THE PANELLA PACIFIC

Bob Panella has been in the process of building a new private estate, surrounded by walnut orchards and bordering a river in the Central Valley of California. I'm sure every one of our readers would agree that Mr. Panella is doing it right— he's encircling the estate with over a mile and a half of 16" gauge Grand Scale railroading. A man with his priorities straight, he had the roundhouse and shop building finished long before the house has even begun construction.

The carbarn / roundhouse has a very Southwestern (US) feel to it with the Spanish tile roof. A very railroad-like atmosphere was achieved in the interior with the use of large timber trusses and beams.

Our tour guides while visiting the Panella Pacific were Bob "Smitty" Smith, Mr. Panella's right-hand man on the railroad, and Marty Melish, whose technical expertise has aided in the fabulous restoration work accomplished on the collection of motive power and rolling stock. These two fellows are rightfully proud of some of the near miracles that have been accomplished.

THE RAILROAD

The roundhouse and shop building are incorporated under the same roof. With seven stalls in the roundhouse and eight tracks running into the shop / carbarn, you'd think there would be a lot of open space, but nearly every section of rail has flanged steel wheels sitting on it.

As a train leaves the carbarn it runs the length of the yard. You have already rolled quite a distance just to pass the yard limits. After a sweeping turn, you get the thrill of riding over a 195-foot long trestle with a view of the river. After a slight turn to the right a tangent will carry you along the southeast shore of one of the two lakes on the property. As you curve around the edge of this seven-acre body of water, you notice that not only was the lake designed to

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The view across the big lake is beautiful. The building seen here is the entertainment pavilion. On the right of the pavilion are pillars and a roof that protect a truly spacious Jacuzzi.

This is the switcher that came from Custom Locomotive in Chicago. It is quite a durable

(Panella Pacific, continued from page 2)

have a very natural appearance, but that an inviting sandy beach has been formed along the northwest bank. Across the lake you can see the large entertainment pavilion with an enclosed hall and open areas bordered with stately columns.

Beyond a passing siding and along the north edge of the property you pass over another long trestle behind the guest house. Turning back south, you take a siding up to the back of the pavilion. For right now this is the end of the line. When the line is complete, you will swing through an open area to the southwest and past the crossing of one end of the long circle drive, and into the remarkable 170 foot long tunnel. But you won't need to be afraid of the dark nor choking over fumes. The tunnel, which has already been built, is equipped with lights and exhaust fans.

As you emerge from the tunnel you will cross the other end of the circle drive then border the west bank of the three-acre lake at the entrance of the estate. Around to the south end of this lake you will cross through a quaint covered bridge. A couple more sweeping turns will bring you back to a junction where you can choose to head for the shops or head back out on the mainline for another run on the Panella Pacific.

Panella Pacific Railroad Profile

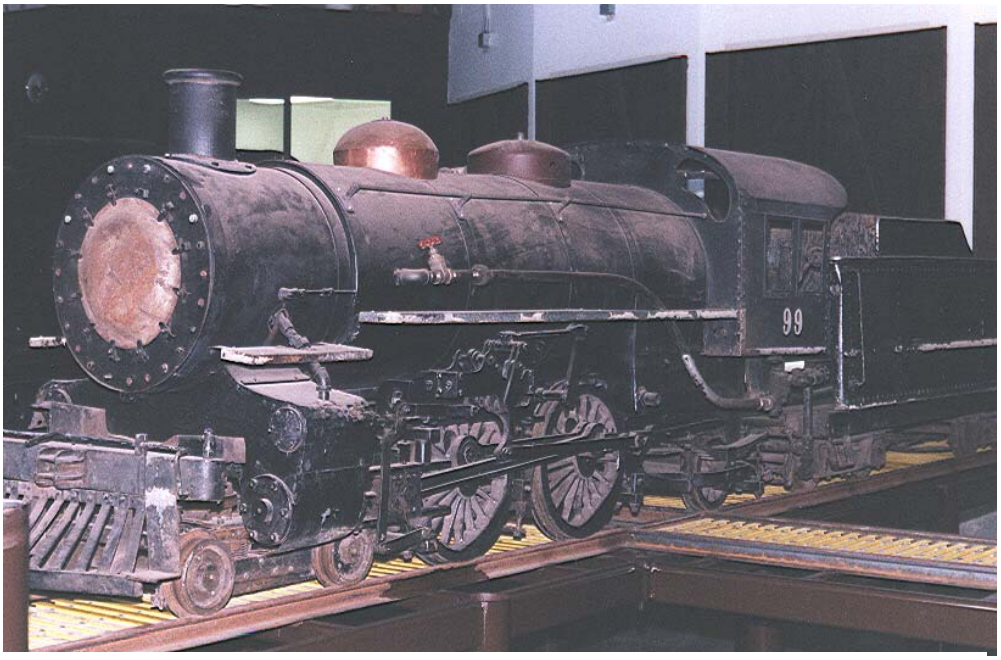
Date Track Laying Began: 7/96
Length of Track: Approx. 8000 ft.
Type of Rail: 12 lb.
Turnouts: 18 total
Max. Grade: 2%
Min. Radius: 85 ft.
Tunnel: 170'
Bridges: 2 wooden trestles - 195 ft. & 144 ft.
30' covered bridge
Structures: 7-stall Roundhouse, 8- track Carbarn
Engines: 3 A-B units, 3 A units, 2 S-16s model 1865, 1 switcher, and 2 live steam
Rolling Stock: 2 flat cars, 1 caboose, 9 -"1865" passenger cars, 19 G-16 passenger cars, and 4 G-16 observation cars
Couplers: Knuckle & Link & Pin

THE COLLECTION

The cornerstone of the Panella Pacific collection of equipment is the #501 (as seen on the cover), but we'll get to that later. The total number of engines in the fleet is eleven, if you consider an A-B unit one engine. There are fourteen if you want to consider a B unit a separate loco. There are thirty-five pieces of rolling stock.

Of the locos there are six G-16's (three with B units), two are S-16's (steam outline gas engines), one SW600 switcher, a 4-6-4 steamer, and a 4-4-2 steamer. Of course the G-16's and S-16's were built by MTC / Allan Herschell. The SW600 is a product of Custom Locomotive in Chicago, the 4-6-4 was originally built by the Sandley's, and the 4-4-2 was built by Norm Gracey.

The equipment has come from all over the United States. The 501 originally ran in L.A. The 580 had run in Oklahoma City's Lincoln Park Zoo starting in 1951. The



No. 99 was built by Norm Gracey, who was a well known live steamer around the Orlando, Florida area. His 16" gauge engines include the 99 and it's sister, as well as a third engine he helped another gentleman build.

726 began running at Point Pleasant Beach New Jersey in 1954. And the S-16 #1882 ran at Wells Park in Wichita Falls, Texas.

The 4-6-4 Hudson #5320 is actually an historic engine in the Grand Scale world as it was originally #4001, the first engine produced by the Sandley Light Railway Equipment Works *[see Little Railways of the World by Shaw, pg.101]*. Ah, I can already hear readers pulling out their notepads, getting ready to write a letter to the editor to say that the Sandley equipment was 15" gauge. Indeed it was. In the early 1950's this engine went to the Great Master Piece & Southern Railway in Lake Wales, Florida. After that the history is a bit sketchy, but it eventually came into the hands of a commercial live steam shop where it was eventually rebuilt to 16" gauge for the Panella Pacific. At the moment the engine is out of service because of a few snags that need to worked out. *[In the next issue we'll talk a great deal about the Sandleys and the Riverside & Great Northern.]*

The 4-4-2 steamer #99 is still waiting for restoration. This little Atlantic was built in the late sixites or early seventies by the late Norm Gracey (described by one of our readers as one of the nicest guys you'd ever have hoped to meet). Originally a coal burner, this little work horse served for years at the Zoo in Sandford, Florida along with its sister engine which now resides at Little A-Merrick-a in Wisconsin. With 16" drivers and around a 7" stroke she is a powerful engine for her size.

THE 501

In the United States G-16's are a very well known type of amusement park train, built by the Miniature Train Company (MTC), then later by Allan Herschell. The #501 was the very first G-16 ever built, completed on June 1, 1946. The prototype after which it was modeled, the F3 by EMD (Electro Motive Division of General Motors), was still a new engine itself when this model was built.

Some of our readers may very well remember having ridden this train as its first assignment was in Griffith Park in Los Angles. It was inaugurated in 1946 with actress Margaret O'Brian *(Madam Curie, '43; Jane Eyre, '44; The Secret Garden, '49; Little Women, '49)* breaking a bottle of champagne over the coupler. For the next fifteen years the #501 was the motive power that brought joy to thousands of people over the 3/4 mile line.

It had to haul thousands of passengers just to pay its way. According to a contemporary

LOCOMOTIVE PROFILE

Loco #: 501, 580, 726
Gauge: 16”
Built: 1946, 1951, 1954 respectively
Builder: MTC **Prototype**: EMD F3
Couplers: Knuckle
Working Weight: 3950 lbs, A&B Units
Wheel Arrangement: B-B
Fuel: Gas **Engine**: Wisonsin VE4
Horse Power: 26 (52 A-B)
# of Powered Axles: 8
Drive : Fluid clutch, gear box, drive shafts, axle drivers
Controls: Vacuum throttle, vacuum brakes

LOCOMOTIVE PROFILE

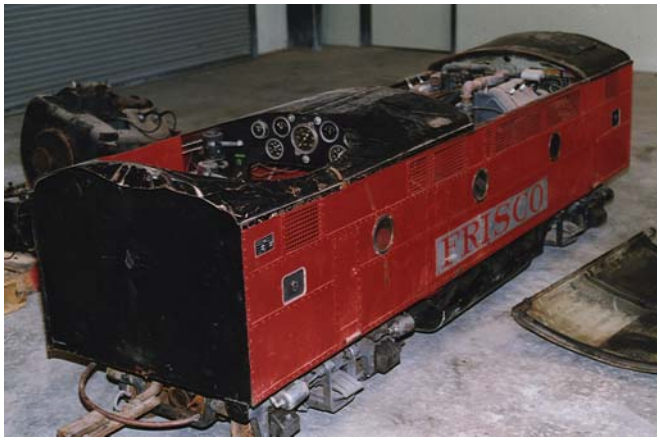
Loco #: 1882, 1899
Gauge: 16”
Built: 1960, 1962 respectively
Builder: MTC
Prototype: Vintage Steamer
Couplers: Pin **Length:** 19’ 3”
Working Weight: 3300 Lbs.
Wheel Arrangement: 4-4-4
Fuel: Gas **Engine:** Wisconsin V4
Horse Power: 26
# of Pwered Axels: 4
Drive: Fluid clutch, gear box, drive shafts, axels drives
Controls: Manual throttle, vacuum brakes

LOCOMOTIVE PROFILE

Loco #: 5320
Guage: 16”
Built: 1995 - 1997
Builder: Sandley Light Railway
Couplers: Knuckle
Length: 25’ 6” **Working Weight:** 9000#
Wheel Arrangement: 4-6-4
Fuel: Kerosene **Boiler Pressure:** 175
Boiler Tubes: 40 @1.25”
Grate Area: 323 Sq. In
Cylander Size: 41/2” x 6” Stroke
Drive Diameter: 20” **Valve:** Piston
Type of Valve Gear: Walschaert’s
Tender Cap: 250 gallons
Tender Trucks: B-B

Before

After



article in Popular Mechanics this A-B unit and six car train set sold for $50,000. That's a lot of money these days. Back in 1946 it was literally a small fortune. Yet the very best built machinery deteriorates over time. A tremendous amount of restoration work was required to get the 501 into the spectacular condition in which you see it today. Over a period of a year and a half the entire train was completely disassembled. Parts were replaced or remade as necessary. The throaty rumble of the two Wisconsin V-4's and the smoothness of the ride are a testament to Smitty's craftsmanship. And the control panel that looks like it belongs in a restored WWII fighter, it is definitely a feather in the cap of Marty who spent countless hours making it perfect (The engraved MTC logo is a great touch). The paint jobs on this and all their restored G-16's has to be seen to be believed.

I must admit to having a strong prejudice that leans toward steam. Even a person such as myself, who has steam cylinder oil running through his veins, couldn't help but feel he was being pulled by a very stately and substantial piece of equipment when riding behind the #501.

We would like to thank Bob Panella, Smitty, and Marty for the tour of the Panella Pacific. It is a line not just of quantity, but real quality. In the future we look forward to being able to report on the gold spike ceremony when the mainline is finished.

LOCOMOTIVE PROFILE

Loco #: 99 **Gauge:** 16”
Built: late 60’s /early 70’s
Builder: Norm Gracey
Couplers: Knuckle
Length: approx. 17’
Working Weight: apprx. 5,000 lbs
Wheel Arrangement: 4-4-2
Fuel: Originally coal - soon to be oil
Boiler Pressure: approx. 150 psi
Cylander Size: approx. 4.5” x 7”
Type of Valve Gear: Baker
Type of Valve: Piston

LOCOMOTIVE PROFILE

Loco #: 438
Guage: 16”
Built: 1993/94
Builder: Custom Locomotive, Chicago
Prototype: EMD SW600
Couplers: Knuckle
Length: 143”
Working Weight: 3700 lbs
Wheel Arrangement: B-B
Fuel: Diesel
Engine: Perkins Diesel 10310 3 cyl.
# of Powered Axels: 4
Drive: Hydrostatic
Controls: Hydrostatic, air brakes