



Grand Scales

Q U A R T E R L Y

CAGNEY TRIPLE HEADER

Adapted from an article by Greg Robinson

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Three Class D Cagneys with fires lit ---sitting together on a siding, nearing working pressure---comprise a living museum of Early American miniature railroading. They are among the earliest, simplest, and most rugged designs of miniature steam engines in America.

This day in the Spring of 2003 would see the operation of three 15" gauge 4-4-0's with a combined age of approximately 290 years. Engines No. 1251 and No. 2 are owned by Don Micheletti (pronounced Mick'-ell-eh-tee). The railroad and No. 1310 are owned by Jerry Cahalan. One can only imagine the countless thousands (mil-

lions?) of happy children, fascinated adults, and reminiscent older folks who have been pulled by these little iron horses.

For the men moving to and fro, oiling, wiping, adjusting . . . the idea of sober historical significance would be easy to forget for a moment. But the fun . . . the sheer kick-in-the-pants joy of getting ready to zoom around a track behind a feisty steam engine couldn't be missed. It was in the air, mixed with the saturated steam.

As the first engine was ready to roll it pulled on to the mainline and backed to where the rolling stock waited. Visitors piled in to the cars and running commenced.

The kids in the crowd especially liked the cattle car. That special feeling of riding "inside" a little train may stick with them forever. Part of it is just the fun of having an area where the dimensions themselves dictate "adults not allowed". We all know, however, that the more you are surrounded by the train, the

more a ride begins to feel like a journey.

For the owners of Cagneys and similar amusement park steamers, the thrill is in the running of these gems and the rekindling happy memories from when they were kids. If one tries to view them as precise scale models, the image does indeed fall short. But that is like a pianist complaining that a trumpet is ill suited for his needs.

It is very similar to the folks who enjoy owning and operating Lionel 3-rail O-gauge trains, as compared to the 2-rail scale modelers. The 2-rail folks try very hard to exactly recreate a world in miniature. Then they look at 3-rail layouts and notice they aren't very accurate as replicas. On the other hand, the Lionel folks often don't even refer to themselves as model railroaders. They are toy train collectors. They are operating by a totally different set of rules. They aren't trying to recreate a world in miniature. They are trying to play with toy trains . . . and are succeeding nicely. When Cagney owner Don Micheletti wants to enjoy prototype railroading he goes to the Golden Gate Railroad Museum and repairs or operates Southern Pacific 2472. When he wants to relive his childhood, he grabs the throttle of a Cagney.

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