

George L. Carter Railroad Museum opens November 17

A museum devoted to the region's historic ties to railroads and featuring active displays of model trains will officially open to the public at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 17, at ETSU. The opening date is especially appropriate since November is "National Model Railroad Month."

Located in the old ETSU College of Medicine Building on the pedestrian mall, opposite Roy S. Nicks Hall, the museum contains several large layouts of towns and landscapes with running model trains as well as railroad-related items of historical interest.

Since the museum was created and is staffed by volunteers, the hours of operation are currently scheduled on Saturdays, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. A full-size flashing railroad crossing signal (crossbuck) donated by Norfolk Southern Railroad Group stands outside the entrance — located on the west side (ground level) of the building. The crossbuck's red lights will blink when the facility is open.

In celebration of the public opening, four speakers will present a free program on related topics the day before, Friday, Nov. 16, from 9-10:45 a.m. in meeting room 6 on the upper level of the D.P. Culp Center. November 16 is "National Take a Model Train to Work Day."



Bird's eye view of a modular cityscape.

Alan Bridwell will speak on "Johnson's Depot: The Foundation of Johnson City." Bridwell, who is marketing director for the Johnson City/Jonesborough/Washington County Economic Development Board, created the johnsonsdot.com Web site (a local historical archive) and has been active in transportation and historic preservation projects for many years.

Johnny Graybeal's topic is "The East

Tennessee Railroads and Their Effect on Johnson City." The author of six books on the East Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad, or "Tweetsie," Graybeal has written a seventh book covering all the railroads of Johnson City. He is president of the ET&WNC Railroad Historical Society and currently serves on committees dedicated to restoring the Linville Depot, which is the last remaining ET&WNC/Little River Railway structure in North Carolina, plus a narrow gauge boxcar that once served on the Lawndale Railway.

The third speaker, Ken Marsh, will discuss "The Clinchfield Railroad." Marsh has had a lifelong fascination with moving things, particularly the Clinchfield Railroad. After graduating from the University of Tennessee in 1960 with a degree in transportation, he worked more than 40 years in water, motor, rail and industrial logistics throughout the United States and Europe. For the past nine years, he has served as a Kingsport alderman while operating P&K Enterprises, a railroad book business, and two small corporations.

University archivist Ned Irwin will follow with a talk about "George L. Carter." A native of Jonesborough, and a graduate of ETSU and UT, Irwin has a lifelong interest in the history of the region. He is active in historical organizations, and his articles on historical topics

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Fred Alsop with railroad trestle and an unfinished mountain.

George L. Carter Railroad Museum

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have been published in numerous journals. With the late Ray Stahl, he wrote an as-yet-unpublished biography of Carter.

The new museum is named for the late George L. Carter, a turn-of-the-20th century coal and railroad magnate and a reclusive figure who was not interested in personal recognition. Among his more notable endeavors, which proved a boon to the economy, are the miles of Clinchfield Railroad track winding through the region's mountainous terrain. And, to help bolster educational opportunities for Northeast Tennessee, Carter donated his farm along with \$100,000 and other amenities to guarantee the Johnson City site would be chosen for one of Tennessee's "normal schools" to educate teachers. That site is now called ETSU.

The museum is under the volunteer direction of Dr. Fred Alsop, an ETSU professor of biology, 2007-08 Faculty Senate president, and president of Mountain Empire Modular Railroaders, a dedicated group that created one of the layouts in the museum and whose members operate the trains and continue to develop and perfect the exhibits. Their work had previously been on display at ETSU's B. Carroll Reece Museum.



Visitor Kathryn Wilhoit examines intricate details on the train station.

Another model train exhibit depicting the railroad in East Tennessee was donated by Marian Bankus of Houston whose late husband created it, and a third is on loan from Tom McKee of Johnson City.

Reaching the museum on Nov. 17 will be affected by the Johnson City Christmas

Parade route along State of Franklin Road. Access through the upper campus onto John Robert Bell Drive off J.L. Seehorn Jr. Road is recommended.

For more information, contact Alsop at 929-3733 or (615) 604-8759 or fredjalsop3@earthlink.net.



Close-up scene in the lumber yard.