

# RIDING RAILWAYS NEWSLETTER



**Grand Scales**  
Quarterly

APRIL 2007

**Riding Railway Newsletter** is published each month by Robinson & Associates as a special service to our paid subscribers of the **Grand Scales Quarterly** and **7+RAILROADER** magazines.

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Hello everyone! And welcome to your April issue of the *Riding Railways Newsletter*. We have many new readers this issue – welcome aboard! We invite all of you to send in your news, photos, stories, etc., for future publication. If you know of others who would be interested in the *Riding Railways Newsletter*, whether subscribers or not, have them send an e-mail requesting their own issues. We are now offering the newsletter free of charge to all who wish to receive it.

We have an interesting newsletter for you this month. First up, an informative letter on traveling with your trains by Bill Laird. Then some railway news from all over and then a reprint of an article on the now defunct Sonora Short Line Rwy. The author, James Hoback, is a frequent contributor to many of the internet lists and would no doubt be happy to answer any questions you might have. If you would like to contact him, send me an e-mail and I will forward it to him. Now sit back and enjoy!

Regards,

*Susan*

PS- The **Riding Railway University** DVDS (vol 3 and vol 4) are now shipping. Thank you, sincerely, for your patience in receiving these DVDs. If you haven't yet ordered your copies, see page 6 for details. Vol 3 has been very well received and we have high hopes for vol 4, which has an outstanding seminar by Cal Tinkham, among others, as well.



**Jeff Badger writes:** Well after nearly 18 months, the locomotive (7.5" gauge) is nearing completion. Just a few more items to plumb in and should be ready for a test fire again with the new burner and bricked firebox. Hope to take it out for a run on Memorial Day. – *Congratulations Jeff! She's a beauty!*

# HOW DO YOU TRANSPORT YOUR TRAINS?



Steam Engine, Tender, and 2 Shorty Flats loaded in the back of my pick up truck.

Last year I wanted to take my 2 1/2" scale narrow gauge steam engine, tender and a short train to the **Maricopa Live Steamers** 2006 Spring Meet in Phoenix, AZ. Since the trip from central Texas was over 1,000 miles one way, I did not want to pull a trailer. The solution was the "hitch hauler".

For about \$50 I purchased a 20" x 60" platform that was designed to be inserted in a 2" class III trailer hitch receiver on the rear of a vehicle. These are rated at 500 pounds capacity and sold as a way to increase luggage space, or perhaps hold large coolers, on trips. I modified mine to add a sheet metal floor over the expanded mesh floor to protect

cargo from road dust and grime splashed up from the road. Further, I added 4 casters, one at each corner, that could be lowered on legs for roll around storage in the garage.

After loading my steam engine, tender, and two shorty flat cars on top of the tender into the back of my covered pick up truck, I roll the "hitch hauler" (which has already be loaded with two more shorty flats and my waycar) to the rear of the truck and insert the tongue on the "hitch hauler" into the trailer hitch receiver on the rear of the pick up truck. Once the "hitch hauler" is secure to the pick-up, I raise the casters and lock them in place so they won't hit the ground while I travel. Items on the "hitch hauler" are secured by turnbuckles and ratchet straps. This is a great way to add cargo capacity for hauling trains.

With this configuration I was able to haul about 30' of train including steam engine, tender, four shorty flats, and a waycar without resorting to pulling a trailer. I did add heavy duty shock absorbers to the pick up truck to handle the extra load and supplemental adjustable air bags to the rear suspension to be able to level the ride. Since the photos were taken, I added a 4" spacer between the "hitch hauler" tongue and the floor of the "hitch hauler" to raise the entire configuration so that when the casters are raised they are higher off the road than seen in the photos. I also had a custom waterproof fitted cover made that covers the load during travel to protect it from the elements.

Bill Laird, Canyon Lake, Texas



"Hitch Hauler" in the garage with casters lowered and loaded with 2 shorty flats and my waycar. Note the load is securely fastened with turn buckles and ratchet straps.



"Hitch Hauler" secured to pick up truck and casters raised.



# NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## AD FOR FAT CONTROLLER BANNED

**Drusillas Park Zoo** in East Sussex, UK, imported a Thomas the Tank Engine train ride and wanted to advertise for a portly gent to fill the role of the Fat Controller. However, they were advised that it was politically incorrect to run such an ad as it was discriminatory against thin people. The zoo has a staff member currently filling the roll of the controller but says that since he is slim, he “doesn’t quite fit the specification.” Along with Thomas, the zoo has the carriages known as Annie and Clarabel.



**Southern Oregon Live Steamers.** It is now home to five clubs: the **Southern Oregon chapter of the National Railway Historical Society**, the **Southern Oregon Live Steamers**, the **Morse Telegraph club**, the **Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club** and the **Southwest Oregon Large Scale Train Club**. The park has other things to share as well. There are restored rail cars, a caboose, a hopper, a locomotive and a working telegraph system.

## TWEETSIE RAILROAD CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF FAMILY FUN IN 2007

North Carolina’s first theme park is celebrating a milestone in 2007: 50 years of Wild West adventure and timeless family fun. The Wild West theme park features live shows, amusement rides, the Deer Park, concerts and much more. The heart of the park is the action-packed three-mile train ride behind Tweetsie Railroad’s historic steam locomotives.

## LALS 50th ANNIVERSARY

The Los Angeles Live Steamers Railroad Museum will be celebrating their 50th anniversary in May. Their celebratory meet will be held May 25-28, 2007. They anticipate having tracks available for 3/4”, 1” and 1.5” scale trains. The club has been working hard for the last 18 months in prepara-

tion for this meet and are eager to share the event with friends and hobbyists from all around.

## SCALE PRODUCTS RELEASES NEW BELL

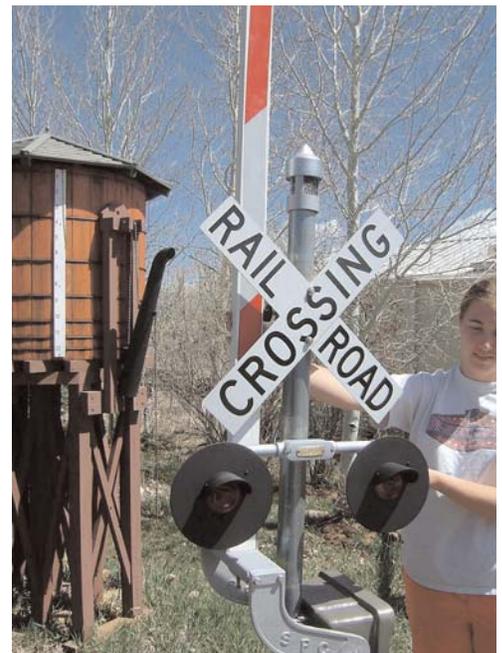
Scale Products has announced the addition of an electronic bell to its commercial drop arm signal. The electronic bell replaces a 6” mechanical bell and offers several advantages including adjustable volume, synchronized bells on multiple signal intersections, 360 degree sound pattern, ultra long life and low power draw. Using a Mylar exterior speaker and amplified circuit, the bell sounds identical to its full size counterparts for maximum realism. The new bell is also available on SPC crossbucks. For additional information contact [evers@frontier.net](mailto:evers@frontier.net) or [www.trainsignals.com](http://www.trainsignals.com).

## THE JERSEY SHORE LIVE STEAMERS NEW HOME

After searching for a home for four years, the **Jersey Shore Live Steamers** will now be located at Bass River Township Municipal Park in New Jersey. The first 700 feet of track was laid down last week. Eventually there will be 20,000 feet of track on this 1/8th scale railroad.

## 26th YEAR FOR MEDFORD RAILROAD PARK

The **Medford Railroad Park** has opened for its season and will operate Sundays, April through October. 21,000 fans visited the park last year. The park was built in 1981 by the members of the



# A Step Back in Grand Scales History

## SONORA SHORT LINE RAILWAY

Written by James Hoback

*(Editor's note: This article originally appeared in issue 4 of GSO. The railway is no longer in operation and the equipment has been sold. However, I thought that some of our readers may not have known about this railway and would enjoy learning about it. The article was written by Jim Hoback while the railroad was still in operation.)*

**T**he Sonora Short Line Railway is a 12" gauge line operating on a local apple ranch near the town of Tuolumne, CA. It is a public hauling line operating on weekends and holidays from mid February through Thanksgiving, 11 am to 5 pm. The railroad pays a percentage for the use of the apple ranch's land. The railroad has been operating there since 1987. The 85 acre apple ranch has a pie shop, gift shop, and farm animals to see. The railroad is operated as a hobby/retirement business and pays its own way.

The loop to loop mainline is nearly 1/2 mile long and passengers are taken around twice for a 10 minute ride. Fares are \$1.50 per person or a 5-ride ticket can be purchased for \$6.25. Children under one year are free. The combination of features of the apple ranch and railroad provide a good family outing. Numerous school classes take field trips to the ranch during the apple harvest season and a train ride is provided as part of the tour. Half fare is charged to the school groups which arrive on week days and are scheduled by appointment.

The track uses 8 lb. rail, 3"x3"x28" soak treated cedar ties on 10" centers, and 5/16" x 2-1/2" spikes. All turnouts are scratch built #6. There are 4



James Hoback with Rosie.

standard turnouts, and one 3-way stub on the lead track to the car barn. All switch stands are scratch built. The two turnouts on the return loops are spring loaded. The gradients on the mainline are 2-1/2%, minimum radius 50'. Due to the hilly terrain of the ranch there is very little level or straight track on the line. The engineers are quite busy adjusting the fire, injecting water, applying or releasing the brakes (locomotives only), adjusting the throttle, and watching to see that passengers are safely in their seats. It is a working railroad and good "stack talk" abounds.

Structures include a covered station, three track car barn, and a one stall engine house. The engine house was converted from a chicken coop donated by the ranch. A 3' deep service pit was dug, the floor cut out of the chicken coop, and the building drug over the pit to place. A small side building, end doors, and board-and-batton siding completed the engine house. Water service includes a water softener and a metal tank inside the false wooden water tank.

Rolling stock consists of 5 all steel excursion cars built by the Hurlbut Amusement Co., Los Angeles area, in about 1958. They were purchased used in 1987 and have been rebuilt and re-painted. These cars are 9' long with 4 seats. They will hold between 4 and 8 persons depending on the "fanny factor". A 4-wheel flat car was built to use behind the Plymouth diesel. It is modeled after one used on the



Continued on the next page. . .

West Side Lumber Company logging line to haul a small Caterpillar. This car has a permanently mounted tool box and in the summer carries a 5-gallon water fire extinguisher. Dry grass is abundant on the apple ranch.

Just completed in February 1998 is a caboose, also modeled after West Side equipment, their "shortie" caboose #4. Windows were added to make the logging caboose look more like a short line caboose. Two steel hoppers, one nearly complete now, are under construction. They are modeled after the East Broad Top RR steel hoppers. They will be used in ballasting service. For construction and maintenance work a "quickie built" flat car was made and it uses an old pair of Ottaway trucks with their tiny little ugly wheels. The flat car lifts off the trucks and they are used as disconnects with a bunk on each of them to

### Railroad Profile: Sonora Short Line

**Owner / Builder:** James Hoback  
**Construction Began:** July 12, 1987  
**Gauge:** 12"  
**Length of Track:** 1/2 mile  
**Maximum Grade:** 3%  
**Minimum Radius Curve:** 50'  
**Type of Rail:** 8 lb. steel  
**Engines:** #4 (4-4-0 steam), #3 (Plymouth diesel)

**Rolling Stock:** 5 Hurlbut excursion cars, 2 flatcars, 1 hopper, 1 caboose  
**Couplers:** Knuckle (Hurlbut cars), Link & Pin (others)  
**Structures:** Station, 1stall engine house, 3 track car barn  
**Bridges:** 1 Deck bridge

haul rail. Couplers used are knuckle style on the Hurlbut cars and link-and-pin on all other equipment.

*Jim Hoback has been a proponent of GSQ since before we began publication. We salute him as a person who is using his energy to make his dream come true and who freely shares his knowledge to help others realize their dreams.*

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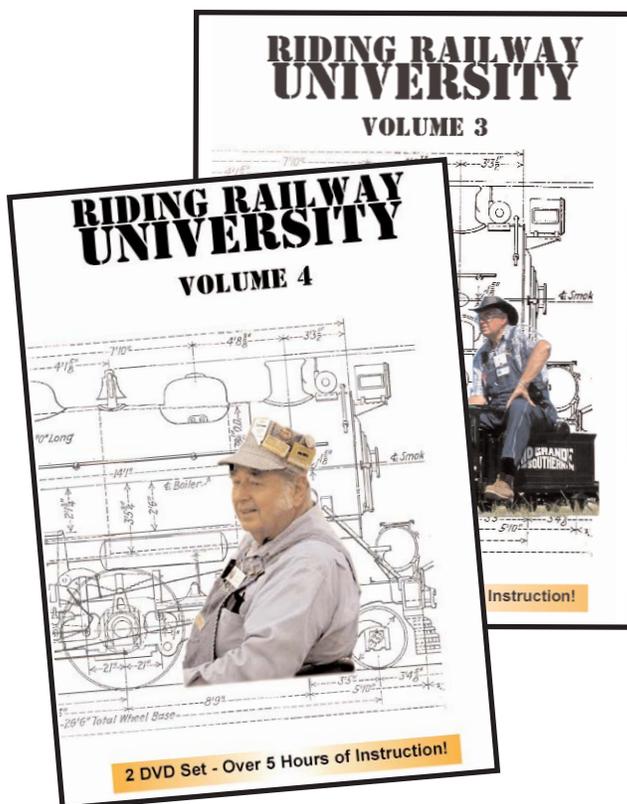
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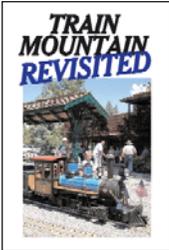


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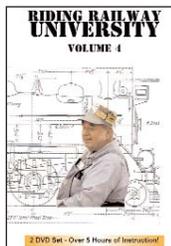
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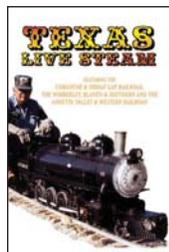
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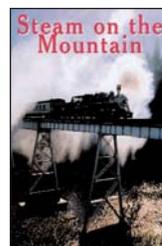
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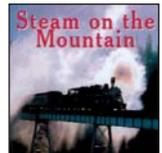
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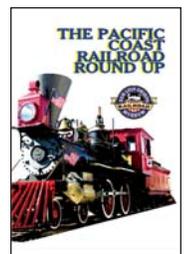


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