

BC&G CONSOLIDATION #4

Modeling an Engine That Survives Today

By Brooks Stover



#4 reproduction number plate



One of the factors that led me years ago to select the Buffalo Creek and Gauley Railroad (BC&G) as my prototype subject was the fact that from the early-1950s until the railroad ceased steam operations in 1965, the era of interest to me, the line rostered three husky Consolidations. I've always thought that the 2-8-0 wheel arrangement generally made for a handsome locomotive and the smaller size of these engines made them perfect for a model railroad, especially in S. Because the BC&G operated so late into the steam era, all three of the BC&G's Consolidations

Of the BC&G's three Consolidations, only Baldwin-built #4 was purchased new. The engine was in service on the BC&G from 1926 until the line closed in 1965 and is the most renowned of the BC&G engines. In this article, Brooks describes how he built a representation of the engine using an S Helper Service Consolidation and also shares some of his experiences with the prototype locomotive. The model is seen here sitting in the Dundon yard on Brooks' prior layout. Brooks Stover photo.

were well photographed and, in fact, all three survive today.

I have modeled all three of the BC&G's Consolidations. In fact, I have modeled all three of the engines twice. My early efforts at modeling the BC&G were pretty basic and I converted American Flyer 0-8-0

switchers into 2-8-0 Consolidations by adding a pilot truck. Then in 2006 Don Thompson and S Helper Service introduced their beautifully detailed and smooth-running Consolidation based on the B&O's class E-27 engines. I was ecstatic as there was finally a very high-quality Consolidation at an affordable price.



This classic portrait of #4 at the Dundon yard was taken by Howard Ameling sometime after 1959 when the diamond logo on the cab was reintroduced. The basic elements Brooks incorporated in his model are evident including the bell location, red number plate, the pilot mounted air tank, the light smokebox and the white striping.

In this article I describe how I lightly modified an SHS engine to represent #4, the Consolidation perhaps most often associated with the BC&G, and I share some of the fun I've had in the process.

The BC&G's #4

Consolidation #4 was the only engine the BC&G ever bought new. Every other BC&G engine was a hand-me-down. Number 4 was acquired from the Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1926. The engine was one of a group of 10 built for the National Railroad of Mexico but BC&G President J.G. Bradley talked Baldwin into converting c/n 59472 from oil to coal and selling it to him instead. The engine was in service until the BC&G closed. In fact, #4 was the engine that pulled the final steam powered train on the BC&G on February 27, 1965.

There was nothing particularly remarkable about #4 as Consolidations go. She had 51" drivers, used 190 pounds of boiler pressure and had a tractive effort of 43,000 pounds. Photos show that during her years of service on the BC&G she had several tenders and

there are no records of any serious accidents. Like all BC&G engines, she was always well maintained. She often sported white sidewalls on her drivers, white trim on her running boards and along the bottom of the tender and a graphite, grey or silver smokebox. Over the years there were a couple of different styles of lettering under the cab window and the engine number sometimes appeared on the steam dome.

After the BC&G closed, the engine went into tourist service on several lines eventually winding up at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC where it remained from 2001 to 2015. Currently the engine is awaiting a new boiler and restoration at the Cass Scenic Railway in West Virginia. When completed, the engine will be painted in her original BC&G livery and run from Cass to Durbin. It's a very exciting prospect for BC&G fans!

A Weekend With #4

In 2005 I helped organize a "BC&G Reunion Weekend" at Spencer where BC&G #4 was re-lettered in her

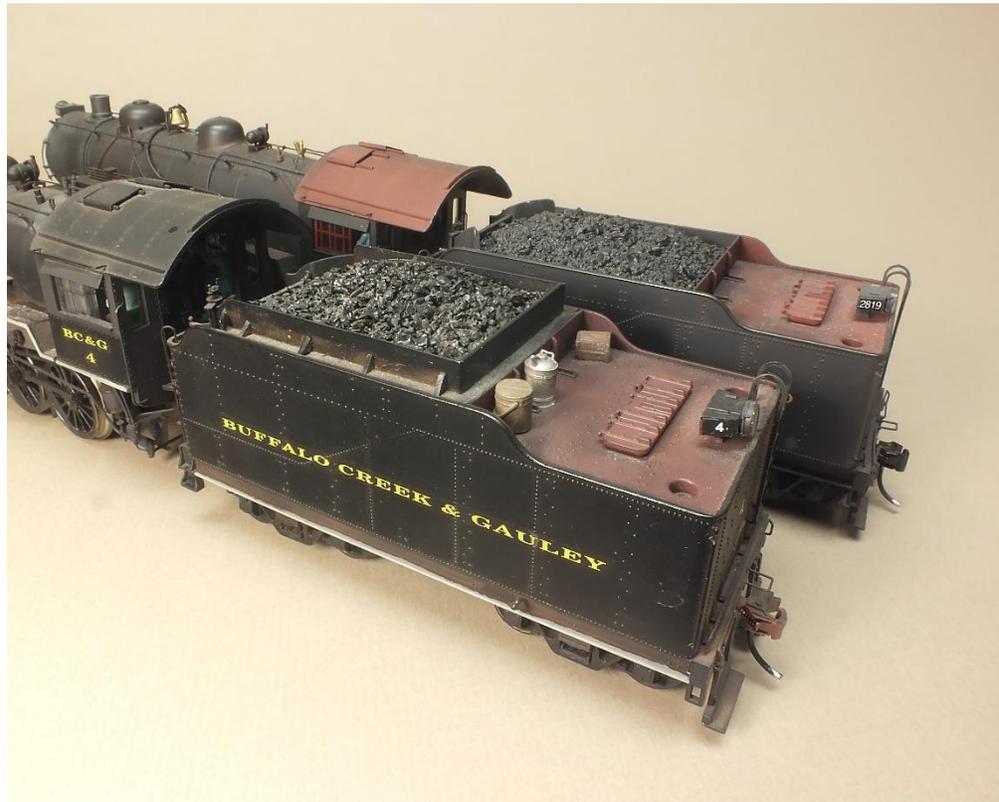
original BC&G livery and former BC&G employees, their families and interested railfans were invited to ride behind the engine. It was a truly memorable weekend as I was able to spend considerable time in the cab, including during some switching at night. I also was able to meet former BC&G employees and even photographed my AF-based model of #4 on the running board of the real #4. As part of the reunion event, the Spencer shops made duplicates of the #4's headlight-mounted number plate. One of them is now proudly displayed in my layout room. At the reunion we also recreated a photo taken on the day of the final run 30 years earlier, and the photo was taken by the same photographer. The original and the reproduction are now displayed in my layout room. Long-time friend and fellow NASG member and BC&G fan Frank Criswell also participated in the event and we remember it fondly.



In 2005 Brooks was able to spend a weekend with the prototype engine at the North Carolina Transportation Museum. Besides riding in the locomotive and meeting former employees of the BC&G, he was able to photograph his AF-based model of #4 on the prototype's running board. Brooks Stover photo.



During the 2005 BC&G Reunion Weekend, Brooks, Frank Criswell and several other BC&G fans recreated a photo that was taken of the crew on the final steam run on February 27, 1965. Amazingly, the 2005 photo shown here was taken by Howard Ameling, the same photographer that took the original 30 years earlier. That's Brooks on the far right and Frank with arms folded under the headlight. Brooks Stover photo.



Brooks modified the coal bunker on the tender to more closely represent the tenders used on BC&G #4. The additional side boards and gussets were fabricated from styrene. A load of loose coal was bonded in place and a few cans and barrels were added to the tender deck which was painted boxcar red. The stock SHS tender is in the background. Brooks Stover photo.

The Model

My intention with my SHS-based model of #4, as with my models of the two other BC&G Consolidations, was to make a "reasonable, recognizable representation", not a perfect replica. I started with an SHS engine with the center-mounted headlight and then relocated the bell to just behind the stack to match the prototype and added a circular number plate under the headlight. I made a cylindrical air tank and mounted it on the pilot deck as every BC&G Consolidation was so equipped. I also modified the coal bunker on the tender to more closely match photos and added a coal pile. I painted the entire engine Floquil Engine Black, the smoke box silver and the deck of the tender red as the prototype was. I painted the edges of the running boards white, added a



The BC&G has often been referred to as the standard gauge railroad with a narrow gauge character. It was common for crewmen to ride on the pilot in nice weather. This early-50s photo by Mallory Hope Ferrell from the author's collection shows the cab lettering scheme used on the model.



Brooks rotates his three BC&G Consolidations just like the prototype did. Engine #4, therefore, is in service about one third of the time on the layout. Here the engine is crossing the 142' Sand Fork Bridge on the author's current 12'x 25' layout. This photo by the author appeared on the cover of the November 2020 issue of Model Railroader.

white stripe to the bottom of the tender and applied custom road name decals to the tender, cab and steam dome. The engine was lightly weathered with pastels.

To the best of my ability to discern, BC&G #4 never appeared on the cover of a rail magazine while it was in service on the BC&G, although the other two Consolidations, #13 and #14, both did. My model of #4, on the other hand, has appeared on the cover of Model Railroader, RMC, Dispatch (twice) and Railmodel Journal. On the BC&G, the three engines were on a monthly rotating cycle. One was in service, one kept ready as back-up and the third underwent maintenance. I rotate my

three engines similarly with #4 running about 1/3 of the time,

Conclusion

As I've told Don Thompson on numerous occasions, I believe the SHS Consolidation he created is, dollar for dollar, the finest small steam engine ever made in S. Besides the three I have representing BC&G #4, #13 and #14, I have one that sees service on the B&O interchange as a E-27, and a fifth that I keep 'just in case'. The #4 has run flawlessly since I acquired it in 2006. And it's really fun to have a model of BC&G #4 on my layout, especially because it's an engine I got to spend the weekend with in 2005. Hopefully, the restoration at Cass will be

This is the photograph taken of the crew in front of #4 at Swandale on February 27, 1965 just before departing for Dundon on what would be the final steam-powered run on the BC&G. It was this photo that Brooks, Frank and the others recreated at Spencer 30 years later. Howard Ameling photo.



completed in a reasonable time and I'll get to ride in the cab of this well-known and historic locomotive one more time.

For more information about BC&G #4 and a link to an excellent short video on the history of the engine, visit my website at www.buffalocreekandgauley.com.

