

Albion Software Newsletter

March 2023

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Ship It! 10 Cresting The Hill

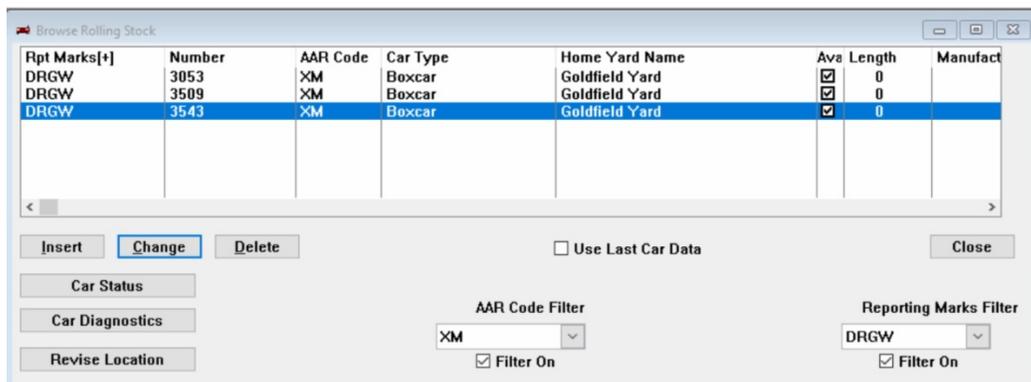
Ship It! 10 is finally released!

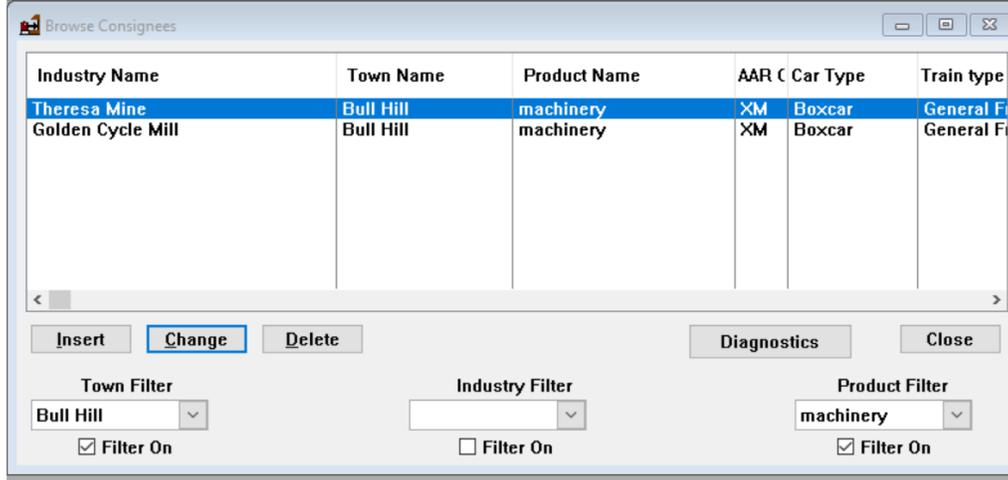
Existing version 9.0 + customers can download it for free. Just log in to your SugarSync account. If you've forgotten your password, their website allows you to reset the password. Your user id on SugarSync is always the email address you used when purchasing through PayPal. If you'd like a USB drive shipped, purchase the USB shipping option (\$35.00) on my website, and I'll send it out pronto.

Ship It! 10 Features

Continued from the last newsletter published in January.

- Redesign of the Browse (List Box) filters - in version 9, the software did not allow you to combine filters. I dug deeper into the documentation for my dev software and discovered that I could indeed combine them. So if you want to look at all your PRR boxcars (only), you can do that. Same thing for the filters on the Browse Shippers and Browse Consignee windows. In addition, as soon as you select an item in a filter drop-down, the filter gets turned on, eliminating that extra mouse click. Some examples follow:





- Save browse window filters (or not). The software now remembers the filters you last used, even after you close the program. I added an option in the Options window to turn that feature off - sort of. If you tell the software not to save the filters, it still saves them - but it does not turn them on when you enter the browse window.
- Save the last row position in browse windows. The software now remembers the last row you were located on in a browse window, and brings you to that row when you return to that browse. There is a caveat here. Certain sorts interrupt this. For example, in the Rolling Stock Browse, Rpt Marks and Number sorting preserve the last row position, but the other sort options do not. I hate having a feature that is not reliable, but there is no real downside, as it works better in most cases than it used to, and it certainly does not work "worse". Usually if you sort using the first 1 or 2 columns in the browse works just fine. And if you don't use a sort on the browse, it always works.

Bug Fixes

I'll start with the major bug fixes. These two were introduced in the rewrite that led to version 9.

- Hidden Staging - in certain circumstances, cars were being skipped over and left in staging.
- Send to Last Interchange - in certain cases, cars were not sent to the last interchange.

The next few are bugs likely introduced in 9.1

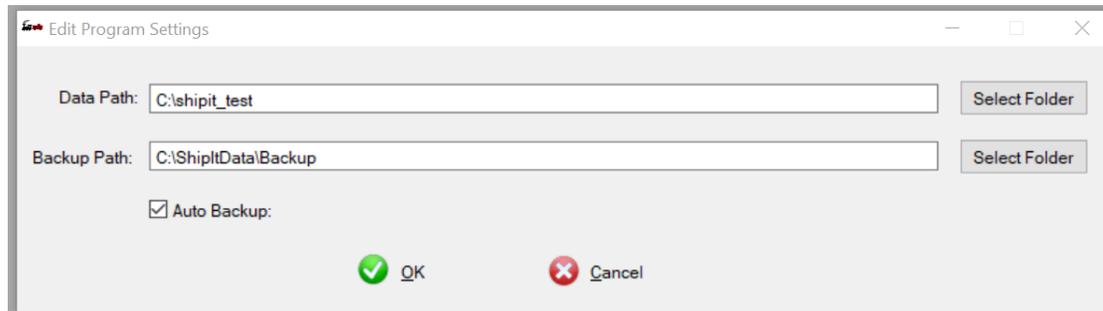
- Duplicate Key error (in certain situations) at the end of session generation, (it had to do with the automatic blocking that occurs if you have blocking lists set up).
- Condensed Switchlist was not being blocked.

Other bugs

- Start Fresh was not taking into account the industry overrides when it was placing cars into their home yards.
- The departure time was incorrect in the Yard Departure List (Style 2).
- Industry Status Report - Occupancy text fields were not calculated correctly when using the "by feet" option.
- Industry Status Report - Occupancy text fields were not taking into account the industry overrides available for Start Fresh.
- The Stuck Car Report was not displaying the full industry name.
- Scheduler - the "current graph" check mark was not displaying.
- Scheduler - the View Schedule button in the Trains Browse was not working.
- Scheduler - one of the browse windows (browse towns, maybe?) was displaying a message box with debugging information in it when opened.
- The ability to change the root database folder (this is found under the File, View/Change Default Settings pull-down menu) has been enhanced and fixed. **Read the section below for the full explanation:**

All of the bugs above have been fixed. Please shoot me an email if you find out otherwise.

Changing Your Root Database Folder



In version 10, when you select the View/Change Default Settings menu item (under the File menu) a message box will appear with the following suggestion:

"Before selecting a new root data folder, create the folder using Windows Explorer and copy at least one database folder from your current root data folder into the new folder."

The message box warns you of this because the program needs at least one database folder present.

Previously, when you changed your root database folder, Scheduler, Railbase, and the Balancer were not able to run. This is because the executables for these programs need to exist in the root database folder. In version 10, all executables and the dll's required for them to run, are copied into the new root database folder when you press the OK button.

Version 10 Features covered in the last two newsletters

- Sort options for car starting and car ending location reports
- Town/Train Departure Report (shows cars left on train and in town)
- Simplified Car Status Report
- Ability to set pre-fills for Train Type and Home Yard Columns.
- Exit program without running a backup.
- For a given industry, report the products that it ships and receives (button on Industry Browse window).
- For a given product, report on the industries that ship or receive that product. (Button on Products Browse window).
- Start Fresh Diagnostics - detects staging and home yard issues in your database, some are warnings, some are data issues that can cause start fresh and session generation issues.
- Home Yard Report

Other contributors

If anyone wants to send me a short write-up of how they use Ship It!, or just wants to share some layout pictures with other readers of this newsletter, please send me your copy. Your grammar or spelling does not have to be perfect, as I'll look it over and perhaps offer some suggestions. The first contribution from another person follows.

Jean is a long time user of Ship It!, and has helped me enormously in testing the product. If anyone can find a bug in Ship It!, it's Jean. His database is massive, and he uses every bit of the functionality, stretching it way past where it was meant to go. Sometimes when he sends me a bug, I'll complain and say, "But it was never supposed to support that functionality!" His answer is always the same: "Well it's been working this way for me for years, and now it's broken." So of course I have to fix it! It was Jean who found the major bugs that were fixed in this version.

Note: The Deluxe Balancer is the first third party software to work with Ship It!, and it has been in use for many years, helping folks "balance" their database. Read on to find out what it does.

THE DELUXE BALANCER

By Jean C. Piquette

What does the Balancer do for you? Here is a list of the major capabilities:

1. Drives your database into good balance, making sure for every product in your database the production rates of loads are very close to the receive rates.
2. Tells you how many trains you need to run by train type, based on the flows of products in your database.
3. Tells you how many cars you need to have in your database for each AAR car type.
4. Produces an individual report for every industry in your database showing you the shipping rate (carloads shipped per session) for each of the products it ships, and the receive rate (carloads received per session) for each of the products it receives. Also shows the percentage of the siding capacity that is devoted to each of the products it deals with, whether shipped or received.
5. Produces an individual report for each of the products in your database, showing each of the shippers of that product and each of the consignees of that product. Also shows you the production rates and receive rates at each industry that deals with that product, and tells you the percentage of each industry's siding devoted to that product.
6. If there are problems in your database, it produces reports that tell you what the problems are, and that can be used to help you to fix these problems.
7. Gives you a capability that allows you to "turn over" the capacity of each industry twice per session, doubling the number of carloads shipped or received.
8. Produces a Layout Design Quality Report that summarizes the major components of your database, and gives your layout a quality rating based on the "50% rule," which for good operation your trackage should not use more than 50% of its capacity.
9. Produces a home yard report for each of the yards in your database, showing you how many cars of each AAR car type that are home-yarded in each yard.
10. Produces a Balancing Summary Report that summarizes the major results given in the many reports that the balancer produces. This can be considered an "executive summary" of the balancer's many results, helping you to find easily the information that is important to you.

The Balancer comes with both a Quick Start Guide that will let you start using the Balancer quickly, and also a comprehensive manual that explains the details.

You can find a link to the Balancer website at the top of the Albion website. There you can read more about what the Balancer can do and see some example reports, as well as order the balancer.



A Tale of Progress or Lack Thereof on the Cripple Creek District

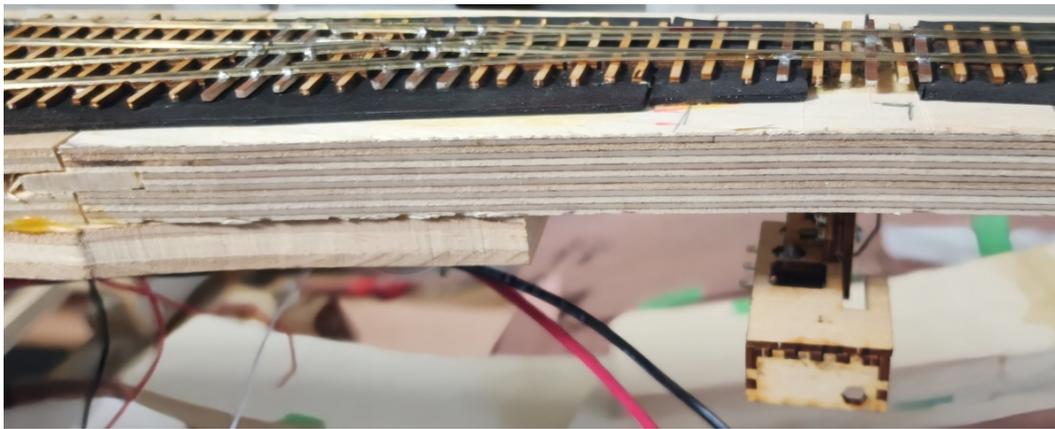
Not real exciting stuff, but trackwork usually isn't, at least not for me. In this scale (HOn3), frustration abounds. Everything has to be double or triple checked with a track gauge - even .005 smaller or wider can make a difference - even if you use commercial jigs. I've learned the hard way not to trust the jigs to do all the work for you. The rolling stock is a bit more forgiving than the track gauge (usually). But if it's off and you don't catch it, usually you'll find the issue when you have visitors over and you want the trains to run perfect.



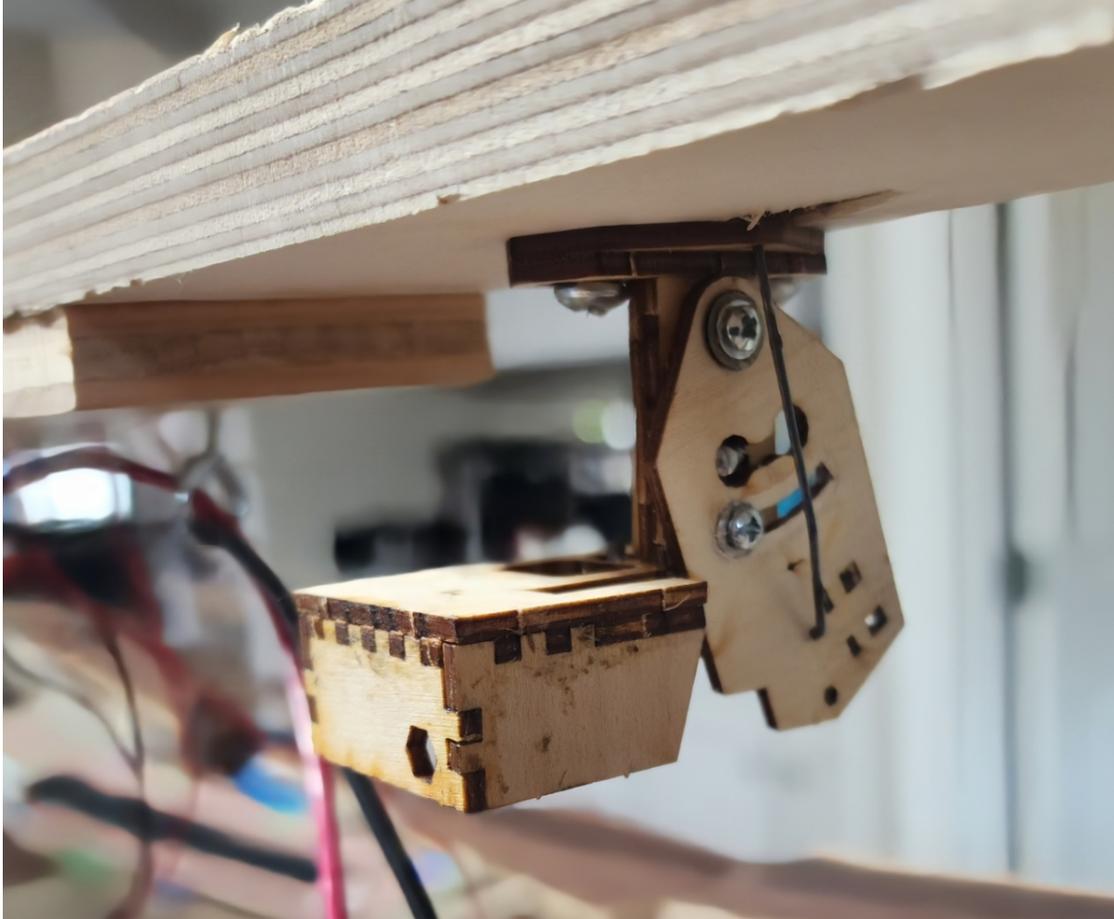
The mainline has been extended to the top ridge. The town of Independence was the track to the right when it was just a dead end, plus some staging. Now the town of Independence will be located to the left



The runaround is still under construction, but getting there. The runaround and the lead track (lower track) will service a mine (upper track).



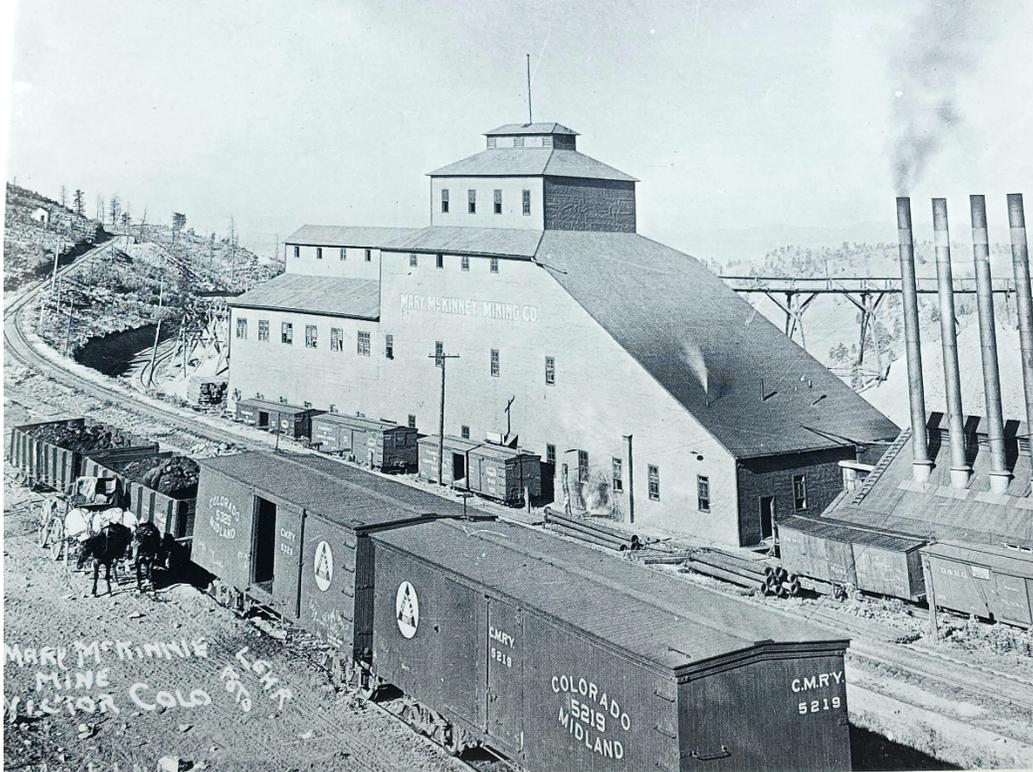
Switch with bullfrog installed.



Side view of the above bullfrog.



And now the fun stuff. I gotta get the new trackage in Independence finished so I can operate! The fun part is replacing the old destination (which was a dead end track - Independence Yard), with the new one - The Mary Mckinney mine. All I have to do is add a new industry (the Mary Mckinney), and change the Shipper and Consignee rows to have their industry as the Mary Mckinney instead of Independence Staging. Because I have merely replaced the industry name in those rows, I won't need to do a Start Fresh. In actuality, an existing session will just use the new industry names on the switchlists, so I don't even have to generate a new session for them to be recognized!



The real Mary McKinney. If you look close, you can see that both narrow and standard gauge cars serve the mine. I plan on doing the same. The standard gauge track work will be easier!

I hope ya'll download the new version. The little user interface enhancements I added can be very helpful. When I was replacing the industry names in the example above, the software "remembered" that I had just entered the Mary Mckinney mine, so that row was already selected for me when I went to replace the industry name. Until the next time - have fun playing with trains!

Bill

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