



The photograph whose discovery prompted this article. It shows the Fulton Foundry 4-4-0T locomotive PIONEER at Jarrahdale Mill, WA circa 1884-89.

Photo: John Ray Collection, courtesy of Bill Weedon

## The locomotive *PIONEER*

by Jeff Austin

A recently discovered collection of photographs of Jarrahdale mills, Western Australia in the 1880s has provided another glimpse of the life and times in this saw-milling community, but more importantly to the railway historian, an early view of the Australian-built locomotive *PIONEER*.

The photographs are from the family collection of John Ray (1859-1924), a Canadian-born steam engineer who after working on large steam river boats overseas, came to the Rockingham Jarrah Timber Co., Jarrahdale in 1884. He was put in charge of the machinery at the various company mills and his family went on to have a long association with the Millars timber companies.

Only two of the company's locomotives are shown in the various scenes. These are the 4-4-0T locomotive, built by Fulton Foundry, South Melbourne in 1874 and later named *PIONEER*; and the 2-4-0T locomotive, *SAMSON* built by Beyer, Peacock & Co, Manchester in 1882 (Makers No. 2158/82). The absence from the photographs of the other Beyer, Peacock locomotive, *SAMSON* No.2 (Makers No. 3120/89) would suggest that these images were taken in the period 1884-89 and more on that timeframe later.

The *SAMSON* engine is little changed in appearance from later 1890's views but the Fulton engine is markedly changed. The openness of the rudimentary cab reveals some of the previously hidden details of the boiler and footplate fittings,

while the basic structure affords little in the way of weather protection for the crew.

In our book *Rails Through The Bush* (LRRSA, 1997), Adrian Gunzburg and I detailed the history of the locomotive *PIONEER*. The available photographs from the 1890s showed it to be an oddly proportioned and ungainly machine, and yet a locomotive which served the Jarrahdale mills well for about 25 years. The lack of nameplates in the early view is attributed to the fact that they were still affixed to the old Thomson Road Steamer, which originally bore that name and was by then driving machinery in a shed at the mill. The question thus arises, why is the cab of the locomotive so different from the later views of *PIONEER*? Fortunately the answer is reasonably simple — it was extensively rebuilt following an accident.

On 11 June 1890, the locomotive was standing at Jarrahdale and preparing to leave for the new 'No. 3 Mill' at '39 Mile Brook' (8 miles south-east of Jarrahdale). In the cab was the driver, W Moreton and a visiting Canadian sawmill engineer. Without warning, a large dead tree adjacent to the line suddenly toppled over and crushed the locomotive cab. Tragically, the engineer was killed and driver Moreton was injured. The newspaper accounts of this accident mention the locomotive by name — *PIONEER* — and this would suggest it had acquired the nameplates by then.

In the subsequent repairs, the opportunity was taken to improve the crew comfort (especially in winter!) by enclosing the footplate in a boxy, all-steel cab. Later photographs show that modifications were further made by removing the top



*Beyer, Peacock 2-4-0T locomotive SAMSON at Jarrahdale Mill, WA circa 1884-89. Photo: John Ray Collection, courtesy of Bill Weedon*



*PIONEER (far left) with the two SAMSON locomotives at Jarrahdale Mill, circa 1898.*

*Photo: Millars*

half of the rear cab side wall, but this was obviously a change based on the practicalities of working in such a confined space.

*PIIONEER* went on to work the bush tramways around Jarrahdale throughout the 1890s and it was only the arrival of the two James Martin built locomotives, *ROCKINGHAM* and *JARRAHDALÉ* in 1898, that led to its eventual retirement.

**Postscript:**

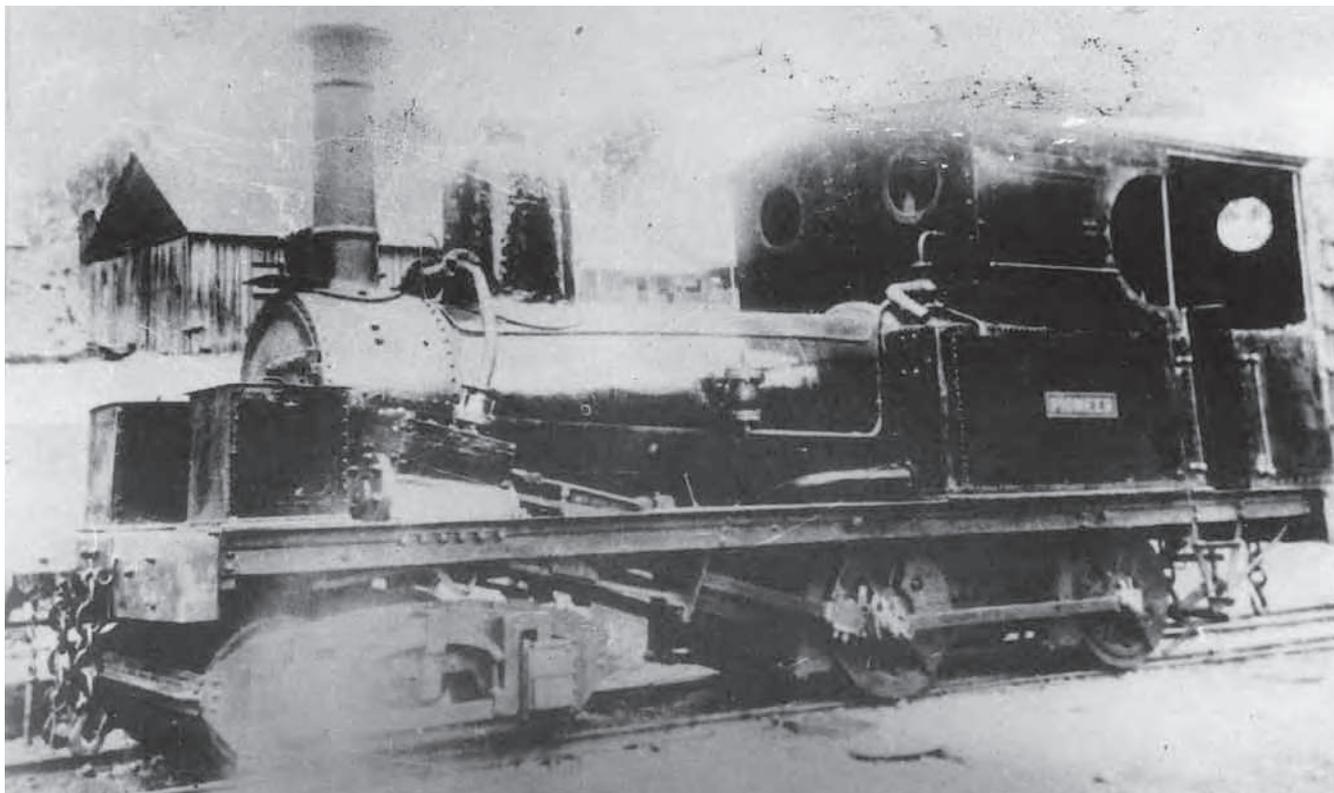
Years later, in March 1910, a reader of the *West Australian* newspaper, recounted his boyhood encounter with this locomotive.

*“An Old Locomotive - ...About the year 1874 my parents with their family were returning from a visit to Melbourne in the ship Formosa...The ship was in ballast...The passenger list was limited to ourselves and one other, a large powerful locomotive, consigned to the order of Mr Drummond Wanliss; its destination...was Rockingham. On the voyage over, the boatswain used to lower my brothers and myself down into the hold, and we would play for hours in the sandy ballast, the iron horse the silent spectator of our games...I was told by a man only last week that there is an old locomotive shunted on a side line somewhere between Jarrahdale and Rockingham. If so, it is probably my old friend...”*



*PIIONEER (left) double-heading with one of the SAMSON locomotives. Following the fatal accident of 11 June 1890, PIONEER was rebuilt with the enclosed steel cab seen here.*

*Photo: Millars*



*PIIONEER in its later form., with the upper part of the rear cab side-panels removed.*

*Photo: John Buckland Collection*