



### CLIMAX LOCOMOTIVE

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Climax Patent Geared Locomotive, Construction Number 1323, owned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, was built for the Champion and Fibre Company as #3, in 1915. It was manufactured by the Climax Manufacturing Company of Correy, Pennsylvania. This company, produced one of the three major, geared steam locomotive classes used in the United States and Canada. Although Climax stopped manufacturing its geared locomotives in 1928, the finished products continued to perform in forests and on mountain sides, "under the most difficult conditions," through the early 1950's.

Champion Fibre Company's Climax #3 first operated on the company's narrow gauge logging railroads in Swain County, North Carolina, near the present day town of Smokemont. It remained in this part of the Smoky Mountains for fourteen years. By 1930 most of the Champion forest land had been worked out in the Smokemont area and #3 was moved south to the Graham County, North Carolina forests. Based near Robbinsville, the locomotive worked here until 1943.

In 1936, Champion Fibre Company transferred the title of the Climax to its corporate successor, Champion Paper & Fibre Company. Sometime around 1943 the new company transferred the locomotive to its Fires Creek operation in Clay County, North Carolina. The Climax worked on and off in this logging region until 1948, when it was sold to the Ely-Thomas Lumber Company of West Virginia. The locomotive was operated on that company's narrow gauge track, out of a logging camp known as Jetsville, West Virginia until the mid-1950's. Ely-Thomas Lumber Company changed the locomotive's number from



3 to 7. This is probably where the original number plate on the smokebox door was lost.

In 1955, Ely-Thomas Lumber Company sold the retired Climax to Harold F. Allen of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Mr. Allen, along with a partner named Casey Samborsky, moved the locomotive from West Virginia and stored it at Glacier Way. The gentlemen evidently intended to restore the locomotive to running condition and operate it, along with several other steam locomotives they had. The partners ran into financial difficulties and never did complete their restoration plans.

The Forest Service purchased the Climax in Michigan, and returned it to North Carolina and the Cradle of Forestry. Officials with the Forest Service determined that it would be desirable to restore the locomotive for display purposes at the Cradle of Forestry.