail.com
- **Historian:** Carolyn Greg
- **National Representative to the NRHS:** Charlotte Pahrts

# 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*