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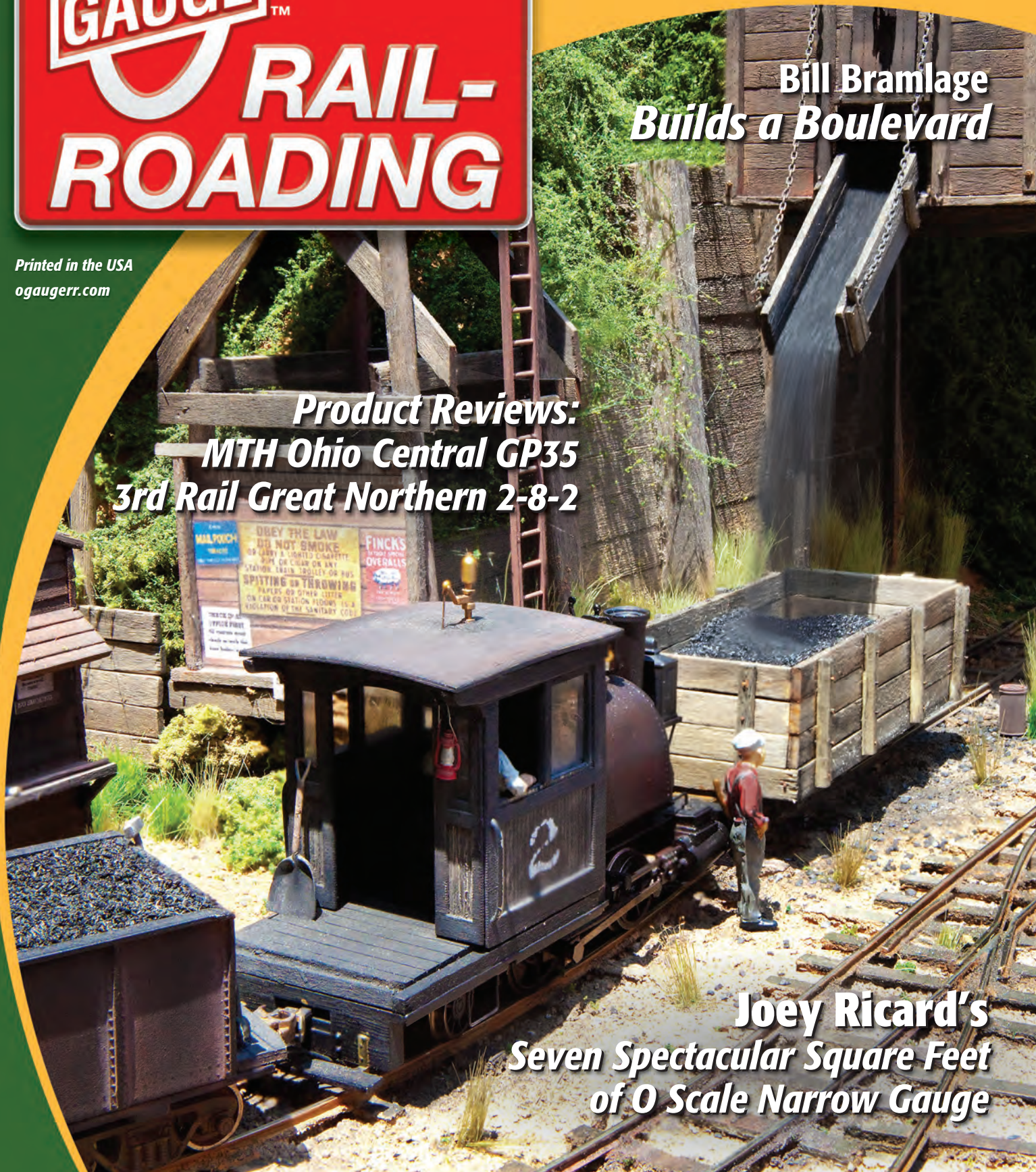
February / March 2014

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*Builds a Boulevard*

**Product Reviews:**  
**MTH Ohio Central GP35**  
**3rd Rail Great Northern 2-8-2**




**Joey Ricard's**  
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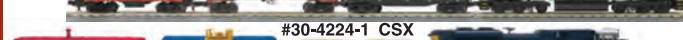
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30-67710 LONG ISLAND RR 60" FULL VISTA DOME





# An Open Letter from Steve (Ross) Brenneisen

Hello everyone, Steve Brenneisen here from Ross Custom Switches. One of the first questions I am asked when someone is trying to figure out what track and switches to use on their empire is "Okay Steve, why should I get it from Ross?" Some folks think I am going to go into a list of what is wrong with Atlas or MTH switches (our main competitors) but I am not here to bash the other guys product. I do know, however, that after 41 years of building these things we are doing alot right. You may also ask why I don't mention GarGraves and that is because we have more of a synergistic relationship with them than a competitive one. I originally started building Ross switches to mate with GarGraves flex track, which was then, and still is, the standard of the O gauge world in flex (yep, you can bend it to any radius). Our sectional track (not bendable) and switches mate right up using the same track pins.

Our main objectives at RCS are to make switches (and track) that work as flawlessly as possible with all O gauge equipment, regardless of manufacturer. We have worked hard to get there and have made a lot of changes through the years to make that possible. Because it is relatively easy for us to make a change in our hand-built switches and track, we can keep up with innovative new ideas and modern equipment needs. Believe it or not, train manufacturers have few or no industry standards to which they build their equipment. It is a real challenge to make switches that are able to handle all the various locomotives and cars that are out there these days, but we do it!

Secondly, we want them to look as good as possible. Now I happen to lean towards brunettes, but would never tell someone that blondes are not attractive, too, so to each his own. However, most real railroad ties are made of wood infused with creosote, so ours are made of wood and are black just like creosote (not brown).

Thirdly, we want to, and do, make our products right here in the USA in our Connecticut shop. Now our aforementioned competitors are made in China and that alone does not make them inferior. It does make it hard to make improvements and changes though and that's where we shine (see goal #1). It also can make product hard to get, and as of this writing (the fall of 2013) at least one of our Chinese made friends are having difficulty getting product at all. Not something you want to hear if you are a layout builder! We are making our ALWAYS available track and switches right here in your back yard. That means your money stays right here in your back yard, and that is a real plus for America and the families that the guys who work here are responsible for.

Finally we make 54 different switches and crossings, and 14 different radii of track, along with straight track, too. No one else comes close! Here is the score;

(From websites Sept. 2013)

MTH switches and crossings....8.....track radii...4 (ScaleTrax)

Atlas switches and crossings....21....track radii...9

Ross Custom Switches and crossings....54...track radii...14

(Atlas will mate with Ross using regular Atlas rail joiners. ScaleTrax does not easily mate with either)

As you can see, in sports terms, those numbers add up to a real butt kickin! Absolutely no one but **Ross** gives you the variety and the chance to do everything the real railroads do. And another one of the real advantages of **Ross** is that it is EASY to cut so you have even more versatility! You are not bound by the constraints that some other track "systems" put on you. Our steel rail works with Magna-Traction too, the others above do not.

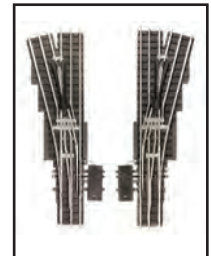
Last but not least, don't forget to check your local dealer to see if they carry **RCS**, or if you prefer, call us... 800-331-1395 ...and talk to a real live person who actually builds our track and switches (9am-4pm and/or from 11-4 Eastern most Mondays-Fridays, me.) We can answer any questions on layout building or design that you may have, and oh yeah, take an order too!

Or email for a catalog; [steve@rossswitches.com](mailto:steve@rossswitches.com) or check out our website: [rossswitches.com](http://rossswitches.com)

Nice talking with you, and Happy Railroading!



Steve



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#### **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 Sales Manager**

Alan Arnold  
adman@ogaugerr.com

#### **Advertising Production Manager**

Don Pedicini, Jr.  
don@ogaugerr.com

#### **Design & Layout / Pre-Press**

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

#### **Subscription Manager**

Linda Melvin  
linda@ogaugerr.com

#### **Merchandising Manager**

Cari Fanta  
cari@ogaugerr.com

#### **Section Gang**

Bill Bramlage  
John Ciccarelli  
Don McCuaig  
Alex Müller  
Jim Policastro  
Eliot Scher

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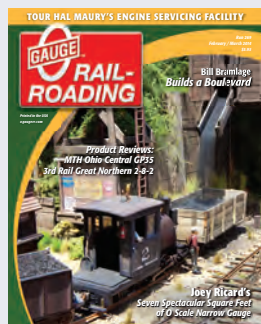
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## ON THE COVER

In this half-second time exposure, the first-shift crew is seen loading another empty with West Virginia's finest black diamonds. The tipple on Joey Ricard's Spruce Coal & Timber Railroad features live loading, and it is operated by a small hook to open and close the chute door. Joey photographed this scene on his compact On30 narrow gauge layout indoors near a window, making full use of the natural morning light.





## The Value of Our Trains

Posts frequently made on our OGR On-Line Forum lead me to believe that an inordinate number of participants in our hobby seem to be preoccupied with the future value of items in their collections. That's understandable...to a degree at least...if one regards himself or herself primarily as a collector who is focused on developing a comprehensive representation of toy trains based on a particular manufacturer, type of item, era of manufacture, or some other criterion.

But I assume, perhaps wrongly, that the vast majority of our forum members, not to mention readers of this magazine, consider themselves to be toy train *operators* first and foremost, rather than *collectors*. Of course the distinction is often blurred once one takes a look at the sizable collections self-described operators tend to amass over time. Not one to be



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unfairly pointing fingers, I certainly consider myself to be in the ranks of that de facto bit-of-both crowd, as one look inside my home would readily attest. Still, though, I regard myself to be more of an operator than a collector. That, at least, is where my main interests lie.

I also assume, again, perhaps in error, that the vast majority of us in the operator-oriented subset of the toy train hobby are not terribly worried about the future monetary value of our trains and are more focused on the nostalgic, aesthetic, and practical value they hold for us today as individual hobbyists. We recognize, understand, and accept that, in strictly monetary terms, these objects of our affection are, more often than not, worth pretty much what we willingly paid for them. If we're lucky, they may be worth considerably more in some rare instances, but more often than not they will be worth significantly less, especially if they have been played with as toy trains are meant to be.

But none of us can even hope to predict the future—no crystal balls here that I know of! That's a lesson those in many other areas of collecting have learned as well, sometimes the hard way. A recent thread on our forum posted a link to an article from *Bloomberg Businessweek* titled "Those Comics in Your Basement? Probably Worthless." In short, the article described how the vast majority of comic book collectors, some of whom had been collecting dating back a half century or more, took huge hits when they tried to sell off their collections to help finance their child's education, pay off a mortgage, or just build their retirement nest egg. Indeed, a very few who were fortunate enough to have a highly sought after and very rare issue of *Action Comics* No. 1 (Superman's first appearance) or *Batman* No. 1 reaped big rewards, but those positive outcomes are very few and very far between.


My personal feeling, based on a good number of years in the hobby and an equally good number of years in the realm of supporting the hobby industry (when I was intimately involved in helping to produce and publish collector guides) is there are lessons about "future value" in the toy train area that closely parallel

what has happened in other areas of memorabilia and artifact collecting such as comic books and baseball cards, among others.

Regardless of whether you consider yourself a collector, an operator, or a combination of both, it's important to know, understand, and accept that objects of considerable worth to you today may be seen quite differently by prospective buyers in what will likely be a smaller and more focused market in the future. Some items will have retained their value, the vast majority will have decreased in value, and very few will have appreciated to a significant degree. That's pretty much a fact of life, as I see it, in light of evolving demographics that have already impacted our and many other hobbies.

If we accept that the majority of collectors and operators today are members of the late pre-World War II and subsequent postwar periods, and if we further agree that these groups still constitute the core of both the collecting and operating segments of the hobby, it stands to reason that the best approach we as individuals can follow is to simply savor the bounty of great product that is available and to not worry overly much about the financial reward these objects might yield at some future date.

My advice has always been to just have fun with what has been offered in what I refer to as the "Platinum Age" of toy trains—a time unlike anything imagined even in the "Golden Age" description commonly applied to the postwar period when toy trains ruled the world of boys' toys. It certainly doesn't hurt to plan for the future by maintaining an up-to-date inventory that includes the prices paid but to continue to see these things as an investment in happiness and relaxation and not as a tangible investment that might be cashed in at some point for big rewards. The comic book collecting analogy fits because far too many devoted collectors held onto dreams of financial reward that were shattered by the reality of changing times in a fast-changing world.

In a world and time when it often seems that the only certainty is uncertainty, isn't it great to have a leisure activity we can turn to on a daily basis, if we care to, to provide a truly welcome and endlessly creative respite? 



## Here's how to contact us:

**PHONE: 800-980-6477**

**FAX: 330-757-3771**

**EMAIL: [info@ogaugerr.com](mailto:info@ogaugerr.com)**

**MAIL: OGR Publishing, Inc.  
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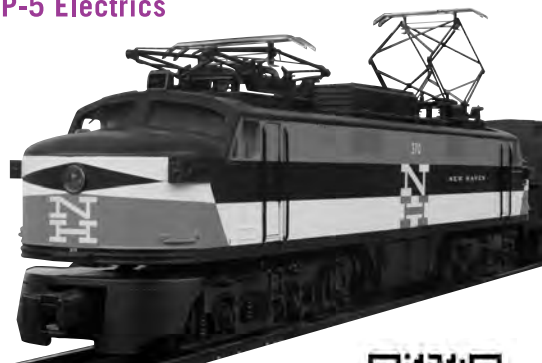
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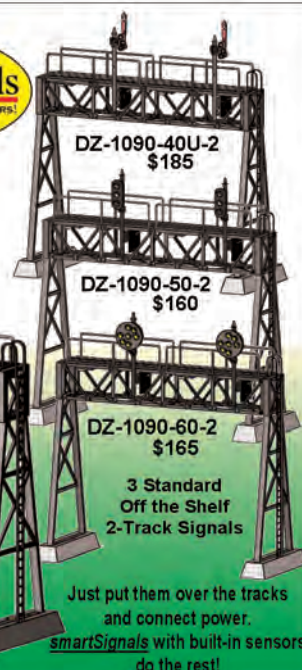


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## Product Announcements

### Worth 1,000 Words

A new Kodak billboard from Miller Engineering is the firm's second 3D billboard. The familiar Kodak film roll, like the earlier Life Saver sign, is actually a half tube mounted on the face of the billboard. This gives the billboard a whole new look. The Kodak billboard kit also comes with an extensive set of peel-and-stick overlays including quite a few names for customization, or you can make your own labels (the instructions tell you how). Only the large version is 3D. A smaller version is Miller Engineering's standard flat design. Large version (#88-0901) comes with supports. Overall size is 3-3/8" wide and 4-1/2" high. Price \$54.95 available directly from Miller Engineering, P.O. Box 282, New Canaan, CT 06840, 203-595-0619. See the full line at [www.microstru.com](http://www.microstru.com).

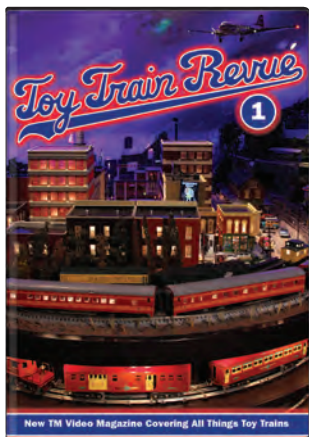


### Classy Structures



Downtown Deco has announced its first new O scale structure kits in over a year: Metals Bank along with the Sisters of Mercy Thrift Store. Both have the same basic wall castings but feature different cornices. Fire escapes are on opposite sides so they can be positioned side by side if desired. These kits feature richly detailed castings in Hydrocal, laser-cut doors and windows, distressed-looking sidewalks, and easy-to-understand assembly and painting instructions. Each structure has a 7"x 12" footprint. Metals Bank (DD50) and Sisters of Mercy Thrift Store (DD51) sell for \$119.95 each. Add \$12.00 shipping on direct orders. Contact Downtown Deco at P.O. Box 335, Conner, MT 59827, 406-821-0181, or [downtowndeco@montana.com](mailto:downtowndeco@montana.com).

### Toy Train Revue Redux



Because the content in the new *Toy Train Revue* DVD from TM Books & Video is all new, the goal is the same as it was with its first *Toy Train Revue* series, which debuted in the spring of 1991 to cover all things toy trains. That means layout stories both big and small, collections, operating tips, how to use the new control systems, layout building tips, how to fix things, and, as always, a bit of humor. The first issue in the

new series features three layouts: two hi-rail and one postwar. Thanks to special effects, viewers will also see Lionel military and space toys as they've never been seen before. In the What's New department, you'll see how to operate Lionel trains with an iPad. You'll also pay a visit to TW TrainWorx, Roger Farkash's new custom-layout building studio where he reveals a few of his mountain-making secrets. *Toy Train Revue, Part 1* provides 65 minutes of information and entertainment for \$19.99. See your hobby dealer or call 800-892-2822. For a full listing of toy train videos and other products, visit [www.tmbv.com](http://www.tmbv.com).



### Help Save the Shore

Shortly after October 2012 when New York and New Jersey were struck by Hurricane Sandy, the Atlas Model Railroad Company created a special run of "Save the Shore" freight cars to help raise funds for affected parties throughout the region. The cars included an O scale Master Line 5161 hopper (available in 2-rail and 3-rail) featuring artwork of a map silhouette of New York City, Long Island, and New Jersey and illuminated by a depiction of the 154-year-old Barnegat Lighthouse located at the northern-most tip of Long Beach Island. Representations of the dunes and grasses commonly found at the shore are also pictured. Profits from the sale of these \$79.95 MSRP cars are divided between the Empire State Relief Fund of New York and the NJ Relief Fund. The O scale version is partially sold out, but if you wish to order any remaining quantities of this car, visit the Atlas online store at [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com) or call Jerry Kimble at 800-872-2521 ext. 7118.



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## Ballast King Two from O Gauge Connection

Cut your track ballasting time by up to 90 percent with the new and improved Ballast King Two from O Gauge Connection. With an adjustable flow rate to accommodate any size ballast, this machine is suitable for all O gauge track.



It also includes adjustable side sweep brushes for different roadbed heights. The device has been specifically designed not to damage detailed or pre-painted rails. MSRP is \$229.00 plus shipping. Go to [www.ogaugeconnection.com](http://www.ogaugeconnection.com) for more information or e-mail [lionelruss@aol.com](mailto:lionelruss@aol.com).



## Just the Numbers, Please

Bachmann Trains has released two new data-only gondola cars for its On30 narrow gauge product line. One version is adorned in oxide red livery (#27297, pictured). A second version is available in black (#27298). The cars feature E-Z Mate Mark II couplers and metal wheels. MSRP is \$42.00 each. Visit your favorite hobby dealer or examine the full line of Bachmann Spectrum On30 products at [www.bachmanntrains.com](http://www.bachmanntrains.com).

## Sweet Scents

JT's Mega-Steam has introduced four exciting new scents to its extensive line of aromatic smoke fluids. Blueberry Thrill smells just like fresh-picked blueberries and will remind you of anything and everything blueberry. Campfire has the romantic smell of burning autumn leaves and is the perfect scent for wood-burning locomotives or hobo campfires. Clove Sensation is a magical spice aroma perfect for bakeries or eateries on the layout. Peppermint Pattycake appeals to the sweet tooth and has the distinct smell of America's favorite chocolate and mint candy. The new scents are in stock and available now for shipping. Price per 2 oz. dropper bottle is \$5.00 plus shipping; 8 oz. refill bottles are \$16.00 each plus shipping. To order, visit [www.megasteam.com](http://www.megasteam.com) or call 434-589-2660.





### A Crate Idea in Rolling Stock

A new O gauge flatcar with crates from Williams by Bachmann is 10" long, navigates O27 curves, and features a durable ABS plastic shell, die-cast trucks, metal wheels, operating couplers, and an attached crate load. Road names include Pennsylvania, Lehigh Valley, Seaboard, and Louisville & Nashville. MSRP is \$69.95 each. Visit your Bachmann Trains retailer, or see this and the full line of Williams by Bachmann products at [www.bachmanntrains.com](http://www.bachmanntrains.com).



### Spiff Up the Right-of-Way

Many New Products (MNP) is offering a new O scale dual-motorized track cleaning car that is ready to run with all systems on AC or DC power. Both 3-rail and 2-rail versions are available. The cleaning mechanism is housed in a Weaver 40' boxcar or reefer (multiple road names available). Features include dual high-torque geared motors, pressure sensitive cleaning discs, easy peel-and-stick pads, adjustable cleaning disc, on/off switch for easy operations, and TMCC command control capability. DCC options are also available. Price is \$184.95 plus \$12.00 shipping. To order, call 757-596-2309. For full details and specifications, visit [www.mnpinc.com](http://www.mnpinc.com) or e-mail [mnp@mnpinc.com](mailto:mnp@mnpinc.com).

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20-65119	PENNSYLVANIA 5-CAR 70" ABS PASSENGER SET (RIBBED) C-	\$279.00
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20-65172	PENNSYLVANIA 5-CAR 70" ABS PASSENGER SET (SMOOTH) M11V1	\$386.00
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20-65184	PENNSYLVANIA 5-CAR 70" ABS PASSENGER SET (SMOOTH) M11V2	\$387.00
20-65189	AMTRAK 4-CAR SCALE B-LEVEL PASSENGER SET M11V2	\$333.00
20-65194	SOUTHERN 5-CAR 70" ABS PASS SET (RIBBED) M12V1	\$387.00
20-65199	SANTA FE 5-CAR 70" ABS PASSENGER SET (RIBBED) M12V2	\$387.00
20-66049	CAL TRAIN 2-CAR BOMBARDIER PASSENGER SET C-	\$129.00
20-66051	METRO LINK 2-CAR BOMBARDIER PASSENGER SET C-	\$129.00
20-66110	ILLINOIS CENTRAL 2-CAR 70" ABS SLP/DINER PASS SET (SMOOTH) C-	\$89.00
20-6613	BALTIMORE & OHIO SLEEPER/DINER (RIBBED) C-	\$69.00
20-66138	VIA RAIL 2-CAR 70" ABS SLEEPER/DINER SET (RIBBED) C-	\$89.00
20-66141	MARC 2-CAR AMFLEET PASSENGER SET C-	\$99.00
20-66149	SOUTHERN 2-CAR 70" ABS SLEEPER/DINER PASS SET (SMOOTH) C-	\$99.00
20-66166	TRI-RAIL 2-CAR BOMBARDIER PASSENGER SET M10V2	\$198.00
20-66176	DENVER RIO GRANDE 2-CAR 70" ABS DINER/SLPR (SMOOTH) M11V1	\$145.00
20-66184	PA 2-CAR 70" ABS SLEEPER/DINER PASS SET (SMOOTH) M11V2	\$162.00
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20-66198	SANTA FE 2-CAR 70" ABS SLEEPER/DINER (RIBBED) M12V2	\$162.00
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30-6512	AMTRAK 2-CAR 0-31 SUPERLINER COACH/DINER SET C+	\$81.00
30-6513	AMTRAK SUPERLINER BUSINESS CLASS CAR C+	\$40.00
30-6514	METRO LINK 4-CAR 0-31 SUPERLINER SET C+	\$162.00
30-6515	METRO LINK 2-CAR 0-31 SUPERLINER COACH/DINER SET C+	\$81.00
30-6516	METRO LINK SUPER BUSINESS CLASS CAR C+	\$37.00
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### How would you like to show your trains and layout to your fellow O gauge railroaders?

You can take your photos using a digital camera capable of at least 3.3 megapixels set to the best JPEG image. Please send only original, unedited JPEG files. Color prints of 4"x 6" or larger are also fine. Be sure to include brief notes about the trains in the photos and any other information you'd like to share, such as the size of your layout, unique scenery, make of track, power supply or control system, and so forth.

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](mailto:editor@ogaugerr.com).

### Father and Son Project

The yard at North Tower is crowded as day quickly fades to evening on the Jackson Hole, Wyoming, O gauge layout built by Tom Masterson and his son, Christopher. The layout depicts the transition era from steam to diesel power. Still under construction, the approximately 25' x 20' multilevel U-shaped layout features two reversing and interconnecting central lines that span three levels from mountains to grade to subterranean level. Christopher took this photo, and readers will see much more of this father and son team's handiwork in a future issue.



### Roanoke Bound

Sam Hopkins has been experimenting with photographing his O gauge trains outdoors in the real world, and this shot of the renowned Norfolk & Western J #611 posed against the real Blue Ridge Mountains background is the result of one of several field trips he has taken to seek out suitable locations. Sam is working on a full article to describe how he has been approaching this type of model photography, and will reveal some lessons learned in the process.



## ***Busy Day at Nazareth Cement***

George Donald's 3-rail 0 gauge layout has evolved over a period of 14 years. The cement plant seen here was modeled after the few left operating in the eastern Pennsylvania area where George lives. He used various items for construction ranging from paper tubes to PVC pipe with balsa wood used for the flat sections. The big brown tube seen beneath the plant's name actually rotates very slowly as do the real-world tubes that crush the stone. The motive power seen in this photo is from MTH. You'll see much more of George's layout in a future issue.



## ***A Family Affair***

Tony Atkins recently completed a 3-rail 19'x 13' layout in his basement, but it was by no means a go-it-alone project. He received a whole lot of help from his in-laws, Mike and Patricia Fay. According to Tony they contributed so much to the project that it would not have been done without their help. The backdrop in this scene, for example, was hand-painted by Pat, and the overall look and feel of the layout is very much her vision. Stay tuned for more views of this splendid layout.





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Photo by George Donald



Photo by Tony Atkins



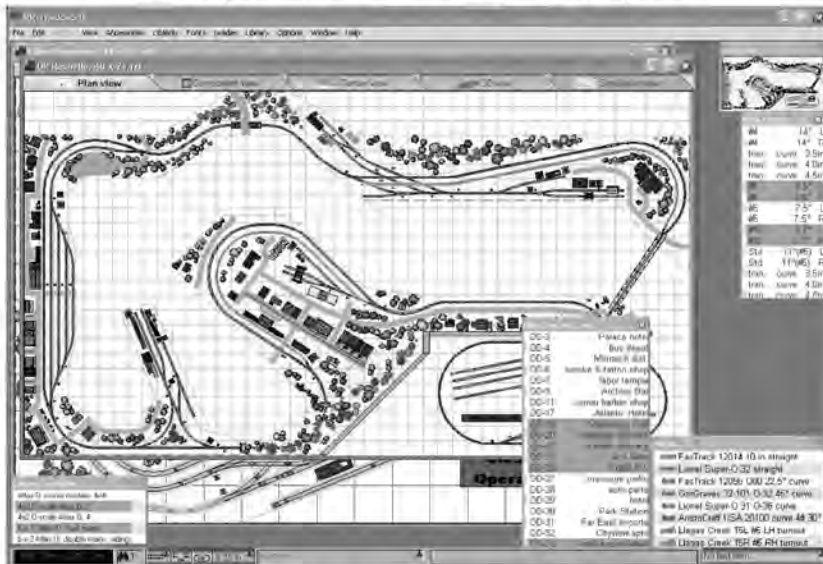


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## 3rd Rail Great Northern Class O8 Mikado

Review and Photos by George Brown

When I saw the first 3rd Rail ad for the Great Northern Class O8, I hoped I would have the opportunity to review it. Well, my hope has been realized, and the wait for the model was worth it. Aside from the O8 being an exceedingly handsome locomotive in its Glacier Park green color scheme, in Run 254 I had the pleasure of reviewing its predecessor, the 1:48 scale rendition of the Great Northern M2 Class 2-6-8-0. What fascinated me about reviewing these two locomotives was the real M2s were actually the progenitors of most of the real O8s. Additionally, and as best I could tell from my photos of the 3rd Rail M2, its tender is dimensionally identical to the one on our evaluation sample of the O8.

In a nutshell look at the history of the real locomotives, the Great Northern bought 35 Class M1 compound Mallet 2-6-8-0 types in 1909, which were converted to simple articulateds beginning in 1924 and classified as the M2. Apparently, the M2 proved to be unsatisfactory, so beginning in 1929, the road's shops rebuilt 22 of them into the huge Class O7 Mikados. The distinctive Belpaire fireboxes from the 2-6-8-0s were retained in the rebuild of the engines into 2-8-2s. The O7s were massive and powerful with unusually large 69" drivers for a freight hauler.

In the road's continuing quest for motive power, three of the largest, heaviest, and fastest 2-8-2s ever erected rolled out of Great

Northern shops in 1932, which were the Class O8s with cab numbers of 3397–3399. These were also the only locomotives built for a U.S. railroad that year, which of course was at the height of the Great Depression. The three O8s tipped the scales at over 212 tons and developed a tractive effort of nearly 78,800 pounds from a boiler pressure of 250 psi. They also had the highest axle loading for any North American steam locomotive at nearly 41 tons. Tenders for the O8s rode on 12 wheels and were huge with a capacity of 5,800 gallons of fuel oil and 17,250 gallons of water.

Apparently, the O7s lacked what was needed during the traffic crush of WWII, so beginning in 1944, the GN shops rebuilt all 22 of the O7s into O8s with new boilers from Alco and Baldwin. Cab numbers of the rebuilt O8s were 3375–3396. The cab number for our 1:48 scale model of the 3rd Rail O8 was 3376, which puts its prototype as one of the rebuilds in the Great Northern lineage of M2 to O7 to O8.

### Construction and Features

As with all 3rd Rail steam locomotives, the O8 is fabricated by hand in the orient from brass sheet and bar stock. All details not made from the appropriate sizes of wire are lost wax castings, which are labor intensive but are also cost effective in the small quantities needed for limited-production brass locomotives. In





fact, according to the 3rd Rail ad, only 70 models of the GN Class O8s were built for 3-rail operation, with an additional 70 made for 2-rail.

After unpacking and setting a 3-rail version of the O8 on my desk, I was enamored with its colorful and flawlessly applied Glacier Park paint scheme, lettering, and graphics in addition to the profuse plumbing and steam appliance details. Having painted a few multicolored locomotives, I can see where the model's four colors made decorating it a difficult yet well-executed task.

I was particularly pleased to see scale diameter pilot wheels and minimal daylight showing between the engine frame and the trailing truck. Even better, the tender sat realistically low on its trucks. Even with its realistically positioned trucks, the O8 easily negotiated the minimum recommended O54 curves on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad. Oh, 56" is the recommended minimum curve radius for the 2-rail version of the big GN 2-8-2.



### 3rd Rail GN Class 08 2-8-2 3-Rail Features and Details

- TMCC with RailSounds 4.0 under license from Lionel
- RailSounds backup battery factory installed
- ERR Cruise Commander motor driver
- 9000-series Pittman motor with flywheel
- Silent Drive mechanism with dual ball bearing gearbox
- Toothed carbon fiber drive belt
- Steel drive shaft and bronze gear
- Fan-driven smoke unit
- Soft white constant brightness headlight
- White classification lamps
- Illuminated number boards
- Scale coupler on pilot
- Wire handrails and coupler cut levers
- Coined brass drivers with steel rims
- Articulated individual rods
- Sprung driver axle journals
- Separate brake shoe hangers for drivers
- Traction tires on rear drivers
- Sprung trailing truck axle journals
- Legible builder's plates
- Wire air and steam pipes
- Cast steam, water, and air appliances
- Brass-colored separate whistle, pop-off valves, and swinging bell
- Illuminated cab with industrial green interior
- Sliding cab windows with clear glazing
- Detailed boiler backhead with painted dials and valves
- Opening cab roof vents and tender water hatch
- Sprung tender truck axle journals
- Directional backup light on tender
- Command-operated coil coupler on tender



On top of the tender's massive water tank was a large platform with a simulated wood grain etched into the brass. Other etched brass surfaces, not readily apparent in the accompanying photographs, included a nonslip walkway pattern on the pilot deck and steps, running boards, cab floor, and tender deck.

As with prior releases of 3rd Rail steam locomotives, the TMCC and RailSounds electronics ride inside the tender with a tether cable electrically connecting them to the electrical equipment in the engine. As I noted in the Features and Details sidebar, the O8 is equipped with the usual RailSounds 4.0 sound set installed under license from Lionel. This sound system uses a single speaker, which is also inside the tender. For operators who like white vapor emanating from the locomotive's smokestack, the motor-driven smoke unit emits a continuous stream with the engine under way.

A three-position slide switch under the one side of the cab selects the smoke output for operation on the lower track voltage of conventional operation or the higher track voltage of command operation. The third position shuts down the smoke unit. Another slide switch under the other side of the cab selects the steam exhaust chuff sounds at two or four per driver revolution. Microswitches actuated by cams on the second driver axle trigger the individual chuff sounds in time with the drivers. Additional controls mounted in the tender include the sound system volume control accessible from underneath the water tank and the program-run switch located under the opening water hatch.

Our model of the O8 had the newly obtainable RailSounds option from 3rd Rail. The steam exhaust chuff sounds and behavior are comparable to those of the RailSounds release 5.0, which only exists in locomotives from Lionel. This option is available for an additional \$75.00 when ordering the O8 from 3rd Rail. As I understand it, the RailSounds electronics that generate the sounds use a new hardware design that not only utilizes currently available components and manufacturing processes but also reduces production costs. I'll delve into the optional sound set in a moment.

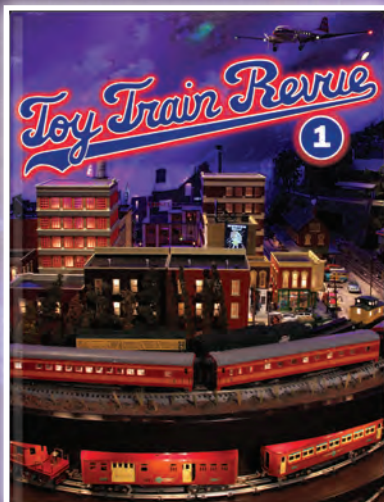
## At Trackside

On my rather small 10' x 10' layout, the eight-driver O8 had the appealing visual mass of a large and heavy locomotive without the extreme length, which worked great both visually and operationally. Because of its massive appearance, I'm certain the big 2-8-2 would be equally at home on a large layout. As I expected, the 2-8-2 was attractive pulling several different steam-era freight trains on my O72 outer loop, and surprisingly enough, the locomotive was equally attractive when plying my O54 inner loop. Regardless of the weight of the train on its drawbar, the scale model of the Great Northern Class O8 was on its game pulling trains over my two main lines, crossing between these lines via Atlas O72 turnouts, or even switching cars in and out of sidings. A Lionel ZW-L provided the track power for both conventional and command operation with a CAB-1L and Base-1L serving as the command control system. An optional control configuration consisted of a DCS remote along with a TIU connected to the Base-1L via the interconnect cable from MTH.





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As to the sounds of the steam exhaust that emanated from the new RailSounds electronics, they were fabulous in both clarity and behavior. In command operation, the intensity of the chuffs varied automatically, dramatically, and best of all realistically as governed by the setting of the throttle knob on the remote. The feature I particularly enjoyed and played with a lot was the operator-selectable soft chuffs, which emulated the engine not working hard at its initial start. Momentarily pressing the brake key on the CAB-1L remote immediately before I eased the throttle open triggered soft exhaust chuffs when the engine first started moving. These chuffs got progressively stronger

and louder as I opened the throttle, and the engine's speed also increased. At the other end of this sound mode's operating spectrum, when I eased the throttle closed, the chuffs became realistically soft as the engine slowed to a stop. For a steam-sounds nut like me, the exhaust chuffs from the new RailSounds platform were a joy to experience. I hope my next door neighbors enjoyed them as much as I did.

However, control of the whistle and bell volumes also proved similar to that of RailSounds 5.0 in that they did not respond to the usual sound volume commands from the remote. The only way to turn the whistle volume down or up was with the sound system control potentiometer located underneath the tender, which also affected the overall sound output up or down. I left the whistle sounds set for full blast throughout the review, much to the upset of our local canine population.


With the Cruise Commander motor driver, which uses electromotive feedback from the motor for speed control, the motor remained pleasantly quiet throughout its operating range. Best of all, the motor ran cool regardless of the load on the O8's drawbar.

Over a period of several weeks of frequent running, the big Glacier Park green 2-8-2 was a smooth-running locomotive capable of realistic operation at all speeds from slow crawl to highball.





## At the End of the Run

I found the rendition of the Great Northern Class O8 from 3rd Rail to be an unusually attractive locomotive to look at as well as a pleasure to run. It's a massive engine that is equally at home on a large or small layout as long as the curves are O54 or wider. I liked it...a lot! 

### Great Northern Class O8 Mikado

Retail price: \$1,399.95 at 3rd Rail or 3rd Rail dealers

800-373-7245; [www.3rdrail.com](http://www.3rdrail.com)

### 3rd Rail GN Class O8 TMCC Performance

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

**Length:** 24-1/2" over couplers; 24" pilot to tender sill

#### Distance Between Locomotive Pickup Rollers:

1st and 2nd: 4-3/8"

1st and 3rd: 16-5/8"

**Weight on Driving Wheels:** 5 lbs, 14 oz

**Tender Weight:** 2 lbs, 9 oz

**Power Consumption at Idle @ 18 VAC:** 0.5 A, 9 W

**Tractive Effort:** 3 lbs, 2 oz @ 2.1 A, 38 W

**Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC:** 1 scale mph @ 0.7 A, 19 W

**Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC:** 50 scale mph @ 1.6 A, 29 W

#### Test Train

15-car mixed freight; train weight 13 lbs; pull to move train 7 oz; recent-production O scale cars from various manufacturers



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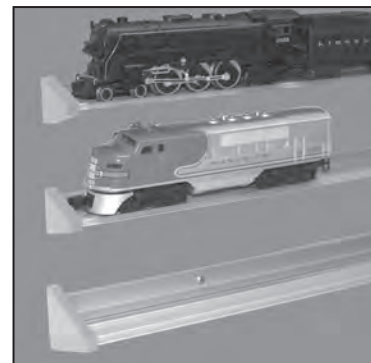
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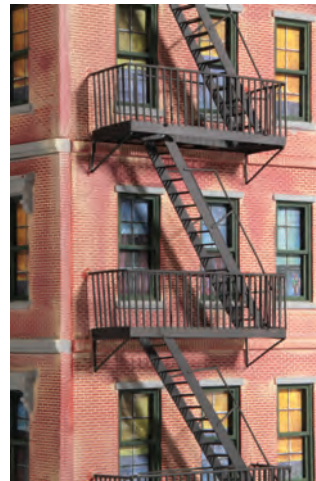
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# MTH Ohio Central GP35

Review and Photos by George Brown

In the world of O gauge railroading, 1:48 scale models of the GP35 seem to be as popular with the manufacturers as the real ones were with the railroads in the mid-1960s. In the latest release of the GP35 from MTH, the Ohio Central System colors garnered considerable interest at the OGR World Headquarters, enough so that both Ed Boyle and Allan Miller each bought one. Because I didn't buy one of the OC Geeps, Ed loaned me his for this review and photos. Additionally, I enjoyed an e-mail exchange with Publisher Rich Melvin regarding real GP35s. You see, Rich was superintendent of operations for the Ohio Central Youngstown Division as well as road foreman and the rules training officer. On short lines such as the Ohio Central, railroaders often have several job responsibilities in addition to the daily duty of running trains.

In a brief look at the real GP35, the four-axle Geep was EMD's horsepower-to-horsepower response to the 2500 hp U25B from General Electric. Production of the GP35 started in late 1963, four years after GE introduced its U25B, and continued into 1966. The high-powered Geep weighed 130 tons and produced 60,500 pounds of tractive effort for starting and 50,000 pounds continuous at nearly 10 mph. Its 2500 hp turbocharged 567D3A prime mover turned between 275 rpm at idle and 800 rpm with the throttle in run-8. As with other locomotives from EMD, the GP35 was available with or without dynamic braking.

As I understand the GP35 from a former EMD field rep, it suffered from too much horsepower for the DC main generator and traction motor designs of that era. To protect the aged main generator from





self-destruction, the electrical control system was complex and had to make 12 to 15 transition steps of electrical power to the motors. Also, the wheel slip control system available at that time was also incapable of handling 2500 hp. The word among the EMD field reps was “the 35 would slip its wheels in a sand house.”

Throughout its unusually short production run of slightly over two years, the GP35 still sold well and kept EMD in its dominant position as the leading producer of diesel locomotives in North America, well ahead of the failing Alco and fledgling GE. A few of them are still working freight trains on class III railroads. Furthermore, the new design of the GP35 cab and hoods featured an angled cab roof and pressurized cooling system for the electrical components, which EMD carried through a number of its successive products.

## Construction and Features

Most of the details on this latest rendition of the GP35 from MTH are apparent in the photos and listed in the Features and Details sidebar. Construction is the usual fare for 3-rail diesels from today’s manufacturers. A molded ABS body shell rides on a stamped steel frame and covers the Proto-Sound 3.0 electronics package, prodigious smoke unit, and cab equipment including figures of the crew.

In what has become the de facto standard for 3-rail diesels, a flywheel-equipped DC can motor powers both axles on each truck via an all-metal gear train. These axles turn in bronze bushings pressed into the die-cast truck blocks. To simplify changing worn-out or damaged traction tires, which are on each of the four wheels closest to the fuel tank, the side frames are easily removed. Two screws, accessible with the engine turned upside down, hold each side frame to its parent truck.



## MTH GP35 Features and Details

- Proto-Sound 3.0 with DCS
- Dual can motors with flywheels
- Metal drive gears
- Proto-Scale 3-2 conversion
- Scale or hi-rail wheels
- Die-cast trucks, side frames, and pilots
- Die-cast fuel tank with speaker inside
- LED directional headlights
- LED marker lights
- Illuminated front and rear number boards
- Fan-driven smoke unit with controllable output
- Molded ABS body on stamped steel frame
- See-through metal screens and grilles
- Wire lifting eyes
- Separate fans inside see-through housings
- Separate brake wheel
- Metal handrails and wire grab irons
- Illuminated cab
- Glazed windshield and windows
- Crew figures
- Separate windshield wipers
- Folding rearview mirrors
- Perforated steps on pilots
- Owner-installed snowplow
- Coil-operated Proto-Coupler both ends
- Separate train hoses
- Separate brake cylinders and air lines
- Wire coupler cut levers
- Minimum curve 042 (3-rail) or 31" radius (2-rail)





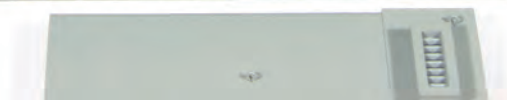
Ed's Geep had hi-rail wheels with oversize flanges and traction tires for operation on 3-rail layouts, but the GP35 is also available with scale wheels. Note that scale wheels do not have traction tires, which increase an engine's pulling capabilities. For the 3-rail scale hobbyist, I haven't tried a scale wheel version of an MTH locomotive on my Atlas sectional track, but I see no reason why the locomotive wouldn't run well with a moderate load on more-or-less level track. One of my steam locomotives from a manufacturer other than MTH has scale wheels on its pilot truck, which has never derailed on my current layout with its O72 and O54 curves and O72 switches.

With Proto-Scale 3-2, switching the GP35 from 3-rail to 2-rail operation is no more difficult than removing the two center-rail pickup roller assemblies, one screw each, and setting a slide switch for 3-rail or 2-rail operation. To go from DCS to DCC, just set another slide switch to its appropriate position. According to MTH advertisements, the Proto-Sound 3.0 electronics package also supports operation with DCC, but I'm not able to verify that claim.

The changeover processes are equally simple going the other direction; however, I urge attentiveness when setting or verifying the position of these switches, especially for a first-time power-up in either mode. If they're set incorrectly, no damage will result, but the engine won't run. Both of the slide switches plus the manual controls for smoke and sound intensities are under the removable center section on top of the long hood, which is the section normally occupied by dynamic brake blisters and fan. Small magnets hold this lift-off section in place. As a side note, the real OCS #2913 did not have dynamic brakes. Nor did it have a snowplow on the front pilot, which is why I didn't mount the owner-installed snowplow that's included with the MTH model.

An attribute many MTH users have lauded with the Proto-Sound 3.0 system is the internal supercapacitors for backup power primarily needed during conventional operation. Best of all and unlike the factory-installed NiCad batteries in Proto-Sound 2.0 engines, supercapacitors never need replacement or charging during periods of prolonged inactivity or storage.

Photos on the web of the real Ohio Central System #2913 show the MTH model is accurately decorated. I understand from the MTH website that OC #2912 is also available as a powered



unit. Other road names in this release of the GP35 include the Akron, Canton & Youngstown, the Milwaukee, the Pittsburgh & West Virginia, and the Santa Fe. As to the quality of the finish including the paint application and masking, I found it to be everything I've come to expect from MTH—excellent.

### At Trackside

At my initial startup of the model in DCS operation, the EMD prime mover starting sound was awesome—a big improvement over the startup sounds of not long ago. In fact, the entire sound set is a noticeable improvement including the horn. In a quick check of the statistics viewable via the Advanced and Info commands on the DCS remote, the model traveled 1.6 scale miles over a power-on time of 23 minutes, which I understand was from the QA testing process that every engine goes through at MTH.



The headlight is dimmed whenever the engine is stopped and goes bright at first movement forward. Inside the cab, the light is on when the engine is not moving and goes off when the engine starts in either direction. Regrettably, the red LED rear marker lights on our evaluation sample blinked on and off intermittently, more off than on—so much for the complete QA check at MTH. Perhaps the model was an even better rendition of the prototype GP35 than I thought and also featured electrical gremlins. The front markers, which are also red LEDs, illuminated continuously.

In command or conventional operation, the GP35 proved to be a smooth runner, although it wouldn't hold a constant speed under 3 scale mph. Considering my past experiences with MTH locomotives, I was reasonably certain the engine would loosen up and run smoothly at slow speed as it accumulated some scale miles on its odometer. I have a highly experienced GP20 with Proto-Sound 2.0 that can now crawl dead slow without so much as a slight hesitation.



In its 2013 Volume 1 catalog, MTH specified O42 as the minimum 3-rail curve for the GP35, which seemed a little wide to me. Other locomotives from MTH such as the GP9, GP30, FP45, and 3GS21B genset are advertised in their respective catalogs at O31 minimum, and the GP35 has a relatively similar length and wheelbase as those engines. The model of OC #2913 negotiated my O36 curves without a problem. Possibly the O42 specification was simply an error in the catalog.

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benchmark for the O gauge train industry are smoke generation and coupler operation. To my knowledge, there is no rival to the prodigious smoke unit from MTH. The fan-driven plume of white vapor from the GP35's exhaust stack was abundant, as was the smoke from every MTH locomotive I reviewed in the past as well as those I own. For operators who want to reduce the smoke volume or eliminate it completely, settings are available using the DCS remote, and for the conventional operator there's the manual control for smoke intensity I mentioned earlier.

Coupler operation worked fine every time opening or closing. Best of all, I didn't have to execute a minor collision with an awaiting train or even a car on a siding just to get the engine's coupler to close. This feature alone makes switching cars in and out of sidings a bunch of fun.

As stated in the MTH catalog, Proto-Sound 3.0 locomotives can be run in multiunit consists with the earlier Proto-Sound 2.0 units. As an inveterate fan of multiunit diesels, I coupled the GP35 to my GP20 from several years ago, configured the two units into a DCS lashup, and let the fun run begin.

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## At the End of the Run

I found the Ohio Central System color scheme to be both unusual and attractive, accentuating the visual lines of the GP35 to their best advantage. Operationally, the MTH model of the GP35 is as competent a runner as any MTH Premier or RailKing locomotive I've played with, and that says a lot for it. 

### 20-20289-1 Proto-Sound 3.0 Ohio Central GP35

Retail price: \$439.95 at MTH dealers

M.T.H. Electric Trains; [www.mthtrains.com](http://www.mthtrains.com)

### Ohio Central GP35 DCS Performance

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

**Length:** 14-5/8" over couplers; 13-1/4" between end sills

#### Distance Between Locomotive Pickup Rollers:

1st and 2nd: 1-1/4"

1st and 3rd: 7-7/8"

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The only thing moving in Slaty Fork this morning is ol' No. 1 as it passes the Slaty Fork passenger station on its way to spot the first empties of the day.

# Appalachian Railroading Down in the Hollow

**Article and Photos by Joey Ricard**

As a landscape photographer, I have enjoyed the opportunity to explore and photograph many beautiful locations. But of all the places I've visited, I can honestly say that nowhere is more beautiful to me than my home state of West Virginia. The vision of steep hills, lush foliage, and cool running streams is never more than a pleasant memory away, no matter where I am.

The concept of my Spruce Coal & Timber Railroad (SC&T) started during a family vacation that included a stop at the Cass Scenic Railroad in Pocahontas County, West Virginia. I had been to Cass many times before and have always been interested in

steam locomotives, but I had never modeled anything from the steam era in my 35 years in the hobby. I can't explain why this trip to Cass was so different, but I came home and immediately started sketching out scenes and ideas for what eventually would become the SC&T Railroad.

My overall concept involves an ever-growing series of small portable module sections and minilayouts depicting scenes that provide a scenic representation of Appalachian West Virginia in the early days of logging and mining. These modules act as photographic dioramas and are built to be taken outside for natural





This is the black-and-white version of the logo I designed for my railroad.

Porter No. 2 heads for the storage siding on the adjoining module to pick up empties to be spotted at the Spruce Coal Company Tipple No. 2.



Porter No. 2 is seen crossing the small curved trestle while exiting the Hickory tunnel. This model started as a standard 0-4-2 Bachmann Porter. A Banta Model Works cab was added along with various detail items. The tender was scratchbuilt from an HO gondola and HO freight car trucks. The tender houses a SoundTraxx Tsunami sound decoder and rectangular speaker. All wheels have added electrical pickup for reliability.

light photography or for display at train shows. All together or one by one, the dioramas all have a sense of place whether they are supported by their modular neighbors or standing alone.

Space considerations are often a big challenge for the model railroader, and the same challenge presented itself to the real railroads in the early days of route survey and line construction. All you have to do is take a drive through the heart of the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia to see just how evident this challenge was to the many coal, timber, and railroad companies. To this day, land developers and engineers strive to get the most bang for the property buck by adapting a plan to fit the land that they intend to build on.

Limited by available space and given the eventuality of a move to a new house, I was prompted to plan accordingly and still allow myself to model my vision to some believable degree. Although very small layouts are nothing new, I couldn't recall seeing one that included all the scenic elements I wanted to pack into such a small space.





The early morning sun rises above the ridge and is starting to burn off the fog. We can always find the station agent and postmaster sharing a cup of coffee to start the day over at Slaty Fork station.

I designed the first section of the SC&T to be a layout of its own—a fully independent minilayout, so to speak. It is incorporated into the rest of the module system by a pie-shaped connector section. I knew it would be a challenge to include a lot of what I had envisioned, but I wanted this minilayout to be special and to include as much flavor and as many key elements as I could pack onto it. How to pull this off in seven square feet was a different story. Yes, you read that right. The base measurements of this minilayout are 24"x 42", with the removable bolt-on pie-shaped connection piece at one end.

## Benchwork

This minilayout is constructed on a frame made of 1x4 lumber with stringers. The stringers were placed and arranged so

as not to block underneath access to the Tortoise switch machines. Atop the frame sits a 1/4" plywood base with switch machine access holes, topped by a 3" blue foam board that acts as a scenery riser. The roadbed is 1/4" drywall, cut to fit. For years I have used 1/4" drywall as my roadbed, and I find it very easy to work with. I used 1/8" Masonite for my fascia and shaped it to fit the scenery contour. Molding was added at the four corners to give everything a finished look.

At the business end of the layout, I added a small pie-shaped section for rail and scenery transitions to the next module. Although removable, I tend to keep this section attached to give a sense of depth for long end photography.

The layout sits on a wooden cart constructed with 2x3 lumber and has upper and lower plywood shelves. The height at

the railhead is about 50" above the floor. The wheels are of the basic screw-in type from the local hardware store and are adjustable for about 3" of travel up or down. Black sheet material is used for the wraparound curtain.

## Trackwork

The layout includes a basic loop for continuous running, with two turnouts on each side acting as rail connections to the next module. I used commercially available wooden narrow gauge ties that I stained with a mixture of black India ink and alcohol. Track is hand-laid Atlas code 83 rail left over from my previous garage-size HO layout. I painted the rails a rusty color created from a mixture of acrylic paints.

I prebuilt all of my turnouts in a jig and then mounted them on the layout.





In this half-second time exposure, the first-shift crew is seen loading another empty with West Virginia's finest. The tippie features live loading and is operated by a small hook to open and close the chute door.



Ol' No.1 is seen again in this sepia-tone image as it passes Slaty Fork station.





Here's a long end view of the layout with diesel No. 27 exiting North End Hickory tunnel.





This is an overview of the business end of the minilayout with the pie-shaped transition section attached (bottom of photo). Porter No. 2 is on the main line heading for the adjoining module. Outdoor natural lighting and a photorealistic backdrop were used for this image.





The "Yellow Dog" way freight exits the North End Hickory tunnel as it approaches Slaty Fork station. Diesel No. 27 was constructed from the base of an HO scale Bachmann GP9 and features a SoundTraxx Tsunami EMD 567 sound decoder along with a rectangular speaker mounted in the body.

Turnouts are controlled by Tortoise switch machines with DPDT toggles mounted on the fascia. Power for the turnouts is provided by a 12-volt power supply mounted under the layout. This power supply stays with the minilayout, but is used to power turnouts on adjacent modules via a plug-in power connection that I made from cheap household extension cords. The main loop has a 9" radius curve, and curvature of the inner track leading to the coal tipple is approximately 6-1/4" radius.

## Scenery

My scenery base is constructed with stacked blue insulation foam board glued together with construction adhesive. Although I typically use the woven cardboard strip method for building landforms, I saw no reason to do so on a layout this small. I cut the blue foam into small shapes, stacked them, and then carved them with a rotary wire brush mounted on my electric drill. This is a messy process, but it goes quickly, and I am able to create landforms very easily and accurately. If any area was too low or needed additional material, I simply cut a piece of blue foam to the shape desired and glued it in place.

I use a wide variety of scenery materials including both natural sources and commercially available products. My ground cover is nothing more than light-colored dirt from my yard that I sifted

and reduced to a dust-like texture. I make track ballast from that same dirt, and then I add gray cement dust. The cement dust comes from sifting an ordinary bag of cement from the local hardware store. After sifting, I end up with quite a few leftover rocks, which can be used in river beds, culverts, and other areas on the layout. I use many of the popular ground foams, grasses, and greenery, as well as dried leaves ground up in a household blender. This makes a great "forest" ground cover.

I am often asked how I get my vines and foliage to look so realistic. I can assure you that my method is nothing out of the ordinary and is easy to make with a little practice. I use a household furnace filter, pulled to shape, and painted flat black. I then apply liberal amounts of cheap, sticky hairspray before sprinkling on fine ground foam through a sifter. I vary the colors and also use a coarser version of the foam to represent different species of vines, bushes, and leafy plants. I use a similar method for my tree foliage, but I puff the filter material prior to painting and then pull and tease it into something that resembles a tree canopy. My tree trunks and armatures are made from a local plant I gather while walking through the woods near my house, but I do not know the species name. I also make trees from wooden dowels, caspia branches, and static grasses.

Rocks and boulders are made with plaster of Paris. I mix a necessary amount and then use a spatula to apply it directly to the





Ol' No. 1 sits in the locomotive service shed at Spruce Coal Company awaiting a fresh crew. Like Porter No. 2, ol' No. 1 started as a Bachmann 0-4-2 shortened and with trailing wheels removed to make it a 0-4-0. The tender was scratchbuilt from an HO gondola and uses an On30 passenger truck. For reliability, all wheels are fitted for electrical pickup.



This view taken from across the Elk River on a rock outcropping shows the many structures that make up the Spruce Coal Company Tiptle No. 2 operation.





Here's a full view of Spruce Coal Company Tipple No. 2. The tipple was scratchbuilt using coffee stirrers, various sizes of bass wood, and other materials and accents. The processing building was scratchbuilt using commercially available siding material and Grandt Line windows. The tipple features live loading and is operated by a small hook to open and close the chute door.





In a view down the main line from a vantage point next to Slaty Fork station, ol' No. 1 exits North End Hickory tunnel. This photo was made indoors near the window, making use of natural morning light.

blue foam. Next, I carve the area with a small knife to get the overall shape and use coarse sandpaper to fine-tune the carving and eliminate any bubbles or unnatural appearing areas. I use a wash mixture of black India ink and alcohol to get the slate or boulder color I am looking for. Occasionally, I will use a wash made from acrylic paints to simulate natural-appearing tones found in the area I am modeling.

## Structures

All of the structures on the SC&T are scratchbuilt from wood and were derived from ideas I gathered from vintage photos. None of my structures were built using actual dimensions, and all were built to fit the intended spot in which they reside. I use many materials including coffee stirrers, craft sticks, and commercially avail-

able siding and clapboard. I also use a wide variety of materials such as cardstock, sandpaper, foil, and other household items. Detail items like doors, windows, and scenic accents are from Grandt Line ([www.grandtline.com](http://www.grandtline.com)) and other popular manufacturers. All buildings on the layout have interior lighting as well as some exterior and pole lighting. Power for the lighting comes from another 12-volt power supply mounted underneath the layout and operated with a hidden toggle switch.

I built the coal loader and chute so I could simulate live loads. The chute is operated using a hook to pull the chute door open; gravity does the rest. When the car is full, I simply use the hook to push the chute door shut. I had intended to automate this feature with a motor and springs, but when I tested the chute initially, it was so easy to operate that I left it alone.

## Electrical

I built and wired the layout with a single-point power connection for track power. The track design is such that I can run it as a continuous loop or use the layout as a reversing loop when attached to the adjoining modules. I accounted for this by adding an autoreverser. It really is a plug-and-play setup. Although I use the NCE Power Pro DCC system ([www.ncedcc.com](http://www.ncedcc.com)), I could easily operate the layout with a simple DC power pack.

All turnouts are powered by Tortoise switch machines ([www.circuitron.com](http://www.circuitron.com)) mounted underneath the layout and controlled by DPDT toggle switches mounted on the fascia. Due to the short wheelbase of some of my locomotives, I power the frogs with track power routed through the contacts on the switch machines.





The SC&T hosts a couple of maintenance-of-way consists, and today No. M1 stops briefly at the station to pick up work orders. This boxcab was built using the base of a Bachmann On30 Davenport side rod gas mechanical locomotive. The body is a kit from Coyote Flats, and this little guy also has a SoundTraxx Tsunami sound decoder and rectangular speaker mounted inside. The mate car is scratchbuilt with HO scale trucks, and all wheels have electrical pickup for reliability.

## Locomotives and Rolling Stock

I initially built this portion of the layout to accommodate my smaller locomotives and scratchbuilt rolling stock. But soon after testing began, I started snipping and notching some of my locomotives and rolling stock to get them to run on the supertight curves. I have since kitbashed a variety of On30 locomotives such as Bachmann Porter locomotives, a boxcab diesel, and a long-nose diesel switcher, which I scratchbuilt out of a Bachmann HO scale GP9. I have since started construction on three more engines. All locomotives on the SC&T have aftermarket SoundTraxx Tsunami decoders ([www.soundtraxx.com](http://www.soundtraxx.com)) installed, along with rectangular speakers.

## Operation

Although this layout was designed to serve as a fun little exhibition layout with model photography in mind, there is

plenty of action happening down in the hollow at Slaty Fork, especially when the layout is attached to the adjoining modules. Switching an old-time coal tipple, one car at a time, can be both fun and challenging. One can use his or her imagination to simulate a tipple switching operation with an occasional way freight coming by to pick up loads and drop off empties. Or it's just as much fun to provide operating action with come-and-go passenger trains and general merchandise moves originating on the adjoining modules.

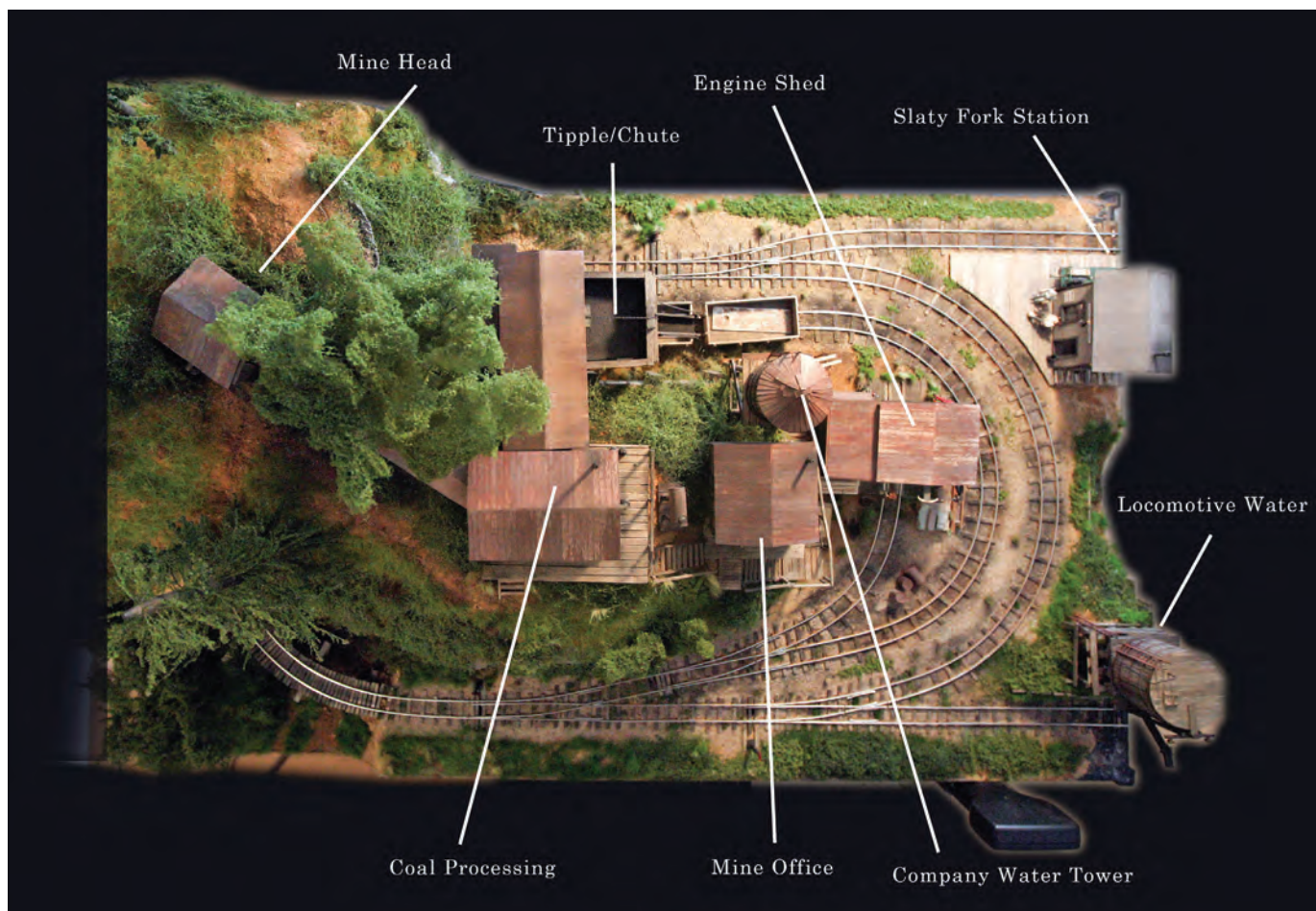
## Photography, Lighting, and Beyond

Outdoor photography provides the opportunity to use natural surroundings as a backdrop and to set the scene with natural lighting, but photographing a layout indoors presents other challenges. I look at model photography in terms of layers, the first being the model and then the back-

drop and lighting layers. When combined properly, using these three layers together can really establish and enhance a sense of place and mood.

I really believe that when any one of these layers is neglected, it tends to detract from the model. Think of that great layout photo you saw recently with the white wall behind it. I always strive to create an image that draws the viewer into the scene. My beyond-the-layout philosophy is a very important key in creating my images. For that, I use photorealistic backdrops that I create from images I have taken in the actual area that I am modeling. I create panorama-size photos in my photo editing software and then use a reputable processing lab to print the large images. Once I get the print, I mount it using spray adhesive on a 1/4" thick Masonite sheet cut to the dimensions of the print. I can now place the backdrop anywhere around the layout and move it to any position or angle that I desire. My most recent print measures 24" x 60", and was purchased at a reasonable cost.





This overhead view is of the full layout.



This shot shows the entire layout with the pie-shaped transition section.



Here's an example of how I set up for an outdoor photo shoot in my backyard. This image includes the pie-shaped transition section, curtain, and photorealistic backdrop.





This shot shows the entire layout without the pie-shaped transition section.



All is quiet around lunchtime at Jake's Machine Shop on the pie-shaped transition section. Spruce Coal Company structures are seen in the distance.



## About the Author

Joey Ricard is a photographer and graphic artist in West Virginia and a former real-life railroader for most of his adult life. He served as a locomotive machinist, conductor, engineer, and yardmaster. He has been involved in the model railroad hobby for more than 35 years and has modeled in many of the popular scales including N, HO, and O. He has built many layouts, both small and large, as well as many model photography dioramas. Joey's other interests include hiking, kayaking, camping, and exploring the great outdoors with his fiancée.



This scene shows the Spruce Coal Company Tipple No. 2 office.



## Layout Specifications

**Name:** Spruce Coal & Timber Railroad

**Scale:** On30 narrow gauge

**Style:** Self-sufficient modular, portable, sectional

**Size:** 24" x 42" — approximately seven square feet

**Locale:** Appalachian West Virginia

**Era:** 1901-1960, but no set date, time, or specific season (warmer months)

**Track:** Hand-laid code 83 rail

**Turnouts:** Hand-laid, jig-built, powered by Tortoise switch machines

**Roadbed:** 1/4" drywall

**Benchwork:** Frame-based open grid mounted on wheeled cart

**Fascia:** 1/8" Masonite

**Grade:** No grades

**Minimum Radius:** 9" on main loop, 6-1/4" on siding


**Scenery Base:** Blue insulation foam board (extruded polystyrene)

**Control:** DCC via NCE Power Pro system

**SC&T Blog:** [www.facebook.com/sprucemodel](http://www.facebook.com/sprucemodel)

**SC&T YouTube channel:** [www.youtube.com/imjoeyricard](http://www.youtube.com/imjoeyricard)

## Summary

Building this portion of the SC&T was one of the most exciting model railroad projects I have done in many years. On30, and more importantly 1:48 O scale, has given me the opportunity to shoot from the hip in regard to design and concept plus the ability to build on my own terms while still keeping my initial vision and focus. It was a challenge trying to fit all that I desired into such a small space, but I came out the other side with a very refreshing second wind for model railroading. See you "down in the hollow" on the Spruce Coal & Timber Railroad! 



The company water tower was built using a cardboard roll, matchsticks, rubber bands and other household materials.



The railroad water tower was built using a vitamin bottle, matchsticks, rubber bands, and other household materials. The spout is made from a plastic tube that was heated and bent to shape.





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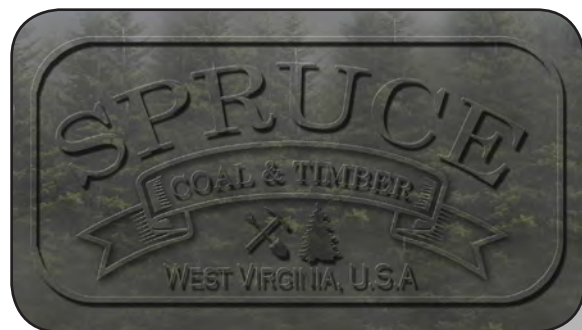
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# Mousetrap Track Cleaner

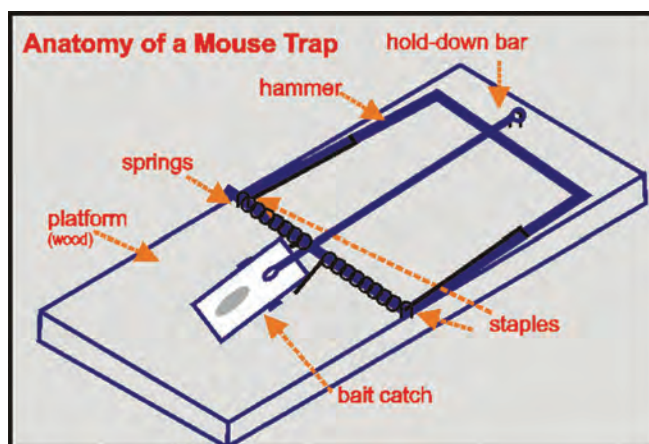
Article, Photos, and Illustration by Daniel Kleine



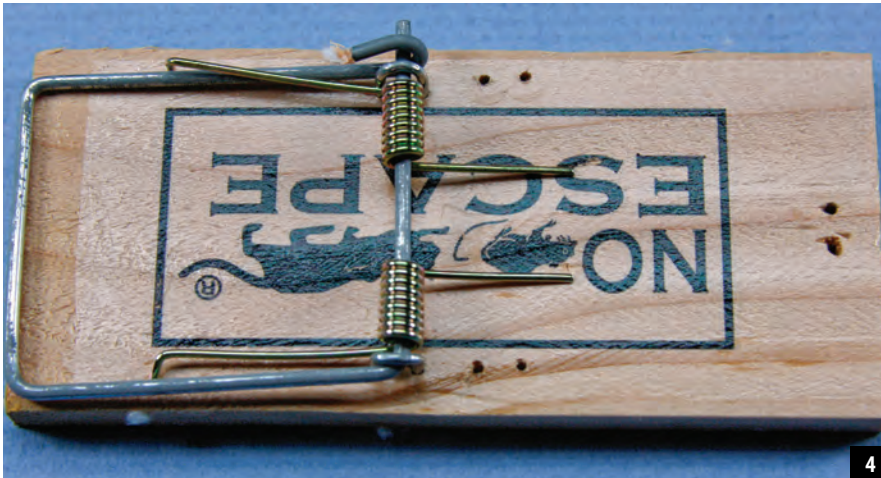
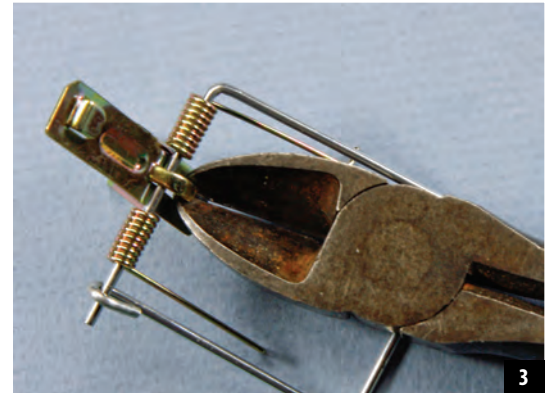
Cleaning track is one of my least favorite activities. However, clean track helps prevent the embarrassment caused when kids want to know why the train stopped so suddenly or why the caboose lights blink.

It is amazing how many track cleaners of different types are on the market. I have tried several types including manual, towed, and powered. I use towed and powered types for hard-to-reach spots but prefer a manual type for most of my layout that is reachable. I am guessing that there are about as many types of track cleaners as there are types of mousetraps (see illustration). Well here's yet another one; it's cheap and takes less than 30 minutes to make.

You will need a two-pack of mousetraps, a computer mouse pad, some clean rag material, and some cosmetic pads (Photo 1). You will also need some glue and a few basic tools.







Take one of the traps and remove the hold-down bar but leave the hammer and springs in place on the platform. Take the second trap and carefully remove the hammer and springs by prying out the two staples that hold the hammer assembly (Photo 2). Cut off both bait catches (Photo 3). Measure the diameter of the staples; you will need a drill bit smaller than the diameter of the staples. My staples were

1/16", so I used a #56 bit for the holes.

Using the existing hammer assembly as a guide, drill four holes in the wood. It's best if the hammer end is just slightly over the end of the platform because this makes it easier to pull the hammer up. Offset the holes so that they are not in the same plane (grain) as the existing staples (Photo 4).

Apply a drop of cyanoacrylate glue over each of the four predrilled holes. Slide

the spring ends of the loose hammer assembly under the fixed one and position it on the platform. A clamp or extra set of hands can help with this. Using the staples you previously removed, attach the hammer to the platform with needle-nose pliers. Push the staples down so the pins are flush with the bottom side of the platform (Photo 5). Don't skip the drilling step. I did that once and accidentally split the wood.

Use a blade cutter to cut a piece of computer mouse pad the same size as the platform. The mouse pad adds a little resilience and keeps the cleaning material from slipping. Glue the pad to the wood with an ample application of contact cement (Photo 6).

Use a pair of scissors to cut your rag material into wiper strips about the same width as the platform and about 2" longer. Mine are 1-3/4"x 6". You may want to make several wipers at this point for future use. Microfiber cloths have a lot of surface area and seem to hold fluid and dirt well, so you will likely get more mileage from them than you would from a regular cotton rag (Photo 7). The downside of microfiber cloth is that it tends to shed lint from the cut edges.

To complete the cleaner, put down a wiper and place a cotton cosmetic pad in the center to serve as a reservoir for track cleaning fluid. Place your modified trap on top of the cloth, insert the cloth ends under the hammers, and pull out any slack (Photos 8 and 9).

I'm sure you are anxious to try it out, so lightly saturate the cloth with your favorite cleaning fluid and begin cleaning. The hammer springs in the center do double duty as a handle. I usually make



### Construction Materials

- Two-pack of mousetraps
- Contact cement
- Cyanoacrylate glue
- Computer mouse pad or any thin rubber sheet

### Tools

- Screwdriver for pry bar
- Diagonal cutting pliers
- Needle-nose pliers
- Hand drill or pin vise
- Drill bit, small
- Scissors
- Blade cutter
- Clamp

### Consumables

- Cotton cosmetic pads
- Rags cut into strips
- Track cleaning fluid



6



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one pass, wait a little while, turn the cloth over, and make another pass. Use a gentle downward pressure and shift the angle and direction of the cleaner occasionally (Photo 10). Be careful going over switches because the rag can snag on the points and frogs. I discard my wipers after using both sides and pitch the cotton pad when it looks dirty (Photo 11). The amount and condition of the track

you are cleaning will dictate the number of cloths and pads you actually use.

As a bonus, this device also works as a sanding block for light-duty detail sanding. Just substitute sandpaper or emery cloth for the pad and rag.

I may not have built a better mousetrap, but I did create a new use for them. 🐭



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11



## Scenery modules constructed at the workbench



Here's a view of the plaza in front of the La WoW hotel and down Tower City's boulevard. This was my attempt to copy the spectacular real-world views of busy streets in New York City.

# Build a Bustling Boulevard

Article and Photos by Bill Bramlage

I wanted to construct a grand boulevard along the border of Tower City on my layout. The boulevard would contain four traffic lanes packed with vehicles, a busy green park median, and sidewalks crowded with people. The view from the front of the layout should send visitors' attention flowing down the entire length of this bustling city street filled with lights, vehicles, and inhabitants.

What I envisioned was a boulevard scene similar to the often-seen street scenes of New York City. There would have to be lights lining the street, the median, and the sidewalks. The contiguous buildings would be ablaze with interior and exterior lighting, and of course multiple Miller Engineering flashing signs would adorn the buildings. The vehicles would have to look like the booth Jack

Pearce has at the TCA's semiannual York meet with all sorts of transports with headlights and taillights shining. Many taxis with multiple lights would also fill the street and line the curbs.

Now, to make the scene come even more alive, I would have to add sounds. Appropriate sound modules are manufactured by Innovative Train Technology Products [see sidebar for a list of product suppliers]. Its sound modules create the sounds of cars, buses, children, horns, trucks, emergency vehicles, construction sites, and church bells. Individual sound modules are activated from a dedicated sound control panel.

The question now became how to do this city street scene on an elevated area of plywood with multiple train tracks below. The





In this early photo of my layout, the elevated plywood on the right side was destined to become Tower City's boulevard.

Progress was made as Tower City took shape, and the area on the lower level was also shaping up. The position of the future boulevard is labeled.



elevated area presented construction and wiring challenges. The wiring below the roadway should not be visible, but extensive wiring of lights and cars had to be done to complete the project. The solution was that this boulevard construction job would be made up of a series of roadway modules created on the workbench. The finished roadway modules would then be laid into position on the layout. Final wiring would have to be reachable and very simple.


The elevated roadway is divided into four separate Masonite panels or modules. A plaza panel is positioned in front of the La WoW hotel, and three separate 4' long, prewired, and fully detailed roadway panels form the long boulevard. Each panel has only one wire pair dropping under the layout for the electrical hookup. This single wire drop per module can be easily concealed behind a pillar or support. The scenery panel or module concept allows the scene creation, the detailing, and the electrical work while sitting at a workbench. This method of construction also allows addition of high detail work to areas of limited access on

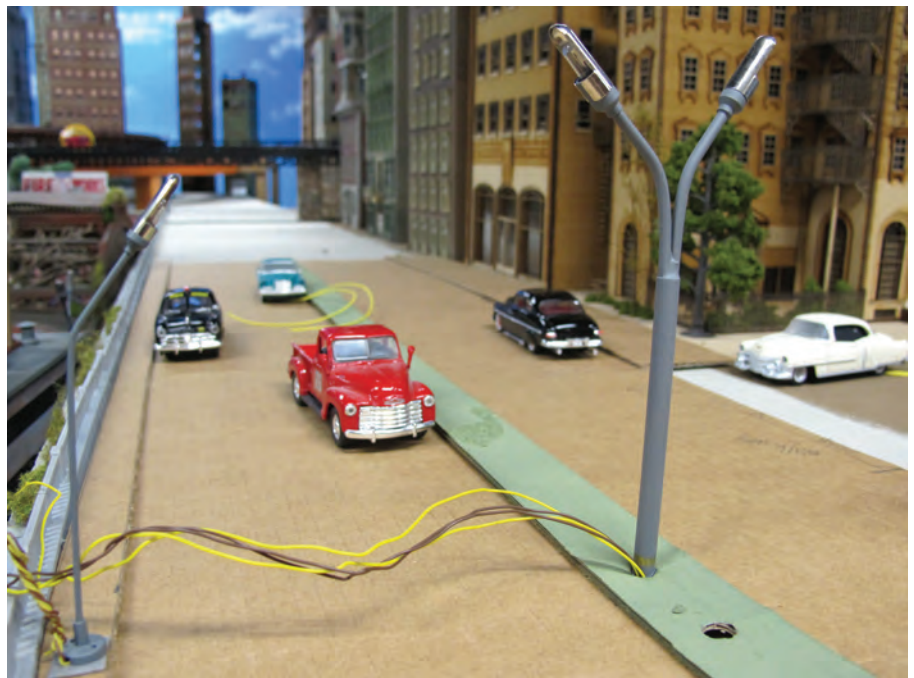


the layout. Since all the wiring is concealed in the panel or module, no wires remain exposed under the elevated area.

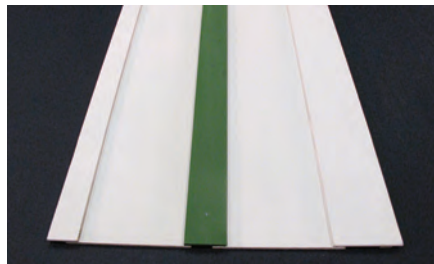
Choosing the street lighting for the boulevard took a little time. Most O gauge streetlights were just too big for my long city street diorama. I chose Model Power #6082 O/O27 double lampposts for the median lights. I shortened the main light pole from 6" to 3" using a brass tube cutter. The final appearance was acceptable. On the narrow sidewalk, I used Model Power #495 single HO scale lights. On the wider sidewalk, I used Model Power #496 double HO scale lights. In terms of size and scale, this combination of lights looked just fine. The final lighting effect was in scale with the cars, the figures, and the doors of the buildings.

The tempered 1/8" Masonite provided good strength for the road panels and facilitated construction. The photos show the double layers of the Masonite that formed the median and the sidewalk detail on the top surface of the panel. Three connected troughs on the bottom surface of the panel concealed low-profile N gauge track and electrical connections. The long pieces of N gauge track allowed for easy and dependable bus bar electrical connection concealed within the panel.

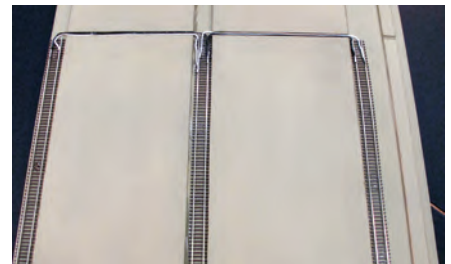
After installing the panels, completing the electrical connections, adding the speakers in adjacent buildings, and wiring the sound modules, Tower City's main street became a glittering, bustling, crowded, almost alive big city boulevard. 



Looking down what will eventually be a busy boulevard, the size and positioning of the lights, sidewalks, median, and cars are being evaluated with the cardboard street and sidewalk cutouts. The Model Power #6082 double light already had the center pole shortened by 3" to improve the proportions.



This is the top side of a 4' long street panel showing the green median strip and the two sidewalks. Gaps on the underside of this panel will conceal the electrical system.



The bottom of one of the street panels depicts N gauge track installation and early stages of wiring.

## Sources for Parts and Supplies

### Miller Engineering signs:

[www.microstru.com](http://www.microstru.com)

### Jack Pearce vehicle lighting:

[jack\\_pearce4@sympatico.ca](mailto:jack_pearce4@sympatico.ca)

(705) 835-2202

### Innovative Train Technology Products:

[www.ittproducts.com](http://www.ittproducts.com)

### Model Power street lights:

[www.walthers.com](http://www.walthers.com)



Model Power lights were used for this project. The #6082 O/O27 double lamppost was shortened to 3" in order to improve the proportion of this light relative to the other lights. The #495 and #496 HO lights were installed along the sidewalks.



A completed street panel is being tested at the workbench prior to being installed on the layout.



*Tour Hal Maury's engine servicing area.*



# Service for Multiple-Era Motive Power

**Article and Photos by Hal Maury**

My model railroad includes both steam and diesel motive power, and both are kept busy powering a full schedule of freight and passenger trains. As with the prototype railroads, these O gauge engines also need service to keep them operational. Of course, the hands-on service for our models usually takes place at the workbench, but it's also important, to my way of thinking, to incorporate proper locomotive service facilities as part of our layouts so visitors get an idea of what is involved in these operations. I needed proper servicing areas for both my steam and diesel locomotives, and the photos with this article will give you a pretty good idea of how I filled both needs (Photo 1).

My railroad started out representing the Pennsylvania, followed by the Milwaukee Road. The Santa Fe was next, and finally the Union Pacific was added. When the Union Pacific Challenger arrived for servicing, it was soon discovered that the original area would not accommodate such a large engine. So a new service area had to be built. This required adding track next to the coach yard (Photo 2).

Building the diesel engine facilities included creating replicas of both the sand towers and fueling stations. The base platforms and working area were made of 1/8" plywood door skins obtained from a lumberyard. The sand towers are simply wooden dowels



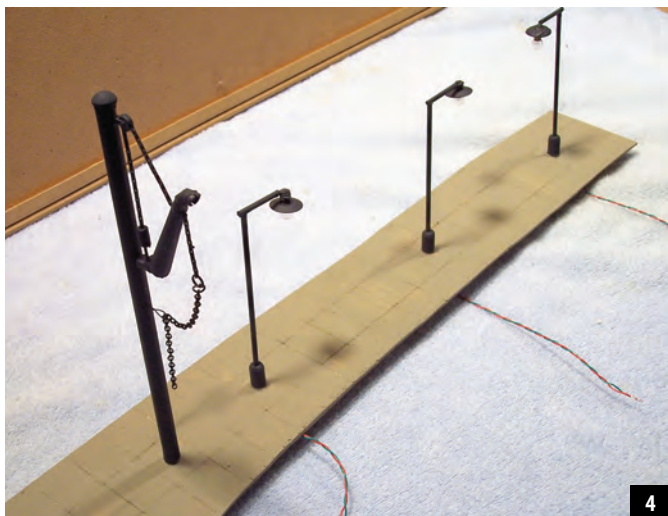


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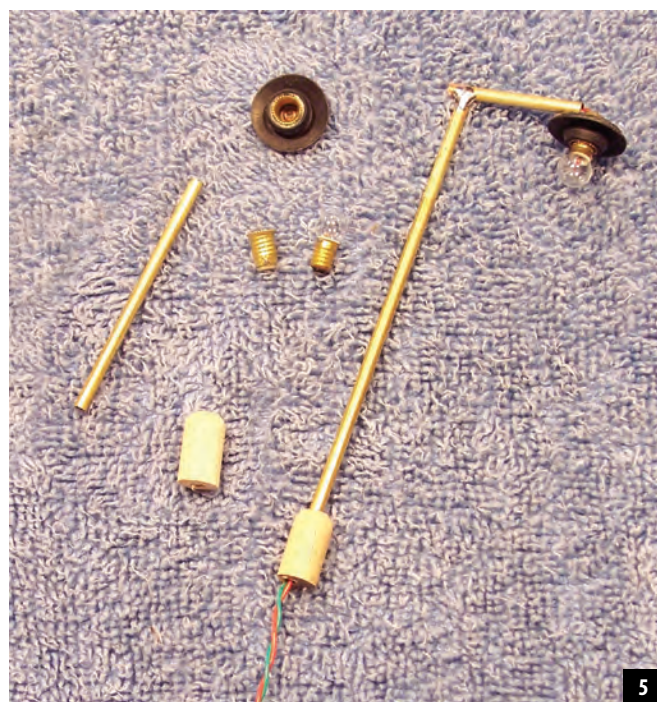
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with small brass pipe and electrical wire used to replicate the sand delivery systems. The fueling systems are made in the same way (Photo 3).

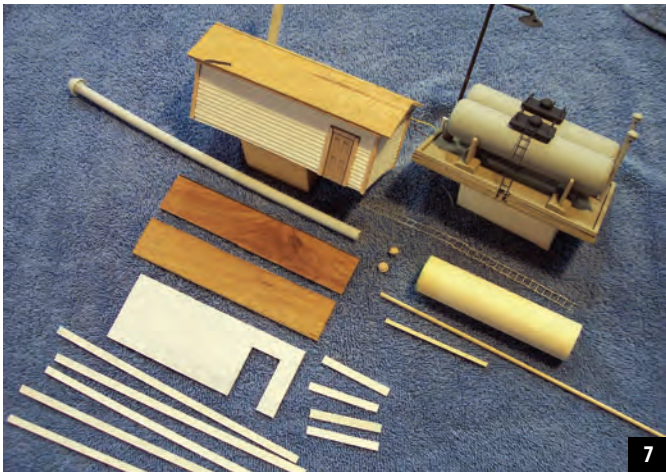
The extensive length of the MTH Premier Challenger required an equally long surface area for maintenance functions. I made the base of this service area with 1/8" plywood. The water column was made using a wooden dowel with a carved water spout and plastic chain attached (Photo 4). Lighting was provided by constructing lamps that used the same brass tubing previously used in making the fuel and sand supply lines located on the



service platforms (Photo 5). The brass sections were carefully soldered together. Shades for the light fixture were made from old plastic Ziebart plugs left over from the days of when automobiles were undercoated and the holes plugged, but I'm confident that







7




8

other gadgets of similar shape and size can be found. Wires were soldered to the brass sockets and threaded through the brass tubing. Small sections of wooden dowels were added to the brass tubing at the bottom for support, and everything was then glued to the work surface. The water column and lights were painted dull black and also attached to the plywood base (Photo 6). The wooden base was scored into sections representing concrete and painted a concrete color.

To accommodate the steam-cleaning and lubricating facilities on the new platform area, it was necessary to place a boiler house and storage tanks adjacent to that area. Materials used were

wooden dowels and more 1/8" plywood (Photos 7 and 8). Wire fencing with 1/4" spacing was used to construct the ladders on the storage tanks as well as on the sand towers. The roof was covered with black 3M emery paper.

The two coaling towers on-site are both stock Lionel structures.

Now that the engine service area is complete, it can accommodate all the steam engines on my roster, large or small. In Photo 9, UP Challenger 3984 is at the work area having its driving rods and wheels steam cleaned and lubricated to ready it for the next assignment. 



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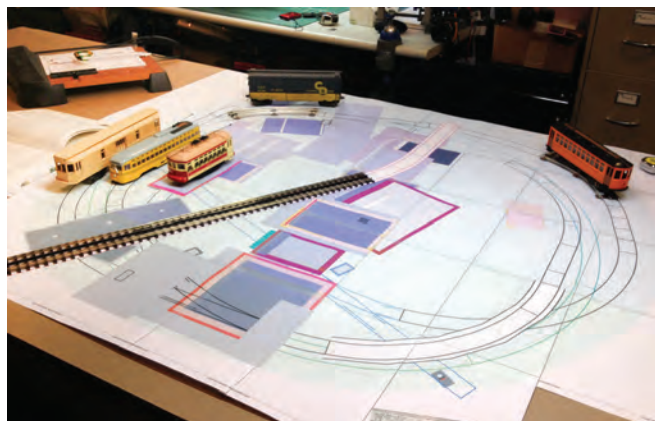
A Cincinnati PCC rounds the country bend before heading onto the overpass.

# *Train and Traction Action*

**Article and Photos by Daniel Raible**

The days of interurban railroads and streetcars reigning over the routes across Ohio were before my time, but, fortunately, I grew up within bicycling distance of the now-defunct operating museum known as Trolleyville USA. This museum offered tours of its vast collection through car barns, restoration shops, and, most importantly, rides. It was there that I met Franklyn Kellogg who had amassed the largest collection of O gauge traction equipment, books, and photographs I had ever seen.

Traction equipment has most of the allure of other railroad prototypes plus the added dimension of the lacy overhead catenary wires. Then there's that unique palette of sounds: the whirring of the electric traction motors climbing steep grades, the intermittent throbbing of the air compressors, the creaking of wooden interurban cars swaying into town, the squealing of wheel flanges around minimum radius curves, and those unmistakable bells. Experiencing the prototypes and working with Franklyn's



A full-size printout of the basic plan was checked with some actual O gauge equipment of the type that would be used on the layout.



models on his display layout at the museum ignited a spark, and I knew this was something I wanted to pursue.

This year a competition was announced on the OGR On-Line Forum to construct a micro-layout within a three-month window of time. The terms “O gauge” and “micro” are not conventionally thought of together, but a review of the late Carl Arendt’s micro-layout designs at [www.carendt.com](http://www.carendt.com) proved that less can definitely be more. The rules of the competition were fairly simple: involve some aspect of O gauge, keep the design under 13 square feet, have at least one structure, include scenery, and have fun.

This was a challenge to try something different, and my immediate thought was to attempt a traction layout. It was also an opportunity to try some different construction techniques given the compact size of the working area. My first step was to develop the following objectives I wanted to meet with the design:

- Operate three trains simultaneously in a mainline loop, an elevated point-to-point, and a subway loop.
- Include a variety of equipment such as electric freight motors with rolling stock, streetcars, interurban cars, and subway cars.
- Provide realistic operation such as pick up and drop off freight cars through lower interchange track and service industry customers while dodging the scheduled passenger runs.
- Incorporate easements to make the 27” minimum radius curves more gradual through a combination of flexible and sectional track.



Risers were added to the multiple levels, and the interchange grade was formed.



The Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee Silverliner glides past the car barn.



This 44-ton GE is dragging a couple of coal cars up through the interchange track while a Silverliner roars past the rail gang on the lower level.



- Include superelevation to the interchange track curve to establish some lean to the cars.
- Feature thematic scenes for the trains to travel through—city, country, mainline interchange, and various viewing angles for the subway line.
- Offer portability for bringing to shows to display.
- Provide the ability to disassemble and fit individual sections through doorways.
- Be as lightweight as possible while also being robust enough to withstand travel.

I spent a few weeks designing the layout using RR-Track software and experimenting until I arrived with something I was happy with. Using the software package was valuable because the track, structure, and scenery libraries allowed me to try out a variety of options and then view them from various angles to evaluate how the idea was developing. Additionally, RR-Track can calculate the square area of the overall design, which was very helpful since I was developing an irregularly shaped concept to conform to the constraints of the contest. Once I was satisfied with the design, I printed out a full-sized plan, taped it together on my workbench, and placed some of my O gauge equipment on it as a final sanity check. Most everything looked feasible. The clock was ticking, and it was time to start building.

After transferring the track centerlines and shape outlines to 3/4" medium density fiberboard (MDF), each of the benchwork levels was cut with a saber saw. The MDF allowed forming of the incline and provided a good base next to the tracks for the future addition of overhead catenary poles. I stacked each level together with temporary blocks to make final adjustments to the relative heights and then tied everything together using vertical risers of pine with wood glue and long drywall screws. I was most concerned with controlling the tightness of the interchange track and the ability for a train to successfully negotiate that curve while still providing adequate multilevel separation. In the end, the maximum point of grade turned out to be 9 percent with about 3 degrees of superelevation. This is within the bounds of prototype traction equipment and has turned out to be manageable for a locomotive with a couple of cars. It sure looks cool seeing them "lean into it" while charging up the hill!



Each of the scenes is separated by a backdrop, which also supports the overhead lighting valence.



Fresh from the paint shop, the 44-ton GE spots a boxcar at the downtown freight house.



The sounds provided by traction equipment are really great, and future plans are to incorporate audio systems into the models. With that in mind, I wanted to explore some new techniques for quiet subroadbed so the viewer hears the intended sound system rather than wheels on the track. After some experimentation, I settled on foam seal tape covered by a layer of cork that was affixed with a paintable silicone caulk. MTH ScaleTrax was selected for the main line because of its flexibility and the wide tie spacing characteristic of traction lines. I shortened rails on the turnouts with a rotary tool to achieve the necessary curvatures to match the plan and soldered all the sections together using Atlas rail joiners. The elevated and subway lines are Ross track for variation. All tracks were also mounted using caulk instead of spikes to minimize conducting noise to the MDF base. This has resulted in an effective and quiet track system. At this point, the layout was starting to appear like a wedding cake of trolleys.

I carved the country landscape contours from 2" rigid pink insulation foam mounted with construction adhesive and built a scenic divider from 1/4" plywood. Everything was painted with household latex paint.

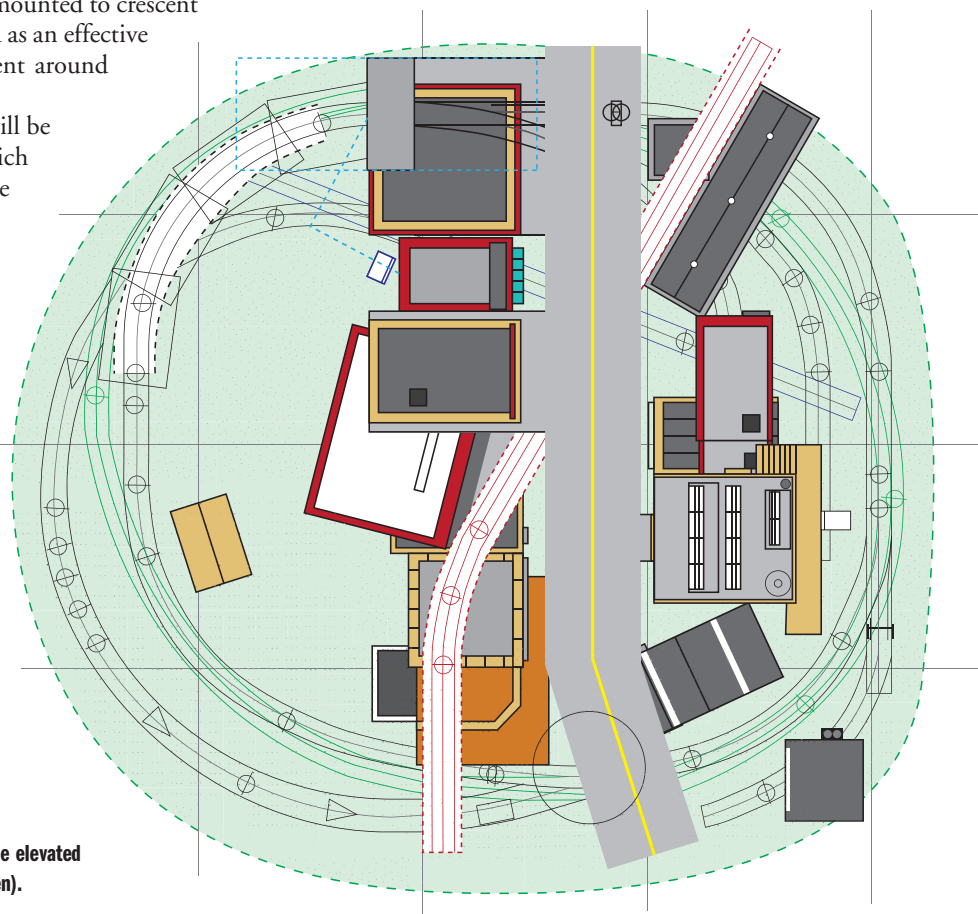
The divider also serves as two scenic backdrops and a support for the overhead lighting valence that follows the contour of the layout. Lighting is a series of LED pucks controlled with a dimmer module.

The structures on the city side are a combination of finished buildings and a variety of cardboard mockups, which represent structures to be built in the future. For example, on one building I used Google Earth to capture an image of the NYC TriBeCa Hook & Ladder #8, made popular in the *Ghostbusters* movies, and sized it to 1:48 using a scale rule. This was mounted to crescent board using a spray fixative and served as an effective way to quickly establish scenic content around the layout.

For the future, the next big step will be to start hanging overhead wire, which will be a first for me, and to continue improving the structures and scenery. Beyond that, I intend to focus on super-detailing indefinitely. Overall, the contest was a great way to try out many new things that were outside my comfort zone, any one of which might fail, and the looming deadline provided a goal to keep plugging away to assemble the elements together. This experience has been very enjoyable, and I am looking forward to taking the layout to some shows to share it. If you see me there, please stop by and say hello. 📷



A Silverliner stops at the platform to pick up passengers while a Brill car rumbles along under the city street.



The track plan, created with RR-Track, depicts the elevated line (red), main line (black), and subway line (green).





A portion of the fleet rests at the car barn between assignments.



A Johnstown Traction Company St. Louis car pauses to let some passengers off downtown.



A subway track gang works on the adjacent line while a Silverliner awaits departure.



The 44-ton GE leans into the interchange hill with a couple of coal cars destined for the city power plant.



## About the Author

Daniel Raible grew up in the Cleveland, Ohio, area and has been involved with several prototype and model organizations performing historical restoration and layout development. He is an electrical engineer at the NASA John H. Glenn Research Center working in the space communications area. He took a long hiatus from the hobby while pursuing his Ph.D. This project was his first layout in many years. Jamie, his wife, and Lynette, his daughter, share his enthusiasm for the hobby.



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2146-1	EMD FP45	199.99
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2168-1	Seaboard E8 ABA	499.99
2172-1	BNSF Dash-9 Set	599.99
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## Two Collectible Station Platforms

One accessory that enhances the looks of even the smallest layout is a wayside passenger platform. If there is not enough space available to locate a station on a pike, the passenger platform suggests that not only is this a miniature railroad, but something more glamorous than a freight set may be coming down the track (Photos 1 and 2).

We are going to examine two collectible O gauge platforms that demonstrate why parallel development in toy trains can be such a good thing for collectors when it increases the choices of available collectibles.

### The Lionel 156 Station Platform

The 156 Station Platform was a welcome addition to the Lionel accessory lineup in 1939 (Photo 3). This attractively painted and colorful accessory continued to be a desirable item during its three-year postwar production run from 1946 to 1949, and has become an even more desirable collectible in the following decades.

A thick coat of bright and shiny red paint covered the phenolic (Bakelite) plastic roof that was supported over the green platform of the 156 by three silver-painted, die-cast pillars, except in 1942





when they were painted gray. The roof was attached to the platform structure by two decorative nickel-plated finials, and the two end pillars held the bulbs that lit the 156 (Photo 4). The outer edge of both sides of the bright green-painted, phenolic plastic base featured a diamond tread for the safety of its miniature passengers. The bottom of the station had detailed instructions about the two lights for the platform molded into the base along with a sign, “Made in the U.S. of America, The Lionel Corporation, New York, NY” (Photos 5 and 6).

The construction details of the 156 Station Platform help make it desirable, but the primary elements that make this piece such an attractive

standout with collectors are the four colorful lithographed advertising signs that adorn the picket fences on a complete 156 platform (Photo 7). The signs are two-sided, fold over the plastic picket fence sections, and hook under them. If you want to hook two 156 platforms together, an additional 156 fence section can be used between them. Replacing the signs or adjusting them often causes the tops of the plastic pickets to be broken (Photo 8). Replacement parts are available, but if they aren’t original postwar pieces, they lower the value of the platform.

The most common advertising signs for the 156 platform are Rival Dog Food, Baby Ruth candy bars, and Sunoco Dynafuel gasoline, but as you can see from the signs on these other examples, a variety of signs were used (Photos 9 and 10). A 156 platform with advertising signs that are harder to find increases the value of the platform, and so does having a box like this one (Photos 11 and 12).

I have seen asking prices as high as \$250 for the postwar version in C-7 condition with the original box and insert, but a price of around \$150 seems more common. Prices for 156s without packaging in C-6 or C-7 condition, according to the seller, range from a low of \$40 to \$99.

## The American Flyer 586F Wayside Station

The Gilbert American Flyer 586F Wayside Station was a contemporary of the Lionel 156 Station Platform being introduced into the American Flyer line in 1939 (Photo 13). When toy train







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production resumed after the war in 1946, this late prewar offering stayed on as an American Flyer S gauge accessory until 1956.

Construction of the 586F Wayside Station was simpler than the 156. Two die-cast pillars painted green supported the dark red sheet-metal roof, and there were no fancy finials fastening the roof to the die-cast supports—two silver slotted machine screws did the job. A socket located near the top of each support provided a place for the two lights that illuminate the platform (Photo 14). The green-painted pillars also held up a formed sheet-metal bench painted bright yellow that was devoid of any details. The dark gray sheet-metal base was equally bare except for a multicolored decal that read “American Flyer, Mfd by, The A. C. Gilbert Co., New Haven, Conn. U. S. A.” (Photo 15). Detail to brighten up the foot-long platform was supplied by two figures and a cart (Photo 16). The cart body was painted the same shade of green as the two pillars, but the cart sported bright red wheels. A detailed hand-painted figure rode on the front of the cart. The second figure was a hand-painted porter clad in formal railroad blue. Possession of these figures in C-7 condition or better is the key to maximizing the collector value of the otherwise “plain-Jane” 586F station. Two other essentials for top dollar are an intact decal on the platform base and a box in crisp shape (Photos 17 and 18).

Prices for the 586F in C-7 condition without the box, or even with a box but without the cart and figures, can range from \$40 to \$60. If the 586F is offered complete with box and the insert, plus the





10

cart with the two figures, prices jump to \$125 and then some. When it comes to collector prices for the 586F Wayside Station, condition and completeness are not everything; they are the only things.

## Insights

Writing about these two toy train platforms meant that I lived with them for several weeks. At one time I had six of them floating around my office and my house (four 156s and two 586Fs). As I examined them and ruminated on their value as collectibles, I also thought about their opera-



11



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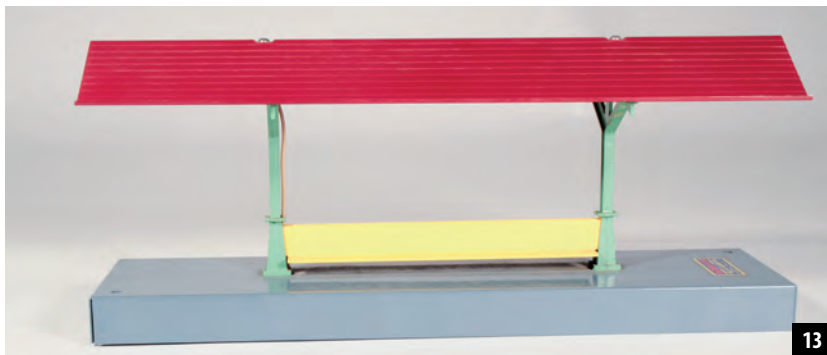
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tional utility for non-collectors and the pleasure they could provide both sides either on the shelf or on a layout.

Although the two platforms give the impression of being different in size, I was surprised to discover that they have basically the same dimensions: bases 12" in length and 3-1/4" in width with an overall height of 5-1/8". The American Flyer 586F seems to be the larger and clunkier of the two. The Lionel 156 looks sleeker and certainly is the more colorful station thanks to its bright colors and detailed advertising signs. Even though the 156 is a clear first choice to go on my layout, I wondered why it only remained in the Lionel lineup for three years in the postwar era. An examination of contemporary Lionel products going into the 1950s yielded the answer. As attractive as the 156 Station Platform was, it no longer fit in with the rest of the line. Painted phenolic plastic had given way to newer materials that were less brittle, easier to mold, provided more detail, and did not need to be painted to give a finished appearance. The later 157 Station Platform may not have been as nice to look at as the earlier 156, but it was compatible in appearance and materials with the new 445 Operating Switch Tower and the 132 Suburban Station.

Production techniques may have moved on, but the 156 Station Platform provides an impressive and nostalgic backdrop for 3-rail passenger trains that newer designs still don't match (Photo 19). 



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## The Circus Train Is in Town

Article and Photos by Jacques Brouillette



A hotbox on the elephant car commands the attention of CN 6060's crew and caused a delay in the circus train's arrival.

"The circus train is here!" shout young, happy boys who race down to the railroad yard where 45 cars of wonder and magic came to a stop on this hot summer day of 1934.

Residents of this small town have been waiting since dawn for the great day to start—Circus Day! Schools and stores have been closed just to make sure that nobody misses one of the two shows scheduled under the big top today. Then, following the three-ring extravaganza, the circus will vanish into the night, disappearing along the rails for another year.

Everybody is happy except for the circus people. Why is that so? Well, as luck would have it, they arrived late—three hours late, in fact—due to a hotbox on both axles of one truck on the elephant car. The circus train had to pull into a siding to make the necessary repairs. By the time everything was once again ready to go, the train had to pause even longer to let a hotshot passenger train go by.

Both owners of the circus, Thomas and Arthur, are very anxious over the day ahead. They certainly don't want to cancel the street parade through town. They will rely on the resolute spirit of their crew to get the show going, and Big Jack, their lot gaffer (manager), is just the right fellow to handle this situation. Jack is in charge of orchestrating the movement of people, animals, and materiel to the circus lot where the tents will be set up. Already he

is barking orders related to unloading the wagons in such a way that the big top, menagerie, and side show tents will be erected first. The dining department, which usually comes in first on the circus lot, will have to wait.

Jack and his roustabouts are making sure all the cage wagons and bandwagons are ready for the parade. Animal keepers hastily feed the bears and big cats in their cages on the flatcars, making sure the growls parade-goers hear won't be the result of empty carnivore stomachs. At the same time, "razorbacks" (circus lingo for men who load and unload railroad circus cars) are installing the pole (tow bar) on a wagon before rolling it down the run (loading/unloading ramp). Another wagon with its load of big top poles and the main canvas is already en route to the circus lot, and the last baggage stocks (Percheron draft horses) are out of the horse cars.

Elephants are brought in to help unload the heavy circus wagons from the flatcars. This is an awesome sight for youngsters who probably never saw a real elephant up close.

By the end of the morning, all of what initially appeared to be confusion, chaos, and congestion is over. The street parade was a success, and the big top is filling with spectators anticipating the first performance. Thanks to all the circus people, townsfolk will fall asleep tonight with spectacular images of the world of spectacle and wonder that is Circus Day. 🐘





A switcher shunts a circus flatcar onto one of several available sidings.



Circus rolling stock is spotted on multiple sidings for faster unloading and loading.



A team of horses anxiously awaits its turn to haul a wagon loaded with tent poles and rigging gear over to the show site.



The big top's main poles and canvas are en route from the rail siding to the circus site.



Zebras, horses, and elephants all travel in specially designed stock cars.



Waiting for their charges to be unloaded, keepers tend to feeding the wagons full of wild animals.

## Trains + Circus = Fond Memories

My boyhood years were filled with stories about the great circus train that came to Montréal, Quebec, Canada. My grandfather had worked for the Swift meatpacking facility next to the railroad's Delormier yard, and he gave water and ice to the circus train people whenever it was in town. In return, he was rewarded with circus tickets for the family. Two sons, Thomas and Arthur Brouillette, really loved the circus experience, and later Arthur built a complete circus train for his HO train layout. I remember saying that one day I'm gonna build a circus train just like my uncle. And build it I did!





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**“Big Jack” gives orders to the train crew (above) while a local businessman gets ready to watch the parade (left.)**



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Some local children get a close look at the huge elephant as the last of the draft horses get off the train.

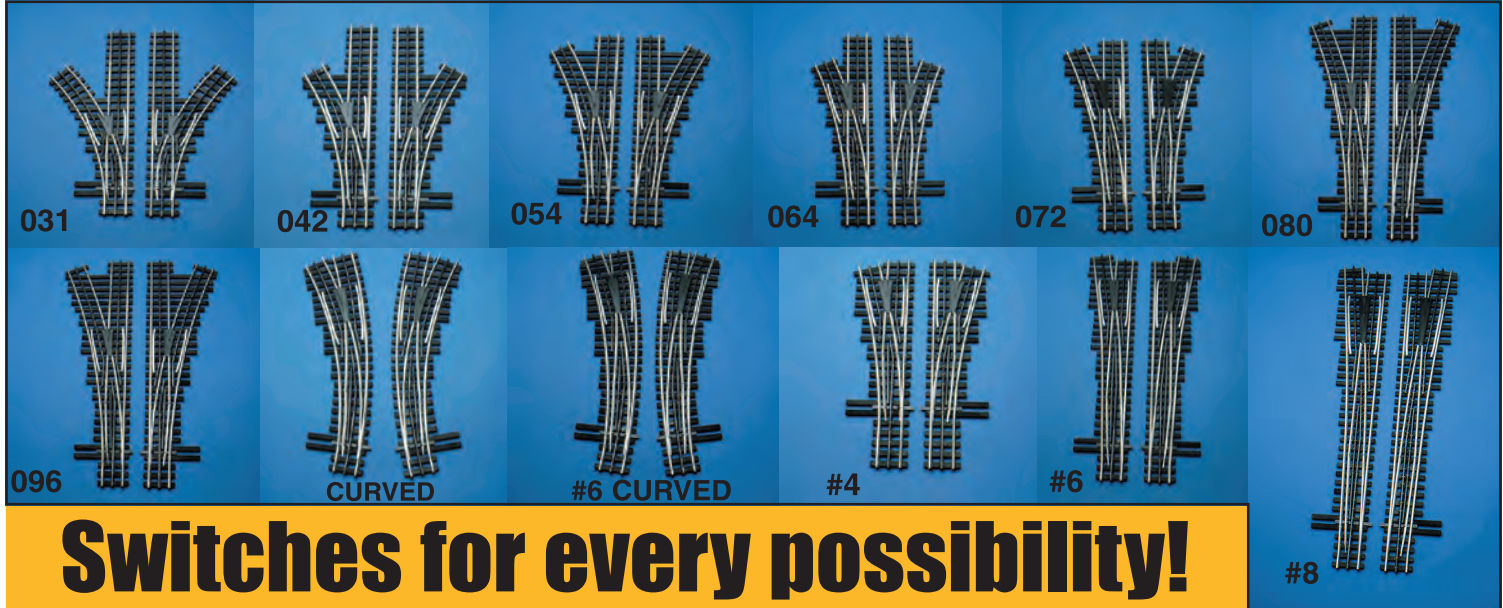




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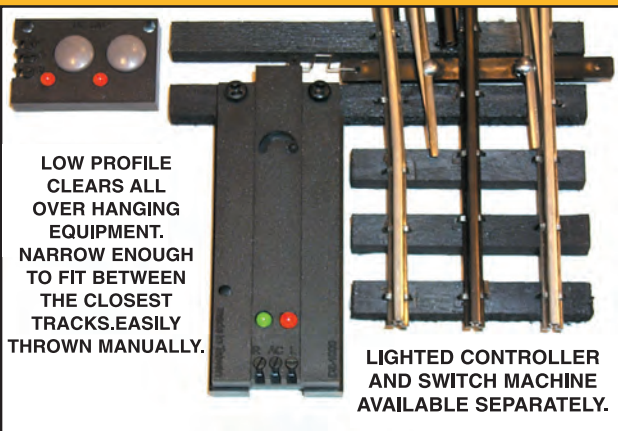


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## Building a Layout: Framework

There are many different types of model railroad benchwork, so what I will show here is the one kind that I have grown to know best. It isn't L-girder benchwork because I believe that while that type of benchwork is great for HO trains, it's not necessarily best for heavier O gauge applications.

For that reason, I've always believed in a simple table framework that more or less goes around the perimeter of the table on the outside edges as compared to leaving any part of the table hanging over the edge of the frame. That doesn't mean that the table surface is reduced to boring rectilinear shapes; it just means that more design thought goes into the framework shape than what might be considered usual.

I believe that the table surface needs to be no thicker than 1/2" and that the surface needs to be supported by bracing (or table joists) that are nominally 16" on center from one to the next. By keeping the joists closer together, the amount of vibration in the surface is greatly reduced. That means the trains will run quieter, which is a major consideration in O gauge.

I used to believe that a plywood surface of 1/2" should then be covered by some sort of sound-deadening material, such as Homasote, to further reduce the noise. There's nothing wrong with that, but in today's world, Homasote is getting harder and harder to find. If you can find it and desire to add an additional sound-deadening surface, by all means go ahead and do so. I've found recently that it just isn't necessarily worth it for the money, material, and effort expended. I've seen quite a few good layouts that didn't use Homasote or any other second layer of sound-deadening material and still had very little noise transfer. I've found that the best way to fight noise is with closely spaced table joists, such as the 16" spacing that I now use.

Another fine way for reducing noise is the scenery itself. Ground cover, trees, highway paving material, cork roadbed for your track, layout structures, and stone ballast do more to keep a layout quiet than any other tricks you might consider. When I design a layout, I think in terms of 4' x 8' wooden frames supporting 4x8 sheets of plywood. Multiples of these frames





2



3



4

simply continue to fill out the table until it gets to the fully desired table size. I first built these frames years and years ago from 2x4s, with 2x4 legs, until the price of 2x4s went sky high. Then I went to 1x4s with 2x2 legs and 1x2 braces. What I found was that the table was still strong enough to support any layout, and the cost was greatly reduced.

When I went shopping for 1x4s this time, I found that the price of good 1x4s was now off the charts, too. As an experiment, I decided to try 1x3s due to their greatly reduced cost. Surprise! The table is still as rigid as ever and very adequate for an O gauge train layout. An added benefit is that if you are installing grades from one layer of the layout to another, the distance between layers is somewhat less (due to the narrower 1x3s used in the frames), which makes for shorter and easier grades in your track plan.

As I mentioned above, a layout can be built to any shape by simply making as many standard 4' x 8' table frames as you need to fill the area, and then cut down the length and/or width of any frame needed to complete the outside edges of the layout space. This design technique quickly lends itself to a modular method of making and attaching frames. Make the first frame by cutting the frame members to the length needed and putting the frame members together with drywall screws (Photo 1). I use 2" fine-thread drywall screws to assemble the frame sides to the end boards and the interior joists.

Stanley makes plastic folding sawhorses that, when combined with a couple of sheets of your plywood for the table, provide a great workbench for building a train layout. In the photo, I'm putting together the first of many individual frames for the layout. Among the handy tools to have available are a couple of battery-operated drills: one for drilling holes for the screws and another set up as a power screwdriver. It's possible to use one tool and to keep changing bits back and forth, but two makes the whole project much easier.

The drill bit you'll want to use for this project is shown in Photo 2 and is called a combination drill bit. It's the same one we used in my previous "Backshop" to install the scenic panel material. You can get these bits from most any big box store. The combination bit drills the pilot hole and the countersink all at once. When you're driving screws right at the edge of soft pine 1x3s, predrilling the location for the screw eliminates any wood from splitting. Use a #6 bit as shown in the photo. It matches the #6 drywall screw size.



5



Another tool worth its weight in gold is a compound miter, like the one shown in Photo 3. This model #M2500RC3 purchased at Sears is a 10" saw that is equipped with a laser beam to show exactly where the cut is going to be made. Current prices start for about \$110. You will quickly find out how valuable it is when making cuts like some of the ones you see in the frame I am putting together.

Using a couple of the sheets of plywood as your worktable provides you with an excellent way to draw your cut plan right from the completed frame onto the plywood for its tabletop to be attached at a future date. While the finished frame is still clamped for the assembly process, simply draw around the perimeter for the cut plan on the plywood. Use a jigsaw, like the one shown in Photo 4, to cut the plywood top pieces for the frame.

Photo 5 shows my first completed frame sitting on the floor next to a bunch of 2x2 table legs. The nominal height for my table is 40", but I cut a bunch of 8' long 2x2s in half, making them 4' long. The exact height isn't important just yet because I will cut off each leg to the exact height of the table frame once the frame is attached.

Use four or so legs to first get the table frame up to the approximate height you want your table to be. Clamp the legs into the corners of the frame. Once that is done, adjust the height of the frame on one of the back legs until you get that leg right at the nominal height you have selected for your table frame. Drill two holes through the frame member and into the leg. Drive the two 2" screws through the frame member and into the leg.

Next, go to the opposite back corner of the frame and, using either a 3' or a 5' carpenter's level, adjust the frame on that second leg until the level tells you it is indeed level from the first leg to the second leg. Clamp the second leg into place and then attach the leg with two more 2" screws.

Repeat this process from the back legs to the front legs and clamp each leg in place and then attach with two more screws making the frame exactly level in all directions. Repeat that process for all four legs and then take a look at the finished frame. If you think a leg is needed in the middle of the front or back frame member, go ahead and add that leg accordingly. When you are done, cut off the tops of all legs that protrude above the frame.





Make up a bunch of leg braces all at once by cutting through three or four 1x2s at the same time with the miter saw. I made one master brace about 20" long with 45-degree cuts on both ends. Using this brace as a master pattern, I drew on the face of an 8' 1x2. Doing it this way and reversing the pattern brace each time will get about five braces per 8' 1x2. Cut out the braces and stack them for future use as needed. Keep in mind the saw will take out more than the pencil line, but the length of each brace is not that critical.

Everywhere you need a leg brace, begin by clamping the brace into the inside face of the frame member and attaching with one 1-1/4" drywall screw through the side of the frame and into the side of the brace. Put the other end of the brace up against the 2x2 leg, drill through the end of the mitered brace into the leg, and attach with a 2" drywall screw. Continue this process using two braces for each leg (Photo 6).

Once the first frame is in place, build the second frame and add it to the first frame (Photos 7 and 8). Begin by clamping the face of the second frame's end or side board right onto the face of the first frame, as shown in Photos 9 and 10. Attach by drilling through the two frames and screwing them together using some 1-1/4" screws. From that joint, go down to the end of the second frame, level it up, and attach needed legs accordingly (Photo 11).

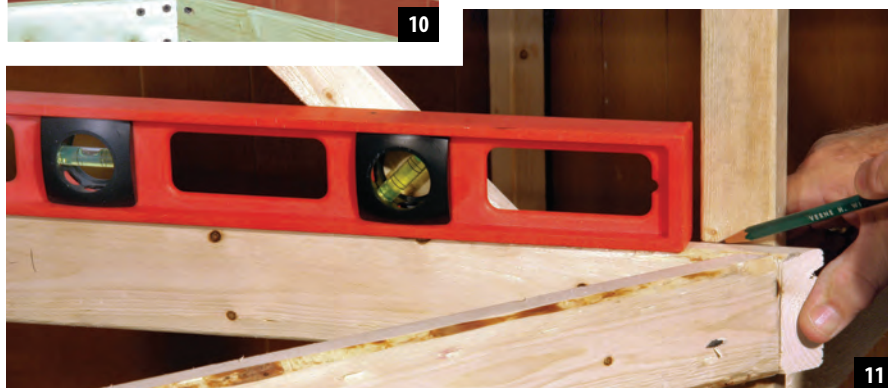
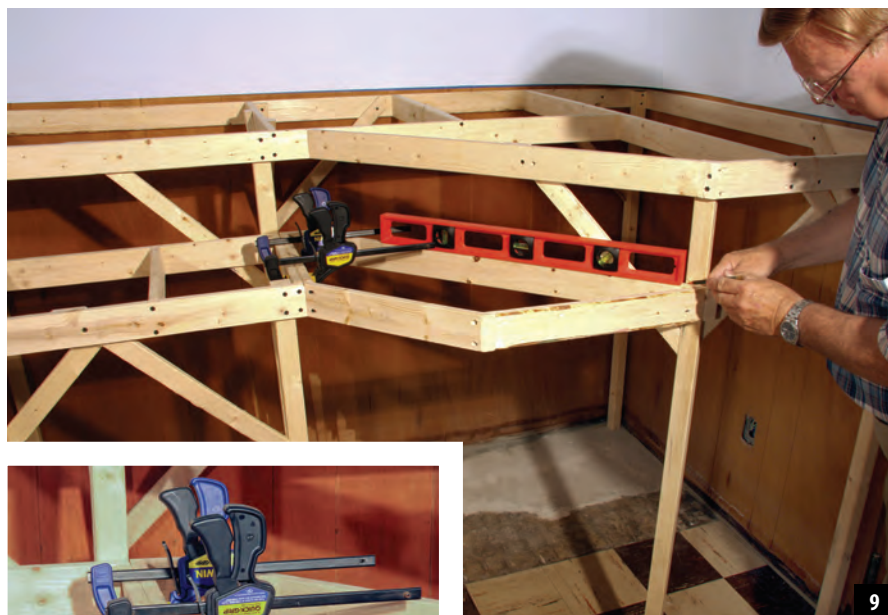




Photo 12 shows my upper-level and lower-level frames all attached and in place for the far end of the layout that is beyond the closet door on the right. Sometimes one leg can be used for more than one frame, such as what is seen in Photo 13. On my layout, the front level is lower than the back level. That means that the back of the lower-level frames can all be attached to the legs already in place for the taller frames. In Photo 14, the framework is continuing from the other side of the closet door and is working its way down to the other end of the basement.

Photo 15 shows a bag of plastic C-shaped clamps available from home improvement stores. These clamps come in various sizes (the ones shown are 1/2"). A wonderful use for these clamps is to attach them to the underside edges of the table frame members with only one screw at one end of the clamp. The other end of the clamp will now flex down easily, allowing you to add and neatly route wires when you get to that stage of your layout construction. The time to add these clamps is now, before you add the plywood



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14



15

for the tabletop. Photo 16 shows the clamps in place, even though I've added the tabletop over the frame since they were put on.

Another great benefit in using these plastic clamps is that any one of them can be replaced with a larger one if the number of wires exceeds your initial expectations. I bought some 3/4", 1", and 1-1/4" clamps just in case that happens. A word to the wise: I bought the clamps shown in the photo from Home Depot at a cost of about 8 cents per clamp. I found the same exact-sized plastic clamp in a national branded hardware store, but the price there was a whopping 44 cents per clamp. It pays to shop around!

Note in Photo 17 that sometimes you need to do some preliminary work on the lower levels before you add the second-level framework. As you see in Photo 18 with the new framework added, getting to some of the track work would certainly be much more difficult. Always keep this in mind as it is very easy to get carried away with framework construction only to realize that you now need to disassemble a part of your frame to first do some track work that may not be easily accessed later.

Also note that I have painted the legs black and the tabletop and frame members brown as I go. The reason for that is to keep moisture (humidity) from getting into the finished framework and warping the wood. If you paint as you go, you won't cover up key pieces of the frame without painting it first. The brown is just my universal color for earth, which might later become exposed for some reason. Better for it to be earth brown than lumberyard yellow!

As you may have noticed in some of the photos, there are large gaping holes in the framework here and there. Those will be for my hinged panels that will allow me to access the hard to get to parts of the finished layout. For those areas of your train table, stay tuned for my next "Backshop."



16



17



18



# 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](mailto: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.

I currently have two Lionel No. 5906 sound activation buttons installed with a postwar ZW. When the horn or bell buttons are activated, all postwar and modern Lionel locomotives with AC motors slow down dramatically. My MTH Proto-Sound 2.0 locomotives slow very little, if at all, and my Williams locomotives show no signs of slowing. Can any modifications be done to maintain speed while using the 5906 buttons?

—Eric M. Thurlow

*This is a common problem with these or most any other add-on sound activation button. The reason is simple. Original ZWs added a few volts as the whistle switch was pressed. These volts were to compensate for the additional drain on the power that the whistle motor used when activated. The desired result was that the operator experienced little or no change in speed of the engine.*

*This automatically supplied voltage doesn't happen with an add-on activation button. The result is that when the whistle motor is activated, it uses up some percentage of the track power, and you definitely will see a slowdown. With electronic whistles on modern engines, there is no additional current demand placed on the transformer. That is why the difference shows up with any loco-*

*motive using a whistle motor and not with any locomotive that electronically produces the sound. —Jim*

Are the QSI systems used in older 3rd Rail engines subject to the same problems as MTH Proto 1 engines? I called 3rd Rail, and they said no, but they did say to put a 9-volt Duracell in the unit. I am interested in your experiences with the QSI systems in 3rd Rail products. The engine is probably from the mid-1990s.

Also, would a BCR work with the 3rd Rail engine? I really don't like to put batteries in engines when I can use a capacitor instead.

—Russ Meier

*I believe that any Proto 1 or QSI system that originally used NiCad rechargeable batteries should be replaced with BCRs. The reason is simple. The original Proto 1 and early QSI units did not use what is called a smart charging system. That means the charger is constantly trying to recharge the battery even when it doesn't need it.*

*With NiCad batteries, the memory that you might have heard about is when the battery is used only partially and then recharged. The memory problem is that the battery effec-*

*tively loses all storage volume below what it had when it was prematurely recharged. That means the battery cannot use any of the area below what it had when it began a new recharge cycle. The result is it actually runs low quicker. Only deep-cycle discharging should be used with NiCads before attempting to be recharged.*

*That is the difference between the older systems and Proto 2. The charger in Proto 2 units does not attempt to recharge the battery until it actually needs it, or when it is actually low. Then it charges the battery. The result is a longer-lasting battery in all cases. —Jim*

I have purchased a few of your kits and just finished building the Acme Machine Co. I enjoyed painting and completing this very nice kit, which is most attractive. When I placed it next to MTH RailKing and other buildings, it appears that your kits are slated for a smaller gauge. Is that true? I would expect these kits would be for O gauge and size.

—Ron Orsi

*The OGR kits are based on 1/4" to the foot scale. Check the height of the doors on any kit, and you will see that they are sized for a 6' person, or roughly 1-1/2". Otherwise,*

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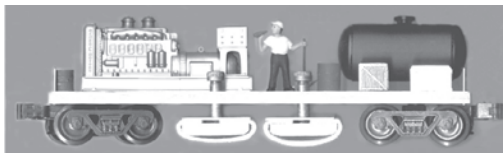
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our kits are indeed sized rather small compared to full-scale buildings solely to not take up too much valuable real estate on O gauge layouts.—Jim

I have a belt-type Lionel coal loader, and one side of the tray moves or jerks a lot compared to the other side. The goal, obviously, is to have both cams hit their respective cam followers simultaneously. Have you discussed the fix or adjustment in your columns?

—Phil Gresho

The two pillow blocks that contain the hole for the axle with the cams on it are on each side of the red coal tray. Remove the bar over the tray by spreading the two legs inward, remove the spring holding the tray in the middle, and then remove the two cap plates over the pillow blocks. When you do, you'll discover that the two pillow blocks with the hole in them for the axle actually have the hole drilled off center, allowing you to install the two pillow blocks with the hole either forward or aft. It's likely that someone has repaired or installed the two pillow blocks with one of them having the hole the wrong way, causing the axle to do just what your coal loader is doing. Reassemble the tray and the axle with the hole in the same direction on both sides, and your problem should be gone.

—Jim Barrett

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## The Junction

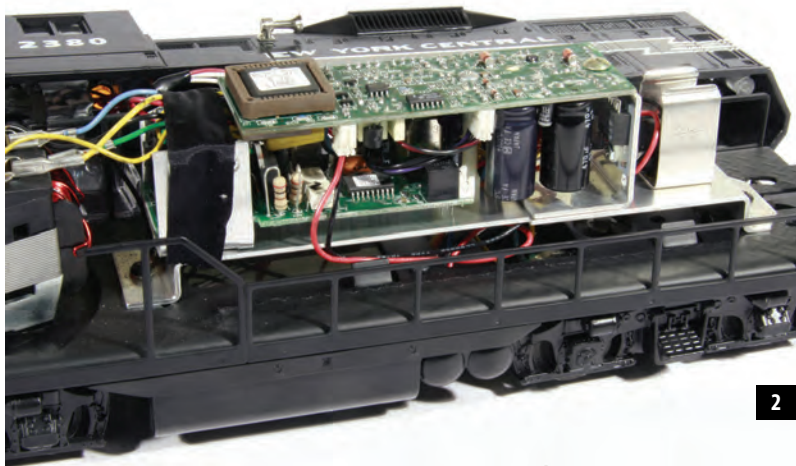
Over the past several weeks, I reviewed locomotives with the latest in command control and sound systems from both Lionel and MTH. Without a doubt the Legacy and Proto-Sound 3.0 systems are fabulous in all respects. Even the latest TMCC with RailSounds electronics implemented by Atlas O, 3rd Rail, and Weaver in their products under license from Lionel are exciting, as I experienced with the Great Northern Class O8 Mikado I reviewed for this issue.

After packing the O8 and Ohio Central GP35 for shipment back to their respective owners, I set up a couple of postwar-era freight trains with cars I built from Intermountain and Red Caboose kits; cars that haven't polished the rails on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad in a while. My A-B-B-A consist of command and sound-equipped Lionel 2380 GP9s in Southern Pacific black widow livery came off the shelf to pull one of the

trains. I decided to make it a Southern Pacific night on the CCRR, so the other freight drew my Lionel 2387 F3s, also an A-B-B-A consist in SP black widow colors with TMCC and RailSounds. The effect of multicolored freight cars with matched-livery SP diesels was visually and audibly pleasing...well, exciting would be a more accurate term, but I digress.

As I entered the train ID number for the GP9 lashup on the CAB-1L, the realization hit that within an hour of taking the O8 and GP35 off the tracks, I went from running locomotives with the latest in integrated command and sound technology to the earliest. Adding to the realization was the fact I was also using the latest TMCC system to run the earliest locomotives equipped with TMCC and RailSounds. And best of all, that transition across products and technology separated by over 15 years was seamless.

In early 1997, I reviewed a Lionel TMCC set consisting of a CAB-1 and Base-1 along with a Lionel 2380 GP9 in NYC lightning stripe colors (Photo 1). I'm usually not an early adopter of technology, and prior to the arrival of the engine and command set, my attitude toward command control was one of relative ambivalence. But Jim Bunte at Lionel was excited about these new products and offered to underwrite the review with them. Mainly, as editor of the *LOTS Switcher* magazine at that time, I was obliged to review them for the club's membership. To make a long story short, within minutes after powering up the Geep, my regard for TMCC with its integrated RailSounds 2.5 system shifted to unbridled enthusiasm and has remained that way ever since. Yup, in mere minutes I was not only an early adopter of the command and sound technology, I was an ardent advocate.





The 2380 Geep was the first locomotive featuring RailSounds version 2.5, which, as I understood at the time, used RailSounds II recordings of the EMD diesel prime mover, horn, and bell. Inside the Geep's plastic body shell was the then-new Liontech Command Reverse Unit, or LCRU (Photo 2). This set of boards received command signals from the CAB-1 remote and controlled and drove all of the locomotive functions including the RailSounds. As a sound system operationally integrated with the LCRU, RailSounds 2.5 produced several of the new and thrilling sound effects that today's 3-rail hobbyists, even conventional operators, take for granted.

But in 1997, functions such as constant speed control and sounds of simulated cab chatter and radio dialogs, dynamic increasing or decreasing intensity of the locomotive's exhaust sounds, exhaust smoke control, and varying warning device sounds, just to name a few, were probably not even envisioned by many rank and file hobbyists. Yet, what was functional back then was not only a technological breakthrough for 3-rail train operation, it was amazing.

When the Geep started moving, the diesel revs would automatically step up from idle to the first of three rev levels and would return back to idle after it stopped. In a carryover from the earlier RailSounds and RailSounds II, the LCRU used a cam and microswitch mechanism mounted on the rear truck to sense if the Geep was stopped or moving. Once the locomotive was under way, the operator had to press a button on the remote to manually increase or decrease the revs. Still, the available sound effects instantly set new standards for enjoying 3-rail trains.

In an odd move, Lionel broke with its customary release paradigm of a unique cab number for each road name or color scheme. The first two command-equipped GP9s were released in NYC lightning stripe paint scheme and SP black widow colors, and both wore the same 2380 cab number (Photo 3). But then, product and business management at Lionel were in turmoil at that time, so perhaps the unexplainable was really...unexplainable.

Both versions of the 2380 had the traditional mechanical disk couplers, which required an electromagnet imbedded in the track to open. But not long after releasing these engines, Lionel offered a command-operated coil coupler kit for installation by either an authorized service station or the hobbyist. Of course, command operated coil couplers are now part and parcel of every command-equipped locomotive regardless of its manufacturer. By the time these coil coupler kits were offered, I had two 2380 Geeps in NYC plus two more in SP colors and cabless nonpowered B units for both pairs. Because I didn't use these multiunit consists for switching duty on my original layout, I considered the cost for four kits, one for each end of the two Geep

consists, outside of my elasticity of price and demand curve and passed on them.

Both pairs of my 2380s have run without problems since new, which is fortunate since replacement LCRU and RailSounds 2.5 boards are now nonexistent. In fact, in the heyday of these engines, if something electronic failed, everything electronic was replaced as a single unit—expensive but effective. But if the electronics in one of my 2380s fails now, I'll likely upgrade it and its stable mate to the currently available AC/DC Commander and RailSounds Commander board sets from Electric RR.

No two ways about it, the 2380 Geeps were watershed products for Lionel as well as many O gauge railroaders, me included. Prior to the advent of command control and sound technology, my original on-the-floor layout was a clear throwback to a youngster's pride and joy in the early 1950s, including traditional tubular track and O22 switches. As such, it encompassed a number of Plasticville and other buildings, operating accessories, and scenic accouterments of vehicles and figures. The trains ran around and around three concentric ovals of track, periodically taking one of the two reverse loops. Today on that same floorspace, just the trains and especially the control and sound functions of O gauge locomotives are everything I enjoy from the hobby. All the former scenic elements are gone, so now I can view my trains from a trackside vantage point anywhere in the room.

On my new layout with sectional Atlas O track, switches, and roadbed, I now enjoy switching cars in and out of sidings or crossing trains from one main line to the other from wherever I am sitting or reclining using the command remote. The trains stop and start frequently under command control, and I find the mechanical sounds of diesel or steam locomotives exhilarating in their realism.

Since acquiring my four 2380s in 1997 and then their matching B units, I've not bought another conventional locomotive and rarely run previously accumulated conventional ones. Additionally, several of my former conventional engines and even earlier TMCC units are now upgraded to TMCC with cruise control and RailSounds 4.0. I've even upgraded dummy Geeps, SDs, and F3s for command-controlled lights and coil couplers. One dummy F3 A unit now has sound, which is audibly awesome in a TMCC lashup of three F3s with RailSounds.

The advent of TMCC and RailSounds 2.5 was the junction where how I enjoyed the hobby changed direction, taking a different and exciting route. 🚂



3



# Scheduled Meets

*Scheduled Meets listings cost \$25.00 per issue. Listings may be placed via e-mail at [info@ogaugerr.com](mailto:info@ogaugerr.com) or by regular mail. For more information, visit [www.ogaugerr.com](http://www.ogaugerr.com) and click on "Train Meets" in the menu displayed in the left-hand column.*

## January 4, 2014

**KATY, TX** – TCA Lone Star Division, Gulf Coast Chapter, Annual Winter Toy Train Meet, VFW Hall, George Bush Dr. and Ave. D. 10:30a-4p, Adm: \$6, family \$9, under 12 free. Operating layouts; buy and sell trains. Children get buttons, hats and Kids Club information. Info: Carl Olson (218) 277-7630, Mark Heavener (214) 529-5150, [www.tca-gulfcoastchapter.org](http://www.tca-gulfcoastchapter.org).

## January 4-5, 2014

**SOMERSET, NJ** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Garden State Exhibit Center, 50 Atrium Dr. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com), [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

## January 5, 2014

**TRUMBULL, CT** – Classic Shows, LLC Train & Toy Show, Marriott-Trumbull, 180 Hawley Ln. 9a-2p, Adm: \$5, 12 and under free w/adult. Info: (203) 926-1327 or [www.ClassicShowsLLC.com](http://www.ClassicShowsLLC.com).

## January 10-11, 2014

**TUCSON, AZ** – Toy Train Show, Tucson Expo Center, 3750 E. Irvington Rd. Fri. 2p-7p, Sat. 9a-2p, Adm: \$6, 13 and under free. Info: Dave Hoverstock, (520) 909-0722, [trainshow@gpdtoytrainmuseum.com](mailto:trainshow@gpdtoytrainmuseum.com), [www.gpdtoytrainmuseum.com](http://www.gpdtoytrainmuseum.com).

## January 11-12, 2014

**DELAND, FL** – 46th Florida Railfair, Volusia County Fairgrounds, Tommy Lawrence Bldg., SR 44 and I-4, Exit 118. Sat. 9a-4p, Sun. 10a-3:30p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, (703) 536-2954, [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com), [rrshows@aol.com](mailto:rrshows@aol.com).

**YORK, PA** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, York Expo Center, 334 Carlisle Ave. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com), [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

## January 18, 2014

**ATLANTA, GA** – 46th Model Train & Railroadiana Show, North Atlanta Trade Center, 1700 Jeurgens Court. 9a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, (703) 536-2954, [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com), [rrshows@aol.com](mailto:rrshows@aol.com).

## January 18-19, 2014

**MONROEVILLE, PA** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Convention Center, 209 Mall Blvd. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com), [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

## January 25, 2014

**LA CROSSE, WI** – 23rd Annual Great Tri-State Rail Sale RR Show & Swap Meet, LaCrosse Center, 2nd St. and Pearl St. 9a-3p, Adm: \$5, under 12 free w/adult. Info: 4000 Foundation, P.O. Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, (608) 781-9383.

**LARGO, FL** – TCA Train Show, Minn Reg Bldg., 6340 126th Ave. 10a-3p. Adm: \$5.00, under 12 free. Displays, layouts, door prizes. Info: Charles Anyan, (727) 345-0288, [canyan1@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:canyan1@tampabay.rr.com).

## February 8-9, 2014

**FREDERICKSBURG, VA** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Expo and Conference Center, 2371 Carl D. Silver Parkway. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com), [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

## February 9, 2014

**WALLINGFORD, CT** – Classic Shows, LLC Train & Toy Show, Zandri's Stillwood Inn, 1074 S. Colony Rd. I-91, Exit 13. 9a-2p, Adm: \$5, 12 and under free w/adult. Info: (203) 926-1327 or [www.ClassicShowsLLC.com](http://www.ClassicShowsLLC.com).

## February 15-16, 2014

**READING, PA** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Greater Expo Center, 2525 N. 12th St. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com) or [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

## February 22, 2014

**JACKSONVILLE, FL** – 36th Model Train & Railroadiana Show, Prime Osborn Convention Center, 1000 Water St. 9a-5p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Alan Altman, P.O. Box 985, Land O Lakes, FL 34639, (813) 949-7197, [rrshows@aol.com](mailto:rrshows@aol.com), [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com).

## February 22-23, 2014

**VIRGINIA BEACH, VA** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Convention Center, 1000 19th St. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com) or [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

## March 1, 2014

**ST. CLOUD, MN** – Granite City Train Show & Sale, National Guard Armory, 1710 Veteran's Dr. 10a-3p, Adm: \$6, under 10 free. Buy and sell, operating model and toy train displays, and play area. Win a Lionel train set or FSM structure kit, refreshments available. Info: 320-255-0033 or [edwardolson@cloudnet.com](mailto:edwardolson@cloudnet.com).

## March 1-2, 2014

**UPPER MARLBOR, MD** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Prince George Equestrian Center, 14900 Pennsylvania Ave. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com), [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

## March 9, 2014

**TOLEDO, OH** – Toledo Toymasters Greater Train & Toy Show, Owens Community College (SHAC), 30335 Oregon Rd., Perrysburg, OH. 11a-3p, Early Birds 9a-3p, Adm: \$6, Early Birds \$8, under 12 free w/adult. Info: Randy Ramsey, 1566 South Ave, Toledo, OH 73609, (419) 215-4181, [www.toymasters.org](http://www.toymasters.org) or [trainmasters@bex.net](mailto:trainmasters@bex.net).

## March 15, 2014

**ALBANY, NY** – The Mountain Toy & RR Club Swap Meet, Polish Community Center, Washington Ave., Ext. and Rapp Rd. 9a-2p, Adm: \$5. Info: George Washburn, 40 Hudson St., Hudson, NY 12534 or (518) 828-7902.

## March 15-16, 2014

**WILMINGTON, DE** – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Chase Center on the Riverfront, 815 Justison St. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, [Staff@GreenbergShows.com](mailto:Staff@GreenbergShows.com), [www.GreenbergShows.com](http://www.GreenbergShows.com).

**KIRLAND, OH** – Railfest 2014, Lakeland Community College (AFC), 7700 Clocktower Dr., NMRA MCR Division 5. 10a-4p, all gauge show, over 400 tables. Info: (440) 357-8890.



March 22, 2014

SEABROOK, TX (Houston) – The Gulf Coast Chapter of the TCA, 4th Annual Toy Train Show & Swap Meet, Bay Area Community Center, 5002 NASA 1. 10a-3p, Adm: \$6, family \$9, under 12 free. Operating layouts, buy and sell, door prizes, refreshments. Info: Carl Olson (218) 277-7630 or Mark Heavener (214) 529-5150, www.tca-gulfcoastchapter.org.

COLUMBIA, SC – TCA Model Train Show, Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1715 Broad River Rd. 9a-2pm, donation \$3 adults. All gauges. Info: Mitch Ayer, (803) 438-2087, rrrloco@sc.rr.com, www.palmettotca.org.

March 22-23, 2014

WILMINGTON, MA – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Shriners Auditorium, 99 Fordham Rd. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, Staff@GreenbergShows.com, www.GreenbergShows.com.

March 23, 2014

DALTON, OH – C J Trains Spring Wayne County Train & Toy Show, Buckeye Event Center, 624 Henry St. 10a-4p, Adm: \$5, 12 and under free; tables (8') \$25. Info: Jon Ulbright, 941 Buchholz Dr., Wooster, OH 44691, (330) 262-7488 (after 6pm EST), cathijon@sssnet.com, www.cjtrains.com.

TRUMBULL, CT – Classic Shows, LLC Train & Toy Show, Marriott-Trumbull, 180 Hawley Ln. 9a-2p, Adm: \$5, 12 and under free w/adult. Info: (203) 926-1327 or www.ClassicshowsLLC.com.

March 29-30, 2014

EDISON, NJ – Greenberg Train & Toy Show, Convention and Expo Center, 97 Sunfield Ave. 10a-4p, Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Greenberg Shows, (630) 279-4087, Staff@GreenbergShows.com, www.GreenbergShows.com.

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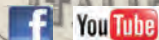
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# Observation Car

## 1:1 and 1:48

George Donald has a layout photo in our “Readers’ Rails” section in this issue. He also sent along an interesting shot of himself standing in front of a real Nickel Plate Berkshire at Strasburg, Pennsylvania, combined with a photo of a 1:48 scale “George Donald” standing in the same position in front of George’s MTH Nickel Plate Berkshire. It’s always fun to compare the details.



Photo by George Donald

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