

Hot times out West at ETSU Carter Railroad Museum's Heritage Day on July 29

The history of Western railroads come alive for summer Saturday event



The George L. Carter Railroad Museum, located in the Campus Center Building of East Tennessee State University, will focus on the vast expanses of the American West on July 29, with an event showcasing the railroads that stretched across deserts, mountains and plains. These colorful and popular lines crossed some of the most dramatic scenery in the world, resulting in creation of specialized equipment epitomized by giant steam engines, multiple-unit diesels and huge landmark-level infrastructure like the Donner Pass. Visitors to the special event will be able to see replicas of some of these machines in action thanks to participating member of the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders club.

“Nobody can dispute the value railroads had on establishing America as a cohesive and united nation,” says Geoff Stunkard, the Heritage Day coordinator for the museum. “This gave way to immense wealth growth through employment

and land agriculture, through business opportunities in raw materials and manufacturing, and through tourism to remarkable places like Yellowstone and Yosemite. Today, the breadth of the nation is still bridged by railroads.”

The aspect of tourism is not lost on fans of these lines such as the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific. In addition to amenities, they used style and color to attract potential customers, like the ‘war bonnet’ and Daylight paint schemes. The reality of rugged terrain meant highly-developed horsepower units like the 4-8-8-4 wheel-arrangement of the Union Pacific’s Big Boy steam engine, the world’s largest, and experimental gas turbines that superseded them. Models of these trains are popular and some will be 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 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

July: Western

August: Midwestern

September: Heritage paint schemes

October: Roanoke Rails

November: Clinchfield

December: Fallen Flags