

The Pioneer 4-2-0

The Pioneer was the first locomotive in the Chicago area in 1848 and the first on the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. In 1850, it was loaned to the new Aurora Branch Railroad as the first locomotive to pull cars on what would become part of the CB&Q (Burlington Route). The locomotive was purchased second-hand from an eastern railroad, most likely the Tonawanda Railroad, but its early

history has been lost.

This 10 ton locomotive is believed to be number 184 and is the only surviving example of this design made by Mathias W. Baldwin (Baldwin Locomotive Works) during his life time. This design was first built in 1836 and was a favorite of American railroads for a decade because its swiveling leading truck greatly improved the engine's ability to navigate the undulating and roughly built tracks of the period.



The Pioneer on display at the Chicago Historical Society never looked like this picture during its working life. The engine was painted all black during its working life. The Chicago & Northwestern Railroad rebuilt the locomotive in 1948 by installing new boiler tubes, a modern water injector, a safety valve, and steam gauges. The rebuild and this gaudy paint job and small out-of-scale head light was added to dramatize the railroad's one hundredth anniversary. Note the wood rails and iron strap arrangement.

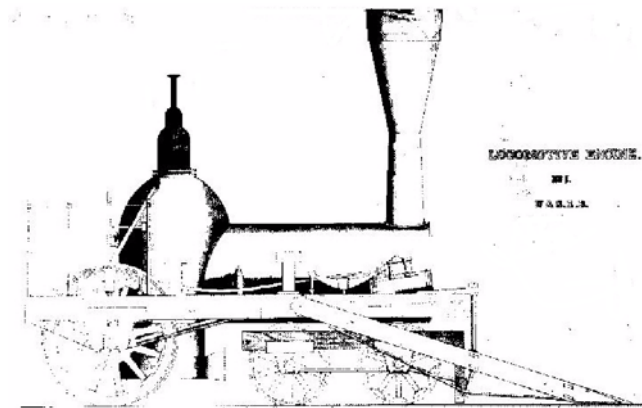
The Pioneer arrived in Chicago aboard the ship *Buffalo* along with a hundred tons of timber and 42

miles of strap rails on October 10, 1848. The engine

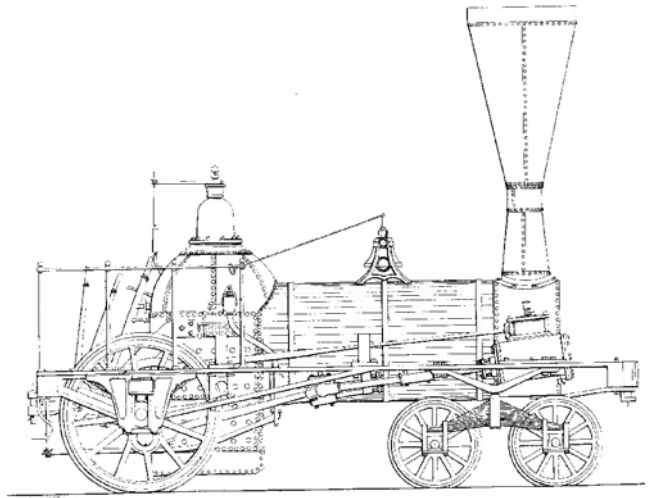
was put to work on October 25, 1848 and used to carry workers and supplies to the slowly advancing track. It could maintain a steady speed over the shaky, metal capped, wooden track at 16 miles per hour.

The track was 6 x 6 inch wood timbers on wood ties and held in place by triangular blocks spiked in place. Iron straps were spiked onto the wood timbers as the “rails.” This rail design was first used on Eastern Railroads beginning about 1830 but was soon outlawed. The iron straps tended to come loose, pass over the wheels of the following carriages, penetrate the floor, and impale the passengers. Illinois had not outlawed strap rails yet, so in order to save money, the two railroads in the Chicago area purchased the timbers and straps from the eastern railroads.

The Pioneer is believed to be Baldwin Construction No. 184 built in 1843. From 1836 (Construction No. 1) until 1845, maybe 190 of these locomotives were built. The locomotives built before 1839 all had wood frames. After this date, these locomotives were built with iron frames.



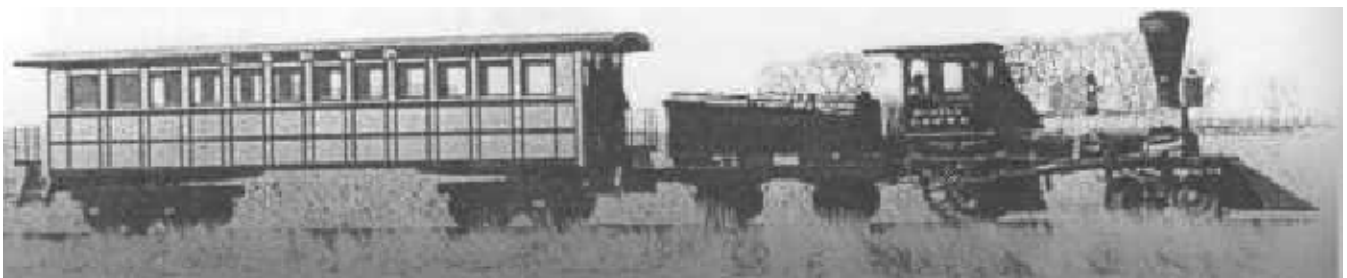
Copied from part of the patent page: Baldwin No. 1 with a wood frame built in 1836 for the Utica and Schenectady Railroad.



Copied from part of the patent page; The Baldwin & Whitney Locomotive Engine for Passengers 1842 to 1846.

These locomotives soon proved to be too light to pull the growing freight demands. A few small cars or a single passenger car was all that could be pulled. The single Paymaster’s car was one of the Pioneer’s regular assignments. In 1839, the Utica and Schenectady Railroad began rebuilding their 4-2-0s by adding a second set of drivers in front of the firebox/boiler. This creation of a 4-4-0 would more than double the tractive power of the locomotive.

In 1874, the Pioneer was retired. It probably would have been sold for scrap, but the financial panic of 1873 depressed the scrap market and there were no takers. The Pioneer quietly decayed on a weed-grown siding until 1880. A local resident, John West, appealed to the directors of the C&NW to preserve this relic. It was stored under cover after 1880 and was lightly renovated for display in 1883. The boiler jacket was forgotten and the locomotive has never since operated nor been displayed with a boiler jacket.





The Pioneer as it appeared in 1883. The boiler jacket, large whistle, and tender have disappeared.

Chicago, Illinois

The importance of Chicago was early recognized by Great Britain as well as the United States as an important future transportation hub for the developing continent. Even after the Revolutionary War and the Treaty of 1783, Great Britain was very reluctant to give up the area. Only after General Anthony Wayne defeated the pro-English Indians in the Battle of Fallen Timber in 1794, was the United States able to bring pressure on the British to cede possession of the area at the mouth of the Chicago River. The Jay Treaty of 1794 and the construction of Fort Dearborn by the US Army in 1803 finally settled the issue.

Until 1823, northern Illinois was unbroken wilderness. The nearest post office was 150 miles away. The only Indian trail from Fort Dearborn led to a trading post 125 miles away at present day Danville, IL. The first wagon road was built in 1832. The cost of shipping overland was \$10 per ton for each 20 miles. (This amount would be the equivalent of \$2200 per ton in 2005 dollars to move a ton 20 miles.) Settlements in Illinois were desperate to get better and cheaper transportation costs.

There were better harbors at Michigan City and Milwaukee that almost prevented Chicago from developing. In 1833, Congress allotted \$25,000 to clean up Chicago's harbor and the settlement of

Chicago was on its way to becoming the major city. After the Illinois-Michigan Canal was finished in 1843, the city was linked with the Mississippi River System. Before the completion of the canal and freight transit time is measured, New Orleans was closer to many Illinois settlements than was Chicago.

Galena, Illinois

Busy stage coach traffic developed between Chicago and Galena on the Mississippi River. Galena's lead mines were once a major source of lead used in early US history. Galena wanted better transportation of its product. The Company [later the Chicago & Northwestern (C&NW)] was incorporated in 1838. A railroad was started from Chicago with plans to go to the Fox River and then to Elgin and Freeport. By 1848 enough track was laid that the Company purchased a second hand locomotive—the Pioneer 4-2-0 which arrived in October 1848. By December 1848, the railroad boasted ten miles of completed strap track and six freight cars.

Aurora, Illinois

In 1834, the McCarty family moved from Elmira, NY and started the settlement of Aurora. By the winter of 1834, this energetic family had begun construction of cabins, a dam, and two mills. There were 15 people living there at the beginning of 1835. Two highways were started and the village was platted as McCarty's Mills. Samuel McCarty

decided that if his settlement was to prosper, it would have to be on a major transportation artery.

McCarty made an offer to the owners of the stage coach line that if they would change their route from Napierville to go through the Mills, he would keep their drivers and horses free of charge for a month. He not only gained the mail stage but also attracted a stream of prairie schooners laden with immigrants. The settlement began to prosper and was renamed Aurora when a post office was established. By 1849, the population had grown to 1200. The dirt highways were becoming inadequate to serve this population and commerce.

When the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad reached the Fox River and turned northward, the leading citizens of Aurora went ballistic. Here was competition 12 miles away on a poor road that threatened Aurora's dreams as a major transportation hub. A charter was soon obtained from the legislature to build a railroad from Aurora to connect with the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad. Capitalization was set at \$100,000. By 1850, six miles of track was completed. As yet, the company's locomotive had not arrived; so the little Pioneer 4-2-0 and a single coach was hired from the C&NW to begin service on the new railroad. At 0630 on September 2, 1850 service was inaugurated on the Aurora Branch of the Burlington System (beginning of the CB&Q).

Aurora Epilogue. Aurora's dream of being a major transportation hub became a nightmare early in the 20th century. By the 1940's, more than 50 trains a day were passing through Aurora and all auto, truck and foot traffic became paralyzed. As a commercial center, Aurora was dying. At great expense to the railroads and the city, the tracks and yards were raised 20 feet to permit the construction of underpasses so that the city would be livable again.

Currently, the Chicago rail hub is so congested that it often takes two days for a freight train to move through the area. Six of the seven major US railroads have tracks that lead to Chicago. There are about 500 trains per day trying to move in the Chicago area.

The Canadian National (CN) wants to purchase the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (EJ&E) and use these tracks as a by-pass route around Chicago (which includes train traffic affecting Aurora, Eola and Elgin). These tracks pass through some expensive and influential suburbs and the residents are in an uproar about increasing the train traffic from about four per day to as many as 30 per day. There are major battles occurring in the Illinois Legislature and the courts.

“Let's Build A Turntable”

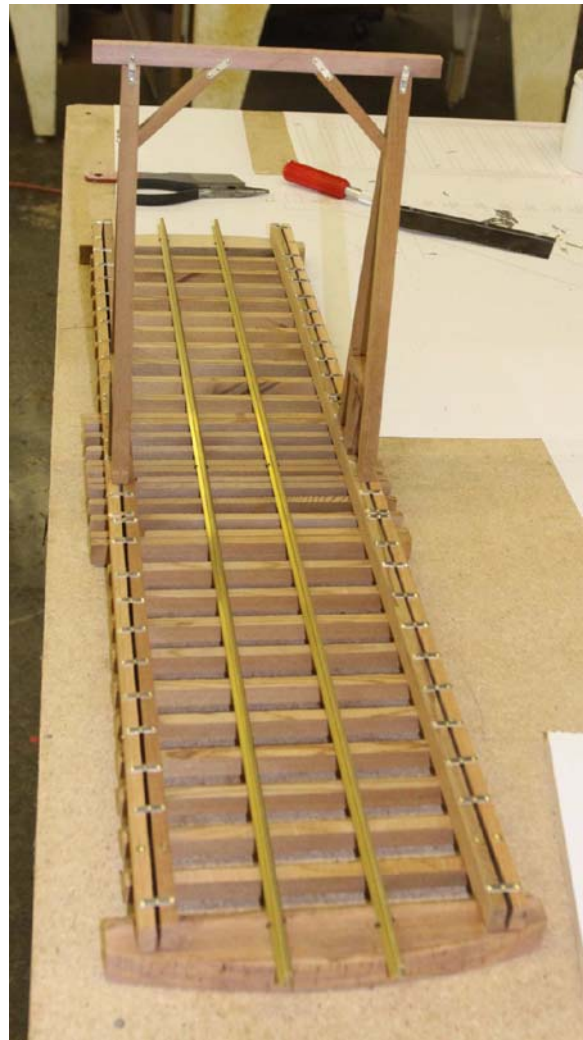
On Saturday, March 14, Gary Lee was the host and instructor for some members who wished to build a gallows style turntable for their railroad. The project is a good beginning exercise in precision wood working. The track is hand-laid across the trestle. Photos are courtesy of Doug Vorwaller. The design appears to be a Waddell Truss much favored by the railroads for its simplicity and ease of construction in the field for short spans. Several models were completed by working two full days.



Odell Lee with a completed turntable trestle.



Ron Bacon fashions a Waddell truss member



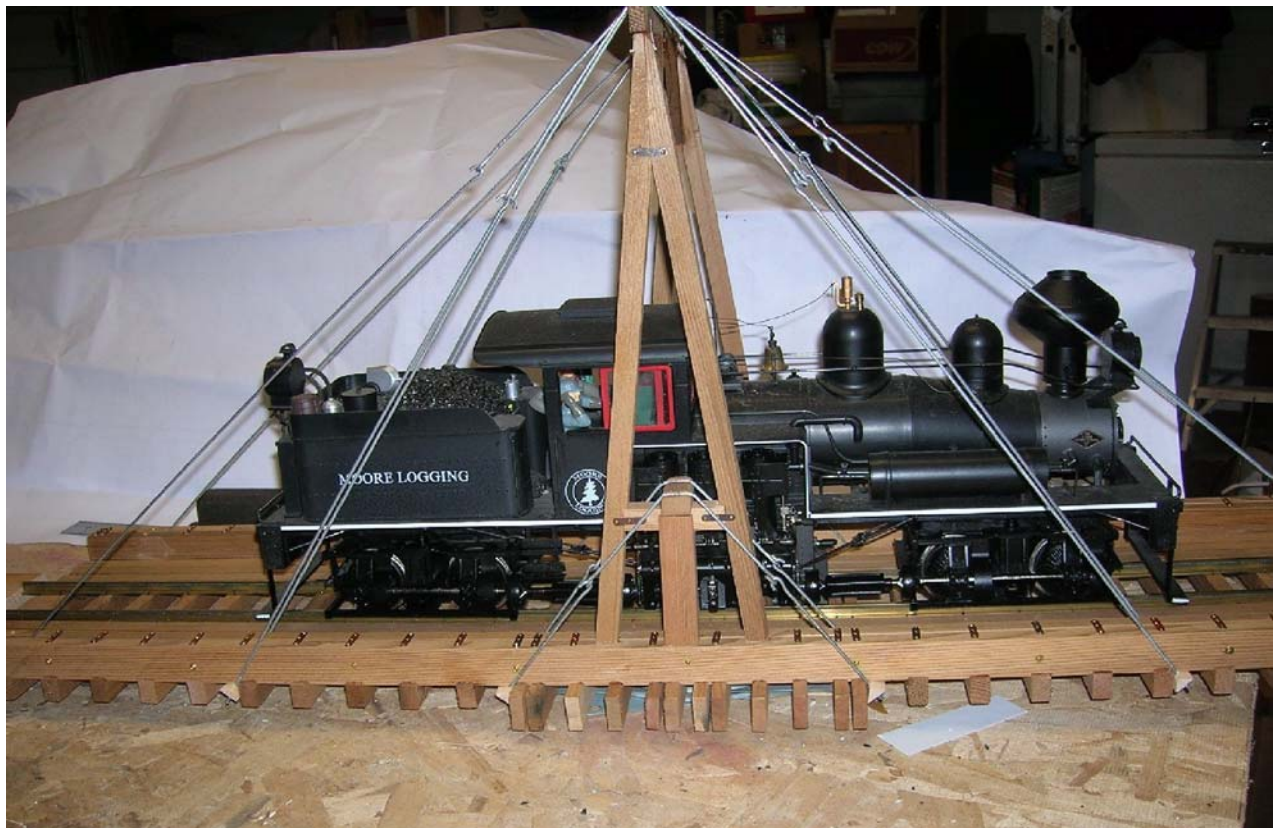
The Waddell truss. The cable stays have not been added yet



Dennis Rose prepares his turntable trestle.



Gary Lee tests the track gauge on David Stratton's work



A finished trestle. Now, on to the turntable pit.

Modular SIG from Dennis Peoples

On Monday, March 16th, we had our second Modular SIG meeting and I must say we have a very active interested group. So far we have 20 club members participating, most of them came to the meeting. We had an extensive agenda and we were able to work through most of it. There are few details to take care of by the next meeting. A discussion of dioramas and vignettes to populate the layout was one of the subjects as we try to get away from the bark dust and plunking down some hasty scenery. A view was expressed that if you work you play attitude, not trying to be exclusionary. The fact remains some of our members have rolling stock but don't have their own railroads and might benefit by participation in the SIG. There are plenty of jobs required to put on a public display and not all are running trains. We are focused on the mission statement:

To "promote and demonstrate the hobby of garden railroading" and our evolving SIG Goals of

- Entertainment of Public
- Education of Public
- Promotion of Club Events

We are now in the process of defining what the look of our modular tables will be or if any changes need to be made. Our next meeting is Monday April 6 at 6:00 p.m. at General Tool & Supply Co. please feel free to contact me if you are interested in coming to the meeting.

HandyConverter from Joe Eckardt

I have discovered and have been using a nifty (and inexpensive) software tool that I have absolutely fell in love with, and I think there are a number of club members that would also love it if they knew about it. It's written by a fellow garden railroader [retired] up in Washington. The program is called "HandyConverter", and it is basically a modeler's "Swiss Army Knife". I have been working closely with the author, Stan Silverman, for a couple

months now adding new features to the program and doing beta testing for him.

I know we don't normally do "product reviews" in our newsletter, but it seems to me that this is low-key enough (i.e., not overtly commercial) and useful enough that such a review might be of general interest. You can see a bit of what it is all about at <http://www.stanstrains.com/SoftwareHandyConverter.htm>. (By the way, the price is only \$11.95 for a download version, so it's definitely not one of those "out of reach" tools to just dream about.)

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Editor's Note: The deadline for the May 2009 newsletter is April 25, 2009.

Schedules & Timetables

Make sure you check the calendar on our Website at <http://www.rcgrs.com/> for the most up-to-date schedules and timetables.

It is the Society's policy to attempt to have an event or open house on every second Saturday of the month. Other and additional dates during a month are also available and encouraged. Anyone interested in having an Open House or sponsoring an event, please contact **Christina Britain**.

OPEN HOUSE INFO NEEDED FROM HOST:

Layout info for those who want to run their own trains?
Can members run trains? Any limitations, ie., no steam?

What is minimum track radius?

What is power supply?

Is layout FN³ compatible?

Education: Is there a topic of interest host will present?

Unusual or crafted feature that makes RR unique?

Directions:

What Host will provide:

April 11, 2009, Saturday, 1:00 to 6:00 p.m.:

Open House at Ron and Merlene Bacon's, 31262 SW Laurelview Road, Hillsboro, OR 503-628-2300 mbacon@centricata.com

Hosts will provide ham for sandwiches and baked beans. Salads or desserts are welcome.

The theme for this open house is Easter. Be on the lookout for rolling Easter eggs on the track. Decorate a car in an Easter theme or give your chocolate bunny a ride on the train. Locomotives such as the Bachmann K-27 will not clear the 8-inch tunnel. The layout is track powered with Train Engineer control. Steam and battery powered locomotives are welcome.

Business Meeting: There will be a short business meeting to discuss events for the coming summer months.

How to Get There: From Beaverton, take Farmington Rd. (Hwy. 10) west about 8 miles to the "T" intersection with Hwy. 219. Turn left and then turn right at the sign pointing toward Laurel onto Bald Peak Rd. Proceed to the "Y" intersection and bear left onto Campbell Rd. Go south to the 4-way stop at the Laurel Valley Store. Continue south on Campbell Rd. to the top of the hill and turn right

onto Laurelview Rd. Go about 1/2-mile to 31262 Laurelview Rd. and turn left down the driveway.

May 17, 2009, Sunday, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.: Dave and Margaret Kookan, Vancouver, WA. A few members have seen our new outside loop railroad, probably none have seen the major changes in our yard. We think almost everyone will be pleasantly surprised by what they see.

Members may run trains on either or both railroads. The new outside railroad has 8' radius, and the original railroad has 4' radius. Track power uses Train Engineer and a 10 amp MRC power supply. Steam is permitted on the new railroad with the hope that operators will do a little wipe-up afterward.

June 20, 2009, Saturday: RCGRS Annual Tour of the Garden Railroads. Bill Derville is chairman for the tour. It is expected that there will be at least eight railroads open to the public tour this summer. The tour books will still be \$10 per family (or carload) and are expected to be available at the same hobby shops and garden centers as last year. In addition to the hosts/hostesses for the garden railroads open for the tour, usually 3 or 4 helpers are needed for each site to help run the trains and for crowd control. You are all needed to help with this event.

July 5 through July 11, 2009: National Garden RR Convention, Denver, CO.

July 11, 2009, Saturday: Gary and Jonette Lee, Corbett, OR

August 2nd weekend: Nick Kelsey, Canby, OR

September 2nd weekend: Doug and Marilyn Watson, Tigard, OR

October ? weekend: Annual Ghost Train Event. Plan now to decorate a car or locomotive (or train) with a ghoulish delight. Mike & Teri Greenwood

November 14, Saturday: Annual Buffet/Banquet

December 5, 2009, Saturday, 4:00 to 9:00 p.m.: Shannon and Millie Pratt are hosting a Christmas train Open House/Potluck dinner.

December Friday Evening: Jan and Rae Zweerts