

PGRS TRACKIN'



The Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

October 2025

EDITOR'S GREETING

Welcome to Fall. Leaves are beginning to drop so that means a little more work for our layouts. I hope everyone is ready to attend our next Fall TrainFest. Details are found in the club news section. Feel free to bring your latest modelling project to share with other club members. I also extend a special THANK YOU to this month's newsletter 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.

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CLUB NEWS

Trainfest will be October 18th at the Lutheridge Camp and Conference Center in Arden, NC from 10am to 3pm. This will be open to members and their invited guests. Our annual membership dues are **not** be collected at this meeting. Member dues will be collected at the spring meeting. However, there will be a Guest fee for nonmembers of \$5.00 to cover the cost of lunch. Of course members eat free, so encourage your guest to join our club.

The program will be similar to the last one in that we'll have a key note speaker on local train history in WNC. There will be garden railroad tips, workshop clinics, and door prizes. Also, PGRS members are encouraged to bring any train related items they wish to sell. More details will be sent out via email prior to TrainFest.

The PGRS Board will be holding another planning meeting at the Asheville TTL in Hendersonville on October 2 at 11:30am. Members are encouraged to attend the lunch meeting to provide input or you can contact any board member with your ideas.

As a reminder, the position of Vice-President is still open. If interested, please contact President Bill Massey.

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

CLUB NEWS - Continued

The first Thursday of each month is still the open house at Apple Valley Model RR and is available to all PGRS members. You are welcome to bring your trains to the Hendersonville Depot from 10 to 2 pm. Track power is available. We had a visitor come by with a collection of trains he had purchased and we tested them for him. Although older models, all ran on track power as seen below.



The usual suspects enjoying the day running trains.

CLUB NEWS - Continued

Jerry Wise provide me a few photos from his railway in Sapphire Valley, NC. A very nice looking layout.



CLUB NEWS Continued
2025 Train Show Calendar Links:

Friday and Saturday, October 10 and 11 is the Autumn Rails 2025 train show. The show is Friday, October 10 from 12pm to 6pm and Saturday, October 11, 10am to 4pm, at the WNC Ag Center, Expo Building at 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd. Fletcher, NC 28732. Tickets are \$8 for adults, children under 12 are free with an adult and scouts in uniform are free.



RAILROAD TRIVIA QUESTION

What is a "COTS" placard found on older freight cars?
The answer is found later in this newsletter.

RAIL-FANNING
PROTOTYPES TO INSPIRE A GARDEN RAILWAY PROJECT

Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway

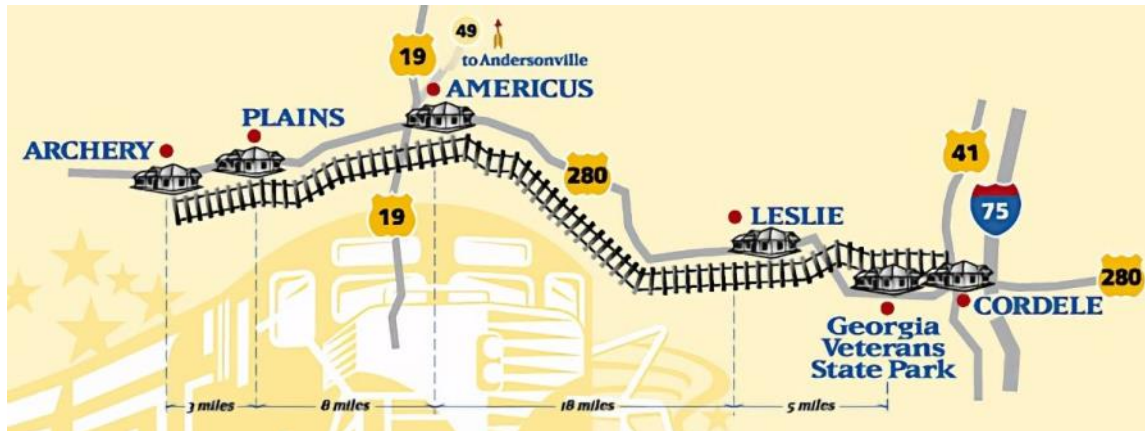


The SAM Shortline Railroad operates seasonal excursion trains between Cordele and Archery, in southwest Georgia. The operation's name pays homage to the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railroad, formed in 1888 as a successor to the Americus, Preston & Lumpkin Railroad. The original SAM mainline between Savannah and Montgomery, Alabama, would later be absorbed into the Seaboard Air Line Railroad, until segments of the line were spun off by successors Seaboard System and CSX Transportation in the early and late 1980s.

RAILFANNING— Continued

Today, excursion trains featuring a small fleet of postwar enclosed passenger cars are managed by the Southwest Georgia Railroad Excursion Authority. Freight shortline Heart of Georgia Railroad provides locomotives and operating crews. SAM Shortline offers a variety of trips throughout the year, with depot platforms in Cordele, the Georgia Veterans State Park, Leslie, Americus, Plains, and Archery. Trains cross scenic Lake Blackshear on an extended peninsula and wooden trestle. The trainset is stored at the Georgia Veterans State Park depot when not in service. We camped at the RV park in the Georgia Veterans State Park, which is a very nice park and campground.

Route Map



Savannah, Americus & Montgomery #101 "Ocmulgee"
from Seaboard Air Line Railway - Richard E. Prince / collection

RAILFANNING— Continued

History

SAM stands for Savannah, Americus, Montgomery, as well as the name of the line's founder and president, Colonel Samuel Hugh Hawkins, a prominent 19th century Sumter County capitalist. Politics, tariffs and other railroad antics caused a disruption for farmers and traders in Americus, Ga. Sam Hawkins and others organized the Americus Preston and Lumpkin Railroad in 1884 to ensure that Americus would continue to dominate the region's trade. The AP&L would be Georgia's only railroad constructed entirely with local capital. In 1888 they extended east and west, creating a direct route between Montgomery, Alabama and Savannah, Georgia. In the same year the road was appropriately renamed the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway, or S.A.M. Upon its completion the SAM's mainline would stand at 340 miles in length. Loans defaulted, mergers happened, the Ga DOT intervened and ultimately the train passed to the Ga DNR in 2000. After a hiatus, SAM Shortline was reborn. Two years of careful planning, track rehabilitation, and equipment acquisition allowed passenger trains to begin rolling down the historic mainline again.

The link for tickets, pricing, and excursion types is below:

[Home | SAM Shortline](#)



RAILFANNING— Continued



THE BACKSHOP

MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS

Southern Railway Projects

By : Wayne Hamilton

This month I'm still working on the Savannah and Atlanta caboose project. I had hoped to be done but suffered a set back on my painting. The Amazon painter's tape I used allowed significant bleeding onto the base coat. This was entirely my fault as I should have applied a clear coat to seal the tape edges before painting the new color. My usual Tamiya tape worked fine on the cupola, so I took a chance on the Amazon tape but with terrible results. I am still deciding on whether to strip it and start over or try to re-mask and try another coat or two along the bad edges.



Anyway, I did complete a couple of other cars, so here they are for your viewing pleasure.



THE BACKSHOP
MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS
Continued

The double door box car started out as an gray undecorated Aristocraft kit. Decals from K4 Decals were used along with a boxcar red paint coat.



The bulkhead flatcar was also an Aristocraft car originally in a Canadian Pacific RR scheme repainted and decaled for the Central of Georgia Railway.



XXX

THE BACKSHOP

MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS

Continued

Blunami Decoder 4408 for Large Scale

by Scott Williams

I recently received, and I'm currently installing the Blunami 'Steam' decoder in my Bachmann Connie, which will replace the Railboss RC card and the MyLoco sound card that I had installed previously.

I also purchased the 'EMD Diesel' sound decoder version to install in my GP 38-2 diesel locomotive that I also had Railboss and MyLoco installed in.

This photo of the card in my hand will give you an idea of the size. Basically 1.25" by 2.5"

About \$204 dollars each. Here's a link to one at Trainworld.

[SoundTraxx 885620 BLU-4408 Sound and DCC Decoder for S, O and G Scales - Blunami Baldwin and Others Sounds](#)



THE BACKSHOP
MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS
Continued

This card combines both the motion control and a sophisticated sound card all in one simple unit. Here's the Blunami product description:

The Blunami BLU-4408

The BLU-4408 is designed to wirelessly operate models with higher stall currents such as some S, O, and large scale locomotives; this decoder features easy-to-use terminal blocks for no-fault wiring and a higher audio amplifier for awesome volume, indoors or out. Blunami decoders can be operated in three different ways: DC, DCC and Wireless mode. Using the Blunami app (iOS versions 8 or later), you can operate your locomotive with incredible ease of use. You will feel like you are in the cab with the amazing new features that Tsunami2 has to offer including: Reactive Dynamic Digital Exhaust, Functioning locomotive and train brakes, injectors, power reverse, and firebox flicker. We also offer a large selection of selectable sound effects including: exhaust chuffs(10), prime movers (up to 12), bells (12), Whistles (90), airhorns (40+), couplers, dynamos and more!

I have just easily replaced the Railboss and Myloco with this one card in my Connie tender this morning in a very short amount of time. All the connections are screw terminals, so no soldering is required.

I haven't completed the wiring to the back up light in the tender and finished the setup programming yet, but Wayne asked if anyone wanted to add anything to this coming newsletter so I submit my work thus far.

THE BACKSHOP MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS Continued



When I connected the battery to the board right before I took the above photo the speaker immediately lit up playing background air compressor/generator sounds which tells me that so far I haven't screwed anything up. A good sign of progress.

The Railboss, Myloco set up has provided a decent set up in many locos I have converted from track power to RC and sound and has performed well enough but this Blunami decoder should provide a superior, all-in-one solution with both better speed/direction control and with a far superior sound library of sounds and many more sound options than the Myloco is capable of. The system is controlled with your phone in an app that you download to your phone in about 30 seconds.

THE BACKSHOP

MODELING PROJECTS AND TIPS

Continued

This is my first attempt at using the Blunami but I heard and saw a previous installation that Doc Watson did a few months ago and became convinced that this is the 'next level' of wireless, battery, motion and sound control for large scale modelers at a comparable price of previous systems which may possibly render them totally obsolete.

You will still need to purchase a battery and a speaker if your loco doesn't have a suitable 2 to 3 watt 8 ohm speaker already. Otherwise, the conversion is similar disconnecting the track power pickups and wiring the motor and lights to the decoder and installing a 3-4 amp fuse between the battery and decoder. It is a slightly less complicated wiring job as the one decoder does it all.

Editor's note: I installed this same decoder in a Climax tender. The small size is perfect for these smaller spaces. The functionality of the lighting and sound effects are superb. You can use either battery or track power for the decoder. Some screen shots of the phone app are shown below.



RAILROAD TRIVIA ANSWER

“COTS” (Clean, Oil, Test & Stencil) or, colloquially, “lube plates”, are these distinctive white-bordered black boxes contained stenciled information recording the car’s build date and inspection and lubrication data for the axle bearings and air brake system. Prior to the 1970s, COT&S data was just stenciled on the brake system air reservoir and/or on a small patch near the truck bolster.



Beginning in 1972, the Association of American Railroads began a program of applying this data in the now familiar consolidated stencil block to new and rebuilt cars. The early version was a white-bordered black box containing the stenciled data (see above image).

In 1974, the Federal Railroad Administration began to mandate the application of these data blocks, and around the same time, the layout changed to a two panel design seen on next page. This was applied to new and existing cars throughout the rest of the 1970s.

RAILROAD TRIVIA ANSWER

Continued



In the early 1980s, the consolidated stencil was modified and standardized to a smaller 3-panel arrangement (seen on next page) with two top panels for lube and test information, and a lower block that would indicate the cars built (and if applicable, re-built) date that would become the standard from 1982-2016. Around 1981 or 1982 a similar 4-panel block (with three upper panels and one lower strip) was briefly used, but due to its short longevity, was pretty rare.

RAILROAD TRIVIA ANSWER

Continued



In 2016 the requirement for the consolidated stencil was dropped, and new or repainted cars no longer feature it. That block was always a nice go-to for checking the car's age if you could read the BLT or "build date" in the lower panel. Use of the correct style COTS panel can then date your railroad. Decals are available at these links:

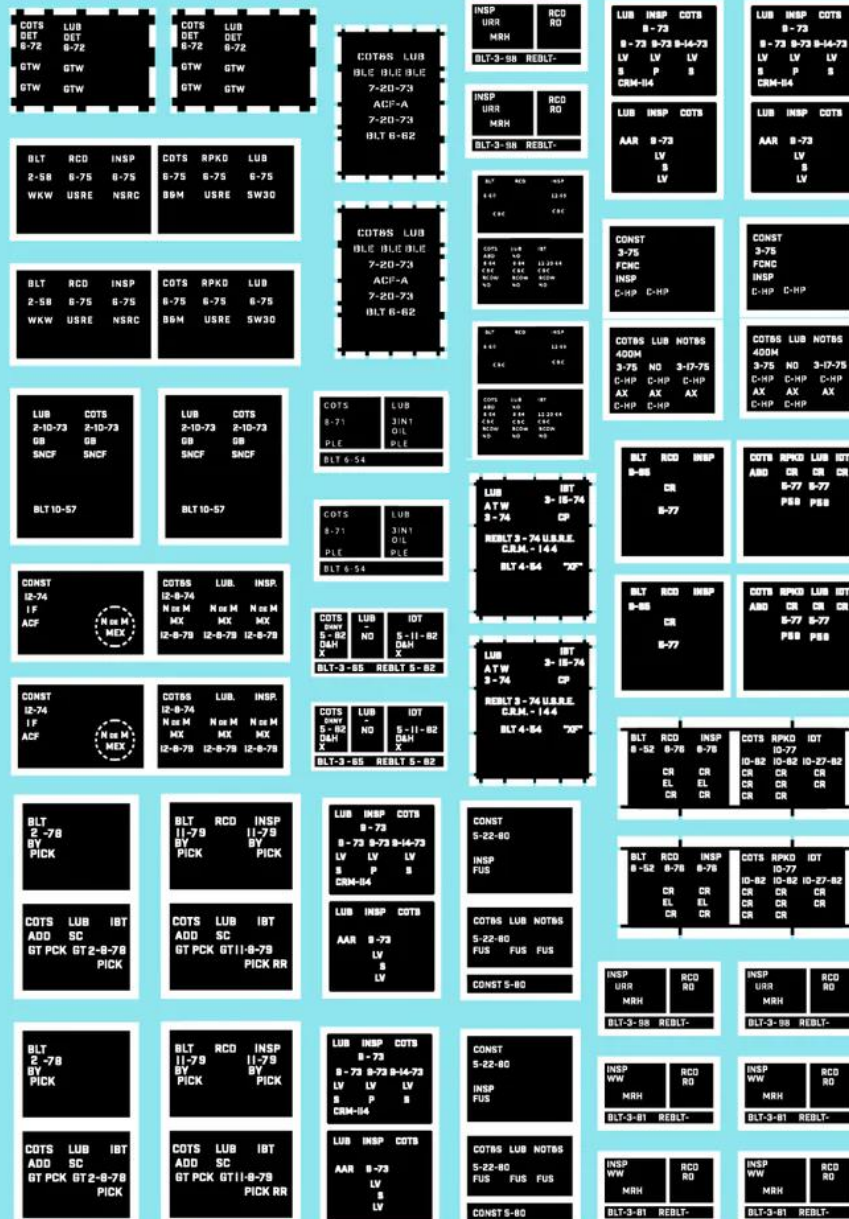
[COTS Lube Data Stencil Boxes Black and White - Decal - Choose Scale – K4 Decals – Model Train Decals](#)

[Generic Modern 50' Boxcar Data Only White Solid Font G Scale Decal Set](#)

I typically use the K4 decals. See the next page for their fine set that provides examples of all the COTS styles described in this answer.

Thanks to the Algoma Central HO Model Railroad for help with this trivia answer.

Continued



COTS / Lube Stencils
G 1:29 Scale



WEB BYTES

Web Links to Resources & Information


[SAM Shortline Excursion Train To Plains, GA](#)

[The Entire History of EMD](#)

[How and Why did Conductors and Engineers get their outfits? | Railroad 101](#)



BUSINESSES ASSOCIATED WITH OUR CLUB

	<p>Jim's Train Sales O & G Gauge New & Used Trains Jim Hendley Etowah, North Carolina 28729 Lionel, MTH, USA Trains, PIKO, LGB Bridgeworks Power Supplies, Bachmann Split-Jaw Rail Clamps, O & G Gauge Track</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 Luncheon** will be the first Thursday every month from 10am to 2pm at the Hendersonville Depot. **Please 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, SC 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, NC.

