

PGRS TRACKIN'

Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

August 2019

Editor: Scott Williams

Here we are in mid-summer. It's been a good summer so far, wet spring, decent rainfall through June and July, hot and humid, but now it's cooled down a bit.

My restored yard and my new wildflower gardens are thriving here in Fletcher. Some of you have been following my layout construction progress and have even visited my backyard layout. I built my layout this spring on 5/4 x 6" treated deck boards stained gray which looks like ballast with deck stain. It really didn't take that much effort. I laid the track out on the ground, marked it with spray paint on the grass, cut the deck boards to shape to go underneath the track, screwed it all together with coated deck screws, leveled it with blocks and bricks. Done. A working Garden Railroad in spite of the uneven ground. You can do it too. Easy Peasey. One thing I did do beforehand is put each deck board on 'stickers', little strips of wood on my back deck in the sun to let them dry out for a week or so. Treated deck boards are 'green' and wet. I dried them this way to see which boards would dry flat and which boards would go all 'wonky' before I chose them for my layout. Most of them dried flat but some twisted or buckled. I used those to cut in to 6" sections for the support pieces and used the flat ones for the roadbed. It was worth the extra effort.



Why did I do it this way? Well, **Two** reasons:

{1} I don't plan to be at this address for more than 2 or 3 years. I did not want to build anything permanent that would be of no interest to future home buyers or would be difficult to rip out and move to a new address.

{2} I also have noted when looking at the roster of our 60+ members of the PGRS that a large percentage of our club members are "[**stuck**]" in the "planning" stage of building a layout.

I hoped to show by example that you too could build a garden railroad in your yard without taking out a 'second mortgage'.

A 5/4 x 6": x 12 foot treated deck board from Lowe's costs...6 dollars. My layout is a whopping 50 feet by 25 feet. That's a big damned garden railroad but using 6 dollar per 12' deck boards seemed to me the cheapest way to do it. If you can think of a cheaper plan, please write to me with your method.

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Last Unit Coal Train to the Skyland Power Plant ran mid July:





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Federal government sues Durango train for starting 416 Fire.

Lawsuit seeks \$25 million from D&SNG for firefighting costs

By Jonathan Romeo County & environment reporter [Durango Herald]
Tuesday, July 2, 2019 7:45 PM



The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad is the cause of the 416 Fire, the U.S. Forest Service officially announced Tuesday.

The U.S. Attorney's Office announced Tuesday a lawsuit on behalf of the U.S. Forest Service in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado against the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. and its owner and operator, American Heritage Railways Inc., that seeks to recover damages suffered as a result of the 416 Fire.

"The United States alleges that the fire was ignited by burning particles emitted from an exhaust stack on a coal-burning steam engine locomotive owned and operated by the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad," a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office said Tuesday.

Because the D&SNG started the fire, the Department of Justice says the railroad "should be held liable under federal and Colorado law for all the damages incurred by the United States as a result of the fire, including the costs of fire suppression and the costs to rehabilitate the public lands damaged by the fire."

"Protecting our public lands is one of the most important things we do in the U.S. Attorney's Office," said U.S. Attorney Jason Dunn in a prepared statement. "This fire caused significant damage, cost taxpayers millions of dollars and put lives at risk. We owe it to taxpayers to bring this action on their behalf."

D&SNG owner Al Harper did not return a call seeking comment Tuesday afternoon. Denver attorney Richard Waltz, representing the railroad, declined comment.

Dunn, speaking to *The Durango Herald*, said the D&SNG has denied it caused the 416 Fire. The U.S. Attorney's Office attempted to negotiate with the railroad, Dunn said. He wouldn't comment further on how the negotiations went.

Though the cost of fighting the 416 Fire has been estimated around \$40 million, the news release Tuesday said the federal government is seeking \$25 million from the D&SNG. Dunn said additional costs may be determined going forward.

"If you operate a railroad that emits embers, then you have to be accountable if that conduct starts a fire, regardless of whether it was intentional, negligent or not," Dunn said.

Tuesday's announcement brings closure to one of the biggest questions for the community in Southwest Colorado: What started the 416 Fire?

According to the seven-page lawsuit, the D&SNG's locomotives had ignited "multiple fires" along the approximately 45-mile track from Durango to Silverton before the start of the 416 Fire.

As a preventive measure, the D&SNG had placed a metal screen over the smokestack to capture burning exhaust particles, but it didn't catch all the emitting material, the lawsuit alleges. Fire investigators, the lawsuit says, found a "collection of numerous, extinguished embers, cinders and ash particles on the ground adjacent to the railroad track, including at the specific point of fire origin."

Though the official announcement came nearly 13 months after the start of the fire, many residents expressed few doubts about the train's involvement.

About 9:45 a.m. June 1, 2018, residents in the Meadowridge subdivision, about 10 miles north of Durango, saw a "wisp of smoke" near a bend in the tracks as the D&SNG passed by, igniting intense speculation that the train was the cause of the 416 Fire.

The small spark climbed up a hillside as some Meadowridge residents, who had grown used to seeing the D&SNG start fires and had equipped themselves with their own water truck, attempted to put out the growing blaze.

Extreme drought conditions, however, set the stage for what went on to become Colorado's sixth-largest wildfire. By the time the 416 Fire was contained nearly two months later, an estimated 54,000 acres of mostly San Juan National Forest lands within the Hermosa Creek watershed had been consumed.

Despite coming dangerously close to homes north of Durango, not a single structure was lost in the blaze, nor was anyone seriously injured.

But the fire took its toll on the community, forcing thousands of evacuations, causing economic losses in Southwest Colorado and leaving behind a threat of potentially destructive flooding to homes and property below the burn scar.

These fears of flooding materialized in July and September when heavy rains hit the burn area, causing destructive flooding to homes north of Durango. As a result, about \$7 million will be spent to protect about 120 homes and buildings in the area.

As the fire burned in the San Juan National Forest, Harper's fleet of six coal-fired steam engines sat idle in a rail yard, unable to infuse thousands of dollars into the Durango and Silverton economies, for more than 40 days. The subsequent flooding also forced mandatory closures.

For the past year, Harper, whose family has owned the railroad since 1998, acknowledged the D&SNG could be responsible for the blaze and said the train would take full responsibility.

Harper, vowing the train would never be shut down as a result of fires again, then invested about \$7 million in the conversion of coal-burning engines to oil-burning and to acquire two custom-built diesel locomotives – engines that hold a lesser risk of starting wildfires.

He also pledged that in the future, the D&SNG would consult with the U.S. Forest Service, local fire districts and La Plata County to determine if weather conditions pose too high a fire risk to run coal-fired engines.

The D&SNG is one of the top tourist attractions in Southwest Colorado, with railroad officials estimating it provides a \$200 million jolt to the economy in the region through nearly 200,000 riders a year.

But the railroad has been a common culprit for starting fires on wildlands.

Documents obtained in an open records request last year showed that in two decades' worth of investigations into fires started by the D&SNG, it took years of negotiations to reach a settlement. In almost every case, the D&SNG hit back with a lower counteroffer, often denying it started the fire.

It's unclear how Tuesday's announcement will affect a lawsuit filed in September 2018 by residents and business owners against the D&SNG, which accuses the train of starting the fire and looks for compensation for damages suffered.

More than 25 affected parties are listed in the lawsuit, with most of those damages a result of floods from the burn area, though a few people are seeking compensation for fire damage to their property. Also, a handful of businesses joined the litigation, arguing they lost sales during the 416 Fire.

Sixth Judicial District Court Judge Suzanne Carlson set a seven-week jury trial to begin Sept. 14, 2020.

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HANDY ONLINE SCALE CONVERTER:

https://www.ginifab.com/feeds/cm_to_inch/scale_converter.html

Type in the Scale you are using first, then enter number and choose feet, inches, mm, etc. and what you want the top line converted to and the scale length automatically appears below.

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MEMBER PHOTOS:

Randy Theis sends these photos from a recent trip to Alaska. **Wow!!**



Holland America owns the vista rail cars that go from Denali to Anchorage. They pay the Alaska RR to pull them. The cars have great viewing on the upper level.



View of Mt. Denali from the train. 20,300' elevation.





Pleasant accommodations.



Kitchen staff photographed apparently while Randy was snooping around.



It was so **hot**, they were worried about rails buckling. Track inspector rode in engine. Limited speed to 10 mph in many sections. Engineer and conductor had been working for 12 hours so we picked up new crew in Talkeetna.



Alaska Railroad's first engine. Its original job was "bumping" moose. It ran at 1 mph and bumped moose off of the tracks to train them not to stand in the middle of the tracks. On the trip from Anchorage to Seward, there was a SD 40 at both ends of train so they didn't have to turn the train for the return trip.



Horseshoe Curve



Our transfer to another mode of transportation in Seward.

Container train yard in Vancouver.



Far out Randy! Thanks so much for sharing. I think many of us might want to put that on our "to-do" list. We might like you to share the details in the future of your amazing trip.

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
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Trivia Question: Who the Heck was Fred Harvey and what was a Harvey House?

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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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Train Lovers Luncheons:

The current luncheons are:

Columbus Area: Meets every Third Thursday of every month at [Rural Seed, 322 E Mills St. In Columbus,NC](#) @ 1:00 PM. Contact Pete Gendron: 954-812-6270

Greater Greenville Area: Meeting the first Tuesday of every month - at 11:30. [Meeting at the A&P Restaurant on Rte 14 in Greer](#). Contact Ken Majchrzak at: kemajchrzak@gmail.com or call Ken at: 864-385-4951

Meeting the 4th Thursday each month at 11:30 AM but the Gondolier Restaurant in east Asheville has closed permanently. We will meet this coming month at **POST 25** restaurant on Rte. 25 in Skyland, south of Asheville along the Hendersonville Highway. There is a separate room in the rear of the dining area. Contact Tim Wagner at: 828-712-9671 for more info.

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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** 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: Fred Harvey emigrated to the US when he was 17 years old and in 1876 he was a freight agent along the CB&Q. In 1876 he opened two railroad eating houses located at Wallace, Kansas and Hugo, Colorado on the Kansas Pacific Railway. The café operation ended within a year, but Harvey was convinced of the potential profits from providing a high quality food and service experience at railroad eating houses. His longtime employer, the Burlington Railroad, declined his offer of establishing a system-wide eating house operation at all railroad meal stops, but the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway (AT&SF) subsequently contracted with him. In 1878, Harvey started the first of his eating house-hotel establishments along the AT&SF tracks in Florence, Kansas. The rapid growth of the Harvey House chain soon followed with Harvey supplying several eating houses on an experimental basis.

Fred Harvey is credited with creating the first restaurant chain in the U.S. Harvey and his company also became leaders in promoting tourism in the American Southwest in the late 19th century. The company and its employees, including the famous waitresses who came to be

known as **Harvey Girls**, successfully brought new higher standards of both civility and dining to a region widely regarded in the era as "the Wild West". The popularity of the Harvey Girls grew even stronger in 1946 when Judy Garland starred in the film version of Samuel Hopkins Adams's novel *The Harvey Girls*.^[8]

Despite the decline of passenger train patronage in the U.S. in the 20th century with the advent of the automobile, the company survived and prospered, by marketing its services to the motoring public. After 1926, Harvey Cars were used in the provision of "Indian Detours" services offered from a number of Harvey hotel locations. The company continued to adjust to the trends. In the late 1950s it operated, for the first 15 years, the then-new landmark Illinois Tollway "Oases" which were built above the Interstate 294 highway in the Chicago suburbs by Standard Oil of Indiana (Amoco).^[9]

The Fred Harvey legacy was continued in the family until the death of a grandson in 1965.^[10] Portions of the *Fred Harvey Company* have continued to operate since 1968 as part of a larger hospitality industry conglomerate.^[11]



The Hotel Castañeda, Las Vegas, New Mexico as seen in 2007. An early mission revival style Harvey House (1899) and sister hotel to the Alvarado in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



A *Super Chief* in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1943. The Alvarado is visible on the left.

Before the inclusion of dining cars in passenger trains became common practice, a rail passenger's only option for meal service in transit was to patronize one of the roadhouses often located near the railroad's water stops. Fare typically consisted of nothing more than rancid meat, cold beans, and week-old coffee. Such poor conditions understandably discouraged many Americans from making the journey westward.

The subsequent growth and development of the *Fred Harvey Company* was closely related to that of AT&SF. Under the terms of an oral agreement, Harvey opened his first depot restaurant in Topeka, Kansas in January 1876. Railroad officials and passengers alike were impressed with Fred Harvey's strict standards for high quality food and first class service. As a result, AT&SF entered into subsequent contracts with Harvey wherein he was given unlimited funds to set up a series of what were dubbed "eating houses" along most of the route. At more prominent locations, these eating houses evolved into hotels, many of which survive today. By the late 1880s, there was a Fred Harvey dining facility located every 100 miles along the AT&SF.

AT&SF agreed to convey fresh meat and produce free-of-charge to any Harvey House via its own private line of refrigerator cars, the Santa Fe Refrigerator Despatch, and in them food was shipped from every corner of the U.S. The company maintained two dairy facilities (the larger of the two was situated in Las Vegas, New Mexico) to ensure a consistent and adequate supply of fresh milk. When dining cars began to appear on trains, AT&SF contracted with the *Fred Harvey Company* to operate the food service on the diners, and all AT&SF advertising proclaimed "Fred Harvey Meals All the Way".

Harvey's meals were served in sumptuous portions that provided a good value for the traveling public; for instance, pies were cut into fourths, rather than sixths, which was the industry standard at the time. The Harvey Company and AT&SF established a series of signals that allowed the dining room staff to make the necessary preparations to feed an entire train in just thirty minutes. Harvey Houses served their meals on fine China and Irish linens. Fred Harvey, a fastidious innkeeper, set high standards for efficiency and cleanliness in his establishments, personally inspecting them as often as possible. It was said that nothing escaped his notice, and he was even known to completely overturn a poorly set table. Male customers were required to wear a coat and tie in many of Harvey's dining rooms. The Harvey Houses served many a meal to GIs traveling on troop trains during World War II.

This mutually beneficial relationship, characterized as one of the most successful and influential business partnerships in the early American West, endured until 1963.

Businesses associated with our club:



Peggy Keyes
Owner / Chief Conductor
RightTrackTrainMuseum@gmail.com
828/625-5551

The Right Track Toy Train Museum
A non-profit museum to benefit Pancreatic Cancer
research
2414 Memorial Hwy (Rte 64/74)
Lake Lure, NC 28746
Find us on Facebook!



*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
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