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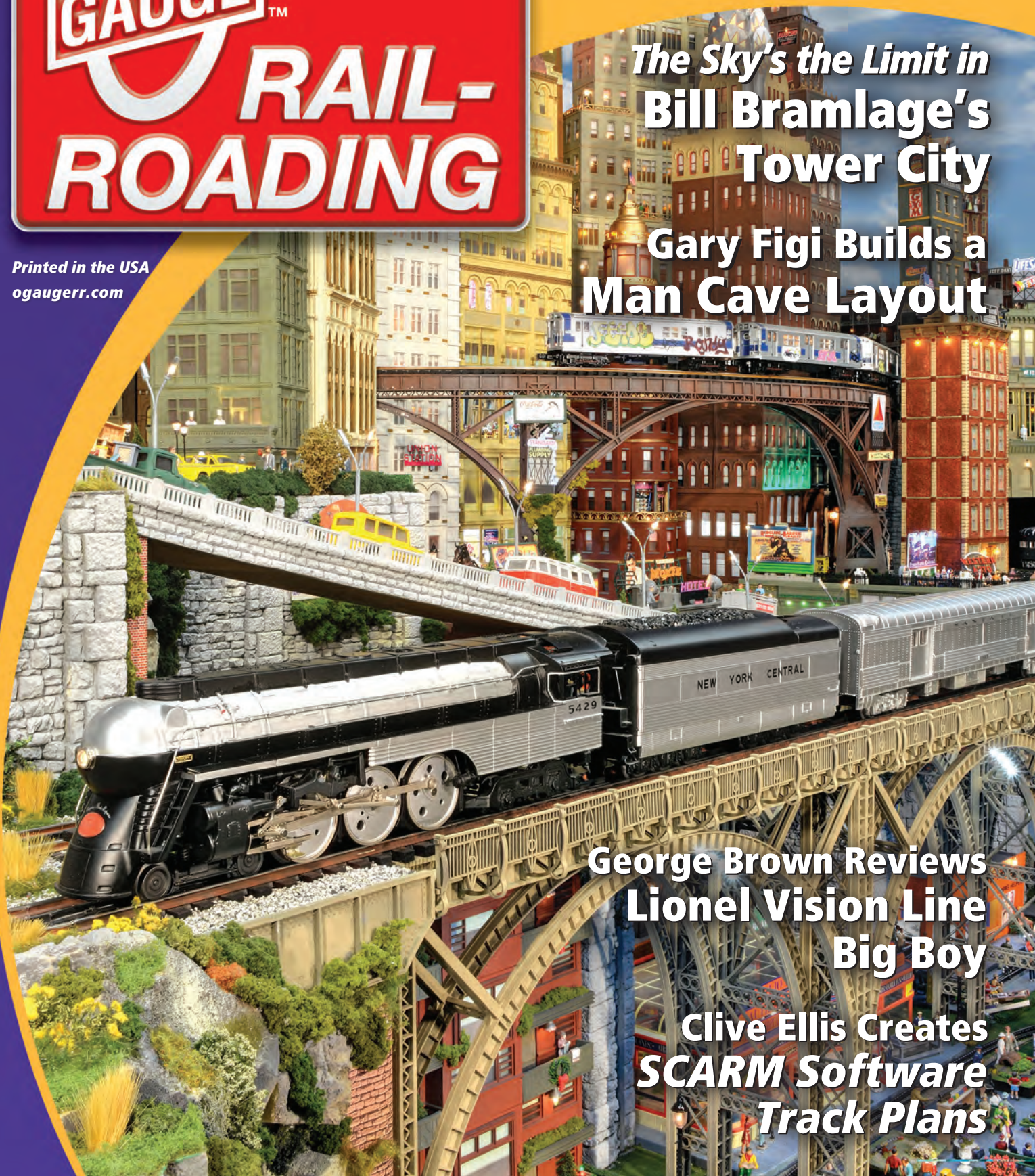
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The Sky's the Limit in
**Bill Bramlage's
Tower City**
**Gary Figi Builds a
Man Cave Layout**

**George Brown Reviews
Lionel Vision Line
Big Boy**

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SALE



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SALE



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Why Made in America STILL Works

Those of you who read our open letter published in the various magazines in the past may be skeptical of why products made in America are a better idea. While many of you know that our main competitor, Atlas, has been having little success getting track and switches from their Chinese suppliers over the last year and a half (as of Feb 2015) there are other reasons as well. Here at Ross Custom we had a price increase on Jan 1st 2015, our first increase in nearly five years. I noticed that even though Atlas hasn't been available the prices in their online store keep going up and up. I thought I'd show you a comparison of regular retail prices as I write this today, of Ross Custom made in America versus Atlas made in China. Note we use switch machines made by Z-Stuff for Trains on our remotes that are made in Taiwan.

ROSS MADE IN AMERICA

031 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
042 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
054 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
064 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
072 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
080 REMOTE.....	\$94.95
096 REMOTE.....	\$99.95
054/031 CURVED REMOTE.....	\$99.95
072/054 CURVED REMOTE.....	\$89.95
096/072 CURVED REMOTE.....	\$114.95
0120/096 CURVED REMOTE	\$134.95
031 WYE REMOTE	\$94.95
042 WYE REMOTE	\$94.95
054 WYE REMOTE	\$94.95
072 WYE REMOTE	\$94.95
11 DEGREE WYE REMOTE.....	\$94.95
22 DEGREE WYE REMOTE.....	\$94.95
#4 REMOTE	\$89.95
#5 REMOTE	\$89.95
#6 REMOTE	\$99.95
#8 REMOTE	\$114.95
#10 REMOTE.....	\$144.95
THREE WAY REMOTE	\$299.95
FOUR WAY REMOTE	\$274.95
DOUBLE SLIP SWITCH	\$249.95
#5 DOUBLE CROSSOVER.....	\$479.95
#8 DOUBLE CROSSOVER.....	\$679.95
#4 YARD CROSSOVER.....	\$209.95

TRACK

031	\$7.49
036	\$7.49
042	\$7.99
054	\$6.99
064	\$6.99
072	\$6.99
080	\$7.49
084	\$7.99
092	\$7.99
096	\$8.49
0100	\$8.99
0104	\$8.99
0112	\$9.49
0120	\$9.99
0128	\$10.99
10 INCH STRAIGHT	\$5.99
29" STRAIGHT	\$12.99
GARGRAVES FLEX TRACK 37"...	\$8.95

ATLAS MADE IN CHINA

036 REMOTE.....	\$104.95
045 REMOTE.....	\$104.95
054 REMOTE.....	\$104.95
NOT MADE	
072 REMOTE.....	\$104.95
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
072/054 CURVED REMOTE.....	\$132.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
072 REMOTE.....	\$104.95
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
#5 REMOTE.....	\$129.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
#8 REMOTE.....	\$132.95
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
DOUBLE SLIP SWITCH...	\$264.95
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	

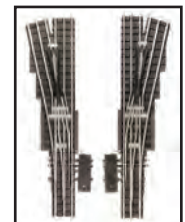
027.....	\$7.95
036.....	\$6.75
045.....	\$7.95
054.....	\$6.75
063.....	\$8.95
072.....	\$9.95 WOW!
081.....	\$11.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
090.....	\$14.50 WOW!
099.....	\$15.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
0108.....	\$18.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
10 INCH STRAIGHT...	\$6.75
40" STRAIGHT.....	\$25.50
40" FLEX TRACK...	\$26.50 WOW REALLY?? YEP!!



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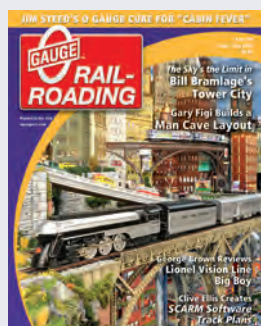


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ON THE COVER

The gleaming NYC Empire State Express passenger train passes the imposing Tower City skyline on Bill Bramlage's 3-rail layout. Bill enjoys the variety of architectural designs and building sizes seen in America's big cities during the first half of the 20th century. Readers are sure to agree that Bill, using mostly scratchbuilt models, has successfully captured the look and feel of a major U.S. metropolis.

Photo by Bill Bramlage



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Take It Outside

For most of us in this O gauge segment of the hobby, our model railroading activity typically takes place within the four walls of our home or local club. Depending on where we live, there certainly are perfectly logical reasons for that.

For example, I'm writing this column in early March, and the outdoor temperature in northeastern Ohio today is a brutal minus 7 degrees with a wind chill down to minus 22—not exactly conducive to railroading fun in the great outdoors.

Then there's the matter of the trains themselves. Unlike the equipment used by large scale (G gauge) hobbyists, our O gauge trains are not made for operation in adverse or extreme weather conditions. In many parts of the country, that might limit our O gauge running to only a few short weeks every year.

When signs of spring arrive, particularly after a harsh winter like this past one here in Ohio, it's only natural for many of us to want to escape the confines of our homes and get out into the fresh air. Often enough, that means abandoning the trains and the layout for as long as Mother Nature provides an attractive alternative.

But there are some hardy O gauge *naturalists* around, and there certainly are creative ways to enjoy O gauge outdoors when conditions permit. I'm providing just a few examples here in the hope that readers will see that O gauge does not necessarily have to be an indoor activity at all times.



Garden railroading with O gauge certainly has its challenges, but they are not insurmountable. In milder climate areas of the country, O gauge outdoors can be a year-round activity. Joe Barker took this photo of a Southern Pacific intermodal train headed by Lionel diesel power and operating on the San Leandro Historical Railway Society's garden railroad in San Leandro, California. The railroad is named G&O because it runs both G and O gauge trains. The O gauge line operates on Atlas track with UV-resistant ties and uses conventional, Legacy/TMCC, and DCS controls.

By the time you read these words, we'll be basking in spring-time warmth and looking forward to the first day of summer. I would really enjoy seeing and featuring in *OGR* a variety of articles about O gauge garden layouts and other creative ways that our favorite modeling scale can be enjoyed in the great outdoors.

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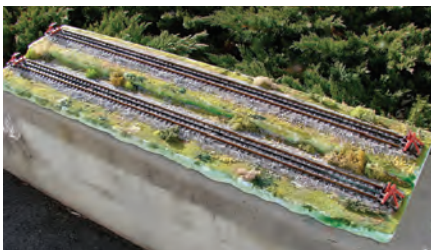
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In Run 273, our October/November 2014 issue, Sam Hopkins described how he constructed a simple, lightweight, and versatile diorama that could easily be transported and set up at various locations so O gauge trains could be photographed in prototype scenes. Scenic elements on the compact module can be easily changed to blend in with whatever Mother Nature provides.



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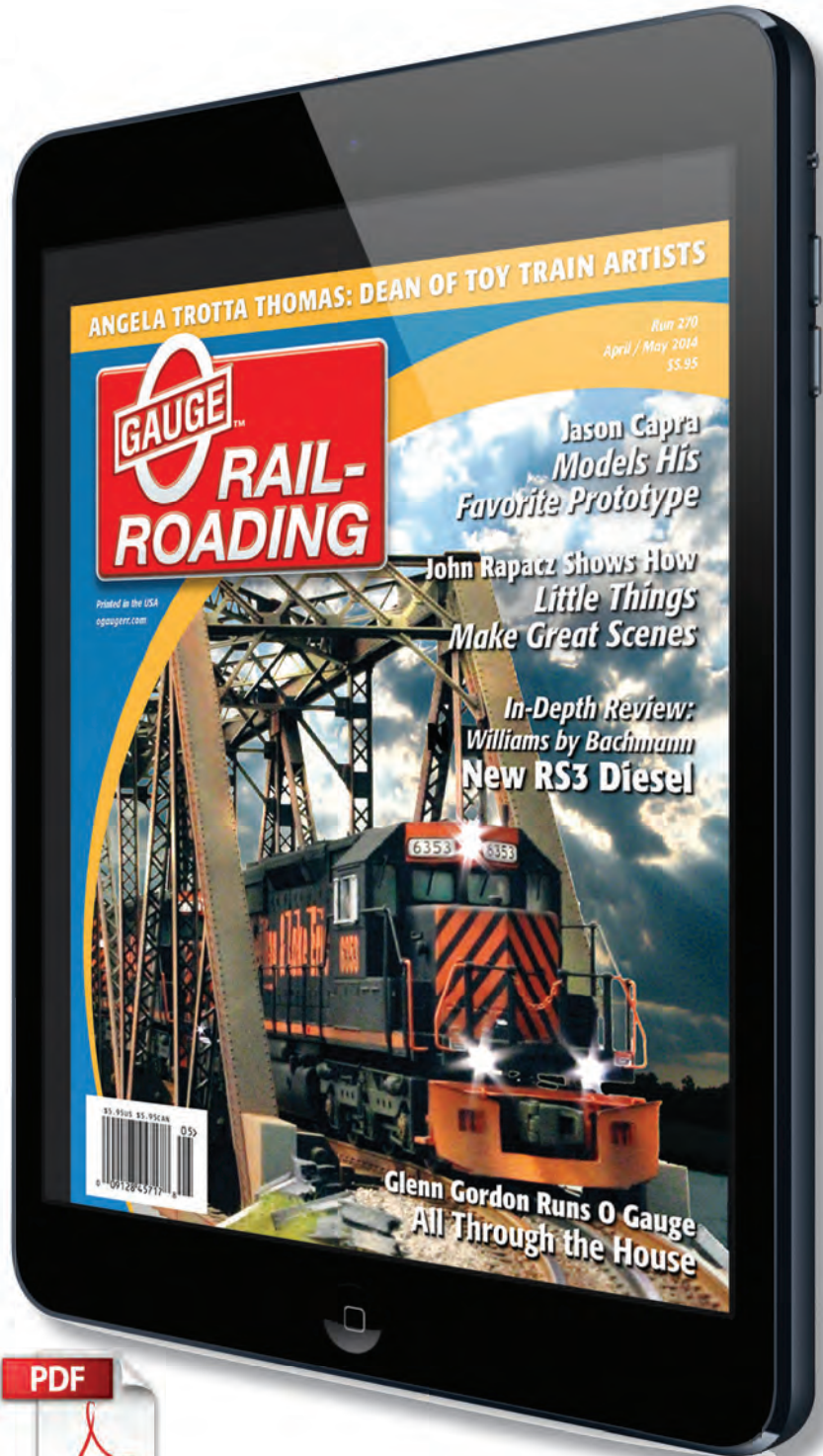
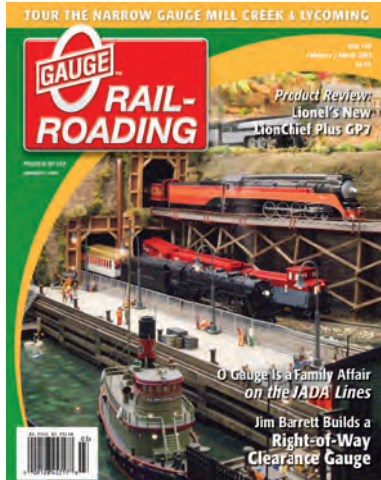
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L81171	Ferromex ES44AC #4617 (L) (BTO)	399.95
L81209	CNJ H24-66 TrainMaster #2401 (L)	399.95
L81216	Southern H24-66 TrainMaster #6303 (L)	399.95
L81225	Rock Island E8 AA (L) (BTO) (L) = Legacy	669.95
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L81519	PRR (L) FA-2 AA (BTO) = Built To Order	599.95
L81527	PRR (L) Powered FB-2 #9608B	369.95
L81533	PRR (L) Non-Powered FB-2 #9610B	284.95
L82112	B&M #1260 S2 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82114	CB&Q #9306 S2 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82116	CP #7020 S2 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82122	Pennsylvania #5648 S2 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82127	Union Pacific #1138 S2 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82130	EMD Demo #1962 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
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L82133	Penn Central #2246 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82134	GM&O #501 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82136	N&W #522 (Black) GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82138	Milwaukee Rd #344 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82139	Milwaukee Rd #350 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82140	Southern #2594 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
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L11448	Union Pacific Big Boy #4012 (BTO)	1999.95
L81245	Pennsylvania M1A #6771 (L) (BTO)	1079.95
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L81188	NYC 2-8-2 Heavy Mikado #9506 (L) (BTO)	939.95
L81192	GN 2-8-2 Heavy Mikado #3148 (L) (BTO)	939.95
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L82341	N&W #2175 Y6B (BTO) (L)	1439.95
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L82266	CN #1158 4-6-0 (BTO) (L)	649.95
L82267	C&NW #1385 4-6-0 (BTO) (L)	649.95
L82271	NYC #1258 4-6-0 (BTO) (L)	649.95
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L81813	Rock Island 18" Alum. 2-Pack (Combo/Vista Dome)	229.95
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L81491	Jersey Central Coal Dump Car	46.95
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L82048	Santa Fe Ice Car	53.95
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L81015	Boston & Maine Reefer	32.95
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L81703	AT&SF 86' Hi-Cube Boxcar 2-Pack	136.95
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L81199	Pennsylvania Railroad Tank Car	50.95
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L81203	Pennsylvania Railroad Flatcar	50.95
L81204	Santa Fe Flatcar	50.95
L81205	Timken Flatcar	50.95
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L81466	BN Maxi-Stack (Pair)	99.95
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Product Showcase

For the Kid in All of Us



Based on the popular TV series “Chuggington,” Bachmann is offering a limited-edition, one-time release of 3-rail O gauge Chuggington electric locomotives and rolling stock. The O gauge Chuggington products will only be made once. Brewster (blue locomotive with operating headlights) and Wilson (red locomotive with operating

headlight) retail for \$349.95 each. Rolling stock includes a boxcar (\$79.95), a blue hopper and a yellow hopper (\$69.95 each), and a passenger car (\$99.95). The O gauge Chuggington items are scheduled to ship later in 2015 from Williams by Bachmann Trains, www.bachmanntrains.com.



Hobby Within a Hobby

Entice your O scale people to join in your hobby with a visit to the Menards Hobby Shop. This model is a realistic re-creation of a typical town or city hobby shop from the good old days. Constructed on an extra-rigid platform for superior strength, the preassembled building's storefront is decorated with tiny train sets and vintage railroad advertising. Special features include fully functioning Menards Hobby Shop and Lionel Trains signs with four lighting patterns as well as two strips of

LED interior lights and one LED yard light. Several figures including Jack the German Shepherd give the shop a homey feel. A young boy gazes at all the train displays, a father and daughter are greeted by a shopkeeper, and a calm cat is on a dumpster near the back office door. With the addition of a 4.5-volt AC adaptor (sold separately), the outdoor signs and the interior of the store brightly light up allowing viewers to take in every detail. Retail price is \$69.99 available exclusively at select Menards stores and online at www.menards.com (search on Menards collectables).



Distinctive Models

River Leaf Models has introduced two precisely crafted 1/4" scale building kits of the real Peerless Rooms building located in Ashland, OR, and the Norfolk & Western freight depot in Norwood, OH. Precise wall sections and detail parts are created using a laser-cutting process that enables exact reproductions with a level of detail limited only by the quality and quantity of the source material. River Leaf kits use 1/4" medium-density fiberboard (MDF) for exterior walls, providing strength, durability, and ease of construction. The MDF is etched with a brick or wood pattern depending on the finish of the original structure. The material easily accepts detailing such as mortar lines and weathering. Detail parts including doors, windows, supports, and signs are all included and use plastic or wood depend-



ing on the desired appearance. The Peerless Rooming House kit with dimensions of 7"x7"x8" retails for \$85.00 plus shipping. The Norfolk & Western Freight Depot retails for \$165.00 plus shipping and is 11"x16"x7". Both kits are available directly from River Leaf Models at www.riverleafmodels.us. For more information, contact Andre Garcia at 561-374-4897 or riverleafmodels@gmail.com.

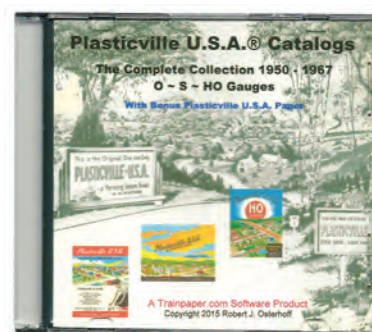


Premier Line O Scale N&W Y3 Steam Freight Set

M.T.H. Electric Trains is now shipping its Premier line O scale Norfolk & Western Y3 steam locomotive with Proto-Sound 3.0. Available separately or in a set with five N&W four-bay hopper cars and an N&W steel caboose (pictured), the 2-8-8-2 Y3 is a die-cast model last seen in the Premier line in 2002. Features include die-cast boiler and tender body, 1:48 scale proportions, die-cast metal chassis, real coal load, metal wheels and axles, constant-brightness headlight, die-cast truck sideframes, remote-controlled Proto-Coupler, engineer and fireman figures, metal handrails, and decorative bell. Available as the N&W set seen here or as individual locomotives in N&W, Pennsylvania, Santa Fe, or B&O liveries. See your MTH dealer for pricing and availability.

Take a Tour of Plasticville

The *Plasticville U.S.A. Catalogs 1950-1967* is the latest project from noted toy train paper collector and historian Bob Osterhoff. Produced with cooperation and encouragement from Bachmann Industries, Inc., this new DVD includes 31 catalogs from 1950 through 1967 in full color, totaling 286 pages of information about the long-standing Plasticville product line. This collection covers items made for O, S, and HO scales and also includes 20 bonus paper items including product brochures and instruction sheets. The HTML-based application is compatible with Windows operating systems and with Macs through Internet Explorer and Apple Safari. Order from Robert J. Osterhoff, 1622 Garden Valley Dr., Wildwood, MO 63038 for \$18.00 plus \$2.50 shipping at www.trainpaper.com.



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11435	Union Pacific #4018	1995.00	8404	Pennsylvania 6-8-6 Turbine w/whistle	195.00	30-1179-1 Lackawanna Camelback w/Proto 2.00	325.00	20-2281-1 Union Pacific SD-24 w/Proto 2.00	295.00		
11436	Union Pacific #4005	1995.00	8872	73 Santa Fe SD-18's Power/Dummy	175.00	30-1180-1 Pennsylvania Camelback w/Proto 2.00	325.00	20-2289-1 Ontario Northland SD-70M P-20 (LN)	325.00		
11437	Union Pacific #4014	1995.00	11013	Southern Scale Pacific 4-6-2 w/TMCC	795.00	30-1184-1 Southern Imperial 0-6-0 w/2.00 (LN)	275.00	20-2240-1 Great Northern FA-2 ABAs w/P-2.00	450.00		
11438	Union Pacific #4017	1995.00	11124	Great Northern F-3 ABAs w/Railsound	395.00	30-1400-1 Reading Imperial Camelback w/2.00	349.95	20-2303-1 Atlantic Coast Line E-8 ABAs w/P-2.00	595.00		
11448	Union Pacific #4012 (Steamtown,PA)	1995.00	11769	N&W J Warhorse Hopper Boxed Set	595.00	30-1474-1 Northern Pacific 0-8-0 w/P 2.00	395.00	20-2305-1 Great Northern E-8 ABAs w/P-2.00	595.00		
11449	Union Pacific #4004	1995.00	14552	55/24517 NYC F-3 Scale ABAs	845.00	30-2504-1 San Francisco PCC Street Car w/Proto 1	99.95	20-2306-1 S.P. F-3 ABAs w/Proto 2.00 (used)	425.00		
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30-1642-1	PRR 2-8-2 Mikado PS3.0	\$375.95
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Early Steam on the CP Railway

The autos seen on the roadway are certainly classics, but that colorful 10-wheeler on the track predates them by a good number of years. The Rio Grande locomotive is leading an excursion train on Carl Rygiewicz's Chicago Pacific Railway. Carl refers to this as an operator's layout that uses Lionel and MTH trains and Lionel tubular track. Lionel, MTH, and American Flyer accessories are in a prototype setting. The layout features long mainline runs, industrial sidings, and realistic railroad signals. Yards provide lots of switching activity. Steam and first-generation diesel eras are modeled with the appropriate locomotives, rolling stock, structures, and vehicles. We'll take a look at more of Carl's fine layout in a future issue.

Easy Rider

A scale Lionel Acela glides through town on the upper-level 072 main line on the 33' x 19' layout in Edward Tucker's basement. In August 2011 the layout suffered a devastating flood during hurricane Irene and had to be completely rebuilt. Edward's layout is pretty much all Lionel using FasTrack with two ZWs, eight 180-watt bricks, seven CW-80 transformers, and the Legacy command control system. Edward tells us he has documented the construction of his layout with thousands of pictures of every step, and we hope to show you a sampling of them in a future issue.



Mighty Muscles

Union Pacific Challenger #1527, the Lionel model pictured in the center of this trio of iron horses, was George Donald's first TMCC-equipped engine, and he is now a big fan of the command control systems offered by both Lionel and MTH. The Challenger is flanked on the left by Union Pacific FEF #844, an MTH model, and on the right by Nickel Plate Berkshire #765, also from MTH. "I got into running big steamers this past year," George said. "They are fun to run and to watch." Hard to argue with that, George!

Hot Time

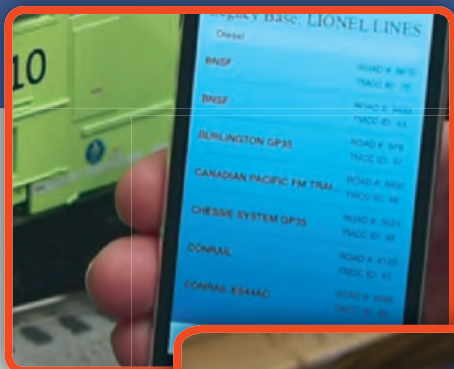
Doug Chiado created this photograph on a section of his layout that represents the Jones and Laughlin Southside steel works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, around 1960. All structures in the complex Doug is modeling are scratchbuilt, and his array of engines and rolling stock comes from Lionel, MTH, Weaver, and K-Line. Back in the days of big steel, the slag being dumped, as represented in this photo, would over time create giant mountains. Today in Pittsburgh and other former steel-making cities, some pretty expensive homes are built atop some of these former slag piles.



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Product Reviews



Lionel Vision Line Big Boy

Review and Photos by George Brown

For this issue, I had the pleasure of reviewing 1:48 scale 3-rail models of two legendary steam locomotives: the Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 Big Boy and the Lima superpower 2-8-4 Berkshire. Both models are from Lionel, and each is privately owned, unfortunately not by me.

The Vision Line Big Boy was built to order in extremely limited quantities. Most were already sold when they arrived at Lionel dealers' stores early this year. At this writing in late January '15, a few are still available on the open market, and I anticipate more will be available on the secondary market within the near future. Like a new Corvette Z51, most of us will never own a new Vision Line Big Boy for a variety of reasons, including expense or lack of wide curves, but the model is nonetheless spectacular and fascinating with some unique audio-visual features.

Lionel offered the Big Boy decorated in one of seven cab numbers including #4014, which is on the mammoth model occupying most of my desk as I type this. What makes this number special is that the Union Pacific has recently purchased and moved the real UP #4014 to the railroad's steam shops in Cheyenne, Wyoming. There the 1941-vintage 4-8-8-4 is to be restored and eventually run as part of the Union Pacific Heritage Fleet Program.

The history of the 25 Big Boy locomotives is well known and easily found on the Internet in addition to numerous books and railfan magazines. So instead of our usual paragraphs about the prototype, I'll devote all of the additional page space that Editor Allan Miller has allocated for this review to descriptions and photos of this spectacular model.



Construction

Both the locomotive and the tender are predominantly die-cast with various sizes of wire modeling the plumbing, conduits, handrails, and cut levers plus many small castings representing the numerous air, steam, and water appliances. On the pilot, the scale coupler pivots realistically out of sight as it did on the real UP 4-8-8-4. Additionally, I was surprised and pleased to see realistically perforated running boards.

As has become common on contemporary top-of-the-line models of steam locomotives, a hinged step plate visually fills the gap between the locomotive and tender. As to the size of this gap, the locomotive and tender are coupled a lot closer together than I expected for a model the overall size of the Big Boy.

The exhaust and high-pressure steam pipes between the boiler and the front cylinders are realistically articulated. These pipes are particularly noticeable when the Big Boy is in an O72 curve, which is tight for a locomotive with a 12" driver wheelbase. On the topic of a long wheelbase, the tender's five-axle rigid truck measures 5", with flanges on all wheels. To negotiate O72 curves, each of the wheelsets in the tender's rigid truck has a side play of $3/32$ ". Except for the pilot truck, all axles including those on the trailing truck and tender trucks run in bronze bushings. Yes, compared to plastic bearings, bronze bushings do require initial and periodic oiling, but to me they are worth it for a bulletproof running gear.

Beneath the rear sand dome's removable top are most of the model's control switches. Two additional controls are under the opening water hatches on the tender.





Inside the boiler are multiple smoke units in addition to the electronics for command and conventional control, Odyssey Speed Control, and the front portion of the dual RailSounds systems. A large can motor is mounted horizontally inside the boiler with a metal drive mechanism, which includes steel drive shafts and a cast universal joint between the front and rear engines.

I was particularly delighted to see the side rods for the front and rear engines assembled 90 degrees out of visual alignment with each other instead of perfectly aligned. Thank you Lionel! Also pleasing to see was the full valve gear on each engine along with a working oiler linkage.

Multiple Smoke Generators

Four fan-driven smoke generators are implemented inside the boiler to create several audio-visual effects. Two of these generators are for the locomotive's prototypically correct dual smokestacks. The real Big Boy had two independent smokestacks with the exhaust steam from each of the two sets of cylinders exiting through its respective stack. On the Lionel Vision Line model, the smoke puffs from each independent stack can be realistically synchronized with the steam exhaust chuff sounds and the visual rod motion for each cylinder. The total effect is fascinating to watch, even for a product reviewer who is not at

all enthusiastic about smoky vapor from O gauge steam locomotives.

Optionally, the dual smoke generators can be set to puff simultaneously. If the owner-installed smoke deflector is set into place on top of the dual smokestacks, the smoke generator for the front stack is automatically shut down so only the generator for the rear stack operates. With the shroud installed and the stacks set for simultaneous operation, smoke puffs will occur realistically for all chuff sounds.

A separate smoke generator for the whistle and yet another generator for the blowdown exhaust are also fascinating to play with, and yes, they too are realistic appearing. Of course, both of these generators operate in unison with their respective whistle or blowdown sounds.

As a side note, some features only work when using the CAB-2 remote, while others will work with either a CAB-1L or the CAB-2 and the appropriate command base. Where necessary, I'll point out what remotes are needed for a particular feature. The Big Boy can also be run under conventional transformer control, but most of its exclusive Legacy or TMCC features will not be available.

Dual RailSounds

I have always enjoyed steam RailSounds, which got better and better with each successive release. Additionally, I have mused how cool it would be to have sounds that are generated by the prototype locomotive to also emanate from its O gauge counterpart instead of only from the model's tender. Well, I need not muse any longer. Sounds from the Vision Line Big Boy have broken new ground for realism with Lionel's new Dual Sound, which features Legacy RailSounds systems in not only the tender but also in the locomotive. Two large speakers are in the acoustically sealed tender and mounted over the lead truck. A single speaker inside the locomotive boiler is located over the front engine.

Some of the sounds, such as the air pumps and the bell, originate solely from the locomotive's speaker. Other sounds that include filling the water tank come from only the tender-resident speakers. The steam exhaust chuff and whistle sounds come from both the locomotive and tender; however, the way they are mixed and balanced gives them a fullness, depth, and stereo effect that I've not heard



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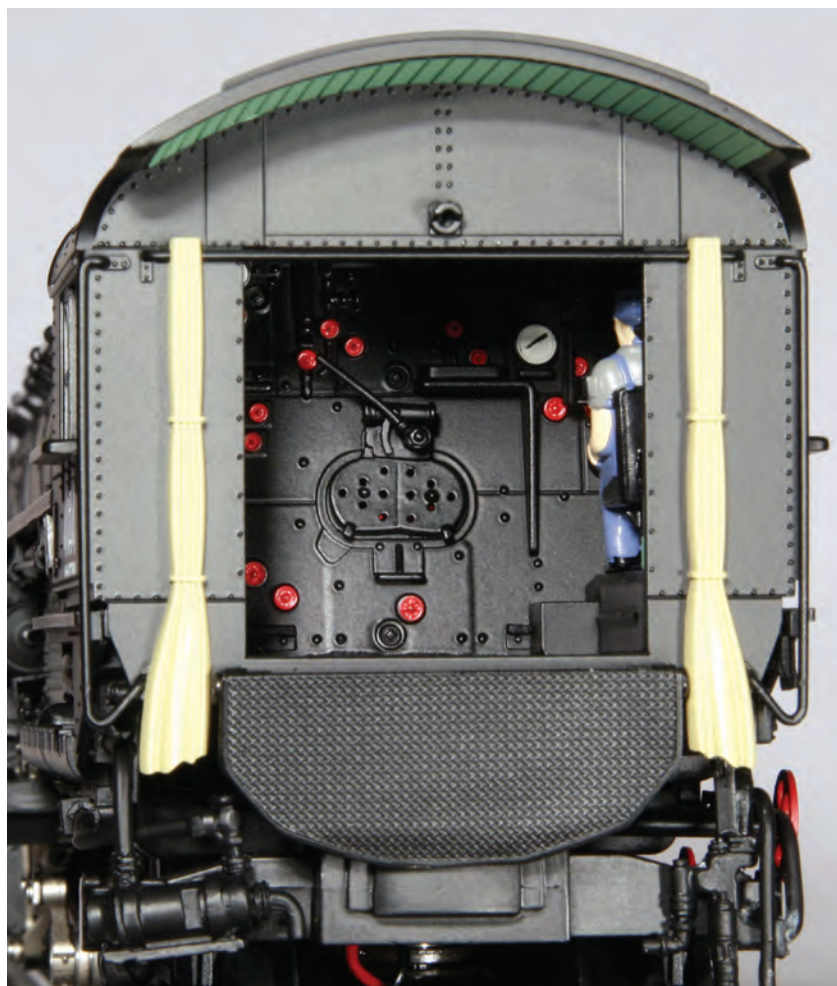
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Lionel Vision Line Big Boy Features and Details

- Legacy command control with Odyssey II Speed Control
- Legacy RailSounds with Dual Sound
- Die-cast construction with cast-in and separate details
- Multiple smoke generators with adjustable outputs
- Owner-installed smoke deflector shroud
- Depleting coal load
- LED lighting
- Illuminated number boards
- Legible builder's plates
- Pewter-toned side rods and valve gear
- Separate brake shoe hangers for drivers
- Brass-colored whistle, pop-off valves, and swinging bell
- Hand-painted valve handles
- Detailed boiler backhead with painted dial faces
- Painted figures representing crew
- Ashpan and flickering firebox glow
- Opening cab roof vent
- Cab illuminated while locomotive stopped
- Clear glazing in sliding cab windows
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- Infrared data transmitter under tender truck
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from any previously released Lionel steam locomotive. Additionally, the strong bass sounds from the tender's speakers play well with the higher frequency sounds from the locomotive's speaker. In fact, after experiencing the sounds from the Big Boy, anything else I ran either simultaneously with it or immediately afterward sounded downright wimpy.

Regarding the Legacy quilling whistle, it has a barely noticeable change in tone and intensity when activating the whistle control from one end of its respective spectrum to the other on either a CAB-1L or CAB-2. According to old vinyl audio recordings I have of real Big Boys, this whistle sound is prototypically accurate. A special treat for me is the reverberating echo from the model's whistle, which always calls up a reverie of a cool, damp night with a real steam locomotive thundering and wailing its way through a bucolic valley.

According to Lionel Director of Audio Rudy Trubitt, the source for some of the sounds reproduced by the Vision Line Big Boy was the 1:1 scale UP #3985 Challenger, which he recorded a few years ago. He also reviewed a lot of historical recordings of the Big Boy for reference. Hmm, I wonder if he has the same old recordings as I do.

A steam exhaust sound unique to the Vision Line Big Boy is the front engine driver slip, which can be initiated at will during train start but only if using a CAB-2 remote. Of course the model's drivers don't really slip, but I found the sound to be nonetheless imaginative with a lot of play value.

Another unique sound feature is what Lionel calls the "drift chuff," which is automatic and appears to occur randomly. The two engines on real single-expansion articulated steam locomotives will randomly drift in and out of sync with each other, causing their twin steam exhausts to bark simultaneously or at

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just about any separated cadence. Again, the drivers on the model rotate in their as-manufactured syncopation, but the drift chuff sound is a realistic audio novelty.

Several human voice dialogs simulating two-way radio communications between the locomotive crew and a dispatcher are included in the RailSounds repertoire. Of my favorite top 100 sounds from O gauge locomotives, these somewhat generic recordings never made the cut. I acknowledge that a number of O gauge railroaders and their guests get a lot of enjoyment out of these dialogs, and all are explained in the owner's manual that accompanies the model, which is also available for download from the Lionel website.

Depleting Coal Load

To me, this single feature is the audio-visual delight of the Vision Line Big Boy—the differentiator from all other 1:48 scale models of the UP 4-8-8-4. Essentially, the coal load is a soft and flexible plastic molding that looks surprisingly realistic. A motorized actuator pulls this molding downward at a single point in what proves to be an amazingly convincing appearance.

The coal load “depletes” at varying rates depending on the speed of the locomotive and also the load on the locomotive as defined by the CAB-2 train brake slider. My running the Big Boy at a throttle setting of 95 with the brake slider set to the maximum load for the amount of throttle, the coal load reached maximum depletion in about 15 minutes. With the engine at rest, the coal load also depletes but at a much slower rate with the actuator motor bumping the load down at repeating intervals of 10 and 20 seconds.

“Refilling” the coal load took about 30 seconds using either my CAB-1L or CAB-2. During the coal refill operation, the sound of coal sliding down a metal chute emanates from the tender's speakers. A manual deplete function is also available for demonstration, is initiated using either a CAB-1L or CAB-2, and is accompanied by the sound of the Archimedes' screw moving coal from the bunker to the locomotive. Again this sound comes from only the tender's speakers.

Of course, while it is at the coaling tower for fuel, the Big Boy can then be moved to the water stand where the sound of refilling the tender's water tank can be initiated by using either type of the CAB remotes. Only the tender's speakers deliver the water refill sound.

During all the virtual replenishment of the coal and water, the speaker in the locomotive independently generates sounds of the boiler hiss, air pumps, and so forth. Basically, the locomotive sounds real! For a ferroequine audiophile like me, the RailSounds Dual Sound system is fabulous!



Lionel Vision Line Big Boy Legacy Performance

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

Length: 34" over couplers

33-1/2" pilot to tender sill

Distance Between Locomotive Pickup Rollers:

1st and 2nd: 4-5/8"

1st and 3rd: 7-1/2"

1st and 4th: 12-1/8"

Distance Between Tender Pickup Rollers: 4-1/2"

Weight on Driving Wheels: 10 lbs, 2 oz

Tender Weight: 4 lbs, 5 oz

Power Consumption at Idle @ 18 VAC: 0.3 A, 5 W

Tractive Effort @ 18 VAC: 7 lbs, 2 oz @ 2.6 A, 47 W

Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC: 1 scale mph @ 0.6 A, 11 W

Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC: 45 scale mph @ 1.3 A, 23 W

Minimum 3-Rail Curve: 072

Power Transformer: Lionel ZW-L

Command System: Lionel Legacy Base with CAB-2; TMCC Base 1L with CAB-1L

Test Train

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

Lighting

The Big Boy is equipped with the usual lighting for top-of-the-line O gauge steam locomotives from Lionel: headlight, number boards, green classification lamps, cab light, firebox and ashpan glows, red marker lamps, and directional backup light. Of course the cab light goes out and the ashpan glow goes on when the locomotive starts into motion.



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Additional lights that struck my fancy are those over the rear and front engine crossheads in addition to under the cab. These motion-detect lights are on when the locomotive is stopped, when it initially goes into motion, and as it slows to a stop. At Legacy speed step 22, these lights go out, and when the model slows to speed step 17, they go back on. They're neat!

At Trackside


One word describes the Big Boy in operation—wow! To me, the big 4-8-8-4's starts and stops bordered on enthralling. Smooth operation is an understatement not only because of the running gear and electronics but also because of the model's immense size and extreme weight. My Atlas O plastic roadbed creaked under the Big Boy's weight, not unlike real roadbed compressed by a ponderous articulated.

As a note of caution, if a layout has a trackside structure that's within 2-1/2" of the outside rail on an O72 curve or a weak bridge, the Big Boy will find it and rearrange it. Yup, the boiler overhang is extreme on the model's O72 minimum curve, but that's no surprise considering the locomotive's 9-1/2" between the axle for lead rigid drivers and the front of the boiler—well, the extended running boards actually. In fact, I had to run the locomotive the wrong direction on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad because the running board rubbed against my trackside display case as the engine exited the adjacent curve.

My only criticism of the entire model is the rear coupler frequently failed to latch closed when coupling to an awaiting train. The same problem existed on the Polar Express scale Berkshire also reviewed in this issue.

After recording and then entering the model's tractive effort into the performance sidebar for this article, I went back through all the steam locomotive reviews I've done over the past 10 years. Not one of those locomotives generated the tractive effort that our 10+ pound Big Boy does. Between this weight and the obvious grip from the four traction tires mounted on each engine's rear drivers, the model of UP #4014 will pull all the way into next month. I believe one of the couplers in a long and heavy train will likely break open before the Big Boy will stall or slip its drivers. Without a doubt, the huge 4-8-8-4 is a heavy hauler.

At the End of the Run

This Vision Line release of the scale Lionel 4-8-8-4 is downright impressive on either the rails or the display shelf. I will miss watching and listening to the Big Boy run, which is a major understatement. The monster model of a monster locomotive is fascinating to watch with its dual set of drivers and rods plus its realistic details. Its audio-visual effects are second to none in addition to being a bunch of fun to play with. My absolute favorite effect is the sound system in both the engine and tender. In a word, it's awesome! 

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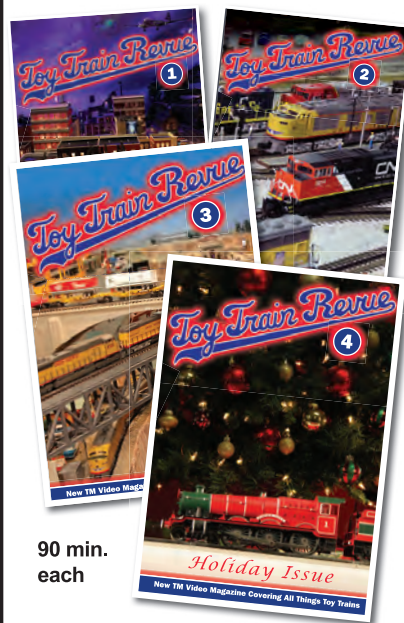
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• 11"W x 6.5"H x 21.5"L SKU# 279-2291

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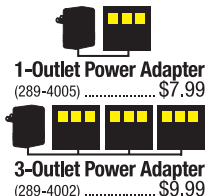
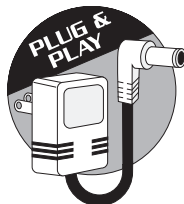


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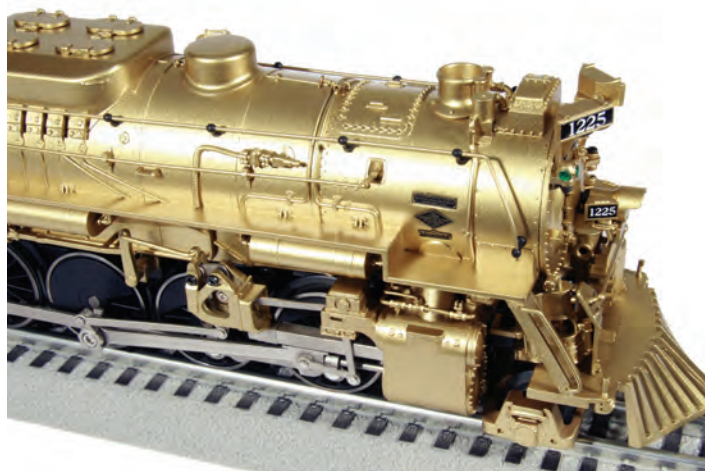
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Lionel Scale Polar Express Berkshire

Review and Photos by George Brown



For the 10th anniversary of the animated movie *The Polar Express*, Lionel released a special edition of its 1:48 scale Lima Berkshire painted in gold with blue lettering. Also released at the same time were a 10th-anniversary scale heavyweight coach and observation car, both finished in the same gold paint with blue lettering as on the 2-8-4.

Although we reviewed the Lionel scale Berkshire in Run 245, the October/November 2010 issue, the gold finish of the Polar Express edition really shows off the model's cast-in and separate details, many of which are hard to see with the traditional black paint. The visual effect is not unlike that of an unpainted brass model. Additionally, recordings in the unique RailSounds repertoire for the all-gold model play a number of the movie's vocalizations by actor Tom Hanks.

Construction and Features

The long cowcatcher and pilot deck on the Polar Express Berkshire is adapted from the locomotive portrayed in the movie rather than the real Berkshire built by Lima. As to the rest of the gold model, it is the same as the scale 2-8-4s released by Lionel at the same time and decorated for the NKP, C&O, Erie, and Pere Marquette.





Both the die-cast engine and the tender measure fairly accurately to the real NKP Class S2 Berkshire, except for the fantasy pilot and the oversized tinplate coupler, of course. Most of the engine is detailed with cast-in and separate components. With the gold paint, small details such as the rivets and boiler wrapper bands really stand out. But then, the black plastic stanchions and grommets that hold and electrically insulate the handrails from the boiler also stand out visually. These particular handrails serve as the antennas for the command receiver located inside the boiler.

Also inside the monolithic boiler casting are the driver electronics for the motor and lights, LEDs actually, in addition to the flywheel-equipped motor and the reasonably prodigious fan-driven smoke generator. On the topic of the motor, its drive shaft and all drive gears are metal—yea, no plastic! For the O gauge railroader who would like to paint the dials and valve handles on the all-gold boiler backhead, the cab is a separate casting and can be removed for unfettered access to the details on the backhead.

During my initial visual inspection of the Berkshire, I discovered red handles on two small valves located near the front of the boiler. Both were expertly painted, yet these particular valve handles were the only two details not painted gold on the entire locomotive.

All four of the driver axles plus the six tender truck axles turn in bronze bearings, which require periodic lubrication. By the way, the six wheels in each tender truck all have flanges. Bearings in the cast pilot and training trucks are plastic, and although they are slick, I recommend an occasional small drop of plastic-compatible oil on these bearings, too. On the model I reviewed, the plastic bearings in the pilot truck casting refused to stay in place, resulting in the wheelset falling out of the truck whenever I picked up the engine to move it. A drop of CA cement on each bearing cured that problem.

In the usual architecture for top-of-the-line Lionel steam locomotives, two Fat Boy speakers and the Legacy RailSounds electronics ride inside the tender. To produce a strong bass sound, the cast body is acoustically sealed to the tender's stamped steel frame, but this sealant material does not interfere with disassembly or reassembly of the tender for installation of an owner-installed 9-volt battery. Note that this battery is only needed if the locomotive is to be run using conventional transformer control.

I found it curious that the build date etched into the replica of the Lima builder's plate is October 2004. Perhaps this date coincides with the release of *The Polar Express* movie.

An additionally curious note is the gold-painted handrails around the perimeter of the tender water deck being held by black stanchions. Obviously the tender body was painted before the gold handrails and their stanchions were installed. It's apparent that the assembler worked carefully because none of the gold paint on the body or handrails was marred. In fact, none of the paint on the entire locomotive was marred during assembly.

Lionel Scale Polar Express Berkshire Features and Details

- Legacy command control and RailSounds
- Odyssey II Speed Control
- Fan-driven smoke unit with adjustable output
- LED headlight and classification lamps
- Legible builder's plates
- Pewter-toned side rods and valve gear
- Separate brake shoe hangers for drivers
- Separate die-cast steam, water, and air appliances
- Separate whistle, pop-off valves, and swinging bell
- Glazed cab windows
- Detailed boiler backhead
- Painted figures representing crew
- Ashpan and flickering firebox glow
- Opening cab roof vent
- Illuminated cab when locomotive stopped
- Real coal in tender bunker
- Opening water hatches cover sound volume control
- Directional backup light
- Command-operated ElectroCoupler
- Infrared data transmitter under tender truck

Lionel Polar Express Berkshire Legacy Performance

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

Length: 26-1/2" over couplers
26" pilot to tender sill

Distance Between Locomotive Pickup Rollers:

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

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

Weight on Driving Wheels: 7 lbs, 8 oz

Tender Weight: 4 lbs, 1 oz

Power Consumption at Idle @ 18 VAC: 0.2 A, 4 W

Tractive Effort @ 18 VAC: 3 lbs, 11 oz @ 1.5 A, 27 W

Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC: 1 scale mph @ 0.4 A, 7 W

Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC: 60 scale mph @ 1.2 A, 22 W

Minimum 3-Rail Curve: O54

Power Transformer: Lionel ZW-L

Command System: Lionel Legacy with CAB-2; TMCC Base 1L with CAB-1L

Test Train

Eight-car streamlined passenger; train weight, 13 lbs; pull to move train, 12 oz;
80' O scale aluminum cars from K-Line



At Trackside

Because of the Legacy command control system and Odyssey II Speed Control, smooth running is something I've come to expect from Lionel locomotives, and the big gold 2-8-4 didn't disappoint me at all. Legacy RailSounds is another proprietary feature from Lionel that I always look forward to hearing, and again, I was more than just pleased.

In addition to the special Polar Express vocal calls by Tom Hanks, OGR Publishing CEO Rich Melvin is the voice for the virtual two-way radio dialogs between the engineer and a

dispatcher. You see, Rich is also one of the engineers for the 1:1 scale NKP #765, which is one of the models in the current Lionel release of its scale Berkshire.

As to the characteristic shotgun sound of the steam exhaust from the real Lima Berkshires, this and the other realistic mechanical sounds emanating from the model's twin speakers were recorded from the real NKP #765 and also the Pere Marquette

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#1225. For those of us who have not seen *The Polar Express* movie, 1225 happens to be the cab number of the locomotive in the story.

As with the Vision Line Big Boy I reviewed in this issue, the only criticism I have with the Polar Express 2-8-4, other than the



axle-shedding pilot truck, is the coupler is difficult to close during switching operations. The coupler on our evaluation sample opened on command every time and once closed, it stays closed.

Conventional operation of the locomotive with the Odyssey II system enabled is nearly as smooth as command operation with a CAB-1L or Legacy CAB-2. As with any TMCC or Legacy locomotive, I recommend using command control for maximum enjoyment of all the Berkshire's electronic features.

At the End of the Run

Regardless of the finish and road name on the Lionel scale model of the Lima Berkshire, it's a handsome locomotive that runs as great as it looks.

To conclude, OGR friend and fellow O gauge railroader Dave Silburn graciously loaned us his model of the Polar Express Berkshire for this review—thank you Dave. 🚂

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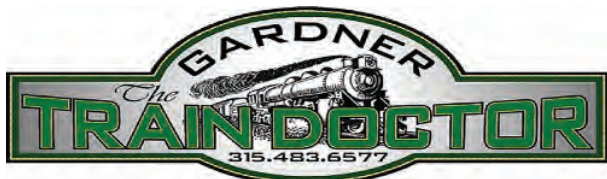


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M80-2119-0	Santa Fe F-7 B-Unit (Dcc Ready) Msp 169.95	90.00
M80-2119-1	Santa Fe Fl #39B W/Ps3 Msp \$219.95	139.00
M80-2120-1	Np #6511A/G511B F-7 A/B W/Ps3 Msp 489.95 Ho10/2	339.00
M80-2121-1	Northern Pacific #6511C F-7 A Np W/Ps3 Msp 269.95 Ho10	185.00
M80-2123-1	Erie Lackawanna #6112 F-7 A/B W/Ps3 Msp \$489.95	294.00
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M80-3207-1	Up 4-8-4-4 Big Boy (Original) #4005 W/Ps3 Msp 649.95	423.00
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M80-98031	Tx 60' Wood Deck Flat Car W/Cat 315C Hyd Exc Msp 34.97	21.00
M80-98032	Up 60' Wood Deck Flat Car W/Cat 315C Hyd Exc Msp 34.97	21.00
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M81-60007	Erie 5-Car Passenger Set (Smooth) Msp 329.95	231.00
M81-60008	Northern Pacific 5-Car Pass Set (Sm) Msp \$399.95 Ho10/2	279.00
M81-90012	B&O Ustra 55-Ton Steel Twin Hopper 6-Pack Msp 169.95	121.00
M81-90015B	Western Mid 55-Ton Steel Hooper Msp 29.95	19.00

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On this sunny day, the NYC Dreyfuss passenger train from MTH has passed over the long viaduct on one of the two parallel passenger tracks in front of Tower City. The plaza of the La WoW hotel on level five is just above the Dreyfuss engine. In large cities, such as New York, there is an extensive variety of architectural design and building size. I have tried to have a similar variety in Tower City. This city contains architectural designs from the early 1900s up through the 1950s.

The Sky's the Limit in Tower City

Article and Photos by Bill Bramlage

After seeing the realistic MTH O gauge hi-rail engines at a 1992 TCA Eastern Division York meet, I converted from a lifetime of S gauge trains to hi-rail O gauge railroading. After switching and with the help of many new O gauge friends, I filled my basement room with an O gauge hi-rail display layout.

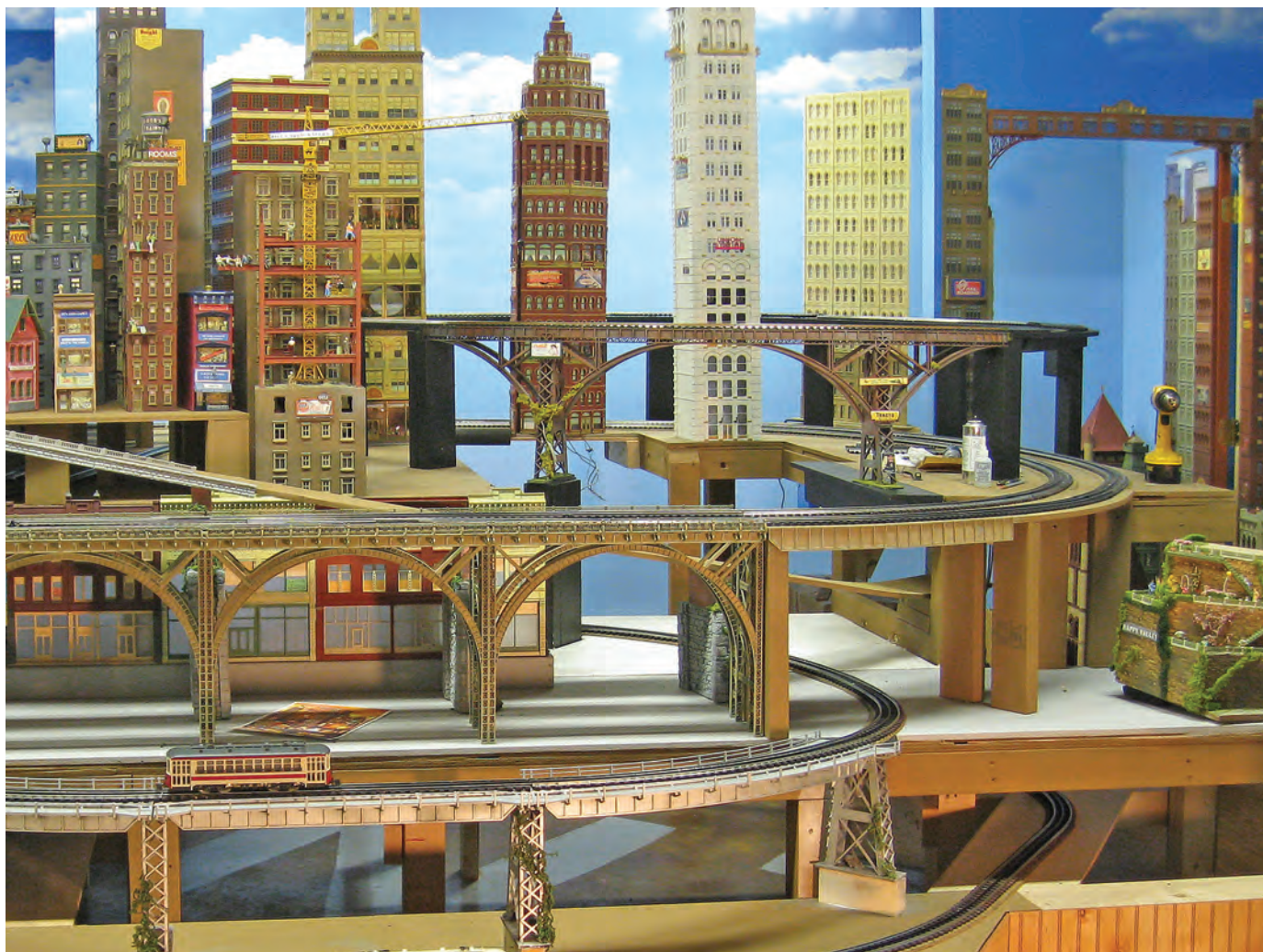
Having run out of space but still suffering with a major dose of model railroading fever, I started a new project in 2002, which eventually became Tower City. This city, similar to New York City, involves many types, sizes, and colors of build-

ings. Also similar to New York, my city is visually congested with many vehicles, crowds of people, hundreds of lights, and Miller Engineering flashing signs. Because of my train friends' interest in my Tower City, my infatuation with the setback skyscrapers of New York and kitbashing, the number of my skyscrapers has increased continually over the years.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, skyscrapers were tall multistory buildings with steel framework and non-weight-bearing walls. Some historians credit the ten-story 1884 Home Insurance

Building in Chicago with being the first skyscraper in the U.S. In 1931 the Empire State Building became the tallest building in the world and it held that record for some 40 years.

A setback skyscraper becomes smaller as it rises into the sky. The setback issue peaked in 1915 when the 38-story Equitable Building in New York blocked all sunlight over seven square blocks. Zoning ordinances enacted the following year mandated setback designs that were then followed by the Empire State Building and other setback structures.



The new multilayered framework for Tower City was constructed during the rebuild phase in 2009. The bottom two levels contain track for trolley lines through the Bottoms and through the future Central Plaza. The third level includes two passenger lines and two freight lines that pass in front of and under the city. Level four will contain the future plaza in front of the La WoW hotel. Level five is the elevated rapid transit line operating subway-type trains. Recently unpacked buildings are scattered about the framework.

This is Tower City as it existed in 2006 prior to moving to my present residence. Several months after this photo was taken, the city and the layout were placed in storage for two years.





Here's Tower City in 2014 with similar orientation to the earlier 2009 construction. The city is approaching completion. A Gulf, Mobile & Ohio MTH passenger train occupies one of the two passenger lines crossing the long viaduct. A silver MTH subway scarred with graffiti pauses on the upper transit line that winds between the tall skyscrapers. On the far left side of the city, a colorful Chicago and North Western MTH passenger train passes in front of the cathedral on level six of the city.



This view of the city summarizes my design goals for Tower City: trains and buildings on multiple levels from floor to ceiling; tall buildings massed close together; gaps between buildings allowing the viewer to see additional buildings in the center of the city; highly visible and congested parks, plazas, sidewalks, and streets allowing for numerous scenery vignettes close to the viewer; extensive lighting mimicking New York City; easily viewed and highly detailed interior rooms within the major buildings; businesses and structures named after friends and family. A final goal is whimsy. I want visitors to smile and enjoy their experience viewing Tower City.

In 2003 a city filled a corner of my train room. This was a good project for a small area since a moderate amount of time and material goes into a single skyscraper. The city grew up and out, and eventually the room was filled. Then my wife, Mary, and I decided to sell the house and move to a better basement. With the help of many train friends, the layout was taken apart. The people, the buildings, the accessories, and all electronics were packed in storage containers. All the trains and layout components were stored for two years.

We moved to the large new basement with a 10' ceiling in 2008. Yes, I must admit there is a house above this fantastic basement. Later that year the framework of the new layout was built, and a renewed layout building frenzy began. The structures of Tower City began escaping from their packing boxes and were being placed here and there in the general area of the planned city.



1 - Custom replica of Cincinnati City Tower by Dennis Kirchman	19 - Mizell Trains 6-story custom building - no longer available
2 - Ameri-Towne parts	20 - Chooch Enterprises Ultra Scale II O scale buildings and fronts
3 - Ameri-Towne parts plus Design Preservation Models (DPM) kits	21 - Tower City's City Hall constructed with highly detailed Chooch panels
4 - Stacking of MTH building components	22 - Chooch Enterprises Ultra Scale II building
5 - Cathedral - Ameri-Towne & DPM kits - casting of curved walls in my shop	23 - Ameri-Towne panels - decorated interiors fill the upper floors
6 - Korber kit parts purchased at York from the Korber "seconds" box	24 - Ameri-Towne panels and HO building parts for the upper floors
7 - Korber #702 - Background Tall City Building Fronts	25 - Chooch Enterprises building panels - my favorite building in Tower City
8 - Korber #702 - Background Tall City Building Fronts	26 - Chooch Enterprises building panels - several highly detailed rooms
9 - Ameri-Towne kit parts	27 - Curved wall building produced by room temperature vulcanizing
10 - Stacked MTH building parts and Plastruct girder construction parts	28 - DPM panels - copies the art deco style of the Chrysler building in New York City
11 - DPM and Ameri-Towne kit parts	29 - Ameri-Towne parts
12 - Ameri-Towne and DPM panels - small windows, doors on upper floors	30 - MTH building components
13 - Custom building created by Dennis Kirchman - Ameri-Towne panels	31 - Ameri-Towne parts - these are actually doors to the rear of the layout
14 - MTH building parts plus dollhouse supplies	32 - Ameri-Towne parts - these are actually doors to the rear of the layout
15 - All Ameri-Towne building kit panels	33 - This hotel is built from a kit produced by Imagine That Laser Art
16 - DPM panels	34 - Mizell Trains 6-story custom building - no longer available
17 - Setback skyscraper created with DPM panels	35 - Chooch Enterprises panels - large windows allow views of the detailed interior
18 - Setback technique and asymmetric upper floors - Ameri-Towne panels	36 - O scale dollhouse built with Chooch Enterprises panels



Here is an aerial view of the La WoWo hotel façade and the front plaza. This highly detailed structure with amazing fire escapes was built from a kit provided by Imagine That Laser Art at www.imaginethatlaserart.com.



This double-tower department store was constructed with Chooch Enterprises architectural panels, which were highly detailed and were excellent for kitbashing. Unfortunately, they are no longer available. This central city department store is busy late in the day. A furniture store occupies the first two floors of this building. A rapid transit elevated train snakes between the skyscrapers taking tired shoppers and workers home.



A Tower City News Editorial

Tower City is a crowded, busy, noisy, bustling city with too many people, too many cars, many tall buildings, and too many bright and flashing lights. More people arrive each month, and new buildings keep being built. The diesel, steam, and interurban trains passing through the city add to the already existing dirt, noise, and confusion. We need to ban steam engines from the city! The infrastructure is stressed. The main boulevard is approaching gridlock. There aren't enough roads or bridges. Many times the city management is inattentive and can be found on the sofa napping. What can we do?

Rapid transit lines wind through the heart of the city. This is a view of the central skyline of Tower City. Classic architectural designs of the 1930s characterize both the façades and the pinnacles of these wonderful skyscrapers. The tall cream-colored MetLife building is the tallest building in this photo. Other buildings show the decreasing size of the upper floors typical of the setback design of New York skyscrapers.



The St. Remu casino is one of the many interior rooms within the city's skyscrapers. The materials for decorating and furnishing the interior rooms of the city were obtained from vendors at dollhouse shows and from Scenic Express.

By 2010 the majority of the layout was constructed and detailed, but the city area still needed a lot of attention. Tower City's multilevel framework and city configuration allowed for added visual interest, clustering of various heights and types of buildings, logical locations for trolley stations in the central city, and centralized city plazas surrounded by tall buildings.

Four passenger and freight lines, two trolley lines, and a rapid transit line operate on four levels through, into, and under Tower City. Buildings of many architectural styles, streets, boulevards, gardens, trolley and transit stations, and many pedestrian plazas were constructed on multiple city levels. Highly detailed 1/4" scale interior rooms were also included in the buildings of Tower City.

The new Tower City is now larger than the initial 2003 version. The city extends over 25' in length, 10' in



Many detailed interior rooms add interest to the tall skyscrapers rising behind the elevated rapid transit line. The white tower made from Ameri-Towne panels is a model of the MetLife building in New York. The cream-colored St. Remu hotel tower contains three completely detailed rooms. The dark red townhouse tower from Ameri-Towne parts has curved wall panels I molded in my workshop.

Under Tower City's steel train viaduct from Miami Valley Bridges, which is no longer in business, are nestled numerous stores, pubs, and restaurants. Bernie's Pub serves many of the patrons of the outdoor train show that fills the mall. The rust-colored apartment building next to Bernie's Pub was built with several Plasticville apartment kits.



Five o'clock in the afternoon is a very busy time in the Central Plaza of Tower City. Homeward-bound office personnel hurry to catch the city trolley, a Western HobbyCraft model. Behind the trolley, the hotel St. Remu from Chooch Enterprises will soon be bustling with patrons heading for the hotel's casino.



This is life in the Bottoms—under the elevated track. The nefarious characters hovering around the phone booth are not drug dealers, but my grandsons. At the far end of the street, the fire department is dealing with a small office fire. When visiting the Bottoms, take notice of possible unsavory characters.

depth, and vertically extends up to the 10' black-painted ceiling. Thousands of lights in and on the buildings, many action signs, hundreds of streetlights, many lighted vehicles from Jack Pearce, and an unknown number of inhabitants crowd into busy Tower City. The city comes alive when the room lights are dimmed, all the city lighting is turned on, and the sounds chips from ITT Products are activated. The Tower City show begins!

Tower City remains a work in progress. I will always be working on details and scenery vignettes. I remember from *Star Wars* the expression, “May the force be with you.” The secret source of this “railroad building force” is my group of railroad friends. They call, e-mail, and stop by to check on and evaluate the layout’s progress. Members of our train group attend our show-and-tell train lunch each Thursday. Tower City is growing and expanding, and there are no plans to stop. My basement door remains open to allow my railroad friends to visit, comment, and critique the train world that is Tower City. 🚂



Nighttime has arrived. Tower City is transformed into a magic kingdom of lights. It all looks fantastic. It's a place to visit, but maybe not a place to live.



Large and grand cities have brightly lighted boulevards, and Tower City is no exception. This boulevard has many lights, multiple blinking billboards, flashing signs, and many lighted vehicles. Extensive lighting is a hallmark feature of my Tower City layout. A variety of lighting techniques were used in order to obtain the sparkling, twinkling appearance of nighttime in this large city.

Space-saving shelf layout



Multiple Levels in the Man Cave

Article, Photos, and Drawings by Gary Figi



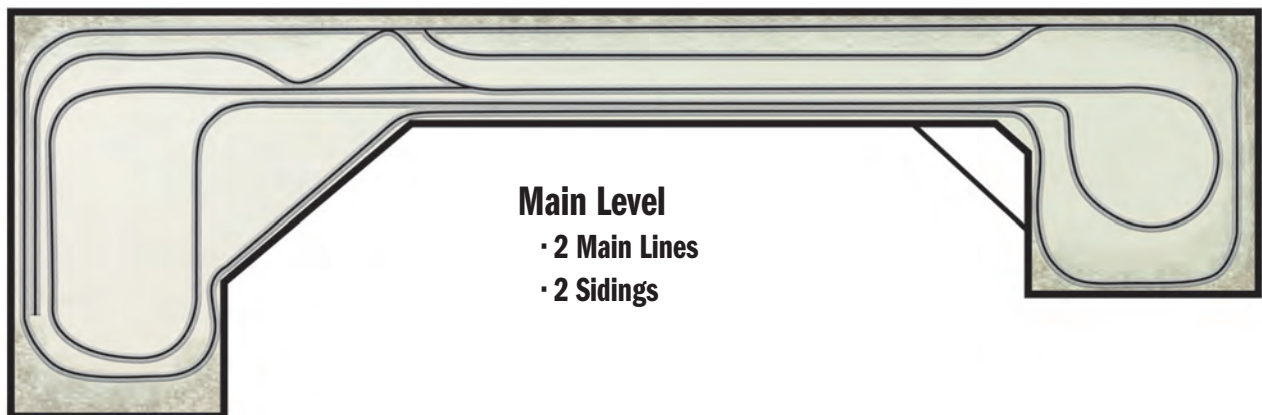
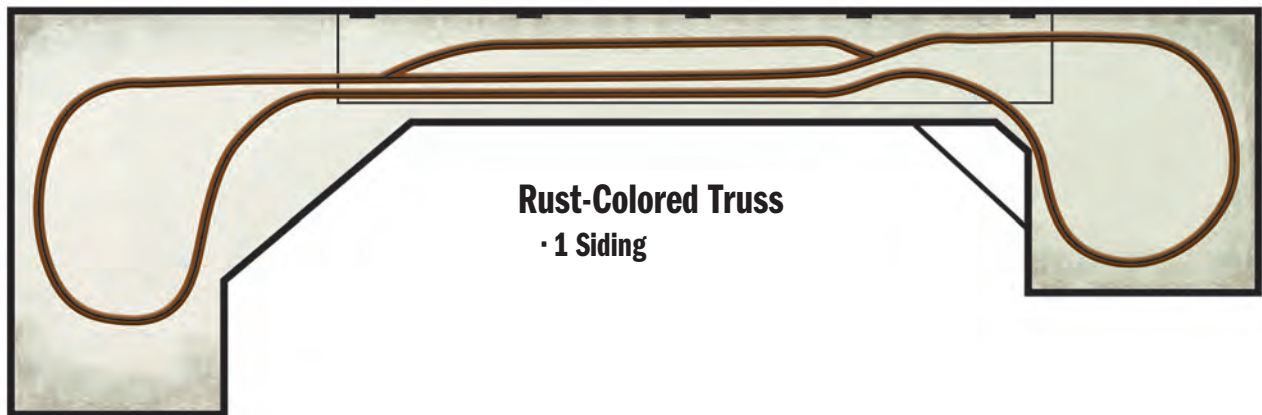
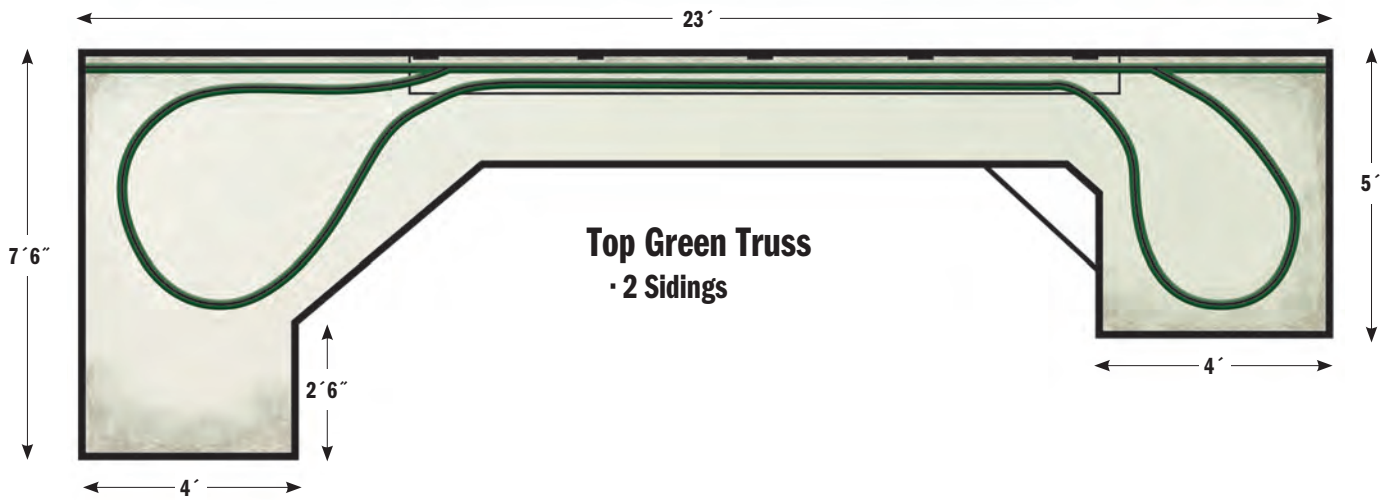


The somewhat commonly used term man cave refers to a select spot in one's home where a guy can get away from it all. Even as a kid who was required to share an American Flyer layout with two older brothers, I dreamed of one day having my own special train room.

In 1983 after attending a large model train show in Michigan, I began building my own 3-rail layout (Photo 1). While at this train show, I also visited all of the dealer and seller tables and purchased a few engines and some tubular track. I still use K-Line Shadow Rail tubular track on my shelf layout, which I designed and built, along with Lionel switches on the four main lines and a few K-Line switches serving some of the sidings.

This shelf layout provides me with a lot of track for running trains while taking up far less floor space than the typical bench-type layout (Photo 2). There is conventional benchwork on the first level, and the rust-colored truss is held up by wooden dowels painted gray to represent concrete piers. The green truss is supported by 3/8" x 3/8" hardwood with balsa cross bridging (Photo 3). The base for each truss is 3/4" hard plywood. I chose hardwood for this to prevent warping. It is sold at virtually





all home improvement stores and lumber yards and costs about \$15 more than traditional plywood. The extra cost is well worth it because I can get a whole lot of trusses out of one sheet.

The black wood that hangs down from the home's sole plate, located on top of the concrete walls, is also made from hardwood plywood for the same reason: no warping (Photo 4). There are no bolts or nails in the concrete wall. The shelf layout simply hangs down, somewhat like a suspension bridge, with all of the weight supported by one 3/8" bolt 4" in length and two 5" long wood screws. Each wooden support against the wall has a manufactured shelf system made from heavy-gauge steel that was prepainted black.

I used Ameri-Towne structures along the walls on the two elevated lines and purchased full kits from which I made a number of shallow building fronts. These structures are fun to build, and I have customized them by painting them with acrylic paints and weathering them with colored chalks.

The truss sides are made from a sub-floor material called luan (Photo 5). It is sold in 4x8 sheets, which are ripped on a table saw to a finished width of 2". The luan strips are glued to the hardwood plywood with carpenter's glue and further secured with finishing nails with everything held in place with clamps until dry. The luan is very flexible and will bend to a



curve without breaking. It is finished with 1/16"x 1/4" balsa strip wood. It is then painted with a flat latex paint, and the truss is placed on top of the piers and then glued and nailed to the piers and towers.

I planned out my shelf layout before construction began and also stayed somewhat flexible when building it. Things sometimes look or fit better on paper than they do on the final layout. I used graph paper for my drawings primarily because, when I started this layout in 1983, home computers were not widely used.

I considered the average adult's height for viewing in my planning and confirmed it in the construction phase. I chose an overall height that would allow the majority of my visitors to comfortably view the action and would also make it easy for me to work on my layout.

Space has been provided on each level for a yard siding to park trains. Space availability is always a big problem with 3-rail O gauge. The layout is powered with Lionel ZW and CW80 transformers (Photo 6).

This layout is based on the Detroit & Mackinac Railway. When I was a kid, I spent a lot of time watching trains in



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East Tawas, Michigan. The D&M had a large yard in East Tawas complete with an engine house and a turntable. My entire layout features a number of local road names such as the Detroit, Toledo & Ironton, Ann Arbor Railroad Systems,

Pere Marquette, St. Clair Blue Water Route, BASF Wyandotte, Ford Motor Company, Soo Line, Canadian National, Conrail, and Grand Trunk (Photo 7). In short, there's little worry about coming up short on available or new products.



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Like most major cities in the United States, I also have Amtrak service represented on the layout. In our real lives, we have enjoyed riding Amtrak from Dearborn to Chicago and to Grand Junction, Colorado (Photo 8). Detroit is an international city with easy driving access to Ontario, Canada, via the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel or the Ambassador Bridge. I can jump on a Via Rail train in Windsor and be in Toronto in five hours to watch my favorite baseball matchup: the Detroit Tigers at the Toronto Blue Jays.

One corner of my man cave has an area that I call Caboose Corner (Photo 9). This space was built in the same way as the trusses on the layout, and it provides a matching and convenient display area. You can see this and much more of my man cave layout on my YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/trainroomgary.

As I see it, the best part of a shelf layout is that it can provide a lot of operating track on a small footprint while still leaving space for details and accessories. (Photos 10 and 11). And we all know that there are a good variety of possible uses for a man cave's real estate. 



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Two small layouts with expansion and operating potential

Readers frequently request more articles about layouts of small and medium size. In addition to pictorial features about such layouts, readers also enjoy seeing what others have done to plan for achieving the maximum amount of railroading in the smallest space. Two articles submitted by OGR forum member and active O gauge hobbyist Clive Ellis are particularly appropriate because they not only demonstrate his effective use of readily available computer software for planning a model railroad but also provide a whole lot of detail regarding the thought process that he used in putting the plans together. We're happy to share Clive's insights here.—Allan



Track Plan 1 – The Triborough

Article, Graphics, and Diagrams by Clive Ellis

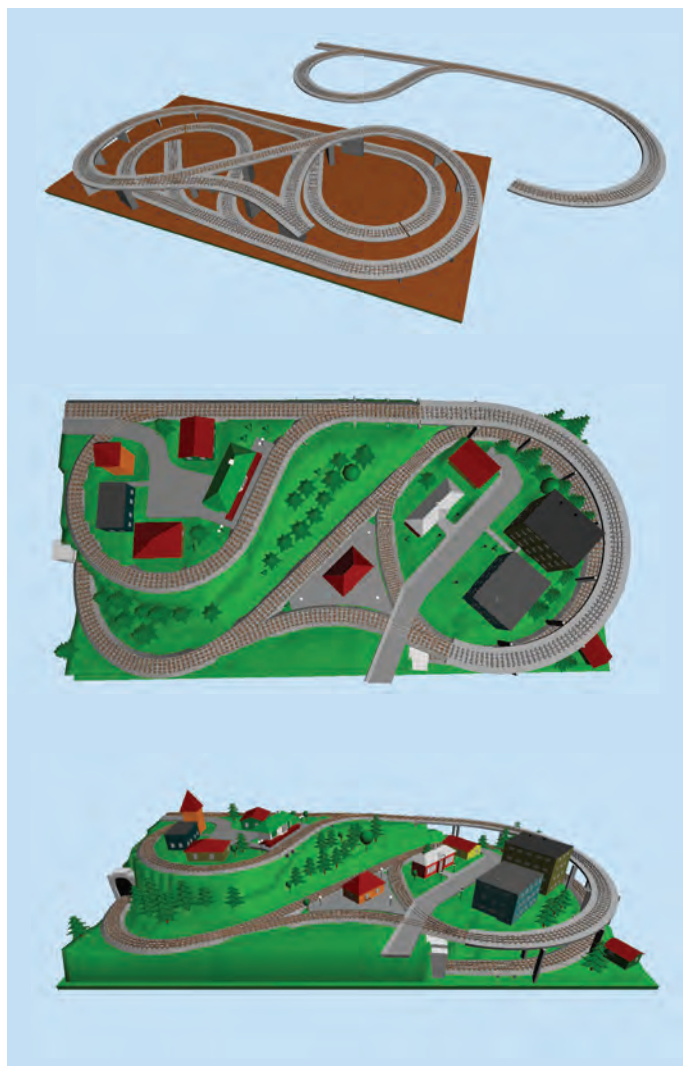
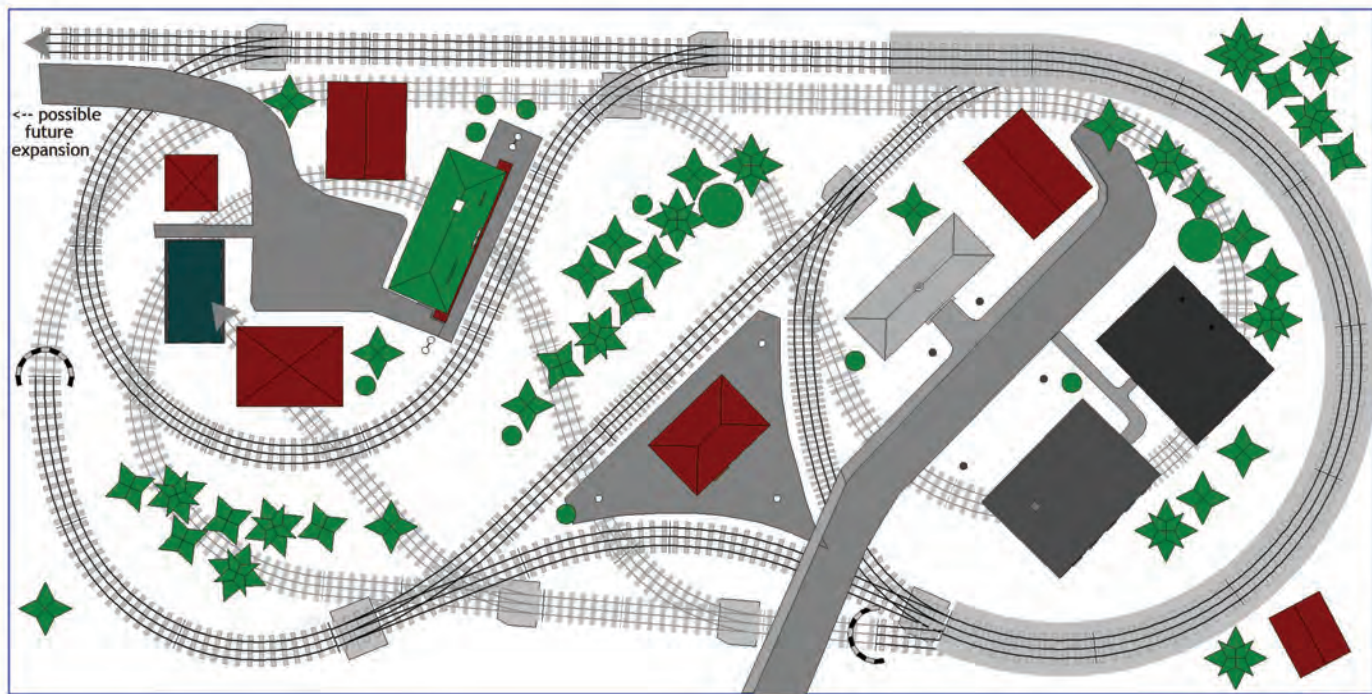
One of the challenges of designing smaller continuous-run layouts involves trying to provide some variety of operation beyond the usual patterns where the route of a train quickly becomes predictable and repetitious to viewers. Smaller layouts typically have some form of oval, figure eight, or perhaps a bent dog-bone track plan due to the constraints of space.

This 4' x 8' 3-rail track plan uses traditional O gauge tubular track and features a wye junction as a central feature, which branches off to three separate reverse loops. This arrangement provides different routing possibilities and two hidden layovers without excessively complicated track work. Three-rail track has a tremendous advantage here because the wye and reverse loops are easy to operate with no special attention needed for track polarity issues.

Operating Possibilities

The three reverse loops might represent three different communities in close range with commuter trains and local freights running every which way. A basic pattern of operation for this plan involves two trains with each train being up to 8' long, as limited by the size of the reverse loops. One train will park on a reverse loop while the other train runs between the other two reverse loops, eventually stopping on one loop. Then the other train can run to the reverse loop that is not occupied. Two trains can run between loops in a free-cell pattern with six different routings of the two trains possible before the pattern repeats.

Operation can be more challenging with additional shorter trains that fit two per reverse loop. Shorter trains might be RDC



or interurban cars, a single diesel with a couple of commuter cars, or a short local freight. This opens up lots of potential for additional variety of operation with the different trains routing through the wye junction in different directions. A single-car train can stop on one leg of the wye junction to clear other trains.

Layout Features

For hobbyists faced with the challenge of limited spaces and nonpermanent residences, this type of layout can serve as a core module. The layout provides interesting operation, and when additional space is available, the track can be expanded off in whichever direction is convenient. The multiple reverse loops can return a train that comes in from any direction without backup moves.

Grades are challenging but not unreasonable for trains of short or medium length with good motive power. Smaller cars and locos would be appropriate on the O31 curves. The plan has wider curves where possible while still maintaining the layout within a 4' x 8' size and trying not to crowd the edges excessively. The wye and reverse loops will be easy to operate with nonderailing switches. The two hidden layovers will keep visitors guessing as to where did that train go and when or where will it reappear.

Control System

Command control has obvious advantages if you want to run more than two trains on this layout. Multiple short trains can start and stop anywhere in streetcar style if necessary.

Conventional control is simple if you run only two trains; you will need only three blocks. Each block would include one reverse loop and the connecting track up through the nearest switch of the wye junction. The block boundaries would all meet in the wye junction. Just isolate one train in one of those three blocks while the other train runs on the other two blocks.



Possible Modifications

It's possible to make additional connections with the hidden track on the lower level for other routing options, but I chose to avoid further complication in the plan. As it stands, there are three hidden switches. Two hidden switches will be easily accessible from the front of the layout if you provide an access opening. I've minimized the total number of switches on the layout that can still provide a variety of different trains and routings. You'll want to make sure that the hidden tracks and switches are all performing reliably before you add tunnels and scenery to the layout.

The two-level viaduct allows more favorable track geometry and reduces the amount of otherwise hidden track, as well as providing a unique feature for the layout. The lower-level track in the viaduct could be hidden from view in a tunnel, but I wanted to reduce the amount of hidden track because there are already two reverse loops where trains can completely disappear from view. It's also possible to align the stacked tracks roughly concentric, but it would require sharper curves, more congestion, and somewhat awkward scenery.

A storage spur 20" long fits inside the lower-left reverse loop with the switch accessible from the front of the layout. This could accommodate a third train of RDC cars that shuttle back and forth to the station at the wye junction. An access opening in the front of the layout will allow you to check the positions of trains on those otherwise hidden tracks.

Provision for Future Expansion and Moving

A good way to expand this layout would be to run a single track off to a yard on a shelf. A multitrack yard provides another destination for the trains, additional layover tracks, and a place to switch cars around to vary the train consists. Flat shelf layout additions are easy to build to fit available space. If it's moderately high, a shelf up to 24" wide can fit over other furniture such as bookcases or storage shelves without impeding access to those items.

You can also build narrower display shelves on the wall over the layout addition. If you eventually need to move, the flat section can be easily dismantled and the parts salvaged for rebuilding to fit a different space. That concept has worked well for my own home layout over a period of decades.

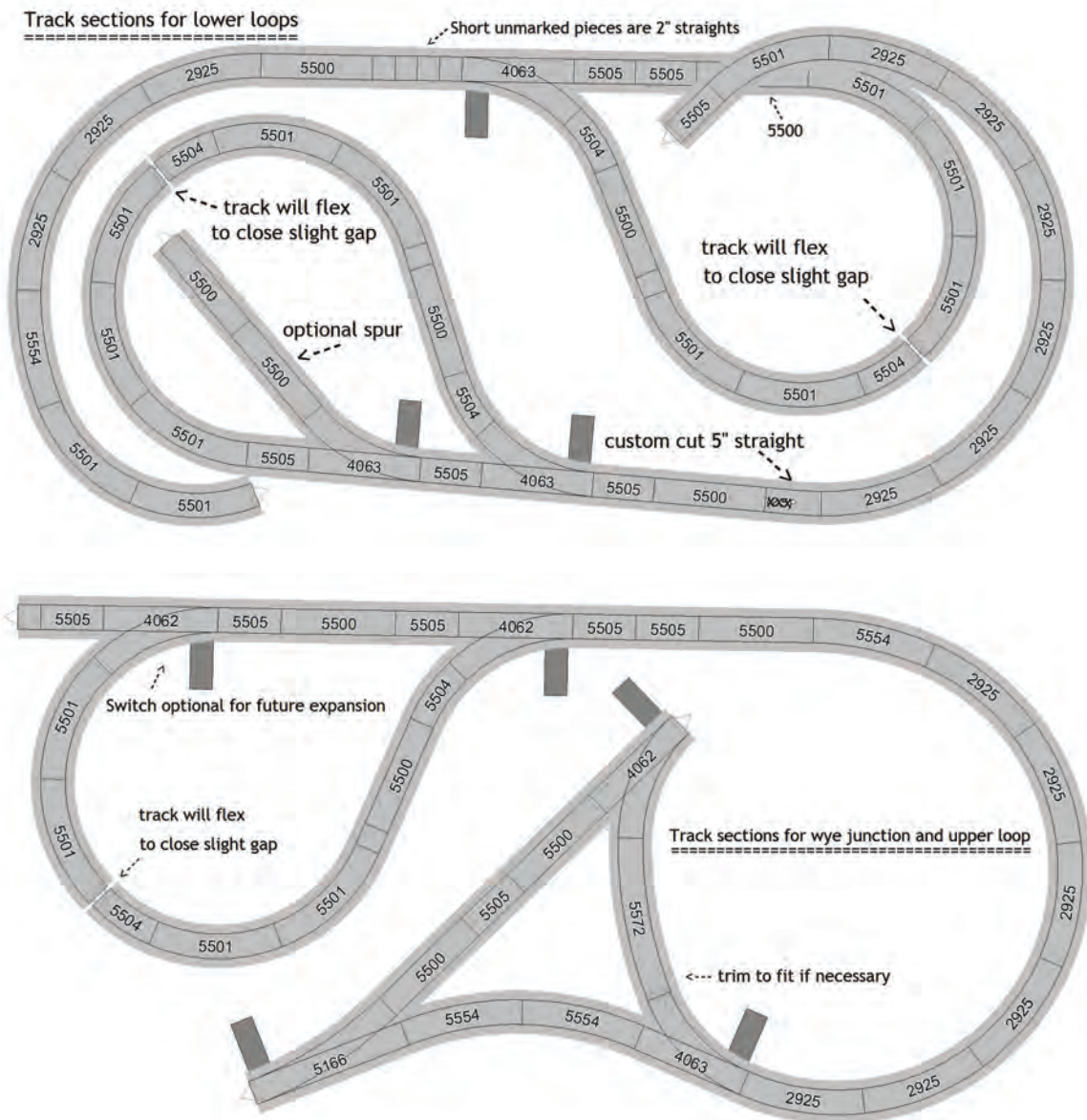
Layout Construction Considerations

This type of layout is somewhat challenging to build because of the interwoven grades and multiple levels, but those complications also add interest to the plan. You can start construction with a flat tabletop to lay out the lower-level reverse loops and then work up to the wye junction from each loop. You may want to provide access holes inside each reverse loop, which will be open from underneath the layout after scenery is added. A flat tabletop is much easier to position incremented risers for the ascending grades when you have all these curved tracks. A suitable 1x4 framework supporting 1/4" plywood should give good support without excessive weight.

The next phase is to construct the double-deck viaduct and the upper-level reverse loop. The upper reverse loop is built on its own flat plywood platform, which provides an area for a community with buildings.

For most people, a 4' x 8' layout is about the largest size that is practical to move in one piece. Of course, it will not always be possible to fit an existing 4' x 8' layout into certain rooms, depending on the access. To maintain a reasonable weight for portability, the layout should not be structurally overbuilt, and scenery should be constructed with lightweight materials. For saving space, the layout could be placed against a wall or in a corner, but it would be advisable to provide rollout access for construction and maintenance.

Layout height is a personal choice, and much depends on whether you are designing for adults or children. Personally, I prefer layout heights of 48" to 57" for good viewing while standing and to allow for access and storage space underneath. But I have



Triborough Track List:

(Includes optional tracks shown in diagrams)

- 5500 12 full straights (10" length)
- 5505 12 half straights (5-1/2" length)
- 301x 8 short straights (2" length)
- 5501 17 O31 full curves
- 5504 6 O31 half curves
- 2925 15 O42 curves
- 5554 4 O54 curves
- 5572 1 O72 curve trimmed to fit
- 4062 3 left-hand O31 switches
- 4063 4 right-hand O31 switches
- 5166 1 left-hand O72 switch
- 1 straight section cut to 5"

another layout at 34" elevation because it was built on an existing table with multiple shelves above, and it's a good height for viewing while seated. I have multiple layouts in my house and first-hand experience with these different layout heights.

A layout designed to be movable should be built with detachable legs, and the legs can be modified fairly easily for different layout heights.

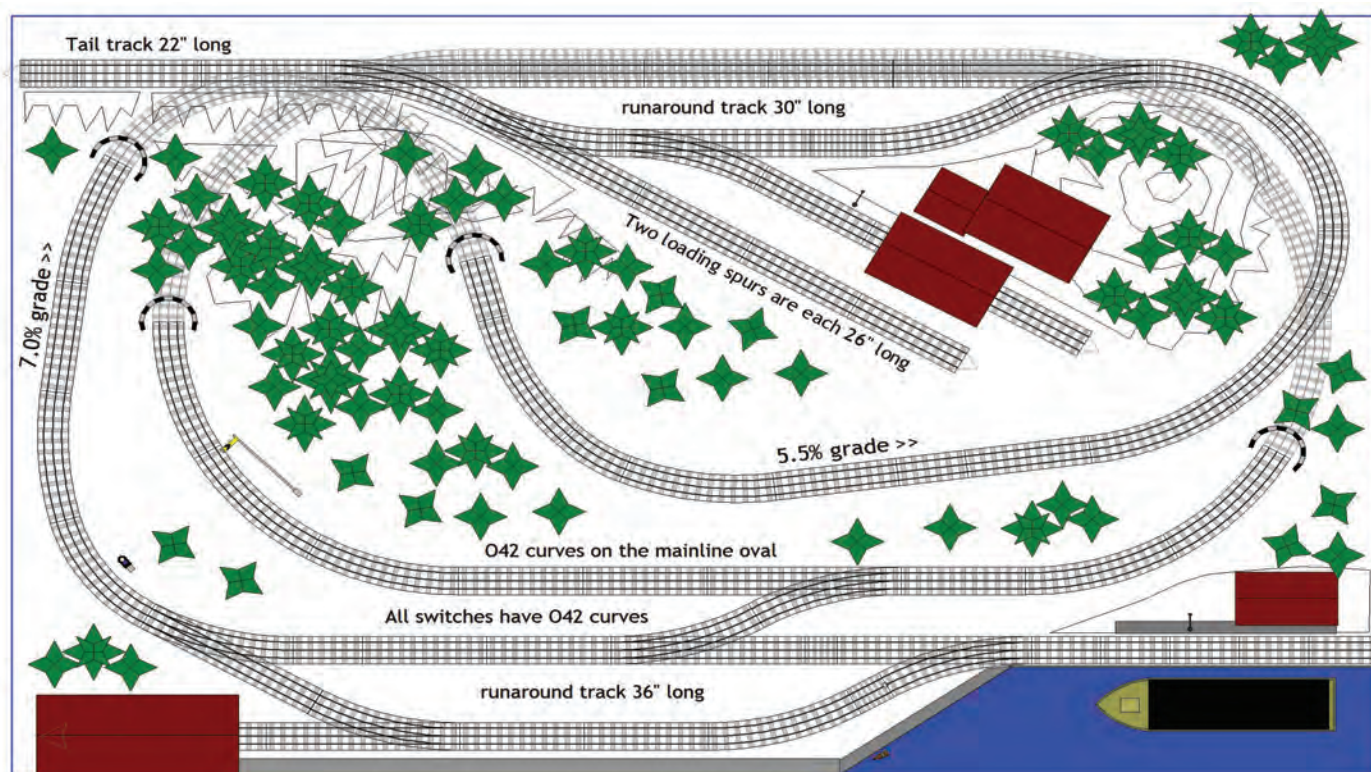
Free Track-Planning Software

The images for both plans presented here were created with Simple Computer Aided Railway Modeler (SCARM) software, available free online at www.scarm.info. Use this easy-to-learn software to create and customize your own plans.

As noted earlier, this first of the two plans is composed with 3-rail Lionel tubular track, and only two pieces of track are cut to fit. The small gaps visible in the reverse loops will close up easily because the track will flex. The gaps show because of the precise geometry of the software and the use of standard uncut track sections. This plan could be reworked for a different track system, Lionel FasTrack for example, and O36 minimum curves in a space of about 5' x 10'.

SCARM allows structures to suit your layout. These can be as basic or as detailed as you want to make them. On this plan, two buildings representing familiar Plasticville structures were downloaded from the SCARM O gauge library.

In this second of two track-planning ideas designed for small spaces and two-train operation, Clive Ellis includes an oval track plan for continuous running with a point-to-point line that serves two related industries. These lines are connected by a simple interchange to further expand the operating potential and fun.—*Allan*



Track Plan 2 – Coal Mountain Lines

This 5'x8' track plan for 3-rail O gauge features two separate rail lines: a mainline oval with O42 curves and a steeply graded point-to-point branch line connecting a mine with a barge pier. The two railroads interchange through a single crossover. The mainline oval has a hidden layover in a tunnel at the back. You can pause the mainline train back there to enhance the illusion of coming and going from distant places.

Branch-Line Operation Keeps You Busy

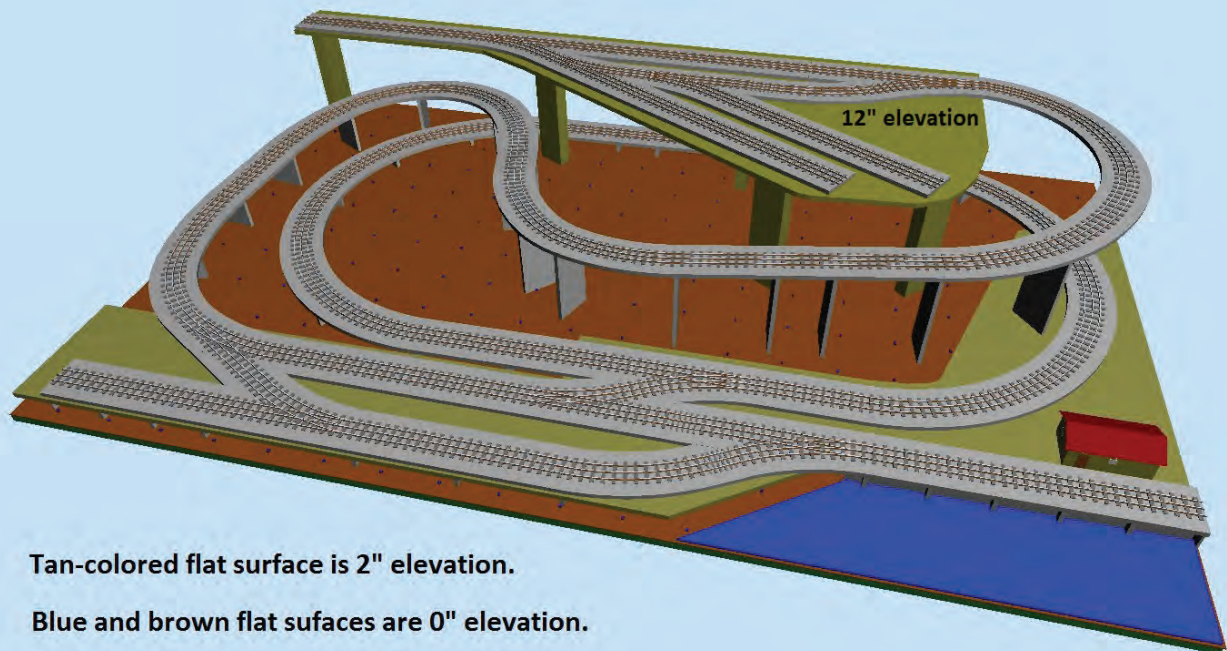
The mine railroad runs most of its traffic to the barge pier, but you can also interchange cars with the mainline railroad. The branch-line loco can help with switching if the mainline train has to do a facing-point move when the pier track is occupied.

Switching at the mine will be expedited if you are able to extend the tail track beyond the table at the left of the track

plan. Train length is naturally limited by the runaround tracks. Short ore cars would look good here. Caboose are optional depending on your switching ambitions. The switching areas have level track for practicality.

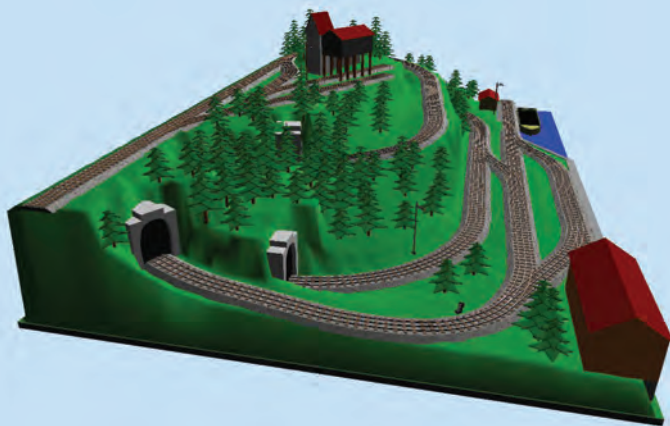
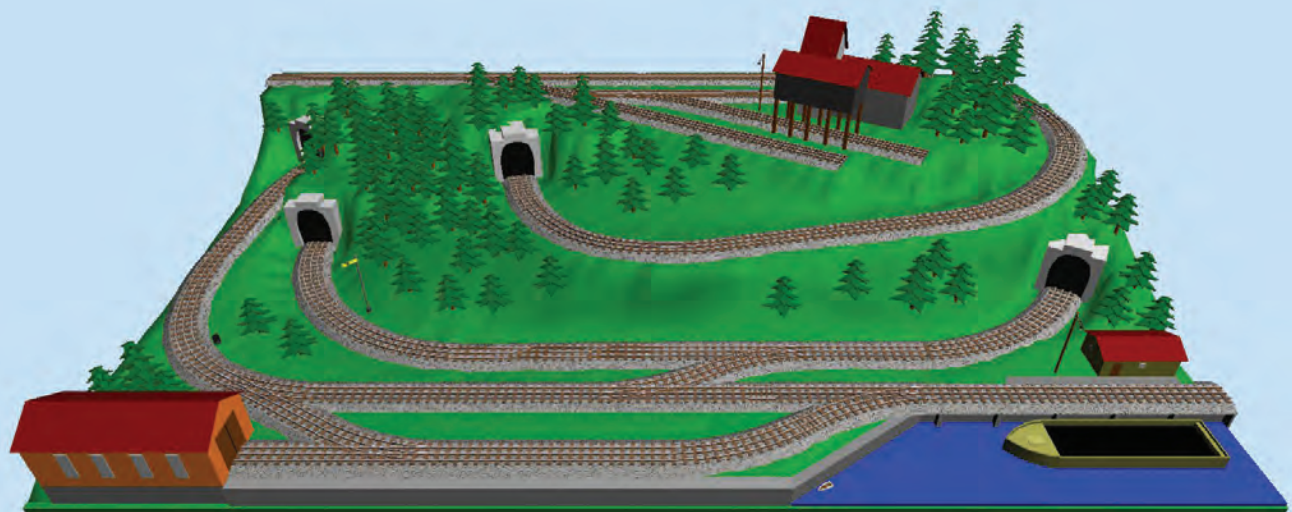
If traffic from the mine increases, one loco can run empties to the mine and depart with loaded cars. Then a separate loco stationed at the mine can switch the empties into the mine spurs where a loaded consist is ready to exchange with the next run of empties from the pier. For additional variety, a bidirectional rail motor might make periodic runs up the branch to transport mine workers. Sometimes a boxcar of mining equipment might be routed to the mine.

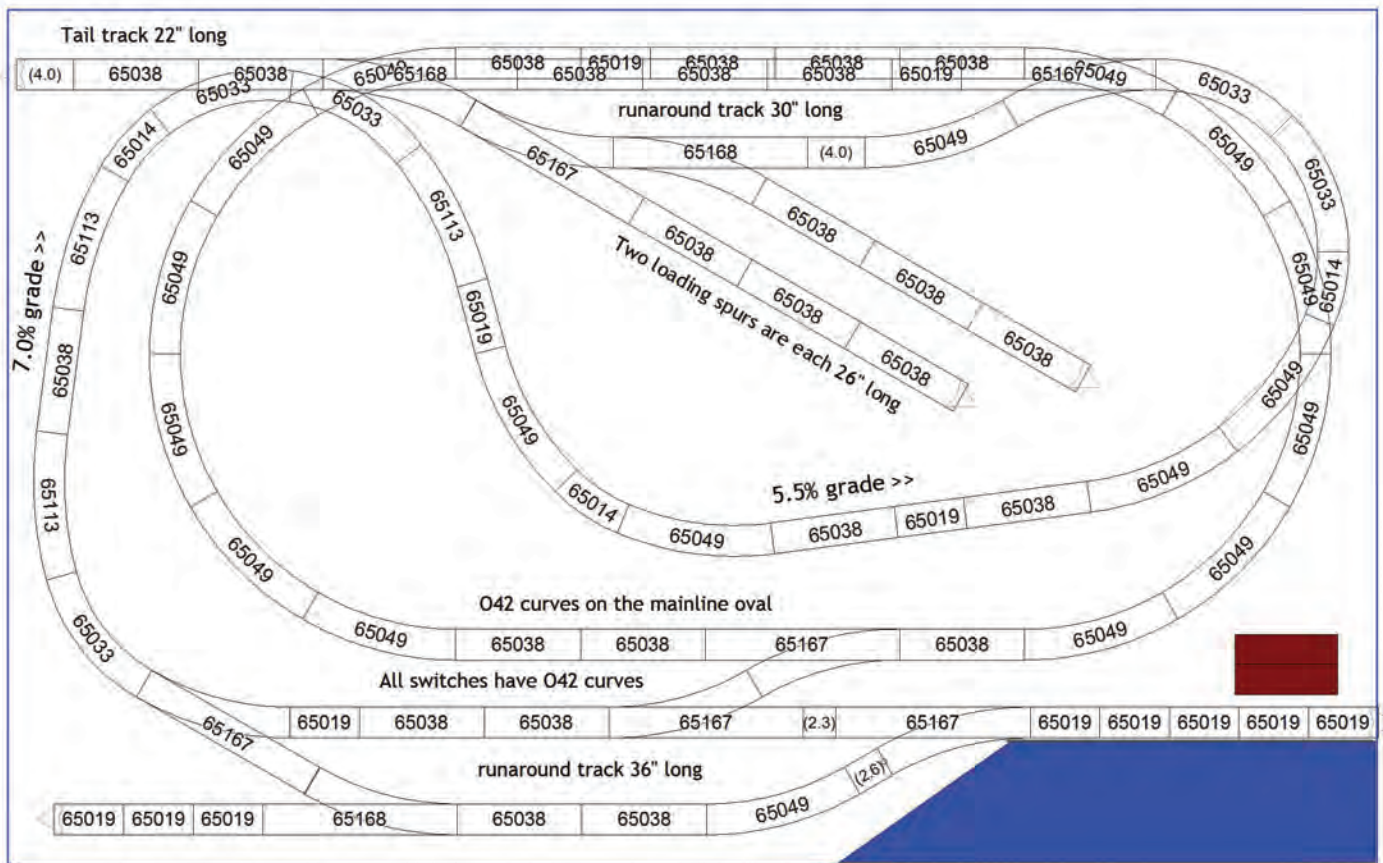
The layout could have additional operating interest if you have accessories to actually load and unload open hopper cars. Alternatively, you could ship an undisclosed material in covered hoppers so you won't have to explain loads and empties moving in contrary directions.



Tan-colored flat surface is 2" elevation.

Blue and brown flat surfaces are 0" elevation.





Coal Mountain Track List:

Traditional Lionel O27 profile tubular track and turnouts

65038 25 full straights (8-3/4" length)
 65019 13 half straights (4-7/8" length)
 65033 5 full curves
 65014 3 half curves
 65049 18 O42 curves
 65113 3 O54 curves
 65167 6 O42 left-hand turnouts
 65168 3 O42 right-hand turnouts
 4 straight sections cut to fit: 2-3/8", 2-5/8", 4", 4"

All O27 Track but Just a Few O27 Curves

The tracks are O27 profile, but the mainline oval and all the turnouts have wider O42 curves. The branch line to the mine has some O27 curves but with O42 and O54 easements and compound curves where possible. The mine branch has rather steep grades, but certainly manageable for short trains with good motive power. The elevation gain provides an operating challenge and scenic interest.

The mainline oval could be a different type of track if you adapt it to connect in the crossover. Just keep the O42 curve diameter to make it fit in the same space.

A Permanent Layout Constructed To Be Movable

A primary advantage of a not-too-large table layout is that it can be saved and moved as a complete unit provided you have suitably large passageways to move it through. It might become a connecting module for a larger layout someday if you plan accordingly.

The layout table measures 5' in its narrow dimension, and it certainly would be desirable to have aisles along the long sides for general access and to facilitate switching at the mine. One 5' end of the layout could be against a wall to save space.

Potential for Expansion

This layout definitely has potential for expansion if additional space is available. An easy place to add on is at the end of the branch line. You might run a single track off to another terminal on a shelf addition built to fit available space. The possibilities are endless.

I developed this plan to provide a variety of two contrasting and different railroad operations in a limited space with interesting and plausible scenic features. Additionally, I tried to keep the track work functional without excessive complications but with enough features to maintain interest. The layout is small enough so that it has the potential to be moved. No one likes to have to dismantle a completed layout that has absorbed a lot of time and energy. 🛠️



O Gauge Cabin Fever

Article by Ed Boyle Photos by Rich Melvin

What do you get when you combine a man who really dislikes camping with a loving wife who definitely likes camping and then mix the two opposing points of view with a lifelong love of toy trains? Well, if you are Jim Steed, you wind up with a piece of real estate that has a great view of Mother Nature's handiwork and also provides the perfect place to build a layout in a small space (Photo 1). Presented here is the full story.

Jim hates camping, and that deep dislike was born by living 13 months under canvas as a Marine in Vietnam. On the other hand, his wife, Gayle, loves camping.

Jim, smart man and good husband that he is, agreed to give in. They bought a pop-up trailer for their outdoor adventures, and Jim quickly discovered he still hated camping and the various chores and discomforts that go along with "roughing it" for fun.

Gary Denski, who built the Steed home in Blairsville, Georgia, and who also is a good friend of the couple, came up with a possible resolution to the problem by offering to make the Steeds a camper without wheels. Jim and Gayle accepted the proposal, and the end result was a beautifully constructed 1300-square-foot cabin with a 650-square-foot porch that wraps

around two sides of the cabin. The porch gives Jim and Gayle a wonderful view of the scenic 4,000' mountains behind their five acres of real estate, which also includes a large creek running through it. The creek is populated by a large stork-like bird—Jim is a train guy and not a naturalist—that uses the creek as its very own free fresh fish market. Best of all, the new cabin is only 12 minutes away from their primary home. Like a lot of people, the Steeds enjoy getting away from the house from time to time, but they especially like the view from the cabin and the convenience of being so close to their vacation retreat.



Cabin and Layout at the Same Time

Following this philosophy with the help of Gary has allowed Jim to make a great deal of progress in creating his new layout at the cabin in a relatively short period of time (Photo 2). With the benchwork in place as the cabin was being built, Jim could concentrate on the track plan, control panel, placement of buildings, roads, and other scenic elements of his mini-tinplate empire. One bedroom in the cabin is the location for the layout, which almost fills the available space. The rear section has an upper-level plateau 13' long and 3' wide. Beneath it is the main level, which is 10' long and tapers down to 9' wide that can be clearly seen in the accompanying track plan and layout diagram.

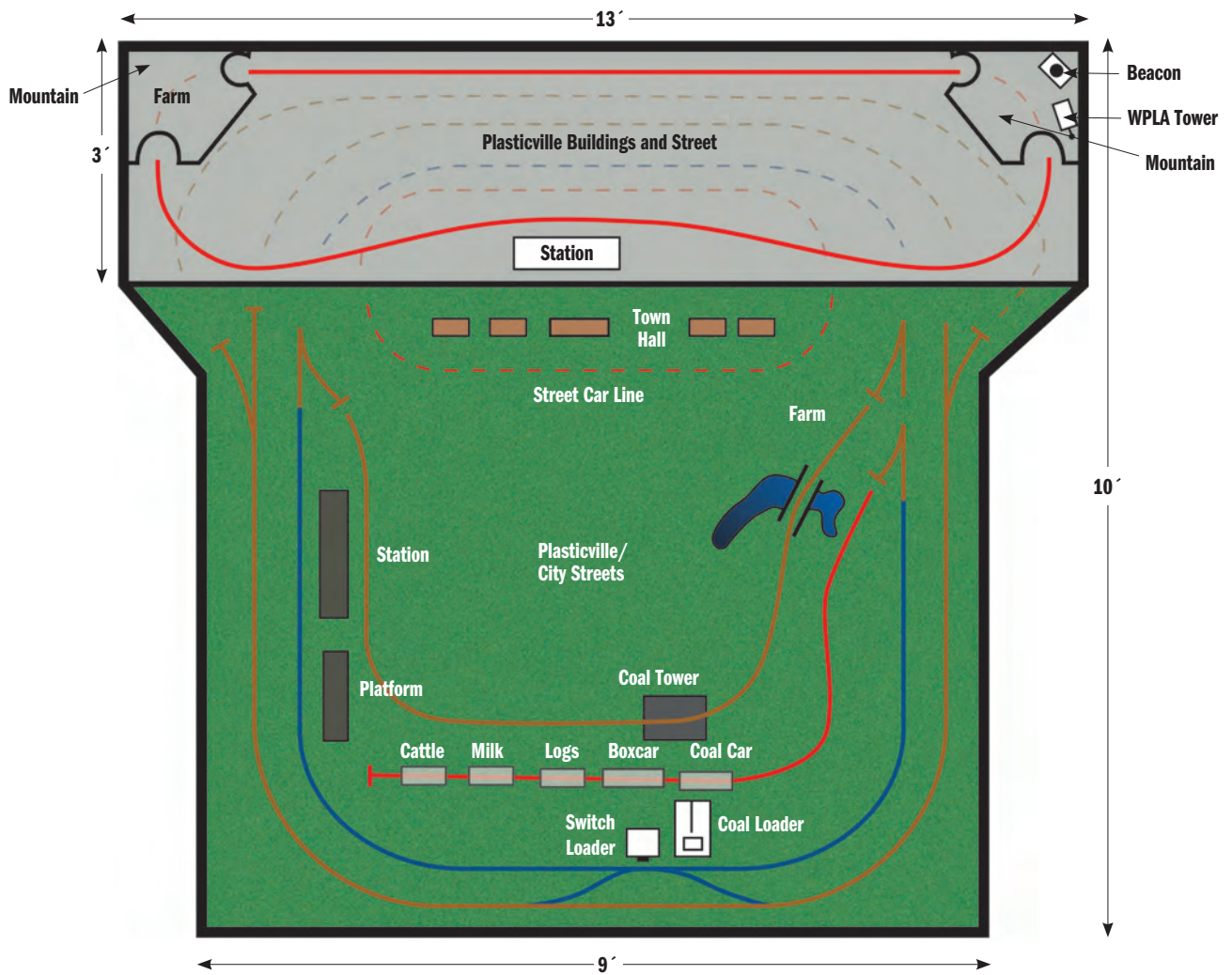
There are two loops of track on the main level and five O72 switches for the sidings. The outer loop uses O54 curved tubular track, and the inner loop uses O42 tubular curves. Both loops have a couple of O72 tubular pieces added to them as easements for the curves. There are four prewar manual O31 switches at the front of the



board for a double crossover between the two main lines (Photo 3). Jim is a big advocate for tubular track. He used it with great success on his main layout, and it works just fine on the new one at the cabin.

The board that supports the track and scenery is faced with tightly knit green

indoor/outdoor carpet. The ties for both the tubular track and the extra cross-ties Jim has placed under the track are secured by nylon cable tie wraps that can be cinched tight to hold both track and ties in place. As a result, there are very few screws used to secure the track, and the end result





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Accessories

A siding near the front of the layout holds several postwar operating cars with platforms and bins that are favorites with operators, starting with the orange 3656 Operating Cattle Car (Photos 4 and 5) and the white 3472 Refrigerated Milk Car next to the black 3461 Log Dump Car (Photo 6). The adjacent inner main line has a 445 Operating Switch Tower beside a prewar inspired 97 Remote Control Coal Loader (Photo 7).

Proto-Sound 2 SW9 in Santa Fe warbonnet livery heading a local freight (Photo 10).

Now that the cabin layout is pretty much complete and summer is here, that 650-square-foot wraparound porch has got to be something of a temptation. What better way for a confirmed 3-railer like Jim to enjoy the great outdoors than to have his very own seasonal modular railroad up and running on that big porch! On second thought, he probably should not mention that idea to Gayle. 

Buildings

The layout has more than 40 buildings on it, and more are being added all the time including what Jim states is “... almost one of each different Plasticville building.” Already on the layout are the WPLA radio station as well as the Plasticville motel and a nice pink swimming pool next to a busy roadway filled with trucks and cars (Photo 8). A focal point is a detailed scratchbuilt station made by a local hobbyist. It looks right at home with the 1952 Lionel Erie FA units idling on the outer main (Photo 9).

Engines and Rolling Stock

The equipment has been chosen to fit the cabin layout’s compact dimensions versus Jim’s much bigger layout at home. The trains are a mix of modern and mature, as you can see with the postwar Lionel Erie FAs with long passenger consist meeting up with an MTH RailKing



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Mmmm Donuts ...and a Lionel Sleeper

Delectable Donut Car

The last time I wrote about the Entenmann's series of cars in "Collector's Gallery" was in our 250th issue, the June/July 2011 edition. Originating in Long Island, New York, Entenmann's bakery products are justly famous on the East Coast and in the Midwest for high quality and great taste. They also make good subjects for limited-edition, uncataloged club cars, as the Railroad Museum of Long Island demonstrated with its Lionel TOFC 6-52497 of 2008 and its 2010 Operating Boxcar 6-52557, both of which were hits with collectors and lovers of Entenmann's baked goods as well (Photos 1 and 2).

This prompted us to modestly suggest another car in the series, a cylindrical hopper that not only had the Entenmann's logo and ENTX reporting marks created by Rich Melvin, who whipped up a rendering for this column, but also a gorgeous representation of my absolute favorite Entenmann's goody: the raspberry Danish twist (Photo 3). Alas, the folks at Entenmann's decreed that their signature chocolate-covered donuts would be the only product represented on future club car offerings.

When I received the 2014 Entenmann's Covered Quad Hopper in its specially decorated box with Entenmann's blue-and-white colors and authentic logos, my disappointment at not having our very unofficial version of the hopper chosen for production disappeared (Photos 4 and 5). After



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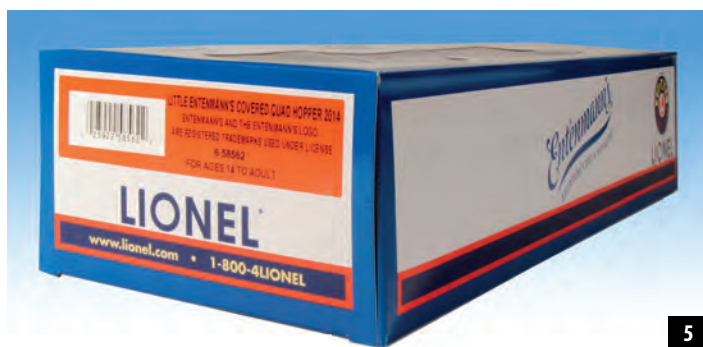


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all, the official Entenmann's logo on the sides of the box included the slogan "Everyone's Got a Favorite!" (Photo 6). How true! The blue-and-white four-bay hopper was flawlessly decorated



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(Photo 7). The chocolate-covered donuts never looked better, and the flat sides of the four-bay hopper were the ideal place to display them (Photo 8). The hopper even had the ENTX reporting marks that Rich had made up for our unofficial hopper proposal, so we came close (Photo 9). When we saw the final version of the Entenmann's hopper, we realized that this was a case where "almost" turned out to be a very good thing.

LITTLE, the Long Island Toy Train Locomotive Engineers, and METCA, the Metropolitan Division of the Train Collectors Association, were responsible for producing the hopper, which has proved to be another winner in the collector's marketplace. The Entenmann's Covered Quad Hopper, 6-58562, is selling for 30 percent more than its original price, and asking prices on auction sites have risen to twice what original buyers paid for them.

The next LITTLE/METCA Entenmann's joint project is a tank car that is scheduled to be delivered this fall (Photo 10).



A Lionel Sleeper

The early 1990s were a great time for reintroductions of prewar and postwar Lionel locomotives and passenger cars. When the 1-700 Lionel scale Hudson was announced in 1990, one of the images included what looked like a small portion of a heavyweight Madison/Irvington car behind the locomotive. Traditionalists rejoiced, and their wishes were answered in 1991 when a four-car set of Irvington cars was revealed in the Book Two 1991 Lionel Trains catalog (Photo 11). The cars even used the same high-density phenolic plastic of the originals to give them the proper heft. The big news was the consist also included the first production of the Sager Place Observation Car, 6-19018, with

number 9018 on its sides, which had been rumored in 1941 and finally made in 1991 (Photo 12). It even had a lighted drumhead on the rear deck railing. The tooling for the 1991 Madison cars was all new because the original 1940s' tooling had been lost and not recovered. However, Lionel was quietly working on another addition to the new Madison cars and announced it in 1993. The 6-19011 Lionel Lines Baggage Car was an all-new design, but it fit perfectly with the rest of the Madison/Irvington heavyweights (Photos 13 and 14). The baggage car was highly detailed with two sliding doors on each side and it used the underbody detailing of the rest of the Madison cars (Photos 15 and 16). When placed on the track with the 6-19015 Irvington Pullman from the first 1991 four-car consist, you can see that it belongs as part of the set.

The baggage car tooling was employed again for a few sets in the 1990s, but the car has not been made as either a part of a set or as an add-on for Conventional Classics offerings, like the GG1-led 2124W reproduction (6-31777) with three Madison cars, or the Conventional Classics Berkshire passenger set with its



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17

Madisons. This is a shame because the baggage car would fit right in as an add-on for these two sets as long as it was painted with the postwar-style Tuscan red that the newer cars use rather than the prewar-style Tuscan brown of the 1990s that the 6-19011 wears (Photo 17).

The baggage car is a real sleeper because it is relatively little known among collectors who were inundated with Lionel Lines Madison cars in the 1990s. However, the prices for the baggage car reflect the fact that some in the collector community have recognized the rarity and desirability of the Lionel Lines 6-19011 Baggage Car. The prices can range up to three times more than the Madison Pullmans on auction sites and at shows. Not bad for a sleeper!



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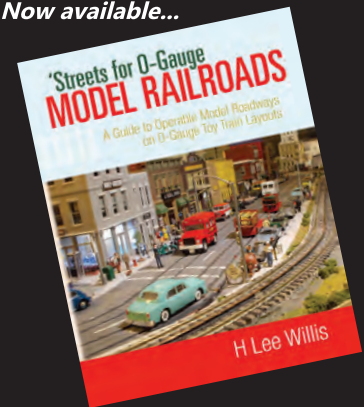
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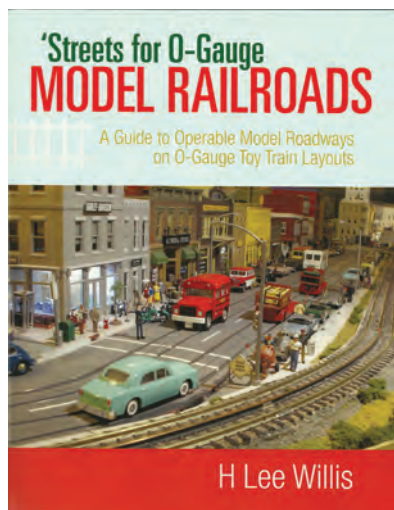
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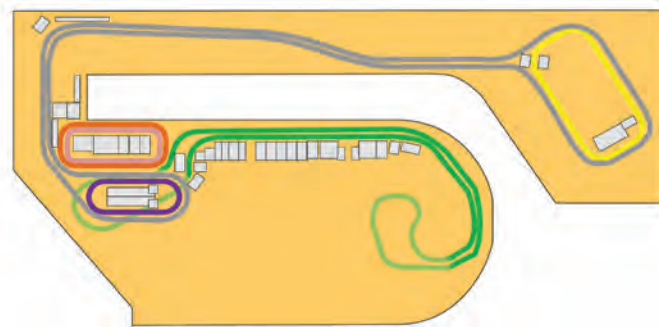


It's probably safe to assert that in addition to locomotives, rolling stock, buildings, figures, and landscape features, most model railroads also have at least a few automobiles, trucks, or buses sitting on the streets and roadways. And "sitting" is just what these vehicles are most likely doing—stalled in static repose as if frozen in time. But now, H. Lee Willis has

written a book that provides a useful and comprehensive reference for anyone wanting to add some action to the highways and byways on their layout.

'Streets for O-Gauge Model Railroads: A Guide to Operable Model Railways on O-Gauge Toy Train Layouts is the first of two books Lee has published on the subject. This initial volume describes how to make effective use of the full potential of K-Line SuperStreets, the Lionel continuation of that line after the demise of K-Line, and the current E-Z Street products being offered through Williams by Bachmann. The successive lines offered by these three manufacturers are all fully compatible, the only difference being some change in the color of the plastic road material, which evolved from a medium gray to dark gray. For ease of identification throughout the book, Lee simply refers to all three products as 'Streets—a logical way to describe the nearly identical and fully interchangeable products.

As Lee points out in his introductory chapter, the 'Streets line is not intended to compete with the various track systems used for 3-rail O gauge trains. Rather, it is designed to supplement



A number of track-planning tips and techniques are presented in this book.

those track configurations by making use of what might otherwise be unused space on many layouts. The tight diameters of both currently available 'Streets curved roadway sections are cataloged as D-16 and D-21 to designate their approximate 16" and 21" diameter curves. These sections will fit nicely inside even the tight 27" diameter curves used on some O gauge layouts.

Subsequent chapters in the book discuss, in considerable detail, the construction and installation of the roadway sections; the most effective and efficient power sources for a 'Streets layout (either AC or DC can be used); the various types of cars, trucks, buses, trolleys, and even short-wheelbase locomotives that can operate on the 'Streets system; and the care and maintenance of the vehicles.

Lee also devotes considerable space to tips for planning and setting up 'Streets roadways that can easily be incorporated into an existing train layout without the need for extensive modification. He also covers the fabrication of custom-made 'Streets sections to fit and special needs situations that may arise.

The book's final chapter describes some neat customizing projects that the more ambitious and creative hobbyist can use to provide truly distinctive vehicles for the layout or to incorporate 'Streets in more



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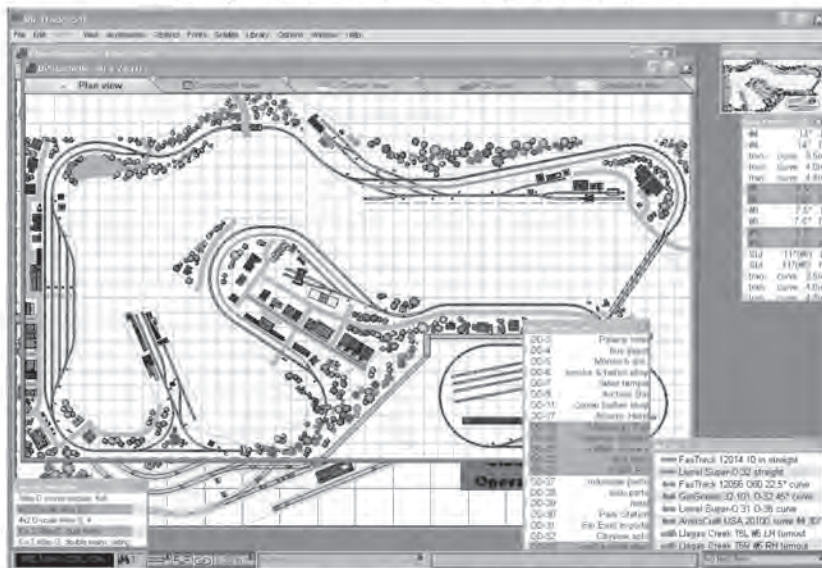


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realistic settings, which include parking lanes, sidewalks, curbs, and other real-world features. As an appropriate follow-up to that topic, Lee has also written and published a second book on the subject titled *Modifying and Scratch-Building O-Gauge 'Streets Vehicles: Improving and Building SuperStreets and E-Z Street Cars, Buses, and Trucks*. If you're at all interested in taking your projects to the next level, by all means consider adding that volume to your reference library.

Both books are available as e-books through Amazon.com and they can also be purchased as softcover printed versions from that source or directly from the author. See the Lee Willis ad in this issue.

I'm a big fan of SuperStreets and E-Z Street stuff myself, and even though I have used these products pretty much since their inception, I discovered a whole lot of useful new information and tips in Lee's book. Give it a try and get those vehicles moving! —Allan

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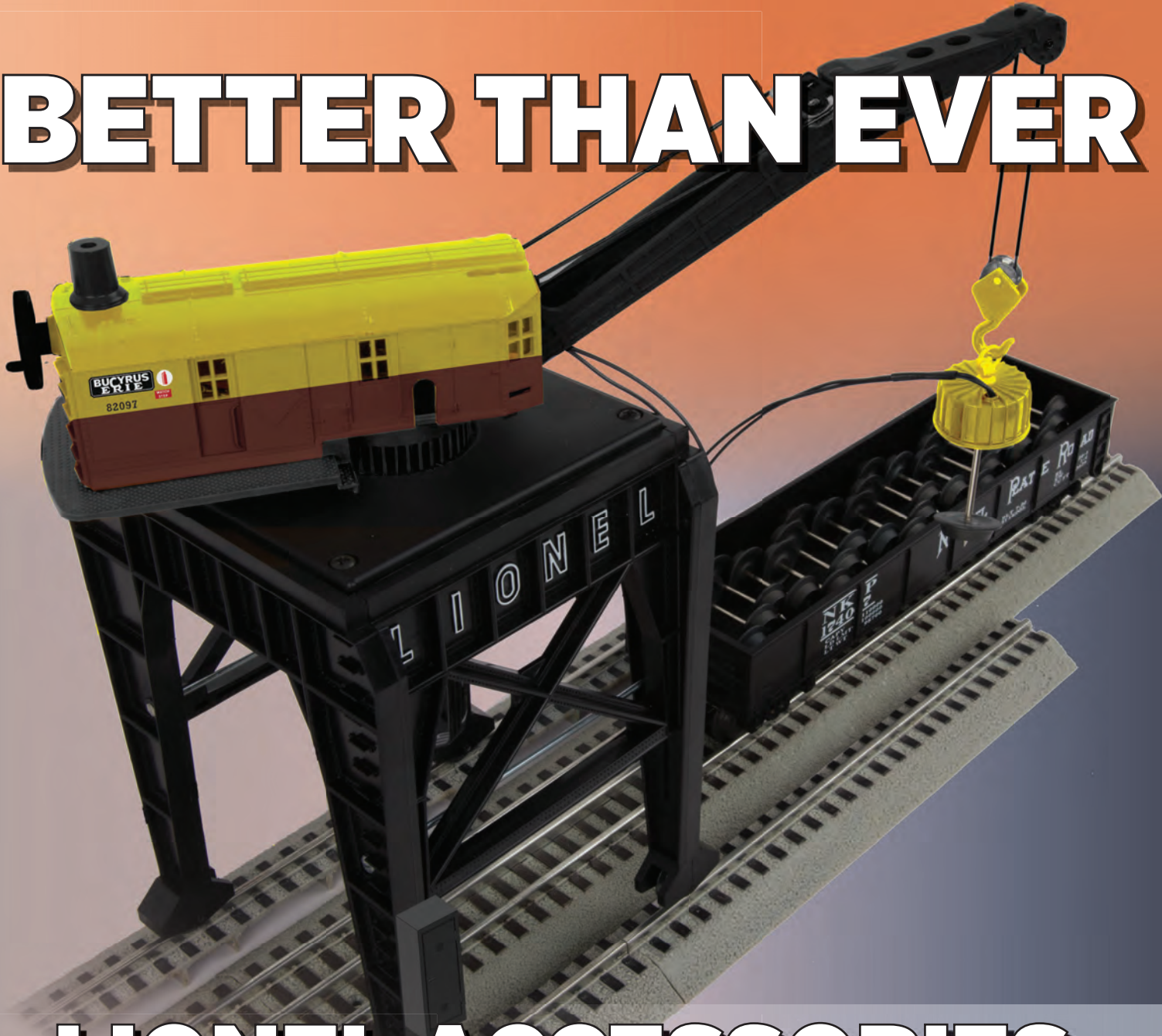
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Scene Along the Rails

Paradise by Rail

Article and Photos by Don McCuaig



Saddle-tank switcher No. 1 is on display at the Hawaiian Railway yard entrance.

If you're planning a trip to Hawaii and are including Oahu in your vacation plans, I would like to suggest a visit to, and ride on, the only still-existing railroad on the island. It's the Hawaiian Railway Society's narrow gauge line that runs 6-1/2 miles down the beautiful Oahu leeward coast.

Two restored ex-U.S. Navy and one ex-U.S. Army diesels provide power for the open-air coaches. Walk around the yard, and you'll find a number of cosmetically restored steam engines, as well as some interesting rolling stock such as the Marci train boxcar. This type of boxcar, called a goods wagon in Europe, came to Hawaii from France. After the war, the French railway sent one boxcar to each of the 48 states plus the District of Columbia as thanks for the assistance U.S. railroads provided in rebuilding France. The car in the Hawaiian Railway collection represented

Washington, DC, as well as the then territory of Hawaii.

At one time Oahu Railway & Land Company rail lines almost completely encircled Oahu. The railroad hauled far more than sugar cane. It transported soldiers and equipment for the war, civilian passengers, and all types of machinery for the many plantations it served.

If time permits, be sure to visit the historic town of Ewa, located right next door. There you will see a true company town complete with plantation worker houses, offices, churches, and manager mansions—many of which are still in use today.

The railroad runs two trains every Sunday at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. and provides about 90 minutes of great sightseeing on the round trip. For detailed information, visit the Hawaiian Railway Society website at www.hawaiianrailway.com. 🚂



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Cover for Your Railroad's Commuters

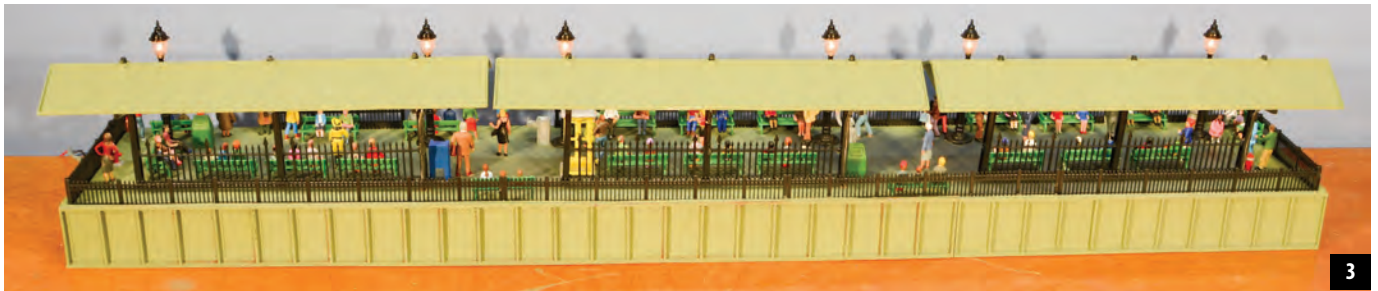
Article and Photos by Bill Bramlage

If commuter or other passenger service is offered in your 1:48 world, you need facilities to provide for the creature comforts passengers expect and deserve. At minimum, you need to have sheltered platforms of some type so passengers arriving and those waiting to depart will at least be somewhat protected from the elements (Photo 1).

A station for your elevated passenger train, subway, or trolley can be easily constructed using the Lionel Station Platform #6-24190 (Photo 2). A number of similar O gauge station platforms are or have been available from other manufacturers. I chose this particular Lionel model, variations of which have been a part of the Lionel accessory lineup for many years, because it is affordable at a list price of \$19.99, is rather plain looking, and lacks lights and signs.

This platform measures 12"x 3-3/8" with a height of 5". You can use a single platform or, as I chose to do, place multiple platforms end to end to create a platform of just about any length. The platform depicted here is made up of three of the Lionel units. I removed the platform base and used only the roof, the roof support system, and the fences. I also removed the metal roof finials provided on the original platform.





3



4

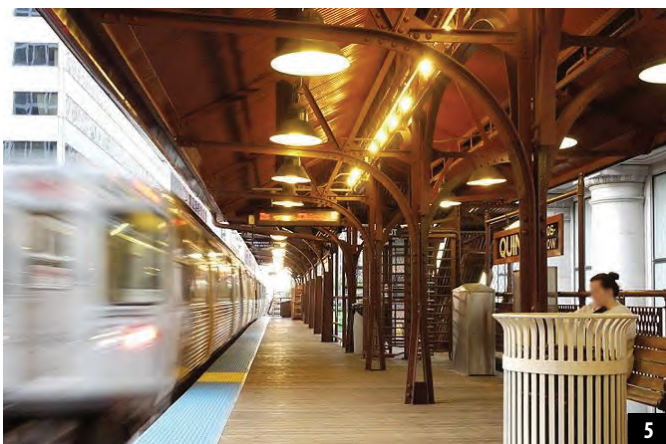
The new platform base was constructed on a sheet of Masonite surrounded by a resin girder structure purchased from Scenic Express (Photo 3). Model Power HO product #548 wrought iron type of fencing was added to the perimeter of the platform. To provide the appropriate busy city appearance, an assortment of figures, benches, lights, trash cans, and phone booths were added to the structure.

An easy way to add lighting along the under surface of the roof is to use self-adhesive LED white light strips powered with a 12-volt DC power source (Photo 4). Self-adhesive LED strips with 300 lights can be found at many websites for around \$10 to \$30. Shop around! Your standard 12-volt AC model railroad power source can be converted to the proper 12-volt DC power for the LED strips with a bridge

rectifier at a cost of around \$5. The lighting effect on the model is similar to what can be seen in Photo 5, taken at a real station.

Depending on how your layout is configured, you may want or even need elevated stations. If there is space to include a stairway system from an upper level to ground level, the MTH #30-9066 Pedestrian 2-Track Crosswalk can be easily made into an attractive stairway (Photo 6).

The elevated train stations on my layout were built at the request of two of my grandsons. They really like the MTH subways that serve Tower City and often want me to have the cars stop and go through their station talk sequence. Now they no longer have to ask where the stations are. 🚂



5

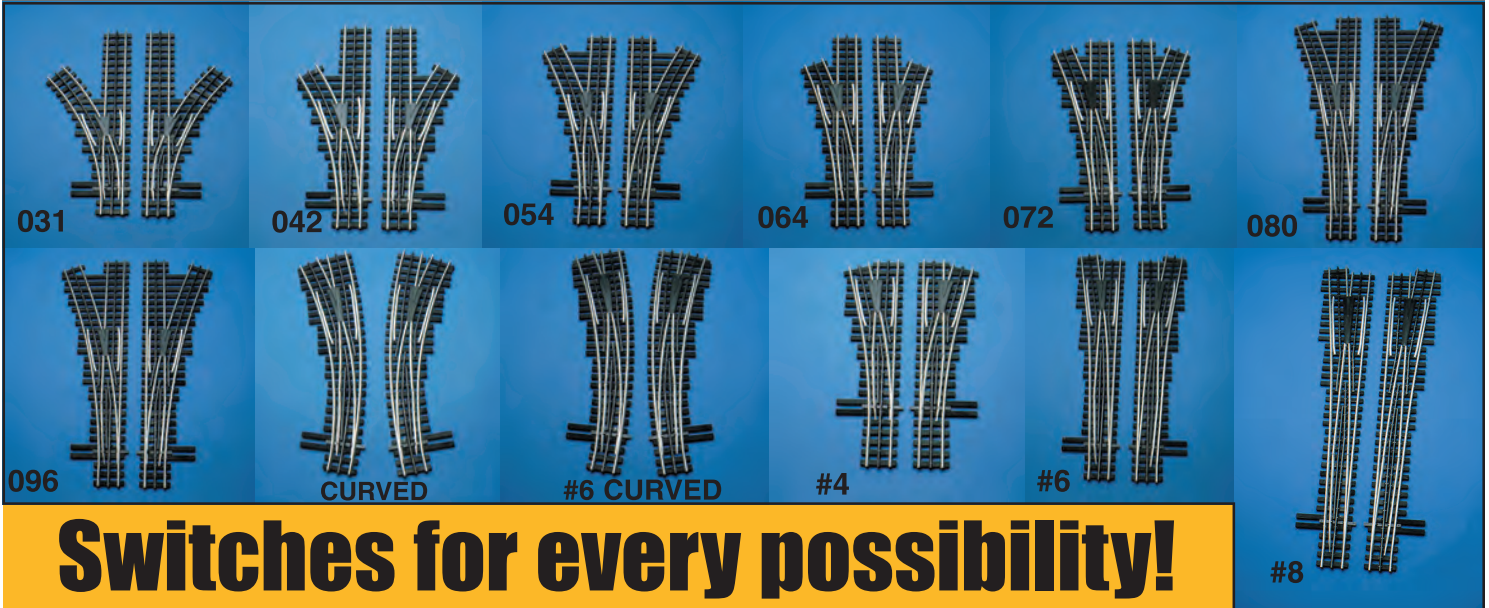


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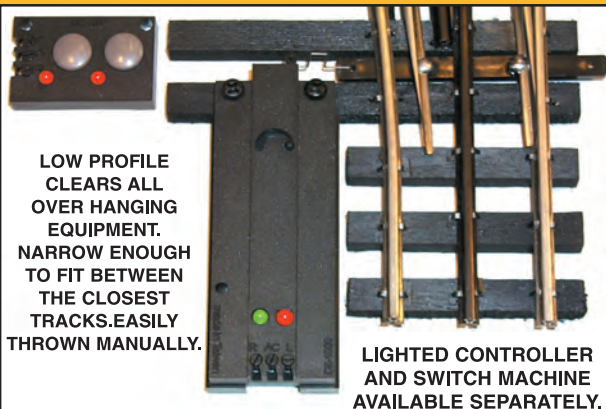


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Building a Layout: Dressing Up Your Tunnel Entrances

Tunnels are an engineering marvel on the real railroads. In amazing achievements, builders blasted their way through sheer rock, came out on the other side, and capped off the entrances with stonework portals. That's why tunnels on our model railroads are so important to model correctly. In Photo 1 you see some dramatic tunnel entrances with stonework portals, such as these from Scenic Express. The details of the portals have already been taken care of for us with highly realistic model portals such as these.

What about the illusion of the tunnel itself and behind the portals? Nothing destroys the effect worse for me than to look into a model railroad tunnel and see plywood and empty air inside. What we need is an easy way to simulate the blasted rock that would normally show just inside the tunnel entrance.

To accomplish this, we need some sort of wall inside the tunnel portal, if for no other reason than to hide the effect of any light sources behind the tunnel entrance. It's supposed to be dark in there, right? We need some walls, but not walls that are just

plain black. They don't have to go very deep into the tunnel or even very high. A couple of feet beyond the entrance, the tunnel lining can look like anything it wants to because we can't see that far into the tunnel.

Let's try this. Using some black foam core board, cut some base walls a foot or so long and about an inch or so higher than the tunnel opening. If your tunnel is on a curve, mark the location for the interior walls with a clearance gauge (Photo 2). Be sure to make this interior wall location about another 1/4" farther away from the track than where the initial line is drawn. This is needed to allow room for the imitation rock material we will apply to this wall later.

Insert your foam core board for the wall into the tunnel opening (Photo 3). You'll have to turn it on a slight angle to get it through the opening. You want the wall slightly taller than the opening so that you won't be able to see the top of the interior tunnel wall from outside the tunnel.

If your tunnel is on a curve, you might have to buckle the foam core board slightly like what you see in Photo 4 to allow it to follow the curve inside the tunnel. Push the foam core wall back about 1/4" or more behind the inside of the tunnel portal and glue it into place using a hot glue gun (Photo 5). Wow! Even with just the black foam core walls in place, look at the dramatic difference (Photo 6).

But the real dramatic effect takes place next. I discovered long ago that a simple way to simulate interior rock walls was with nothing more elaborate than oven-strength aluminum foil...and some paint. The brand of paint isn't important to achieve the effect you want. I've used enamels, lacquers, and acrylic paints; amazingly enough, they all stick to the surface of aluminum foil nicely. If you want to simply use Krylon spray paint, I've used Smoke Gray #K01608 or Platinum Primer #K01314. Unfortunately though, using commercially available spray paint severely limits the colors you can use. They also severely limit your wallet as well.

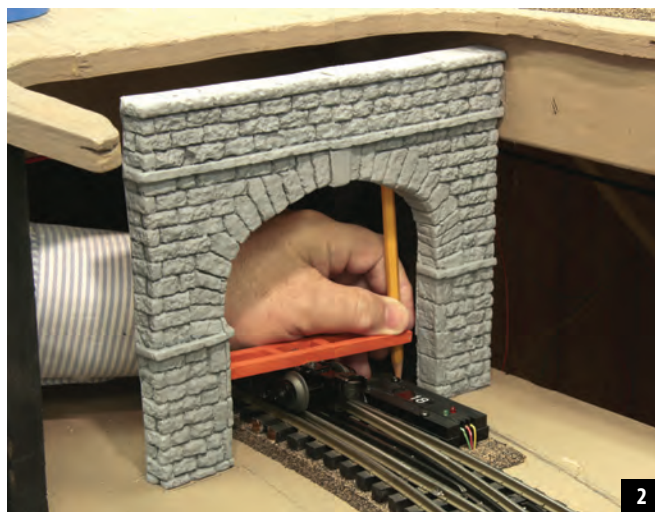
Before you go out and buy commercial spray paints, please consider this. If you haven't noticed it lately, the price of spray paints in general and model paints in particular have gone sky-high in recent months. The Krylon Platinum Primer is now all the way up to \$16 or \$17! The availability of certain model railroad colors has shrunk or in some cases even disappeared as well. I've seen as much as a 500 percent to 600 percent increase in the price of bottled model paints compared to just a few short years ago. That is just ridiculous!

On the other hand, prices of simple airbrush spray painting systems have gone the other direction. Their prices are down dramatically. One of the most familiar brands, Paasche, now packages its H model single-action airbrush complete with a handy little tankless portable compressor, adjustable pressure valve and pressure gauge, air hose, and mixing and dispensing bottles. You can find the complete set on Amazon.com for less than \$130. At today's prices, it sure won't take very many cans of commercial spray paint to go past that price. The little air compressor that comes with this set, complete with a handle, is only about 6" high by 7" wide and 10" long.

This set will let you spray any paint or ink in any color and take it right with you to the application site. Since most any paint you will probably use will be either acrylic or latex, the airbrush cleans easily with water, some pipe cleaners, Q-tips, and some paper towels.

At that price and for all the work you might need to do on a complete layout, it makes airbrushing spray paints very affordable. With this kind of system, now even common house paints such as Valspar latex interior wall paint can be thinned with water and sprayed through your airbrush. You can go to the paint department at any home improvement store or equivalent and get a professionally tinted sample-size bottle of any mixed latex paint color for only about \$2 to \$3 each. What I selected was one of Valspar's satin base latex gray colors, Valspar #0760-D-20150131104430, from the sample paint cards at the store.

The store will custom mix the paint in the little sample-size bottle, shake it up, and sell it to you (Photo 7). At home I mix that sample latex paint with water at a 50/50 ratio. That will let you spray it though an airbrush with fantastic results. I found that I can even vary the intensity of the actual color by mixing in a few drops of black ink to achieve any effect I want. That changes the shade of gray I get for darker interior colors, like inner tunnel rock, or lighter exterior applications, such as mountain rock and so forth.



The Valspar paint sample is shown along with a small spray can of Testors Dullcote. I still prefer to use Dullcote to overspray any finished paint color, getting it as flat as possible to look more like the rock seen in nature. Dullcote used to be readily available in bottles and thinned with lacquer thinner for your airbrush, but sadly, that too has now nearly vanished.

Okay, back to the project. Photo 8 shows the progression of aluminum foil from roll to finished interior rock. Cut off a piece of foil to more than cover the foam core wall that you have installed in the tunnel and then gently crush it up and gently pull



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8



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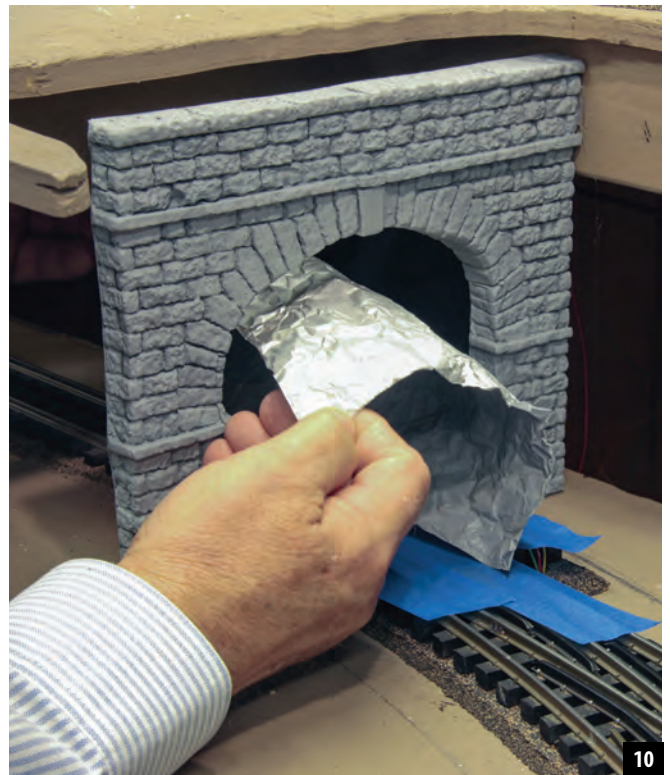
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it out to get the effect shown on the middle piece of foil in the photo. Don't "smooth out" the foil; just gently pull it back apart a little.

Spray the foil, but with very light applications. If you use an airbrush, you can adjust the air pressure up a little to get the paint to dry more as it goes from the airbrush to the foil. As you see in the photo, the paint may still have a slight satin look rather than the flat finish you'll want for rock. Once you overspray this coat



10

with Dullcote, the finished result looks exactly like interior rock walls. Amazingly, the paint also doesn't flake or peel off the foil.

Once you have trimmed the dried, finished foil sample to an area a little larger than the wall piece it is to cover, turn it over back side up and spray it lightly with 3M Super 77 spray glue (Photo 9). Then curl it gently and carefully apply it to the interior wall (Photo 10). You'll just want to loosely tamp the finished foil covering in place, leaving it crinkled (Photo 11). Avoid the urge to spread it out smoothly on the foam core board. Smoothly spreading it out on the wall will cause it to lose the rock appearance you are trying to achieve.

Once you've gotten to this point, add the track ballast of your choice to the track and to the sides of the ties all the way over to the wall (Photo 12). I like to use actual granite ballast from Scenic Express, correctly sized to O gauge track. Look at how much more dramatic this entrance is to the earlier photos. Now is also the time to add any airbrush finishing touches for interior staining; smoke stains above the tunnel portal entrance; and trim such as rocks, small branches, twigs, and trash.

Finally, make sure to close-up and cap off any distracting light sources. Room light coming from inside the tunnel tends to destroy the dramatic effect. Once it is dark inside as it should be, light from the locomotive's headlight coming through the tunnel and shining on the interior rock walls adds lots of tunnel drama, too. In addition, keeping your tunnel dark will prevent being able to see where the rock wall ends inside the tunnel.

Dressing up tunnel entrances is a small trick with a big effect. It adds depth and believability to a model railroad. Tunnel entrance work needs to be done early on in the scenery building phase. Attending to them later on is almost always a big inconvenience. By then such work can easily interfere with other finished scenery.

If you do decide to go ahead and purchase an airbrush, which I highly recommend, be sure to keep it handy. We're going to have lots of fun with airbrushes later. As we continue our layout construction, we'll make good use of your newly found artistic talents in future projects we undertake in "Backshop."



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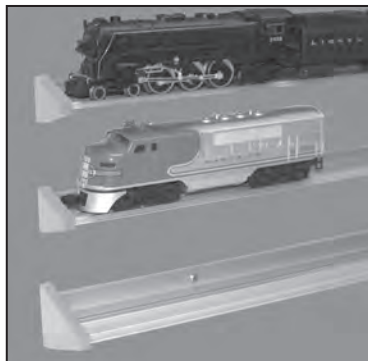
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Size and Simplicity



For the most part, I set up and run trains consisting of scale locomotives and rolling stock. These trains may portray what I see today on the nearby Union Pacific or BNSF tracks, but usually they represent equipment from the past. My favorites are from the steam era of the late 1930s through the early 1950s with the first and second generation diesel eras running a close second. Of course, TMCC with RailSounds or DCS with Proto-Sound 2.0 or later is a must for each of my scale locomotives. Those that didn't have TMCC with RailSounds when I acquired them soon visited my electronic upgrade shop—our dining room table on a rainy afternoon.

The main reason I prefer scale models of rolling stock from the past, primarily freight cars, is they are smaller than contemporary cars. To me, freight trains with cars of less than 12" in length just look better on the space-challenged editorial Carpet Central Railroad. In fact, 52" is the longest of my four straight tracks for each of my two loops. Even considering the layout's wide O54 and O72 curves, it simply won't accommodate many scale 50' or longer cars.

However, on not infrequent occasions, I'll swap out the scale trains for those of traditional size. By traditional size, I mean locomotives and cars that are smaller than 1:48 scale, will run on O31 or possibly even O27 curves, and have dimensional proportions that look more or less convincing. In a diametrically opposed paradox to my scale motive power, I prefer technical simplicity with traditional size. With traditional trains, all I want to do is set the throttle handle on the transformer and then lie down and watch them run by me. I normally won't do any switching or other prototypical operations as I would with scale equipment, so I have little need for locomotives with command control and sound.

Although my traditional size motive power roster includes a number of postwar and MPC-era Lionel locomotives, the series-wound AC motors in these engines tend to be noisy. Also, these AC motors are amp hogs, so they get hot rather quickly.

In the mid-1990s, MTH introduced a line of traditional size trains that really appealed to me—RailKing. They had cool-running, flywheel-equipped DC can motors with simple AC-to-DC reverse units and an electronic whistle or horn. I have to admit that the electronic whistles or horns produced sounds of dubious quality, but they worked every time. Additionally, the locomotives also maintained their speed during whistle or horn actuation. As a strong plus, all of my RailKing engines were and still are much smoother running than those from the postwar and MPC eras.

One of my favorite traditional size iron horses coupled to a mixed freight is the MTH RailKing Southern Pacific Cab Forward that was initially released in the fall of 1999. This model was sold with either an electronic reverse unit and whistle (30-1144-0) or the original Proto-Sound train control electronics (30-1144-1). When my favorite mail-order dealer called me in late summer of '99 about the upcoming RailKing model of SP's turned-around articulated, I ordered one sight unseen. Of course it had just the reverse unit and whistle. Like my previously released RailKing Union Pacific Challenger and Big Boy, the Cab Forward had two motors with one driving each of the articulated's two engines. A welcomed benefit of the independently powered front and rear engines is they realistically and randomly run in and out of sync with each other.

By the time I ordered the Cab Forward, I was more than just pleased with all of my RailKing locomotives beginning with



the 30-1101 NYC Mohawk 4-8-2, cab #3000. This debut of the RailKing line arrived on the market and at my front door in the fall of '95. At the reasonable list price of \$299.00 for a new die-cast steam locomotive, the Mohawk was only available with an electronic reverse and whistle—Proto-Sound came later. With the advent of Proto-Sound, I opted out initially because of its price premium and later because of its technical complexity. With the benefit of 20-20 hindsight, I was glad I did.

Following the Mohawk were several more steamers and also diesels built with the simple electronics. At a list price of \$199.00

for an A-A pair of F3s with dual motors, reverse, and horn, these short diesels were welcomed by the CCRR's finance department as well as by operations. Matching B units at \$79.95 each proved to be handsome additions to my NYC and UP A-A pair.

As to maintenance, all of my early MTH 30-series engines have proven to be rock-solid dependable. At any given time, I can take my 30-1108-0 Challenger, 30-2001-0 Lightning Stripe F3s, 30-2009-0 Gas Turbine, or any one of my other early RailKing engines off the shelf, dust it, oil it, and then couple it to an awaiting train. I know it will run. 🚂



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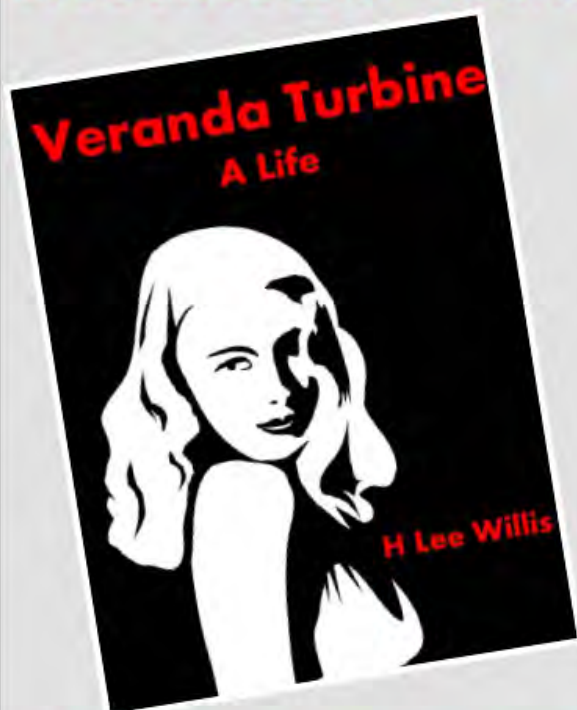
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TUCSON, AZ – Toy Train Show, Expo Center, 3750 E. Irvington Rd. Fri. 1p-6p, Sat. 9a-2p, Adm: \$6, 13 and under free. Info: Dave Hoverstock, 520-909-0722, TrainShow@gpdtoyrainmuseum.com, www.gpdtoyrainmuseum.com.

June 20, 2015

CHARLOTTE, NC – 12th Annual North Carolina Rail Fair & Model Train Show, Metrolina Expo Center, Building 1, 7100 Statesville Rd. 9a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Operating layouts, over 250 tables. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, 703-536-2954, rrshows@aol.com, www.gserr.com.

July 11, 2015

DELAND, FL – 52nd Florida Rail Fair, Volusia County Fairgrounds, Tommy Lawrence Building. SR 44 and I-4, Exit 118. Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, 703-536-2954, rrshows@aol.com, www.gserr.com.

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17" PLASTIC HARRIMAN CARS



60-C-5 COACH



70' BAGGAGE



70' RPO



60' LUNCH CAR

Build Your Post War Commuter Train: 68' coupler to coupler, (17" O SCALE). Harriman Coach, Baggage, RPO, Lunch Car and Business Car with open Observation Platform. Available in variety of roads and livery. These super detailed cars will come with full underbody detail, "Anti Flicker" overhead LED lighting and passenger interior with figures flush fitting windows, close coupling and highly detailed die cast trucks.

Operation: Designed to operate on 042 or larger 3 Rail Track. 36" Radius or larger O Scale Track.

Price: Order the 6 car set
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- Extra Coaches Available

Set Includes:

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- 1 - RPO
- 1 - Lunch Car
- 2 - Coaches
- 1 - Business Observation

Note: Post War Era - Roof Details were removed when AC was added (Coach, Lunch, Business Car)

SP Green / Two Tone Grey, UP Two Tone Grey / Yellow, IC, CB&Q
C&NW, Rock Island, Lackawanna, Jersey Central, Erie, Reading, SF, Pullman



60' BUSINESS OBSERVATION

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