

# PGRS TRACKIN'



## The Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

**March 2025**

### **EDITOR'S GREETING**

So far this winter has been a mix of either usually warm days or brutal cold ones. On a good note the warm days have allowed us to run some trains! I would like to showcase some of our members' work, either layouts or projects. Since submittals are few, I would like an invitation to visit and take a few photographs. Expect me to ask for this at Train Fest 2025! Thanks to this month's contributors.



### **OUR CLUB'S MISSION**

**Our mission is to promote and to further the enjoyment of large scale model railroading among its members, their families and their guests, as well as the public at large.**

### **Society Officers**

Bill Massey – President  
[coachbillmassey@aol.com](mailto:coachbillmassey@aol.com)  
Vacant – Vice President

Jim Redmond – Secretary / Treasurer  
[Jim.Redmond@Alumni.Duke.edu](mailto:Jim.Redmond@Alumni.Duke.edu)

#### **BOARD MEMBERS:**

Jon Bole  
[Jarabhill@windstream.net](mailto:Jarabhill@windstream.net)  
Fran Monahan  
[MargeMonahan2@gmail.com](mailto:MargeMonahan2@gmail.com)  
Jim Redmond  
[Jim.Redmond@Alumni.Duke.edu](mailto:Jim.Redmond@Alumni.Duke.edu)  
Scott Williams  
[srwavl@outlook.com](mailto:srwavl@outlook.com)  
Wayne Hamilton  
[railman1959@aol.com](mailto:railman1959@aol.com)

#### **WEB SITE ADMINISTRATORS**

Larry Williams (Acting)  
[LDWeng55@gmail.com](mailto:LDWeng55@gmail.com)  
Dan Bails (Assistant)  
[DanBails339@gmail.com](mailto:DanBails339@gmail.com)

#### **NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Wayne Hamilton  
[railman1959@aol.com](mailto:railman1959@aol.com)

#### **SOCIETY WEB PAGE**

[WWW.PIEDMONTGARDENRAILWAY.ORG](http://WWW.PIEDMONTGARDENRAILWAY.ORG)



## CLUB NEWS

The last Asheville Train Lovers Luncheon (TLL) at the Hendersonville Depot enjoyed some spring type weather. I got to run my battery powered Southern Railway PA-2. Don Watson ran his beautiful DSP&P Mason Bogie. Everyone had a chance to run something, even if it was AVRR Club equipment. Consider joining us next month. Additionally, there will a PGRS Board of Directors meeting at the March 6th Asheville TLL at 11:30. All are welcome to attend.



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](#) or contact:

Jim Redmond  
PGRS Secretary/Treasurer  
14 Fountainview Terrace #202  
Greenville, SC 29607

### 2025 Train Show Calendar reminders with web links:

**2025 Piedmont Division NMRA Model Train Show** March 8th & 9th

Info @ [Piedmont Division Model Train Show - Model Train Show](#)

Info @ [Piedmont Division Model Train Show | National Model Railroad Association](#)

**23rd Annual Hickory Train Show** Fri/Sat April 4-5 at the Hickory Metro Center  
Additional Info @ 828-674-5958 and \$8.00 admission for both days.

## **CLUB NEWS Continued**

Our club experts at our last TLL gathering. A lot of wisdom being shared.



## **RAILROAD TRIVIA QUESTION**

In the mid-1970s, the Southern Railway began applying a single letter to the right of the road number on the cabs of their locomotives. Why was this done? The answer is found later in this newsletter.

## **RAIL-FANNING PROTOTYPES TO INSPIRE A GARDEN RAILWAY PROJECT**



The Yancey Railroad was a short-line that connected with the Clinchfield at Kona, NC. The Yancey served the Yancy County towns of Bacchus, Micaville (junction), Bowditch, Windom and Burnsville, NC.

The Yancey RR was previously known as the Black Mountain and Yancy RR, and the line to Burnsville previously extended to Eskota, NC.

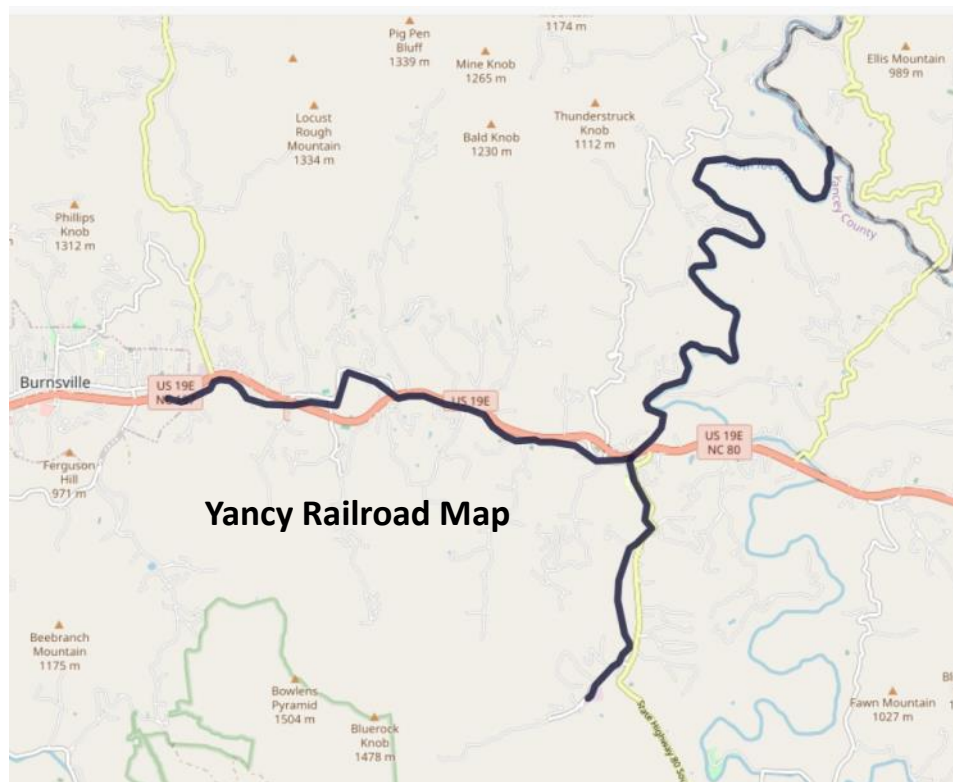
This line was abandoned after the bridge piers were damaged during a flood in 1977. There was later some interest in reopening the line by a new owner, but those plans were put on hold after the track and bridge were vandalized.

## RAILFANNING— Continued

Construction began in 1907, and at the height of its operations the line stretched twenty-three (23) miles from Eskota to Kona.

Around 1928, most of the timber in the area had been depleted, and the line from Eskota to Burnsville was removed. On the remainder of the line, traffic was reduced so steadily over the next twenty years that in 1951 the Clinchfield Railroad applied for abandonment with the Interstate Commerce Commission. Permission was granted with one stipulation - If local interests wanted to acquire and operate the line, the Clinchfield Railroad was obligated to sell the line at a fair market price.

Local interests did step forward and purchased the line for \$22,000, then acquired a new locomotive. A small engine shed was erected in Burnsville, and the railroad was renamed to the Yancey Railroad in 1955.



Flooding in 1977 damaged sections of the track in spots as well as weakened the piers and pilings on the bridge over the North Toe River. This resulted in the loss of much of the Yancey's remaining freight customers.



## **RAILFANNING— Continued**

Most of the remaining equipment was taken off the railroad by the summer of 1984 (which included the scrapping of GE 45-ton locomotive #2), while the remaining assets were auctioned off in May 1985.



Yancey Railroad's locomotive number 2, a GE 50-ton switcher photographed somewhere in Micaville on October 20th, 1981. The railroad nicknamed number 2 "Puddles", because, according to former Yancey Railroad president Bill Cannon, "it had a tendency to waddle along the tracks without falling into a puddle."



Engine number 1, a GE 45-ton diesel built and entered into service in 1955.

## RAILFANNING— Continued



Headed north from Bowditch to Micaville, July 1970.



The fall of 1984, the final run of the Yancey Railroad, photographed in Micaville. This old engine sits abandoned along 19E in Micaville, across the road from the convenience store for years.

More information can be found here: [BMRR & Yancey Railroad](#)

This railroad would be easy to model as any Class I road freight cars could be used as rolling stock. A Bachmann 45 tonner would make a perfect starting point for a locomotive model.





## **THE BACKSHOP**

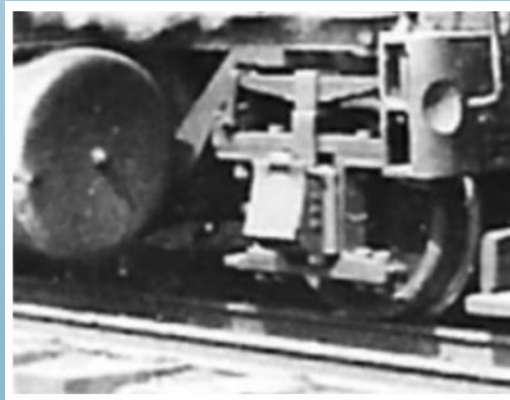
### **MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS**

Pilot Improvement For Bachmann Connie

By: Doc Watson



Not long after the Bachmann Connie came out, I noticed that something was missing. The Connie was a great model of an outside frame consolidated locomotive, but the front pilot lacked the typical outside journal box and leaf springs as shown below.



My first attempt involved using an existing plastic journal box, a plastic spring and some styrene and brass. I cast the end piece from the spring and journal box in resin and made a support structure from additional styrene and brass. It turned out pretty good but was a bit fragile. I ran with this until I recently discovered 3D Printing.

**THE BACKSHOP**  
**MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS**  
**Continued**

Here's what the original Connie looks like.



And it disassembles into this:

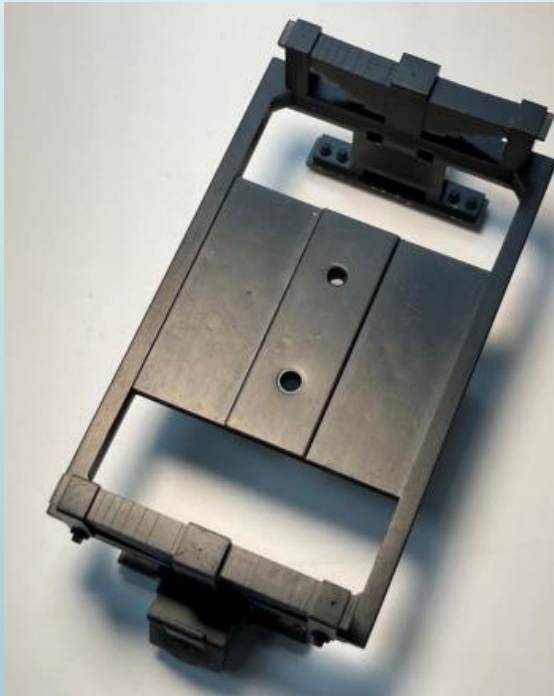


I took my original outside frame pivot piece and sent it off to my son who used it to create a 3D file with the exact dimensions of my original and printed a single unit that is much sturdier.



**THE BACKSHOP**  
**MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS**  
**Continued**

Here are a couple of photos of the finished part.



To install this unit, all you have to do is remove the pilot, remove the two screws that hold the original two plastic leaf springs and use the same two screws to install the new, enhanced, outside frame unit. The new unit uses the exact same holes. Here's the new piece attached to the pilot.



**THE BACKSHOP**  
**MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS**  
**Continued**

Here's what the new pilot looks like installed on a Bachmann Connie.



If you are interested, please contact me, Don Watson,  
at [docwatson@morrisbb.net](mailto:docwatson@morrisbb.net)

**XXX**

I don't have an update on my hand cart shed build this month as the cold weather is keeping me from painting it. I do want to share some photos on a Bachmann Climax conversion to battery power with a Blunami 4408 decoder.

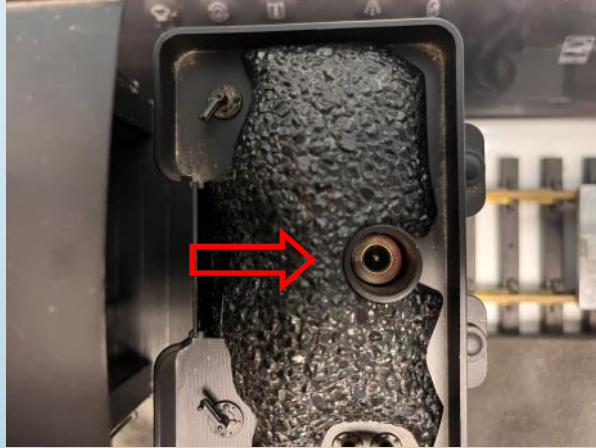
I was able to get the decoder and battery into the small tender. As this is an old model, the incandescent lighting was replaced with 5mm LEDs. The speaker was placed in the ash pan and the charging jack was placed in the water fill on the tender. The power switch was mounted under the tender with a piece of heat shrink tubing covering the toggle handle.

## **THE BACKSHOP**

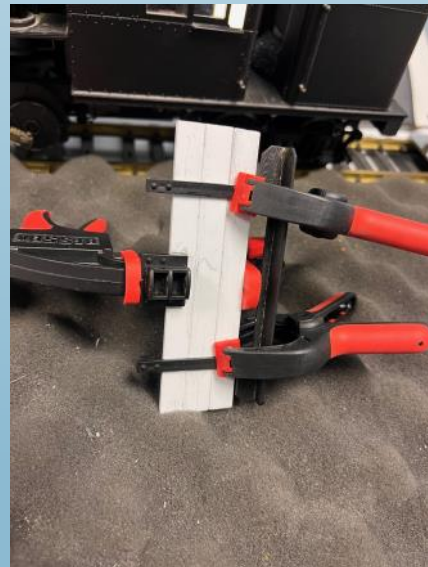
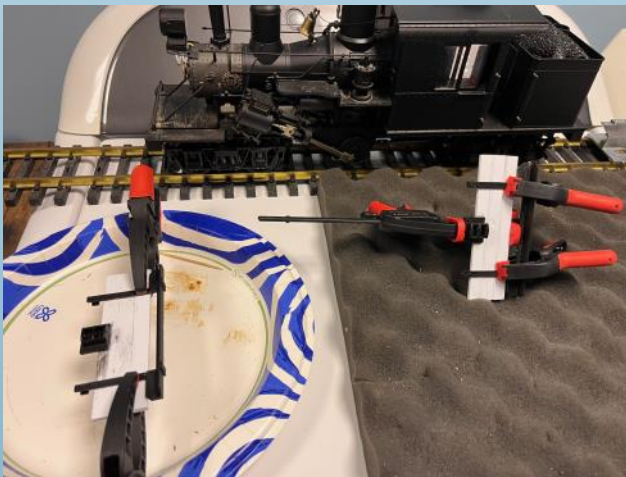
### **MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS**

#### **Continued**

The tender charging jack location.



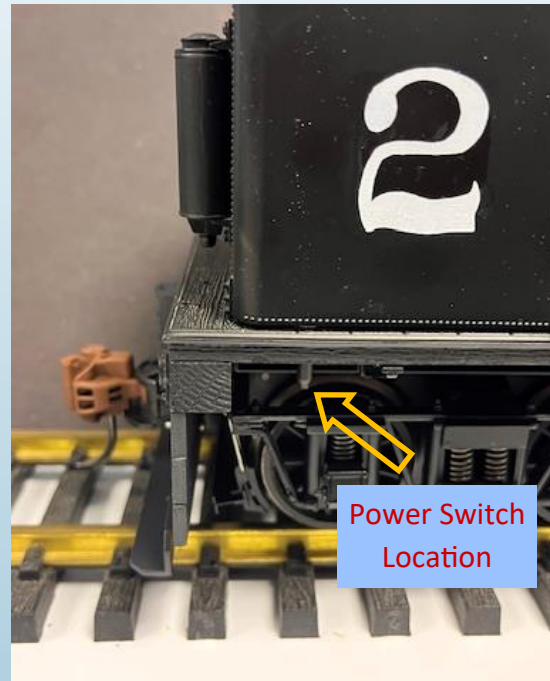
The original model used truck mounted couplers which looked terrible. The pilots needed additional styrene "boards" added so the new couplers would have a mounting point, as shown below



The couplers are Kadee #779 which have been painted with a rust colored paint. I added minimal markings, just the road number, which is common on logging locomotives. I have not completed the weathering yet but it is coming along. Also, the egg crate foam is very helpful as it contains wayward bolts, nuts, and screws.



## THE BACKSHOP MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS Continued



You can see from the photo on the right there is minimal space for hardware. I always verify the couplers are at the correct mounting height before I fully tighten the micro bolts. I also found that the supplied bolts were too long, so I used some M2 x 8mm bolts which worked and looked better.

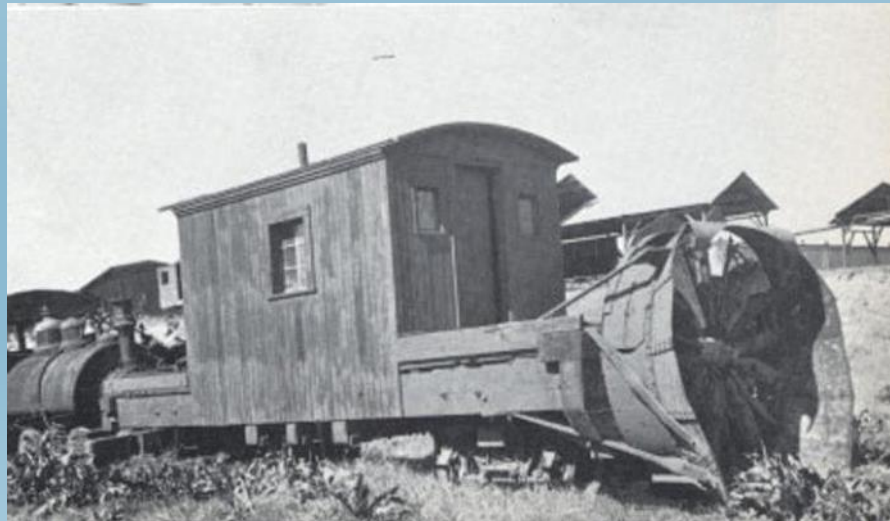


XXX



**THE BACKSHOP**  
**MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS**  
**Continued**

This is some inspirational information if anyone is so inclined to attempt a model. The Swayne Lumber company needed a snow plow so they built one. The plow blades were removed from a truck mounted snowplow. The plow unit was mounted on a flat car built with very large timbers in the framework. The plow blades were powered by a vertical steam engine in the cabin. Steam to the engine was supplied by a line from the locomotive pushing the plow. The trucks under the plow were taken from a Swayne Lumber company Heisler locomotive. The Nevada County Narrow Gauge railroad acquired the plow from the Swayne Lumber company and rebuilt it.

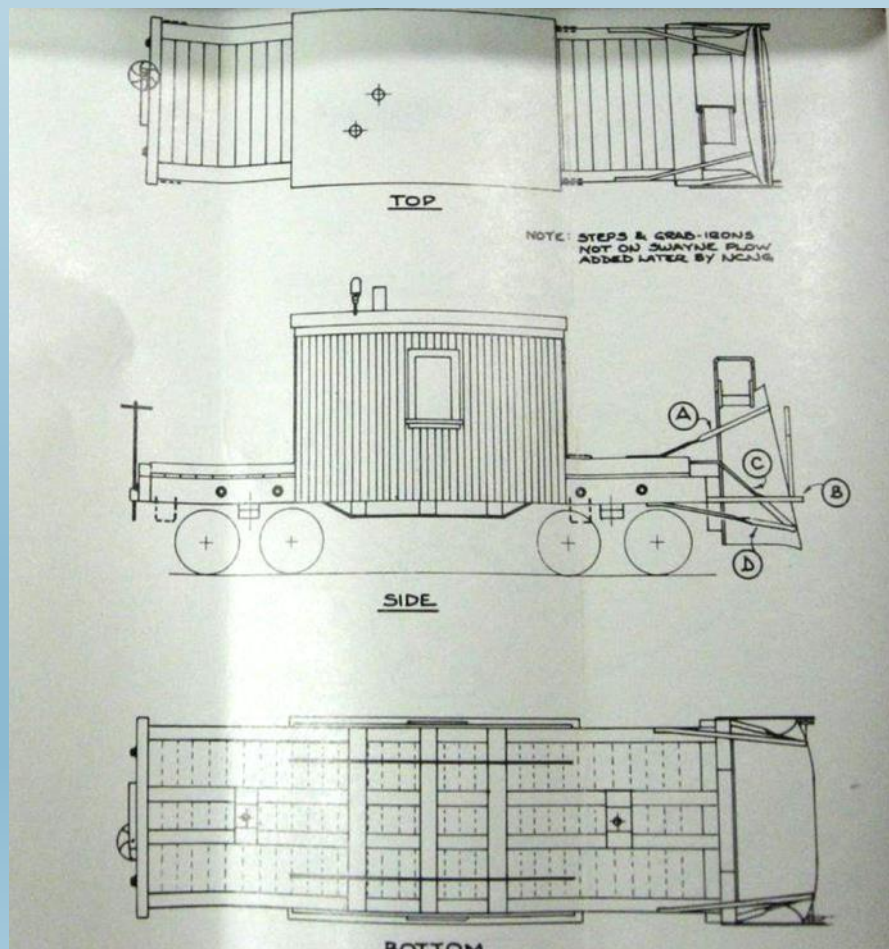


## **THE BACKSHOP**

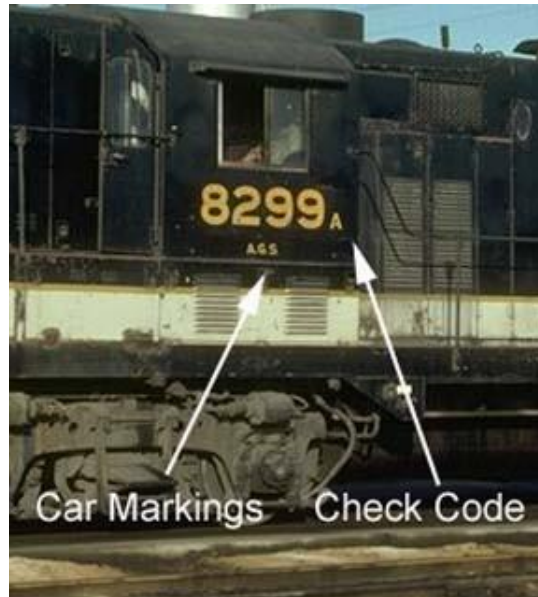
### **MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS**

#### **Continued**

It had components from an old Climax locomotive (the engine and the trucks) but no one seemed to know which engine had been "salvaged" by the Swayne crew. The Nevada County Narrow purchased it in 1939 and had to do a significant rebuild of the center sills and frame along with a repainting. They conducted one test and found that the rotary could really throw snow, so they installed valves on the steam domes of three of their engines to supply the rotary's Climax engine steam needs. Unfortunately, the future weather was never fierce enough to justify a snow train in CA, so the unit spent most of its life in the sun on a siding. In the freelance world a reasonable new step for your private line would be a conversion to a gas or diesel power source. Good luck! Sorry for the poor plans.



## RAILROAD TRIVIA ANSWER



Starting sometime in the mid-1970s, the Southern Railway began applying a single letter to the right of the road number on the cabs of their locomotives. This number did not appear in the number boards, nor did it appear with any end number boards on locomotives that had them. The check letters were Southern Railway's solution to prevent the transposition of digits when keying movement information into the company's computer system or in written documents. Southern used A, F, H, J, K, L, R, T, W & X on their engines.

If you research this on-line you will find several "experts" giving the formula for the calculation to find the check code. The letter used was calculated from the road number using the formula detailed here is the one that I believe is correct version.

These are the assigned numbers to the letters for the cab digits.

A=0, F=1, H=2, J=3, K=4, L=5, R=6, T=7, W=8, AND X=9.

Also you must take any cab number, and make it 4 digits. So if its only 3 digits you add a zero on the front and make it 4 digit number.

## RAILROAD TRIVIA ANSWER— Continued

Take the engine number say 3971 which is an coded as X. Add first number to 2 times the second number plus the third number plus 2 times the fourth number.  $3+(2*9)+7+(2*1)$  = now this won't work if the formula is applied straight away. If the result is two digits when multiplying a number, add the two digits together, such as  $(2*9)$  which is 18 then you use the two digits in 18 as 1+8. Now the formula becomes  $3+(1+8)+7+2=21$ .

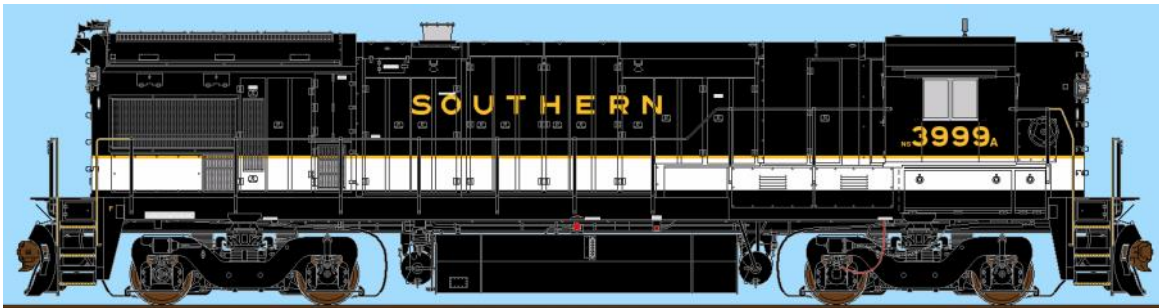
We are still not there yet. You now subtract the answer from the next larger number in units of 10.

In this example this would be  $30 - 21 = 9$  OR "X".

Another example might be engine 701 which is a J.

Since there are only 3 digits simply put a zero in front. This will give  $0+(2*7)+0+(2*1) = 0+(1+4)+0+(2)=7$  then  $10 - 7 = 3$  which is "J".

So was all this really necessary? Well, the Southern Railway was a conglomerate of several railroads still under their individual equipment ownership, as noted by the car marking in the photo of the AGS for Alabama Great Southern RR. Prior to the 4 digit class renumbering in the early 70's, for example it was possible to have three RS-3 in a consist with 2, 3, and 4 digit cab numbers all with different sub-owners. Once renumbered to four digits it was thought to have a check code system to make sure they entered the cab numbers correctly in the new computer systems. No other railroad used such a system.





## WEB BYTES

There is a very nice museum in Newton, NC. Information on the Southeastern Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum @ [Newton Depot](#) or by calling 980-858-4266. They are open Friday and Saturday.

Every product comes from somebody's "vision" (see what we did there?) and the passenger dome-observation car was no exception. From the Pentrex show "Union Pacific Streamliner Collection"


<https://rfd.video/UPStreamliner>

or

[Every product comes from somebody's... - Classic Streamliners | Facebook](#)



## BUSINESSES ASSOCIATED WITH OUR CLUB

	<b>Jim's Train Sales</b> O & G Gauge New & Used Trains <b>Jim Hendley</b> Etowah, North Carolina 28729 <i>Lionel, MTH, USA Trains, PIKO, LGB Bridgeworks Power Supplies, Bachmann Split-Jaw Rail Clamps, O &amp; G Gauge Track</i>
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Garden Railroad Design, New and Used Track

You can now reach Jim at: [hendleyjim4@gmail.com](mailto:hendleyjim4@gmail.com)

Or....(828) 333-2523

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

The **Asheville Train Lovers Luncheon** will be the first Thursday every month from 10am to 2pm at the Hendersonville Depot. Bring trains to run.

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

The **Columbus Train Lovers Luncheons** are held at 12:00 on the Third Thursday of each month at Sully's Restaurant in Columbus.

