

PGRS TRACKIN'

Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society – January 2017

Editor: Scott Williams

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Happy New Year PGRS Members.



Club News:

The Piedmont Garden Railway Society's officers and Board of Directors are currently hashing out changes to the club calendar and by-laws which will allow us to move the annual major club meeting from January to March. Proposals were made to move the annual meeting further in to the spring to hopefully avoid dealing with adverse weather conditions which caused difficulty last year.

Club members will receive information regarding this schedule change as soon as the dates are finalized.

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Fran would like to announce that he **still has some PGRS club shirts left for \$15.00** and will have them available at PGRS annual meeting in March

He says we can place an order for more if we buy 25 or more shirts-call Fran @ 828-674-0707

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Fran also shares a photo of his train load of antique cars on 12 flat cars.

“6 antique cars so far- 6 more to go” He says.



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Larry Williams sent this note regarding a new, useful paint color he discovered;

“When I replace the plastic wheels with metal in my trucks, I like to paint them to get rid of the shine. I have been using flat black, but it looks a little stark; Not like the steel wheels I see in real life. I found a color of spray paint at Lowe's that I think looks much better. It is Valspar Color Radiance 84512 Blindfold. I don't get the name, but it looks much more like a dark gray steel color to me.”

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Link and Pin Couplers:

I've modified some hopper cars and logging disconnects before to use Link and Pin couplers and will do so again to model my Sugar Cane train cars. *What are they?* FYI;

“U.S. railroads used the link and pin coupler through most of the 19th century. It was simply an iron loop, or link, that was held in sockets on adjoining cars by a vertical pin. As cars came together for coupling, it was necessary for a switchman to guide the link in the socket by hand, then drop the pin through the link at the right instant. It was supposedly possible for the switchman to hold up the link with a stick, but in reality the switchman had to stand between the cars during coupling. Thousands of railroaders lost fingers and limbs – or their lives – in the link-and-pin era.

The forerunner of today's coupler arrived after passage of the Federal Safety Appliance Act of 1893 and a subsequent amendment in 1898, which required adoption of a coupler that would connect on impact and remove the necessity of putting a man between the cars.”



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Cass Scenic Railroad in the snow. [Pretty film footage for a Winter's viewing lifted from a YouTube post]

"This was shot on MAY(!!) 10, 1997. Actually we experience THREE seasons on this day! We depart in the fall, arrive at Bald Knob in winter, and arrive back at Cass in the spring! All within 8 hours! The temperature at Cass upon departure was about 35 degrees. At Bald Knob it was about 20, but upon our return to Cass it was almost 60!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-NJQAlqkWI>

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Want to ride a Steamer? Great Smoky Mountain Railroad has restored its # 1702

<https://restoring1702.com/>

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Member Photos:



Old Depot G Hobbies mine being repaired in Jon Bole's shop.

Looking good Jon, I'm sure it will be better than new when you've rebuilt it.

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Richmond Tri-Level Overpass:



Staged for Richmond NRHS Convention – 1983

And these two from 1959 discovered on Facebook by Jerry Bartle





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Trivia Question:

What do Western Singing Cowboy star Gene Autry and the Denver & Rio Grande RR have in common?



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** A reminder from Terry Ketcham that PGRS club members are invited to come by the Apple Valley Model Railroad Club in Hendersonville the last Saturday of each month to run their large scale trains on the club layout from 10 – 2 pm.

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*** Think you might have an idea for a topic to share at the next Trainfest? We are **always** looking for presenters. This should include examples you have built on a topic and/or accompanying slides to show at the Trainfest. This summer we are also hoping to display Posters of projects if you think your project is something others would like to learn about but maybe not large enough for a 'Clinic' that you could display photos and documents on poster boards.

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Trivia Answer:

Short answer: They both owned a **Mudhen**. The same one in fact. #463.

Autry never used the Mudhen and donated it to the City of Antonito, Colorado. It was restored by, and entered into service on, the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad in 1994.

Longer Answer: What's a Mudhen?....

K-27 Mikado History

Mighty Mudhens

by Jeff Johnson

'Those things are little monsters'. While this reference to a mere 63-ton locomotive in the steam heyday of the early 1900's may have seemed to be a bit of an exaggeration, enginemen of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad had cause for excitement on the narrow gauge.

In April and May of 1903, Baldwin Locomotive Works delivered fifteen 2-8-2 Vaclain Compound locomotives to Salida, Colorado. Numbered 450 to 464 and resplendent in their freshly applied livery, thus began the ultimately checkered career of the Mudhen. Originally designated as class 125 (the "K-27" designation was adopted in 1924), they were the largest narrow gauge power the D&RG had purchased to date.

So what was the buzz all about? Up to this point the D&RG narrow gauge had utilized the ever-present 2-8-0's and 4-6-0's from the 1880's to carry the burden of motive power for the line. The narrow gauge men had not experienced locomotives of this relatively grand size and wheel arrangement, much less the newer Vaclain Compound style of using steam. Although a higher rate of pay was awarded to enginemen operating the compounds, it can be easily presumed that crews found it disconcerting that the bigger power would also reduce the amount of engines (and thus labor) needed to handle the expanding business on the railroad.



Vauclean Compound Style, H.L.Curtis Photo, Gunnison 1905. Photo Courtesy John Maxwell Collection.

Necessity is the mother of invention (and hard work), so right of way improvements and a little mechanical “getting used to” were among the adjustments the railroad men had to make while breaking in the new machines. Track upgrades were dictated by the fact that the new engines required a minimum 52lb. rail weight for safe operation. The outside frame arrangement of the running gear meant that the counter-weights (or “cranks”) were well outside of the total width of the rails. The low-slung appearance of these cranks turning just above the ties gave the engines the appearance of almost “waddling” down the sometimes tenuous narrow gauge track. From this observation, the ultimately well-known moniker of “Mudhen” was adopted by operating crews when referring to this class of motive power.

Changes For The Mudhens

The original Vauclean Compound design was conceived in the interest of increasing the efficiency of steam’s expansive force. The more common locomotive design (simple) exhausted the steam after it expanded once in the driving cylinder. The Vauclean Compound system first admitted steam to a smaller high pressure cylinder, then used the steam again in a larger low pressure cylinder prior to being exhausted to the atmosphere.



Slide Valve Era, Otto Perry Photo, June 6, 1923, No. 463 at Chama, New Mexico. Photo Courtesy Denver Public Library

Only a few years after the locomotives’ arrival, some impractical design issues with the Vauclean Compound begged for new solutions. The unexpected result of much higher maintenance with this cylinder and driving arrangement forced the railroad to consider another option. Thus, beginning in 1906, the class 125 locomotives were eventually changed to a simple, single expansion design with “D” style slide valves. This change was in keeping with the design of the other narrow gauge power and

served the engines well for over a decade.

In 1917, the Denver & Rio Grande engaged an independent auditor to evaluate the railroad and recommend improvements to keep the line competitive. Among other suggestions, the advice to convert these fifteen 2-8-2's to piston valves and Walschaert valve gear was partially heeded. By 1929, all but four of the Mudhens sported the piston valve arrangement. Other gradual modifications brought about new, larger tenders and super heater installation. Locomotive number 462 was the only piston valve conversion that did not receive super heating. The 450, 451, 457, and 460 remained with the simple slide valve arrangement (and lack of superheating) to the end of their relatively short careers.



*Piston Valve Era, Otto Perry Photo, September 5, 1936, No. 463 at Montrose, Colorado
Photo Courtesy Denver Public Library*

Rio Grande Southern

By the late 1920's, the Rio Grande Southern Railroad (operating between Durango and Ridgeway) had upgraded its track to accept larger and heavier locomotives. The necessarily frugal railroad had realized the need to lease some of the Mudhens to maintain their operation. By this time, the Denver & Rio Grande Western (as it was re-named during company reorganization in 1921) was able to expend some of the K-27's for use on the "Southern". At one time or another, most of the Mudhens had a turn at pulling the diminutive trains through the grandeur of southwestern Colorado on the RGS.

In 1939, the RGS finalized the trade of ditcher 030 to the D&RGW in exchange for engine 455. All was not well for long however. In November of 1943, the 455 was badly wrecked as its heavily loaded manifest lost air braking ability on the north side of Dallas Divide, a mere 11 miles from its destination at Ridgeway. The engine crew on board had jumped to relative safety, but the ill-fated engine and train picked up excessive speed and turned over on a curve south of the siding at Valley View.

While operating under the auspices of the Department of Defense, the RGS rebuilt the 455 at Ridgeway (returning it to service in April of 1947) and managed to squeeze a few more good years out of her. The

While eventually being used faithfully across the entire narrow gauge system, newer, more powerful locomotives delivered in the 1920's had relegated the now comparatively small K-27 to less prestigious service. The toll of the great depression on the Colorado narrow gauge sent many of the locomotives into storage at Alamosa. The 450, 451, and 457 never returned to the rails beyond the early thirties. By the mid 1940's, four K-27's had been scrapped, two were sold to another railroad, and two others were primarily in yard switcher service. However, a struggling little cousin railroad helped keep the Mudhens waddling along.



*D&RGW No. 462 on the RGS, Otto Perry Photo, July 13, 1946, at Glencoe
Photo Courtesy Denver Public Library*



*RGS No. 455, Wrecked Near Dallas Divide, Otto Perry Photo, June 19, 1944
Photo Courtesy Denver Public Library*

“new” 455 sported a rebuilt standard gauge cab (from D&RGW 0-6-0 #60) and a very different looking tender tank acquired from D&RGW 2-8-0 #933. The instability of this retro-fitted tank resulted in the railroad borrowing the tender from the 452 and coupling it with the 455 toward the end of its career. The engine lasted until the end of RGS operations and fell to the scrapper’s torch at Ridgway in 1953.



*RGS No. 455, Post-Wreck, Otto Perry Photo, May 30, 1947, at Ridgway, Colorado
Photo Courtesy Denver Public Library*

Engine 461, often leased to the RGS in the 1940’s, became the second K-27 acquired by that railroad. This purchase in February of 1951 came at a time when the end was well in sight for the RGS. The 461 was slated for the scrapper’s torch when the RGS and D&RGW struck a purchase agreement that was favorable to the RGS’ limited resources. It briefly carried the so called “Rising Sun Herald” on its tender before joining the 455 for dismantling in 1953.



By the beginning of the 1950’s, the Denver and Rio Grande Western’s need for the surviving K-27’s came full circle. With the ending of the RGS operations, and the coming abandonment of the narrow gauge line from Salida to Montrose, most of what remained of this faithful class of motive power chugged into our history books.

*RGS No. 461, at Ridgway, Colorado
June 27, 1951,
Photo Courtesy John Maxwell Collection
Modern Mudhens*

Only two Mudhens remain today. The 463 is currently stored in Antonito, Colorado and serves the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad. This locomotive found its way from Durango to California in 1955 after being purchased by western film star Gene Autry for use at his Melody Ranch film studio in Placerita Canyon, California. It languished until the early 1970’s when Autry donated it to the city of Antonito. In 1994, the 463 was rebuilt and returned to the rails between Chama, New Mexico and Antonito, Colorado.

The 464 worked in the Durango yards into the late 1950’s then remained static until it was purchased by Knott’s Berry Farm in 1973. The 464 returned to service later that year pulling amusement park visitors around a loop in the balmy, palm tree filled atmosphere of Southern California. The locomotive was a bit big for negotiating the relatively tight radius of the curves at Knott’s, thus it’s operation was sporadic in favor of the other 2-8-0’s that operated at the park. In 1981, the engine was donated to Genesee County Parks and Recreation



in Flint, Michigan and eventually began service on the Huckleberry Railroad. Faithfully restored, the 464 works hard to this day, hauling the many visitors through the scenic theme park and surrounding area.

*editor's note: Above information stolen off the internet from Blackstone Models website:

<http://blackstonemodels.com/loco/k27/k27history.php>

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Membership:

Please consider sharing this newsletter with friends who might be interested and if they wish to become members ask them to contact our PGRS Secretary/Treasurer for a membership form.

Don Watson
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Hendersonville, NC 28791

docwatson@morrisbb.net

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Train Lover Luncheons:

The current luncheons are:

Columbus Area: Meets every Third Thursday of every month at Larkins Carolina Grill, 155 West Mills Street in Columbus, NC 28722. @ 1:00 PM. Contact Pete Gendron: 954-812-6270

Greater Greenville Area: Meeting the first Tuesday of every month - at 12 noon. It has been moved to Mutts in Greer as it is more centrally located for the greater Greenville area. Contact Ken Majchrzak at: kemajchrzak@gmail.com or call Ken at: 864-385-4951

Asheville Area: Meets the 4th Thursday each month. We meet at 11:30 AM at Gondolier Italian Restaurant and Pizza located at 1360 Tunnel Road, Asheville 28805. Contact Tim Wagner timwagner2012@gmail.com

The location is on the east end near the VA hospital, so it is recommended that you access Tunnel Road from I-40, exit 55. Take a left at the first light after you exit and a left at the next light. The venue will be on the right a few hundred yards from the intersection.

Winston Salem luncheons are currently being planned by Tony Potter and J.R. Snider.

Charlotte luncheons are meeting at Bubba's BBQ 4400 Sunset Rd. (exit 16, rte. I-77).
at 11:30am on the third Tuesday of each month.

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Please help make our newsletters interesting!!!

Send any idea, project, photo, something you found surfing on the Internet, etc., no matter how great or small you may think them to be to your newsletter editor. I will use them or log them away on my hard drive for future use. Our newsletters will be as interesting as you can help make them. We all love trains so...if it's about trains, and you've got it on your computer, chances are you won't be the only person who might enjoy reading about it.

Send your input to: srwavl@outlook.com

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Business Related to Our Hobby

Any Member who has a business related to our hobby is welcome to submit an entry for inclusion in PGRS Trackin' each month.



Garden Railroad Design
Old Trains Wanted

Jim's Train Sales

O & G Gauge New & Used Trains

Jim Hendley

Etowah, North Carolina 28729

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