

‘Little Railroads That Could’ Run at Carter Museum on February 25



ETSU’s Tweetsie model railroad, noted as the most accurate HOn3 replica of this railroad in the world, is operational. Here is an exact replica of the Belvins bridge in Carter County.

Short Lines & Industrial Railroading are the focus of ETSU museum Heritage Day this month

This month, the George L. Carter Railroad Museum, located in the Campus Center Building of East Tennessee State University, will revisit the (rail)road less traveled. The February 25 “Heritage Day” program will focus the short line and industrial-based rail operations of yesterday, including the museum’s large East Tennessee & Western North Carolina narrow gauge representation, one of four operating model train layouts in the facility.

While most of the monthly Heritage Day events focus on larger operations and equipment, this event showcases the smaller companies that once coupled the national rail system to the republic’s farthest reaches. In that era, a “Mixed Train” referred to a smaller scheduled train that combined freight and passenger service in a single unit, usually on a once-daily or regular schedule. The advent of expanding highway projects and other travel options dealt an end to these trains, which are fondly recalled in model form, and often later abandonment of the entire railroads. Some served specific industries such as mills or mines. Others like the ET&WNC or ‘Tweetsie’ line, even used a smaller track-width to save on expenditures for equipment and facilities.

“Short line railroading is still alive in some ways, but in its heyday created a true form of civic pride and interest in railroading,” notes Geoff Stunkard, the coordinator of the museum’s monthly Heritage Days program. “People even considered these local operations as ‘our train,’ particularly nostalgic now in east Tennessee where the Tweetsie narrow gauge once ran into the mountains. We will use this event to demonstrate how short line operations appeared and functioned.”

In addition to mixed operations on the museum-based 24x44 HO scale layout, there will trains running on the museum’s interactive logging railroad in G scale, and on the ET&WNC narrow gauge line in HOn3 scale. The latter is an exacting replication of this railroad that has been featured in national magazine publications.

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 Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad; this room, still under construction, again will be open for guided tours during event days.

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://johnsonsdepot.com/>' or '<http://www.stateoffranklin.net/johnsons/glcarter/cartermuseum.htm>'

Members of the George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders (MEMRR) club will coordinate the exhibits. Visit '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 Alsop at 423-439-6838 or alsopf@mail.etsu.edu. For disability accommodations, call the ETSU Office of Disability Services at 423-439-8346.

CARTER MUSEUM HERITAGE DAYS 2017 – final Saturday each month

January 28: Northeast

February 25: Short Line – Industrial lines

March 25: Steam UP! All Steam

April 29: Diesel – All diesels 1925-1960

May 27: Modern – 21st Century

June 24: Tri-Cities

July 29: Western

August 26: Midwestern

September 30: Heritage paint schemes

October 28: Roanoke Rails

November 25: Clinchfield

December 30: Fallen Flags