



# Garden Railroading News

January/February 2025 • 2025 #1 • [www.GRNews.org](http://www.GRNews.org)



**The Wandering  
Railroad**

**Review: 25-Ton Diesel  
Switcher from PIKO**

**Report: Southeast Regional Get-Together**

A free digital magazine produced by garden railroaders for garden railroaders





# Garden Railroading News

January/February 2025 • 2025 #1 • GRNews.org

Pictures to enjoy; projects to attempt.

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**Cover Photo: A Piko Mogul leads a D&RGW passenger train through the Town of Crystal Creek and past Gold Spike Park on Ken Brody's Westie Line. The spike monument in the park commemorates the nearby completion of the layout's initial track loop in 1994.**

• Proprietor/Photographer Ken Brody



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Editor & Layout Design Carla Brand Breitner Web & Marketing Mick Spilsbury



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Photo by Carla Brand Breiter

Above: Gary Woolard's new Accucraft C-18 steams past the service yard at Jim Gabelich's "Wednesday Water Boil" steamup. For this "tune-up" run, Gary borrowed Jeff Campbell's freight consist. • Palos Verdes, California

Below: On GR News social media, we are used to seeing locos powering through verdant or snowy scenes on Shawn Viggiano's Kittatinny Mountain Railroad, but here we are off the beaten path at his back country mill. A steam donkey is loading milled logs onto a flat car while a sawdust pile smokes. • Wantage, New Jersey



Photo by Shawn Viggiano



*MAY  
WE SUGGEST...  
Something New*



## A Moment of Reflection

Garden Railroading News would like to take a moment to console those who have lost homes to the recent fires in Los Angeles County or to past floods and winds from tropical storms across the country. G-Scale garden railroaders are always planning for weather protection, but the scale of damage and destruction recently is overwhelming. All scales of model railroaders have been affected. Our thoughts go out to those who have lost model train layouts and collections.

In this moment of loss, we would like to share the link to a story of layout survival. Rob Caves lives in a house along Christmas Tree Lane in Altadena, California. Christmas Tree Lane, aka Santa Rosa Avenue, is lined with cedar trees over a century old that are lit up for visitors to celebrate the holidays. Rob welcomes holiday visitors to a meandering train layout from his garage throughout his backyard illustrating a journey by rail from San Diego to Seattle. He and members of the Christmas Tree Lane Model Railroad Society saved his house and railroad during the Eaton Fire.

For a more complete story and photos, go to: [laist.com/news/climate-environment/he-built-a-massive-train-set-in-his-altadena-backyard-and-returned-to-protect-it-from-the-eaton-fire](http://laist.com/news/climate-environment/he-built-a-massive-train-set-in-his-altadena-backyard-and-returned-to-protect-it-from-the-eaton-fire)

For information on the Christmas Tree Lane Model Railroad Society, visit: [www.facebook.com/EasternCaliforniaRailroad](http://www.facebook.com/EasternCaliforniaRailroad)

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[youtube.com/channel/UCmuyDnk2QRyleIQIAMFXrJw](https://youtube.com/channel/UCmuyDnk2QRyleIQIAMFXrJw)

## 2025 National Garden Railway Convention June 18 to 22, 2025

Register now for Early Bird Ticket Bundles to the 2025 Sacramento National Garden Railway Convention scheduled from June 18 to 22, 2025.

For more information, go to: [NGRC2025.org](http://NGRC2025.org)

## A PIKO Switcher from the Cold War Is Now in Private Service

A new German State Railroad shunting diesel from PIKO will be arriving this March.

This PIKO model is of a former V 60 of the Deutsche Reichsbahn, in use on the SKL Schienen Komplex Logistik rails in an attractive

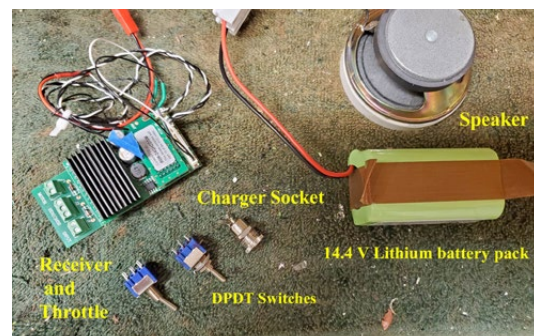


paint scheme. The model 37594 SKL VI BR 345 Diesel Loco has two powerful Bühler motors, directional LED white/red headlights and tail lights, and many separately applied parts and individual details, including a detailed cab interior with driver figure. The model is smoke unit ready and set up for sound retrofitting with a PIKO digital decoder and sound unit.

Following experience gained running the V 60 in the early 1960s, the DR improved their switcher design with this V 60.12, including a wider cab and cab roof, more engine access doors, and a new headlight arrangement. Over four hundred V 60.12 were delivered to the DR through 1969, and there were hardly any rail yards in the DDR that did not have at least one V 60. The rugged and reliable V 60 served on many industrial railroads and belt lines and was a popular export unit. In the early 1990s, DR rebuilt 80 units with new engines. These units were classified as BR 344 with the introduction of uniform operating numbers in 1992. The BR 105 and BR 106 series became BR 345 and BR 346. More information at: [www.piko-america.com](http://www.piko-america.com)

For the latest catalog and new items brochure: <https://www.piko-america.com/pages/catalogs-brochures-and-flyers>

## Coming Soon in GR News: Pete Thornton on an Approach to Radio Control Installation



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## LGB Plans Three Variations of a class C 3-Truck Shay

Lima Locomotive Works produced locomotives originally developed to haul logs in Michigan, using patents by Ephraim Shay. The locomotive's tractive effort made the engine popular on logging and mining railroads throughout North America. LGB will be delivering a high-end G-Scale version of the class C 3-Truck Shay in the third quarter of 2025. The models come in three versions, one as originally delivered to the Madera Sugar Pine Railway in 1912, one as used on the West Side Lumber Co. Railroad until 1962, and one still operating on the Roaring Camp & Big Trees Railroad pulling excursion trains today.

LGB has produced new tooling to build these high-end models which use metal construction with separately applied details. Locomotives come equipped with an mfx/DCC decoder, a built-in smoke generator, and extensive light and sound functions. The smoke box door can be opened; fire box reveals a flickering fire.

The timing for a model (No. 26701) of Roaring Camp's No. 7 coincides with the upcoming return to service of No. 7 after a boiler rebuild last year. Jake Zarraonandia caught a photo of the rebuilt boiler returning to Felton, California, as he passed it (on the picturesque 3-cylinder side) on the 101 freeway in Los Angeles. When the rebuild is complete, locomotive No. 7 "Sonora" will pull tourists on a three-mile-long trip in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. The class C Shay from 1911 ran during its active forest railroad career for various timber companies in California, sat on display in a Sonora park, and ran resort excursions for the West Side & Cherry Valley Railway before joining the Roaring Camp & Big Trees in 1986.



Photo by Jake Zarraonandia

*Rebuilt boiler for "Sonora No. 7" on road back home.*

LGB is also offering a model (No. 26702) of No. 7 detailed for its working career on West Side Lumber Company rails in Tuolumne County, where it worked alongside eight other Shays. The West Side, the last narrow gauge logging railroad in America, operated until 1962. The lack of a spark arrestor on the stack is one of many details that differentiate this mid-20th Century model from the present day locomotive.



L26701 RC&BT RR Shay Steam No. 7, Era VI

L26702 WSLC RR Shay Steam No. 7, Era III



L46775 Log Transport Car



L26703 MSP RR Shay Steam No. 5, Era II

Stepping back to the early 20th Century, LGB is modeling Locomotive No. 5 (No. 26703), built in 1912 for the Madera Sugar Pine Railroad in California. This class C Shay was wood-fired and had a massive Kobel smokestack. The railroad was abandoned in 1931, and Locomotive No. 5 was sold for spare parts. Similar three-truck Shays can still be admired under steam at

the Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad, a four-mile-long tourist railroad formed in 1967 from a partial line segment of the Madera Sugar Pine Railroad.

To complete your North American logging railroad, LGB will be producing a log transport car with metal solid wheelsets that comes loaded with an old-growth log restrained by chains.

More information at:

LGB.com or email [customerservice@marklin.com](mailto:customerservice@marklin.com)

Steam up on multiple tracks at **Steam Over Spencer** at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in **Spencer, North Carolina** from **March 6 to 8, 2025**. Info at: [www.nctransportationmuseum.org/steam-over-spencer](http://www.nctransportationmuseum.org/steam-over-spencer)



Layout tours (including G-Scale), clinics, excursions and more happen from **March 27 to 30, 2025** at the **NMRA Pacific Coast Regional** in **San Luis Obispo, California**. Info at: [pcr2025.org](http://pcr2025.org)

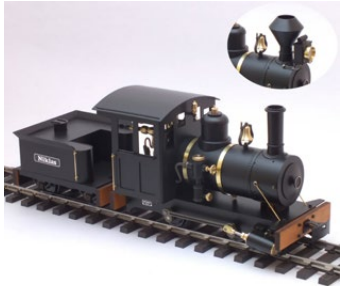


The **Staver Spring Steamup** will be running live steam G-Scale trains at Staver Locomotive in **Portland, Oregon**, for four days from **April 24 to 27, 2025**. Info at: [staverlocomotive.com](http://staverlocomotive.com)



## Regner Adds an American-style 0-4-0 to their Easy Line Models

For delivery starting in the second quarter of 2025, Regner looks to an American design to expand their live steam Easy Line models. Easy Line locomotives are designed to be easily controlled and customizable.



Niklas is a generic 0-4-0 locomotive with a small tender. While not a specific locomotive, Niklas captures the look and feel of many early American prototypes. With its optional diamond smoke stack and headlamp, you can fully customize the model. It

comes with an undecorated, early wood-look cab and a small 2-axle tender which is hollow for carrying any radio control gear. The model features Regner's new direct drive dual oscillating 10mm cylinders reversible from the cab. Both the locomotive and the tender can be re-gauged from 45mm to 32mm. A whistle kit and R/C fittings kit are available if desired.

The Niklas is available for pre-order from The Train Department at: [thetraindepartment.com/collections/regner-locomotives](http://thetraindepartment.com/collections/regner-locomotives)

The Train Department will be showing the Niklas at Steam Over Spencer, a multi-track steamup held at the North Carolina Transportation Museum from March 6 to 8, 2025. Info at: [www.nctransportationmuseum.org/steam-over-spencer](http://www.nctransportationmuseum.org/steam-over-spencer)

## Large Scale Train Shows & Events

Make plans to attend a train show, layout tours and/or the 2025 National Garden Railway Convention.

The **2025 Northeast Large Scale Train Show** sponsored by Amherst Railway Society will be in **West Springfield, Massachusetts**, on **May 3 and 4, 2025**. Info at: [nelsts.org](http://nelsts.org)



The **Great Lakes Large Scale Train Expo** (formerly the North East Ohio Large Scale Train Show) sponsored by the Riverside Railroad Crew will be in **Girard, Ohio** on **May 9 and 10, 2025**; info at: [www.greatlakestrainexpo.com](http://www.greatlakestrainexpo.com)



The Tulsa Garden Railroad Club is planning a **2025 Midwest Garden Railroad Gathering** from **June 4 to 7, 2025**, around **Tulsa, Oklahoma**. More information soon.



The Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society invites everyone to the **2025 National Garden Railway Convention in Sacramento, California**. Layout tours, clinics, vendor hall and more will be happening from **June 18 to 22, 2025**. Early registration is open now. More information at: [ngrc2025.org](http://ngrc2025.org)



Georgia Garden Railway Society welcomes the **2025 National Big Train Operators Club Convention** based in **Helen, Georgia**. Convention activities are being planned for **July 13 to 18, 2025**. Info at: [bigtrainoperator.com](http://bigtrainoperator.com)



## Garden Railroading News will be 5 Years Old in 2025

Happy New Year to our Readers & Followers, Advertisers, Contributors, Club Community, and Regional Advisers

In Fall of 2020, the last issue of *Garden Railways* magazine was published. Garden railroad clubs came together and conceived of *GR News*, a free digital magazine for and by garden railroaders. Two pilot issues were distributed to clubs across the United States and Canada to share with their members. Since then, clubs around the world have signed up to notify their members when issues are released.

From 2021 to 2024, twenty-four issues have been digitally published.

As we start 2025, 150 clubs in eight countries share the link to new issues of *GR News*, 5 social media channels publicize new issues for those who do not belong to clubs and showcase the railroads of our readers, and *Garden Railroading News* has over 10,000 readers and followers.

From the Engineers in the Cab, Carla Brand Breitner in Southern California, Steve Cogswell in Oregon, Bill Derville in Oregon, and Mick Spilsbury in Northern California, we are thrilled that you all are on board.

## Print Copies of Garden Railroading News Are Available to Order On Demand

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## The Affiliated Clubs List Is Online at [www.GRNews.org/ourclubs](http://www.GRNews.org/ourclubs)

150 Garden Railway/G-Scale Clubs are *Garden Railroading News* affiliates. *GR News* can help you find a club to join or check to see your club on the list. Go to [www.GRNews.org](http://www.GRNews.org) and click on the tab "OUR CLUBS."

150 clubs in 8 countries: 10,000+ Garden Railroaders



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There you will find our affiliated clubs organized by country/state with main city location.

### USA BY STATE

AK Alaska Garden Railroaders (*Copper Center*)  
 AL North Alabama Garden Railway Club (*Hazel Green*)  
 AR Greater Hot Springs Garden Railway Society (*Hot Springs*)  
 AR Northwest Arkansas Garden Railway Society (*Fayetteville*)  
 AR/OK/MO Ozark Garden Railroad Society (*Springfield*)  
 AZ Arizona Big Trains Operators (*Mesa*)

Almost all the clubs have websites or Facebook pages readily found on the web using any major search engine. You will find event and 'Contact Us' information on most club pages.

If you contact a club without getting a response or want to add your club to the list, email *GR News* at: [marketing@GRNews.org](mailto:marketing@GRNews.org) and be sure to tell us which club (or clubs) you are writing about.

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## The Wandering Railroad • Proprietors: Jerry & Matt Abreu

### The Wandering Railroad: A Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society Production

Photos by Matt Abreu, Jeff Namba, Mick Spilsbury  
or Carla Brand Breitner unless otherwise noted

#### Introduction by Mick Spilsbury

I had heard about the Wandering Railroad before the 2023 National Garden Railway Convention and imagined that it would be something like the roving BAGRS railroad. That travelling railroad was mounted on an open top trailer which had to be covered when stored. Maintenance was challenging and when the wooden trailer deteriorated the railroad was scrapped.

When I actually saw the Wandering Railroad at the 2023 NGRC, I was blown away. It is housed in a weather-proof trailer. It's big! Its ingenious track layout gives the impression that there is a lot more track than there really is. Landscaping, structures and trackside details are meticulous in both design and scale.

Since the 2023 convention, I have often wondered why the Wandering Railroad was created, what it took to build it and how it stays in great shape on its journeys. I finally decided to stop wondering and asked Matt and Jerry Abreu of the Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society to satisfy my curiosity. Here is their story about the Wandering Railroad.



*Fall colors & Uintah-inspired loco make a great contrast.*

### Building and Operating The Wandering Railroad

By Jerry & Matt Abreu

#### Before the Wandering Railroad

The Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society has a long history of taking the joy of garden and large scale railroading out into the community. For years, members of the club would transport track tables, locos, rolling stock and structures to locations. Thousands of hours were spent assembling the tables, installing rail clamps, and diagnosing dead spots in the track. Then rolling stock and structures were put in place. As we did this set up time and time again, we thought there had to be a better way to showcase our club and garden railroading.

*continued on next page*



*Folks gathering to view the Wandering Railroad.*



**In the Beginning**

Our friend and mentor, Jim Daly, started building a layout on a flatbed trailer. In its prior life, the trailer was a tent trailer. Matt took a great interest in the trailer and spent many hours helping Jim. The layout on the trailer was about half complete when Jim became ill and could no longer work on the layout.

Matt acquired the layout and finished the work. We towed the trailer to a few local events. It soon became apparent that moving an open trailer with buildings and scenery was not practical. However the seeds were sown, and Matt started to formulate a plan to build a layout inside a box trailer. After much thought, we landed on the idea of using an automobile transport trailer.

**Building the Railroad**

We acquired a 30-foot automobile transport trailer in May of 2017. The first thing to do was to create glassless viewing windows. With the help of a friend who owns a fabrication shop, we set about cutting viewing windows in the sides of the trailer. The rear ramp was removed and replaced by a wall with a viewing window. With the viewing windows complete and doors installed we brought the trailer home.

Once home, we installed a sub-floor so the layout would be level with the bottom of the viewing windows. Now the fun started. We tried many different track layouts and kept coming back to two ovals on a flat surface. We did not come up with anything that excited us. Fortunately, we had been talking with Joel Bragdon about the project because we wanted his help with the scenery. On one of Joel's visits, he brought a clay model which depicted a figure eight layout, mountains, and tunnels. We knew right away that it was the best track plan.

Before we started on the railroad, we took one more step. After getting the platform built, we decided that the trailer's plain white walls were not acceptable. Matt had seen the trailer used by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation at a Sportsman show. We decided to go for a 'Display Case in a Museum' look with wood paneling. Materials for the 'Display Case' look were acquired, stained and then attached to the inside of the trailer.

*continued on next page*



*Jim Daly's layout on a flatbed trailer.*



*The modified automobile transport trailer with viewing windows closed.*



*Early stage of figure 8 track layout laid over window-level raised floor.*



*Early landscape construction is seen through the rear 'window'.*



*A later stage of landscape construction is seen through a side 'window'.*



Then the work on the railroad began. Over the next four years, we worked inside the trailer. Track was installed on PVC trackbed in the figure eight configuration. Track power connections were made. Joel Bragdon led the creation of mountain scenery and tunnels constructed by Joel and us. Trestles were built and installed around the trackbed; ballast was laid. Forests grew on the hills. Structures were acquired or designed, then built and installed.

### Our Wanderings

Our first adventure was to a one-day train show in Concord. We were apprehensive because we did not know what shape the layout would be in when we opened the doors. To our relief there was no damage.

Since then, we have wandered to train shows in both northern and southern California. Our longest wander was to Denver, Colorado. We wandered to the 2023 National Convention in the San Francisco Bay Area and to the Bay Area Garden Railway Society's 2024 Annual Meeting at the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos. We enjoyed entertaining museum visitors as well as BAGRS members, so we are returning for their 2025 Annual Meeting.

In all, we have wandered 7,000 miles. The railroad has suffered no damage. We arrive, park and level the trailer, open the viewing windows and run trains.

### The Layout Today

The Wandering Railroad has approximately 80 feet of track with figure eight and point-to-point configurations. We can run two trains on the layout.

*continued on next page*



*With most scenery completed, trains are running at a 2020 show.*



*Running through the industrial center.*



*Nighttime maneuvers.*



*Cab Forward loco passing a moose at a tunnel entrance.*



*USA Trains Wandering Railroad box car in weathered freight consist crosses the lower loop track.*



The railroad has five buildings. The Lumber Mill was built by Jack Verducci. The Stone Cutter came from the Little Amador Railway. The Dynamite Shack, Mining Tower, and Outhouse were built by Jim Daly and are from the DGNNRR.

All locomotives that run on the mainline are dual motor LGB locomotives based on the Uintah or Sumpter Valley railroads. Small Porters work in industrial switch yards. Rolling stock is a hodgepodge of LGB, Bachmann and USA Trains. Everything is weathered and detailed.

The railroad weighs 9,600 pounds and has a four-point self-levelling system like an RV. It is stored at an indoor private facility. We tow the trailer with one of two ¾ ton trucks.

*continued on next page*



*The lumber mill.*



*The stone cutting operation.*



*A dual motor LGB "Mallet" hauling freight.*



*A train passes the mining tower switch yard.*



*The dy•no•mite shack built by Jim Daly.*



*Looking across the industrial area and through the opposite viewing window.*



*A 'stream' runs through the industrial area.*





The lumber yard operates as the railroad wanders.



The 2025 National Garden Railroad Convention Locomotive and Convention Car crossing a trestle.

**Postscript** by Mick Spilsbury

Clearly it took a lot of skill, ingenuity, time and funds to create the Wandering Railroad. Many great modelers contributed to its creation. Now the investment is in the wandering phase.

I am happy to report that the investment is producing great returns. Adults and children are awe-struck when they see the railroad. Videos and images of the railroad posted on social media are very popular. It even has its own USA Trains box car. I am a proud owner of one.

If you come to the 2025 National Garden Railway Convention, you will be able to see the Wandering Railroad up close and personal because it is most definitely wandering to the convention. Prepare to be impressed.

Thank you to Matt and Jerry and their team of contributors for creating the Wandering Railroad. Congratulations to all on the amazing outcome. If you are interested in the Wandering Railroad wandering to a model train event you are hosting, you can reach out to Jerry & Matt by email at: [wanderingrr@yahoo.com](mailto:wanderingrr@yahoo.com)



The Wandering Railroad will be in Sacramento at the 2025 National Garden Railroad Convention June 18 to 22, 2025. For information and to register, go to: [www.ngrc2025.org](http://www.ngrc2025.org).

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# LGB® Garden Railroading

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20494 Amtrak AMD 103 "Genesis" Diesel Locomotive; Road No. 108 (left)  
 20493 Amtrak AMD 103 "Genesis" Diesel Locomotive; Road No. 160 (right)



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## Whether To Weather or Not to Weather?

From Lawrence Ginnow, Pine Ridge Railroad

You find the perfect building and it fits perfectly in that special spot on your layout. It's all shiny and fresh looking, as if G scale house painters just finished the trim work.



Looks good! On to the next project!

But wait...some railroads just don't have the crisp clean shiny persona.

My Pine Ridge RR is a depression era backwoods logging railroad. Things aren't always new and shiny. Used, hand-me-downs, make do, and fix it is more the norm. A depot might look more like this.



Time worn, well used, a little dirty, looks about 75 years old in real life. Modelers can achieve this in a few minutes, very easily. I have done multiple layers of spray paint, dry brush over the top of that, then used the weathering powders, and have repeated some of the steps over and over. Two days later it looks pretty good. Now I have figured out how to speed this up with equal results.

My challenge for this article was to use as few colors as possible and one brush.



I have some of those 'use it once and discard brushes.' Perfect! 1 inch wide. I started with Dark Rust [Panzer Aces 70,302] for a base, giving the roof a quick once over.



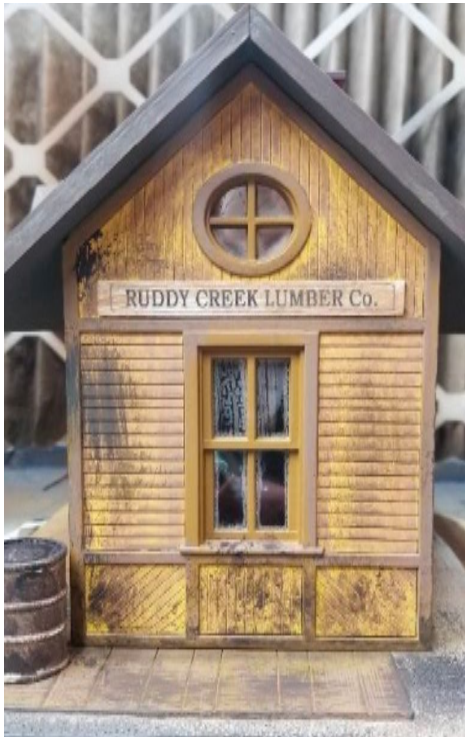
I did a little less on the side walls. Then switched over to my second color, Dirt [Polly Scale]. Using Dirt over the Dark Rust starts to give the wood siding some age. I did repeat Rust and Dirt on the roof a few times, not bothering to clean the brush.



My third color is a Brown Black [Model Color 70,822]. It makes good dirty smudge marks from dirty loggers, spills, soot, ash, all the good stuff around a steam railroad.

*Continued next page...*





You can always go back to a lighter color to buffer the dark spots. In fact, several layers of different colors give many different hues.



My fourth and final color is one of my weathering favorites, it's called Green Brown [Model Color 70,879]. It gives that mossy, under the pine trees look. I also use it in my airbrush to make the roofs of locos and cars look like they've been in the woods a while.

I used all four colors on the walkway and gravel area. A final spray of Rust-Oleum Matte Clear seals the colors and takes the outdoor weather well. Total time spent, about an hour. In some of my pictures the weathering paint may look shiny, it's still wet and will dry flat.

*Continued next page...*

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My material list included the disposable brush (that I saved for the next building), the four paint colors (all flat non-gloss), half a sheet of paper towel, a plastic cover from a Cool Whip container for a paint pallet, a cup of water (to thin paint), and the Matte Clear spray. Not much investment compared to an air brush and/or weathering powders.

Try your hand weathering a building or old box car. If you aren't happy with the results, you can add a different color... or just spray paint it back to a shiny new building.

*Have fun on the Railroad!*

*Lawrence Ginnow  
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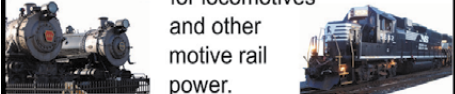
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# THE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL GET-TOGETHER

Descriptions & Photos  
provided by Georgia Garden Railway Society

The Southeast Regional G Scale Get-Together was a huge success! Garden railroaders from the South as well as California, Maine, Ohio, and elsewhere gathered in Atlanta last August 22 through 25. The weather was fantastic for touring fourteen garden railroads, hot but low humidity. Saturday was an event highlight with the 65th Annual Model Train Show held at the Gas South Center in Duluth. Georgia Garden Railway Society, the host, would like to thank all those that attended, volunteered, and supported the event through donations and promotions. We had a blast sharing our hobby with many folks during this time.

## THE RAILROADS

**James & Sally Bando's Great Western Mining Company Railroad**  
This layout, built on an old pool deck, features 300 feet of track in one large oval and an elevated folded dogbone. Live steam logging locomotives alternate with fun Aristo-craft track-powered vehicles. Indians, long horn steers and log cabins sit among plenty of plants; some are even to scale.



**Russell & Leslie Ann Bundy's Cedar Creek Railroad**  
Cedar Creek is modeled after a scenic railroad operating in the current era. The layout is a twin mainline consisting of an outer loop surrounding an inner extended figure 8. Set among several hundred individual plants is a small vacation spot in the Blue Ridge Mountains.



Continued on next page





## RAILROADS OF THE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL GET-TOGETHER continued

### Tom & Eileen Conrad's TEC Garden Railroad

The TEC started as a raised bed railroad with a town and tunnel. Over the years, track expanded with trestles, arch bridges, and planter boxes extending the width of the yard, providing room for industry stops and another town. A train room provides train storage and anchors a return loop along the fence.



### Ron & Kristy Humphrey's Colorado & Minnesota Family Railroad

Newly completed, the Colorado & Minnesota Family railroad includes over 500 feet of track running across three independent loops of track power, as well as a separate circus loop and trolley track, passing 50 buildings, 25 feet of scratch-built trestle, a koi pond, two waterfalls and a river, not to mention the 9-hole miniature golf course.



Continued on next page



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# RAILROADS OF THE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL GET-TOGETHER continued



## Phil & Barbara Jones' Higher Grounds Railroad

The Higher Grounds Railroad, a rare indoor G-Scale layout, is based on the 1890's Rocky Mountain mining towns near Buena Vista and Leadville, Colorado. Four mainline tracks on two different levels and three other separate track systems pass the town of Buena Vista, a scale model of Mt. Princeton, wall murals of actual Colorado mountain scenery, and model details on all surfaces with hundreds of trees, bushes, people and animals.



## Dan & Carol Steidle's Happy Little Train

Another indoor layout, the "Happy Little Train" takes you to the Alps of Switzerland and a small town where the Wilson Bros. Circus is setting up. Two hundred feet of track includes a table top double loop, an elevated mountain loop, and an overhead, ceiling mounted railroad... allowing 4 trains to run at once.



## Peter & Lori Thomas' Cothran Valley Gardens Railway

This railroad travels back in time to the 1970's to a fictitious short line running through the rural north Georgia mountains. The railroad features two ovals of track with a crossover bridge and S-curve. The track is surrounded by farmsteads, a small train depot, and a magical village.



Continued on next page





## RAILROADS OF THE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL GET-TOGETHER continued

### Roy & Pam Williamson's R&P Railroad

The R&P Railroad, established in 2019, is a raised layout with approximately 100 feet of double-tracked mainline. A 30-foot siding houses the L&N Hoptown Station and a rural agricultural village set in the Baby Boomer era. The Slippery Slope Underpass runs under the arched bridge used to enter the center of the layout, the Beantown Tunnel is a New England styled covered bridge, and the Vine Tunnel is the result of a stubborn Carolina Jasmine.



### Ted & Deborah Yarbrough's Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad

Established in 1992, this garden railroad represents the D&RGW and RGS from the Colorado Narrow Gauge era. The 250-foot track-powered mainline travels through bridges and tunnels, past kit or scratch-built wooden buildings and scale-size plants, stopping periodically at Colorado towns.



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**LOCO OF THE EDITION**

**Helena  
a Versatile Charmer  
by Bob Frein**

I recently picked up a LGB Porter locomotive on the used market. It was in pretty good shape. I decided that I could use a locomotive that I could run around the Christmas tree on track power, but then also use outside on a loop that runs only battery powered engines.



After tearing the locomotive apart to see what I had to work with, I sought advice from the GR News and G Scale.net Facebook groups. After weighing all the information, I gutted the Porter of the factory electronics and put in a DPDT switch to choose between track power and battery. Since it was a 3 wire motor block, I had to add the fourth wire.

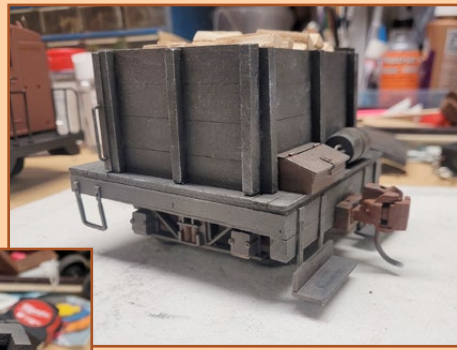
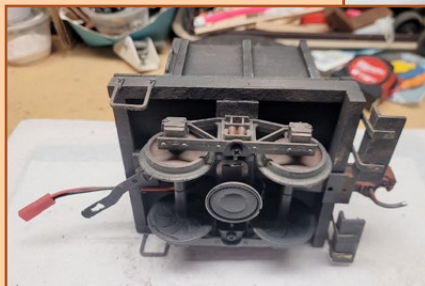
I didn't want to jam the battery and receiver in the cab, so I decided to scratch build a small tender for the locomotive. I started with a set of freight trucks and built it up from there using basswood from a local hobby shop. I mounted a speaker under the tender for sound and fabricated a drawbar to attach it to the locomotive. Due to space constraints, I used a Revolution Micro receiver, and the receiver and the battery live under a load of real (scale) logs that I hand cut and split.

*continued on next page*





I added a few details from Ozark Miniatures and the spare parts box I have. The weathering consists of an air-brushed coat of Grimey Black and Mississippi Mud paints. Rust was added by using a mixture of Burnt Umber and Burnt Sienna and some dry brushing of a Light Gray to bring out some highlights. I made the front and rear pilot beams out of real wood; they look much better than the factory plastic. All that was left was to add an engineer.



The grandkids enjoyed the train at Christmas, and Helena has run outdoors on several layouts since.

Submit your scratch built, modified, weathered or detailed—unique in some way— loco. Send your photos and write-up to [Editor@GRNews.org](mailto:Editor@GRNews.org) or [Marketing@GRNews.org](mailto:Marketing@GRNews.org).

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## *A Review of PIKO's 25-ton Remote Controlled Diesel with Sound and Battery Power*

Story and photos by Peter Drymalski

One of the best recent introductions into the garden railroad community is PIKO's 25-ton diesel, fully equipped with remote control, sounds, and battery power.

Some of you already have earlier, non-sound versions. This model is a big improvement. It allows you to run an engine on any G-gauge track anywhere and at any time without any hassle. The engine is easily loaded onto the track and comes already mated to its controller, and the controller itself could not be easier to operate.

Let's look at its highlights and flaws.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** The engine comes in a wide variety of paint schemes and is equipped with two hook-and-loop couplers; two knuckle couplers are included for those who use them. It has bright directional lighting, and you can install the horn and bell and additional steps. In addition to the directional lights, there is a bright light in the cab as well. The detail is very good and there are lots of grab irons. All but one of the windows is glazed.

The motor requires 6 AAA batteries which are easily loaded into a cartridge, which is in turn easily loaded into the engine shell through a removable radiator front. Once you turn on the power switch under the motor, the sound and cab light come on automatically. The diesel sound is constant and doesn't vary much, except to increase with speed.

The controller is small and simple, with just 4 buttons. One button moves it forward in steps, the other button moves it backwards in steps. There is no "stop" button: to halt the engine, you press the other directional button to bring the engine slowly to a halt. If you keep pressing the same button, the engine will begin to move in the opposite direction. A nice result of this is that it's impossible to change direction abruptly by mistake, which could otherwise damage a motor.

Two more buttons control sound: the bell and the horn. If you press the bell button, the bell will come on and ring steadily until you press the button again to stop it. The horn button sounds the horn (sort of a beep) once. You can't hold the button down and get a long horn sound, just another beep. Inside the cab, on the ceiling, is a small button that allows you to regulate the sound volume.

All four wheels have rubber tires set into steel wheels.

Another very nice feature is that the controller and the engine can be set to 8 different frequencies with a small screwdriver, so that different engines can be run next to each other from different controllers.

Finally, the instructions include good illustrations and even an exploded diagram.

**WHAT COULD BE BETTER:** The first obvious omission is that there's no engineer inside the well-lit cab. However, one cab window is not glazed and it's possible to insert a driver through it. Since the cab floor is too high to permit either a standing or sitting engineer, you'll have to perform some plastic surgery in order to get the driver to fit on the floor and look realistic. (See photo, right.)



Product Photo from PIKO-America



*continued on next page*



I found the large handrails to be weak and easily broken by little hands or accident, as it's difficult to pick the machine up without touching them. It might be better to remove and save the 4 biggest ones and replace them with brass rods bent to shape.

The sound volume is acceptable in most situations, but at Brookside, it was overwhelmed by ambient noise unless you were very close to the engine. [Ed. Note: WVMGRS sets up an extensive December display at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, Maryland, each year as seen in the photo below.]

It would be nice, also, if PIKO could make undecorated versions of this engine so they could be customized more easily.

**OPERATING THE ENGINE:** This is a Shetland Pony—not a racehorse or even a plow horse. “Speed” is not a word that is easily associated with this engine. I tried it out on the inner loop at Brookside Gardens, and at its fastest while pulling a light load, it took 65 to 70 seconds to complete a loop of approximately 70 feet, about a foot a second. (Emily, our club-owned Thomas friend locomotive, at her usual speed was at least twice as fast and could easily have gone faster.)

Nor is this a powerful engine that's comparable to LGB's 4-wheel diesels. It will struggle to pull even two 8-wheel cars with steel wheels. It's far better to hook it up to 4-wheel cars, and it can pull as many as about 6 or 7 field train wagons (or 3–4 pounds) even if they have steel wheels.

I tested this engine on a simple 4-foot loop, hooked up to one LGB Christmas car with steel wheels.

*continued on next page*



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The passenger car weighed in at almost exactly two pounds. (By comparison, an LGB 4044 gondola with steel wheels weighs 10 ounces, so you could run three of those in place of one passenger car.) Running almost as fast as it is capable of, the engine emptied its batteries after about 50 minutes. When it runs down and stops, it sends out a long horn signal to let you know. You should definitely pop for an AAA battery recharger that can hold at least 6 batteries and buy extra rechargeable batteries if you want to run it for a longer period.

The controller is simple, but no larger than a car key fob—it can easily be lost outdoors if you don't attach it to some visible, larger object.

*(Old habits die hard!* When I was preparing my test track for this experiment, and stepped back to be sure everything was in place, I wondered why the heck I had connected the track to the transformer.)

**TO SUM UP:** For just \$400, PIKO offers a locomotive with a simple, complete, ready-to-run remote control system and sound, which affords garden railroaders a great opportunity to run trains more often with very little fuss and preparation (other than being sure to charge the batteries). This is barely half the cost of anything else comparable. It's also an excellent engine to help introduce children to the hobby, since the controller is so simple to use and they can't suddenly reverse direction on it. On the other hand, it's not at all powerful; you have to have a supply of batteries on hand and a recharger; and children are likely to break the large handrails on the machine (so remove and replace them with brass wire). Hopefully, PIKO will expand on this concept and offer more powerful engines in the future.



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Plant of the Month

— By Richard Murray

BOTANICAL NAME: *Podocarpus alpinus*, 'Red Tip'

NEWER NAME: *Podocarpus lawrencei*, 'Red Tip'

COMMON NAME: Mountain plum pine,  
red tip Tasmanian podocarp, alpine plum yew

USDA HARDINESS ZONE: 7 through 10 (down to 0°F)

### Growth Habit

Mountain plum pine is a hardy selection from the Australian highlands. It is a dwarf evergreen conifer. It grows slowly to 1–2 feet tall and 3 feet wide. It has a mounded form and has arching branches with dark green needles that spiral around the branch and are soft to the touch. The new spring growth at the branch tips is red, giving the plant its name. The needles then turn deep green in summer and bronze in winter. Female plants, if pollinated by a nearby male plant, will produce small red berries in the fall. Spring flowers are inconspicuous.

The plant in the photo is about 6 years old and has never been pruned. It has been even slower growing than the literature says it should be and seems to be taking a different shape than what the literature describes.

### Site

Plant mountain plum pine in bright shade, part shade or morning sun. In cooler coastal areas it can take full sun. It doesn't thrive in hot, sunny locations.



### Cultivation

The soil for mountain plum pine should be gritty and well-drained. Its native habitat is alpine slopes, so it doesn't have to have rich, humus soil, although it will certainly do better in rich humus soil. It will grow in most any pH. Mountain plum pine is more cold and heat tolerant than some other podocarpus species. In fact, although it is rated as suitable down to zone 7, it will usually withstand temperatures much lower than 0 degrees F. The plant protects itself by transferring its chlorophyll to the roots, leaving the needles bronze. It does best with regular water. It is not drought tolerant. It responds well to pruning and is verticillium resistant. None of the plant parts are toxic.

### Uses

Because of its compact growth habit, the dwarf mountain plum pine is a good choice for rock gardens, Asian gardens, and garden railroads. It also does well in pots. The plants provide changing color and interest year round. Mountain plum pine is also a good bonsai subject. In summary, it is a well behaved plant with many uses and no downsides.



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## GOODBYE SPRING CLEANING • HELLO APRIL RAILROAD OPENING

by Mick Spilsbury, San Rafael CA

April should be a great time to open a garden railroad in the San Francisco Bay Area. Winter rains are usually over. In between April showers, it's sunny. Gardens are bursting into life. Leaves are lovely shades of green. Spring flowers are blooming. There's just one problem. Almost no garden railroads are ready to open in April, mine included, because 'Spring' renovations and maintenance are still underway, or even just beginning.

April 2025 is going to be different for my Black Canyon Railroad because 'Spring' cleaning and maintenance started in November, outdoors between storms and in my garage during deluges.

All structures were inspected in the Fall. Necessary maintenance was recorded and has progressed as winter rains filled our Northern California reservoirs.

For example, inspection of the Mine Station revealed that rats had been chomping on the back foundation wall which is hidden from view when it's in place. They had also been gnawing on a barrel and a security guard. By early December, rat damage was fixed, and the Mine Station was restored to its 'new' condition when it was built seven years ago.



*Rat damage at the foundation of the Mine Station.*



*The Mine Station restored.*

Other structures had escaped rat attacks but were showing wear and tear from a combination of the fierce sunlight of six summers and the damp conditions of five winters, so they have been getting some TLC.



*Red Rock City Station was restored.*



*The roof of the Last Resort Hotel was repaired.*



*The global headquarters of BS Ventures could not be omitted from the restoration program*

Other features of the Black Canyon have also been getting winter attention.

- Before the end of November, struggling plants were replaced with plants proven to do well in the RR's challenging southern exposure.
- Irrigation adjacent to the RR was reconfigured to serve landscaping that had been significantly modified since the irrigation system was last updated.

*continued on next page*



- ❑ Small gaps at rail joints and ballast were filled.  
[See “A Different Sort of Track Short” in Nov/Dec 2024 #6 Garden Railroading News.]
- ❑ A 150 feet/15 structure lighting circuit has been modified to 2 circuits with lesser loads.



*New lighting circuit being laid under the watchful eye of a random dinosaur..*

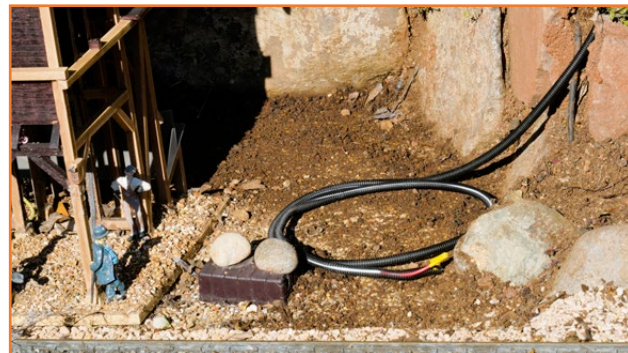
Rats had also chomped their way through some of the wiring to track side sounds powered from the tracks of the railroad. Dealing with that required a different approach. New heavier gauge wiring encased in flexible tubing now runs from 2 small 12-volt transformers independent of track power. The wiring has been laid to existing trackside sounds and to three new locations. When it starts raining again, I will create sounds for the coaling tower, the whiskey distillery and the church. Speakers for all sounds will now be waterproof speakers designed for boats.



*New 12-volt transformers for lights and sounds.*



*New waterproof speakers for all trackside sounds.*



*New wiring for new sound at the coaling tower.*

Thus, much of the work to get the Black Canyon Railroad in ‘show-off’ condition by April 2025 should be completed by March.

There will be some right-of-way maintenance to do in March but that will not be onerous because my track/ballast is glued in place and ‘dirt’ next to my tracks is red lava fines glued in place. Landscape rocks are also glued/cemented in place. Track and areas close to the tracks can be cleaned with a Shop Vac.

Switches have been inspected and all passed. However, on average, one mainline switch (out of ten) fails each year, so replacement LH and RH switches are on hand. Track power, used only to light cars, will be serviced by a fleet of LGB Track Cleaning Locos.

So, unless the weather gets out of order, I will be scheduling my first open railroad in late April. Of course, the best laid plans of mice and men don’t always work out, so I will be sure to report the date of my first open RR in 2025.



*Naturally the RRs most important structure—a whiskey distillery—also got some TLC.*



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# CLUB CORNER

Curated by Bill Derville, Past President  
Rose City Garden Railway Society • Portland, Oregon

For the past three issues, I discussed how to retain members and fight membership decline. I have covered ways to attract new members to join your club in several issues, so I will attempt to summarize them in this column and cite back issues where I discussed these ideas in detail. Hopefully some of you will find an idea that your club can use to attract new members. We can never prevent members from eventually leaving our clubs, so we always need to find ways to bring new people into the fold. New members bring fresh enthusiasm, new ideas, and build new layouts. If clubs are going to survive in the long run, attracting new members is essential.

The first thing a club must do is to have a welcoming attitude toward potential new members. Some clubs seem like a closed group, and at events, those who are just joining feel like outsiders. If they continue to feel that way, they will stop attending and will not renew when the time comes to pay their dues again.

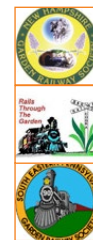
Having people wear their name badges and being friendly to people you don't know is something I covered in my first column in the May/June 2021 issue. (All our back issues are available for free on our website, just like this issue.)

In my second column in July/August 2021, I covered the topic of work parties. People often need help building a layout in their backyard, and work parties help layouts get built. This leads to open houses at new

layouts. It is also an opportunity for people to learn how to build a layout and assemble track. Along the way it builds friendships as people cooperate to create a new layout.

One of the biggest inhibitors to building a layout is the cost of buying track. In my third column in September/October 2021 I discussed how our club buys and sells used track for under \$3 per foot to help members build or expand their layout. Populating layouts with engines, cars, and buildings is the next big expense. I covered how to run club auctions where people can find deals on the things that bring a layout alive in my November/December issue of 2021.

Then for the next three issues, starting with the January/February issue of 2022, I covered how the Rose City Garden Railway Society in Portland has hosted tours for the public which we have been doing every year (except during COVID) since 2001. We have added many of our 141 family memberships as a result of showing our layouts to the public. It has also earned our club an average of \$1,000 in income each year. We have between 400 to 800 people attending each year, bringing their spouses, kids, and grandparents to watch our trains traverse our gardens. Planning and advertising these events takes some effort, but it is well worth it. I feel that about half of our members joined the club after attending one of our Summer Tours. I would estimate that ¾ of the people attending have been on a previous tour and love coming again to view



Group photo from a track repair work party.



Public layout tour guide booklets.

Back issues of Garden Railroading News are available for free to everyone on our website: [www.GRNews.org/archive](http://www.GRNews.org/archive).







their favorite layouts and visit new ones they haven't seen yet. Many people have never heard of a garden railroad, and public tours are a great way to expose the public to our hobby.

Rail fan trips where club members and guests ride on real trains are another way to get people to attend a club function and meet members. I explained how our club has done several of these trips in the January/February issue of 2023.

Some clubs have their own layout that they build and run for the public to view, such as the Colorado Railroad Museum layout in Denver and the Fairplex layout in the LA area. I covered this subject in the March 2023 issue.

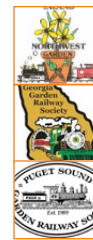
In the April/May issues of 2023 and 2024, I discussed how clubs buy items such as rail benders, foam cutters, and Jig Stone molds and loan them to their members. Clubs can also stock and sell items like 50-pound bags of ballast that have to be purchased in large quantities. This can be another benefit clubs use to promote membership in their club.

Finally, in the November/December issue 2023, I discussed how to build a Christmas display in a garden center to both promote the hobby and advertise your club. It is all about exposure. As people near retirement age, many are looking for new interests to keep them occupied. Membership in your club is a great way to attract people to the hobby and help them stay involved.

My next column will be about building temporary displays at county fairs, train shows and even stores and malls. I will start tackling the topic of club modules beginning with the May/June issue this year. Club layouts are another reason people join clubs, so they can run their equipment when they don't have, and maybe don't want, a layout of their own.

Stay tuned, and use your imagination and energy to find ways to build the membership in your club. Your club's long-term survival depends on it.

I am always happy to hear your club's experiences. You can email me at: [bill@derville4.com](mailto:bill@derville4.com).



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## GR NEWS SOCIAL MEDIA - FACEBOOK

### IMAGES ON FACEBOOK

On GR News FB Page. Posts about the release of new editions of GR News get the most likes but images like these were popular too.

#### A: SNOW IMAGES

*Like this image by Patrick Walker that captures freezing conditions on a lonely stretch of track.*



A

#### B: TRESTLE & BRIDGE IMAGES

*Like this image by Tim Headings that captures not just one but 2 bridges and a water feature.*



B

#### C: TAIL END IMAGES

*Like this image by Matt Anderson from the Greenwood Valley RR that captures an early evening mood beautifully.*



C

We are privileged to share images like these!

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for your model railroad displays

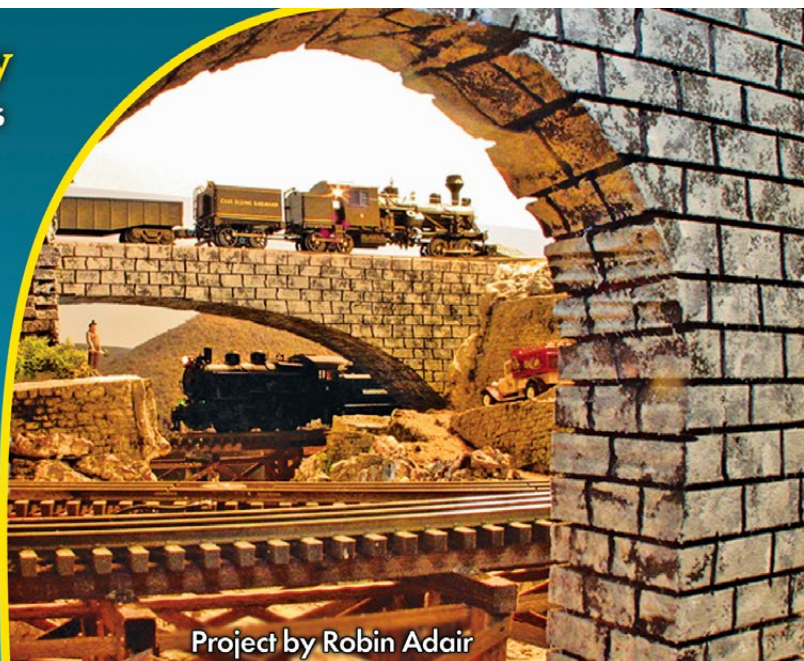


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Project by Robin Adair



# GR NEWS SOCIAL MEDIA - INSTAGRAM IMAGES

## IMAGES ON INSTAGRAM

Although images receive fewer likes on average than videos, some still garner many likes.

**#1** A set of images of the Mendocino Coast G-Scale Model RR gathered 300 likes.

*Videos of the RR were also popular on both Instagram & YouTube.*

**#2** A set of Front End Images, many by Jeff Namba, received 267 likes.

*Other sets of FE images were popular too!*

**#3** Sets of images of Live Steaming were also popular. One set received 155 likes.

*Other sets got close that mark.*

Images for our Instagram can be emailed to [marketing@GRNews.org](mailto:marketing@GRNews.org)



#1



#2



#3

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## GR NEWS SOCIAL MEDIA - INSTAGRAM VIDEOS

### VIDEOS ON INSTAGRAM

Videos tend to get more 'likes' than images.

**#1** This video was a very simple early spring run on Mick Spilsbury's RR (no buildings out) which garnered 560 likes.

*Perhaps a video posted in early March with no snow/winter debris was just well-timed!*

**#2** Even though John Cushman's video of Bob Dunlap's RR was posted as a top post from 2023, it attracted another 520 likes in 2024.

*Given the setting and the amazing trestle, we are not surprised.*

**#3** A 1st video of Mick Spilsbury's 50th wedding anniversary train garnered 380 likes.

*Fortunately, Mick's wife, Liz, also liked the train when it was revealed!*

**#4** A 2nd video of the 50th wedding anniversary train got another 252 likes.

*Perhaps not a surprise that the % of likes from women was higher than typical!*

**#5** A video of 4 Front Ends in 16 seconds received 170 likes.

*Front Ends are always popular!*

We would love other garden railroaders to share short videos with us. The average length of these 5 videos was 14 seconds. YouTube is the place for longer videos.

Short videos for Instagram can be emailed to [marketing@GRNews.org](mailto:marketing@GRNews.org)



#1



#2



#3



#4



#5



# GR NEWS SOCIAL MEDIA - **FACEBOOK GROUPS**

## 2 GROUPS - 8,700 MEMBERS

While we post regularly to our 2 Groups, they are enriched by contributions from others.

### Facebook Groups recognize **ALL-STAR CONTRIBUTORS & TOP CONTRIBUTORS**

We recognize and thank ours here in the order they posted in the last 3 months of 2024.

- Michael Senical
- Ted Yarbrough
- Keith Stratton
- Kosala Wijerathna
- Shawn Viggiano
- Mike Barmes
- Timmy DeHan
- Kevin Strong
- Joel Pfrang
- Jess Steven Hughes
- Gary Devonshire
- Vito Volpe
- Russel Courtenay
- Lee Parker
- Chuck Carlson

There are also many  
**RISING CONTRIBUTORS.**

We look forward to them joining the members above in 2025.

### FEATURED POPULAR IMAGES

- Image A : Ted Yarbrough
- Image B : Shawn Viggiano
- Image C : Michael Senical
- Image D : Kevin Strong
- Image E : Jess Steven Hughes





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Direct download web addresses changed in 10/2022.

### How to Download Garden Railroading News

GR News is a PDF document meant to be read in Acrobat Reader. It can be read in many browsers, but is best inside Acrobat Reader where you can control more display options and jump around throughout the magazine. All browsers have a download option, but the icons can vary. Look for an arrow pointing down and try clicking on it; then choose “Save File” and a location on your device. Some icon examples are shown here.

**Look for the arrow.**



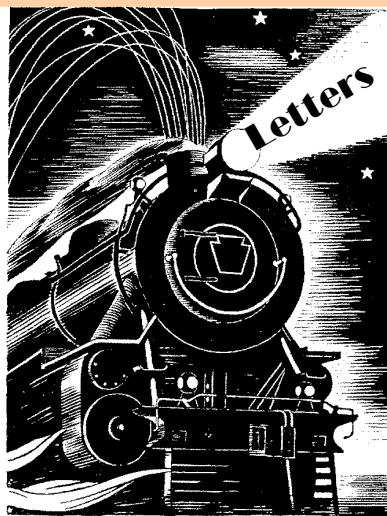
### Photos Welcome for Seen on the Tracks

A G Scale Realistic Scene Photo Gallery

Please send uncompressed photo (with caption information describing the scene, rolling stock, railroad name & proprietors, location, and photographer’s credit) to:

[Editor@GRNews.org](mailto:Editor@GRNews.org)

Photos may also appear on the **GR News** website and social media.



## STRAIGHT FROM THE IRON HORSE’S MOUTH

Letters to the Editor should be sent as e-mails only to Carla Brand Breitner at: [Editor@GRNews.org](mailto:Editor@GRNews.org)

Letters will then be addressed accordingly and/or passed on to the author for further edification. Unless marked otherwise, letters to this publication are assumed to be submitted for print. Please include your name and club affiliation. Please note that we may not be able to print all letters, though we will try to respond to them. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We are unable to answer requests for information about specific products or systems; these are best addressed to the appropriate manufacturer.

### Ordering Hardcopy of GR News Works Very Well

Carla, I ordered a hardcopy of the most recent GRN so that I could have it with the pieces I wrote for *Steam in the Garden*. Ordering was simple and quick, price was reasonable, shipping time was OK, packaging was excellent and the

product quality was high—for paper, binding and images. Also, very nice that you arranged for the two pages of the Wandering Welshman piece [*Garden Railroading News Nov/Dec 2024 #6*] to be on facing pages!

Jeff Williams

*Garden Railroading News* Author  
Consist of the Edition GRN 2024 #6  
Livermore CA

*Glad to hear feedback on the print version of Garden Railroading News. As a matter of record and for quick reference, I also order a printed copy of each issue. It's good to hear that the print availability is appreciated. Instructions for ordering can be found on page 6.*

*Yours, Carla Brand Breitner*  
Editor  
*Garden Railroading News*