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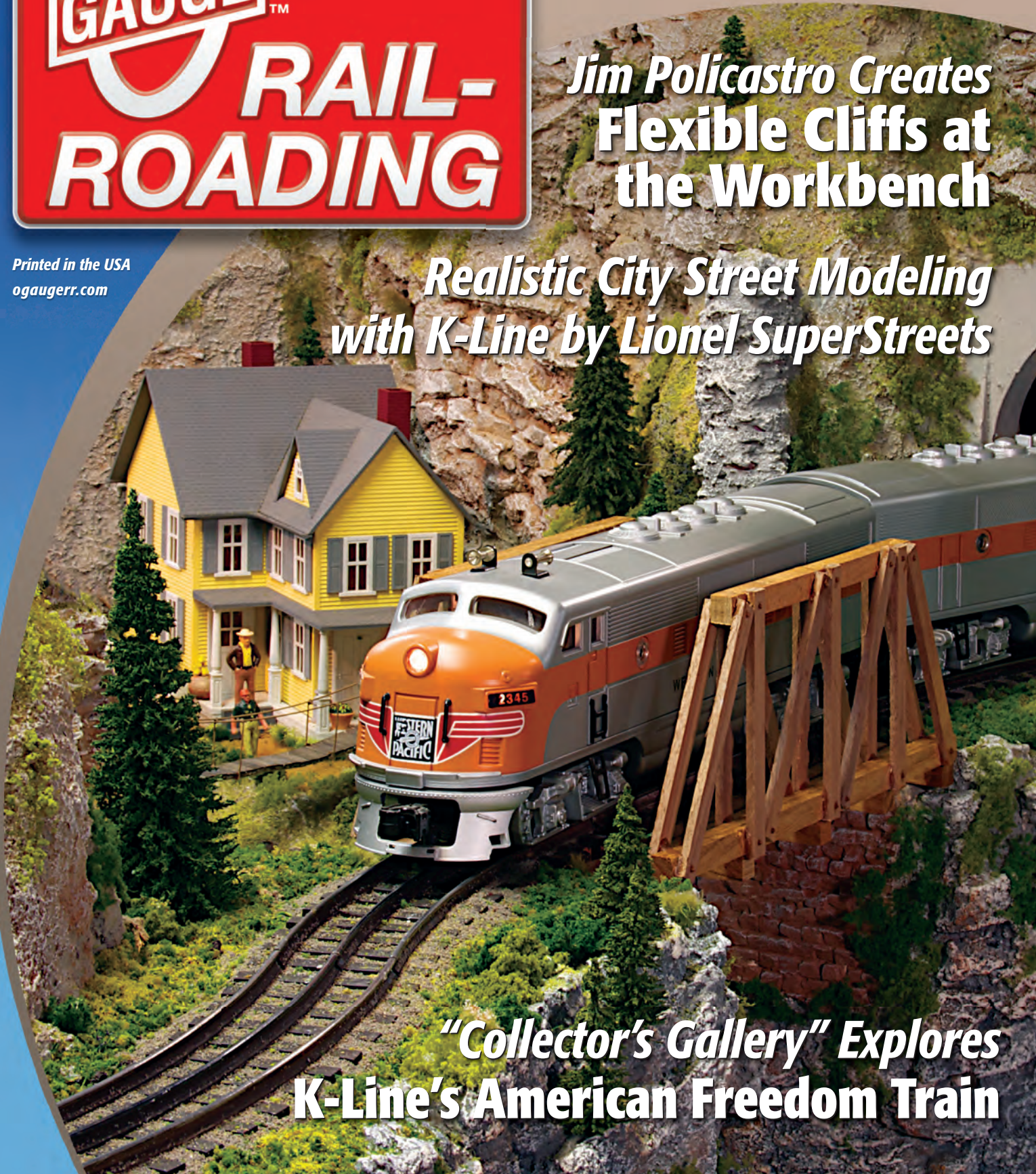


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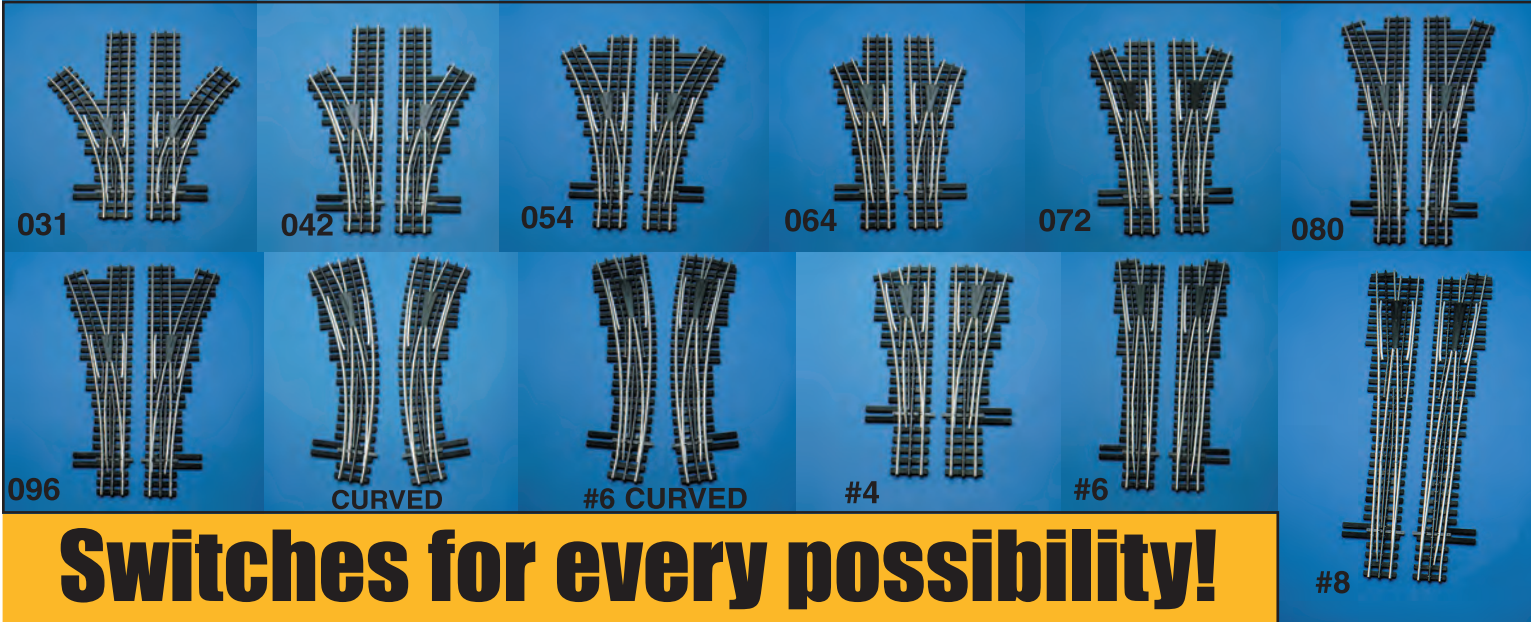
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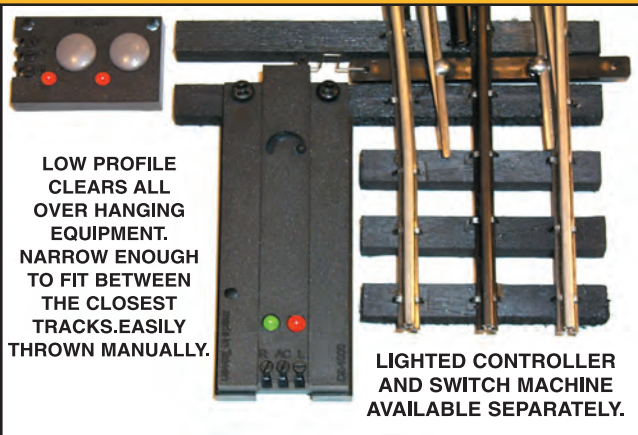


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ON THE COVER

This Western Pacific F3, a Williams model, is passing a home that many of us would consider a railfan's paradise. Hopefully, the two fellows standing outside the house share that opinion. This scene appears just outside the new Pinnacle Peaks State Park addition to Jim Policastro's Central New York Railroad, and in this issue Jim describes a technique he used for constructing portable and flexible rock masks for this new scenic attraction.

Photo by Jim Policastro



Publisher

Richard P. Melvin
publisher@ogaugerr.com

Editor-in-Chief

Allan Miller
editor@ogaugerr.com

Special Projects Editor

Ed Boyle
ed@ogaugerr.com

Associate Editors

Jim Barrett
jim@ogaugerr.com

George Brown
george@ogaugerr.com

Kathryn Brown
kitty@ogaugerr.com

Advertising Manager / Graphics Design

Don Pedicini, Jr.
don@ogaugerr.com

Dealer Manager

George Seil
dealers@ogaugerr.com

Design & Layout / Pre-Press

W-Graphics Digital Services, Inc.
ogauge@teamwgraphics.com

Subscription Manager

Linda Melvin
linda@ogaugerr.com

Merchandising Manager

Cari Fanta
cari@ogaugerr.com

Section Gang

Bill Bramlage
John Ciccarelli
Frank Cozzi
Bill Parisi
Jim Policastro

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Lionel on YouTube

While browsing our OGR On-Line Forum recently, I came across an ongoing discussion about a series of Web-based instructional videos that Lionel is providing for its customers—free videos at that, if you have access to the Internet.

I must admit that this was news to me, although some of the videos had been around for several months at that point. When I got around to viewing a few of them in the comfort of my home one evening, I was quite impressed. These are not Hollywood quality productions to be sure—most were filmed by Lionel's Director of Customer Service Mike Reagan and his crew at Lionel's Canfield, Ohio, facility—but they sure do provide the kind of easy-to-grasp, nuts-and-bolts information that any Lionel enthusiast is certain to find very useful.

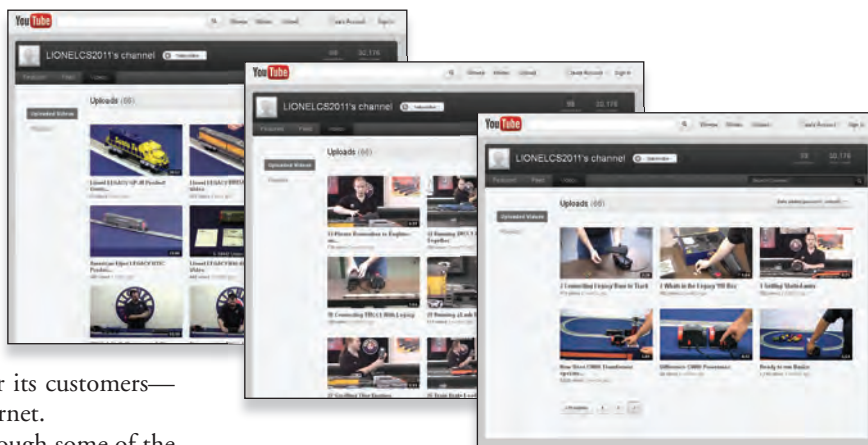
At the time of this writing, there are 66 video segments available, with running times ranging from less than a minute to nearly half an hour. Topics fall into the following four basic categories:

Instructional, covering lubrication, maintenance, troubleshooting tips, and the like

Informational, similarities and differences between TMCC and Legacy and others

Product Overviews, which are basically product-specific visual instructional manuals

Technical Bulletins, with information related to repair and maintenance



A visit to Lionel CS2011 channel on YouTube provides you with a variety of videos covering a wide range of Lionel-specific topics and products.

I haven't managed to view all 66 of the current programs yet, but the random samples that I have viewed were well worth the time. There are a couple of ways to access these videos. If you have a specific product in mind, just go to the Lionel website at www.lionel.com, select the "Products" button in the top menu bar, select "Find a Product," key in the Lionel 6-dash product number or a brief product description such as AC6000, and then click on "Instructional Video" in the window that opens.

But there's also a very quick and easy way to access and view the entire range of videos, all of which are located on the famous (or infamous) video-sharing website known as YouTube. Lionel has the Lionel CS2011 channel, and you can get to it by simply keying in www.youtube.com/user/LionelCS2011/videos. This will bring up the full video list on multiple pages (see partial views of the three current pages in the accompanying graphic).

I asked Mike how the idea to create these useful video segments came about.

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"I figured that if you put this kind of information in a video, you *may* only have to explain it once," Mike responded with a grin. Note that his emphasis there is on the word *may*.

Since Lionel's Legacy system is on my list of planned future purchases, I can honestly say that I have already learned a lot from viewing the Legacy-related segments on the site, and it will be very

easy to go back and view them again if questions come up once I have the components in hand. If you haven't already done so, check YouTube to see how these efforts by Lionel might assist *you* in gaining even more enjoyment from the hobby. 🚂

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The collage shows several newsletter covers. One features a man holding a train, another says 'FREE SHIPPING on any order over \$75.00!', and others advertise 'COOL TOOLS SALE!', 'Extra Savings on Bachmann Trains!', and 'Save on Tools for Train Lovers!'. A QR code is visible in the bottom right corner of the collage.

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New MTH Warranty Policy

MTH Electric Trains unveiled a new one-year limited warranty policy beginning with all products delivered after January 1, 2012. The policy is similar in nature to one instituted by Lionel in the past year and should not affect most retailers who frequently turn over their inventory.

The new policy still includes one-year limited warranty coverage to any MTH product purchased from an MTH Authorized Retailer within one year of the original purchase date. However, coverage will only extend to those MTH products produced within five years of the original purchase date. For example, a product produced in 2012 will only have one-year limited warranty coverage until 2017. Monthly coverage will be extended to that product into 2018 until the six-year anniversary of the product's monthly production delivery date passes.

MTH Authorized Retailers are encouraged to continue employing in-store sales policies that ensure that MTH inventory will completely turn over within five years of an item's production date to avoid sales of items that only enjoy a portion of the one-year limited warranty coverage or, in other cases, no warranty coverage at all.

An item's specific production delivery date will be visible on the MTH website (www.mthtrains.com) whenever a visitor reviews an item's detail page, allowing both the retailer and his or her customers to confirm the actual length of warranty coverage an item may still enjoy prior to the sale of that item. In the past, when an item has shipped, the shipping date field just listed the item as "Shipped." The detail page will now list the month and year the item was "Delivered."

Staple items like transformers, track switches, or DCS systems include a production date code on those items or their packaging that reveal the production delivery time frame the item was released. MTH Customer Service representatives can confirm the production delivery date time frame for those items if the retailer or consumer is unable to discern the specific time frame from the code. Retailers who practice first-in, first-out inventory policies will likely never run into warranty expiration issues with staple items from MTH.

The following is the new consumer warranty information on the MTH website:

All MTH products purchased from an Authorized MTH Retailer are covered by this warranty provided the product was manufactured within five years of the date of purchase. This warranty is for the original purchaser and is non-transferable.

See our website www.mthtrains.com to identify an MTH Retailer near you. MTH products may be registered online in advance of warranty work at www.mthtrains.com/warranty. The original sales receipt and the conditions below must be met regardless of whether the product is registered on the MTH website in order to obtain warranty service.

MTH products manufactured within five years from the date of purchase are warranted for one year against defects in material or workmanship, excluding wear items such as light bulbs, pick-up rollers, batteries, smoke unit wicks, and traction tires. We will repair, replace, or credit (at our option) the defective part without charge for the parts or labor if the following conditions are met: (1) the item is returned to an MTH Authorized Service Center (ASC) or MTH National Authorized Service Center (NASC) or MTH Electric Trains Service Department, (2) was manufactured within the previous five years and (3) was purchased within one year of the original date of purchase from an MTH Authorized Retailer. Products manufactured after the five year cutoff from the date of purchase are not covered under any warranty by MTH Electric Trains. The manufacture date of an item can be verified on the item's detail page "shipping date field" on the MTH website (www.mthtrains.com). This warranty does not cover damages caused by improper care, handling, or use. Transportation costs incurred by the customer are not covered under this warranty.*

Items sent for repair must be accompanied by a return authorization number, a description of the problem, and a copy of the original sales receipt from an MTH Authorized Retailer, which gives the date of purchase. If you are sending this product to an Authorized Service Center, contact that Center for their return authorization.

This warranty gives you specific legal rights, and you may have other rights that vary from state to state. Specific questions regarding the warranty may be forwarded to MTH directly.

* Authorized Service Centers (ASC) are only obligated to provide warranty service for any consumer who has purchased the specific MTH item from them that requires service work.

Atlas O and Atlas Model Railroad Company Merge

The merger of Atlas O, LLC and Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc. was announced December 28, 2011, by Thomas W. Haedrich, Atlas chairman and CEO. Atlas O, LLC became a wholly owned subsidiary of Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc., effective January 1, 2012. "The merger accomplishes family business planning and makes for a more effective and unified organization in the short and long run," Haedrich said.

"On a day to day basis, the merger provides a more efficient structure for sales, marketing, distribution, and administration. Atlas distributors and dealers will benefit by having only one company to transact business with," Haedrich explained.

Atlas O, LLC was established as a separate business entity in 1997 and is dedicated to producing multiple lines of O model railroad products including track, freight cars, locomotives, and accessories. Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc. is the successor to Atlas Tool Co. Inc. founded in 1949 in Hillside, New Jersey, by

Stephan Schaffan, Jr. Both companies have been dedicated to producing broad lines of quality N and HO model railroad products. Atlas Tool Co. Inc. is the successor to Atlas Tool Co. founded in Newark, New Jersey, in 1924 by Stephan Schaffan, Sr. After 88 years and four generations, the Schaffan family remains actively involved in the day to day operation of Atlas.

Diane Schaffan Haedrich, spouse of CEO Thomas W. Haedrich, is president of Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc. Jarrett Schaffan Haedrich serves as vice president of Marketing and Jesse Schaffan Haedrich, a recent college graduate, is active in Design and Development."

LCCA Plans for World's Largest O Gauge Modular Display

The Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) announces the launch of a national O gauge model railroad modular group using Lionel FasTrack. The project is endorsed by the LCCA Board of Directors in cooperation with Lionel LLC. This effort will generate a code of best practices and technical specifications, create an efficient set of design criteria, and provide organizational and promotional support to club members who want to become involved in building and operating a modular layout.

The initial goal is to build a minimum of eight modules, four corner units and four straight sections, for operation at the LCCA 42nd annual convention in Norfolk, Virginia, during July 23–28, 2012. The ultimate goal is for the LCCA, together with Lionel, to build the world's largest modular train display.

"This new group will provide an environment where club members with a common interest can build their own module for placement with other modules built to the same standards," said Dennis DeVito, president of the LCCA. "Some members have already told me they would enjoy being a part of a modular layout group for expanded enjoyment of the hobby."

The LCCA will solicit design specifications from existing modular railroad clubs concerning module size, electrical hookups and wiring in general, cross-modular bridge tracks and electrical connections, electronic control system grounding, general construction guidelines, minimum track radius, rail positioning and spacing, layout support systems, layout height, and other variables.

Comments regarding the soft side of modular layouts, which includes protective barriers, best venue for presentations, promotion and advertising tips, and related information, will also be gathered to help avoid pitfalls others may have experienced.

Since LCCA favors Lionel products, an important specification for the group will be the use of Lionel FasTrack exclusively. Advances in electronics, wiring systems, and wireless operation make it possible to utilize technology in sophisticated applications, such as including recording actions on the layout that can be repeated on command.

Although LCCA requests and welcomes input from all sources, participation in this group activity is limited to LCCA members. The group will seek volunteers to serve on a modular layout committee that will review and finalize all specifications. Hobbyists interested in supplying modular specifications or becoming a part of this committee can contact Dennis DeVito by e-mail at President@lionelcollectors.org. LCCA invites all modular layout groups that use FastTrack to join it in the project.

President of Polk's Model Craft Hobbies Inc. Named

Effective January 1, 2012, Scott H. Polk, son of Fred Polk, former executive director of the Hobby Industry Association and grandson of Nat Polk, owner of Polk's Hobby as well as former president of Polk's Hobby, has been appointed the new president of Polk's Hobby, Aristo-Craft Trains, and RMT by AristO.

Scott Polk spent 10 years at F.A.O. Schwarz and Build-A-Bear Workshop around the country before joining Aristo-Craft as the vice president of sales. Lewis and Maryann Polk are retiring after 40-plus years running the former retail store on Fifth Avenue and then starting Aristo-Craft Trains.

Scott is very computer centric and will expand the use of the Internet with Aristo-Craft Trains. Scott was born into the industry and has a full understanding of the traditions and likes of the hobbyist.

The 70-plus-year history of Polk's is in good hands with Scott as he takes the helm.

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O scale version from B.T.S., similar to the original drawings, is based on the three structures located across the tracks from the Quinnimont depot in West Virginia and features different doors, windows, and trim. The kit consists of laser-cut bass wood, cardstock, and plywood. Tabbed construction and peel-and-stick window sashes and battens allow easy assembly. Interior floor and walls are included. The overall footprint is 7-3/4" x 4". Item #17655 sells for \$59.95 and is available directly from B.T.S., RR 1, Box 141A, Belington, WV 26250, www.btsrr.com, 304-823-3729.

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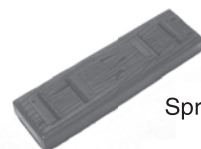
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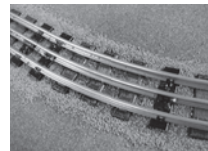
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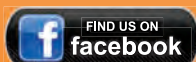
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We are looking for quality photography with good lighting and clear images; however, on-camera flash photos are generally not acceptable. Send your photo, CD, or prints to Readers' Rails, 33 Sheridan Road, Poland, Ohio 44514-1680. Or you can e-mail your image and text files to editor@ogaugerr.com.

There's a golden spike reenactment taking place on the expansive layout at Bevell's Hardware store in Blackstone, Virginia, and Ron Timma managed to snap the action from something of a hot air balloon perspective. That's the Union Pacific "119" on the left and the Central Pacific "Jupiter" on the right—both are models of the real 4-4-0 locomotives that met at Promontory Summit in Utah for the May 10, 1869, Golden Spike ceremony that marked completion of the first transcontinental railroad. Learn more about the Bevell's O gauge Christmas Holiday Train Display at www.bevellshardware.com.



A Lionel Legacy SD40 in C&O livery waits, ready for its next assignment, at the mine on Joe Cassiday's O scale layout. This is a 5' x 35' shelf-type layout built along the perimeter of Joe's sheet metal shop walls. The lower level is 5' above the floor, and the upper level is a full foot above that. The layout features 300' of Lionel tubular track that Joe painted a rusty-brown color, and he brought the ballast higher to help hide the oversize rails. Joe is a member of the C&O Railway Historical Society and he said that the group's monthly newsletters inspired him to go with that theme. The layout used to feature over 40 of Lionel's operating accessories, but Joe says he sold all of them when he decided to go to hi-rail with his modeling.



John Ciccarelli is in the process of making changes to his hi-rail 0 gauge layout to give it a more unified northeastern Ohio theme. Here's a scene of the recently remodeled East Youngstown station area. The crew on that P&LE switcher is patiently waiting for dispatcher orders permitting them to cross the diamonds in East Youngstown. Meanwhile, passengers have started to gather at the station awaiting arrival of the next local bound for eastern Pennsylvania. We'll be treating readers to more of John's handiwork in a future issue.

Fil Fillion's "Dream Layout" was first photographed by Jim Policastro and featured in Run 236 in June/July 2009. Fil's interest centers on railroads that served the New York capital district area, and this shot that Jim provided of the scene around one of Fil's yard areas confirms that pretty well. You'll see motive power and rolling stock representing the New York Central, Boston & Albany, and Delaware & Hudson operating throughout his 28' x 31' pike. An enthusiastic ambassador for our hobby, Fil thoroughly enjoys sharing his detailed layout with others including Boy Scout troops and a school for disabled youngsters.



Night views of various scenes on Carl Soderstrom's layout were featured in Run 250, and we figured it's about time that we tempt our readers further with at least one daytime view of Carl's detailed operation. Here, Sampson, a 3rd Rail 2-6-6-2, is about to make an early morning pickup at the logging and milling facility. Logs destined to become boards are visible in the mill pond behind the locomotive. Workers will position them for a conveyor that will transport them into the sawmill where they will be converted into finished lumber, seen stacked in the foreground, that will eventually be hauled to distant destinations for use in homes and businesses.



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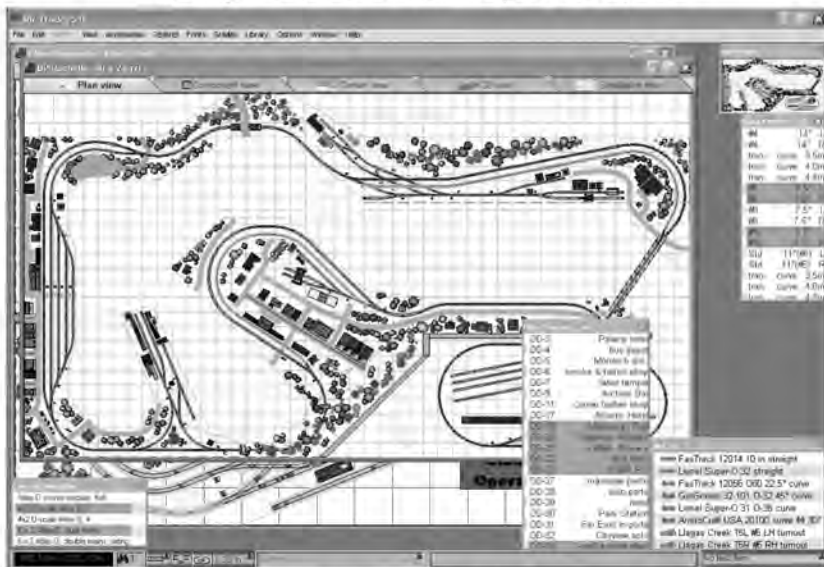


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Product Reviews



MTH Deutsche Reichsbahn BR18

Review and Photos by George Brown

Beginning in 1908, J. A. Maffei Co. of Munich, Germany, built what became the highly successful Class S 3/6 locomotives for the Royal Bavarian State Railway. The S stood for the German word *schnellzuglok* meaning an express passenger engine. The term 3/6 indicated 3 powered axles of the engine's 6 total axles. By the Whyte locomotive classification system used in North America, the engine is a 4-6-2.

In 1920, the various German railroads were nationalized into the German Imperial Railway Company, or Deutsche Reichsbahn. The company redefined its Class S 3/6 locomotives into Class 18 with several subclasses. Class 18 reflected the engine's individual axle loading of 18 tons. As part of the nationalization, these locomotives were repainted from their original liveries into the DR scheme of black and red.

The prototype for the MTH model of the BR18 was a four-cylinder compound design equipped with 74" drivers. The two high-pressure cylinders were inboard between the two outboard low-pressure cylinders. The high-pressure cylinders

drove cranks on the center driver axle via internal rods located between the frame beams, while the low-pressure cylinders drove the center wheelset via the usual external rods.

Before and after WWII, the BR18 locomotives were so successful that they were frequently favored over more modern power to pull the prestigious Deutsche Reichsbahn Rheingold Express along the





Rhine Valley. As a side note, MTH offers a five-car passenger set decorated in the Rheingold Express colors to run behind its model of the BR18. Both the locomotive and the cars are modeled in the European scale of 1:45 for O gauge.

Construction and Features

When MTH Vice President Andy Edelman mentioned the Proto-Sound 3 Class S 3/6 was on its way for my review, I consulted the 2011 Volume 1 catalog just to see what was en route. I can state without reservation that the image in the catalog doesn't do justice to the model. Upon my unpacking the die-cast locomotive, its red frame and running gear vividly contrasted with its overall satin black paint and polished brass trim, all generating a first-class wow with oak leaf clusters. The quality of the finish and lettering is superb as I've come to expect from MTH products.

Although the photos show most of the external details on both the engine and tender, several subtle details are not apparent. For example, the quintessentially European bumpers on the front of the engine and back of the tender are spring-loaded and telescope realistically. Also typically European are the movable safety gates between the cab and tender with springs

that hold them in the closed position.

In addition to the coil-operated tinplate knuckle coupler on the tender, European style of couplers are also included with the BR18 for owner installation. These are an NEM fine scale hook and link coupler mounted on a tender beam plus an Ace Train NEM 365 coupler pocket with an NEM 362 Lenz compati-

ble coupler. Locomotives equipped with scale wheels have a bracket for mounting a Kadee coupler on the tender.

The BR18 runs on 3-rail or 2-rail track using either DCS or DCC. Slide switches select the type of operation as described in the operator's manual that accompanies each engine. As a note of caution, check the settings of these switches before running the BR18 for the first time. If either switch is set incorrectly, the engine won't run. For the DCC operator, the manual also contains 18 pages of information for programming DCC features and command variables. Of course the engine also runs under conventional control from an AC transformer or DC power supply. For conventional operation, small potentiometers located in the tender regulate the volume of the sound and smoke.

A respectable-sized can motor powers the rear drivers via a plastic drive shaft and a metal worm and gear. On our evaluation model, which is the hi-rail version with tinplate-size wheel flanges, traction tires on the rear drivers contributed significantly to the engine's tractive effort listed in the performance sidebar.

As with all MTH steamers, and diesels too, the prodigious smoke unit can fill a reasonably sized train room with white vapor in a rather short time span—minutes actually. To suit individual preferences, the volume of smoke that this unit produces can be adjusted up or down as well as off using the DCS remote in command





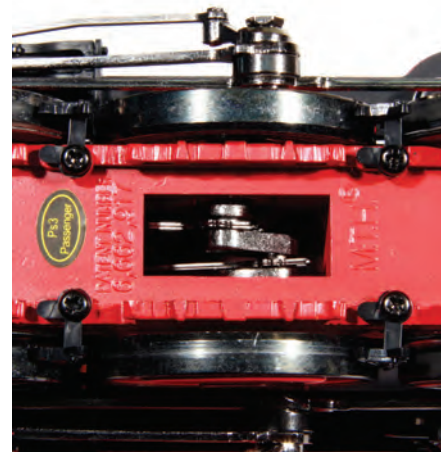
operation.

Although the engine carries some electronics inside its boiler casting, the majority of the DCS and PS3 electronics ride inside the die-cast tender, as does the speaker for generating sound. A printed circuit board carries electrical signals and also serves as what MTH calls the wireless drawbar between the engine and tender. Only one pickup roller is mounted under both the engine and the tender, which I find rather curious. Most 3-rail locomotives today have multiple pickup rollers to ensure uninterrupted electrical power when traveling through track switches. To prepare the BR18 for operation on 2-rail tracks, these rollers are easily removed using a #1 Phillips screwdriver.

With the advent of PS3, all lights in MTH locomotives are now LEDs instead of the incandescent bulbs used in the past. Of course, LEDs use considerably less power than bulbs and thereby are a lot cooler in operation.

At Trackside

On the editorial Carpet Central Railroad, the BR18 started and ran smoothly at 1 scale mph with no load or a light load of three plastic cars. At this or any other speed throughout this course of this review, I noticed no difference with the locomotive running on straight track, O72 or O54 curves, or



my O72 Atlas switches. With our official test train coupled to the tender, the engine started at 2 scale mph and accelerated smoothly to 60 scale mph. At any speed and with any train in tow, the BR18 proved to be a superb performer.

With the engine at rest, the light in the cab is turned on, but as soon as the engine starts moving, the light turns off. As to the sounds from the PS3 system, the synthesized steam exhaust chuffs from this or any other MTH steam locomotive are definitely not what I would call realistic, but the shrill European whistle note is mighty convincing. Of course, the passenger-freight announcements and sounds are entertaining, as they are on all contemporary MTH O gauge locomotives. I'm not at all interested in



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the broadcast feature, but I can see where it too would be entertaining to some O gauge railroaders and especially visitors to their layouts. Basically, only realistic sounds emanating from a locomotive are high on my personal list of play value.

Soft keys on the DCS remote set up the dual lights on the front of the

engine and the back of the tender to one of several configurations used in European train operations. These operations emulate what the operator's manual identifies as Era I and Era II. They include running with a train or no train coupled to the engine, running forward or reverse, and running on the wrong line.

20-3401-1 Deutsche Reichsbahn BR18

Retail price: \$1,195.95 at MTH dealers

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MTH BR18 DCS Performance

(smoke unit: off; sound: on; speed control: on)

Length:

20-3/8" over couplers

19-3/4" between end buffers

Distance Between Pickup Rollers:

Locomotive and tender: 6-1/4"

Weight on Driving Wheels: 5 lbs, 11 oz

Tender Weight: 2 lbs, 2 oz

Tractive Effort @ 18 VAC: 2 lbs, 6 oz @ 1.2 A, 22 W

Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC:

2 scale mph @ 0.8 A, 14.4 W

Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC:

60 scale mph @ 1.0 A, 18 W

Test Train

Eight-car streamlined passenger; train weight, 13 lbs; pull to move train, 12 oz; recent-production 0 scale cars from various manufacturers

In conventional operation with my postwar ZWs providing the power, the engine was as much of a pleasure to run as in command operation. At power-up, its headlight was on for up to 15 seconds while the PS3 system's supercapacitors charged, then the headlight shut off, the sounds started, and all the lights came on signifying the engine was ready to roll. And roll it did with considerable panache. MTH got it right for the conventional operator.

At the End of the Run

With its conical smoke-box front and streamlined cab front, the MTH model of the BR18 captures the look of Teutonic railroading in the early 20th century. For the European train enthusiast, the 1:45 scale model of the BR18 could prove quite interesting.



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TIU and PS3

An anomaly that I observed is not a problem with the BR18 or the new PS3 electronics but is likely related to how the DCS TIU is powered and possibly to downrev'd software in the system. On my layout, one of the outputs from my postwar ZW powers both the TIU and my track 1 through the TIU's fixed voltage 1 port. When I apply power to track 1, which is my 072 outer loop, the TIU powers up as does whatever MTH locomotive is on the track. A second ZW powers track 2, my 054 inner loop, through the TIU's fixed voltage 2 port. Ever since I installed DCS on my layout over a decade ago, this power scheme has worked problem free with PS2 locomotives. Because the TIU must be powered up for a PS2 or PS3 locomotive to come up in command mode, my startup routine for a session of running trains has always been to apply power to track 1 first and then to track 2.

However, when the PS3-equipped BR18 was on track 1, its power-up proved unpredictable. At times the engine powered up successfully with its PS3 system ready for command operation. But at other times, the engine powered up in a strange state that appeared to be an irresolvable hybrid of conventional and command modes, which predicated considerable frustration—mine. After several sessions of running the BR18 on track 1, I switched it to track 2 to test it on 054 curves. On track 2, the engine powered up in command mode every time.

For a quick test of a hypothesis, I connected a wall transformer, which I temporarily appropriated from a portable stereo system, to the TIU's aux input port. Problem solved! Much to my pleasure, the BR18 was then a rock-solid performer in command operation on either track.

In a subsequent exchange of e-mail messages with the folks at MTH, Vice President of Product Support Jeff Strank explained that early versions of software in the TIU can cause similar problems at power-up of PS2 locomotives in command mode. A TIU software update corrected this problem. Although the PS3 system is specified as compatible with all versions of the TIU software, Jeff recommended not only powering the TIU with a dedicated transformer connected to the aux power port but also upgrading the system software to version 4.20.

Within the next few weeks, I'll be reviewing another PS3 locomotive with a Z-500 brick powering my TIU. Even though I'd rather run my trains instead of downloading the loader and update software to my laptop PC and then to the TIU, my layout will be running on version 4.20 when I review the new PS3 locomotive. I'm hopeful that I'll see zero anomalies.



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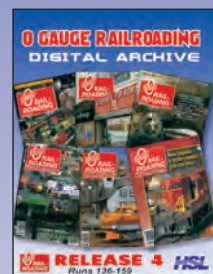
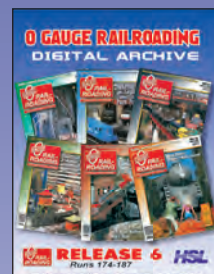
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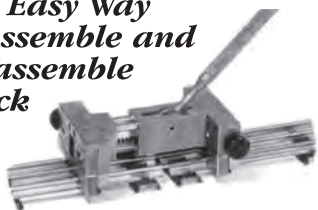
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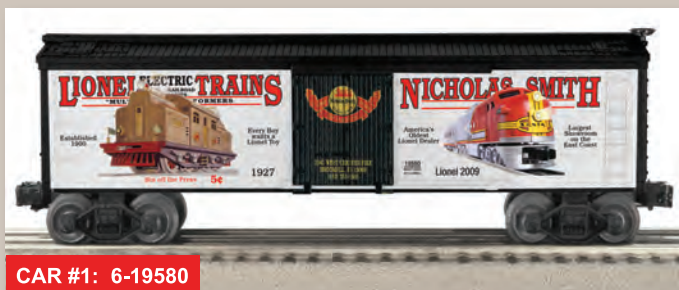
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Williams by Bachmann Baldwin Ten Wheeler

Review and Photos by George Brown

Over the past 12 years of reviewing O gauge products, I've enjoyed just about every one of them. Most delivered on the promises made about them in advertisements, while a few unexpectedly delivered one or more pleasant surprises. The Williams by Bachmann scale-sized ten wheeler released in late 2011 is one of those products that delivered on both counts.

Since I'm writing this review the week of Christmas 2011, I'll drop back to October of this year when we ordered the review sample of the 4-6-0 ten wheeler. At that time, I preferred the model painted in the green and gold Southern Railways livery, but Ed Boyle wanted us to do the C&O engine. In this particular case, I'm glad Ed's choice prevailed and not just because he's one of the owners of the magazine. When the WbB ten wheeler arrived here at the OGR Southwest Office, I was instantly captivated by its colorful paint scheme reminiscent of the decoration on real steam locomotives in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although I saw the engine in the Williams by Bachmann full-page ad in Run 254, I didn't fully anticipate the impact of its silver smokebox front and red number board, Russian blue boiler jacket, gold bell and pop-off valves, red cab windows and doors, gold lettering and striping, and white-rimmed wheels. This

colorful little locomotive was definitely a pleasant surprise as it stood proudly on my desk.

Construction and Features

In a number of ways, the WbB ten wheeler is a throwback to postwar O27 steam locomotives from the original Lionel Corporation. As such, the engine is die-cast with the weight of a traditional O27 steamer, while the tender is plastic with a

stamped steel frame and die-cast trucks. Even the classification lights have green jewels in them as did toy trains from the mid-20th century.

The prototypes for the model were an engine from Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1906 with a tender from a later construction USRA Mikado. I understand from Larry Harrington of Williams by Bachmann that the real engine and tender combination worked trains on the C&NW in the 1940s. This engine rode on





63" drivers, and as a side note, Bachmann produces an HO scale model of it.

Although the diminutive 4-6-0 is designed to negotiate O27 curves, its principal dimensions are rather surprising in that they compare quite reasonably to those for a 1:48 scale ten wheeler. In fact, Larry explained that the ten wheeler was originally planned as an O scale locomotive, but as the development project for the

model got under way, it was redefined as a starter set class of locomotive. As such, the 4-6-0 is robust and forgiving of some heavy handling, which is the forte of past and current trains with the Williams name on them.

To keep production costs and thereby the retail price unusually low for a die-cast O gauge steam locomotive, most details on the engine,

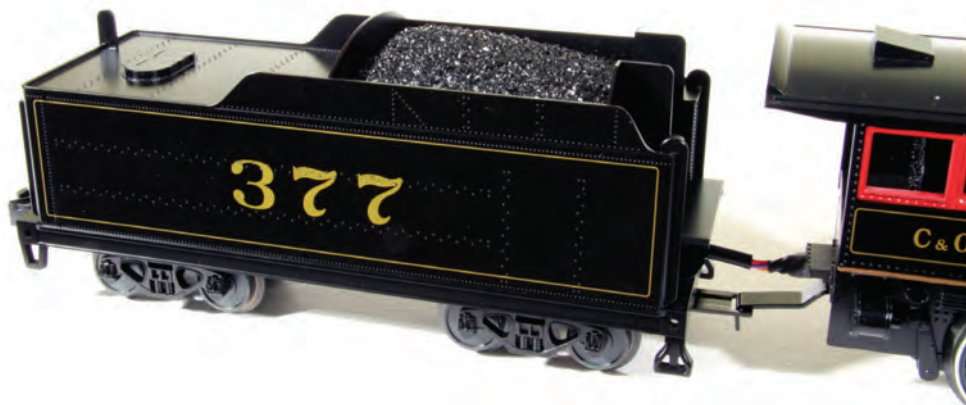
such as the handrails, pipes, air pumps, and brake rigging, are cast into the boiler or chassis. The few separate detail pieces include the headlight, bell, whistle, pop-off valves, and generator. Even the open vent on the cab roof is part of the massive boiler casting.

Regarding the cab, the boiler extends realistically inside it with a modest amount of cast detail on the backhead. The rest of the cab is spartan with no window glazing or provisions for the crew, which to me are reasonable tradeoffs for a low purchase price.

Pilot and driving wheels are cast with open spokes, which are most unexpected on a steamer with a low price point. But then, a tab on the main rod slips into a slot on the stamped crosshead, which is something I would expect on a low-cost engine. I would prefer riveted rods and crossheads, but riveting these two pieces together would mandate an additional process on the assembly line and thereby an increased build price and retail cost. This tabbed rod is my only criticism of an otherwise nice little locomotive.

Hidden completely inside the boiler is a DC can motor equipped with a flywheel, but the motor is mounted atypically for an O gauge steam engine. The flywheel faces the





front of the engine, with the worm and gearbox behind the motor. The motor drives the rear drivers through a reduction gear mechanism, so the ten wheeler is not the speedster that I've seen with other WbB locomotives. Mounted on the rear drivers are the requisite traction tires, which contribute a lot to the engine's moderate tractive effort. A spare pair of traction tires are included should they be needed in the future.

A Seuthe smoke unit resides inside the smokestack. For those who are not familiar with the Seuthe unit, it requires a special fluid and produces a steady stream of smoke rather than puffs normally associated with O gauge steam locomotives. A slide switch located under the cab turns the smoke unit on or off. Of course, a bottle of smoke fluid for the Seuthe unit is also included with the locomotive.

Die-cast trucks, each equipped with a pickup roller, carry the tender. The rear truck has a die-cast operating coupler that stayed closed until I wanted it to open, even with a heavy train coupled to it. Inside the tender are the sound board and a speaker with a plastic cover, which serves as a bass reflex chamber. A 6-amp electronic reverse unit also rides inside the tender with a four-wire tether cable connecting the unit to the motor in the engine. By the way, the cable's plastic connector has a retaining latch that locks it to the receptacle on the locomotive. When disconnecting the cable from the engine, be sure to unlatch the connector first, as directed in the instruction sheet for the locomotive.

Speaking of the instruction sheet, an illustrated parts list is also included that covers both the engine and tender. The drawings are excellent, and I

found them particularly helpful when disassembling the engine for photography. Should a repair be necessary somewhere in the future, these drawings and parts listing will likely prove invaluable.

Lighting is minimal with a small incandescent bulb inside the headlight. A voltage regulator board inside the boiler keeps the light at a constant brightness, which was actually a soft and pleasant golden white light.

On our evaluation sample of the ten wheeler, the decorative C&O paint scheme is one area where cost was apparently not a consideration. The overall finish is excellent, and the color separations are as crisp as they come. Of course, the prototypically correct lettering includes only the road name on the cab and the engine number on each side of the headlight, the smokebox front, and each side of the tender. By the way, the prototype for the paint scheme on the WbB 4-6-0 is the real C&O number 377 ten wheeler, which is currently stored in a severely deteriorated condition at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.

At Trackside

On the desk or on the rails, the colorful 4-6-0 is a neat little engine. Its smooth performance on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad was probably the most pleasant of surprises that the engine delivered during this review. Because of its drive gear ratio, the engine started noticeably slower than other Williams locomotives I own and WbB engines I've reviewed on these pages. Top speed is also a lot slower and more realistic than I've seen on earlier Williams products. Best of all, the 4-6-0 dutifully hauled a heavy train around



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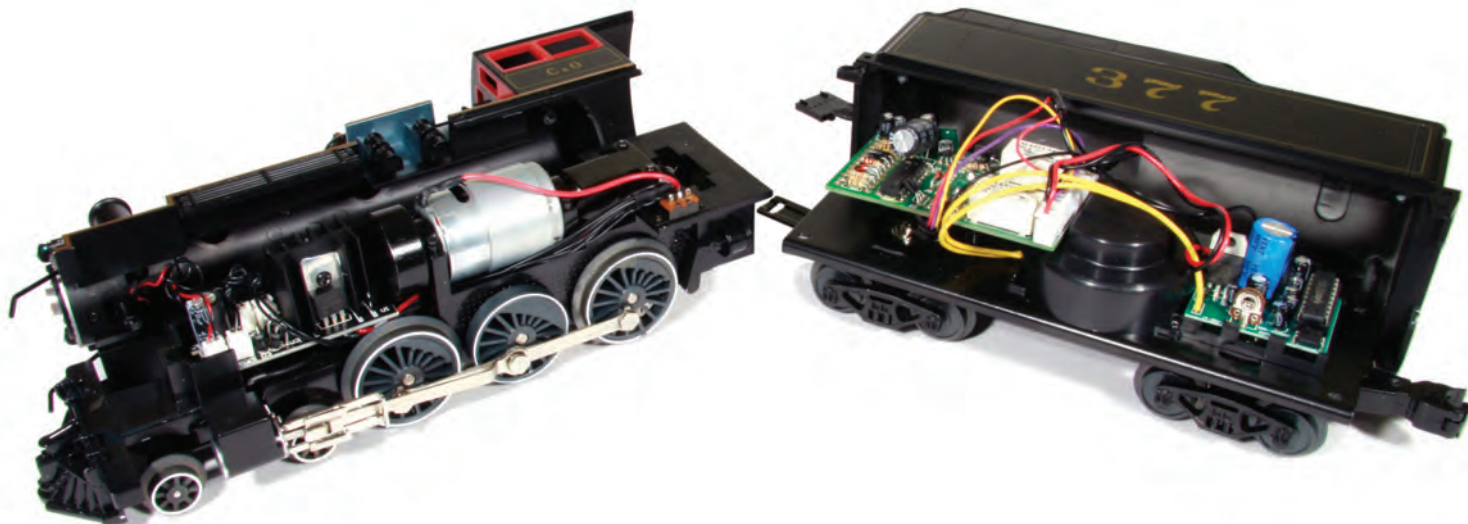
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the editorial Carpet Central Railroad for several cumulative hours without showing any signs of stress.

Running on my O72 and O54 main lines with a period-correct consist of wooden boxcars and reefers in tow, the 4-6-0 was downright handsome. It held a fairly constant speed on stretches of my track where other conventionally controlled locomotives usually slow down. Additionally, it tracked through my O72 and O36 Atlas switches without a glitch in both forward and reverse.

As smooth as the ten wheeler ran, and if it were mine, I'd be tempted to install a TMCC and RailSounds upgrade in its tender, which I believe is large enough inside to hold the electronics. At the low prices for the engine that I've seen in dealer ads in our current issue and also on the Web, the total cost of the engine and upgrade electronics is mighty appealing. And as smooth as the motor and drive train runs, realistically slow starts, stops, and switching operations under command control would be a bunch of fun to play with.

At the End of the Run

To be candid, I was expecting my review of the WbB scale ten wheeler to be a fairly ho-hum run, primarily because of the engine's low price. I'll take the kind of surprises it delivered any day of the week...and on weekends too. For the new O gauge railroading hobbyist or one who is an O gauge veteran of several decades, the 4-6-0 could deliver to or even beyond your expectations, as it did mine. 

40602 C&O Baldwin 4-6-0 Scale Steam Locomotive

Retail price: \$279.95 at Williams by Bachmann dealers

Bachmann Trains; www.bachmanntrains.com

Williams by Bachman 4-6-0 Performance

(smoke unit: off)

Length: 18-7/8" over pilot and couplers, 18" pilot to tender sill

Distance Between Locomotive Pickup Rollers: 3-1/4"

Distance Between Tender Pickup Rollers: 3-7/8"

Weight on Driving Wheels: 3 lbs, 3 oz

Tender Weight: 1 lb, 1 oz

Tractive Effort: 1 lb, 12 oz @ 9.2 V, 1.9 A, 17.5 W

Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC: 9 scale mph @ 7.2 V, 0.7 A, 5.0 W

Maximum Tested Speed: 60 scale mph @ 16 V, 0.9 A, 14.4 W

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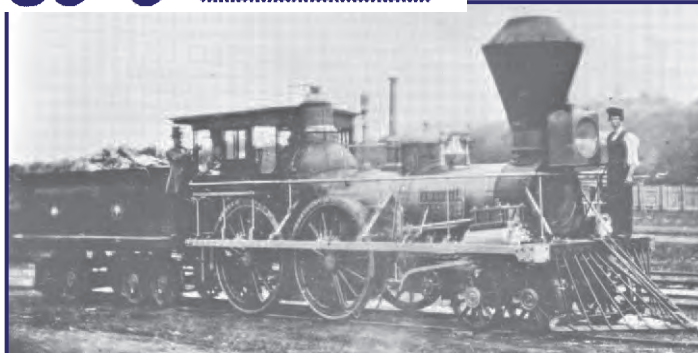
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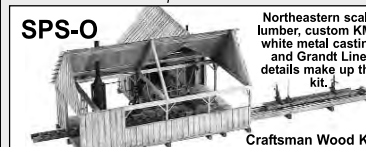
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The Milwaukee Road in Northeast Ohio

Article and Photos by John Ciccarelli

A few years ago, retired Youngstown State University art history professor Rich Ulrich and his wife, Margaret, decided it was finally time to move from their Victorian house in Canfield, Ohio, with its stone foundation and cellar's partial dirt floor. A smaller, single-level house was their goal, but Rich also knew that one of the top priorities would have to be a large basement to house his collection of O gauge trains and his future dream layout.

That new home for him, Margaret, and his trains turned out to be a single-level villa with the requisite basement in the neigh-

boring community of Austintown. With that large, clean, and dry basement, he was ready to construct the layout of his dreams. His earlier layout had been a generic setup, not depicting any particular place or time, and it was in need of a major overhaul due to some deterioration and neglect caused by limited space, inadequate lighting, poor access, and a feeling of resignation as to the prevailing conditions. However, when moving became necessary due to other factors, there was no point in even trying to improve that layout. It would make more sense to simply wait and start anew.

Milwaukee Road 251 has just taken on a load of black diamonds and is preparing to head up a sleek passenger consist.





A Milwaukee Road FM unit glides by the Schlitz Brewing Company facility on the outskirts of the city.

His new layout would be based on scenes around downtown Milwaukee along with some of its iconic landmarks and structures, and the trains would be exclusively Milwaukee Road. I wondered why someone living in northeast Ohio would want to model a road from another part of the country when there are so many local roads to choose from as well as fallen flags. When I asked Rich, he explained that while attending a train show in the late 1980s he came across a Lionel Milwaukee Road Little Joe set and was very impressed with its looks. A Little Joe is a twin-cab electric. At the next show he attended, he decided that focusing solely on Milwaukee Road trains would make collecting easier and somewhat more economical since he wouldn't be tempted to buy equipment representing a variety of railroads. Over the course of the next several years, he had also purchased several Milwaukee Road train sets for his son, nicknamed Bic, who like most adult children eventually moved away. Over time Rich had become a de facto Milwaukee Road collector and operator and, subsequently, he continued his quest to model that once proud railroad. But that cold, dank, and dark cellar of the Victorian house was not the place for an endeavor of this magnitude. His new basement, however, was just the ticket.

The layout would be built on two levels, and the track plan would include two mainline ovals with a passing siding branching off and leading to a

small yard and engine servicing facility. The lower level would represent the city of Milwaukee with its main line heading west. The upper level would depict the road's northwestern terminus in Seattle, Washington.

Construction began in the winter of 2008 with benchwork consisting of plywood on 2x4 supports. Rich's brother-in-law, John Farcas, was instrumental in the construction of the benchwork as well as mounting the Glenn Snyder shelving system to be used to display Rich's extensive collection of engines and train sets. John's brother, David, also assisted in the construction process.

The layout measures 17' x 32'. The primary focus is the area around Milwaukee, although some liberty has been taken with details and the necessary compression of landscape features. The line destined for the Pacific coast disappears and then returns

through tunnel portals to help hide the fact that things are necessarily condensed and to help convey the concept of trains leaving for a distant destination and then returning.

Rich decided that Lionel FasTrack would be the primary track used on the layout because of its excellent conductivity and because only one power connection is used for each of the two 32' mainline ovals and because the molded-in ballast slope would make laying track and future track changes fast and easy. Some GarGraves track is used in the yard area and engine



With rail traffic light at this point, it's time for a quick noontime snooze on a warm summer day.



There's no snow in sight at this season of the year, but that snowplow is sure to have plenty of action as it struggles to keep the yard tracks clear during the coming Milwaukee winter months.

servicing facility, and some Atlas O track is used on the upper level.

Power for the layout is supplied by an MTH Z-4000 on the lower level, with an MTH Z-750 supplying juice to the upper level. Motive power and rolling stock in just about every variation of the Milwaukee Road's many paint schemes are on display somewhere, and just about every type of freight and passenger car is represented along with a variety of steam, diesel, and electric locomotives. Whatever is not on display, either on the layout or on the wall-mounted shelving system, is stored in original boxes under the layout. The train room looks a lot like a hobby store, and Rich probably has more inventory than a good number of them.

Structures are a mix of Ameri-Towne kits and parts, Bachmann Plasticville, original Plasticville, Atlas O, Korber, MTH, American Flyer, and Scale University. The downtown area includes the railroad's impressive station

with its attendant train shed along with city streets and buildings. An industrial area hosts the Schlitz Brewing Company and the Harley Davidson factory as it was in its early years. These architectural icons were built using a combination of structures along with various other materials. Rich's interest in and knowledge of architectural styles proved to be very helpful in these modeling efforts. His version of the Victorian/Romanesque Everett Street

Station in downtown Milwaukee is based on a Walther's HO kit that is based on the original design from the 1980s. The Schlitz brewery complex is made up of three separate structures. The silo building is a Korber kit, the middle building is made from foamcore board, and the brick building is made with Ameri-Towne parts. The Harley Davidson factory is also built from Ameri-Towne parts. Rich's only source of information for this structure came from the image on a small refrigerator magnet he had purchased.



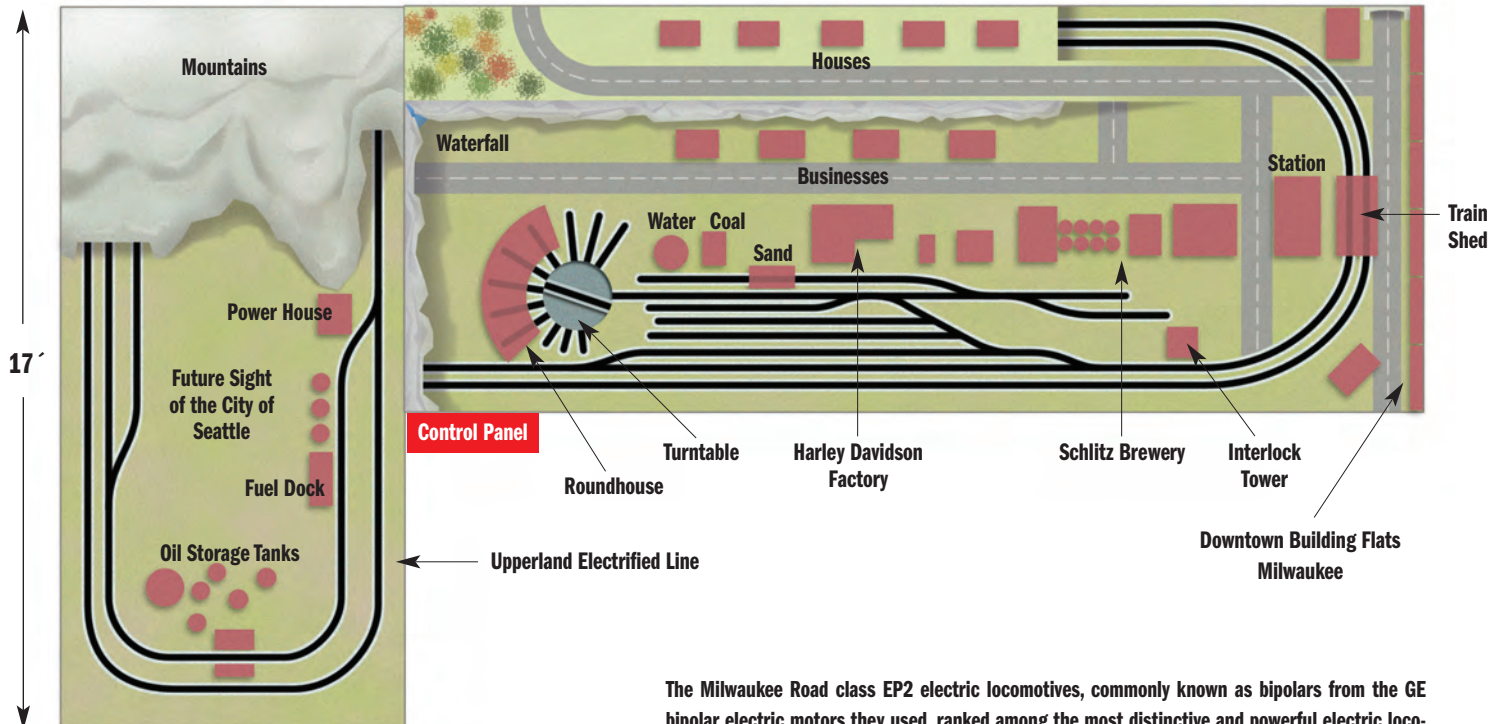
Everett Street Station is shrouded in smoke as this streamlined Hudson departs for points west.



Those green Railway Express Agency vans were familiar sights in just about every American community in the 1940s and '50s. REA, a monopoly established by the U.S. government in 1917, provided small package and parcel transportation using the nation's railroad network.

Here's a clearer view of the Victorian/Romanesque architecture of Everett Street Station, a Milwaukee landmark modeled by Rich.





The layout also includes a small yard and engine servicing facility, which includes a coal tippie and water tank for the steamers and a fuel dock for the diesels. Farther down the track, visitors will find a turntable, which was built and installed by Ron Capots, as well as a five-stall roundhouse. The residential area includes replicas of Rich and Margaret's former home in Canfield and Margaret's childhood home on the south side of Youngstown.

Ground cover and scenic elements consist of various Woodland Scenics products along with tunnel portals made from plaster and extensive rock formations. Rich painted and weathered the scenery and also made use of some printed backdrops from Realistic Backdrops.

Future plans for the upper-level expansion include an oval of track with sidings along with structures to represent the Milwaukee Road in Seattle. These structures will include an oil refinery complex, a mine, a large mountain, and another city. This expansion is well under way.

Rich's interest in history is evident in his operation of historic trains from the Milwaukee Road original timetables. He runs models of the original Hiawatha made by Lionel and MTH as well as a tinplate example from the now defunct Pride Lines. He also has an Olympic Hiawatha in Union Pacific colors. The reason for this color scheme is that in the mid-1950s the Milwaukee Road took over the UP passenger lines. This probably wasn't a terribly good business move because the Milwaukee folded and the UP survives to this day.

The Milwaukee Road class EP2 electric locomotives, commonly known as bipolars from the GE bipolar electric motors they used, ranked among the most distinctive and powerful electric locomotives of their time. They became enduring symbols of Milwaukee Road electrification.



About the Builder

As if Rich doesn't have enough to do with work on his own layout, he is a founding member of the Western Reserve Modular Railroad Club. As the club's current president, he was instrumental in construction of the organization's layout at the Historical Center of Industry & Labor in Youngstown, Ohio. Rich built several of the steel mill buildings used on that layout as well as the row houses and many other elements. Now that's a great example of dedication to promoting the hobby!



Rich and Margaret Ulrich



Rich's artistic style might be considered American realism with a slight primitive influence that is representative of the so-called "Ashcan School," which is characterized by a gritty approach to common everyday sights. This style can be seen in the hand-painted signs for Millrite Lumber.

Dining at Dolly's Drive-In is always a special treat.



Create Some Flexible Cliffs

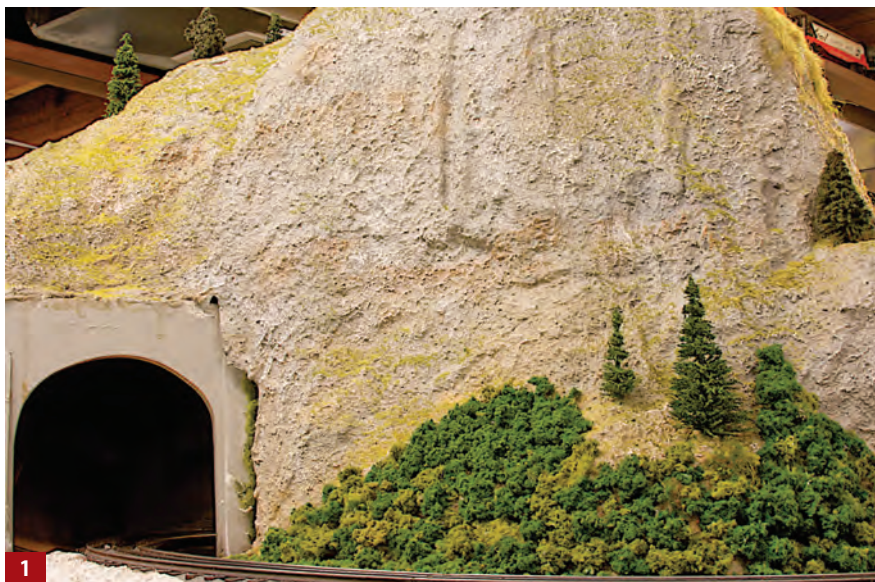
Article and Photos by Jim PolICASTRO

Anyone who has ever made that first great leap into scenery construction soon realizes that basic scenery is not at all difficult to build. In fact, it's a welcome change from some of those more exacting and critical tasks such as installing smooth track work and installing reliable wiring. But we also find that our scenery-making skills definitely improve with practice as we progress from one area on the layout to the next. We often find ourselves looking back on earlier efforts and wishing that we had enhanced the detail and realism of both our rock work and the vegetation clinging to the hillsides.

Although we are frequently advised, and properly so, to go back and redo what we are not happy with, often it isn't quite that easy. First of all, slinging paint and plaster in an area adjacent to finished scenes is almost always asking for trouble. No matter how hard we try to cover things up and try to be neat, an errant glob or splatter is sure to land on that road we had weathered so carefully.

Worse yet, despite our best efforts to keep all parts of the layout accessible, reaching those distant hillsides and cliffs may now be next to impossible. They definitely are not places where we would want to work for extended periods of time at the limits of our reach. We ask ourselves if there is an easier way. Well, I think I may be able to help out in that regard.

Instead of struggling to get to those hard-to-reach areas on the layout, or running the risk of messing up some fine scenic detail you're perfectly happy with, consider creating flexible scenic masks right at the workbench so you can add rocky details and lush vegetation to those bare hills. The only on-site work necessary will be the initial measuring and the final installation of the finished mask.



Shaping a Mask

The first step is to scout out a likely candidate for an upgrade. In my case, I had this recently constructed plaster cliff that didn't look too bad but definitely didn't have anywhere near the level of detail of other cliffs in the area (Photo 1). Once you have located the spot for an upgrade, you're ready to go.

First, select the fabric for the mask you will be making. An old T-shirt will work for small masks (well, maybe larger-size masks in my case). But heavy-duty cloth from the craft store fabric department will be easier to handle and install. Cut a piece of cloth larger than the area to be covered and tape it in place on your cliff (Photo 2). The color doesn't matter at all because it will be totally covered by paint.

Mark the outline of the desired mask with chalk or a marking pen. Try to avoid straight edges and sharp corners. Cut out the mask with scissors. You may wish to mark on the cloth where the larger rock formations should be placed as well as the areas that must remain the most flexible so they can bend to follow the contours of the scenery. If you are working on trackside cliffs, be sure to check clearances before planning formations with any wide ledges and deep relief.

Adding Rocks

Place the mask on your workbench and gather up some scrap pieces of pink or blue Styrofoam extruded polystyrene insulation panels. If desired, you may also add some small chunks of thin rock castings you made in the past. You knew there had to be a reason why you saved all those pieces from that casting you dropped, or those small chunks that always break off the edges during installation.

Avoid the white beadboard type of Styrofoam for this project. The bead-like pattern will show through and be very unrealistic. Use a knife to break small bits off the edges of the Styrofoam chunks. Try to keep the back of each piece flat, but give the front an irregular shape. Think horizontal as you arrange the pieces on the cloth mask. Try to keep all the Styrofoam rocks in their own horizontal layers or strata and most of the broken castings together in others. But otherwise avoid creating regular patterns. The art of making scenery is to mix shapes into a pleasing and realistic arrangement. Vary the size of the pieces. Don't set them all in a brick-like pattern, for example. Also, vary the positions of the joints between the rocks. If your mask will need to be very flexible to follow the contours of your hills, use smaller pieces. If the area to be covered is fairly flat, you can use larger pieces. If you will be bending the mask into a concave area, be sure there is enough clearance between rocks to allow for the bend. When you are happy with the arrangement, attach everything to the cloth using hot glue (Photo 3). When finished, go back and glue some smaller chunks into any remaining gaps.





6

Final Shaping

After all is secure, use your knife or an electric hot knife to shape your Styrofoam pieces. Just knock off any edges that are too sharp or protruding knobs that aren't rock-like. I prefer to use a hot knife because it is gentler and less likely to loosen the rocks from the cloth. I find that adding some horizontal grooves across adjacent rocks tends to tie it all together into a believable sedimentary rock layer. Not much can be done with the plaster casting bits, but you can add a dab of premixed lightweight spackle with your fingertip to fill in gaps or hide irregularities.

Adding Color

Now, place the cloth mask on a sheet of wax paper. I used a 2" brush to cover everything with a thick coat of ordinary interior flat latex house paint. I used both a tan color and a medium gray, dipping the same brush alternately into each color and mixing them right on the mask. Don't dilute the paint at all. You want the thick paint to cover the rocks completely and flow into all the crevices between the rocks. Now fill a shaker jar with fine white sand such as the type sold at the pet store for terrariums or

desert animal habitats. Cover the entire cliff with the sand, making sure that it too fills the gaps between rocks (Photo 4). It will take quite a long while for everything to dry, but eventually you will have a thick, tough skin that locks everything in place, yet remains fairly flexible.

Finishing Touches

After the latex paint with sand application is completely dry, you can go back and add some thin washes of color to your rock layers. Horizontal patterns can be accentuated by coloring each layer slightly differently. I use inexpensive craft store acrylic paints mixed with water to create these washes. Allow the washes to dry thoroughly, then go back and coat the entire cliff with full-strength antique white acrylic paint using a dry brush. Just dip the tips of the bristles in the paint and wipe most of it off on a paper towel. Then you whisk the brush across the rock face. Properly done, this will highlight just the edges of the rocks to simulate sunlight striking the cliff. Until you try this final step, you will not believe the difference it can make in bringing your rocks to life (Photo 5).

Vegetation

Now you are ready to add your favorite greenery to the rocks. Concentrate the vegetation in crevices or on flat surfaces where soil would naturally be deposited by rainwater. I use both the Scenic Express and Woodland Scenics coarse foam and foliage products in light and medium greens and secure them with full-strength white glue. Now, to hide the edges of your mask, use one of the foliage products. This is a mat-like material that can be stretched thinly to represent leafy vegetation (Photo 6). Cover the edges of the mask with foliage of various colors and allow the foliage to hang out over the edge of the mask. After installation, be sure to add some foliage to other parts of the cliff also so that the outline is less apparent.

Installation

Glue the mask to the hillside with a hot glue gun. Start at an upper corner and work down and across the mask, bending and shaping it to follow the contours of the scenery base. As you apply the glue, hold that part of the mask in place against the hill for the few seconds it takes for the glue to grab. Finally, add more vegetation where

needed. It's amazing how the green stuff seems to "grow" best on the most poorly shaped rocks on the cliff, hiding them from view. You might also want to use some full-strength white glue to tack down foliage

that is hanging over the edges of the mask. Also touch up any areas where the paint may have cracked during flexing. The result of my efforts at improving the look of that previously nondescript area of my

layout can be seen in Photo 7.

After completing a few of these upgrades, you might even decide to use this technique right from the beginning in your future scenery-building projects. 🛠️



7

A project that will enhance any layout



City Streets with SuperStreets

Article and Photos by Lee Willis

Like many model train enthusiasts, I feel that a detailed downtown area adds a sense of realism to a layout. But real downtown streets have traffic—cars and trucks moving along city streets as people go about their daily business. I've used K-Line by Lionel SuperStreets system, which is to be sold by Bachmann under the name E-Z Streets starting in early 2012, to add moving vehicles to the downtown areas on my layout (Photo 1).

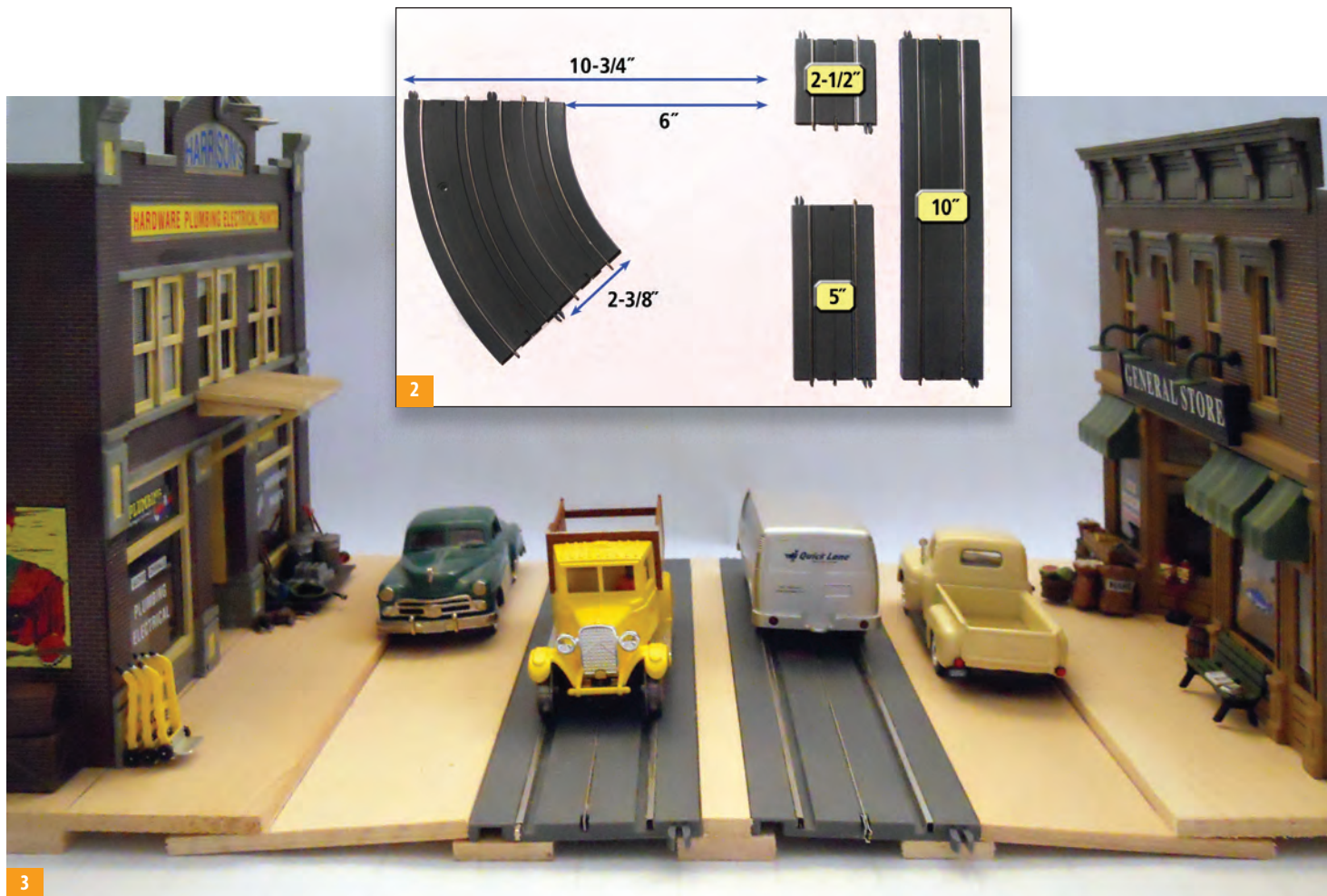
Commercially available SuperStreets vehicles include several realistic trucks and a very short but otherwise near-scale school bus. All have heavy die-cast metal bodies, flanged metal wheels, center pickups front and rear, and powered rear axles. They will run on normal 3-rail O gauge track using a conventional AC transformer or a DC power source. However, they are primarily intended to run on SuperStreets track.

Road sections are made of asphalt-colored plastic and are available in two radii that nest one inside the other, several lengths of

straight sections, and various special sections. All have a 2-3/8" lane width, are 3/16" thick, and have three stainless metal rails raised about half a millimeter above the road so the vehicle wheels never actually touch the road surface. Thin slots to accommodate the wheel flanges are molded alongside the inner edge of the outer rails (Photo 2).

Ideal City Streets

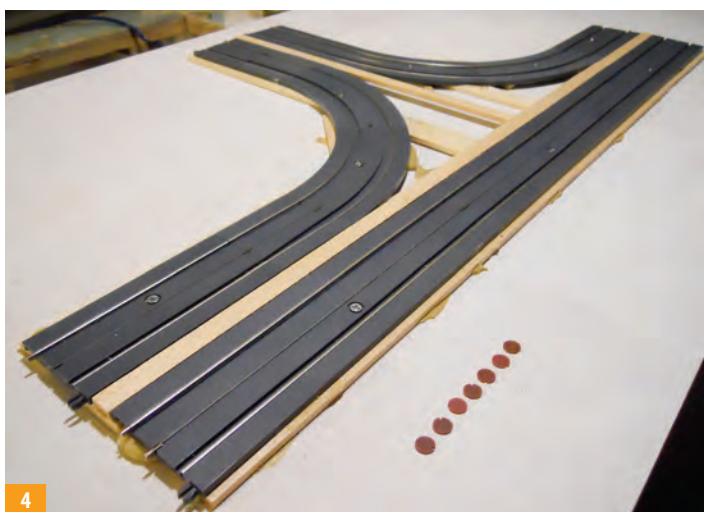
SuperStreets track does not look bad if simply put down on a layout and used as is. However, I have blended mine into model city streets in an attempt to gain more realism. Photo 3 shows a cross-section of the typical street I build on my layout. I separate the opposing directions of traffic by 1/2" and build 2" wide parking lanes and sidewalks on either side of the street for a total of 13-1/4" from building front to building front—a scale 53'. Real



city streets are about 75' across, so this is a considerable compression. It is possible to eliminate the mid-road separation and narrow the parking lanes and sidewalks, but the result does not look particularly good to me. Real streets have a slight crown for drainage. Modeling this makes a big difference in how real the roads look.

For the center strip, parking lanes, and sidewalks, I use 3/16" thick bass wood. The separator between traffic lanes is 1/2" wide.

I use 3" wide wood for the parking lanes even though they will eventually be only 2" wide because the wider wood results in just the right slope for the road crown. I use wood 1" wider than the sidewalks will be (here, 3"). The buildings rest on that extra 1". To create a road crown with a realistic increasing slope toward the gutter, I raise the center strip and inside of the traffic lanes by 1/4", the junction between SuperStreets sections and the parking lane by 3/16", and leave the outer edge of the 3" wide parking lane





board flush on the bench top. The sidewalk overlaps onto the parking lane board, and a 1/4" spacer under its outer edge keeps it level.

The remaining photos show the steps in construction of a T intersection similar to one I recently put on my layout. This particular intersection has buildings on only one side and is up against the edge of the layout, so it has only a 1" wide sidewalk on the right side.

I begin by fitting the SuperStreets sections together while placing a 1/2" x 3/16" bass wood separator between the two opposing lanes of all straight sections only and installing the road crown spacers underneath—1/4" in the center and 3/16" on the outer edge (Photo 4). I then glue and screw each road section in place. I do not use white or yellow wood glues because they do not adhere to plastic well and will sometimes warp thin bass wood. Liquid Nail bonds well to plastic and wood. I put down globs every two to three inches underneath a piece and push it down until the glue flows into place to lock the piece at just the right height relative to its neighbors.

Next, I place the parking lanes alongside and flush with the roadway, but only on all straight sections (Photo 5). The curves will come later. Once parking lanes along all straight sections are down, I install the sidewalks, which are made of straight sections of bass wood, running them straight to each corner so that they meet (Photo 6).

I then fill in the gaps in the parking lanes at the corners (Photo 7). Some cutting and fitting is required to fit and slope each piece here, and a lot of thick Liquid Nail goo below helps to position each so it meets the roadway flush in the center of the road with the gutter and curb at the right height along that edge. I use 1/4" balsa in the middle of the intersections; the extra 1/6" sticks up higher. After the glue has dried, I sculpt the intersection's road crown with #80 sandpaper, being careful to not scratch the metal rails on the SuperStreets sections.

Once the glue has dried thoroughly and I have sculpted road crowns and sanded smooth any mismatches in height of parking lanes, I fill holes and seams with Auto Body glazing putty, a non-mixable, squeeze-tube paste that adheres to plastic and wood and sands easily when dry, (left side of Photo 8). I cover the metal rails with masking tape when I do this. The putty is designed to cling to metal and it does, tenaciously. After everything has hardened for 24 hours, I lightly sand the work and cover everything with

spackling paste to fill the wood grain and any remaining tiny cracks, as shown on the right side of the photo. When the spackling has dried thoroughly, I sand everything smooth with #220 sandpaper.

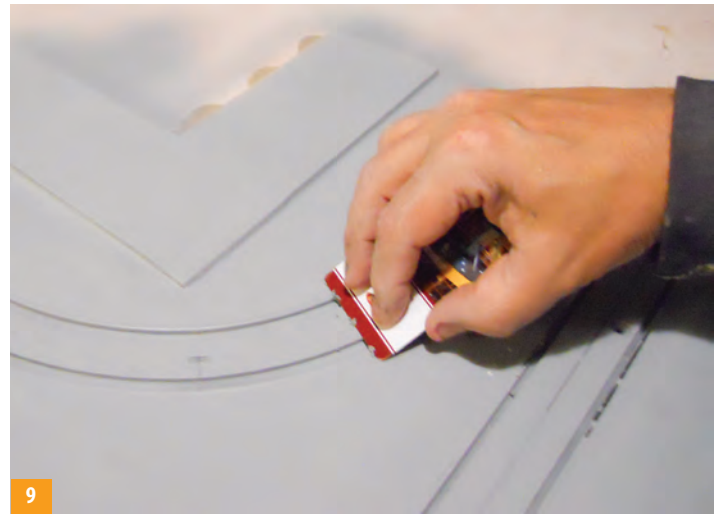
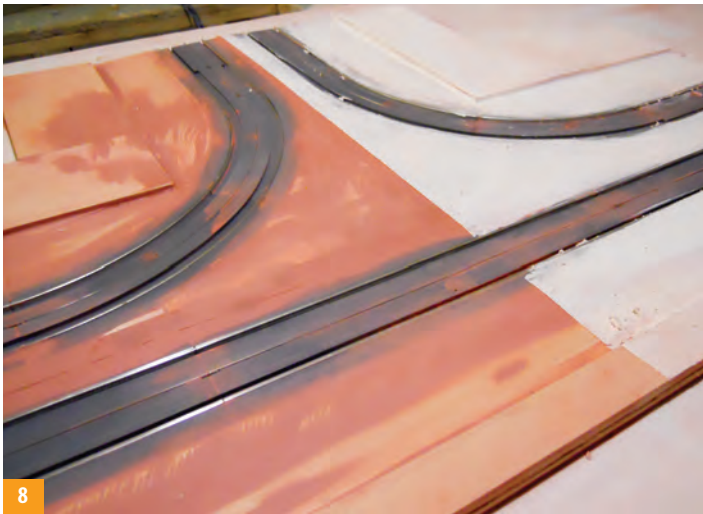
Before painting the roads and sidewalks, I apply three light coats of spray primer on everything at three-minute intervals, making no attempt to mask the metal rails. After about an hour when the primer is dry to the touch but still soft, I remove the paint and any spackling off the metal rails using the edge of an old credit card (Photo 9). The metal rails hold the card off the roadbed so it removes primer from the rails but does not touch the roadbed. I use a plastic picnic knife to remove primer from the inside of the outer rails as well. Finally, I score the sidewalks and road to create seams and cut storm drain holes near the intersections.

Painting the Roads

Because SuperStreets vehicles ride on metal rails, raised half a millimeter above the plastic, their wheels will never touch a painted road surface, so paint wear is not a worry. I apply a final road color with a brush and then again scrape the rails clean with a plastic card. Latex paint works, but I prefer to use a flat oil-based enamel such as Rustoleum. I make the sidewalks a weathered concrete color. Road color is a frustrating tradeoff. Lighter concrete or weathered tarmac colors look most realistic, and the metal SuperStreets rails stand out less against a light color. But the grooves alongside the outer rails that accommodate the wheel flanges develop shadows inside the depressed areas that stand out starkly against a light road surface. I experimented with many colors but ultimately decided something close to the original dark gray is overall the best compromise. I'm convinced the road sections are made in the newer asphalt color for this very reason. After letting the paint dry at least three days, I sand it with #400 sandpaper to give everything a flatter and slightly weathered look.


Crosswalks and Lanes

I create marker lines with pin-stripping tape, either 1/4" (scale 1') or 1/8" (scale 6"). Real world lane marker paint is a goo that hardens so thick it often has a visible third dimension. Pin-stripping tape matches this scale thickness well and assures stripes of uniform width. I tried buying white and yellow tape but settled



on only black, which I spray paint with flat white primer or yellow marking paint. The whites and yellows look weathered over the black, so it is very realistic. I let the paint dry thoroughly overnight before removing the backing and applying the tape to the street. I paint manhole covers and drain surrounds with rust-colored paint, add some oil stains in parking places, and apply some light weathering in the traffic lanes.

Finally, I add buildings, parking meters, road signs, traffic lights, street lamps, fire hydrants, trash cans and dumpsters, signs, cars, and figures (Photo 10). Tiny details add a lot to any scene, even if not consciously noticed. I vary the shade of concrete and asphalt slightly, add stains and cracks, apply tire scuff marks on curbs, and place tiny bits of trash in gutters. I park cars along city streets at

slightly uneven angles and use pliers to bend axles and turn their front wheels to the curb. With a few powered vehicles moving up and down the streets, the layout has truly “super streets.” 

About the Author

Lee Willis has been an avid model train enthusiast since 1955 when he received a Marx train set for Christmas. An electrical engineer by profession and a tinkerer by inclination, he has never met a model locomotive he doesn't like or could leave alone. He lives with his wife, Lorrin, in Cary, NC.



A layout home for postwar, MPC, and contemporary trains

Trains Past and Present Are All Good

Article and Photos by Christopher Esposito

Trains have been part of my life for as long as I can remember. My earliest memories include running my dad's postwar trains on a 4' x 8' layout he built in a spare room at my grandmother's Brooklyn apartment and on our summer vacations to Strasburg, Pennsylvania. I was lucky enough to have a modest-size layout in my bedroom while I was growing up, but like many of us, as I got older, the trains took a back seat even though I never really lost interest in them. After my dad passed away in 2007, I wound up with a lot of his trains. It was at that point I remembered all the fun we had building layouts, running trains, and going to train shows in search of that must-have item.



Contemporary CN power rumbles past the outskirts of town.



A colorful Virginian rectifier heads eastbound with a rather dangerous cargo of radioactive waste.



A venerable Lionel 520 boxcab, the firm's most affordable motive power in the early 1950s, glides past one of the billboards made by photographing actual signs in the area.



High above town, a Seaboard switcher works its tank train around a gentle curve, while the passengers in that taxi treat themselves to a close-up view of the action.

I thought it would be a great idea to get back into model railroading and to build an O gauge railroad of my own. After a few false starts, I finally began construction of my current layout in January 2011. Amy, my wife, who has been more than supportive of my hobby since the day I met her, was nice enough to give up the family room, which meant lots of space for around-the-wall shelves and ample natural lighting. Working a full-time job along with having other hobbies and a new baby doesn't leave a lot of time for trains, so I tried to work as quickly as possible a few hours each night. At this point, I can say my layout is about finished.

My layout, which was built using the tabletop method, is an open-square plan plus a small extension for a yard. The layout measures 8' x 15' with the yard measuring 3' x 6'. With each section of the board being only 3' in width, this allows easy access to the entire layout. The track plan is not overly complicated. It features a double-track main line with a passing track on the outer loop, a crossover, and a small freight yard. The outside loop uses O72 curves, and the inner track is a mix of O60 and O72. All of the turnouts are O72. This allows me to run some of the largest scale engines and also enhances the look of the traditional-size trains. There are a couple of spurs that serve the local industries scattered along the right-of-way including a bottle plant, oil depot, grain silo, lumberyard, building supply company, and factory. As I'm sure many do when planning a layout, I turned to the various publications available today to develop ideas for scenery. Other resources that have been of great help are the online forums. Countless ideas for scenery and projects have come from many of the participants on those sites. Keeping with getting things done quickly, I opted to use Lionel FasTrack for my layout. Although the track is great, I didn't care for the color of the plastic roadbed, so I weathered it with a mix of black paint, India ink, and rubbing alcohol.

One of my favorite things to do in my free time is watching the Norfolk Southern's former Pennsylvania Railroad Middle Division from Harrisburg to Altoona, Pennsylvania. I tried to make the scenery on my layout paint a picture of what I would see when I was out along the rails in Pennsylvania, complete with farms, grain silos, small industries, a sleepy Main Street town, Pennsy position light signals, and high hills. After spending so many hours out among the real thing, there was no question



Arrival is late night for this Rio Grande passenger train.

that I wanted a hi-rail layout that would recreate the scenes I could see trackside. My lone non-scale operating accessory is an American Flyer whistle billboard.

I also tried to impart a local touch by

using signs and names from real towns along the Norfolk Southern main line in Pennsylvania. By taking a picture of an actual sign and sizing it, I was able to print out highway signs, billboards, and railroad

right-of-way signs that help add to the theme.

My layout was landscaped using a mix of store-bought and homemade trees along with ground cover from Scenic Express

The track passing this grain storage facility sees a constant stream of motive power in various liveries, most of which represent postwar Lionel and MPC production.



and a homemade mix of crushed leaves and branches from my yard. Roofing shingles were used in some areas as well. The town structures are mostly Ameri-Towne building fronts that I painted and detailed. An idea I came up with for quick building interiors was to use photos from the Internet and scale them up or down to fit the building size. Other buildings on the layout are an assortment of Lionel, MTH, and Ameri-Towne. The cliffs were built using ceiling tile that was stacked, cut up, and then painted. The backdrop is a mixture of preprinted scenes and polyfiber and plaster rocks from Woodland Scenics that I attached to peg board.

My layout has no central control panel. Instead, everything is wired into the variable inputs on my MTH TIU using two Lionel 180-watt bricks. This allows me to run conventional trains using the DCS remote to adjust the voltage or set it at a fixed voltage when running in command mode. The TMCC base is also connected to the TIU, so DCS and TMCC engines can run on the layout. Feeder wires every 2' help keep voltage drops to a minimum. My dad's childhood ZW controls all the lights and signals on the layout. All of the PRR position signals are manually controlled via toggle switches, so during an operating session, one person can play dis-



This year's crop of beets is looking good as is the vibrant red Lehigh Valley Geep heading up a coal train.

patcher and handle the train movements. All of the turnout controls are mounted along the side of the board for easy access. Shelves along the walls and under the layout provide ample room to display and store trains.

Although I have a collection of the latest hi-tech trains that are available from today's manufacturers, I tend to run post-war and MPC Lionel the most. I think both styles of trains are great. When my friends and I want to have an operating session, we

This Great Northern EP5 is a special treasure on the roster because it was my father's childhood train and the engine that started it all for me.





Just about every postwar-era Lionel fan is familiar with the distinctive 681 steam turbine locomotive.

use the latest scale Norfolk Southern diesels from Lionel and MTH to re-create the action we have observed along the tracks today. Nothing beats a train crawling down the main line at 10 scale mph with a long consist of double stacks or

hearing the diesel engine rev up on a unit coal drag. When I want to be a kid again and just watch the trains run, I'll put a few postwar and MPC trains on the track and just sit back and watch. There is something timeless about turning down the lights,

putting on an old Lionel train, and just watching it run around the layout with its lighted passenger consist in tow. Smelling the ozone from the open-frame motors and the smoke fluid, I am instantly transported back to a more innocent time.

Lionel called this switcher, seen here in bright Lehigh Valley livery, a 44-tonner, but it's much too large to merit that designation.



I fondly remember being a young child and spending hours looking at all the Lionel catalogs with my dad and wanting all the great sets of the MPC era: Chicago & Alton Red Train, Burlington Zephyr, Great Lakes Limited, and Quaker State Limited. But we were never able to afford them. As an adult, I finally have a chance to acquire those items, which is not much different from those who grew up in the postwar years and came back to the hobby eager to collect all the items they dreamed of as a child.

The great thing about the older trains is that they are easy to work on, which is a part of the hobby that I like. The MPC trains have a reputation for being less than stellar performers, but I have found that as long as you keep up with the maintenance, they run just fine. I try to rotate the trains that I run every week so I don't overtax any of the engines. I also feel the hi-rail style of my layout really enhances trains of any vintage by making them stand out and look a lot more realistic. No matter what your approach to the hobby, there is such a wide selection of product available today that it's hard not to find something that fits your

style of O gauge modeling.

With my layout pretty much finished, I am now able to turn my attention to other fun projects such as detailing some scenes, weathering structures and rolling stock, and keeping up the motive power fleet. Having a young daughter now lets me experience the pleasure that my father must have felt when he introduced me to

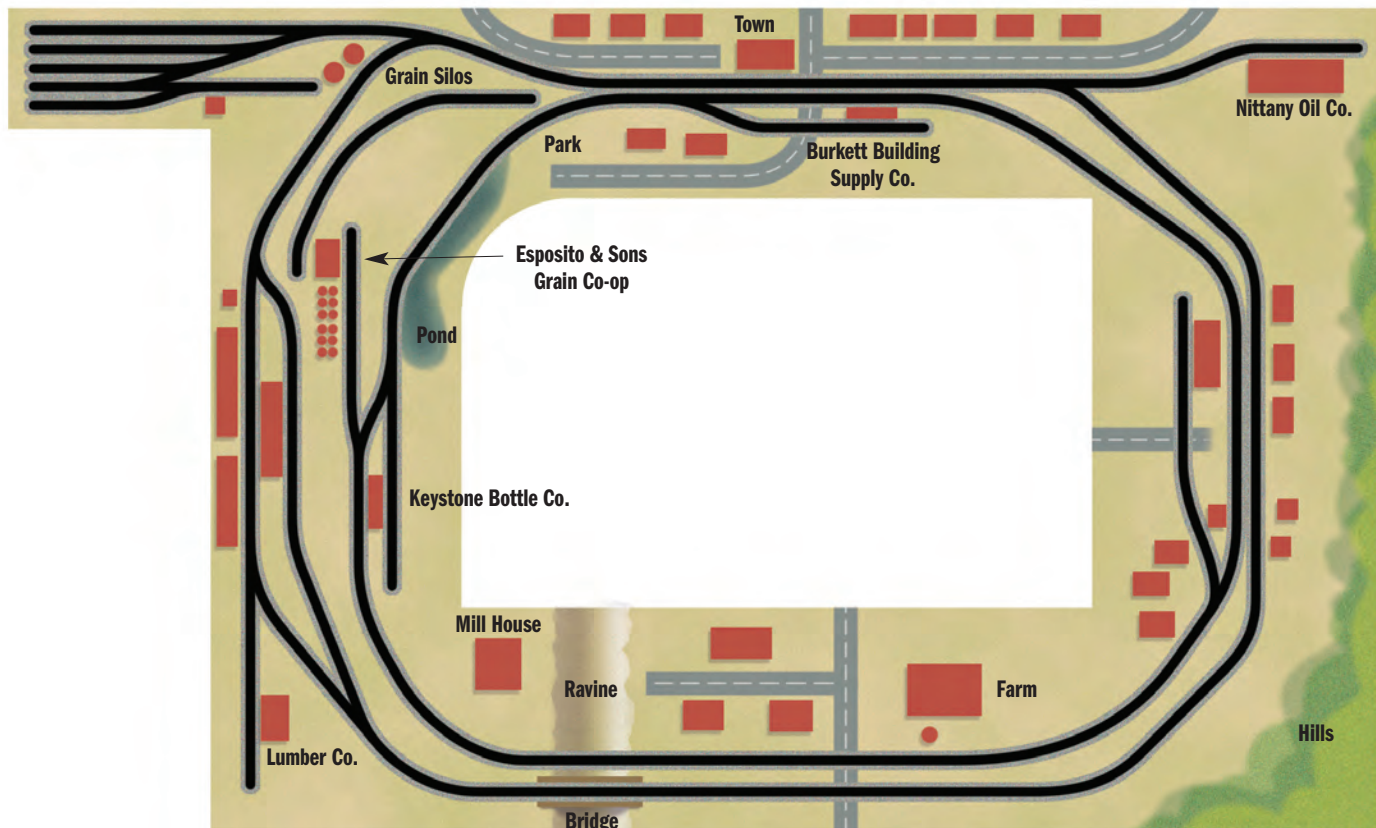
the magic of Lionel trains. I like to head down to the train room with her and share in the joy as she watches the trains race around in the miniature world I created. The marketing department at Lionel must have been on to something when they came up with the slogan Toys to Grow Up With, Not Out Of. 🚂



Lucia, Amy, and Christopher Esposito

About the Author

Christopher Esposito works as a computer system engineer and lives in central New Jersey with his wife, Amy, and daughter, Lucia. In addition to model trains, Christopher's other hobbies include photography and playing drums and his guitar.





Bridging Lake Rowena

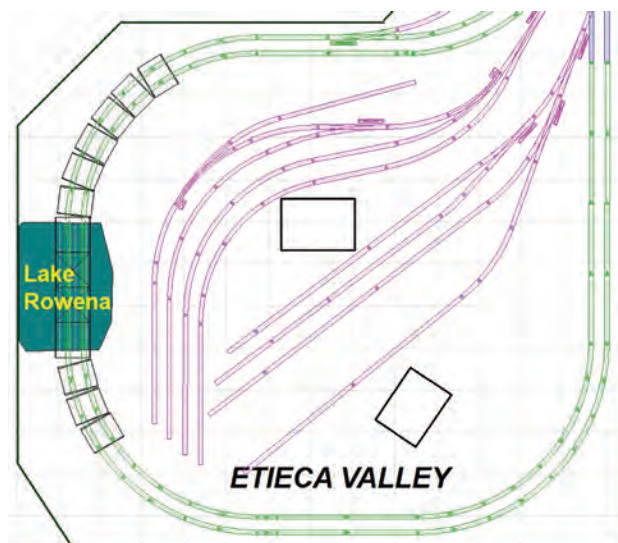
Article and Photos by Alexander Müller

Over 40 years ago, I saw a large wooden trestle on an HO layout. Since then I have had the desire to build one, but the effort and time required to do the construction convinced me otherwise. I took down my last HO layout in 1993 and did not become involved with model trains again until 2008 when I started in O gauge, which was the best move I ever made. I built a 7' x 19' layout to learn about O gauge. I knew that we would soon be selling our house and moving shortly thereafter, so I kept things simple. That layout included grades, a 50" bridge that I built, and operating accessories, but no trestle.

We bought our new house with an unfinished 2,300 square foot basement and moved in 2010. My plans for half the basement included an ample workshop, a large study, an exercise room, and a utility room. The remaining space was to be devoted to the trains. With this much space available for the layout, I wanted to include a large trestle.

Figure 1 shows the RR-Track software rendition of the trestle location over Lake Rowena in Etieca Valley, and Photo 1 shows the actual location of the trestle on my layout benchwork. The trestle

FIGURE 1



Basic Specifications

- Overall length along centerline: 121"
- Dual main track diameters: concentric 108" and 99"
- Long curved section span: 63.5 degrees
- Straight section length: 32"
- Short curved section span: 35 degrees

would support a double main with the tracks spaced 4-1/2" apart on a 2 percent grade. The double-main track consists of a curved section, a straight section, and another curved section, making the trestle about 10' long. The middle straight section over the lake is 26" above the lake and about 50" above the floor.

There are two main styles of wooden trestles: round post or pile and square post. Round posts normally are sunk into the ground or water, and square posts are set upon concrete piers or similar bases. I selected the square post style because I thought it would be easier to glue the cross-braces to the flat surfaces of the posts. Also, I could create my own square posts out of 1/4" stock.

To fit in the area selected, the trestle would be configured as described in the Basic Specifications sidebar.

Additional decisions involved the actual construction of the trestle, the proper track support to use, and the support of the trestle. After looking at several designs used by other modelers and reviewing dozens of photos of full-scale trestles, I opted for my own design based on a combination of the other trestles.

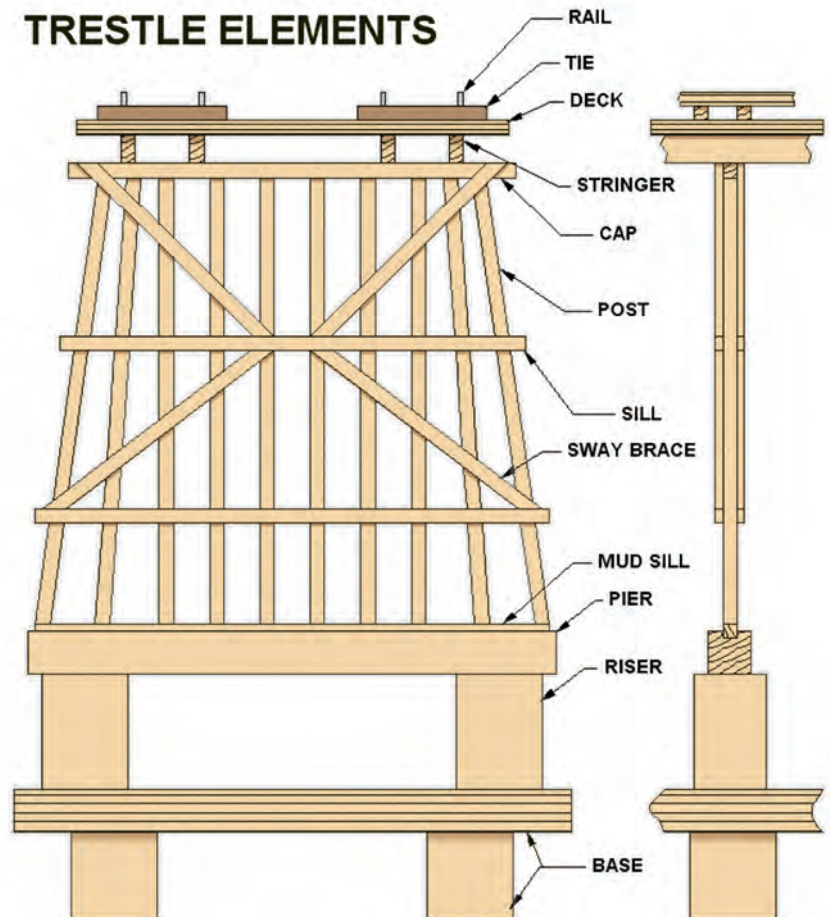
In the 1:1 scale world, the track ties on most trestle bridges are longer than normal ties. In some cases, they are larger in cross-section as well and may be spaced differently than when laid on terra firma. I was not going to attempt to replicate this, so the track ties on my trestle are the standard Atlas O nickel silver track ties.

Also in the full-size world, the most common support immediately under the track consists of two sets of three stringers. Each stringer is 8" wide by 18" high, and each set of three is fastened together with 3/4" bolts, with a 1-1/2" gap between the stringers. The two sets of three stringers support the ties directly under the track rails. I definitely wanted to use stringers to support the track, but to make it easier to



FIGURE 2

TRESTLE ELEMENTS

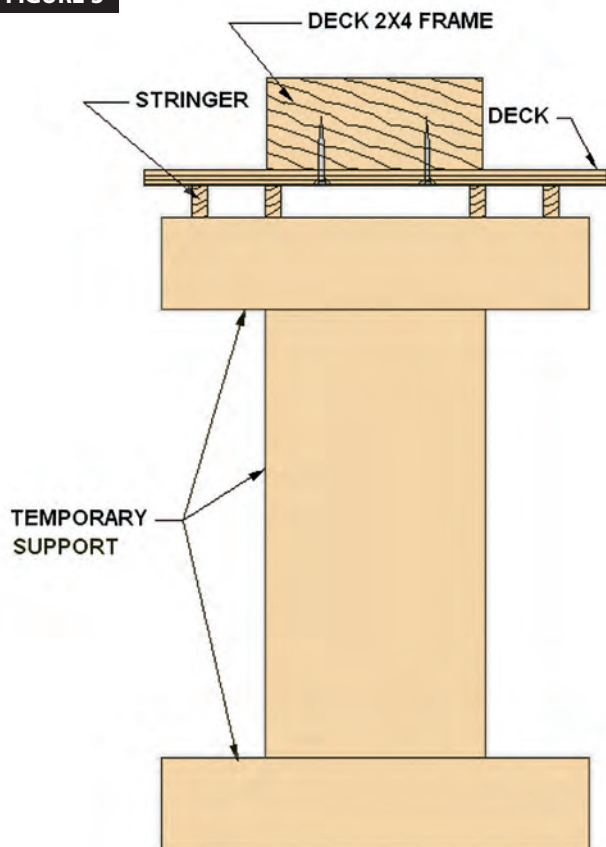


build the trestle, I decided to use a deck between the tracks and the stringers. This deck would also allow me to do a temporary setup to determine the exact position and height of the trestle elements, as I'll

describe later.

Smaller model trestles, especially when supporting straight sections of track, can be built upside down and off-site. The track would be laid upside down on a table

FIGURE 3



with the stringers on top of the track ties, and the bents, which are the main vertical frames that make up a trestle, are built atop the stringers. Since my trestle included two curved sections, fastening the stringers to the track would have been a challenge. Even if that difficulty could be resolved, the sheer size of the trestle would have made it very difficult to build off-site and upside down, with the subsequent requirement to invert and install it. So I decided to build mine on-site and right-side up.

The deck I decided to build would support the track and in turn be supported by stringers that go on top of the bent caps. During construction, this deck without the track could be suspended in place by a frame made from 2 x 4s and with perhaps only one or two supports under its midsection. This would provide access to the stringers on the bottom of the deck and allow



the bents to be slid into place under them. This worked as expected. Figure 2 depicts the construction elements of the trestle, and Figure 3 depicts the temporary construction supports.

Before starting actual construction, I determined the height of each of the trestle elements. I created an Excel spreadsheet to easily manipulate the dimensions and also created a plot chart depicting the heights of each trestle element, as shown in Figure 4.

With the dimensional details established, I cut the deck out of 1/4" plywood. Photo 2 shows the three curved sections, and Photo 3 shows the entire deck. You can see the notches I cut with a router to simulate tie construction of the deck in the curved sections.

Photo 4 shows the 2x4 frame lying on top of the deck, and Photo 5 shows it leaning against the layout. This frame protrudes over the ends of the deck so it can rest on the roadbed that is adjacent to the trestle at both ends. I fastened the deck to the 2x4 frame with drywall screws.

Then I made the stringers that go on the bottom of the deck. There would be four stringers—two under each track. I made them out of the same 1/4" poplar stock I used for the bent posts. I cut them 1/2" wide, making the stringers 1/4" x 1/2" and 36" long. Of course, the length of at least one of the stringers would be different to avoid the junction of one stringer coinciding with the junction of its adjacent stringer.

As shown in Photo 6, the completed deck with the 2x4 frame is upside down and ready for attaching the stringers. I screwed and glued the stringers to the deck and then removed the screws when the glue was dry so they would not get in the way of the bent caps later on. The screws I used were #2 x 3/4", and I used two screws at the ends of each stringer to make sure they followed the curves (Photo 7).

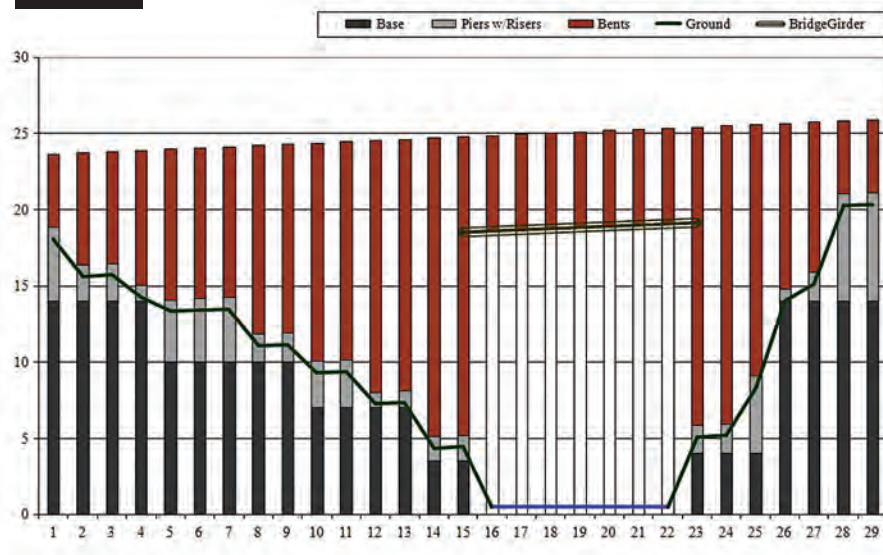
Construction Specifications

- Bent spacing: 4" apart (spacing along the centerline of the trestle)
- Number of bents: 29 plus two partial inner bents at the straight section
- Bent height: varies from 4" to 20" with all seven bents in the straight section at 6"
- Posts per bent: 10 for all bents except the inner two at the straight section that have five posts

Bent Construction

To locate and hold the bents, caps, and the top three sills, I used a Black Bear jig for O gauge double track. It is made of laser-cut acrylic and works wonderfully (Photo 8). I cut my own 1/4" square sticks from the 1/4" x 6" x 36" poplar lumber. This 1/4" square stock can be bought already cut from a number of places, but I enjoy cutting my own and saving a few pennies

FIGURE 4





while doing so. Photos 9 and 10 show how I set up my 40-year-old Craftsman table saw.

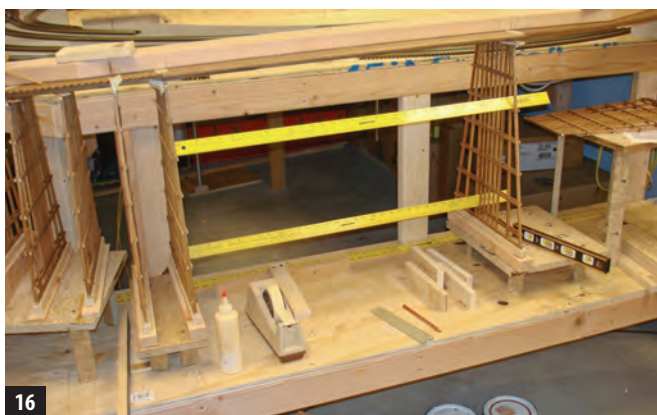
The 1/4" square poplar sticks are used for the bent posts, caps, and mud sills. I used 1/8" x 1/4" bass wood for the sills and sway braces, but 1/16" x 1/4" could also be used. I glued the caps and the sills to one side of the posts first while on the jig. When dry, I removed the partial assembly from the jig, turned it over, and glued the sills on the other side. Later I added the sway braces one side at a time. I found that gluing just the sills first and then the sway braces made it easier to apply uniform pressure to the parts while being glued. I used yellow carpenter's glue for the entire trestle. Photo 11 shows the bents as I weighted them down to attach the sills on the first side, while still on the jig, and the second side, now out of the jig, just over a piece of wood. Photo 12 shows how I weighted the sway bracing down for gluing.

Photo 13 shows the bents with all the posts, caps, and sills glued and ready for the sway bracing. I ran out of material for the sway bracing, and while I waited for more, I proceeded with construction. I cut 3/4" square piers and slotted them 1/4" wide by 1/8" deep to accept the mud sills (Photo 14). The photo may give you the impression that the far ends of the piers are cut at an angle, but they actually are square.

Assembly

With the piers and bents completed, without the sway braces, I was ready to make the bases and risers to





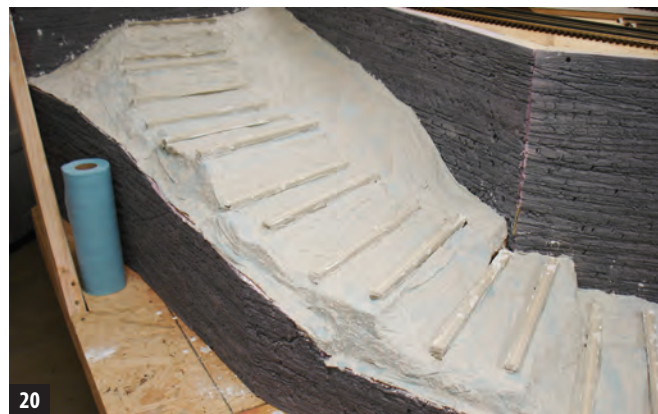
bring the piers to the desired height. Even though I had calculated the heights of these parts, I wanted to make sure they fit. The deck with its 2x4 frame set in place needed only one support in the middle to be stable.

The bases are pieces of 3/4" plywood (or oriented strand board) set on top of four legs made of whatever scraps I happened to have on hand. I made the risers under the piers out of 2x4s that I cut to the desired width or height. Photo 15 shows the deck with the frame in place with a single middle support made of 2x4s, the bases, risers and piers, and several bents in place. Photo 16 shows the middle section of the trestle, which is the straight section, and the measurement of the distance between the two inner full bents to make sure that they are plum and parallel to each other.

The bents on the curved sections are not parallel to each other but resemble the spokes of a wheel when viewed from above. To align them, I used a string stretched from the center of the curves to the outer diameter of the curved sections. Before marking the final location of each bent, I verified the alignment simply by sighting along the side of each bent cap toward the centers. I used nails sticking above the top of the layout by a few inches, with a piece of red tape wrapped around their tops, to mark the centers.

Once I had marked the locations of all the bents, piers, risers, and bases, I removed all the bents and glued the bases, risers, and piers in place (Photo 17). A few days later, I added the sway braces to the bents and did one final check (Photo 18).

Before going any further with installation of the trestle, I had to finish the surrounding area. On my trestle, I had to finish



everything behind it, or I would not be able to work through the bents or the bracing between the bents. I used pink foam for the vertical walls behind and around the trestle and Structolite for the ground cover (Photos 19 and 20). I then added some grass and bushes (Photo 21).

To finish the cross-bracing on the inner side of the trestle, I reached down from the top, mostly from the front or outer side of the trestle. This was not as difficult as it appeared, at least not after installing and gluing a few pieces.

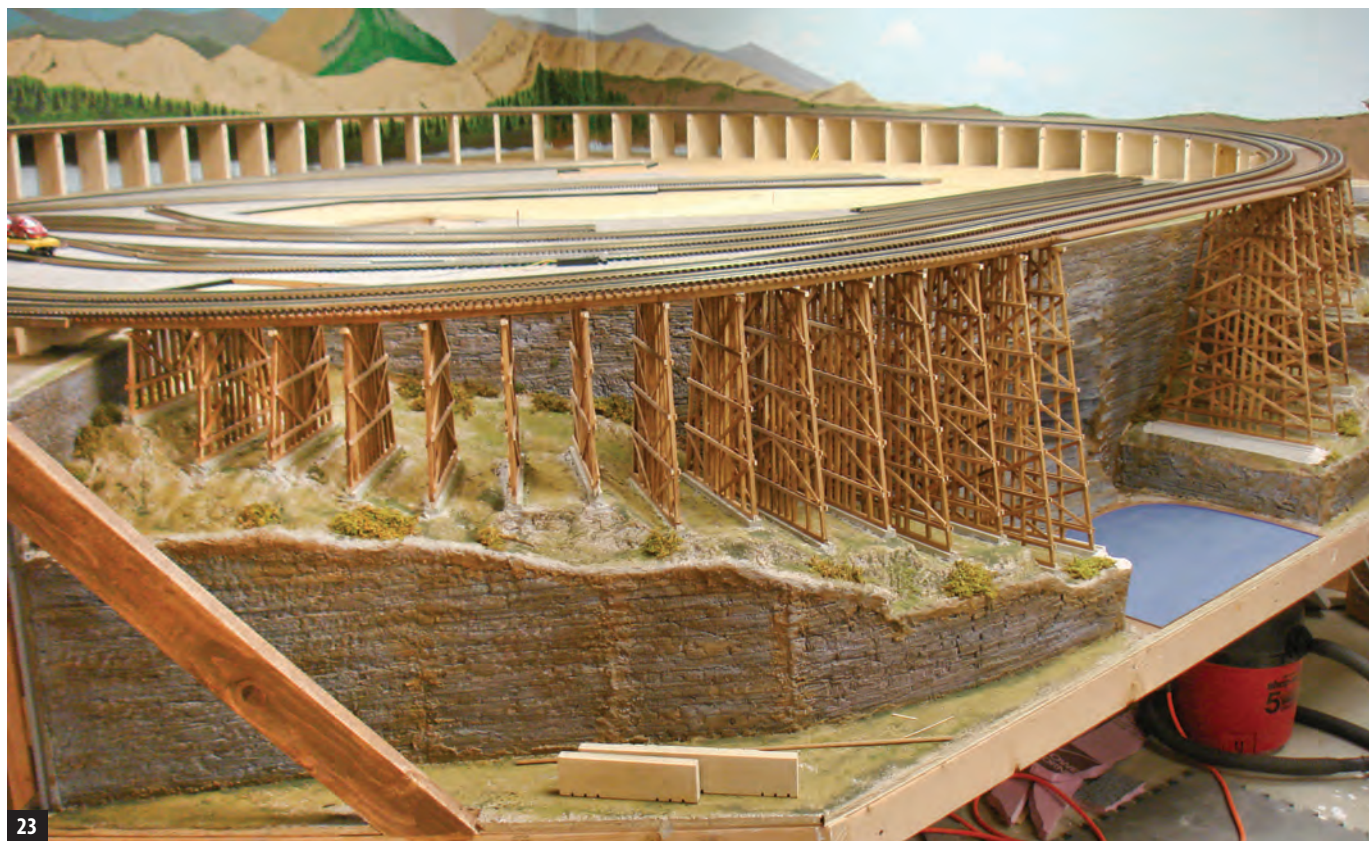
Photos 22 and 23 show the bents installed permanently, and Photo 24 shows one of several schemes I used to hold the braces and girts, which are 1/8" square pieces that run from bent to bent, on the inner side while the glue dried. For convenience, I used one girt on the inside of the trestle and two on the outside.

Later when adding the bracings and girts on the outside, the

job became a little easier than it was on the inside. Photo 25 shows one of many methods I used on the outside to secure and hold the outer bracing. Rubber bands, small clamps, and clothespins became handy for this step.

Next was adding the support for the open or straight section of the trestle that runs over the lake. This support consisted of four 32" long beams, each 1/2" square. The seven bents that these beams supported were all the same size, which meant that the beams would be on a 2 percent grade, parallel to the track. In the prototype world, these beams could not be as long as needed—32" in O scale would equal 128' on a real trestle. To enhance the realism, I scribed and drew lines to make the beams look as though they were made of several lengths and simulated a bolt plate with 1/64" plywood (Photo 26).

When I had all the center beams and all the bents in place, it





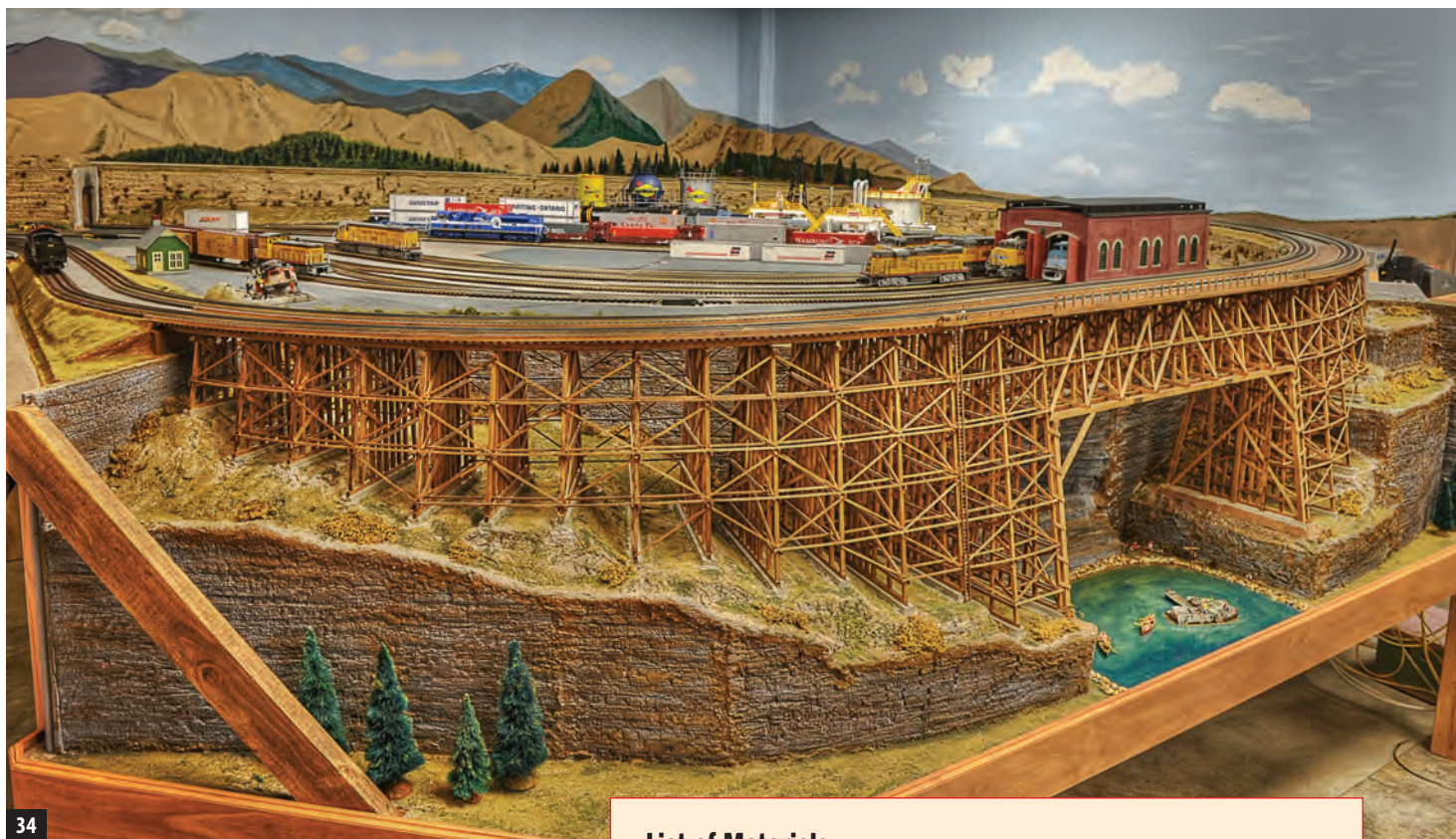
appeared that the center section needed additional support, perhaps another bent or at least reinforcement for the two inner bents. I decided to add a partial bent just inside about 1/2" from each inner bent. I made four outer posts for these two additional bents out of 1/2" square poplar and used 1/4" x 1/2" for the inner posts. The inner partial bents extended upward only as far as the center horizontal beams and they really impacted how the trestle looked in this area. Photo 27 shows the added piers for these afterthought bents. Photo 28 shows the horizontal beams, two of the bents, and the additional bents installed. Photo 29 shows the center section beams.

The final details included a walkway on the outside of the straight section and a ladder to get to it. I made the walkway planks out of 1/32" x 1/8" bass wood, properly cross-scribed to simulate 12' planks. The rail posts were made from 1/8" square bass wood, and the cable was seven-strand 0.021" stainless steel wire rope threaded through 0.025" holes (Photos 30, 31 and 32).


I made the ladder out of 1/16" x 1/8" bass wood, and the rungs are #20 x 1/2" nails. The ladder ends at the walkway, and there is an opening for a small person to climb through the hole (Photo 33).

Now that the trestle was complete, I added the "water" to the lake. I used what I call the Envirotex approach. I had used this method on my previous layout, and it came out great. I was able to paint the bottom of the lake once, and it looked fine. I used green, brown, and blue paints with the proper brush strokes and mix of colors to make very believable water. In videos taken with a camera on board the train, the water appeared to have waves that actually





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moved. But this time around, my first paint job after adding the Envirotex looked awful. After several more tries, the water looked much better. The problem was that the paint looked different in the can from how it looked when first applied, after it dried, and finally when covered with Envirotex. Lake water under a real trestle is not fully under the sky, so it does not have as much of a blue tint as when out in the open. What worked were darker shades so that when covered with the Envirotex, the surface of the water reflected its surroundings: the sides of the gorge, the canoes, the fishermen, and so forth (Photo 34). It looked fine! 

What's in a Name

My trestle is named Judy Jane after my wife, who did much of the finishing of our basement. She carried most of the 300-plus 2x4s from the garage and from the patio into the basement and helped me to carry the drywall, plywood, and other materials. She also laid most of the mud on the drywall and did all the painting. For the trestle construction, Judy stained all the cut pieces of bass wood and poplar. Lake Rowena is named after her mom.

List of Materials

- ☐ Deck (directly under track): 1/4" plywood, 8" wide, curved and straight segments
- ☐ Stringers (between bent caps and track deck): 1/4" x 1/2" poplar
- ☐ Bent posts: 1/4" square poplar (not round)
- ☐ Bent caps: 1/4" square poplar
- ☐ Bent bracing, sill (horizontal) and sway (diagonal): 1/8" x 1/4" bass wood
- ☐ Mud sill: 1/4" square poplar
- ☐ Girts (horizontal stringers between bents): 1/8" square bass wood
- ☐ Diagonal bracing between bents: 1/16" x 1/8" bass wood
- ☐ Support beams at straight section: 1/4" x 1/2" poplar
- ☐ Inner bent outer posts: 1/2" square poplar
- ☐ Inner bent inner posts: 1/4" x 1/2" poplar
- ☐ Pier footer: 3/4" square pine (slotted on one side 1/4" wide, 1/8" deep)
- ☐ Track tie caps (outside outer and inner ends of track ties): 1/8" x 1/4" bass wood
- ☐ Walk platform floor boards: 1/32" x 1/8" bass wood
- ☐ Rail posts: 1/8" square bass wood
- ☐ Rail cable: McMaster-Carr No. 3458T115 seven-strand stainless steel wire rope
- ☐ Horizontal beam bolt plates: 1/64" plywood (7/16" x 3/4" each)
- ☐ Ladder sides: 1/16" x 1/8" bass wood
- ☐ Ladder rungs: #20 x 1/2" flat head nails (not brads)
- ☐ Nut-bolt-washer (simulated): Black Bear TJN-S (25 sprues, 20 piece/sprue)
- ☐ Double Track, Standard Gauge, O Scale jig: Black Bear TJ-D5LO

Interactive button to activate police car lighting



License and Registration Please—Part 2

Article and Photos by Bill Parisi

I wrote a how-to article titled “License and Registration Please” in Run 251, August/September 2011, that dealt with the installation of an LED lighting kit on a 1:43 die-cast police vehicle (Photo 1). Since writing that article, the vehicle has pretty much been sitting on my layout collecting dust.

In early October, our modular club, the Western Reserve Modular Railroad Club (www.wrmmrc.org), set up our layout at the National Packard Museum (www.packardmuseum.org) in Warren, Ohio, for a three-month exhibit. On some of the modules, we have installed red buttons, housed in small boxes, for visitors to press in order to activate various accessories such as a train ride, race car, helicopter, and turntable. On one module, a club member displays a figure of a policeman with a criminal handcuffed to him. Nearby in the street is the policeman’s car. With permission from the module owner, I replaced his police car with mine.

Unfortunately, I did not have another assembled box to activate the



blinking lights on the police car. However, I did have all the parts necessary to construct another box. The box used for this project is Radio Shack #270-1802 Project Enclosure. It cost \$3.19 and measures 4" x 2" x 1" (Photo 2). This photo also shows the momentary push button. For this project, when pressed and held, the momentary push button completes the circuit, thereby allowing voltage to pass through and activate the police car's blinking lights. The button is rated at 3 amps and 250 VAC, which is more than sufficient for this project. I purchased five of these buttons from an online vendor a year ago for less than five dollars including shipping. Other material needed for this project includes two lengths of two-conductor wire (red/black), a piece of metal to be used for a mounting bracket, three small screws, electrical tape, and a small AC or DC transformer to supply power. A 9-volt battery could be used in place of the transformer.

To begin the project, I removed the cover from the project box. The box comes with four screws to mount the cover to the box. There are two covers: one plastic and one metal. I used the plastic cover for this project.

Next, I drilled a 5/8" hole in the box so the push button would fit into it. I also drilled a small hole in the box for routing the wire through.

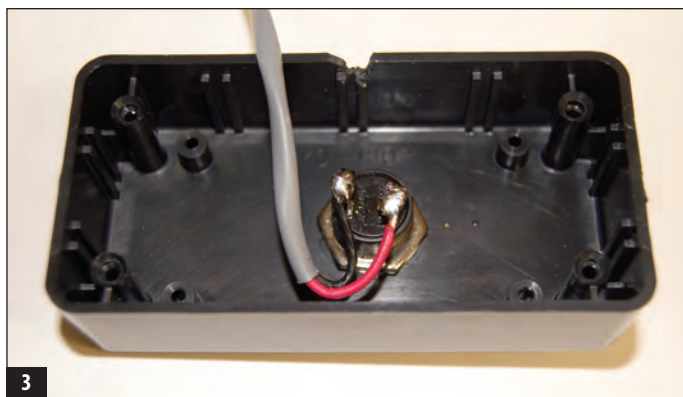
Once the hole was drilled to the proper size, I mounted the push button in the box using the included washer and nut. I then cut two 5' sections of 16-gauge OGR two-conductor (red/black) wire. I stripped approximately 2" of outer insulation from the ends of each section.

Next, I stripped approximately 1/2" of insulation from the ends of each of the red and black wires. I then took one of the 5' sections of two-conductor wire and soldered one of the ends of the red and black wires to the button (Photo 3). The four screws that came with the box were used to re-attach the cover to it.

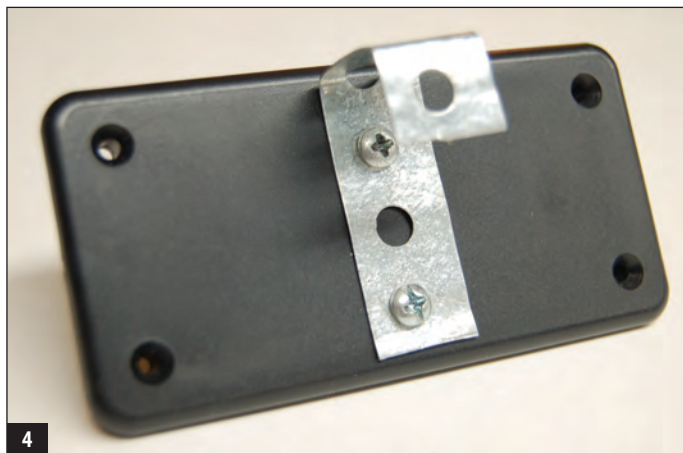
I took the other 5' section of two-conductor wire and connected one end of each of the red and black wires to the terminals of the transformer. For this project, I used a small Lionel No. 6-32923, 36-watt AC transformer as the power source. Previously, I had made a mark on the faceplate of this transformer for 16-volt AC output. That voltage setting will supply sufficient power to light the police car.

Next, I cut a small piece of metal strapping. This strapping is used as a bracket to attach the box to the module façade. I drilled two holes in the back of the box and then attached the metal strapping to the box with two small screws. I bent the metal strapping to conform to the module's façade (Photo 4). Before attaching the box to the module, I used a label maker to print a few instructional labels to be attached to the front of the box (Photo 5). Next, I mounted the box to the module's façade with one small screw. I routed the wire behind the skirting and under the table and painted the metal strapping black to blend in with the façade (Photo 6).

The connections I used between the button box, transformer, and police car are temporary. The wire connections are twisted and taped together with electrical tape. For a permanent installation, I would solder the connections together and protect them with shrink tubing.



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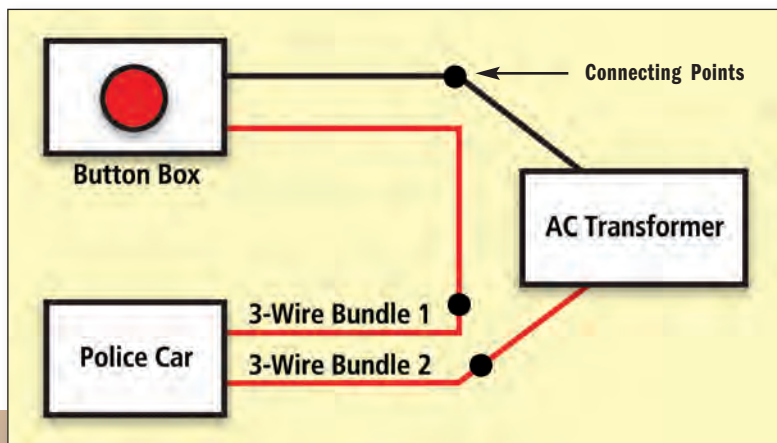


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Now came the hard part of crawling under the layout. Once situated under the layout, with a flashlight available for lighting, I began connecting everything together. First, I connected the *red* wire from the button box to one of the 3-wire bundles coming from the police car. I then connected the *black* wire from the button box to the *black* wire from the transformer. I connected the other 3-wire bundle from the police car to the *red* wire coming from the transformer in the diagram. While under the layout, I plugged in the transformer and checked to make sure I had the dial set to the 16-volt level.

Before I could even get out from under the layout, a visitor stopped by and pushed the button. From his reaction I knew that the police car lighting was working properly. Of course, once I managed to extract myself from under the layout, I had to try it out for myself. I pushed and held the button. Although you cannot really tell from the photo, all the lights were blinking properly (Photo 7). The completed installation is shown in Photo 8.

It took a lot more time to write this article than it did to complete this project. You should be able to do it from start to finish in less than an hour. To view the police car lighting in action, please visit my website at www.parisiconsulting.com and click the “published works” button to link to the video. 🎥





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After the shocking and tragic events of September 11, 2001, the model train industry reached back over 25 years to commemorate a positive symbol of American railroading. Several makers in O and HO gauge produced the American Freedom Train, whose red, white, and blue display cars toured all the contiguous 48 states for almost two years in 1975 and 1976, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the United States of America. More than seven million visitors from all over the country viewed the hundreds of patriotic artifacts and images contained in the exhibit cars, highlighting two centuries

of American historical events, culture, and achievements. During its extended run, the American Freedom Train was pulled by several different steam engines, treating thousands of Americans brought up in the diesel age to the glorious sights and sounds of mainline steam.

In this edition of "Collector's Gallery," we are going to focus on the K-Line version of the American Freedom Train (Photo 1) and how the company strove to make it as authentic looking as possible.

The American Freedom Train—K-Line Style

K-Line's American Freedom Train GS4

The most photographed steamer leading the real train was the best looking: the Southern Pacific GS4 streamlined 4-8-4 passenger locomotive, all decked out in a special red, white, and blue paint job that perfectly matched the American Freedom Train (AFT) display cars. Even though it is less than scale size, the K-Line version captures the essence of the shape and decoration of the big 4-8-4 (Photo 2) in AFT livery.



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Both the locomotive and its tender are die-cast, which makes for a hefty combination weighing around 10 pounds.

The tender alone weighs over 3-1/2 pounds. The two six-wheel trucks have springs in them, but they are not functional. The rear truck has a coil coupler, and both trucks have pickup rollers attached to them (Photo 3). The controls

for the Lionel-licensed TMCC and RailSounds functions are also located on the bottom frame. The oil tender is nicely detailed with separately applied railings and ladders, operating marker lights, and a directional headlight on the rear. The massive umbilical cord growing from the front of the tender detracts from the appearance of the engine (Photo 4). It looks like a sec-

tion of Libyan oil pipeline rather than a model train electrical connection. When the tender and the locomotive are hooked together, the umbilical doesn't look quite as bad curled between them (Photo 5).

At first, the rear of the 4449 AFT locomotive did not look correct to me because it seemed to lack detail and be much too neatly finished (Photo 6). As an Easterner, I had never seen the all-weather cab of an oil-fired steamer before, but a photo of the actual locomotive, courtesy of Jack Wheelihan, erased all doubts (Photo 7). As you can see from this image, the eight main drivers have nickel rims, and the rear drivers have treaded traction tires (Photo 8). The only switch on the body of the 4449 is under the cab and it is used for the smoke unit. This close-up view of the front of the locomotive (Photo 9) shows it is loaded with detail including the signature headlight and Mars light of the GS4 and a scale-size dummy coupler that can be replaced with a traditional 3-rail coupler. There is even a gold-painted locomotive bell hidden under the operating smoke unit. All in all, the locomotive and the tender together are a convincing representation of the actual American Freedom Train 4449 with their accurate paint schemes and wealth of detail (Photo 10). The manufacturer's suggested retail price of \$549.95 for the less-than-scale GS4, K3601-4449, was also justified by the wealth of premium features offered including TMCC, RailSounds, rear coil coupler, and mechanical puffing smoke unit. This was at a time when in the same 2002 Second Edition catalog, K-Line was announcing the just-released, scale-proportioned New York Central Hudson with basically the same features for \$624.95, or a bell and whistle only model for \$499.95.

American Freedom Train Set Cars

Five cars were chosen to represent the real American Freedom Train consist that rode the high iron with 26 cars. The K-Line set featured two showcase cars #40 and #41, two display cars #101 "The Beginning" and #110 "Conflict and Resolution," followed by the #205 observation car complete with an old-fashioned open rear deck with gold-painted railing (Photo 11). All of the cars utilized new smooth-sided tooling, had bodies made of extruded aluminum, measured approximately 18" in length, and rode on four-



wheel die-cast trucks. The showcase cars and observation car used the K-Line overhead StreamLighting system with incandescent bulbs to provide even lighting to interiors.

A detailed description of the initial five cars demonstrates the amount of research and effort K-Line employees put into re-creating the authentic look of the AFT cars.

K-4601-30040, AFT showcase car #40, featured detailed cast-resin models of the Arabian early C&O locomotive, the *Friendship* hand-operated pumper fire truck, and a 1904 Oldsmobile Scout. These exhibits were easy to see from outside the car on the ground because all the prototype showcase cars were equipped with unusual floor-to-ceiling windows covering most of their length (Photos 12 and 13).

K-4601-30041, AFT showcase car #41 (Photo 14), has two of my favorite exhibits: a lunar rover prototype (Photo 15) and a twice-original-size Liberty Bell (Photo 16), but without the prototype's crack. The center display is a detailed map of the route of the American Freedom Train, which is a striking exhibit in its own right. After the tour, the replica Liberty Bell wound up outside the Union Station in Washington, DC, as the Freedom Bell. It is also known as the Children's Bell.

K-4601-30101, AFT display car #101 "The Beginning" 1776-1796, highlights the first 20 years of American history. Each of the display cars carried four images on their sides: two portraits on one side and two evocative images of the period on the opposite side (Photo 17). The real cars had exhibits on both sides of their interiors as well, and visitors could see them while being moved through the car by a conveyor system.





The K-Line AFT cars even had prototypical off-center end doors that accommodated the walkways on the real train.

K-4601-30110, AFT display car #110 "Conflict and Resolution" 1956-1976 (Photo 18), highlights a tumultuous time in American history. In reality there were 10 display cars in the K-Line American Freedom Train, and this poses both a challenge and an opportunity for the motivated collector, as we shall see.

The original five-car set was rounded out by the K-4601-30205, AFT observation car #205, complete with figures in its well-lit interior (Photo 19). It is important to note at this point that the initial five AFT cars were only available as a set under the number K-4601A, with an MSRP of \$599.95, or as part of the GS4 locomotive and car set, number K-1122, for a suggested retail price of \$1,095.95.

Packaging

The K-Line packaging for the locomotive and cars looks as good as the set contents. The end of each box carries an authentic reproduction of the red, white, and blue American Freedom Train logo



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as well as information about the particular car (Photo 20) or the GS4 locomotive (Photo 21). The sides of the boxes even carried reproductions of American Freedom Train admission tickets (Photo 22). This left a problem for the decoration of the box fronts. If the colors of the stars and stripes on the front of the window boxes were as vivid as the American Freedom Train logo on the lower right front, the AFT logo would be completely lost in the design. The solution was to use pale pastels for the stars and stripes covering the top of the box. The color of the stripes could charitably be called salmon and the field for the white stars a faded blue, but the combination of pale and vivid worked to give a harmonious look to each of the set's boxes (Photo 23).

Challenges and Opportunities

Acquiring the GS4 and the five-car set is really the first rung on the ladder for the motivated, or compulsive, collector. K-line produced eight—count 'em, eight—additional AFT display cars in addition to the two for the set. They embraced the rest of the 200-year

history of America. Each individual car was priced at \$114.95 a pop, which would have been a significant drain on almost any collector's budget. In addition, K-Line also made a 4-pac of American Freedom Train crew cars, numbered K-4601B, with a retail sticker of \$449.95. All this high-quality, high-priced bounty tested the financial patriotism of even the most motivated collector, so production numbers for the additional cars were not high. Exact production totals are difficult to come by owing to the confusion that reigned during the last days of an independent K-Line. There are probably three places that production numbers may be found at this date: in the heads of former K-Line employees, in the K-Line papers archived at Lionel LLC, and at the Sanda Kan factory in China. If you find that detective work is part of the joy of collecting, this situation is made for you.

Another consideration that should add interest in the AFT set and the cars as collectibles is that the hunt to successfully find all the pieces that K-Line made is likely to be protracted. After all, it has been 10 years since the basic



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set and the additional cars were produced. The company that had them manufactured is no longer in business, and the eight additional display cars that were released were sold individually. That means that most folks who bought the extra cars probably won't have a complete set, which makes assembling all eight cars a truly challenging task. The K-Line American Freedom Train crew car 4-pac is also likely to be hard to find. If the thrill of hunting down those last two or three pieces of an extensive set like this gets your juices flowing, it probably doesn't get any better than this.



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The Eleventh Display Car


Just to make things even more interesting for the collector, K-Line produced an eleventh American Freedom Train display car to update American history from 1976 to 1996. The K-4601-30111 was created by K-Line in careful consultation with the American Freedom Train Museum, and that is why it carries the number MAFT111 on its sides.

For more information about this car and the other 10 display cars, you can visit the museum on the Web at www.freedomtrain.org. Its mailing address is The Museum of America's Freedom Trains, P.O. Box 2211, Laguna Hills, CA 92654-2211.

Summing Up

K-Line put in an enormous amount of effort and investment into creating its image of the American

Freedom Train at a time when the relatively small staff of the company was fully occupied with other projects such as introducing scale-proportioned steamers, making high-end streamlined diesel passenger sets, and tending to the rest of an extensive line of 3-rail O gauge toy trains.

The end result is intriguing to historians and modern-era collectors. Even operators should be attracted to this set if they do not harbor any unrealistic expectations of running the complete 18-car consist at one time. The complete extended AFT set takes up over 29' of O gauge rail, which would be a strain for even the largest layouts, not to mention a current drain from all those incandescent passenger lights that would defeat current 3-rail technology. Of course, as a shelf display, it is a different matter, and because I am a collector, that is a welcome relief. 



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Scene Along the Rails



Sentinel to Bygone Days

Photo by John Ciccarelli

This abandoned turntable is located at the former Erie-Lackawanna Brier Hill diesel service facility in Youngstown, Ohio. The turntable is reportedly still functional, but currently there are no tracks leading to it. Sand towers once used at the facility are visible directly behind the turntable. The property, largely stripped of everything that once made it such an active place, now

belongs to the Norfolk Southern Railroad, which uses it for maintenance-of-way equipment and supplies. The mill complex in the distant background is V&M Star, the Mahoning Valley's last large steelmaker and North America's leading producer of seamless tubular products that are mainly used in oil and gas applications. 

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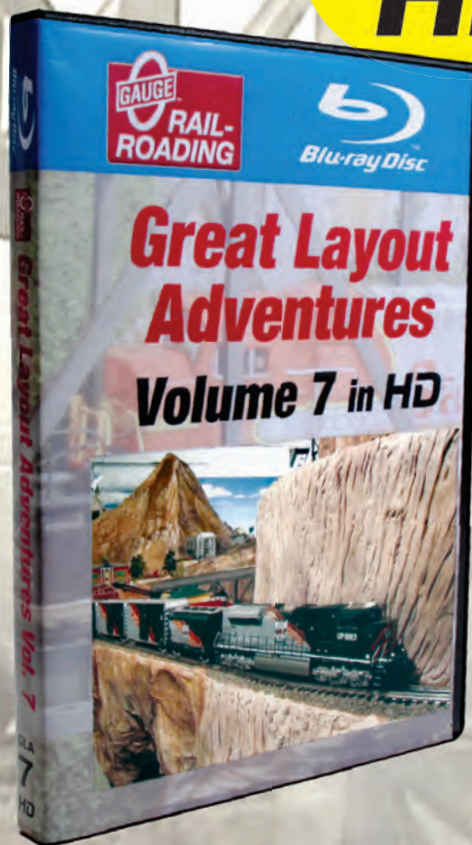
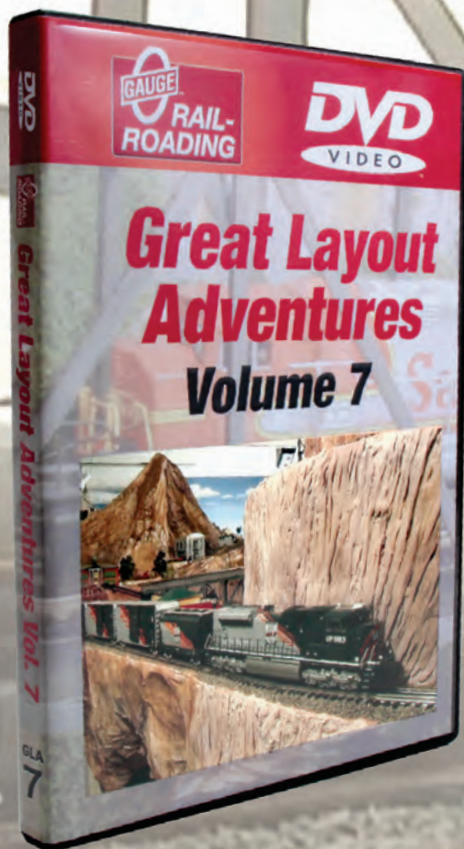
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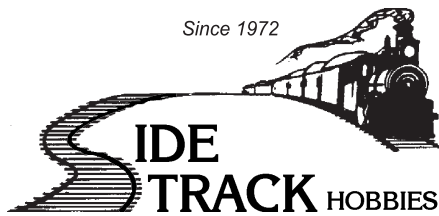
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Lionel Accessory No. 6-24177, shown in Lionel's Volume 1 catalog from 2004, has two colorful balloons. I chose to use a different motor rather than the Lionel base station motor, which I found was prone to making an annoyingly loud grinding sound.



This animated Christmas deer motor has been removed from its lighted holiday host. I have found this to be an excellent, strong, quiet, and cool-running motor, which is easy to modify for continuous operating accessories.

Up, Up, and Away

Article and Photos by Bill Bramlage

Installing moving hot air balloons will add color, action, and interest to the sky area of your train world.

I wanted to add some up-in-the-air action to my layout, so I started by locating several Lionel hot air balloon rides, product number 6-24177, by conducting an Internet search. The Lionel balloons are about 10" tall and are colorful. Suspending several of these balloons in the background of the layout helps add a new dimension that is often overlooked or perhaps made up of a blue painted backdrop with some fluffy clouds. And when you come up with a way to animate the balloons so they move up and down, you end up with an attention-

holding attraction. I managed this with a simple, efficient, and inexpensive motor.

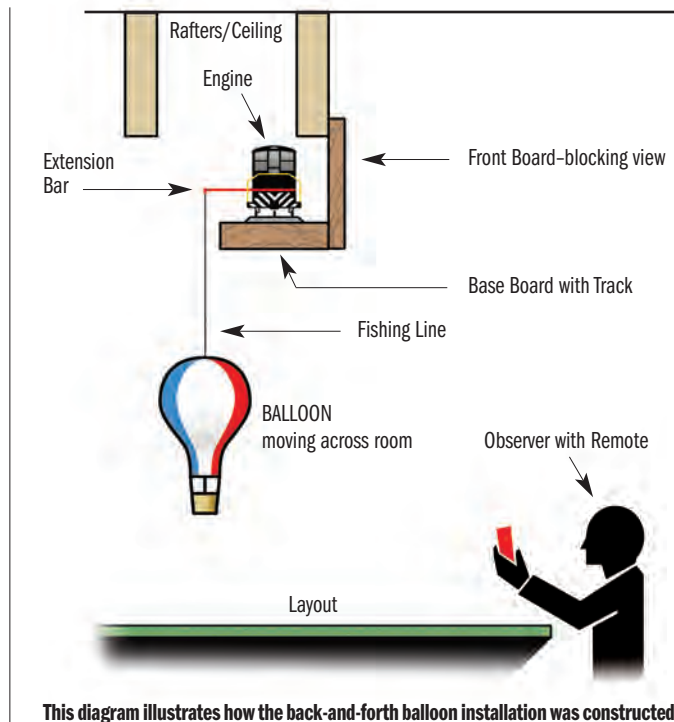
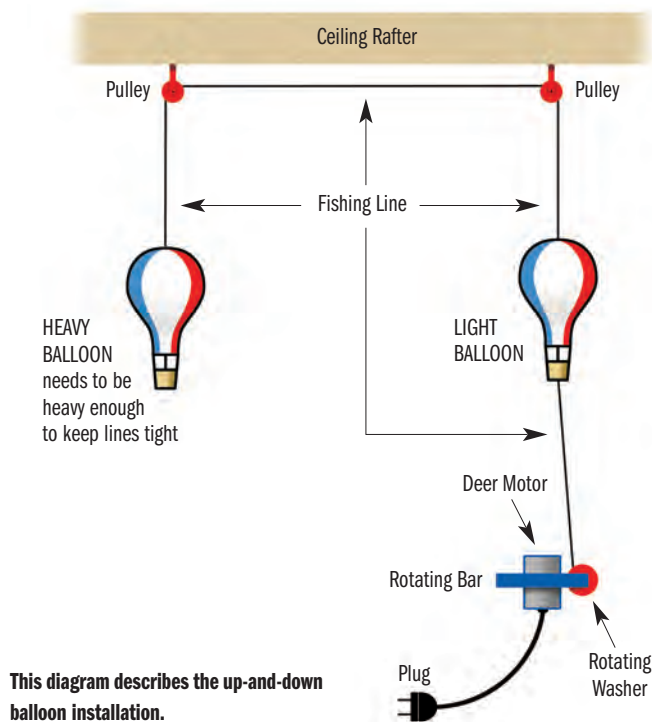
I wanted a hot air balloon that would move across the layout high in the sky, move out of sight in peek-a-boo fashion behind buildings or scenic features, and then move back across the layout in the opposite direction. Visitors to my layout notice these balloons, especially the balloon that travels close to my skyscrapers as it makes its journey across the layout.

The first challenge was a simple up-and-down motion for two balloons. Lionel includes two red, white, and blue balloons with the accessory. One balloon is lightweight, and the

Here the motor has been fastened to a flat wooden base. A plastic bar was glued to the armature. Freely rotating washers are installed on one end of the rotating bar. Black fishing line is tied to the largest of the washers. The length of the bar determines the extent of the balloon's motion.

The engine is operating on the ceiling track and powers the back-and-forth balloon. A single balloon hangs via black fishing line from a short extension bar wired to the rear of the engine. Of course, the fishing line needs to clear the edge of the track board for smooth movement. If the engine is operated at slow speeds, you will obtain very realistic hot air balloon movement. I've found that this accessory can operate all evening long without a problem.





second is fairly heavy. The drawback is the Lionel motor mechanism, which is noisy and does not operate smoothly. In its place, I decided to use one of those quiet and smooth operating motors used to power and animate outdoor lighted Christmas deer sold during the holiday season. Immediately after the holiday, you can find these animated lawn display items at very reasonable cost. I removed the motor intended to move the head of the deer back and forth and then gave the still-lighted deer away for a yard decoration next Christmas.

This particular motor is wonderful for powering action accessories because it is powerful, has good torque, and is very quiet. The diagram and photos provide details of the construction and installation.

Activate a switch mounted on your control panel, and you have an action accessory that can operate without breaking or overheating.

For even more fun, one of the hot air balloons would move slowly and smoothly across the train world. I considered different engineering methods, but the final solution was simple and was suggested by a visiting HO train buff.


I installed some O gauge train track near the ceiling so it spans the full length of the layout. I left

enough space between the rails and the ceiling for a small SW switcher to clear any obstacles as it traverses this suspended line.

Next, I installed a vertical black baffle board in front of the engine and track to conceal the operating mechanism from normal viewing positions.

An electronic reversing unit from Dallee

Electronics was installed to pause and automatically reverse the engine at the end of the track, thus sending the engine back to the other side of the room.

This easy-to-make accessory is truly a magical and dependable attention-getter. 



An overall view shows the balloons and back of the layout seen from the normal viewing position.



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Backshop Letters

Do you have a question about repairing or operating your trains? Do you have a problem with your trains, accessories, or layout?

For answers, e-mail Jim Barrett (jim@ogaugerr.com). Please include your phone number, city, and state. If possible, also include your work phone number so Jim can respond directly to you, as it may be several months before your question and his answer appear in the magazine. If you are unable to e-mail Jim, you may write to him at OGR Publishing, 33 Sheridan Rd., Poland, OH 44514.

My 12-year-old grandson is suggesting we build a postwar Lionel layout around the Christmas tree this year. I would like to elevate the layout about 1-1/2" off the floor and then raise the tree about 8" from the top of the layout. We would like to have it no larger than 4' x 8' with two or more lines.

Have you seen any layout plans in your travels or can you suggest a layout in FasTrack that would model the 1950s? I plan on using the latest transformer by Lionel to power the layout. Did Lionel ever produce a dealer's display for Christmas in a 4' x 8'?

—Bill Farrell

I don't know about a Christmas theme specifically, but there were certainly lots of Lionel store layouts in a 4' x 8' design. On the Internet, you can search for "Lionel 4' x 8' store layouts" and you will find a lot of information on different 4' x 8' layouts that you can build. Many of these will not fit your goal, but you can still get lots of ideas. —Jim

I somehow misplaced your article on replacement of the TMCC remote antenna. The folks at an electronics supply store I visited told me they do not have anything like

it. I was surprised to hear that. Maybe the remote antenna can only go by a catalog number. Would you help me on this?

—Frank Nardo

I had to go back and look up the article. It's amazing how much you forget over a short time! It was Radio Shack part number 270-1401. —Jim

I have a 30-year-old Lionel No. 8100 MPC-era N&W J that I just bought a few months ago. The engine runs great. I put some of that Red n' Tacky brand grease in the gearbox, lubed the motor, and installed new brushes. What concerns me is the noise the engine makes. Although it sounds very rough, it doesn't seem like the motor is straining. It runs very smoothly, and with all five passenger cars, it draws about 4.7 to 5 amps on my Z-4000. I replaced the grease on the armature. Visually, everything seems good to my untrained eye. The only other clue I can give you is if you have ever been around an electric ice cream freezer, it makes the same sound those motors do.

—Brad

What you are up against is called "cogging,"

which is a natural noise that some three-pole Lionel AC armatures make. That is particularly true of the one in your 8100 steam locomotive. I've never found anything that can reduce that noise, which is not, I'm sure, what you wanted to hear. The tip-off to me is that 4.7-amp to 5-amp reading on the ammeter. That is a relatively high current flow for today's trains. Even my F3 A-B-A MTH diesels with five lighted cars and equipped with four DC can motors doesn't pull anything like that much current. DC motors have up to eight poles per motor, which is why they run so much smoother. The current is what makes that particular three-pole AC motor so noisy. I have a similar MPC-era AC electric motor steam engine that has the same annoying noise problem. —Jim

My grandson and I are building a 36" tall office building from scratch for our O gauge layout. I would like to purchase some windows. Is there a building parts supplier?

—Harry Mann

Grandt Line comes to mind. Go to www.grandtline.com and check out the website. It has literally an infinite supply of styles to choose from. —Jim

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I need some help with my installation of a panel-mounted AC ammeter for my O gauge layout. I have a Lionel KW transformer set up to run two trains on two different tracks. I did a test by wiring the meter directly to the track, and the meter went off the chart. Do I need a current shunt? Someone told me I don't. If that is the case, then there must be another way to wire the meter.

—Jerry

What you want to do is attach the wires to the ammeter in line between AC common and between the transformer and the outside rails of the track. That will let you measure the flow of electricity from the transformer to the tracks. —Jim

Thanks for your article a few months back describing the use of Lionel uncoupling magnets in GarGraves track. I bought some and have installed three to date. What a great idea!

—Phil Bender

I have about 40 of these installed on my layout and constantly look for more locations. I've noticed that some manufacturers' cars are really problematic when it comes to their couplers operating smoothly. What I do is devote a Z-4000

handle to the uncoupling magnets as well as all accessory power, which you can vary right from the Z-4000 or DCS remote, so you can bump the voltage all the way up to 22 volts if necessary. That won't damage the magnets as long as you don't lean on the button for any great length of time.

I've also seen where some of the magnets are actually a couple of thousandths of an inch taller (or thicker) depending on how much they have been heated in the past. As a result, I've used some 1/32" plastic shim stock under the magnets to adjust them up if needed. It becomes a constant game of how high you can space the magnet and still not have it catch on low-hanging uncoupler buttons. —Jim

Some time ago you published two articles, I think, about how to download a sound/control system from the MTH website into an upgrade kit installed in a locomotive. Can you tell me which issues they might be in?

—John Clary

Hmm. They might be my "Backshop" articles in Runs 215 and 216. Those articles dealt with using the DCS Loader for such things as updating the TIU and remote with newer versions of the DCS code. Or it might also be in Runs 224 and 225, which dealt with installing upgrades

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in steam and diesel engines. Are you possibly thinking about our OGR Backshop PS2/DCS conversion video? That video included installing the downloaded sound set into the upgraded steam and diesel engines. —Jim

Here is a tip you may already know about. I have a Lionel RailSounds II tender. It's probably 10 years old or older. The tender has a magnet mounted to one of the axles and a Hall Effect sensor that picks up the magnetic field as the magnet rotates with the axle.

On several occasions the chuffing sound would stop, and I would end up fooling around with this magnet sensor arrangement. I've replaced the sensor and adjusted the proximity of the magnet to the sensor but found that the problem had nothing to do with the sensor and its location. It turned out that the magnet had simply lost its magnetism. I guess this can happen in several different ways: age, shock to the magnet, and so forth. The last time it happened, I was cleaning the wheels with a wire brush on my Dremel motor tool, and sure enough that was all it took. The chuff stopped working. The wire brush had knocked out the magnetic field. So for \$12.00 you can get a new axle from Lionel, and it will start

working again. My lesson learned—no Dremels!

—Steve

A good tip for all of us! Thanks. —Jim

I enjoyed your pictures and comments on possible methods for managing cable and wire on a layout. I want to share a method that I found to be very simple and also low in cost. I use plastic conduit clamps that can be bought at a home improvement or hardware store. These clamps are typically gray in color and come in popular sizes such as 1/3", 3/4", 1", 1-1/4", and 1-1/2". They are typically under a dollar per bag, and the quantity varies with the size: more in the small bag, less in the large bag. I simply connect them at one end only with a screw and pull the wire through or even drop it in the top by pulling the top out just a little. I used this method for years when building radio stations. It's a cheap wire management method.

—Rich Redmond

Yet another great idea from a reader! Thanks.


—Jim Barrett

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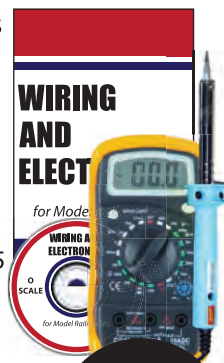
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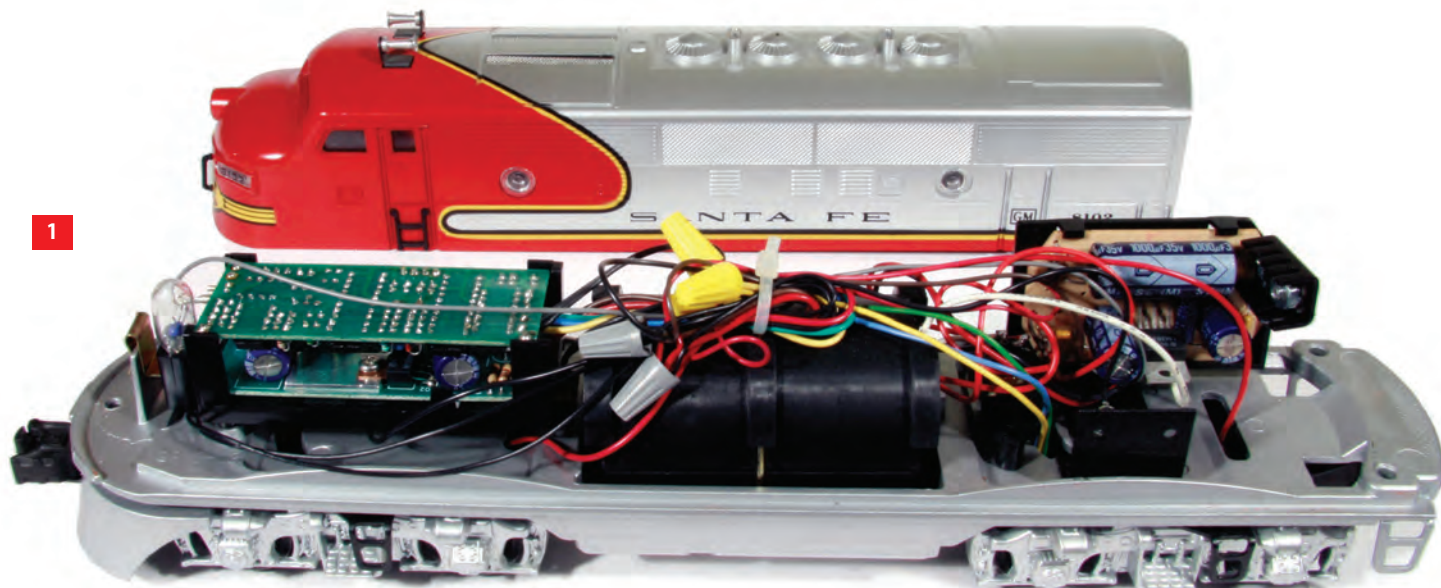
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Sound Delight

One of the many diverse reasons for being in the O gauge railroading hobby is the re-creation of scenes or actions from the past or present that are pleasant, fascinating, or even thrilling. This personal immersion into the hobby usually involves trains and physical scenes blended together into a visual presentation that many hobbyists enjoy.

For me, the trains are everything—the total sum of the hobby. As a lad, I built a layout with scenery for my Lionel O27 train, but I discovered that I enjoyed watching my train more on the unfinished section of the layout than on the finished portions. Why? Because the train was always in full view, it approached or departed my vantage point with no

scenery, structures, vehicles, or even sign posts in the way. Upon my return to the O gauge hobby after a hiatus of nearly four decades, the trains were still the visual focal point for me.

I have always enjoyed and even sought out the sounds of real reciprocating and turbine engines. The bigger and more powerful they were, the more their sounds thrilled me. On evenings and weekends, I would rush to trackside vantage points just to listen to the exhaust bark from a restored Southern Pacific 2-8-2 ascending the hill east of Burnet, Texas, or the diesel cacophony of multiple Union Pacific Dash 8s climbing the westbound grade out of Taylor. I have also enjoyed listening to vinyl and CD recordings of steam locomotive sounds for over 40 years. So with the advent of Lionel RailSounds in the early 1990s, my O gauge trains took on a whole new dimension and means for enjoyment. They were no longer just a visual experience that I could enjoy whenever I wanted. They could now be an audible one, too.



RailSounds

My first exposure to RailSounds was the 8100 Santa Fe F3 A-B-A with the high-tech electronics mounted in the dummy A unit (Photo 1). Here was a locomotive that played rather realistic-sounding solid-state electronic recordings of the diesel prime mover, horn, and bell. A magnetic pickup in one truck on the dummy A unit sensed the motion of the locomotive and thereby revved up the prime mover sound or returned it to idle, depending on whether the locomotive started moving or stopped. In keeping with toy train tradition, pressing the appropriate button on the transformer triggered the sound of the air horn or bell. This rudimentary sound system beat hands-down anything that preceded it, but control of the diesel revs up or down was equally rudimentary and lacked the behavior of a real F3.

A steam version of RailSounds was also offered, but I never owned or got to play with an engine so equipped. Those that I did see and especially hear at Lionel dealers were rather neat, but their prices put a chill on any interest I had in them.

RailSounds II

RailSounds II appeared soon after the original RailSounds, but with much-improved sound recordings, especially those of steam locomotives. But the high-tech sound generator installed in a dummy diesel, tender, or boxcar was still pulled around a layout by a locomotive with 1930s technology. Regardless, the first time I heard RailSounds II, I had to have it. I never got a complete steam locomotive, but I did eventually acquire a 2426RS, which was a die-cast replica of the postwar 2426 tender equipped with RailSounds II (Photo 2). It replaced the moribund Mighty Sounds of Steam tender behind my well-worn Lionel 786 Hudson. The first time I ran my new sound tender with the Hudson, the heavy and hollow metallic sound of the steam exhaust put goose bumps on my arms—it was that realistic. The magnetic speed sensor on one truck synchronized the

chuff rate reasonably close to the rotation of the engine's tall drivers.

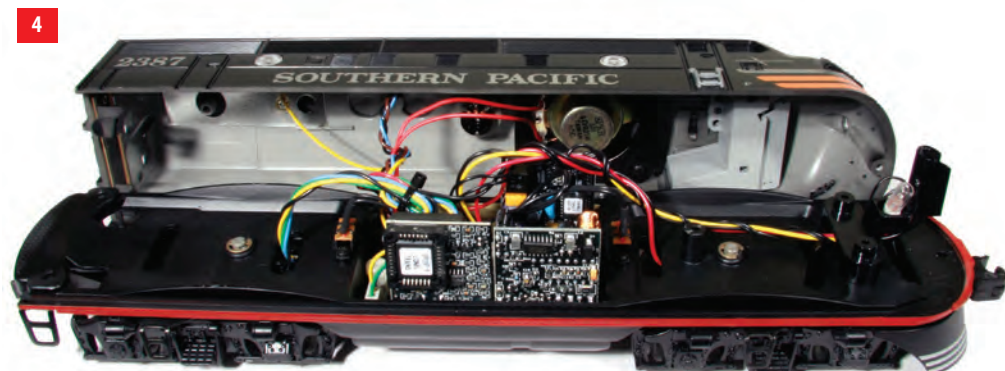
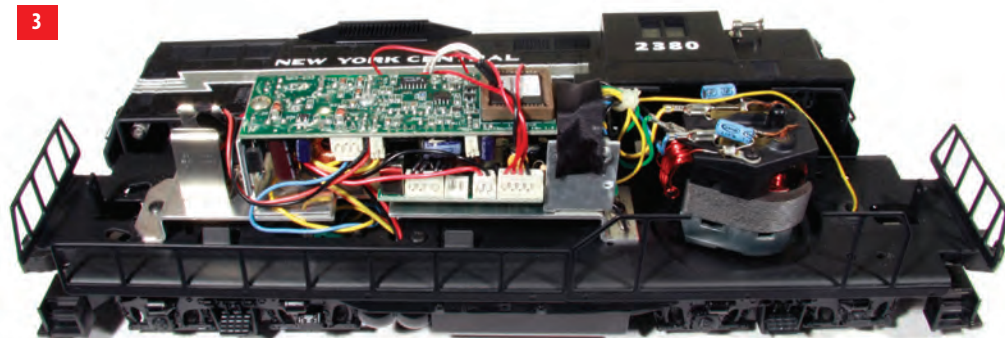
RailSounds 2.5

The breakthrough in sound and locomotive control happened in 1996 with the arrival of TMCC and RailSounds 2.5 packaged in the 2380 NYC (Photo 3). The first night I set up the new TMCC system and ran the NYC Geep was pure excitement. The sounds of the EMD 567 prime mover with the accompanying movement of the engine emulated a real diesel as it shuttled cars in an out of sidings. All that seemed to be missing was that distinct bouquet of hot steel and oil mixed with diesel exhaust and perhaps a whiff of green vegetation crushed against the rails. As a side note, I soon bought a second 2380 NYC GP9 in addition to a pair of 2380 SP Geeps that were on the market at the same time. The exhaust and characteristic gear whine recorded from the real EMD 567 was mechanical music, and with two or more Lionel Geeps in a TMCC lash-up, starting a train into motion or bringing it to a stop was a symphony of diesel power.

Technically, the RailSounds 2.5 board set connected electrically via a single-wire serial communication link to the Lionel Command Reverse Unit, or LCRU, which was the first-generation TMCC receiver and engine controller. As a result, the RailSounds 2.5 system performed much more realistically than the previous systems. However, diesel RailSounds versions 2.5 through 5 had only idle plus three throttle settings instead of the eight on real diesel locomotives. On the 2380s, a cam and a microswitch mounted on one truck sensed the engine's motion in both command and conventional operation, which helped to control the prime mover's rev sounds. After initial start and automatic rev-up to the first throttle setting, increasing or decreasing RailSounds 2.5 revs in response to throttle changes was a manual operation via keystrokes on the CAB-1 remote.

RailSounds 4.0

From my perspective as a ferroequine audiophile, or iron horse sound nut, RailSounds 4.0 was the quantum leap in



sound fidelity, realism, and enjoyment. This release also introduced the modular electronics that Lionel has used until recently.

On steam locomotives, the new DynaChuff automatically increased or decreased the intensity of the steam exhaust chuff in

response to opening or closing the throttle on the CAB-1. Additionally, the exhaust note changed to more staccato and softer chuffs as the engine speed increased, which simulated the hogger increasing the cutoff to the cylinders.

An echo overtone carried with each blast of the steam whistle or air horns brought back reveries of those simple days of yesteryear...or for that matter, yesterday or even earlier today. RailSounds whistle and horn recordings have always been excellent, but to me, they seem to get better with each successive version.

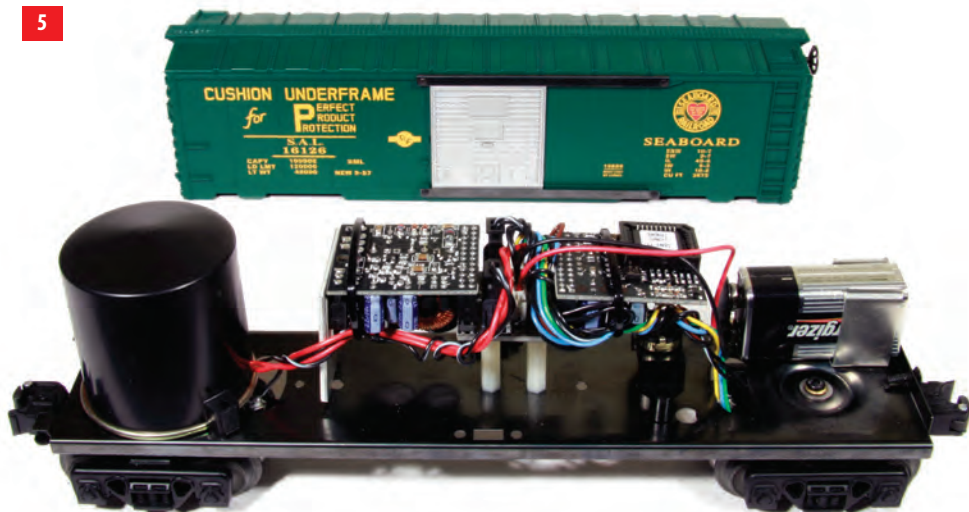
With diesels running version 4.0, increasing or decreasing the throttle caused the sounds of the prime mover revs to immediately and realistically speed up or slow down. Additionally, a later release of RailSounds 4.0 saw the introduction of a new recording that captured the distinctive bark of the EMD 567 prime mover exhaust. Real 567s were built before EMD employed turbochargers on its diesels, so their exhaust raucously exited the engine heads straight out through the twin stacks on top of the locomotive. The first I knew of the new recording of the 567 was with arrival of my then new Lionel 2387 SP black widow F3 (Photo 4).

Additionally, the traditionally sized Seaboard boxcar equipped with RailSounds II (Photo 5) gave steam sounds to my postwar steamers such as the 736, 2046, and so forth, which I ran frequently until a few years ago. Now these engines spend most of their time inside my display case of postwar Lionel locomotives.

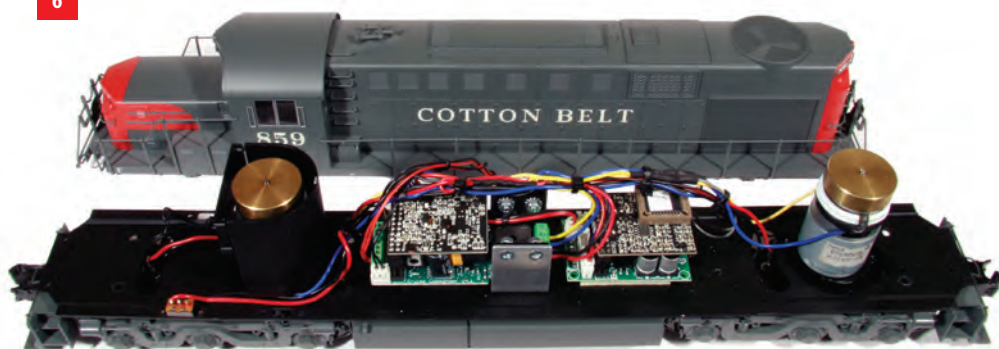
Although Lionel superseded RailSounds 4.0 in its own products, the version 4.0 sound recordings and board sets are still widely used under license in locomotives from Atlas O, Sunset/3rd Rail, and Weaver. A favorite is my Atlas O Trainman RSD15 in Cotton Belt livery (Photo 6).

Several vendors over the past decade offered aftermarket TMCC and sound upgrades using RailSounds 4.0 recordings and boards under license from Lionel. Currently, The Electric RR Co. is

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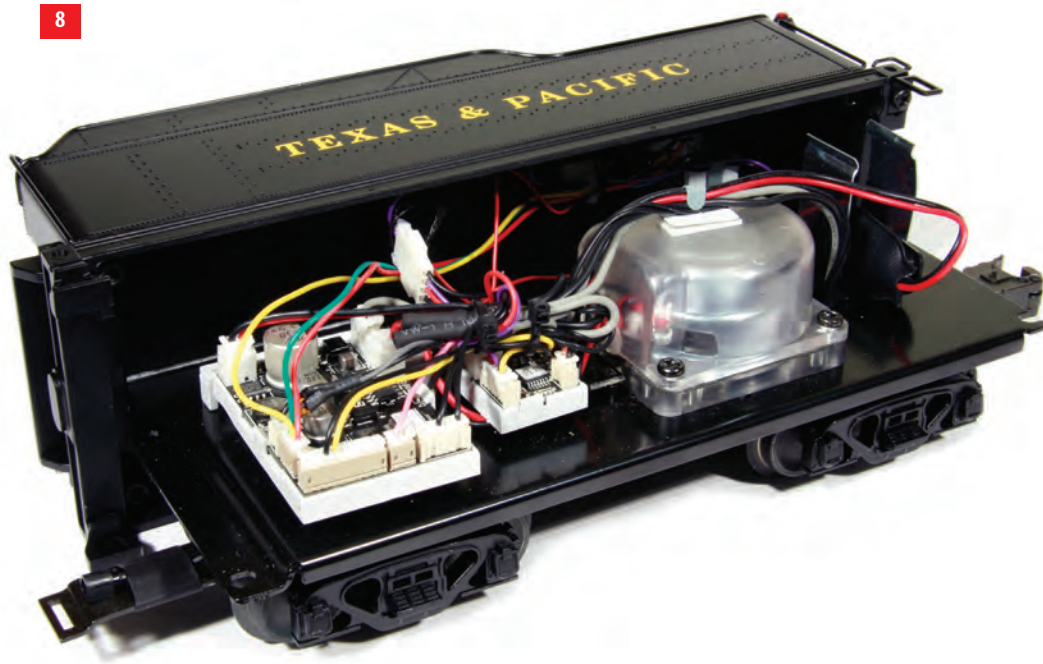


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the only supplier of aftermarket TMCC and RailSounds upgrade kits. As a side note, the RSD15 has also been upgraded to Cruise Commander speed control from Electric RR.

RailSounds 5

With version 4.0, I didn't think the RailSounds system and my audio enjoyment of it could get any better. Well, they both did. Introduction of RailSounds 5 further refined the DynaChuff feature in steam locomotives, to say nothing of more intense sounds emanating from the new dual Fat Boy speakers. With the engine stopped, pressing the Brake button on the CAB-1 caused the steam exhaust chuffs to be very soft as the engine began moving. As the throttle opened, the exhaust chuffs got stronger and louder. Or if the throttle was not opened past the point that got the engine into motion, the engine drifted realistically and effortlessly to the sounds of soft chuffs. Although I've owned my Lionel SP GS1 equipped with RailSounds 5 for several years (Photo 7), I still revel in its sound as it drifts through the crossover switches between my layout's two main lines. This engine's only letdown is its two chuffs per driver revolution, as were most of the RailSounds steamers up through version 5. In fact, a surprising number of pre-Legacy RailSounds steam locomotives had only one chuff per driver turn. Ugh!

Legacy RailSounds

Introduction of the Legacy Command system and the accompanying Legacy RailSounds put the sounds of diesel and steam locomotives into a whole new dimension—two of them actually. With the Christmas arrival of my new T&P USRA 2-8-2 (Photo 8), I can now enjoy both dimensions whenever I please. One is the highly touted set of features available with the Legacy system and its CAB-2 controller, including the prototypical four steam exhaust chuffs for each turn of the drivers. The quilling whistle is a ball, and the laboring exhaust with the brake slider set to high drag with the throttle wide open is...wow! The recordings of both steam and diesel locomotives are better than ever, and I find them not only pleasurable but also exciting.

The other dimension is DynaChuff using the original TMCC system and its CAB-1 controller with a Legacy steamer. Several Legacy RailSounds features are not available under TMCC and CAB-1 control, so I'm pleased that Lionel kept the fine sound feature of DynaChuff for the TMCC operator. Although the Mikado has only one speaker with a bass reflex chamber in its tender, the exhaust note is a heavy bark, and the whistle is crisp and shrill like a real one. The exhaust note is full at engine start and gets heavier as I ease the CAB-1 throttle open to slowly and


realistically accelerate the train. The sound is awesome! A special audio treat is when the engine runs parallel and close to one wall of my train room. With the engine moving and accelerating at a slow rate, the exhaust sound reverberates off the wall. It's great!

With the USRA Mike, I no longer have to press the brake button just before starting the engine to select soft chuffs as the engine begins moving. This TMCC-only DynaChuff feature is now automatic at every start of the engine. It was selectable in previous releases of Legacy locomotives I reviewed and returned to Lionel, such as the NKP Berkshire, USRA 0-8-0, and Vision Line 700E Hudson. My guess is that Lionel needed the memory space in the sound chip for the proliferation

of two-way radio and other dialogs featured in Legacy RailSounds. Although a number of hobbyists enjoy these dialogs, I have subzero interest in them. Also much to my listening pleasure, the progressively softening of the exhaust chuffs as the engine slows to a stop is still in the DynaChuff repertoire and is about as real sounding as it comes.

For diesels equipped with Legacy RailSounds, the big news is the prototypical eight levels of prime mover revs plus improved sounds for the brakes. And yes, the horns on diesels can be accurately modulated with the quilling control on the CAB-2. I had a ball with the sounds when I reviewed the Vision Line Genset and, before that, the Legacy GP9. Speaking of the Genset, the sounds of the three Caterpillar gensets were fabulous and accurate, too.

In several phone conversations with Lionel Chief Technology Officer Jon Zahornacky, I learned of even more improvements, both hardware and software, that may be forthcoming with Legacy RailSounds. For ferroequine audio-philos, *this* is our moment.

In our next issue, I'll relate to some more sound delights that I have enjoyed from MTH and others. 

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Scheduled Meets

March 10, 2012

RINGGOLD, GA – TCA Dixie Div. Toy Train Meet, The Catoosa Colonnade, Old Mill Rd. Members 9a, Public 9:30a-1p, Adm: \$7. Info: Bill Stitt (423) 894-1284 or George Blatz (423) 842-6094.

ST. LOUIS, MO – Boeing Employees RR Club Meet, Greensfelder Recreation complex at Queeny Park, 550 Wiedman Rd. 10a-3p, Adm: \$3, tables \$15. Info: Wayne Schimmel, 733 Hwy. Y, Winfield, MO 63389-2206, (636) 668-6313 (after 6p), wmschimmel@gmail.com.

ANNAPOLIS, MD – WB&A Chapter TCA Annual Train Show, Armory, 18 Willow St. 9a-2p, Adm: \$5, under 12 & military free. Info: Art Tate (410) 766-9100 or annapolismet@wbachaptertca.com.

March 10-11, 2012

MATTOON, IL – Cross County Model RR Days, Cross County Mall, Exit 190B, I-75. Sat. 10a-9p, Sun. 12p-5p, Adm: Free. Info: Cindy (217) 258-8513, john@coryvillestation.com.

ROCHESTER, NY – Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, Monroe County Fair & Expo Center, 2695 E. Henrietta Rd. 10a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: (630) 279-4087, staff@greenbergshows.com or www.greenbergshows.com.

March 11, 2012

NILES, OH – Youngstown Model Railroad Club Train & Model RR Flea Market. McMenamy's Banquet Hall, 325 Youngstown-Warren Rd. 10a-3:30p, Adm: \$5, tables \$20. Info: Jim Pope (330) 547-3614 or Ed Williams (330) 539-4786, www.ymra.org.

ALTOONA, PA – Alto Model Train Museum Assoc. Train Show, Blair County Conv. Center, 1 Conv. Blvd. 9a-2p, Adm: \$4, under 12 free. Info: Ron Kennedy (814) 696-9671, ronjane@atlanticbb.net or Greg Miller (814) 695-3246, gmamflyer@verizon.net.

SEVERNA PARK, MD – National Capital Div. TTOS Train & Toy Show, Earleigh Hgts. Firehouse, Rte. 2 & Earleigh Hgts. Rd. 9a-2p, Adm: \$5, under 12 free w/adult. Info: Bill Dyson (301) 621-9728 or Al Toone (301) 906-9354.

TOLEDO, OH – Train & Toy Show, Premier Complex, 4480 Heatherdowns Blvd. 11a-4p, Adm: \$6, early birds \$8, 12 & under free w/adult. Info: Randy Ramsey (419) 215-4181, trainmasters@bex.net.

March 16-18, 2012

LOMBARD, IL – O Scale Meet, Westin Lombard Center, 70 Yorktown Center. Sat. 9a-5p, Sun. 9a-2p, Adm: \$20 for entire weekend. Large 2-rail show. Info: Melissa (630) 745-7600 or www.marchmeet.net.

March 17-18, 2012

KIRTLAND, OH – NMRA Railfest All-Gauge Train Show 2012, Lakeland Community College, 7700 Clocktower Dr. 10a-4p, Adm: \$7, \$12 two-day pass, family \$12. Info: (440) 357-8890, railfest@mcr5.org or www.railfest.org.

WILMINGTON, MA – Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, Shriners Auditorium, 99 Fordham Rd. 10a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: (630) 279-4087, staff@greenbergshows.com or www.greenbergshows.com.

FAIRHOPE, AL – 20th Annual Model Train Show, Kindergarten Center, 100 S. Church St. Sat. 9a-5p, Sun. 10a-4p, Adm: \$2, kids free, active duty military, police & firefighters free. Info: Herb Kern (251) 660-1659 or dxlndkern@aol.com.

March 18, 2012

NEW BERLIN, WI – Lionel RR Club Toy Trains All-Gauge Swap Meet, Clarion Hotel Airport, 5311 S. Howell Ave., Milwaukee. 8a-12p, Adm: \$4, under 13 free. Info: Art (414) 764-5375.

FARMINGTON HILLS, MI – Redford Model RR Club Trainorama, Costick Community Center, 28600 Eleven Mile Rd. 10a-4p, Adm: \$5, under 12 free w/adult. Info: Pierre Willmeret, (734) 953-2546 or pwillmeret@gmail.com.

March 24, 2012

HOMOSASSA, FL – Regal Railways Model Train & Swap Meet Toy Show, Lions Club, 3705 Indiana, Terrace & Homosassa Trl. 10a-3p, Adm: \$4, 12 & under free. Info: Joe (727) 244-1341 or www.regalrailways.com.

March 24-25, 2012

WILMINGTON, DE – Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, Chase Center on the Riverfront, 815 Justison St. 10a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: (630) 279-4087, staff@greenbergshows.com or www.greenbergshows.com.

March 25, 2012

WALLINGFORD, CT – Classic Shows LLC Train & Toy Show, Zandri's Stillwood Inn, 1074 S. Colony Rd. 9a-2p, Adm: \$5, 12 & under free w/adult. Info: (203) 926-1327, www.ClassicShowsLLC.com.

FRANKLIN SQUARE, NY – RR Lines Train & Toy Show, 1132 Hempstead Turnpike. 8a-1p, Adm: \$5, under 12 free w/adult. Info: John Koenig (516) 486-6658 or Jerry Nappi (516) 384-4566.

DALTON, OH – C J Trains Train & Toy Show, Buckeye Event Center, 624 Henry St. 10a-4p, Adm: \$5, 12 & under free, tables \$25. Info: Jon Ulbright, 941 Buchholz Dr., Wooster, OH 44691 (after 6p), cathijon@sssnet.com or www.cjtrains.com.

KINGSTON, NY – Model Train & Hobby Show, Murphy Midtown Center, 467 Broadway. 10a-4p, Adm: \$6, under 12 \$1. Info: (845) 481-4198 or kingstontmts@aol.com.

MT PLEASANT, MI – Model Train Show, Finch Fieldhouse on CMU campus. 11a-4p, Adm: \$4, 10 & under free. Info: Larry Lewis (989) 386-6987.

March 31-April 1, 2012

EDISON, NJ – Greenberg's Train & Toy, NJ Conv. & Expo Center, 97 Sunfield Ave. 10a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: (630) 279-4087, staff@greenbergshows.com or www.greenbergshows.com.

April 1, 2012

FARMINGTON, NY – Central Operating Lines Ltd. All-Gauge Swap Meet, Bingo Hall, 1055 Portion Rd. 8:30a-2:30p, Adm: \$4, under 12 free w/adult. Info: Michael Iorio, 382 Hollbrook Rd., Ronkonkoma, NY 11779, (516) 314-6499.

April 14, 2012

DELAND, FL – 39th Railfair, Volusia County Fairgrounds, Tommy Lawrence Bldg. 9a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, (703) 536-2954, www.gserr.com or rrshows@aol.com.

April 14-15, 2012

TIMONIUM, MD – Great Scale Model Train Show, Maryland State Fair Grounds, Exit 17E from I-83. Sat. 9a-4p, Sun. 10a-4p, Adm: \$9, under 15 free, family \$18, good for both days. Info: Howard Zane, (410) 730-1036, www.gsmts.com or hzane1@verizon.net.

April 15, 2012

HAWLEY, PA – Model Train Show & Sale, Hawley Fire Dept. 9a-3p, Adm: \$3, under 12 free w/adult. Info: Bill Delling (570) 226-3206 or hawleyfd@ptd.net.

April 21, 2012

BROOKSVILLE, FL – Model Train Toy Show & Swap Meet, Elks Lodge, 14494 Cortez. 10a-3p, Adm: \$4, 12 & under free. Early Bird Adm: \$6, 9a-10a. Info: Joe (727) 244-1341, www.regalrailways.com.

COLUMBUS, OH – 51st Buckeye Model Train & RR Artifacts Show, Ohio Expo Center, Lausche Bldg. 9a-4p, Adm: \$6, under 12 free. Info: Gordon Hartranft, 58 Creed Circle, Campbell, OH 44405, (330) 755-1914, nlion02@aol.com or www.gserr.com.

ST. CLOUD, MN – Granite City Train Show, National Guard Armory, 1710 Veterans Dr. 10a-3p, Adm: \$5, 12 & under free. Info: (320) 255-0033, edwardolson@cloudnet.com, www.granitecitytrainshow.com.

May 12, 2012

ALLENTOWN, PA – Great Lehigh Valley Train Meet, Merchants Square Mall, 1901 S. 12th St. 10a-4p, Adm: \$5, tables \$20. Info: www.lehighvalleytrainmeet.com.

May 19, 2012

PINELLAS PARK, FL – Regal Railways Model Train Show & Swap Meet, Knights of Columbus, 7177 58th St. North. 10a-3p, Adm: \$4, 12 & under free. Info: Joe (727) 244-1341 or www.regalrailways.com.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – 17th Annual RR Fair, State Fairgrounds, School Arts Bldg. 9a-4p, Adm: \$6, under 12 free. Info: Bryan Moseley, P.O. Box 6583, Albuquerque, NM 87197, (505) 345-0657, mossman@zianet.com or www.gserr.com.

JACKSONVILLE, FL – TCA Train Show, Hendricks Day School, 1824 Dean Rd. 11a-4p, Adm: \$5, under 12 free. Info: Jeff Sawyer (904) 891-7395.

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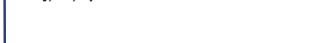
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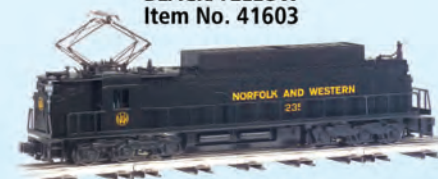
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