

# PGRS TRACKIN'



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## The Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

**February 2023**

**Editor: Wayne Hamilton**

### **Greetings**

I am considering a newsletter series on “So You Want To Build a Garden Railroad?” Topics could include why, design, themes, construction, power, water, lighting, etc. If anyone has thoughts to share on this idea, please contact me. I hope this series could take some folks from planning to construction, then operating. Please send any idea, project, photo, 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](mailto:railman1959@aol.com) Special thanks to this month’s contributors.

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### **Club Messages**

The PGRS Board met on February 1, 2023. In attendance were Don Watson, Bill Huntman, Randy Theis, Larry Williams Jim Redmond and Jon Boyle.

#### Topics of Discussion:

Next Trainfest: The board decided the next PGRS Trainfest will be held on March 11th, 2023, from 10am – 3pm. The format would continue as before starting with an annual meeting then presentations. Food (coffee and doughnuts and a cold lunch) will be provided and a drawing will be held for door prizes. We will have the same room we used last year at Lutheridge at 2511 Hendersonville Road in Arden, NC. The room is also available at 8am-5pm for set-up and break-down needs.

#### Dues:

Annual dues of \$20 will be collected at this meeting.

#### Food:

Coffee and donuts will be served in the morning and a cold lunch with beverages will also be provided.

#### Door Prizes:

As before, a drawing will be held for some great door prizes. We are looking for donations from the members to supplement those prizes purchased by the club.

#### Train Sales:

Tables will be provided so the members can sell their RR-related items. Please let Don Watson know if you would like a table set aside for you. This will help us to determine how many tables we need, since the supply is limited.

#### Annual Meeting:

As required by our By-Laws, we will begin with our annual club meeting. The meeting will include a brief Treasurers report followed by the election/re-election of officers. We would greatly encourage any of you members to volunteer to serve as an officer. Please let Bill Hunteman know if you are interested in volunteering.

#### Presentations:

We are currently looking into what presentations to offer in the limited time we have. So far, we have two scheduled.

Track Work Basics: Several knowledgeable members will present information on how to prepare and lay large scale track. This will include how to lay, connect and bend track using a railbender, the best methods for installing and operating turnouts/switches and what turnout numbers mean as far a radius is concerned. Suggestions will also be provided on how to wire and power your trains.

How to hold a Gandy Dancer event: Randy Theis will define and tell you how to hold a successful Gandy Dancer event.

Additional information regarding the Trainfest will be forth coming as the need arises.

Here are several Train Shows you can place on your calendar:

Feb 17-18: Easley, SC Train Show      Feb 24-25: Asheville Train Show  
March 24-25: Savannah RPM      Mar 31-Apr 1: Hickory Train Show  
June 2-3: Johnson City Train Show      Sept 14-17: SER Convention - Cartersville, GA  
April 14-15: East Coast Large Scale Train Show – Annapolis, MD  
July 1-8: 38th National Garden Railroad Convention – Santa Clara, CA  
Aug 30-Sept 2: 43<sup>rd</sup> National Narrow-Gauge Convention – Denver, CO

As always, 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. Dues can be mailed to PGRS Secretary/Treasurer at:

Doc Watson  
125 Mistletoe Trail  
Hendersonville, NC 28791  
[docwatson@morrisbb.net](mailto:docwatson@morrisbb.net)

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**Railfanning - Prototypes to inspire a garden railway layout.**

**Alabama and Mississippi Train Travels  
Part Three  
By: Wayne Hamilton**

During our last camping excursion into the deep south, we visited several historic depots in Alabama and Mississippi. This month I'll share our visit to Fort Payne, Alabama and Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Let's start with the Vicksburg, MS. The Classical Revival style Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad station was built in 1907 for the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad, a subsidiary line of the Illinois Central Railroad System (IC). In the 1940s, the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley was absorbed into IC. The station was also known as the Illinois Central Railroad Station. Passenger service was dropped in 1932. IC offices were in the building until 1977. Since 1907 at least four major Mississippi

River floods have inundated the building. The building is on the National Register of Historic Place.



Multiple exhibits are housed within the Old Depot itself, which was fully restored during a \$2.4 million project undertaken by the City of Vicksburg and the Mississippi Department of Transportation.

The Old Depot's exhibits examine earlier modes of transportation, the Siege of Vicksburg and many other elements of the city's history. Inside the museum, you'll find railroad memorabilia, a collection of model Civil War gunboats carrying Mississippi names, 40 original war-themed paintings by Herb Mott, video footage of trails used by soldiers and citizens during the Siege of Vicksburg, a detailed Civil War diorama of the Siege of Vicksburg, multiple model railroad layouts, and models of architecture styles employed throughout Vicksburg's past.



Ticket Office display



Model Train layout



Other O scale Layouts



Model of a civil war rail gun



Vicksburg Battle Field diorama



The Fort Payne Depot above was erected in 1891. It is housed in a unique Richardsonian Romanesque building of locally quarried pink and white sandstone. It served as a depot for the Alabama-Great Southern Railroad for approximately 85

years. Thousands of people passed through the doors during its life as a passenger station. A group of preservation-minded citizens succeeded in acquiring the building from Norfolk-Southern Railway in 1985, when the railroad announced plans to close and dismantle the Fort Payne Depot. Funds were raised locally for stabilization and restoration of the building. It opened as a museum in 1986. Unfortunately, they do not allow indoor photography, but the outside is very photogenic.



Today, the Fort Payne Depot Museum serves 2500-3500 visitors annually, and houses several permanent and rotating exhibits. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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### **The Backshop – Modeling Tips and Projects**

#### **West Side Lumber Flat Cars in 1/20.3 and A Little Bit of History**

**By: William Huntman**

When the West Side Lumber Company (WSLC) began operation, they purchased 16 flat cars from the Carter Bros in San Francisco, CA. These cars were used to haul logs from the forest to the WSLC sawmill. The cars were 24' long with wood frames and swing motion trucks. This is a scratch-built model of a Carter Bros flat car.



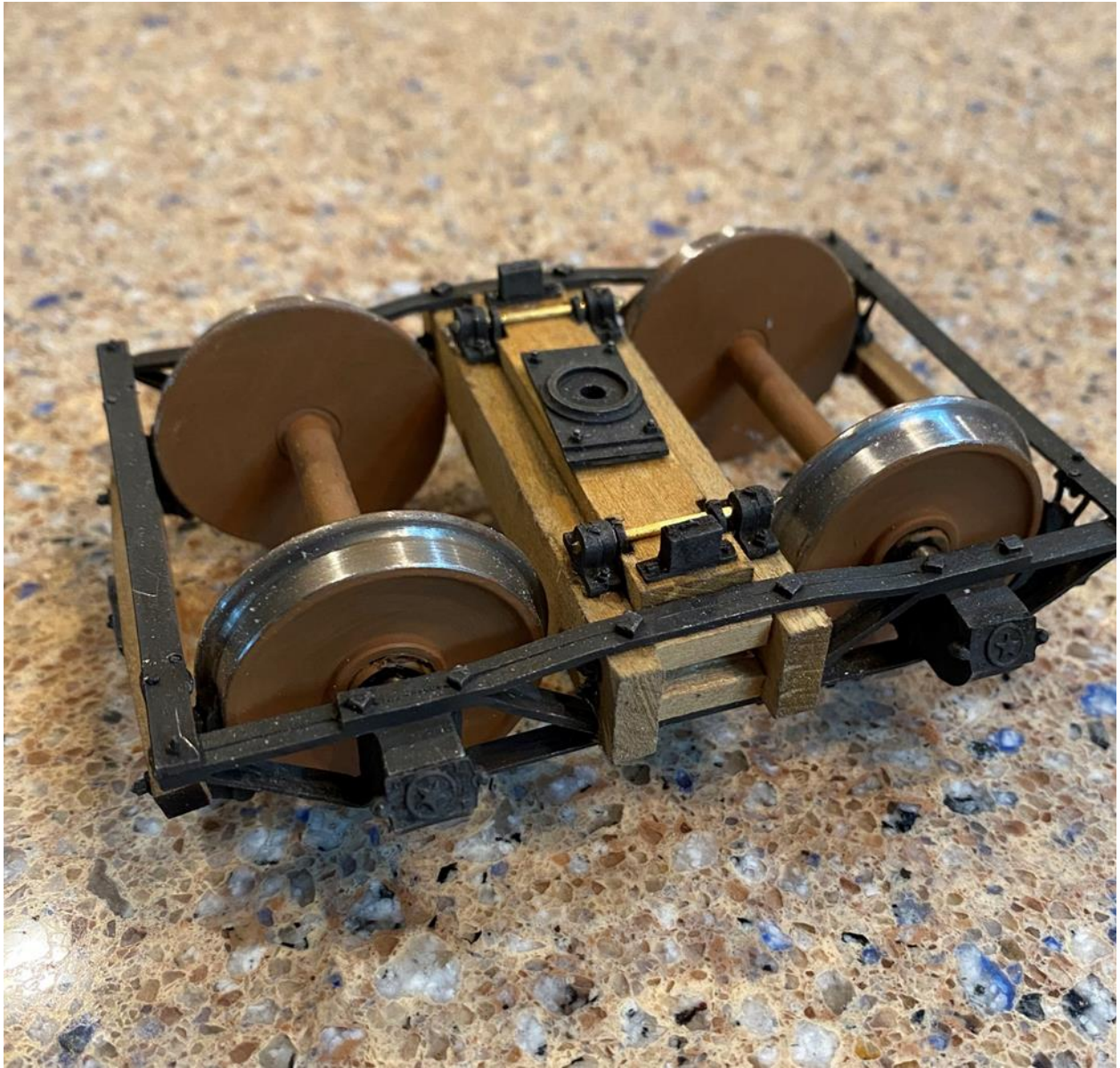
The WSLC purchased a few additional flat cars from J S Hammond's California Car Works, and decided to build their own flat cars. The WSLC eventually built over 300 flat cars during their 40+ years of operation. This is a scratch-built model of a WSLC flat car.



The swing motion trucks used on the Carter Bros cars were designed to provide flexibility for the flat car to operate on uneven track. The swing motion allows one side of the truck to rise or fall while allowing the car to remain level. This is a model version of a swing motion truck. The brass rods (unpainted) provide the



swing motion for the center planks and springs to remain horizontal while the wheels and truck side frames follow each rail.



The swing motion trucks proved to have serious maintenance problems. You might imagine the damage the wooden parts of the trucks would receive as the heavy logs were loaded onto and transported on the flat cars. The maintenance issues caused WSLC to construct their shop-built flat cars to use a different truck. The following is a picture of a 'standard' WSLC 4' truck used on their flat cars and many of their other cars.



When the WSLC began building their own flat cars, they also made a few other changes to the Carter Bros design. They changed the side sills to a smaller timber and changed the way the end sill was attached to the car frame. WSLC also made minor changes to the brake system piping under the cars. This picture compares the side and end sills of the Carter and WSLC cars.

A few flat cars retained their swing motion trucks and were converted to other cars. One example is the 24' Crew Car which was built on a flat car frame (with swing motion trucks) and used to transport the logging crews to and from the forest cutting areas.

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## Converting scale model ratios; It's not as hard as it sounds.

Edited from: Shep Paine's Armor Modelers Guide.

As modelers, we often find ourselves working with either scale drawings, kits, or photographs as references. Often, those drawings, kits, or photos are not in the same scale as the model we're building. Sometimes, we're able to enlarge or reduce an image on a computer or copier, but what if you can't do that? There is another way, but it involves a little bit of math or at least plugging the numbers into a calculator and letting it do the work for you.

Let's begin with the assumption that you have a scale drawing. The key to working with a scale drawing is the "scale multiplier factor," which is a number that expresses the proportional difference between the drawing and your model. Once you have this factor, you simply enter any dimension from the drawing into your calculator, multiply by the factor, and out comes a corresponding dimension for your model.

First, determine the decimal equivalents for the scale of the drawing and the scale of your model: divide the numerator (top number in a fraction) by the denominator (bottom number in a fraction). For example, to get the decimal equivalent for 1/29 scale, divide 1 by 29 and you get .0345 (rounded up). For easy reference, here are some decimal equivalents for common railroad modeling scales.

$1/87 = .0115$	$1/64 = .0156$	$1/32 = .0312$	$1/29 = .0345$
$1/24 = .0417$	$1/22.5 = .0444$	$1/20.3 = .0492$	$1/13.7 = .0723$

To find the scale multiplier factor, divide the model's decimal scale equivalent by that of your drawing's. For example, if our model is 1/29 scale, we found our decimal equivalent to be .0345. Let's say our scale drawing is in 1/87 or HO scale. Its decimal equivalent is .0115. To find the scale multiplier factor, we divide .0345 (the model) by .0115 (the drawing) and get 3. All we must do is multiply any measurement off the drawing by 3 to get the corresponding dimension for our 1/29 scale model. It makes me wonder if that's why Aristocraft and USA Trains chose the scale of 1/29, as it's easy to convert from HO scale.

As an easy example, if a dimension on the 1/87 scale drawing measures 1 inch long, then the same part we're making for our 1/29 scale model must be 3 inches long.

Maybe you don't have a scale drawing, but you do have a model or kit that you are confident is accurate and know its scale. You use the same process.

What if we don't know the scale of a drawing or photo? Well, there's a way around that too. Convert a real dimension of the prototype you can verify (its length, for instance) and convert from feet to inches (multiply by 12) divide by the same dimension measured on the drawing. This will give us the subject's scale. We can then find the scale multiplier as shown above. For example, let's assume our research on a flat car we want to build is 40 feet long;  $40 \times 12$  gives us 480 inches. We measure the length of the flat car in a photo and find it is 10 inches long, giving us a fraction of  $10/480$  or 1/48 scale. Then proceed as we've already discussed.

Finally, let's assume we have no information about the dimensions of the real vehicle nor the scale of the drawings or photographs we are working from, but are willing to assume the dimensions of our model are accurate. Take a dimension, say the overall length of the model, and divide it by the same dimension from the drawing or photograph. This will give us the scale multiplier without the intermediate step. This process is particularly useful when scaling measurements from photographs. However, only direct side views should be used for this because any change in perspective will considerably distort the dimensions. And there you have it, everything you need to know about converting scales!

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### **Railroad Trivia**

Nevada was the location of the shortest and slowest operating railroad in the United States. It was also chartered as a common carrier railroad although it didn't connect to any other railroad or allow public use. What was the name of this railroad and its purpose?

The answer is found later in this newsletter.

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## Businesses associated with our Club



### 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

Garden Railroad Design, New and Used Track  
You can now reach Jim at: [hendleyjim4@gmail.com](mailto:hendleyjim4@gmail.com)  
Or...(828) 333-2523



**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!

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Right-Track-Toy-Train-Museum-141291999274246/>

I am planning to close the Right Track Toy Train Museum at the end of 2023. Hours for both years are Fri., Sat., Sun 1- 5 PM. **2023** - everything that is for sale in the - 50% off.

### **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**

The Nevada Test Site was home to a unique railroad, The nuclear rocket engine program commenced in 1955, when the Atomic Energy Commission and the U.S. Air Force began various thermal reactor studies for the first assembly of a prototype rocket engine. During the 1960s and 70s the U.S. Government

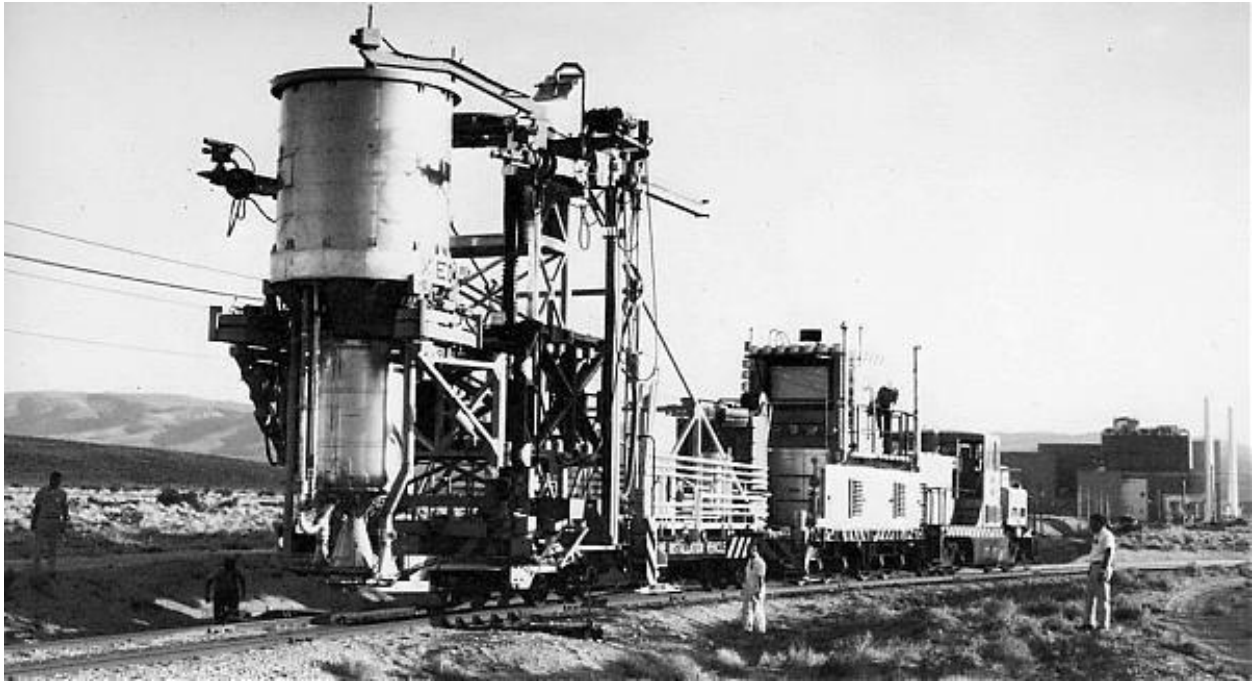
constructed several rocket development stations at Area 25 at the Nevada National Security Site and connected them with their own series of railroad tracks, thus allowing easy movement of the rocket engines from one test station to the next throughout the sprawling site. The unique name **Jackass and Western** shown on the side of the locomotives comes from the geographic location of Area 25. The Jackass Flats are some of several flats at the Nevada Test Site, such as Frenchman Flats and Yucca Flats, where most of the actual atomic testing took place during the mid to late 20th century. The Jackass and Western Railroad operated as a chartered common carrier until the U.S. Government suspended the nuclear rocket engine program in the mid-1980s. It was just a few spurs leading from the assembly building to the test sites. The short length of the spurs and the short program duration both contributed to the mere 9 miles of operational track at the Nevada Test Site.



This General Electric 25-ton diesel locomotive was used at the Nevada Test Site in the 1960s for hauling nuclear powered rocket engines. After the program had been finished, the locomotive was mothballed. Once the radiation contamination reduced to safe levels, the locomotive was made available to the Nevada State Railroad Museum.



This GE 80 ton diesel electric locomotive was built in 1953. It served initially at a U.S. Naval facility before it was overhauled and relocated to the Nevada Test Site in 1964. There, it was routinely used to transport nuclear powered rocket engines to various test stations. It is also located at the Nevada State Railroad Museum Boulder City in Boulder City, Nevada.



A nuclear rocket engine is being moved at Area 25 in NV

At the National Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas there is a model layout of the Jackass and Western Railroad. More information can found at [Project Rover - Wikipedia](#)

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### **Web Bits**

The Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum sent out their 2023 Hiwassee Loop Announcement, operating April – November. Ride through the famous Hiwassee Loop. Departs from 9406 Highway 411 in Delano, TN. Enjoy a 50-mile roundtrip through the beautiful lower Hiwassee River gorge. This 4-hour round trip takes you to the top of the famous Hiwassee Loop, where the tracks cross over themselves as they corkscrew up the mountain near Farner, Tennessee. There are only 6 of these loops in North America and this is the only one east of the Mississippi River. There is no layover on this excursion so you will be on the train for the duration of the trip. [Hiwassee Loop Train Ride | Tennessee Valley Railroad | Delano, TN \(tvrail.com\)](#)

The Bay Area Garden Railway Society is hosting the 2023 NATIONAL GARDEN RAILWAY CONVENTION for the 6th time in July 2023. Here are a few links to the railroads on the tours and their home website.

[Bay Area Garden Railway Society - Home Page \(bags.org\)](#)

[BAGRS World #1 - YouTube](#)

[BAGRS World #2 - RRs in the far north and south of the San Francisco Bay Area GRS - YouTube](#)

[38th National Garden Railway Convention 2023 – Hosted by BAGRS \(Bay Area Garden Railway Society\) \(ngrc2023.org\)](#)

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**See you next month!**