

PGRS TRACKIN'

The Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

December 2023

Editor: Wayne Hamilton

Greetings

Seasons' Greetings. It's that time of year to work on all those kits or projects you have been waiting to start. Please send any idea, project, tips, photos, or something you found surfing on the Internet, etc., no matter how great or small they may be, to your newsletter editor. Send your materials to: railman1959@aol.com A special thank you to this month's contributors.



The Polar Express at the NC Arboretum, courtesy of Scott Williams

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Club Messages

Bob Thompson sent in this report from the open house held on October 7th:

I went to Steve Berrier's wonderful railway about 70 miles ENE of me in Germanton NC. A great group of guys and I felt welcomed to his railway. He has done one heck of a job mostly by himself building it in about three years. He is a carpenter by trade and clearly good at it. I'm posting lots of pictures from Saturday and Sunday. Nico Corbo was there from MrPictovid on YouTube. Met several people from Ill, Canada and Ohio. All came in for the weekend. I brought my Blunami powered LGB Forney on Saturday and three D&RG engines on Sunday c-19, K-27 and K-28. I had a ball and it has gotten me working on my railway more since. My steamers were the only steam engines there. Except for Steven's beautiful Challenger. Got me liking diesels better. You missed a great weekend!

Bob Thompson











Dan Bails reports our club page is active on Facebook. Go on Facebook and search for: Piedmont Garden Railway Society. You will see a similar logo that is on the newsletter.

As always, consider sharing this newsletter with friends who might be interested in our club and if they wish to become members ask them to contact our PGRS Secretary/Treasurer for a membership form or download a form from our website:

[Join Us – Piedmont Garden Railway Society](#)

Dues can be mailed to PGRS Secretary/Treasurer at:

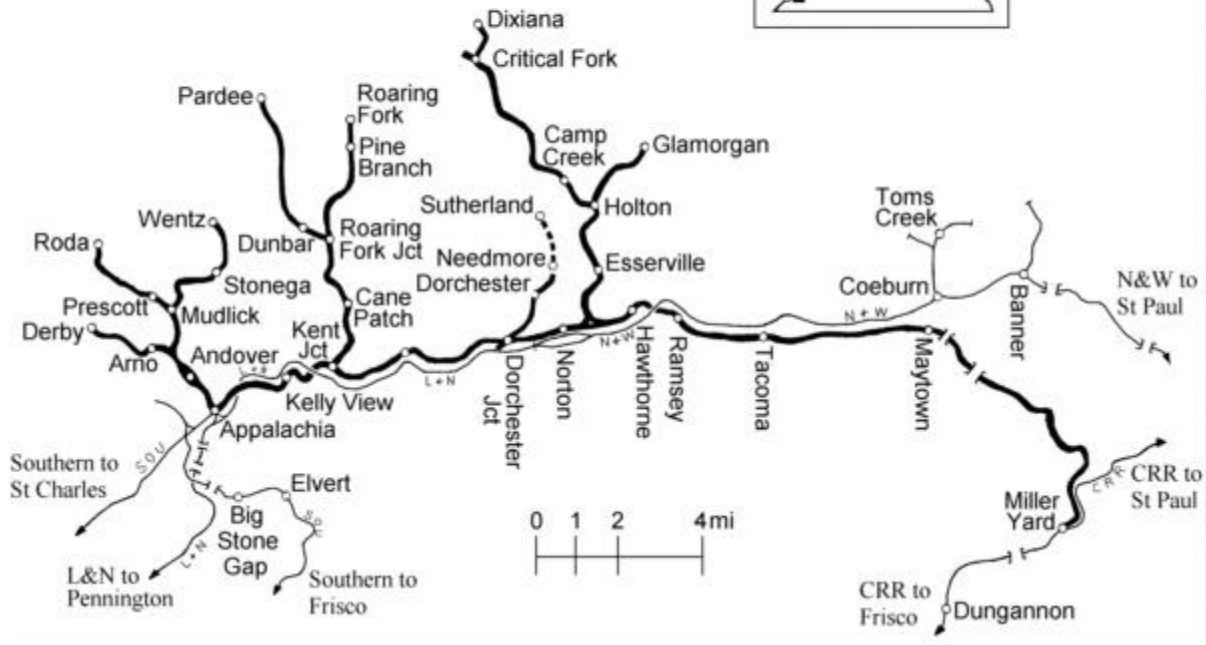
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Railfanning - Prototypes to inspire a garden railway layout.

The Interstate Railroad

INTERSTATE RAILROAD MAP



A map of the Interstate Railroad

The Interstate Railroad is an 88 mile long coal-hauling shortline set in the hills of western Virginia. The IRR was incorporated on February 18, 1896 by the Virginia Coal and Iron Company to provide transportation of coal from several mines in Wise County, Virginia to the L&N at Appalachia. A few years later, a connection with the Virginia & Southwestern (later acquired by the Southern) also provided a southbound outlet for the excellent coking coal of the region. The railroad gradually spread east through acquisition and construction until it established a connection with the N&W at Norton in 1909. In 1923, the IRR completed its final stretch of mainline by establishing a connection with the CC&O (Clinchfield) at Miller Yard. In the 1930s, the L&N used trackage rights over this line (known as the Guest River Extension) to deliver its coal directly to the CC&O. In 1935, the IRR and L&N established a flat-rate per car arrangement that had the L&N drop-off its Clinchfield-bound loads at Dorchester Jct (just west of Norton) where the IRR would

pick them up and deliver them to Miller Yard. The IRR trains performing this duty were known as “Hill Crews.” This arrangement lasted all the way til 1973.



The Interstate made its money in two ways. First, it made money by delivering on-line coal from the mines to interchange points. Secondly, it made money through per-diem charges on its large hopper fleet. Every night at midnight, a record is made of where each revenue car is located. The railroad holding the car is charged a small per-diem fee to be paid to the owner of the car. Interstate crews prided themselves on their “per-diem prudence.” If a foreign-road car was needed to load coal, it was placed in a first-out spot at the tipple. That way, the car would be loaded and placed onto another railroad long before midnight. Likewise, if the L&N or Clinchfield delivered a string of cars for the Interstate to shuttle at 11:00 PM, the IRR would immediately dispatch a crew to move the cars down the line and off IRR rails to stick the charges to someone else. By managing per-diem charges and

ensuring IRR cars spent much of their time making money off-line, the IRR kept its books in the black almost every year.

By the late 1950s, the Interstate's fleet of 50 ton hoppers were growing old and obsolete. Rather than face the task of acquiring a new hopper fleet, the Interstate was put-up for sale. Both the L&N and Southern placed bids worth over \$15 million. On the day of the sale, the difference between the two bids was less than \$25,000, but the Southern won, and ownership was transferred in October of 1960.

From 1960 until 1965, things were status-quo on the Interstate, but on September 10, 1965, the Southern shut down its Appalachia yard and moved into Andover. The Interstate's bright RS3s were soon moved South to work as yard engines to work in major Southern cities like Atlanta.

At first, the Southern used old F-units on Interstate mine runs, but in the late 60s, the Southern invested heavily in GP38s for use on the Interstate's branch lines. An enormous transloading facility was built on top of the ex-Southern yard at Appalachia by Westmoreland coal. This facility became the terminus for many single car loadings from Interstate tipples. These short-haul cars were known as "yellow balls" and were generally smaller, older 50 and 70 ton hoppers. The transloader and a few other loaders like Wentz became loading points for unit trains, a concept the Southern helped inspire.

When the energy crisis and subsequent coal boom of the 70s hit, the Interstate was not prepared to handle the onslaught of new traffic. An early victim was the agreement with the L&N for haulage of coal to the Clinchfield. The L&N, feeling its traffic was receiving too low a priority, entered into a trackage rights agreement with the N&W on June 5th, 1973. The agreement allowed the L&N to run trains on the N&W's line through Norton to St Paul to interchange with the Clinchfield at Castle Yard. The Interstate line between Ramsey and Miller Yard was then used mainly for Plate "C" or larger cars which would not fit through the tight N&W tunnels. It was abandoned in 1985.

The next major change for the Interstate came in 1982 with the merger of the Southern and N&W into Norfolk Southern. Although operations changed little in the beginning, by the mid-80s, change was in full-swing. The Interstate ceased to exist as a separate entity on October 31st, 1985 when control was transferred to the Clinch Valley Extension of the Pocahontas Division. Soon after, in January 1986,

the L&N (CSX) no longer exercised its trackage rights over the N&W line through Norton. Instead, the CSX and NS had arranged an agreement that allowed CSX trains to use the Southern's line south of Big Stone Gap. In exchange, the NS used the ex-CRR line from St Paul to Frisco for most of its South-bound coal.

Andover yard is still an important coal-collection point on the ex-Interstate, but only for the western IRR branches. The ex-N&W yard at Norton now serves as the primary collection point for the eastern branches. The ex-L&N line from Big Stone Gap to Norton was sold to local coal companies, and after years of collecting rust, a loadout has been constructed east of Appalachia over the old L&N main. The CSX is fighting hard for the rights to serve the loader, so gray and black may once again compete in Appalachia!

An Aristocraft RS3 made as a club item in 2008



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The Backshop – Modeling Tips and Projects

Fran Monahan took the “going vertical” presentation from Train-Fest to heart with this new elevated layout:



Marge reports Fran took down his yard layout. He's getting to the point where he can't give it the care it needed. So now he's on the porch and it looks great.



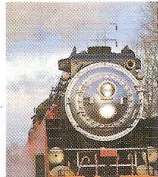
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Railroad Trivia

Everyone knows that the front of a train is called a cowcatcher, right? Well, no. There were a select few that could act "sort of" like a "cow catcher", but hardly any of them actually are referred to in that way! The real terminology is found later in this newsletter.

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Businesses associated with our Club

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|  | <p>Jim's Train Sales O & G Gauge New & Used Trains Jim Hendley Etowah, North Carolina 28729 <i>Lionel, MTH, USA Trains, PIKO, LGB Bridgwerks Power Supplies, Bachmann Split-Jaw Rail Clamps, O & G Gauge Track</i></p> |
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Garden Railroad Design, New and Used Track
You can now reach Jim at: hendleyjim4@gmail.com
Or....(828) 333-2523

A reminder to all our members of the Train Lovers Luncheons:

The Asheville Train Lovers Luncheons are on every 2nd Thursday of the month at the Post 25 restaurant in Arden, NC at 11:30.

The Greater Greenville Train Lovers Luncheons. They are on the first Tuesday of every month at the A&P Restaurant in Greer starting at 11:30 AM.

The Columbus Luncheons at Rural Seed are held at 12:00 on the Third Thursday of each month.

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Railroad Trivia Answer

[NOT A COWCATCHER?! What is it then? | Railroad 101 - YouTube](#)

In railroading, **the pilot** (also known as a cowcatcher, cattle catcher or cow plow) is the device mounted at the front of a locomotive to deflect obstacles on the track that might otherwise derail the train.

In addition to the pilot, small metal bars called 'life-guards', 'rail guards' or 'guard irons' (UK) are provided immediately in front of the wheels. They knock away smaller obstacles lying directly on the running surface of the railhead. Historically, fenced-off railway systems in Europe relied exclusively on those devices and did not use pilots, but that design is rarely used in modern systems. Instead of a pilot, trams use a device called a fender. Objects lying on the tram track get hit by a sensor bracket, which triggers the lowering of a basket-shaped device to the ground, preventing the overrunning of the obstacles and dragging them along the road surface in front of the wheels.

Modern US diesel locomotives have flatter, less wedge-shaped cowcatchers, because a diesel locomotive has the cab near the front, and the crew are vulnerable to impact from obstacles pushed up by the “cowcatcher”.

To protect the crew and passengers, most modern locomotives have a horizontally grooved steel beam known as an **anti-climber** fitted across the front, above the coupler. Its purpose is to prevent colliding locomotives from riding up and moving over the locomotive frame through the cab.

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Web Bits

[CSX Santa Train to Return to the Rails Nov. 19 for First Time in Three Years - CSX.com](#)

[Ruby G Gauge Garden Railroad 11/19/2022 Large Scale Trains In The Backyard - YouTube](#)

[Holiday Garden Railway | Morris Arboretum & Gardens](#)

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