

# PGRS TRACKIN'



## Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

June 2017

Editor: Scott Williams

Greetings Club Members. I'm sitting here this evening as the month of May comes to a close, my windows are wide open, the temps are averaging in the 60's, we've had great rainfall so far, my vegetable garden is growing like crazy, my perennial flowers I planted last year are starting to bloom, I'm mowing my yard weekly... Man! I love this time of year. Everything is looking so lush and the promise of summer is finally upon us.

I've been doing spring cleaning things and house maintenance and now it's time for fun in the backyard. My Memorial day plans, other than baking potatoes and sizzling Rib Eye Steaks on the Weber later in the afternoon, include laying track pieces down on the ground to lay out my future garden train layout.

After flying Old Glory and enjoying my morning coffee I will then head to my backyard to lay out the track I have been amassing the last few years. I've promised myself that this summer I will build a backyard garden train layout and Memorial Day is the day it will begin.

I hope other club members who've been thinking of building a layout this summer will feel the urge to get going too. I'll take some photos and keep you in the loop along the way during my garden layout construction. I hope other club members who have decided that this is the year to lay track will send me photos of their budding layouts too.

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### 2017 PGRS Open Houses:

The PGRS has two Open Houses coming up. Please put these on your calendars.

Jim and Helen Pitts have invited PGRS members to an open house at their Sugar Plum Express RR located on their beautiful Sugar Plum Farm in Plumtree, NC. It will be held on Saturday, June 10, 2017. The hours are from **10:00 am until around 3:00 pm**.

Their layout is track powered but battery and steam powered locomotives are also encouraged.

[Coffee and sweet rolls will be available for early arrivers and a lunch of chicken tenders, BBQ plate with sides and beverages of choice will be served around noon.](#)

Directions, map and other information about their facilities can be found at <http://www.sugarplumfarms.com/>

**PLEASE RSVP** Jim or Helen at [sugarplumfarm@att.net](mailto:sugarplumfarm@att.net) no later than Tuesday, June 6 so they can plan for the food.

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Les and Ruth Knoll will have an open house on Saturday August 5<sup>th</sup> on Les's 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Trackage is 101' main line, 5' radius curves, aluminum track, NO electrification. All motive power is welcome as long as it is self-powered and can negotiate 5' curves. Les has #4 turnouts, but they are all set straight on the mainline so there is no issue there. Start time is 11:00, probably go until 5:00.  
Ruth and Les Knoll  
(704) 966-0349  
(704) 249-1960 (cell)

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## **Inexpensive Brick Buildings from Foam Insulation Panel**

By Les Knoll

Brick buildings can be made easily and inexpensively using materials readily available at Lowes. The building panels are made from foam insulation, Lowes Green Guard XPS, sold in 4' x 8' sheets. This is more than you will need for a number of buildings. Lowes will cut it up for you if you can't transport a full sheet. They use box cutters, not saws.

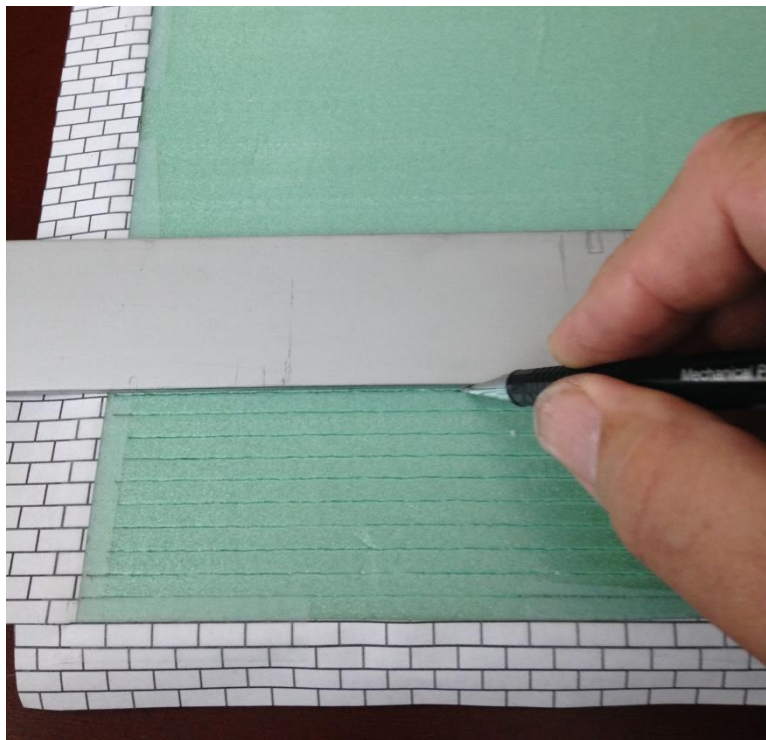
Before you start constructing a building, make a 'practice panel' to test out these construction techniques, and practice your mortar application and weathering.

Make a drawing of the building pieces you will need including some brick detail. You will need to draw the vertical brick spacing for all courses and the horizontal spacing for at least two courses, since brick courses are offset by one-half brick in the horizontal direction. CAD is handy for this, but manual drawings are OK, too. My brick is 1/4" high by 3/4" long, a bit large for G scale, but it looks good on the buildings.

Lowes Green Guard XPS has a definite grain to it. The grain runs the long way on the sheets. When you lay out your building pieces on the insulation board, make sure that the brick course lines (horizontal) line up with the grain of the insulation board, the long way.

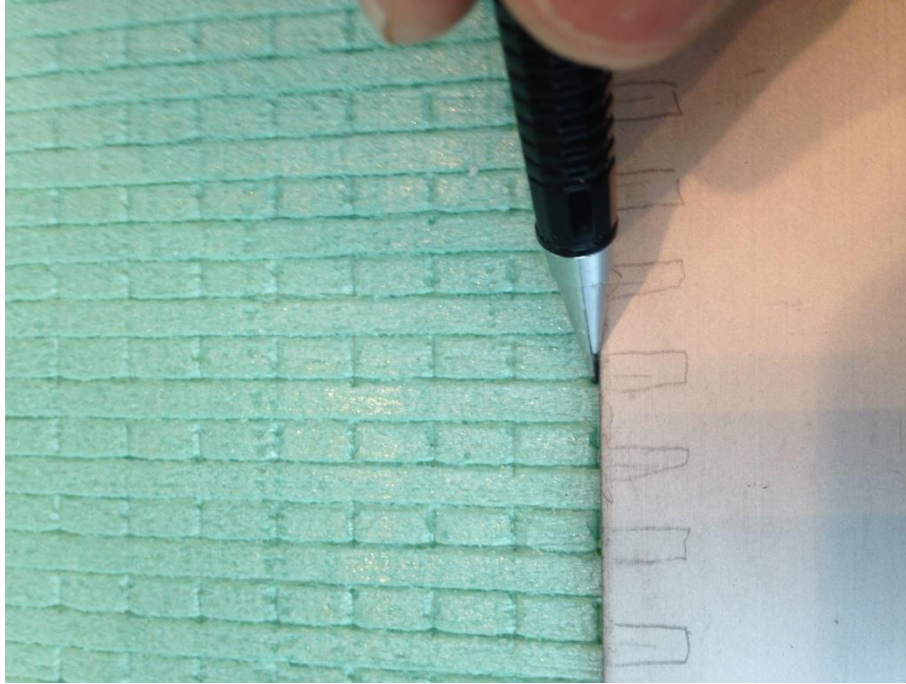
Cut building panels with either box cutter or table saw. The table saw is cleaner and more accurate. Cut out any openings for doors and windows at this point. In constructing a building, make one panel at a time, then assemble the building.

Applying the brick pattern is done by scoring the insulation material with an ordinary sharp pencil. On each end of your building panel, tape a piece of paper with lines corresponding to each vertical course of brick. These can be CAD or manually generated. If you follow the sizing I use, you will have  $\frac{1}{4}$ " marks on a paper running the full height of your building panel on both ends.. Place a straight edge on the building panel, lining it up with the lowest mark on the paper on both ends. Gently score the insulation material to a depth of about  $\frac{1}{16}$ ". Go slow and easy, maybe several passes to get the  $\frac{1}{16}$ ", and press the pencil against the straight edge as well as down on the panel. Sharpen the pencil after several horizontal courses. The pencil may have a tendency to wander away from the straight edge, so use care here. Continue all the way up the building wall.



If your pencil 'wanders' and gets off track, simply fill in the bad line with spackling compound. I use heavy duty DAP Vinyl Spackling available from Lowes. Dab some on with your finger and let it completely fill the lines you wish to remove. Let it dry for a couple of minutes and gently

wipe the surface off with a paper towel. It will be painted over later.



The vertical lines are done the same way as the horizontal, but each is only one brick high, and the lines are shifted one-half brick length from course to course as on prototype bricks. Use paper guides again, placing them on the top and bottom of the panel. Using a straight edge as a guide, do one set of vertical courses (lines) first (see illustration) skipping every other horizontal course, then shift  $\frac{1}{2}$  brick length, and do the other courses.

You could also do one set of vertical lines (remember to alternate your courses, only do every other one), shift one-half brick length, and do the other courses, alternating as you work your way across the panel. That way, if you keep your straight edge on the unscored side, you can check your work as you go. If it looks like brick, you're doing OK, if you make a mistake, you can use spackling compound to patch it up.

In addition to panels, I have made brick columns of the same material. The insulation board is approximately  $\frac{5}{8}$ " thick and this seems to be a good depth for a column. In my recent roundhouse project, I made the columns  $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. I made the brick length slightly smaller to include more brick detail on the narrow column. I kept the height of brick the same. Remember to put brick pattern on three sides of the column, both of the  $\frac{5}{8}$ " thick sides and one of the  $\frac{3}{4}$ " sides. The other side gets glued to the building panel.

Take note of any panel ends that will be seen when the building is completed, and add brick detail to them also. You can use the existing horizontal lines as a guide for the horizontal courses on the ends. Usually one vertical line in the center of the panel end, on every other course is sufficient detail.

I used Valspar Color Radiance paint and primer for plastics, #84515, Radiant Red as my basic brick color. It is available from Lowes. You may want to shop this paint line for other brick colors as well. It is safe for plastics like this foam insulation and will not deform the foam insulation when applied. It is very important to use brick color that will not deform or 'craze' the

foam insulation. This color looks quite vibrant when applied, but subsequent steps in the construction will tone it down.

Spray at least two coats of brick color on the panel and let dry overnight. You will want a robust layer of paint on the panel for the following steps.

Note that you do have the option of omitting the following mortar effect if you want. I have buildings on my layout both with and without mortar, and both look just fine. It's a matter of taste. Note that this mortar step is a good thing to practice on with a practice panel.

Fill in the brick lines with DAP Vinyl Spackling (NOT the light grade) available from Lowes. Spread it on the entire panel with a paper towel, let dry a few minutes then gently wipe it off the face of the brick with a swirling motion. Eventually the spackling will rub off the brick faces and remain only in the cracks. The spackling adds a little texture and maybe a little white to the brick face, but this adds to the appearance. Do the same painting and spackling techniques to the columns if you have made some. Do not attach them to the panels yet.

To make the building look less like it just arrived from the hobby shop, add a bit of weathering. This is done by very lightly spraying any color of flat black paint you prefer. I use the high heat black for Bar-B-Q from Rust-Oleum because it's always around to paint my live steamers. A tiny bit of grey primer might work as an additional step. Hold the can at least 18" from the panel and start the spray before the stream reaches the panel. 'Sneak up' on this paint operation, watch the panel gradually darken to taste as you spray ever so gently. Weather the columns separately from the panels. Practice on a practice panel first!

When the weathering is done, you can attach any columns you made. Use any type of construction cement that will not harm the foam insulation. This is done last because in doing a very light weathering spray, the corners where columns meet building panels could be missed, creating a very 'fake' looking effect.

Cap off the operation with Krylon Matte Finish #1311 to seal all the paint layers from the elements.

Assemble your building with construction cement and add windows and other detail. Roofs can be any material you like, although I find 1/16" plastic sheet in black works very well. This can be found at shops that sell sheet steel and steel shapes to the construction trade.

I have had buildings made in this way on my Rivendell & Midland Railroad for over three years with little effect from weather except the usual need for cleaning. The illustrations you see here are from my next major project, a four-stall roundhouse, my largest structure yet. One other thing: These buildings are so light that you may want to anchor them to your layout in some way so that high winds do not blow them away. Also you might want to spray them occasionally with Rodent Sheriff to humanely keep inquisitive (and hungry!) raccoons and squirrels away.

Good luck with your projects

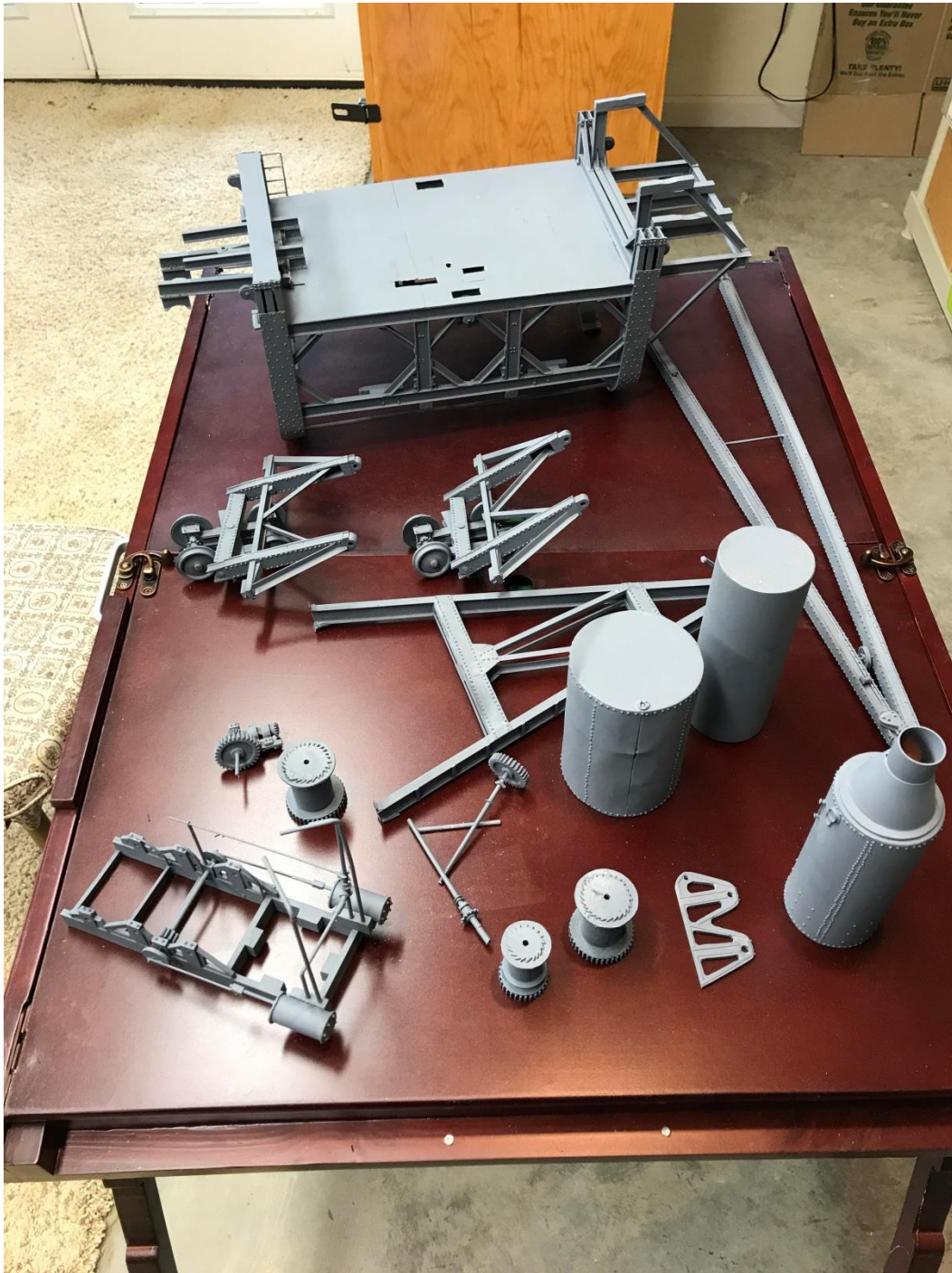
Les Knoll  
Rivendell & Midland Railroad

[Thanks Les, I'm doing some foam construction myself for my future layout and will share my experiences with club members in the next newsletter.]

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**Member Photos:**

Bill Huntman sends progress photos of his 1:20 McGiffert Log Loader.



Here's two photos of the type of log loader Bill is constructing:



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Videos of Interest:

Big Model Trains Running Through the Front Door

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FESpCJBPY18&feature=youtu.be>



Who knew that Donald Duck was also a live steam, garden train enthusiast who also had to deal with rodents in his backyard layout? "Out of Scale" Disney short from 1951:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jadtYPIvlds>

Here's a related video. Jim Sabin's outdoor garden railroad, with a beautifully detailed, handmade, live steam locomotive and rolling stock inspired by Donald Duck's 1951 cartoon "Out of Scale".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpqlJutxKek>

Luxury Travel on the rails of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Let's return to the early mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when railroads were combating the fledgling cramped, bumpy, spartan mode of transportation by the new airlines and the growing federal automobile highway systems. Can you just imagine how luxurious travel by rail must have been 8 decades ago?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8-Ea041Tjg>

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**Trivia Question:**

In the 20th century there have been a few notable vehicle transportation designs that in their original concept proved to be so fundamentally sound that they were produced for not just a few years, but decades.



The Type 1 Volkswagen Beetle was built from the 1930's and altered minimally until its final production in Mexico in about 2002.



The Douglas DC-3, while only built from 1935 until 1941, it continues to fly in active service to this day. An estimated 2,000 DC3 derivatives are still flying today.

In the same vein what might be the longest running American Locomotive design in its original conception from the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

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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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Trivia Answer [possibly]:

You may disagree but I think the GG1 should hold the record for one of longest running mass produced American Locomotive design in large numbers in daily use on Class 1 railroads. First built in 1934 and not largely altered from the original design the last GG1s were retired by New Jersey Transit in 1983. Initially styled by Donald Dohner, Raymond Loewy later was employed to refine the design.



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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  
125 Mistletoe Trail  
Hendersonville, NC 28791

[docwatson@morrisbb.net](mailto: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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**Thanks, and 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. 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](mailto: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

Lionel, MTH, USA Trains, PIKO, LGB  
Bridgwerks Power Supplies, Bachmann  
Split-Jaw Rail Clamps, O & G Gauge Track

Email: [jhh1218@att.net](mailto:jhh1218@att.net)  
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