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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

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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
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072	\$6.99
080	\$7.49
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092	\$7.99
096	\$8.49
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0104	\$8.99
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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	
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DOUBLE SLIP SWITCH....	\$264.95
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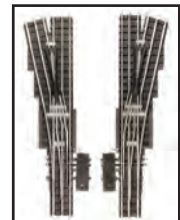
027.....	\$7.95
036.....	\$6.75
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054.....	\$6.75
063.....	\$8.95
072.....	\$9.95 WOW!
081.....	\$11.95 WOW!
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090.....	\$14.50 WOW!
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ON THE COVER

We all know about toy trains running under the Christmas tree, but how many have an O gauge train running *in* their tree? In this issue Bill Henning shows you how it's done.

Photo by Bill Henning



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An Evolving Tradition

If there's any time of year when O gauge trains are thrust into the spotlight in a big way, it's during the Christmas holiday season. After all, many of us old-timers in the hobby remember how our lifelong affection (or is it affliction?) for toy and model trains started with a Lionel train running in a closed circle or oval around the base of the family Christmas tree. It's a tradition that began before many of us seasoned citizens were even born, and it's a tradition still well worth preserving and sharing with future generations. How do we accomplish this in today's much-changed society?

The hobby industry in 2015, and the hobby itself, isn't what it was back in the post-World War II period. Back then, toy trains were sold and displayed prominently in just about every town and city, and these mechanical marvels were just about every young boy's toy of choice. Starting with the holiday season in 1945 and continuing for a couple of decades thereafter, you could find O gauge trains in nearly every hobby shop, department store, hardware store, auto supply store, and even in many five-and-dime outlets. Simply put, if you didn't see or know about toy trains at Christmastime in those golden years, you probably weren't born yet.



George Donald's 2014 Christmas celebration included a gaily decorated tree with under-the-tree action provided by two colorful O gauge trains.

Changing Times

Alas, times have changed for our hobby and perhaps never more dramatically than over the past decade or so. Granted, there was a tremendous resurgence of interest in toy trains that started

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in the early 1980s and extended through the first few years of the current century. In large part that resulted from those who had reached middle age or so finally being able to realize, financially as well as in other ways, boyhood dreams that had proved elusive way back when. We (I'm in that group) now had the money to buy the trains we always wanted; we had mortgage-free homes with the space to accommodate our hobby interests; and we had a number of manufacturers more than willing to satisfy our desires to create 1:48 scale rail empires. All of us who have been in the hobby for a significant length of time fed an ever-expanding bubble, and like all such bubbles it was destined to burst or at least begin to deflate at some point. Sadly, we may have reached that point in this second decade of the 21st century. Most of our material needs in the way of locomotives and rolling stock have largely been satisfied, and we're now devoting more time and effort to doing something with these things. (A segue here: see George Brown's "Helper Engine" column in this issue.)

Take a good hard look at the O gauge segment of the hobby today and you'll recall that we've lost several significant manufacturers over the past 10 years, with Weaver Models being the most recent fallen flag (see Run 280, October). Some other manufacturers appear to be scaling back a bit in terms of quantity of a given item being made or following a made-to-order production plan that requires the customer to commit to a pre-order before the item is even made.

Looking deeper, you'll also observe that the number of local brick-and-mortar hobby shops is on a fairly sharp decline. The convenience of Internet shopping is partly responsible for this, but normal attrition—the retirement of longtime mom-and-pop hobby retailers, for example—is also an important factor as is the impact of the aforementioned somewhat satiated consumer market. Of course, you'll rarely see toy trains displayed or even sold at many of today's department and chain stores. This lack of public exposure obviously has an impact.

Then there are the kids—an all-important target market. Youngsters today may grow up rarely noticing a real train. More importantly, they are increasingly attracted to the siren call of an ever-expanding array of digital and electronic devices that compete for their attention. Aside from tapping a keyboard or touch

pad, few youngsters appear to be attracted to actually *building* things with their hands. There are exceptions, of course, but I think most readers of this magazine will agree that the trend is fairly clear. But...and it's a big *but*—all is not doom and gloom.

Continuing the Tradition

Youngsters today, both boys and girls, still harbor a childhood fascination for trains. Witness the consistent and continuing popularity of the "Thomas the Tank Engine," "Chuggington," and "Dinosaur Train" televised programs, for example. And don't forget the hugely successful *Polar Express* movie, along with the train itself as made by Lionel. Toddlers and their older siblings may not be interested in pursuing model railroading as a hobby, but we oldsters certainly can and should initiate them to that all-important holiday tradition with something as simple as a train circling the base of the Christmas tree.

Begin with a starter set and a couple of operating cars or accessories, and there's a good chance that the seeds of nostalgia will be firmly planted. That may or may not help grow the hobby in future years, but it certainly will help assure that toy trains remain a vital part of an American Christmas celebration. If you consider yourself a rank novice, I encourage you to support a local hobby shop if you're lucky enough to have one. Nowhere else are you apt to view trains and accessories up close and personal before opening your wallet. And even if you can save a few bucks buying via the Internet, keep in mind that supporting local businesses has never been more important.

Lacking a convenient hobby shop for your shopping and purchasing, I invite you to frequent the advertisers in *OGR*. These folks help make this publication possible, of course, but they also represent the best of the best for mail order or online shopping.

And here's my annual plea to veteran O-gaugers who are reading this: We probably have more trains than can be put to good use in several lifetimes. How about putting together from your collection a nice starter set for a relative, friend, colleague, or an area family in need of some Christmas cheer. I've done this myself over a number of years, and there's nothing like it to put you in the true holiday spirit. Give it a try! 🚂



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L82695	UP LionMaster #3977 - Gray (BTO)	\$839.95
L82696	UP LionMaster #3989 - Black (BTO)	839.95
L82697	Rio Grande LionMaster #3803 (BTO)	839.95
L82698	WM LionMaster #1201 (BTO)	839.95

SCALE STEAM LOCOMOTIVES

Items listed below are **SOLD OUT** at Lionel - very limited quantities remaining for sale - ORDER YOURS BEFORE THEY ARE GONE!

L81038	Milwaukee Heavy Mikado #8693 (BTO)	\$1099.95
L81181	Southern Heavy Mikado #4866 (BTO)	1099.95
L81189	CB&Q Heavy Mikado #5509 (BTO)	1099.95
L81190	WP Heavy Mikado #334 (BTO)	1099.95
L81191	Erie Heavy Mikado #3207 (BTO)	1099.95
L81194	NP Heavy Mikado #689 (BTO)	1099.95
L82184	Pennsy B6 0-6-0 #1670 (BTO)	589.95
L82266	CN #1158 4-6-0 (BTO)	649.95
L82271	NYC #1258 4-6-0 (BTO)	649.95
L82272	New Haven #816 4-6-0 (BTO)	649.95
L82307	Pennsy B6 0-6-0 #5244 (BTO)	589.95
L82308	Pennsy B6 0-6-0 #3233 (BTO)	589.95
L82311	Polar RR 0-6-0 #2515 (BTO)	589.95

SCALE DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES

Items listed below are **SOLD OUT** at Lionel - very limited quantities remaining for sale - ORDER YOURS BEFORE THEY ARE GONE!

L81519	Pennsylvania Scale FA-2 Diesel AA Set	\$539.95
L82112	B&M #1260 S2 (BTO)	469.95
L82116	Canadian Pacific #7020 S2 (BTO)	469.95
L82122	Pennsylvania #5548 S2 (BTO)	469.95
L82123	Pennsylvania #5652 S2 (BTO)	469.95
L82127	Union Pacific #1138 S2 (BTO)	469.95
L82130	EMD Demo #1962 GP30 (BTO)	469.95
L82131	TP&W #700 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82134	GM&O #501 GP30 (BTO) (L)	469.95
L82137	N&W #542 (Blue) GP30 (BTO)	469.95
L82139	Milwaukee Rd #350 GP30 (BTO)	469.95
L82140	Southern #2594 GP30 (BTO)	469.95
L82143	Union Pacific #830 GP30 (BTO)	469.95
L82274	B&O Chessie SD40 #7500 (BTO)	544.95
L82276	BN SD40 #6314 (BTO)	544.95
L82278	Grand Trunk SD40 #5922 (BTO)	544.95
L82280	Mopac SD40 #3007 (BTO)	544.95
L82282	Conrail SD40 #6308 (BTO)	544.95
L82284	Conrail (Savings Bonds) SD40 (BTO)	544.95
L82285	SP SD40 #8402 (BTO)	544.95
L82287	SP (Daylight) SD40 #7342 (BTO)	544.95
L82288	Clinchfield SD40 #3000 (BTO)	544.95
L82205	BNFS "G Swooosh" ES44AC (BTO)	544.95
L82207	Iowa Interstate/Rock Island ES44AC (BTO)	544.95
L82209	NS ES44AC #8056 (BTO)	544.95
L82214	KCS "Southern Belle" ES44AC (BTO)	544.95
L82215	SF Warbonnet ES44AC #440 (BTO)	544.95
L82218	FEC ES44AC #802 (BTO)	544.95
L82220	SP Alco PA AA Set (BTO)	839.95
L82223	Rio Grande Alco PA AA Set (BTO)	839.95
L82226	Lehigh Valley Alco PA AA Set (BTO)	839.95
L82229	Mopac Alco PA AA Set (BTO)	839.95
L82232	Nickle Plate Alco PA AA Set (BTO)	839.95
L82241	Wabash Alco PA AA Set (BTO)	839.95

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L81443	Rio Grande Rotary Snowplows (CC)	234.95
L81444	PRR Tie-Jector (CC)	164.95
L82091	PRR Tie-Work Car	53.95
L81445	MOW Tie-Jector (CC)	164.95
L82092	MOW Tie Work Car	53.95
L81447	Norfolk Southern Tie-Jector (CC)	164.95
L82094	Norfolk Southern Tie Work Car	53.95
L81448	Amtrak Tie-Jector (CC)	164.95
L82095	Amtrak Tie Work Car	53.95

LIONCHIEF® PLUS DIESEL & ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES

L82175	Virginian LionChief Plus Rectifier	\$284.95
L82177	New Haven LionChief Plus Rectifier	284.95
L82178	Conrail LionChief Plus Rectifier	284.95
L82290	Santa Fe LionChief Plus FT AA	419.95
L82302	Santa Fe LionChief Plus FT Powered B-Unit	234.95
L82299	Rio Grande LionChief Plus FT AA	419.95
L82305	Rio Grande LionChief Plus FT Pwr B-Unit	234.95
L82163	B&O LionChief Plus NW2 #9555	249.95
L82171	BNFS LionChief Plus GP20 #2050	279.95
L82172	NYC LionChief Plus GP20 #2102	279.95
L82173	NS LionChief Plus GP20 #10	279.95

MOTORIZED UNITS

L82412	Reading Birney Trolley	\$83.95
L82413	Lionel Transit Birney Trolley	83.95
L81439	Halloween Pumpkinheads Handcar	75.95
L81440	Western Union Handcar	75.95

SCALE 21" PASSENGER CARS

L82558	Southern 21" 4-pack	\$429.95
L82563	Southern 21" 2-pack	214.95
L82685	Southern Stationsounds Diner	214.95
L82582	Chesapeake & Ohio 21" 4-Pack	429.95
L82587	Chesapeake & Ohio 21" 2-Pack	214.95
L82888	Chesapeake & Ohio StationSounds Diner	214.95

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L81493	Missile Carrying Car	46.95
L81723	#3413 Space Mercury Capsule Launcher Car	57.95
L82101	Mercury Space Capsule Astronaut Car	57.95
L81693	Aerial Target Launcher	64.95
L82543	943 Exploding Ammunition Dump	35.95
L82544	Missile Firing Base	46.95

2015 CHRISTMAS ITEMS

L81122	Christmas Inspection Truck	\$149.95
L82701	Escaping Snowmen Handcar	75.95
L82049	Christmas Log Dump Car	46.95
L82053	North Pole Central Ice Car	53.95
L82713	2015 Christmas Music Boxcar	57.95
L82740	Winter Wonderland Christmas Aquarium Car	68.95
L82510	The Polar Express Aquarium Car	61.95
L81372	Santa's Reserve Cocoa Tank Car	43.95
L81373	Candy Cane Flatcar with Bulkheads	43.95
L81428	Frosty the Snowman Boxcar	39.95
L81811	Polar Express N5b Caboose (Q Scale)	68.95
L82049	Christmas Log Dump Car	46.95
L82053	North Pole Central Ice Car	53.95
L82496	Polar Express "Letters to Santa" Mail Car	50.95
L82512	Polar Express Work Caboose w/Presents	61.95
L82514	Polar Express Reindeer Stockcar (Q Scale)	64.95
L82691	2015 Christmas Boxcar	53.95
L82693	North Pole Central Santa's Helpers Crane	61.95
L82699	Angela Trotta 2015 Christmas Boxcar	53.95
L82709	Pennsylvania "Silver & Gold" Ore Car 2-Pack	93.95
L82710	Pennsylvania Ice Breaker Tunnel Car	46.95
L82711	"Santa's Favorites" Transparent Gift Car	61.95
L82737	Coca-Cola Santa Boxcar	61.95
L82741	Christmas Tinsel Vat Car	50.95
L82742	Candy Mountain Christmas Quad Hopper	46.95
L82748	Silver Bell Casting Co. Hopper	50.95
L82877	Kinkadee/Polar Express Boxcar (Made in USA)	61.95

ROLLING STOCK

L82621	Buffalo Creek Flour PS-1 Boxcar	\$57.95
L82622	US Army PS-1 Boxcar	57.95
L82312	Union Pacific ACF 40-Ton Stock Car	57.95
L82313	Great Northern ACF 40-Ton Stock Car	57.95
L82315	Nickle Plate Road ACF 40-Ton Stock Car	57.95
L82502	Chicago & North Western 89' Auto Carriers	79.95
L82505	BNFS 89' Auto Carriers	79.95
L82506	Union Pacific 89' Auto Carriers	79.95
L81705	Milwaukee Road 86' Hi-Cube Boxcar 2-Pack	136.95
L81710	Milwaukee Road 86' Hi-Cube Boxcar #4980	68.95

continued next column

SCALE ROLLING STOCK (Continued)

L82652	Global Ethanol 30,000 Gal. Tankcar 3-Pack	\$179.95
L82657	Western Maryland 60' Boxcar	64.95
L82658	Burlington Northern 60' Boxcar	64.95
L82659	Rock Island 60' Boxcar	64.95
L82644	PES 30,000 Gallon Tankcar 3-Pack	179.95
L82648	Midwest 30,000 Gallon Tankcar 3-Pack	179.95
L82667	DT&I Gondola's w/50' Flatcar (Pair)	125.95
L82670	Conrail PS-5 Gondola's w/50' Flatcar (Pair)	125.95
L19374	Norfolk Southern Bathtub Gondola 2-Pack	99.95
L19380	CSX Bathtub Gondola 2-Pack	99.95
L82674	Union Pacific Bathtub Gondola 2-Pack	99.95
L82703	Burlington Northern PS-4 Flatcars w/Loads	64.95
L82704	Rio Grande PS-4 Flatcars w/Loads	64.95
L82705	Reading PS-4 Flatcars w/Loads	64.95
L82611	Pennsylvania Twin Hopper 3-Pack	159.95
L82630	Pennsy Scale NSB Caboose w/Arietanna	68.95
L82631	Boston & Maine C-16 Scale NSB Caboose	68.95
L82690	Coca-Cola Anniversary Bottle Boxcar	60.95
L81654	Philadelphia ES Single Dome Tank Car	43.95
L81668	Philadelphia ES Single Dome Tank Car #0771	43.95
L82073	Canadian National Ore Car	35.95
L82074	Southern Pacific Tank Car	35.95
L82186	"The Patriot" Tank Car	43.95
L82249	Bethlehem Steel Boom Car	39.95
L82253	John Deere Fuel Tank Car	46.95

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AF49632	Polar Express LionChief Plus Remote Pass. Set	\$299.95
AF49972	The Polar Express Abandoned Toy Car w/Gld Ticket	50.95
AF49973	The Polar Express Baggage Car	50.95
AF49078	The Polar Express Elf Handcar	71.95
AF49882	The Polar Express Girder Bridge	17.95

AMERICAN FLYER BERKSHIRE LOCOMOTIVES

AF42569	Chesapeake & Ohio Berkshire	\$294.95
AF42562	Nickle Plate Road Berkshire	294.95
AF47921	Pera Marquette #1225 Berkshire	294.95
AF47922	Erie #3360 Berkshire	294.95
AF47923	Southern #2716 Berkshire	294.95

AMERICAN FLYER DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES

AF42563	Bethlehem Steel Dockside Switcher (C)	\$79.95
AF42564	Reading Dockside Switcher (G)	79.95
AF42597	Canadian Pacific Baldwin Switcher (C)	244.95
AF42598	Union Pacific Baldwin Switcher (C)	244.95
AF42599	Youngstown Steel Baldwin Switcher (C)	244.95

AMERICAN FLYER ROLLING STOCK

AF48443	Union Starch Single-Dome Tank Car	\$43.95
AF48867	U.S. Army Unloading Boxcar	57.95
AF48877	U.S. Army Missile Launch Flatcar	50.95
AF48878	U.S. Army Flatcar with Two Rockets	43.95
AF48876	Reading 2-Bay Hopper	43.95
AF48879	New Haven Gondola with Pipes	46.95
AF48880	American Flyer Commemorative Caboose	46.95
AF48882	2015 Christmas Boxcar	46.95

(L) = Legacy (G) = Conventional (CC) = Command Control (RS) = RailSounds (BTO) = Built-To-Order - Limited Quantities

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Product Showcase

Keeping Memories Alive



Williams by Bachmann has reintroduced the Alco FA2 powered and dummy A-A set to its Golden Memories line with new True Blast Plus 16-bit polyphonic sound that includes prime mover, horn, and bell. Other features include four-wheel trucks with traction tires, dual motors with coasting action, an electronic 6-amp reverse board with directional lockout, front headlights, illuminated marker lenses

and number boards, and add-on metal steps. Also featured are die-cast frame, trucks, truck sides, and operating front couplers. The A-A length is 22" with a height of 3-1/2". Available in three road names: Texas Special #210 (shown), New Haven #209, and Santa Fe #208 (blue & yellow). MSRP is \$519.95 per set. Visit www.bachmanntrains.com for more information.



Smoking Tips

The folks at Mega-Steam have listened to fans of their ever-expanding line of smoke products. They recently announced the availability of special tips for their line of 8-ounce refill bottles. In the past, hobbyists were on their own when it came to dealing with transferring smoke fluid into the smaller bottles and applicators. Now the refilling task is easy with these special caps that fit all Mega-Steam 8-ounce bottles. Two types are currently available: a flip-top spout that locks when closed and a snap-top funnel that is useful for several applications. Visit www.megasteam.com for more information and to place your order.



Long Live the Five and Dime

Andre Garcia, owner of River Leaf Models, has announced the introduction of a long-awaited five-and-dime store. This kit is based on a former Woolworth's location in Greensboro, North Carolina. According to Andre, for many years O scale modelers have lobbied manufacturers to produce a kit featuring the distinctive red and gold Woolworth sign, so he stepped up to fill this demand and researched a prototype to design this kit. The River Leaf Models F. W. Woolworth O scale structure has a footprint of 14"x 6" and is 8" tall. The walls are laser cut from 1/4" MDF for sturdiness and square corners. Windows are rigid 3/32" acrylic. The F. W. Woolworth kit retails for \$124.95. More information and online ordering are available at www.riverleafmodels.us.

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Display with Flair

Harrison Trains & Scenes is now offering TrackScapes to display prized engines or rolling stock. All TrackScapes displays are made by hand and are unique. The basic unit is 35" long and comes standard with life-like scenery and a ballasted length of 2-rail O gauge track. It sells for \$65.00 plus shipping. Upon request, the unit can be fitted with 3-rail track. Custom orders are accepted for additional cost. (Locomotive not included) Order at www.harrisontrains.com/tracksapes.htm or 410-391-3433.



Rolling Stock that Performs

New to the MTH RailKing line is the 30-79454 Dump Car with Operating Bay. Painted orange and black and sporting CSX livery, this car would be ideal for work train service as well as for gravel or other mineral operations. Car action can be activated with any operating track section and with any transformer. Features include durable ABS body, metal wheels and axles, die-cast trucks, operating die-cast metal couplers, and operation on O31 or larger curves. Car measures 12"x 2-5/8"x 2-7/16". MSRP is \$69.95. Pick one up at your favorite MTH dealer.



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MTH Premier Engines		SALE
20-20131-1	GP35 UP Diesel w/ PS 2.0	\$389.00
20-20184-1	Conrail E-8 ABA Diesel PS3	\$649.00
20-20184-3	Conrail E-8 B-unit Diesel (NP)	\$150.95
20-20366-1	D&H GE U30C Diesel PS3.0	\$404.95
20-20368-1	CSX GE U30C Diesel PS3.0	\$404.95
20-20369-1	BN GE U30C Diesel PS3.0	\$404.95
20-20391-1	Alaska F7 ABA Diesel Set PS3	\$654.95
20-20393-1	NS Dash 8 Motor Rocket Set	\$674.95
20-20401-1	LV F3 ABA Diesel Set PS3.0	\$689.95
20-20412-1	MR SD40-2 Diesel PS3.0	\$399.95
20-20413-1	BN GP30 Diesel PS3.0	\$399.95
20-20417-1	BNSF Dash 8 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20418-1	NS Dash 8 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20419-1	CSX Dash 8 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20420-1	CR Dash 8 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20423-1	NS SD50 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20426-1	BNSF SD70 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20427-1	George Bush SD70 PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20428-1	CNW SD70 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
20-20430-1	EMD SD70 Diesel PS3.0	\$409.95
22-20430-2	EMD SD70 Diesel Scale	\$419.95
20-20432-1	CR SD80MAC Diesel	\$409.95
20-20434-1	UP SD80MAC Diesel	\$409.95
20-20440-1	BLE SD40 TM PS3.0	\$419.95
20-20443-1	STL SD40 TM PS3.0	\$419.95
20-20459-1	NS SD45 Diesel PS3.0	\$429.95
20-20462-1	MR E6 ABA Diesel Set PS3.0	\$689.95
20-3543-1	4-8-4 T1 Reading(Black)PS3.0	\$1049.95
20-3543-2	4-8-4 T1 Reading Black Scale	\$1049.95
20-3544-1	4-8-8 T1 Reading Ramble	\$1049.95
20-3545-1	4-8-4 T1 Reading Blue Min	\$1049.95
20-3551-1	WM 2-8-0 H9 #811	\$789.95
20-3562-2	WM 2-8-0 H9 #734	\$789.95
20-3563-1	PRR 2-8-0 H10 Steam	\$819.95
20-6564-1	PRR Reading 2-8-0 H10	\$819.95
20-3565-1	LI 2-8-0 H10 Steam PS3.0	\$819.95
20-3580-1	LI 2-8-0 H10 Freight Set PS3.0	\$959.95
20-3574-1	NW 4-8-4 J Freight Set	\$1209.95
20-5679-1	BB1 PRR Green roof Electric	\$669.95
20-5685-1	E33 NH Electric PS3.0	\$404.95
20-5686-1	PC E33 Electric PS3.0	\$404.95
MTH RailKing Engines		SALE
30-1614-1	DMIR 2-6-6-6 Allegheny PS3.0	\$619.95
30-1615-1	WM 2-6-6-6 Allegheny Steam	\$619.95
30-1627-1	PRR 2-10-0 Imperial Decapod	\$389.95
30-1644-1	Ene Triplex 2-8-8-2 Steam	\$589.95
30-1645-1	Ene Triplex 2-8-8-2 Steam	\$589.95
30-1651-1	LI 2-8-2 Mikado Steam PS3.0	\$375.95
30-1648-1	SP 4-8-8-2 Cab Forward	\$589.95
30-1649-1	SP 4-8-8-2 Cab Forward Set	\$589.95
30-20155-1	NH F3 ABA Set PS3.0 3.0	\$425.95
30-20159-1	M&M's Galloping Goose PS3	\$259.95
33-1038-1	PRR 2-8-0 Steamer & Tender	\$254.95
33-1039-1	UP 2-8-0 Steamer & Tender	\$354.95
33-1040-1	LI 2-8-0 Steamer & Tender	\$354.95

MTH RailKing Engines		SALE
30-2582	War Bonds Bump-N-Go Trolley	\$60.00
30-2585	Pittsburgh Bump-N-Go Trolley	\$60.00
30-2596	NYT Bump-N-Go Trolley	\$60.00
30-4172-1	Christmas RTR Trolley	\$60.00
30-20204-1	LV ES44AC Diesel PS3.0	\$275.95
30-20206-1	NW ES44AC Diesel PS3.0	\$275.95
30-20207-1	Central Of GA ES44AC Diesel	\$275.95
30-20208-1	Interstate ES44AC Diesel PS3.0	\$275.95
30-20209-1	Monongahela ES44AC Diesel	\$275.95
30-20210-1	NS ES44AC Diesel PS3.0	\$275.95
30-20212-1	CP ES44AC Diesel PS3.0	\$275.95
30-20216-1	RI RS3 Diesel PS 3.0	\$268.95
30-20217-1	Amtrak Genesis PS3.0	\$254.95
30-20220-1	NH Genesis PS3.0	\$254.95
30-20227-1	NW-2 BUR PS3.0	\$259.95
30-20237-1	Indians RR SD60 PS3.0	\$277.95
30-20238-1	FM Demonstrator Trainmaster	\$277.95
30-20238-3	FM Demonstrator (NP) Scale	\$150.95
30-20241-1	Virginian FM Trainmaster PS3.0	\$277.95
30-20255-1	MTA R26 Subway 4 Car	\$393.95
30-20255-3	MTA R26 2 Car Add-on	\$133.95
30-20254-3	MTA R26 2 Car Add-on	\$133.95
30-4230-1	Amtrak RTR Pass Set	\$329.95
30-6521	Amtrak 2 Car Pass Add-on	\$99.95
30-4231-1	NS SD70 RTR Freight Set	\$339.95
30-4232-1	BNSF SD70 RTR Freight Set	\$339.95
30-5134-1	PCC Electric Newark PS3.0	\$192.95
30-5135-1	PCC Electric Brooklyn PS3.0	\$192.95

MTH TINPLATE

10-3047-1	Detroit Monorail Red/Cream	\$674.95
10-3048-0	NYC Detroit Monorail Green/Cream	\$674.95
11-6060-0	Lionel Lines Detroit Monorail	\$674.95
11-6060-1	Lionel Lines Detroit Monorail PS3.0	\$674.95
11-5510-1	269 E Freight Set	\$419.95
11-5509-1	269 E Christmas Set	\$409.95

MTH Premier Rolling Stock

	SALE
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20-91552	Alaska Ext Vision Caboose
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20-95120	CNW Flat w/Trailer
20-95121	K-Line Trailer Train flatw/trailer
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20-95124	UP Flat w/Pup Trailer
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GarGraves: Keeping Us on Track for 75 Years



This is GarGraves headquarters and train store.

In a Rochester, New York, basement workshop in early 1940, Eldyn Graves began making track for his son's toy trains. It just so happened that his next door neighbor Earle Gardner operated a model train store out of the basement of his home. The two men formed a partnership using a combination of their names for GarGraves Trackage Corporation and began the production of the GarGraves line of flexible track. A lot has happened with the firm and its products over the past 75 years.

Don Roder was a young customer of Gardner's train store at that time. One day while visiting the store, he was offered a job working for the new company. He quickly accepted and became the first GarGraves employee.

GarGraves track was originally made in 3-rail O gauge with tinplated rails. Soon thereafter, 2-rail O gauge and outside third-rail track were added to the line. At around this time, an attempt to make a turnout using the same flexible track technology was quickly scrapped as the switches proved to be as flexible as the track—not a good thing in that particular application.

In the early 1950s, the Phantom line of O gauge 3-rail track was introduced with a black center rail intended to be less noticeable and thereby giving the look of 2-rail track. The GarGraves product line was expanded again with the addition of S gauge and Standard gauge track, and stainless steel rail was introduced about this same time as well.

The first turnout in the GarGraves line was developed and produced in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was a #6 switch that was made available in 2-rail or 3-rail configurations. In the late 1960s, Don purchased Eldyn's half of the business. At that time, Don's wife, Marcia, started handling much of the bookwork for the firm. And at one time or another as they got old enough, all their children also worked in the company.

In the early 1970s, Don bought the second half of the business from Lois Gardner. Earle had passed away in 1950. At that time the company still operated out of several basements and garages. Don also purchased Gardner's inventory. Gardner, well known as The Train Doctor, sold and repaired Lionel trains since the 1930s.

In 1973 the decision was made to move to the present manufacturing site in North Rose, New York. A new 2,500 sq. ft. building was constructed on 2-1/2 acres of land. This building finally consolidated all GarGraves operations in one location.

Product development continued with the introduction of #1 gauge track and a multi-gauge flexible track. Train sales and repairs also continued in a small room in the new building.

Uncoupling sections and operating sections were introduced in the 1980s to the ever-expanding product line. More products meant more space was needed, and the first of what would eventually become three structure additions was added, along with a separate 1,800 sq. ft. storage building. These new additions resulted in the loss of part of the parking lot, which meant that ties for the track products, previously spread out to dry on the blacktop pavement in the summer sun, now went into a special dryer system located in one of the additions. This change allowed for a larger train store and repair area as well as a train layout fitted with GarGraves products.

Flexible track with traditional wooden ties had been the firm's staple product up into the 1990s. In 1995 sectional curves and straights fitted with plastic ties were introduced. These products met the needs of hobbyists who wanted the GarGraves appearance but didn't want to form their own curves. Also in the mid-1990s, the switch line was expanded to include a redesigned 100" switch and an O42 switch. To meet a growing demand, sectional track with wooden ties was introduced in 2004 in both O and S gauges.

The turn of the century saw the development and production of three additional switches: the 72" and 54" diameter switch as well as a 72" wye switch. Working cooperatively with Z-Stuff for Trains, its switch machines were used on GarGraves remote control switches.

Other items have been developed to make layout building and enhancement more enjoyable. The track end bumper has been very popular, and pigtail wires presoldered to GarGraves pins have also appealed to many layout builders. Specialty track, such as GarGraves gantry train track, has also been very popular.

Gardner's original train store is still in business. It is a fully stocked store catering primarily to O gauge enthusiasts. Selling trains and seeing what the train manufacturers are doing keeps GarGraves up to date with the hobby as a whole.

Mike Roder, the youngest of Don and Marcia's children, is the firm's president and has been a part-owner for 25 years. Mike and his brother Tom, who serves as vice president and assists in running the company, have seen and experienced the ups and downs of the model train industry over a good number of years. Mike views the declining number of some longtime established dealers who have in-depth knowledge of GarGraves products and services as one of the biggest obstacles to growth. GarGraves dealers once numbered more than 500 across primarily the U.S. and Canada, but these store numbers have declined over the years—an issue for the entire industry and not just for GarGraves.

In addition, competition in the industry is also stiff. The introduction of several new track systems in the last 10-plus years has invariably had some impact. This is a niche market, but Mike feels that GarGraves is holding its own. He believes getting younger adults and their children involved is key.

So what does the future hold? Tom Roder sees increasing numbers of baby boomers in the store. They've found their childhood trains and want to run them again. A number of them are bringing along the grandchildren and getting them involved. "It's promising because they tell me they have the time now that they have retired or are about to," Tom asserts, "so why not play with trains?"

All GarGraves products continue to be made at the factory in North Rose, New York. "We are proud to provide American-made products to all of our customers," Mike said. "We pride ourselves on service after the sale. While we may at times get a little behind during peak season, there is no waiting for a slow boat to get here (if it ever arrives) with products made overseas." Certainly an added plus in today's business world!



Mike and Tom are keeping you on the "right track."

Father of Hi-Rail

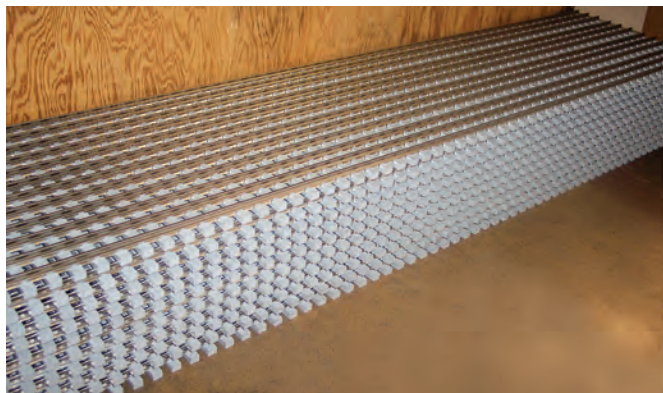
As this article was being prepared for publication, we were informed of the death of Don Roder. He was a valued friend and contributor as well as a faithful advertiser, and many in the O gauge hobby regard him as the "Father of Hi-Rail."

Steve Brenneisen, founder and owner of Ross Custom Switches, recalled "I'll never forget the first time I laid eyes on GarGraves flexible track. What a difference from the three-tie Lionel stuff! There is no hi-rail as we know it today without prototype-looking track, and Don was there first."

Our entire OGR family extends sincere condolences to Don's wife, Marcia, and to his entire family and many friends.—Allan



Kevin is working the assembly line and giving careful attention to every track piece.



A recent introduction is track with gray ties that simulate the concrete ties used on some real railroads.

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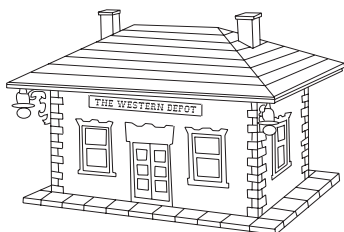
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The Chicago Pacific Railway is the realization of a dream layout envisioned by Carl Rygiewicz in his earlier years. Carl refers to it as an operator's layout and uses Lionel and MTH trains, Lionel tubular track, and Lionel and American Flyer accessories in a prototype setting. Scenery was inspired by Colorado prairies, mountains, and canyons. The era modeled includes steam and first-generation diesel. Road names represent those that operated or still operate between Chicago and the various West Coast states. You will see much more of Carl's layout in a future issue.



Seasonal Excursion

Scott Smith's MTH Tinplate Traditions 260E Christmas train provides a colorful sight as it crosses a high trestle on the Virginia Museum of Transportation's O gauge layout in Roanoke, Virginia. Scott is a regular participant with the group of enthusiasts who built this layout in Virginia's premier rail museum. This museum houses several of the Norfolk & Western's most renowned real steam locomotives: #2156 Class Y6a on loan from the Museum of Transportation in St. Louis, #611 Class J, and #1218 Class A. For information and to plan your visit, go to www.vmt.org.

Christmas Consists

Tom Kaiser has been fascinated with model trains since his father built his first Lionel layout back in 1954. Tom says it also was great inspiration having a grandfather who was an engineer for the Jersey Central Railroad because that afforded opportunities to be exposed to prototypes at an early age. Following a long hiatus, Tom returned to the hobby five years ago. His collection is comprised of Lionel, Williams, and MTH motive power, and he likes both passenger and freight trains. During the holiday season, he delights visitors with special trains such as the Lionel Hogwarts Express running on the outer O60 loop, the Lionel North Pole Central 4-4-2 locomotive pulling animated freight on the O48 loop, and a Lionel North Pole Central passenger train on the O36 loop of his 6' x 11' layout.



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Williams by Bachmann Alco FA1-FB1 Pair

Review and Photos by George Brown

At first sight through the window of the set box, the 1:48 scale size Alco FA1-FB1 freight diesels were handsome...no, exciting is a more apt description. Prominent were see-through wire screens and separate wire handrails. Behind those screens were representations of the internal truss structure that characterized the 1:1 scale Alco carbody diesels.

In its latest release of 3-rail O scale locomotives, Williams by Bachmann (WbB) has skillfully reproduced the perennially attractive Alco freight diesels for work on layouts large and small—well play actually, but we won't go there right now. In addition to the Union Pacific color scheme of our review sample, these models are also available in liveries for Canadian Pacific and Erie as well as Gulf, Mobile & Ohio.

Before I get into the construction and operation of the WbB Alco units, let's take a short visit into the past when the real American Locomotive Company introduced and sold its over-the-road freight diesel.

Prototype Notes

With its debut in January 1946, the 1500-hp FA carbody freight locomotive was Alco's response to the 4-axle F-series of carbody diesels from EMD. The cab unit FA1 and booster FB1 were geared for freight service with a traction motor driving the four axles on each unit. Alco's new and unproven turbocharged 4-stroke V12 model 244 diesel was the FA's prime mover with the DC generator and traction motors built by the then-partner



General Electric. By comparison, EMD's reliable 1500-hp model 567 prime mover was a 2-stroke V16 with a gear-driven roots supercharger instead of an exhaust-driven turbocharger.

The FA blazed new territory for Alco as its first high-horsepower, at that time, diesel locomotive with one large prime mover instead of two smaller ones. The prewar predecessor to the FA, the 6-axle 2000-hp DL109 passenger diesel, had two 6-cylinder 1000-hp prime movers. Also new with the FA was Alco's 244 prime mover. Unfortunately, Alco's upper management, with a classic case of myopic hysteria over EMD's rapid dominance of the diesel locomotive market in the 1940s, crammed the 244 through development with inadequate testing and production planning. As a result, the 244 proved unreliable in heavy freight service. Turbocharger failures and crankshaft breakage ranked high on the long list of frequent and repetitive problems with the engine.

Demonstrator units of the FA1 and FB1 first served on the Delaware & Hudson with additional demonstrators going to the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio. Customers for the FA1 and FB1 included the Erie, GM&O, Katy, Lehigh Valley, Missouri Pacific, New York Central, Pennsylvania, Reading, Rock Island, Union Pacific, Wabash, and others. A number of roads traded in their FA-FB units to EMD for replacement locomotives, mostly GP-series road switchers, while a few roads replaced the Alco 244 engine with the EMD 567. Some roads sold their running units to short lines. Today, several excursion railroads in the U.S. own and operate the few surviving FA units.

Construction and Features

Each unit in the FA1-FB1 set from WbB is just about as indestructible, bullet-proof, as an O gauge locomotive can get. In this conventionally controlled set, the A unit is powered with a flywheel-equipped DC can motor and metal gear train driving all four wheels on each truck. Two wheels in each truck have traction tires, which have become a requisite feature on contemporary 3-rail motive power. As to the B unit, it's nonpowered—a dummy. Although the front of the A unit has an operating thumbtack-style of die-cast coupler, the other three on the A-B pair are cast dummy couplers.

As a side thought, combining two of



the FA1-FB1 sets into an A-B-B-A consist would put an operating coupler at both ends, to say nothing of creating an impressive-looking consist capable of some awesome pulling power. Of course with the trailing A unit running in reverse, its motors would need to have their polarity reversed, which isn't difficult to do.

The 6-amp reverse board has the emblematic Williams direction sequence of forward, neutral, reverse, neutral, forward. Of course this board includes a rectifier that converts AC power from the rails to DC for the motors. A slide switch under the frame locks the direction to whatever the operator wants, such as forward only. Sound of the prime mover, horn, and bell are from the

Williams proprietary True Blast Plus 16-bit polyphonic sound board and speaker. Both of the electronic boards and speaker ride inside the A unit. An incandescent bulb inside the nose of the A unit runs on track voltage and illuminates the headlight, cab interior, and red classification lamps.

Bodies for both the A and B units are molded ABS plastic with stamped steel frames. Under each unit are the die-cast fuel tank for traction-enhancing weight and die-cast 2-axle trucks with the drop equalizer style of side frames. Each axle rides in bronze bushings that are factory pressed into the monolithic truck block. While scrutinizing one of the trucks on the B unit, I noticed a small hole, a lubrication



dows are glazed with clear plastic sheet. The two windshield panes are molded for a flush fit in the body. However, on our evaluation sample both panes became dislodged at some point during transit between the factory in the Orient and me in Texas. I glued both panes back into place for the photography session.

The satin finish paint and precise lettering are some of the best I've seen from WbB—they're without reproach. Having done repaints of diesel locomotives in the past, I'm impressed with the expertly applied paint, trim, and lettering that decorates the FA1-FB1, which are sitting on the desk between my keyboard and computer screen as I type this review. Well done Williams by Bachmann!

At Trackside

Locomotives from Williams have never been noted for slow-running characteristics, but our evaluation FA1-FB1 pair proved to be a pleasantly surprising exception. Running light with slightly over 6 volts from my postwar ZW, the pair's start was smooth and predictable and it settled in at a reasonably slow pace that didn't vary much as it traveled around the O54 and O72 loops of the editorial Carpet Central Railroad. Crossing between these two loops via my Atlas O72 crossover switches proved to be an exercise in gracefulness. On a temporary loop of O36 track, the A and B units tracked without any problems. The set is advertised in the 2015 Williams catalog as suitable for O27 track, and I understand this is accurate.

With our standard test train of 3-rail O scale cars in tow as well as any other train I coupled to the powered-dummy duo, the scale Alcos performed smoothly at slow speeds. If a locomotive runs smoothly at slow speeds, its running gear is likely well designed and built with no binds or defective components, which includes the motor(s) and control electronics. Also, at minimum track voltage for slow-speed running, the light bulb inside the A-unit cab emitted a soft glow, which of course got brighter as I opened the throttle on the transformer.

In fact, at all speeds the powered unit ran smoothly with no discernable mechanical noise. By discernable, the sound of the Alco prime mover was at a constant volume with no externally accessible control provided on the model. Although this volume was not nerve-stomping loud,

port, cast into the truck block on each side and above each axle. That's the good news. The not-so-good news is these lubrication ports are obviously for oiling the axles during manufacturing. You have to take the truck off the frame to get to the ports with a pinpoint oiler tube. But then, taking the trucks off either unit is not difficult.

In addition to the screens on the sides of the bodies and above the radiator fan, wire handrails bracket each crew entry door. Additionally, both units also sport separate wire grab irons at realistic locations, horns, and windshield wiper blades. Stamped steel steps are separately applied at the appropriate locations. All side win-

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the prime mover sounds precluded audible detection of any subdued mechanical noises.

On the topic of the sounds, the prime mover has the prototypically correct eight "rev" levels, which increase or decrease according to the throttle setting and thereby the track voltage. Moreover, the sounds are characteristically Alco, but to me they sounded more like a 251 instead of a 244. Regardless, they were fun to play with. As to the horn and bell, they were also realistic and triggered reliably from my control buttons.

At the End of the Run

In ads on the Internet for the scale FA1-FB1, the Williams set is available from several discount mail-order dealers in the \$350-\$450 price range. For the conventional operator of 3-rail O gauge trains, the scale Alco A-B units make for a handsome pair that runs as great as it looks. I had bunches of fun playing with the dynamic duo as it pulled several different trains of up to 18 freight cars around the CCRR. To sum up the set in one word, recommended! 🍷

Williams by Bachmann Alco FA1-FB1 Conventional Performance

(sound: on)

Length: 26" over couplers (total, both units)
25" between ends (total, both units)

Distance Between Pickup Rollers: 6-1/8"

Weight: A Unit: 3 lbs, 13 oz
B Unit: 2 lbs, 12 oz

Power Consumption at Idle: 0.2 A, 1.7 W
@ 6.5 VAC

Tractive Effort: 2 lbs, 14 oz @ 7.2 VAC,
5.6 A, 40 W

Minimum Sustained Speed: 10 scale mph
@ 6.5 VAC, 1.2 A, 8 W

Maximum Tested Speed: 60 scale mph
@ 9.2 VAC, 2.1 A, 19 W

Minimum 3-Rail Curve: 027

Power Transformer: Lionel ZW

Test Train

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

#23201 Union Pacific FA1-FB1

Retail price: \$569.95 at Bachmann dealers

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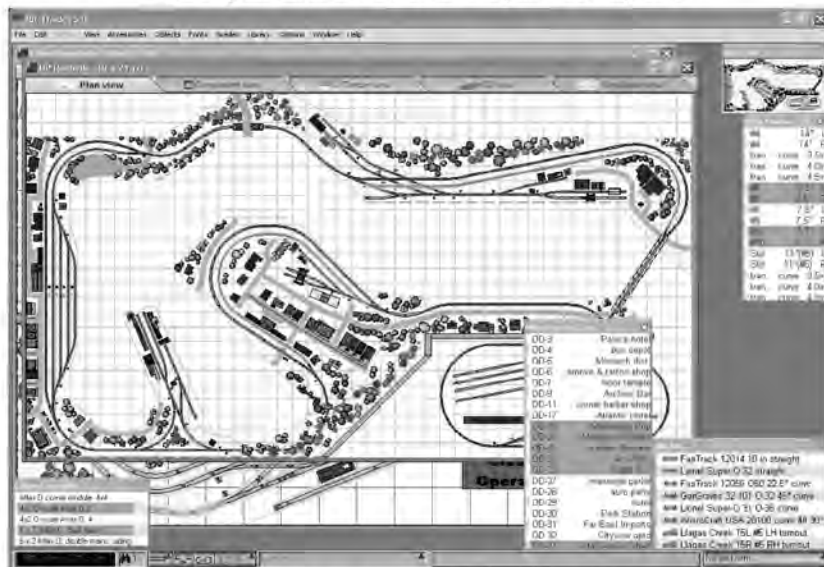


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PASSENGER CARS - MIS



MTH Premier SD70ACe

Review and Photos by George Brown

For this issue I had the pleasure of reviewing not only the 1:48 scale MTH Premier model of the EMD SD70ACe but also the scale model of the GE Dash-8, both wearing BNSF colors. The SD70ACe was decorated in the latest BNSF Heritage III colors, or what is colloquially called the “swoosh” paint scheme, while the Dash-8 wore the road’s earlier Heritage II livery. I find both paint schemes equally attractive especially with their silver trucks, fuel tank, and underpinnings.

Because both of the MTH models were nearly identical in construction, operating features, and their respective levels of details, I’ll concentrate on the SD70ACe primarily because we’ve not reviewed a scale model of this locomotive in the recent past. A sidebar presents the Premier Dash-8, which we have reviewed in the past but with Proto-Sound 2.0.

As with all of today’s MTH O gauge locomotives, the SD70ACe includes the Proto-Sound 3.0 electronics package, which features operation under either MTH’s proprietary DCS or the open-source DCC. Our evaluation sample also featured hi-rail wheels on the Proto-Scale 3-2 trucks that can be easily converted

for operation on 3-rail or 2-rail track. A version of the SD70ACe equipped with scale wheels is also available from MTH.

Prototype Notes

The 4300-hp SD70ACe has its origin in EMD’s SD70 and SD70MAC, but with the exception of the proven radial steering

trucks, the new engine shares little visual relationship with its predecessors. The locomotive was completely reengineered for crew comfort and visibility in addition to reliability and simplified maintenance. Its underframe is all new with electrical cables on one side and plumbing on the other. Aficionados of late-model EMD power will likely recognize the SD70ACe’s

overall architecture with the huge radiator housing of Conrail’s 5000-hp SD80 and the moribund 6000-hp SD90. As was also introduced on those high-horsepower units, the dynamic braking equipment on the SD70ACe is at the back of the unit where the associated noise and heat are separated from the cab and crew.





Starting tractive effort is a monstrous 191,000 pounds with a respectable continuous tractive effort of 157,000 pounds at 12 mph. The SD70ACe's prime mover is the third generation of EMD's familiar two-stroke 16-cylinder 710—each cylinder displaces 710 cubic inches. Although the microprocessor-controlled 710 was EMD's game plan for meeting EPA emissions standards from Tier 2 up through Tier 4, that didn't work out. Because the prime mover failed to meet the Tier 4 standards, production of new units built for service in the United States was stopped in January 2015. However, Tier 3-compliant SD70ACe units built before 2015 continue to ply U.S. rails hauling freight trains for their respective roads.

Construction and Features

In keeping with the traditional architecture for O gauge diesel locomotives, a molded ABS body shell mounts on a stamped steel frame with the electronics package, motors, and fan-driven smoke unit located inside the body shell. Underneath the frame are die-cast trucks and pilots plus the fuel tank with its obligatory speaker for the sound system. The sidebar lists the features and details for the SD70ACe, which by the way are the same for the Dash-8.

In addition to the BNSF livery, this MTH release of the SD70ACe also includes Union Pacific's Chicago North Western heritage colors and the special George Bush 41 commemorative unit. Two different Electro-Motive demonstrator color schemes are also available on



dealer shelves. For the O gauge railroader who wants multiple units in the same livery, each BNSF or UP CNW heritage unit sports one of three cab numbers.

Manual controls for the locomotive are located underneath the removable radiator housing. These controls include two slide switches for selecting operation on 3-rail or 2-rail track using DCS or DCC plus two potentiometers for manually setting the sound volume and smoke density.

The walkways, which are part of the body shell, have a nonslip pattern molded into them. On each pilot, the steps have a pattern of small dimples that simulate the safety perforations on the real locomotive's steps. While on the topic of the pilots, I especially liked the simulated MU control cables coiled under each end. On each of the SD's two opening crew doors, one on the nose and the other at the right rear corner of the cab, a handle made from wire holds the door closed or unlatches it.

As to the model's paint and decoration, they are quintessential MTH—flawless! And, inside the cab is an industrial green shroud that hides the front motor and flywheel from view.

At Trackside

Before setting any new Proto-Scale 3-2 locomotive on the track for its initial run, I always check its control switches for the proper setting in addition to checking lubrication on the trucks. They were set for 3-rail DCS operation, but I've heard several cases where one or both of these switches were set to some other position. Naturally, the engines didn't behave as expected, which was understandably upsetting to their

new owners. The quick start guide that's included with each MTH engine explains the switch settings as well as how to configure the power pickup at the trucks for 3-rail or 2-rail operation.

With the exception of a short run under direct transformer control just to confirm conventional operation, all my time with the SD70ACe, and also the Dash-8, was spent in DCS operation. That's where all the operating features of Proto-Sound 3.0 are available. Well, I typically use a fairly small subset of these features, primarily the Proto-Doppler, and I even shut the smoke unit off.

The sound recording of the EMD 16-710 prime mover in startup is fabulous, as is the five-chime horn. Actually, I found all the sound recordings of the locomotive in operation are excellent and realistic.

When the locomotive is stopped but ready to move forward, the headlight is dimmed and the cab lights are on. Upon putting the locomotive into forward motion, the cab lights go out, the ditch lights go on, and the headlight turns bright.

In motion, the SD70ACe is again quintessential MTH, which is to say responsive, smooth, and mechanically quiet. With the sound shut off, the only noise emission was from the wheels on my nickel silver rails. I encountered zero problems running the BNSF #9378 on my O72 and O54 curves and O72 switches. On a temporary O45 loop of track, the big SD performed well. Of course with a locomotive that is approximately a scale 74' long, it looks best on wider curves. And with

MTH SD70ACe Features and Details

- DCS, Proto-Sound 3, and DCC receiver/decoder electronics
- Freight Yard Proto-Effects
- Fan-driven ProtoSmoke unit with variable output
- Dual DC can motors with flywheels
- Metal worms and drive gears
- Hi-rail or scale wheels
- Four traction tires on hi-rail wheel version
- Fixed pilots on scale wheel version
- Proto-Scale 3-2 for 3-rail or 2-rail operation
- Separate sand pipes and brake system on trucks
- Owner-installed snowplow
- Kadee compatible coupler mounting pads
- Wire handrails and grab irons
- Wire MU control cables and coupler cut levers
- Separate underframe details
- Separate warning horns, air conditioner, sand fill pipes
- Metal handrail stanchions
- Movable roof fans
- See-through grilles and vents
- Coil-operated Proto-Coupler both ends
- Prototypical rule 17 lighting
- Directional LED headlights
- Illuminated cab interior and number boards
- Painted crew figures
- Operating ditch lights
- Minimum O42 curves (3-rail) or 42" radius curves (2-rail)



The Dash-8 and the DCS Lashup

Our other evaluation sample for this review was the MTH 20-20417-1 Premier Dash-8 with a retail price of \$499.95. The prototype for the model was GE's earlier 8-40CW and not the later ES44AC. In overall length, the Dash-8 model is slightly shorter than the SD70ACe at 18" over couplers and 17-1/4" between end sills and is also a pound lighter. As a result, the Dash-8's tractive effort is less than the SD's at 2 pounds, 1 ounce, which is still a respectable number for pulling power.

As on the SD, two pickup rollers are under each truck of the Dash-8, and manual operating controls are beneath the removable radiator housing. With the exception of the nonopening crew doors on the Dash-8, its operating features are identical, and its performance numbers are proportional to those of the SD70ACe.

In addition to BNSF, the Dash-8 in this release is also available in Conrail, CSX, and Norfolk Southern liveries. With models of two contemporary diesel locomotives deco-

rated in the colors for the same railroad, did I run the Dash-8 together with the SD70ACe in a DCS lashup? You bet I did! And were the two BNSF freight haulers spectacular together? Yes they were!

As an added visual treat, the Dash-8 and SD70ACe coupled closely to each other. About the only elements missing were the train lines and MU cables that connect full-scale diesels together in a multiunit consist.


The train was a 20-car mixed freight similar to those we regularly see on nearby BNSF rails. Most of the cars were weighted so the train was heavy and continuously running through three of the four curves on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad. With the awesome combined pulling power of well over four pounds from the pair of MTH diesels, the train could have been a lot longer and heavier, but it was limited by the aggregate length of my O72 loop. Regardless of the length of the train, the BNSF pair was a thrilling sight with an electrifying sound.



the smooth-acting Proto-Coupler and predictable low-speed operation, switching cars in and out of the editorial Carpet Central Railroad's industrial sidings was as enjoyable as it comes.

To a number of O gauge railroaders, the smoke unit is figuratively and literally the center piece to a diesel locomotive. If you've never before seen an MTH diesel in action with its smoke unit volume set to maximum, the density of the white vapor that's blown out of the exhaust stack borders on unbelievable. The best part is this volume can be controlled to just about any level from extremely dense to none. The fact that the locomotive is from MTH says it all.

At the End of the Run

To say that I enjoyed my time with both the MTH Premier SD70ACe and the Dash-8 is a major understatement. Each of these models is an outstanding representative of contemporary motive power modeled in 1:48 scale and each one earned my Green Aspect Award for clear track ahead. 

20-20426-1 BNSF SD70ACe

Retail price: \$499.95 at MTH dealers

M.T.H. Electric Trains; www.mthtrains.com

MTH SD70ACe DCS Performance

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

Length: 18-7/8" over couplers

18-1/4" between end sills

Distance Between Locomotive Pickup Rollers:

1st and 2nd: 3"

1st and 3rd: 11-5/8"

1st and 4th: 14-5/8"

Weight on Driving Wheels: 6 lbs, 9 oz

Power Consumption at Idle @ 18 VAC: 0.12 A, 2 W

Tractive Effort @ 18 VAC: 2 lbs, 7 oz @ 5.1 A, 92 W

Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC: 3 scale mph @ 0.9 A, 16 W

Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC: 60 scale mph @ 1.8 A, 32 W

Power Transformer: Lionel ZW-L

Command System: MTH DCS Version 4.20; TUI powered by MTH Z-500

Test Train

15-car mixed freight; train weight 13 lbs; pull to move train 7 oz;

recent-production O scale cars from various manufacturers

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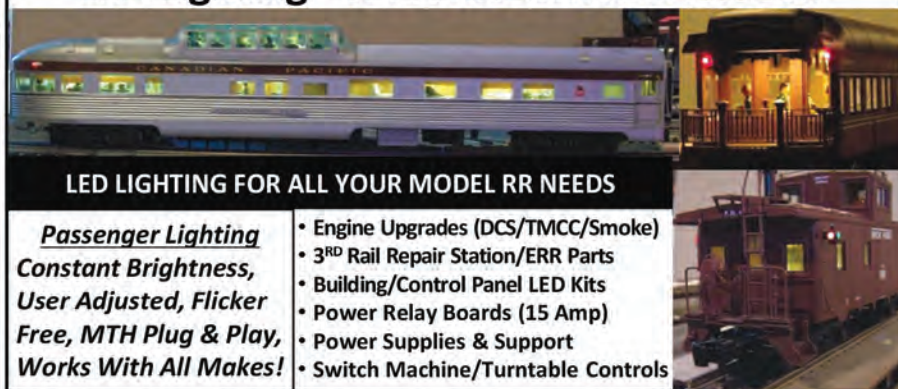
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How about a Lionel train actually running *in* the tree? Bill shows how it is done.

Trains in the Tree

Article by Bill Henning Photos by Ron Lego, Sr. and Bill Henning

Each year during December our town of Lansdale, Pennsylvania, hosts the Holiday Trees Display event that features 30-plus Christmas trees, each decorated by various local businesses and community organizations. A lot of creativity goes into these displays with all of the participants trying to capture attention while promoting and representing their business or organization. The general public is invited to view all of the decorated tree displays and encouraged to vote for a favorite. There is no big prize other than bragging rights and some nice community recognition.

We put together a Christmas tree display each year featuring Lionel trains to represent and promote our local family business: Henning's Trains, a model railroad shop started in 1939 by my grandfather, Harry Henning. Ours is typically your standard train layout under a tree, although each year the train display gets a little more involved than the year before. After winning first place for a few years, I am proud to say, I had elected not to be in the voting

competition. I figured it was time to let someone else win, but we would still participate and continue to do a great display.

Despite all that, I wanted to try something really different—to have a train not only circle the tree but to actually climb it as well, much like the train climbing the snow-covered mountain in Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express*. Then the train would come back down to do it over again and again for all to enjoy.

With sketchpad, pencil, ruler, and calculator in hand, I started work on the design. I used Lionel FasTrack for this project because of its simplicity, good track contacts, and its good-looking plastic ballast base. After a week of attempts at creating a consistent five-level spiral, I was successful, at least on paper. The train started its climb at 1" per foot circling O84 track first followed by O72, O60, O48, O36, and then curving within itself to start its descent back down the tree. The full descent was comprised of O36 curves at a steeper grade of 1" per 9-1/2".

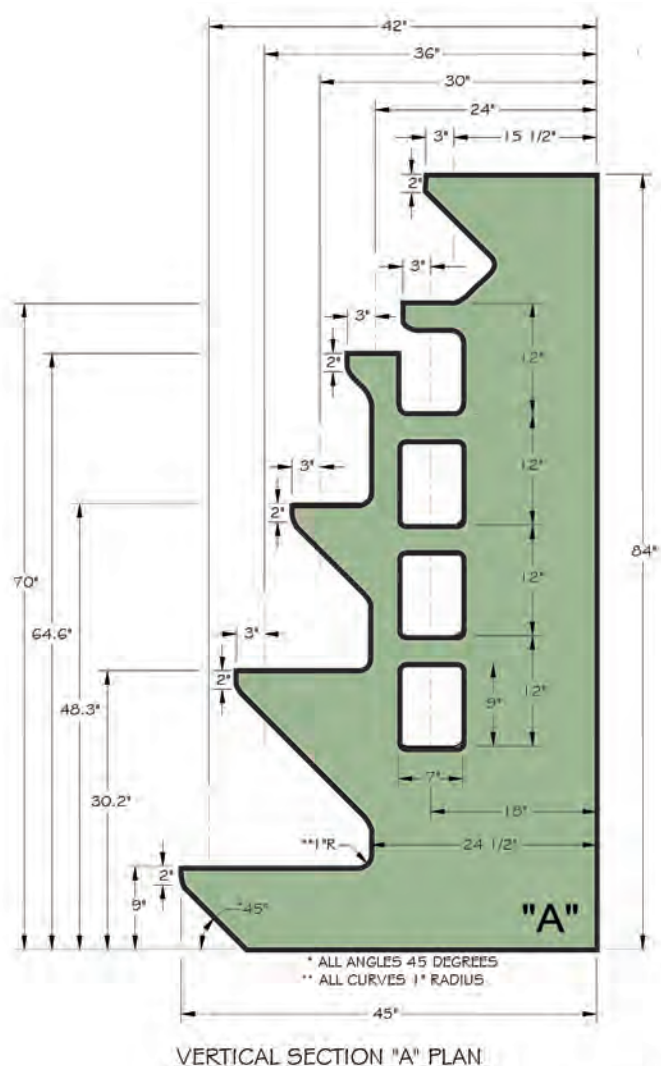
I carefully sketched on each piece of plywood where it needed to be cut and used a reciprocating saw to cut everything out. I used 5/8" press board because it was relatively inexpensive and light. I lettered each of the vertical base track sections A through F.

As far as holding the top of these together, they lock down with the 37" diameter circular "wagon wheel" used for the O31 loop at the top of the tree. I cut out what looks like wheel spokes to create open areas for weight loss and to provide plenty of room for electrical cords for tree lights that would be added later. Pie-shaped blocks were screwed under the wagon wheel that created slots for the top of each vertical section to fit in. A few screws held that in place.

A 6" piece of 1x4 was attached on each side of the vertical sections under the track supports to provide something to screw into. I started at vertical section A. The first track support went from A to C. The second went from C to E, E to A, and A to C, which started the second level. This continued on to the top and then back down, trimming, fitting, and installing one piece at a time. When back at the bottom, a couple of straight sections were used to go from the inside of the tree back to the outside where the train would begin the climb again.



The process begins with planning...a good bit of planning if you're starting from scratch.



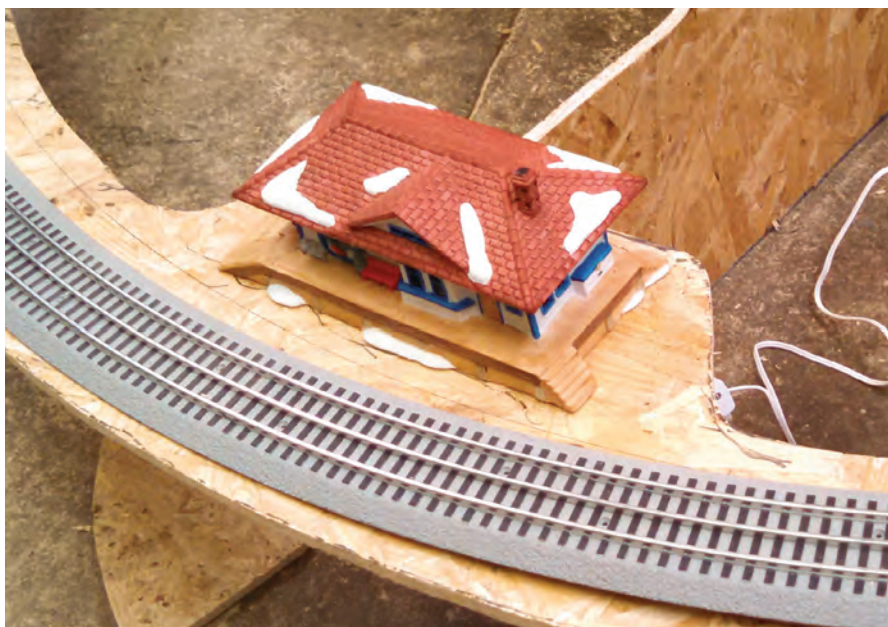
Here's a plan for vertical section A. There are separate plans for each of the six sections, and those interested in constructing a train tree like this one can find the full set of plans on the OGR On-Line Forum at www.ogagerr.com.



Six vertical sections of plywood make up the primary supporting structure.



Horizontal track section supports are added using actual sections of track as a template.



Small shelves are incorporated at various locations to hold a variety of Department 56 ceramic buildings.



With track in place, a lone Lionel Polar Express Berkshire sans tender and cars are used to conduct a test run.

While I was cutting each of the required 27 track support sections, I incorporated small shelves to hold Department 56 lighted buildings. I arranged them as I went along and had to make sure they were between the six vertical sections so there would be ample clearance for the buildings, especially as things got tighter going up the tree. As I was going along, I set the track in place to make sure everything was aligned as planned.

Once the track supports were screwed down and the track was in place, though not yet screwed down, it was time for the first test run. I was a little nervous. A lot of work had gone into this so far, and I was already questioning my sanity for even starting this project as scrap pieces of plywood and sawdust littered the entire garage. With the steep decline visibly next to the incline, the grades were visually exaggerated, and it was looking more like a roller coaster. With no guardrails or anything else on either side of the track, derailments were not an option. After connecting a couple of wires to a Lionel CW-80 transformer, I was ready for the test run of a Lionel No. 1225 Polar Express Berkshire. A little nerve racking, but it worked great!

One obstacle that became obvious was controlling the locomotive's speed going up and down the tree. I talked with a few electrical wizards (I admittedly am not one) about the issue and came away with a few different recommendations that called for diodes, regulators, contact breaker things, or adding a cruise control circuit to the locomotive—most were more than I wanted to tackle. I wanted to keep things simple and eventually found my solution of one transformer for going up and a second transformer for going down. A couple of 1-3/8" insulated center-rail track sections separated the two.

Naturally, the whole thing got painted green. One downside with the press board is it really absorbs the paint. After a few hours and a couple quarts of paint, and with time running out, I got some green spray paint and spray-bombed the whole thing. Boy! That went a lot quicker and looked great, but after a year, the garage is still painted green from overspray.

After the paint dried, it was time to work on transforming this thing from a modern art sculpture into a credible Christmas tree. I had an artificial tree that could supply some branches, but it



Once I was satisfied with the configuration and operational characteristics, the framework was painted an appropriate tree green color.

was obvious one tree wasn't going to be enough, so I confiscated a second tree from my brother. That gave me 125 branches to work with. Next time I set this thing up, I will look for a third tree because it still needs more branches. To hold the branches, I cut 4" lengths of 2x2, drilled a hole in the top to hold the branch, and mounted them to the vertical sections. I staggered the locations according to the branch length and height on the tree. It took a while to get it to look natural—kind of like putting together a very large flower arrangement.

Once that was done, I pulled all the branches and track off and disassembled the tree into three main sections. This

allowed moving everything through a 48" wide door opening to the location where the tree was to be displayed. Reassembly of the track and branches took quite some time. We first got the track wired and screwed down. Then we positioned the buildings and ran cords all over the place. Next time I need to get more green extension cords and green cords with bulbs for the buildings because it was tough to hide white wires with this setup. I also made a couple of trips to the store for more Christmas tree lights. I underestimated how many lights a 9' diameter by 10' high tree uses.

The top of my tree had an O31 circle of track for running a separate train. This



Some 125 branches used on this tree are anchored in place via holes drilled in 4" lengths of 2x2 lumber.



This shows how each branch is attached to the framework.



The tree is shaping up nicely at this point, but there's still a lot of work to do.



The completed tree is a major attraction to store visitors and a very effective seasonal promotion for Lionel trains.



The top wagon-wheel-shaped plywood section holds the top of the entire structure together and provides the operating platform for a two-car Lionel Candy Cane Commuter set.



The Polar Express is one of two featured trains performing regular duty on this special "layout."



Even more colorful than the Polar Express, an additional Lionel train in Christmas livery also serves for variety. The motive power is rotated regularly to keep them lubricated and running smoothly.

was powered by a third transformer. For that track I used the Lionel Candy Cane Commuter two-car set because at 7' high a trolley just seemed to get lost up there. In the center of that circle, I added a piece of PVC pipe mounted in a block of wood to hold the top section of the artificial tree that I robbed the branches from. This formed the very top section of my tree.

Finally it was time for the ornaments, all of which were train-related. We started with about four dozen custom-painted Lionel Christmas balls followed by Hallmark Lionel ornaments and many Lionel ornaments that have been made over the years. Needing still more ornaments, we used several train parts, including many reproduction parts that we manufacture. This assortment included standard gauge wheels, transformer handles and emblems, rockets, crossing signals, and crane booms, among many other things. A red Lionel caboose with a large bulb inside capped everything as a tree topper. Meanwhile, we surrounded the base of the tree with a variety of Lionel boxes, accessories, cars, and some gift-wrapped boxes.

The Lansdale Holiday Tree Displays event continues through the month of December and is open a couple of evenings and Saturdays. The train being used is a conventional-controlled Lionel O gauge Polar Express set with three lighted passenger cars. The train endures a lot of heavy run time, constantly climbing a steep hill in front of a lot of people. I removed the electrical pickup assembly from one truck on each passenger car to cut down on the rolling drag. This eliminated one roller and the contact tabs rubbing against the axles, which reduced strain on the locomotive. The passenger car lights worked fine with just one roller. I also wrapped a thin piece of wire around the couplers to prevent their jaws from opening. The last thing we needed were any runaway passenger cars while climbing the hill. Also keeping the loco well-oiled and the track clean was important.

The Christmas tree train ran for many hours up and down that tree time and again without any problems...well almost. With just a couple of days of display time left, we wore the poor engine out. The axle gear and motor just had enough. The Berkshire slowly came to a halt. The interesting part was that while the locomotive was back at the store for a quick repair, we called in the backup engine, a Lionel



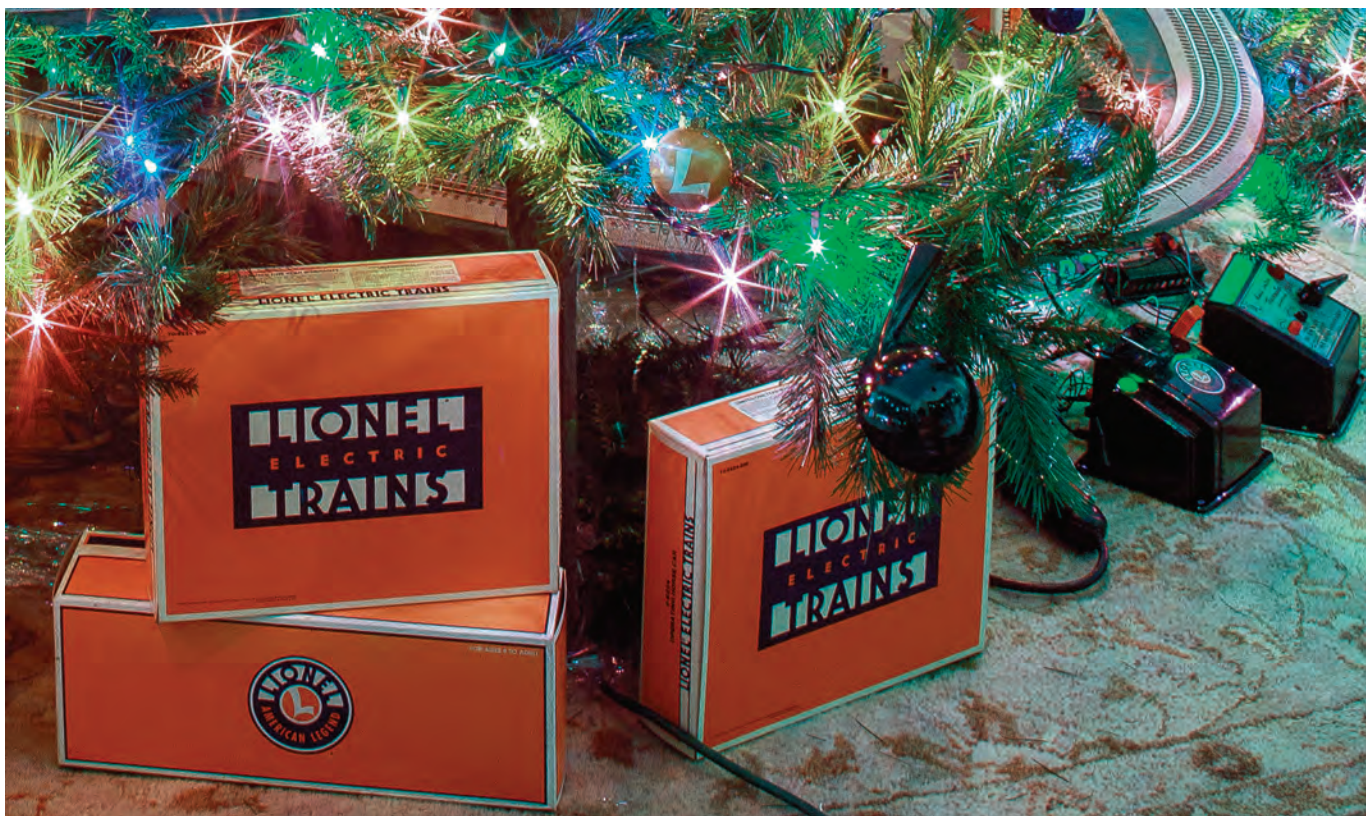
Appropriate for this theme tree, a caboose provides the topper.

LionChief Polar Express. We simply turned the throttle on the remote all the way up and relied on the transformers to provide the speed control. The only problem was we had to push one of the buttons on the remote once in a while or it would automatically shut off after a period of time. Also, the LionChief locomotive tended to lose traction occasionally while the conventionally controlled engine didn't—interesting!

This project was quite an undertaking, one I underestimated, and, believe it or not, I did not decide to actually do it until late in the game—a week before the show's opening. So our tree went from paper to reality within a week. But with some sleepless nights and help from some friends, we got it finished. I have to admit that this thing looks like, without question, a Lionel fan's ultimate Christmas tree. A lot of people thoroughly enjoyed seeing it, although I am not sure who liked it more, the kids or the adults. 🚂



It was easy enough to notch the plywood base to accommodate a Lionel truss bridge.



Lionel set boxes make great under-the-tree additions. At right are the two transformers used to power the layout: one for powering the train going up and the other for powering it as it comes back down.



Various types of ornaments are used on the tree, including commercially available Lionel ball ornaments and miscellaneous Lionel parts and accessories such as the bag of coal and a U.S. Navy missile.

Lionel FasTrack Specifics

Curves	Straights
8 - 031	2 - 1-3/8"
38 - 036	2 - 1-3/4"
1 - 036 half	1 - 4-1/2"
16 - 048	4 - 5"
2 - 048 quarter	1 - 10"
1 - 048 half	
16 - 060	
16 - 072	
24 - 084	

Track placement order starting each loop at vertical section A

Incline:

- Level 1: (1) 1-3/8", (24) 084, (4) 072, (1) 5"
- Level 2: (12) 072, (4) 060, (1) 4-1/2"
- Level 3: (12) 060, (3) 048, (1) 5", (1) 1-3/4"
- Level 4: (9) 048, (1) 048 quarter, (1) 1-3/8", (2) 036, (1) 1-3/4", (1) 5"

Decline:

- Level 5: (1) 036 half, (7) 036
- Level 6: (8) 036
- Level 7: (8) 036
- Level 8: (8) 036
- Level 9: (5) 036, (1) 048, (1) 048 half, (1) 5", (1) 10", (1) 048 quarter, (3) 048



About the Author

Bill Henning, father of three, started sweeping floors and stocking shelves at an early age in the family business of Henning's Trains in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. After heading in a slightly different direction and getting an architectural degree, he spent more than a dozen years as an engineering designer before a company layoff brought him back to the family business. What was to be temporary fortunately turned into a permanent career change, and Henning's Trains has prospered and grown since then. His engineering talents get tested once in a while with projects such as this Christmas tree layout. Bill is also the driver of the family owned #80 NASCAR Dirt Late Model stock car sponsored by Henning's Trains and Lionel.

Building Blackwrap Canyon

Article and Photos by Don McCuaig

I am currently constructing the largest model mountains I have ever attempted using flexible latex rubber molds. The total area will be about 20' long and 6' high, extending down to 3" above the floor. For this project, I'm using a technique that I developed over the years on a smaller O scale layout. It's easy, fast, and best of all looks good.

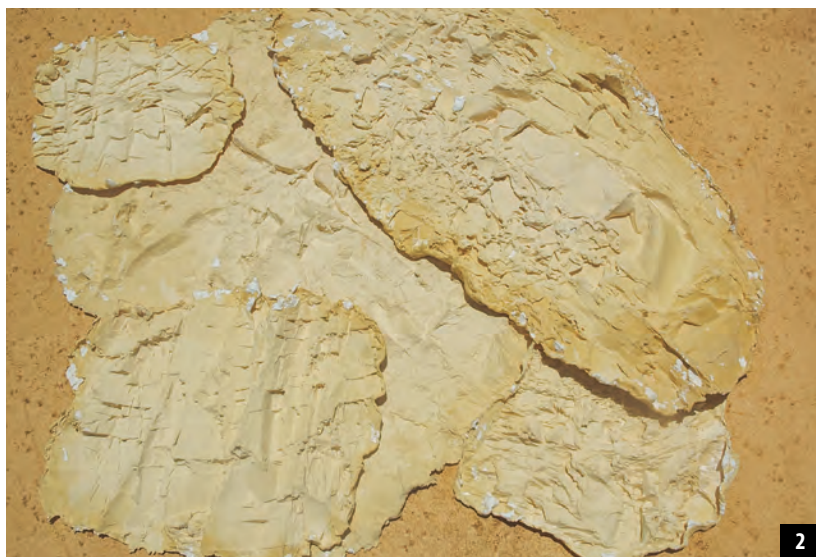
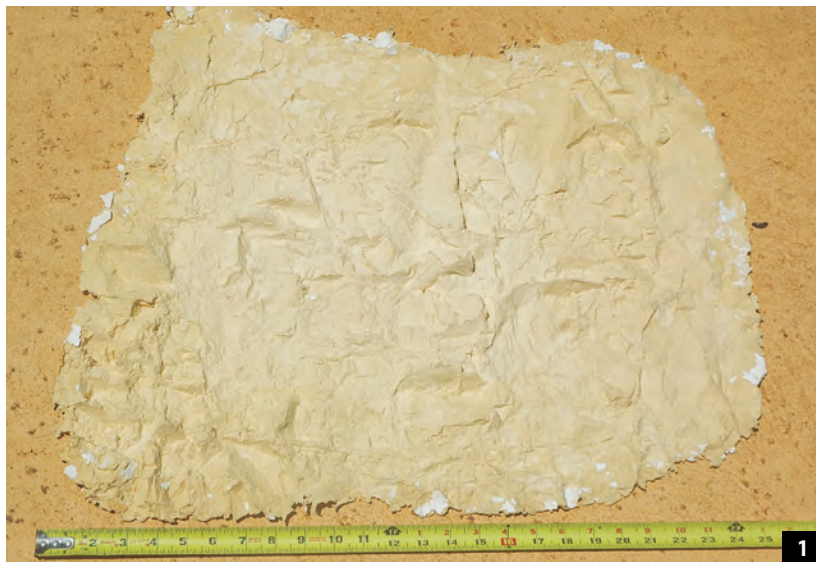
Rubber molds are, in my view, one of the most important key pieces for building realistic rock formations and mountains. Small molds are available from Scenic Express and other suppliers. I have certainly made good use of them many times over a good many years. They are very handy for small areas to add detail to a hill or to fill in areas around larger molded rocks.

For larger rock faces, I prefer the molds offered by Bragdon Enterprises (www.bragdonent.com). This supplier makes over 120 large and small rock and stone wall molds plus everything needed to finish realistic-looking rock faces (Photos 1 and 2). I've had some of these molds for years and have used them again and again. They continue to hold up well. That said, let's get started.

The large mountain area I built needed a frame of some sort. As you can plainly see in Photo 3, I'm no carpenter, but the good news is that none of the work done here will ultimately be visible.

Next is to create a structural web with masking tape. You can double it up at the top or use 1x3 wooden strips here.

Now comes the big difference in my mountain building as compared with other methods: I make extensive use of a material called Blackwrap made by Gam Products. This is a very heavy aluminum foil that is flat black on both sides. It's used by lighting grips in the TV and movie industries for blocking out unwanted light. You can buy it in 12" and 24" wide rolls that are 25' and 50' long (Photo 4). I buy this material from a company called Filmtools in California (www.filmtools.com). Don't try to use regular aluminum foil because it will not hold up and will rip when any significant weight is applied



to it. Blackwrap is so strong you can shape it in any form you want (Photo 5).

Once you are satisfied with the shape of your mountains, lay a plaster layer over the Blackwrap. I mix up some plaster, such as Hydrocal, in a bucket and dip half sheets of Bounty paper towels into it, making sure they are well covered. Then just layer them over the Blackwrap (Photos 6 and 7). If you're using plaster as I do, double the layer on the edges for strength. When all this is dry, it's amazingly strong. You might ask why I recommend Bounty paper



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Inspiring Modelers

John Allen (1913-1973) has long been my primary source of inspiration in the model railroading hobby. Mountains, mountains, and more mountains were a hallmark of this great modeler's Gorre & Daphetid HO scale layout. Oh, yes, there were trains somewhere in there, too. Another great pioneer in the hobby, Frank Ellison (1887-1964), supported John's approach. Frank became well known for advocating that the layout scene provides the stage and the trains are the actors. I share the view that scenery should always dominate the trains, and the railroad I'm currently building is my tribute to John Allen.



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towels by brand. Well, they just seem to be stronger. I've used some other brands of paper towels that fell apart when wet with plaster. Let everything dry overnight, and soon you will be ready for your molds.

After you select the molds you're going to use, you need to pour something into them, right? Hydrocal would be the first and best choice. If you can, purchase it at a cement supply company and get the largest bag you can find. It's cheap and works much better than the lightweight Hydrocal you buy

at hobby shops. Alas, I had to use plaster of Paris for this project because no one carries Hydrocal on Maui, Hawaii, where I live. I buy two or three 25-pound bags of plaster of Paris at one of the big box hardware stores. Again, it's inexpensive and works amazingly well, though not as strong as Hydrocal. Both, when dry, are quite lightweight. That's a good thing if you are building something anywhere near the size of my mountains.

Determine how many pours you will need for the area you are working on. Every mold you buy can be used and oriented four ways: right, left, up, and down. No two rocks are exactly alike, so there is no right or wrong way to place them. I make as many molded rocks as I think I can use in a given area and then add about 20 percent more (Photo 8). I'll tell you why later.

Let the molds dry overnight and then pull them the next day. Gently peel back the latex rubber molds from the sides, slowly working toward the center. The molds from Bragdon are latex, so take care not to rip them. Freshly molded rock is heavy and will crack if you're not careful. Let everything dry in the sun for a couple of days. Time varies depending on weather conditions, but here on Maui they dry fast. You will be surprised how light and strong these rocks are when they are completely dry.

Now comes the fun part! Look at the area you're going to cover with your rock work. Match rocks together. They won't fit perfectly, but you can fix that in no time.

To hold the rocks in place, simply lay on a glob of joint compound (Photo 9). Keep in mind that the mold will most likely not fit

perfectly flat against your mountain. The joint compound will hold the molded rock in place and will fill in any space between the rock and the mountain.

You can always reposition or remove a rock and replace it before the joint compound sets up. You will invariably have some gaps between rock areas. Not to worry.

Remember my making those extra rocks? This sounds terrible, but I drop a couple of my large, beautiful molded rocks on the cement floor of my layout room. Yes, they break into small pieces, but I use these small chunks to fill in the areas between rocks. Think of it as working on a jigsaw puzzle. Try different rocks until you can fill the space as best you can. You will still have some small cracks, but those can be filled with small strips of paper towels dipped in plaster. Just push the strips into the cracks (Photo 10). These strips will have texture, and when dry your mountain looks as if it is one big piece of stone. Let everything dry for a couple of days and give yourself a break.

At this point you have a very big and very white mountain. I started by adding some color. I'm doing the Cascade Range, so I want a basic gray rock color. Some stone is red, others brown, yellow, or even some very dark gray. Check the Internet and magazines for color pictures of mountains you might want to duplicate. For my gray I use spray cans of Rust-Oleum automobile primer. It's a flat paint and works well, but be sure to wear a spray mask when using this stuff indoors.

Now you have a big gray mountain instead of a big white one. You need more detail for those molded rocks you made. There are simple ways to highlight the detail of rocks. Some people use India ink diluted with alcohol. I use Dr. Ben or Brandon Enterprises black dry pigment, but there are many other weathering pigments. It's like a fine powder. I buy a large jar of the black and small jars of browns and rust. You can also buy sets of these pigments and save a few dollars. A little goes a long way, so just start out with one of each.

First spray the area to work on with water using a regular spray bottle. Then take a small paintbrush and run just a



little of the pigment across the top of the rocks. Don't let it dry. Spray more water and let it run naturally down the rocks. To finish, use a large brush with an upward motion to get the black wash into all the cracks.


Now step back and take a look. Add more pigment if you think it is needed or spray more water on the rock if you feel it's too dark. When everything has dried the next day, the coloring will be lighter, so take that into account. Don't worry about messing things up; you can always go back to your auto primer paint and start over again.

The next morning your modeled masterpiece should be dry and displaying its finished shade. I like to add a little brown and maybe a little rust pigment in cracks to represent the effect of water running down in these areas (Photo 11). Experiment with different colors. Always wait until everything is dry before you make any final decisions on the color of your rocks.

Flat, relatively flat, or certain other areas should have dirt, grass, and other details added (Photo 12). I use Elmer's Multipurpose Spray Adhesive because it stays tacky longer than other brands I've tried. This gives more time to work with turf. Woodland Scenics Earth Blend and Light Green Grass works for me. You can also add some brush and maybe a few scrub trees.

That's about all there is to make your Cascade Mountains or any other range (Photo 13). Once you get started, you will find some other ways of doing things. Keep in mind that you can easily repair or replace anything and start over with your detailing. I can pretty much guarantee that visitors to your layout will be impressed with your work.

A couple of other things are worth noting about Blackwrap. You can also use it to detail the insides of tunnels. Simply crunch up some wrap, pull it apart, and form the inside tunnel walls. You can airbrush some color to it. I staple the lip of the wrap to the wooden floor of the tunnel, and that's it. It will hold its shape with no additional support. You can also use Blackwrap for rolling hills instead of wire screen and shape it into endless designs.

I hope this enhances your railroad construction. Mainly, have fun! 



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JUST BIG ENOUGH

Article, Photos, and Diagrams by Michael Lee

When it became necessary for me to make a third work-related relocation, I was determined to move into a house with a large enough finished basement so I could construct a small railroad empire. My previous layout was smaller, not affording much room for longer trains and some of the scenes I would have liked to create. I expressed this interest to my real estate agent as we searched for houses. After viewing over 100 houses in three days, she soon learned that an inadequate basement was a real deal breaker. But eventually I did find a proper house, and after completing my relocation, I got started with my layout in the fall of 2010.

From an operational standpoint, I enjoy watching the trains go around circles in a really cool-looking landscaped environment. My previous layout had a duckunder, and I wanted to avoid this

going forward. I started to make a list of items that were important to be included before starting the design on the new layout: two-track main line that would share a siding, hidden siding behind the scenery that would provide the illusion of trains disappearing and new trains appearing, staging yard(s) that could store trains out in the open to be viewed as opposed to hidden under the layout, track on a grade for trains to climb, and an icing facility to show off my 40' reefers.

I am also guilty of wanting the typical fantasy themes for most layouts including a trestle (Photo 1), mountains (Photo 2), water scene (Photo 3), and station (Photo 4). The overall appearance of the layout resembles woods with evergreens, such as seen in Spokane, Washington.

Because I prefer to run mostly scale-size steam engines (large and small), track

radius became an important consideration with not only O72 minimum curve being a requirement for the large steam engines but also having the correct spacing between the tracks. With dreams at the time of owning a Big Boy, center-rail-to-center-rail distance (5" plus) became another requirement based on limiting myself only to 18" passenger cars for overhang when passing on the adjacent track. With all this in mind and a limited space from which to work, I used a combination of various Ross switches and GarGraves Flex Track for maximum flexibility.

The use of track planning software was critical in developing a track plan from which to build, especially one that did not include a duckunder. Many track layout ideas once drawn in the software could quickly be proved or dismissed, sometimes with just a matter of inches making



a difference. The software was also helpful in exploring the huge selection of Ross switches in the software library. It is easier to see what will work in a scaled environment, which the software provides, instead of trying to guess and order the wrong switches or build the wrong benchwork.

In the end, the layout became an inverted dog bone of 15'x 24' in overall size with a 15' multilevel staging area (Diagram 1). An O72 minimum radius was used for the inside loop with an O82 minimum radius used for the outside loop. The benchwork was built specific to the track design as a combination of both open-grid and tabletop design with roughly a 30" aisle (Photo 5). The goals were to make the layout modular so that it could be disassembled and moved to another location and purposely create easy access (2' reach) to all track work and



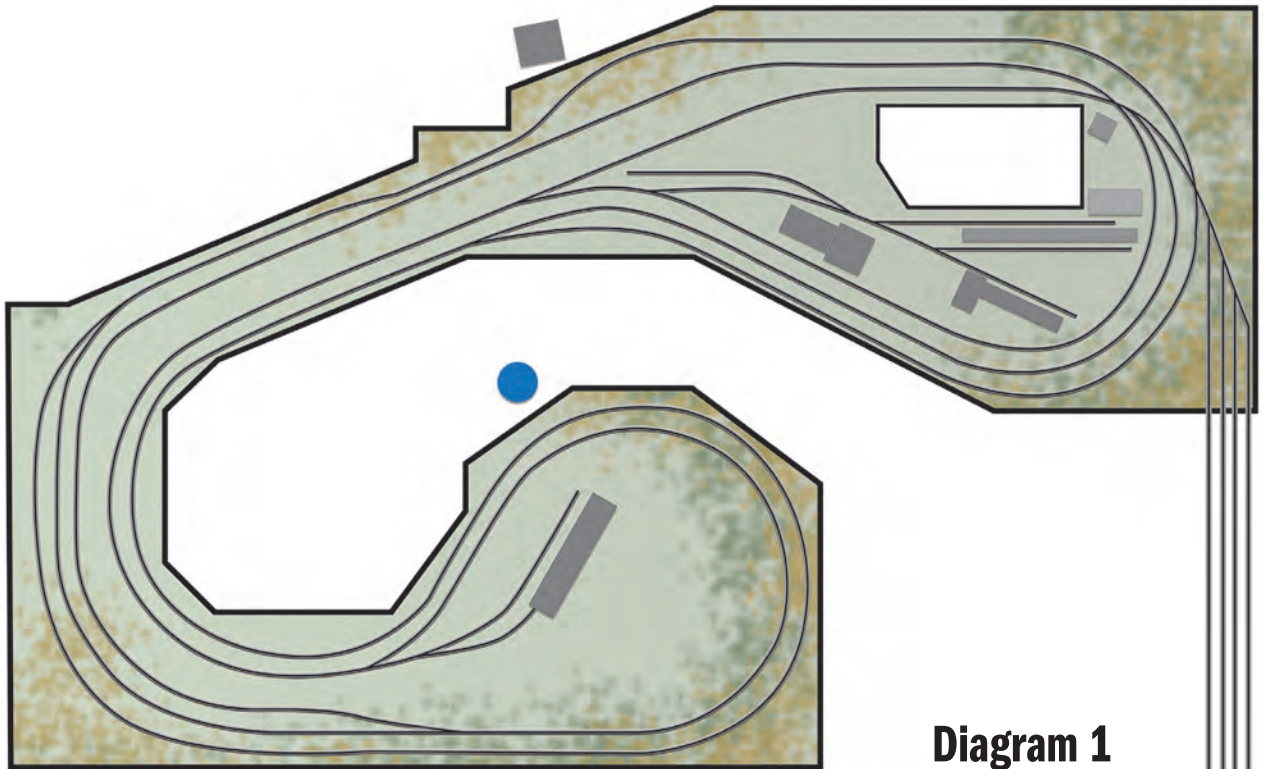


Diagram 1





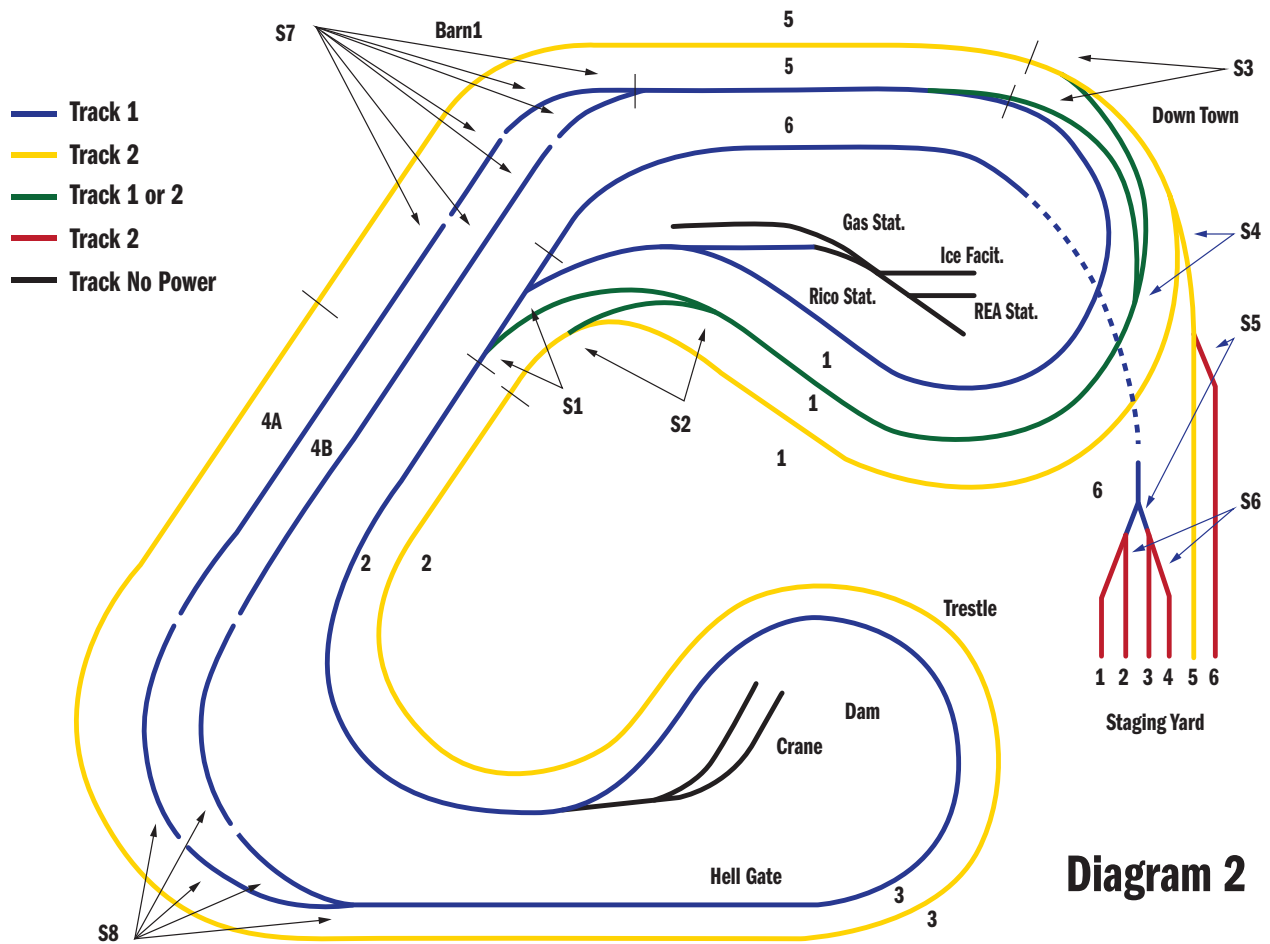
scenery. I used mostly oriented strand board (OSB) for the tabletop instead of plywood because it is less expensive and does not warp, but it did need to be supported more frequently. It was important for me to use a router and also sand the edge of the OSB to prevent cuts and splinters and to paint it a neutral earth color, thus making it look more finished.

One of my favorite parts of the track work is the appearance of the curved switches that allow the smooth transition from two to three tracks (Photo 6). This track work reminds me of being a kid in Chicago and looking at the maze of switches at the Illinois Central commuter area when getting off the South Shore at Randolph.

The layout is wired in a star pattern and operates DCS and TMCC systems through the DCS remote. Initially, I could not get the DCS signal to work. I ended up using Susan Deat's post on the OGR forum about engineered filters for the DCS signal, and this resolved my issue. Lots of ideas for building this layout came from the forum. Each loop is powered by a 180W brick. This is more than enough power to run two passenger trains of seven cars each simultaneously with engine smoke enabled.

I like control panels, but I wanted a look where the switches were controlled and indicated through a cleaner appearance with toggle switches and LEDs mounted to fit the track schematic rather than the standard switch controllers. I used crimp-on RJ45 connectors and CAT5 cables to provide wiring connections between switches and the control







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panel (Diagram 2). These connectors make it easier to construct and to troubleshoot when assembling the panel. A local sign company made the vinyl schematic for each of my control panels. Part of this wiring effort included the creation of isolated rail section blocks needed for a future signal system. Each powered track block is shown designated by a number with a line through the track indicating the limits and the color indicating its power source: brick 1 or brick 2. Also shown is the switch control wiring with each of the RJ45 and CAT5 cables labeled with a prefix of "S", such as "S2" meaning RJ45 jack #2. I use this system to label the wires under the layout, and it is helpful in troubleshooting.

Although there are some better track ballast products out there, roofing granules are very economical. When covered with a brown wash, they look pretty good. My wife, Leah, glued and colored most of the ballast. She also carved and painted the pink foam used in landscaping with a cut-off wheel and hammer claw (Photo 7). She is good at selecting appropriate colors.

I built my icing platform from wood with the plastic ice house from Atlas and mechanized the ice block delivery system to allow the blocks to move back and forth (Photos 8 and 9). The theory behind the platform design was to accept ice delivery by rail from the lower platform for loading the house, with the upper platform used for loading ice into the rail cars.

The crane was the first craftsman kit I assembled, and I made provisions to add a motor and rails for movement back and forth (Photo 10). This is my favorite structure on the layout, and I like how the boom is supported by the guide wires. This was also my first project using weathering chalks. Being a newbie to weathering, they are easy to use while producing great results. The barge below the crane was constructed from medium-density fiberboard and basswood.

I wanted the trestle to appear higher off of the ground but still not have the water be too low for a dock scene. I created a dam to regulate the water from the river and create a height differential for the stream to drop under the trestle (Photo 11).

I had two vacant corners left on the layout that needed scenery. One of them allowed the inclusion of a downtown scene with buildings and streets. This was a fun project where Leah and I assembled and painted the building kits.



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Only one-way streets are permitted in this town (Photo 12). For the other corner of the layout, Leah wanted to create her vision of a barn scene. We created a set of plans for the barn based on a real-life image, and she built it from scratch. She also did the remaining scenery for the barn area (Photo 13). This scene came out great!

Brick walls along the 24' back wall were created out of pink foam using a Tippi Foam Cutter (Photo 14). Several shades of gray paint were applied to create a weathered appearance. This is an economical way to create walls in a variety of lengths and heights.

The visible staging area integrated into my display shelves works great and allows storage of six full-length trains that are still out on display even when not being run (Photo 15).

What's left? Well, I have future plans for the harbor scene to include a steam plant for the crane, more details on the barge tie-offs, and a new dredge barge. My long range plan would be to develop a signal system with each of the control points having custom software logic.

I am really happy with how the layout turned out (Photos 16, 17, 18, and 19). I am very fortunate with the space and layout I have. It seems to be just big enough to keep me busy and make the goal of a finished layout attainable. With Leah being supportive and participating in it really makes the hobby all that much more fun. 



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About the Author

Michael Lee was born and raised into the train hobby through his dad's lifelong model train interest. He started seriously collecting trains after graduating from college with a physics and engineering degree. Mike currently works for BNSF Railway supporting the hump yard control systems. He enjoys a variety of outdoor activities and working on the train layout with his wife, Leah, daughter, Skyler, and son, Simon.



No-cost automatic stop-and-go streetcar operation



Remembering Charlie and the MTA

Article, Photos, and Diagram by William Fuller

As youngsters trundle down Railroad Avenue aboard the Lionel streetcar, their anticipation and excitement over the swings, seesaws, and carousels awaiting them in the city park grows until the motorman can hardly wait until these boisterous kids hop off at the approaching stop. But what's this? The streetcar keeps right on going! The car completes its loop around the city and again approaches the park station, but it never stops. The youngsters' excitement turns to frustration, and now the motorman dreams of retirement.

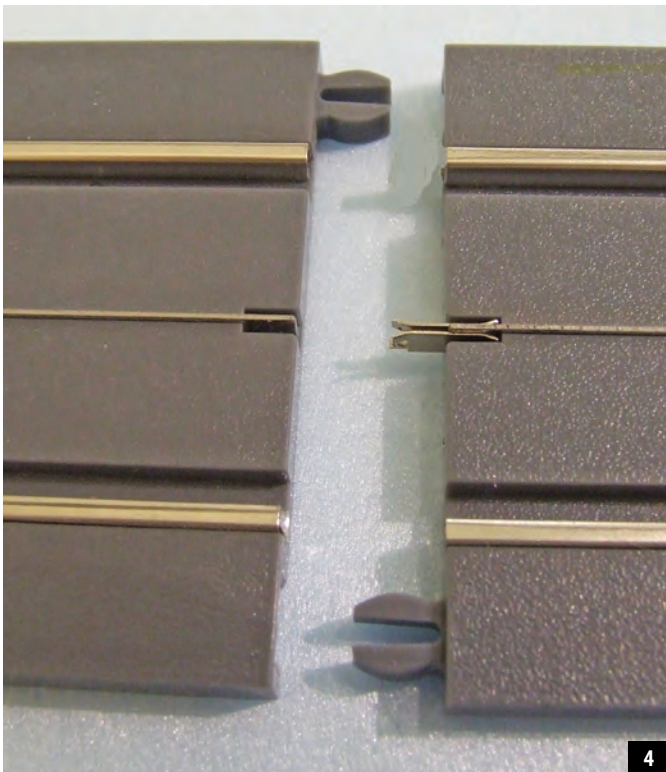
Everyone starts singing "Get poor Charlie off the MTA"—a line in The Kingston Trio's popular "MTA" song from back in 1959.

*"Now, all night long
Charlie rides through
the station crying, 'What
will become of me?'"*

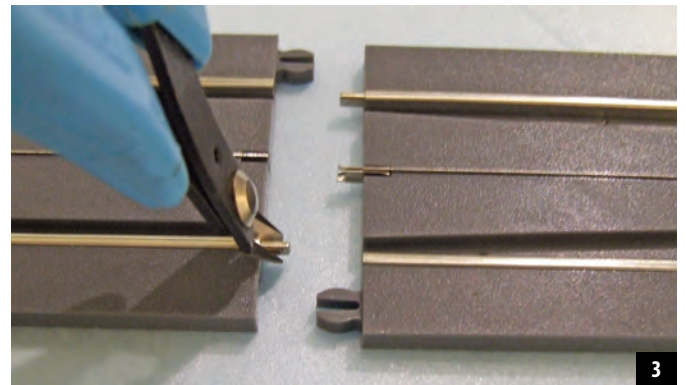
What to do? We can contrive a way to automatically stop and start that streetcar at the park as well as at other convenient stops around town, and let's do it without spending a cent on fancy devices such as IR detectors. This simple technique works with regular 3-rail track, with K-Line SuperStreets, or with Bachmann E-Z Street roadway sections (Photo 1). We'll use the two brands of roadway sections, which are identical in design and differ only slightly in color, to illustrate the technique used here.



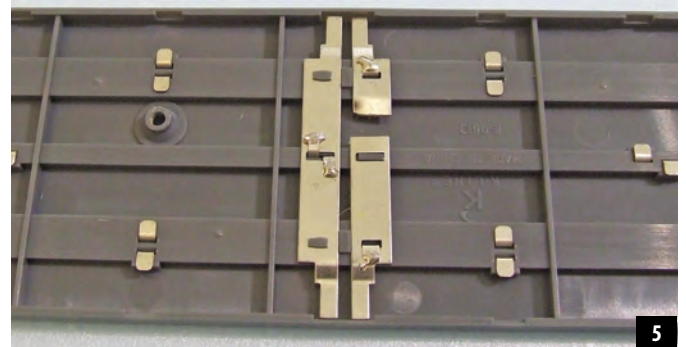
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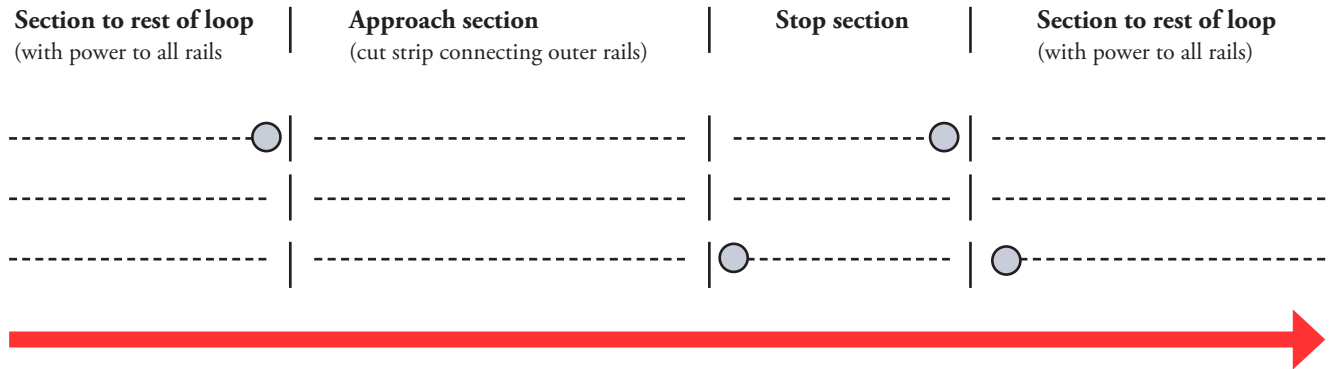
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DIRECTION OF TRAVEL



INSULATING POINTS ○

(Snip off connecting pins and be sure rail ends do not touch)



Typically, when insulating a section of 3-rail track, we leave the two outside ground rails alone and insulate only the middle power rail. In this case, just the opposite applies. Do not do anything to the center power rail! We will modify only the two outer rails.

By interrupting electrical continuity in the two outer rails, we'll create what we will call a "stop section" and an "approach section." A streetcar entering the stop section will automatically stop, and a second streetcar entering the approach section will send the first car on its way and will then take its place in the stop section. For this process to work, the city streetcar line must have one car more than it has stops. For example, if the loop has only one stop, it must have two cars running on it (Photo 2). If there are two stops, there must be three cars, and so on.

To create a stop section, first snip off the metal pins projecting from the rail ends (Photo 3). Because both outside rails must be insulated at the end of the section from which the streetcar will exit, the pin coming from the next roadway section that would normally insert into the other outer rail of the stop section must also be cut off (Photo 4). Be careful to leave a very slight gap between this end of the stop section and the continuing loop beyond it so that the rails do not touch. If necessary, insert a tiny bit of insulating tape or cardstock between the rail ends. We now have a stop section with no outer rail connection to the following roadway section that continues around the loop.

Now we need to prepare the approach section. Turn the track being used for the approach section upside down and cut through the metal strip that connects the two outer rails (Photo 5). Join the approach and stop sections together. One outer rail of the stop section is now electrically connected to one rail in the approach section, and the other stop section rail is completely isolated at both ends.

Finally, isolate the rail that is electrically continuous through the approach and stop sections from the roadway section that connects to the rest of the loop by snipping off the connecting pin that would normally insert into that rail. Again, be careful that the rail ends do not touch. What we have now created is illustrated by the above diagram.

Here are a few considerations for the most reliable operation:

- Use DC-motored, short base streetcars.
- Use short half-sections of roadway trackage for the stop section.
- Use one or more full-length sections for approaches to give the stopped streetcar time to leave the stop section before the second streetcar arrives.
- Be sure that the rail ends do not touch where pins have been cut off.
- Because operation depends on completing the electrical circuit through wheels and axles, keep streetcar wheels and the rails very clean. This means placing stops within reach of the edge of the layout.
- Consider removing traction tires from Lionel streetcar wheels and adding weight to the interior of these streetcars to increase wheel-to-rail electrical contact.
- If working with traditional tubular track, insulate the outer "control" rail of the approach section from the metal ties used on most tubular track.

With only a few snips of the wire cutters and without having to purchase a single electronic control device, streetcars will stop automatically wherever we need them to and will resume their travel as soon as a second streetcar enters each approach section. Now those antsy kids will be able to disembark and enjoy the playground! 🚲



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11710	CANADIAN PACIFIC RAIL FREIGHT SET\$329.00
11743	CHESAPEAKE & OHIO FREIGHT SET\$249.00
11909	#2168 RS WARHORSE N&W J FREIGHT SET\$649.00
11912	SERVICE STATION ONE SET\$229.00
18303S	AMTRAK GGI CON DIESEL AS SET ONLY W/19100-19106\$599.00
29365	"THE POCHONTAS" PASSENGER SET STD "O" SCALE L12V2\$1,449.00
29366	SOUTHERN PACIFIC TANKTRAIN SET\$619.00
30116	LOVE RANGER WILD WEST SET W/FASTRACK\$269.00
30122	WIZARD OF OZ SET W/FASTRACK L12RTR\$169.00
30161	BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA SET L12RTR\$179.00
30162	THOMAS & FRIENDS REMOTE CHRISTMAS SET L13RTR\$109.00
30166	COCA-COLA 125TH ANNIV. VINTAGE STM SET L12RTR\$209.00
30167	SOUTHERN PACIFIC MERGER SET MSRP 399.99 L12RTR\$269.00
30169	2011 LIMITED EDITION NJ TRANSIT L11RTR\$249.00
30171	GG-1 FREIGHT SET L12V1\$349.00
30184	POLAR EXPRESS FREIGHT SET LC12\$229.00
30187	MARITIME EXPLORATIONS SET RTR\$249.00
30188	UP FLYER FREIGHT SET L12RTR\$189.00
30189	LONG ISLAND RAILROAD PASSENGER SET L12RTR\$189.00
30190	THOMAS REMOTE OPERATING SYSTEM SET LC12\$99.00
30193	PEANUTS CHRISTMAS SET LC12\$189.00
30195	GRAND CENTRAL EXPRESS PASSENGER SET L12RTR\$259.00
30196	HERSHEY'S "O" GAUGE FREIGHT SET L12RTR\$189.00
30200	NEW YORK CENTRAL FLYER FREIGHT SET L12RTR\$219.00
30205	SILVER BELLS CHRISTMAS REMOTE SET L14RTR\$169.00
30210	CP U368 DIESEL GRAIN TRAIN SET L13RTR\$239.00
30211	BNSF S038 MAXI STACK FREIGHT SET L13RTR\$319.00
30213	NS GP38 HERITAGE FREIGHT SET L13RTR\$259.00
30214	PEANUTS HALLOWEEN 2-4-2 REMOTE "O" SET L13RTR\$179.00
30217	SOUTHERN PACIFIC "BLACK WIDOW" FREIGHT SET L13RTR\$269.00
30218	POLAR EXPRESS LIONCHIEF O GAUGE REMOTE SET L14RTR\$259.00
30219	GINGERBREAD JUNCTION DOCKSIDER SET L13RTR\$179.00
30220	10TH ANN. POLAR EXPRESS STREAMLINER SET LC13\$299.00
30223	JAMES REMOTE SET MSRP L13RTR\$99.00
30225	MEDAL OF HONOR TRAIN SET L13V1\$269.00
30226	NS GP-38 SOUTHEAST HERITAGE FREIGHT SET L13V1\$269.00
31784	#1593 UNION PACIFIC WORK TRAIN L9V1\$279.00
31791	NYC LIONMASTER DIESEL FREIGHT SET W/FASTRACK L9V2\$669.00
31799	GN EMPIRE FREIGHT EXPRESS W/VISION WHISTLE\$299.00
38310	#2185W NYC F-3 CONVENTIONAL CLASSICS FREIGHT SET\$649.00
38353	X-828 PROMOTIONAL NAVY OUTFIT L14RTR\$459.00
38358	#2239 ILLINOIS CENTRAL F3 FREIGHT SET L12V2\$419.00
38648	CHRISTMAS PIONEER ZEPHYR SET LC13\$749.00
38656	MARK TWAIN ZEPHYR SET L13V1\$749.00
38664	LIONEL LINES ZEPHYR SET L13V1\$749.00

7-12008	CHICAGO CUBS BERKSHIRE STEAM SET L13RTR\$179.00
BATTERY OPERATED SETS	
7-11022	G-GAUGE BATTERY OPERATED POLAR EXPRESS SET L12RTR\$99.00
7-11193	SANTA FE FREIGHT G-GAUGE SET L10V1\$89.00
7-11352	HERSHEY'S FREIGHT G-GAUGE SET L12RTR\$89.00
7-11371	POLAR EXPRESS LITTLE LINES L13RTR\$39.00
7-11440	WIZARD OF OZ LITTLE LINES L13V2\$39.00
7-11495	POLAR EXPRESS G-GAUGE FREIGHT SET L14RTR\$109.00
7-11498	COCA COLA RTR G-GAUGE BATTERY POWERED TRAIN SET\$109.00
7-11499	SNOOPY RAILROAD G-GAUGE SET L15RTR\$99.00
7-11498	FROSTY THE SNOWMAN G-GAUGE SET LC14\$99.00
7-11548	CRAYOLA G-GAUGE SET L14RTR\$99.00
*7-12004	PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES BERKSHIRE SET L13RTR NO TRACK or PS. \$99.00
*7-12008	CHICAGO CUBS BERKSHIRE STEAM SET L13RTR NO TRACK or PS. \$99.00
*7-12012	BOSTON RED SOX BERKSHIRE SET L13RTR NO TRACK or PS. \$99.00
81021	B&M GP-9 "PAUL REVERE" FREIGHT SET L14\$349.00
81023	CNU O-4-0 "YARD BOSS" FREIGHT SET L14\$349.00
81025	POCONO (LACKAWANNA) BERKSHIRE FREIGHT SET L14RTR\$319.00
81028	MARQUETTE GP38 FREIGHT SET L14\$299.00
81030	CB&W WINDY CITY GP38 TRAIN SET L15V1\$289.00
81030	UNION PACIFIC O-8-0 GOLD COAST FREIGHT SET L14\$299.00
81031	DINOSAUR DIESEL LIONCHIEF SET L14RTR\$119.00
81094	BIG BLUE 86' HI CUBE BOXCAR SET L14V2\$679.00
81101	REMOTE POLAR NEW DECO W/10TH ANNIVERSARY LOGO L14RTR\$279.00
81259	PENNSYLVANIA O-8-0 REMOTE BROADWAY LIMITED L14RTR\$259.00
81262	PA FLYER LIONCHIEF RTR SET MSRP 399.99 L15RTR\$319.00
81263	CNU LIONCHIEF RTR PASSENGER SET L15RTR\$259.00
81264	WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH GENERAL FREIGHT SET L14RTR\$259.00
81266	AMTRAK LIONCHIEF FT PASSENGER SET L14RTR\$309.00
81279	"ALBERT HALL" LIONCHIEF 4-6-0 EUROPEAN SET L14RTR\$279.00
81280	ST NICHOLAS VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS 4-6-0 LIONCHIEF SET\$319.00
81284	FROSTY THE SNOWMAN CHRISTMAS SET LC14\$239.00
81286	LIONEL JUNCTION "LITTLE STEAM" LIONCHIEF SET L14RTR\$119.00
81287	LIONEL JUNCTION UNION PACIFIC LIONCHIEF SET L14RTR\$119.00
81288	PET SHOP DIESEL LIONCHIEF SET L14RTR\$119.00
81395	THOMAS KINKADE CHRISTMAS REMOTE SET LC14\$299.00
81475	DC COMICS BATMAN REMOTE SUBWAY SET L14RTR\$269.00
81480	JOHN DEERE RS-3 FREIGHT SET\$219.00
T2428TRAIN	JEFF GORDON #24 NASCAR SET L13RTR\$139.00
TX328TRAIN	DALE EARNHARDT #3 NASCAR SET L13RTR\$179.00

LIONEL TINPLATE

Item Number	TIN-PLATE TRAIN SETSOur Price
M11-1013-0	THE WARRIOR AM FLYER 4094 4-Car Pass. Set (TRAD) 1399.95 L12\$1,149.00
M11-1014-0	IRON MOUNTAIN AM FLYER 4094 4-Car Pass. Set (TRAD) 1249.95 L1\$999.00
M11-1022-1s	RED COMET 400E W/PS3 Sold as 5-Car Set Only 11-4008/69/70\$2,249.00
M11-2016-0s	MIL ROAD SUPER 381 TRAD ONLY AS 6-Car Set W/11-40013/14/15/16\$3,849.00
M11-2016-1s	MIL ROAD SUPER 381 W/PS2 ONLY AS 6-Car Set W/11-40013/14/15/16\$3,849.00
M11-2033-1s	TT BR STD GA BRUTE ELECT. W/PS3 ONLY 4-Car M11-40061/COACH 62\$3,549.00
M11-2034-1s	LIONEL L BRUTE ELECT. W/PS3 - ONLY 4-Car M11-40063/COACH 64\$3,349.00
M11-5001-1	BLACK/BASS NO 384 STEAM R-T-R PASS SET W/PS2 599.95 L19\$449.00
M11-5007-1	NO 388 OUTFIT FREIGHT SET W/PS2 MSRP 399.95 L11\$399.00
M11-5012-1	LL NO 342E OUTFIT STD GA PASS SET W/PS3 599.95 M15RTR\$399.00
M11-5013-1	CHRISTMAS NO 318E FRT R-T-R SET W/PS3 MSRP 599.95 M15RTR\$499.00
M11-5014-1	PA NO 384E STEAM PASS R-T-R SET W/PS3 MSRP 599.95 L14\$499.00
M11-5506-0	LLINES NO 299 OUTFIT FREIGHT SET (TRAD) MSRP 449.95 L14\$329.00
M11-5506-1	LL NO 299 OUTFIT FREIGHT SET W/PS2 MSRP 449.95 L14\$329.00
M11-5508-0	LIONEL LINES O GA CELEBRATION PASS SET (TRAD) 479.95 L12\$329.00
M11-5508-1	CHRISTMAS NO 289E DISTANT CONT'L FGT SET W/PS3 499.95 M15RTR\$379.00
M11-6006-1	UP O GAUGE STREAMLINER PASS SET W/PS 2.0 MSRP 799.95 L19\$499.00
M11-6015-1	BLACK NO 279E O GA STM PASS SET W/PS2 MSRP 749.95 L14\$459.00
M11-6016-0	BLUE STREAK NO 295E STM PASS SET TRAD. MSRP 749.95 L13\$549.00
M11-6018-0	LIONEL ARCHIVES HAWAIIA O PASS SET (TRAD) 899.95 L10\$649.00

M11-6018-1	LIONEL ARCHIVES HAWAIIA O PASS SET W/PS2 899.95 L10\$649.00
M11-6019-0	NO 757W O DISTANCE CONTRL FGT SET (TRAD) 899.95 L10\$719.00
M11-6020-0	CITY OF DENVER O GA UP PASS SET (TRAD) 589.95 L14\$399.00
M11-6020-1	CITY OF DENVER O GA UP PASS SET W/PS3 589.95 L14\$399.00
M11-6021-0	CITY OF DENVER O GA UP PASS SET (TRAD) 699.95 L13\$449.00
M11-6021-1	CITY OF DENVER YELLOW/BWN UP PASS SET W/PS3 699.95 L14\$449.00
M11-6029-0	NO 214 ARMORED MOTOR CAR OUTFIT MSRP 399.95 L13\$259.00
M11-6030-1	GRAY/CHROME NO 295E O GA STM PASS SET W/PS3 749.95 L14\$499.00
M11-6037-0	PINK O GAUGE GIRLS FREIGHT SET (TRAD) 829.95 L12\$629.00
M11-6037-1	PINK O GAUGE GIRLS FGT SET W/PS3 MSRP 829.95 L12\$629.00
M11-6038-0	NO 284E O GAUGE FREIGHT SET (TRAD) MSRP 899.95 L12\$499.00
M11-6038-1	NO 284E O GAUGE FREIGHT SET W/PS3 MSRP 899.95 L12\$499.00
M11-6039-1	BLK/CHROME 616 FLYING YANKEE O PASS SET PS3 589.95 L14\$399.00
M11-6040-0	RED/SILVER 616 FLY YANKEE O PASS SET TRAD 589.95 L13\$399.00
M11-6040-1	RED/SILVER 616 FLYING YANKEE O PASS SET PS3 589.95 L14\$399.00
M11-6041-1	OLIVE/CHROME 616 FLY YANKEE O PASS SET PS3 589.95 L13\$399.00
M11-6046-1	BLK/RED BLUE #79E O STM PASS SET S3 699.95 L12\$499.00
M11-6055-0	O GAUGE BOY'S FREIGHT SET (TRAD) MSRP 899.95 L14\$629.00
M11-6055-1	O GAUGE BOY'S FREIGHT SET W/PS3 MSRP 899.95 L14\$629.00

MIKE'S TRAIN HOUSE

PREMIER

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20-20167-1	UNION PACIFIC VERANDA TURBINE FREIGHT W/PS3 M14V2\$799.00
20-20346-1	NEW HAVEN TURBOTRAIN PASSENGER SET W/PS3 M13V2\$659.00
20-20356-1	BURLINGTON PIONEER ZEPHYR DIESEL PASSENGER SET M13V2\$659.00
20-20357-1	BURLINGTON PIONEER ZEPHYR DIESEL PASSENGER SET M13V2\$659.00
20-20359-1	BOSTON & MAINE PIONEER ZEPHYR DIESEL PASS SET M13V2\$659.00
20-20393-1	NS DASH-8 SOLID ROCKET MOTOR TRANSPORT SET W/PS3\$599.00
20-20394-1	UP AC4400 DIESEL TWIN STACK FGT SET W/PS3 M14V1\$599.00
20-20395-1	CSX AC4400 DIESEL TWIN STACK FGT SET W/PS3 M14V1\$599.00
20-20421-1	BNSF DASH-8 DIESEL FREIGHT SET W/PS3 M14V2\$599.00
20-2774-1	UP S070ACe DIESEL HERITAGE SET W/PS2 M7V1\$399.00
20-2925-1	UNION PACIFIC M1000 DIESEL PASSENGER SET W/PS2\$579.00
20-3259-1	JERSEY CENTRAL P47 BLUE COMET PASSENGER SET W/PS2\$859.00
20-3299-1	PA K-4 STREAMLINED PASS SET W/PS2 M8V1\$859.00
20-3427-1	PA 4-4-6-4 OZ SPECIALTY FREIGHT SET W/PS2 M10V2\$1,149.00
20-3456-1	PENNSYLVANIA STM FREIGHT SET W/PS3 M11V2\$1,049.00
20-3460-1	JERSEY CENT'L P47 BLUE COMET STM PASS SET W/PS3 999.95 M11V2\$799.00
20-3535-1	UP FEF NORTHERN STRML PASS SET PS3 1349.95 M14V2\$1,049.00
20-3549-1	READING BLUE MOUNTAIN 4-8-4 T-1 STM FGT SET W/PS3 1349.95\$1,049.00
20-3467-1	PA K4s METROPOLITAN DELUXE STM PASS SET W/PS3 M11V2\$799.00
20-3468-1	PA K4s RED ARROW DELUXE STM PASS W/PS3 M11V2\$799.00
20-3482-1	PENNSYLVANIA K-4 STREAMLINED PASS SET W/PS3 M11V2\$829.00
20-3498-1	CANADIAN NATIONAL U1F STEAM PASSENGER SET M14V1\$999.00
20-3500-1	GREAT NORTHERN S-2 PASSENGER SET W/PS3 M12V2\$999.00
20-3503-1	PA S-1 4-4-6 STREAMLINED PASSENGER SET W/PS3 M14V1\$1,169.00
20-3525-1	NYC 20TH CENTURY LIMITED STREAMLINED PASS SET W/PS3\$959.00
20-3526-1	NYC 20TH CENTURY LIMITED STREAMLINED PASS SET W/PS3\$959.00
20-3541-1	NYC 4-8-4 NIAGARA STRML PASS SET W/PS3 1349.95 M14V2\$1,129.00
20-3542-1	NYC 4-8-4 NIAGARA EXPRESS REEFER SET W/PS3 M14V2\$1,129.00
20-3548-1	CHESSIE 4-8-4 T-1 STM PASS SET W/PS3 1349.95 M14V2\$1,129.00
20-3571-1	NYC 4-8-4 NIAGARA EXPRESS REEFER SET PS3 1349.95 M14V2\$1,129.00
20-5666-1	NEW HAVEN EP-3 PASSENGER SET W/PS3 M13V1\$699.00

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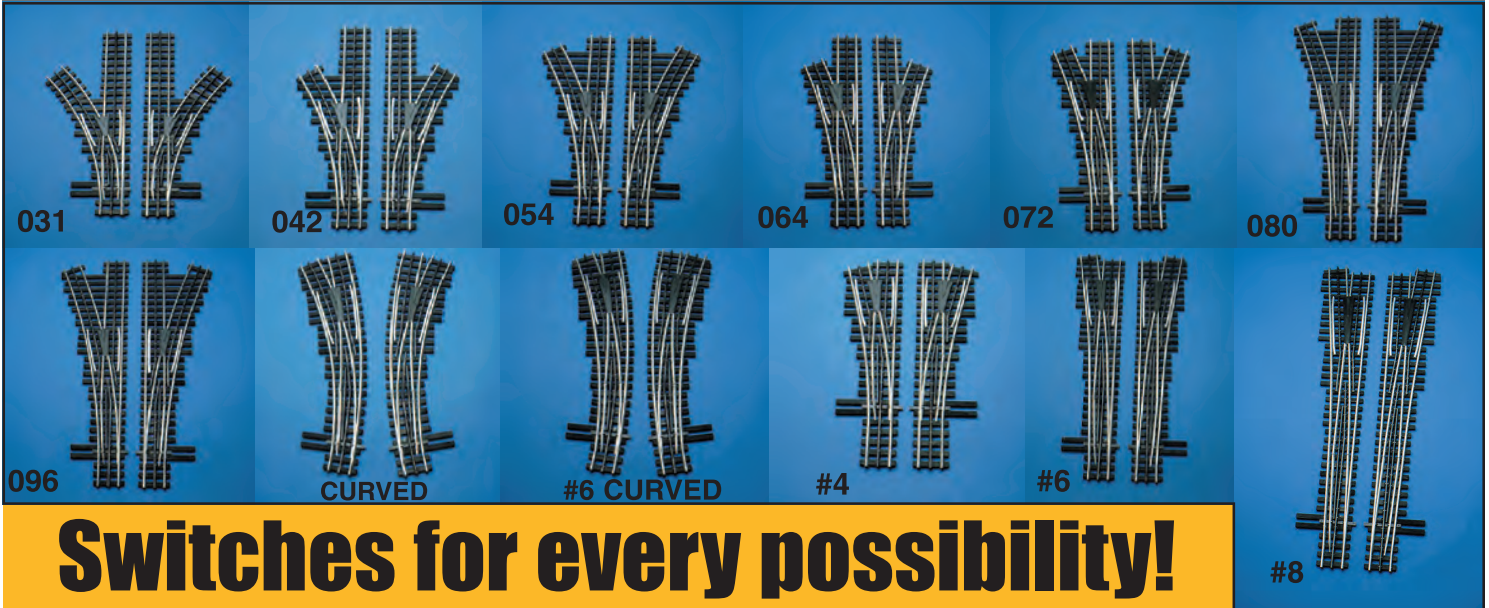
Item No.	PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE PRICE
30-1670-1	UP 4-4-0 GOLDEN SPIKE PASS SET W/PS3 629.95 M15V1\$499.00
30-1671-1	CENTRAL PAC. 4-4-0 GOLDEN SPIKE PASS SET PS3 629.95 M15V1\$499.00
30-4203-1	PITTSBURG STEELERS 2-8-0 R-T-R FREIGHT SET W/PS2\$329.00
30-4191	M&M TROLLEY BUMP AND GO\$109.00

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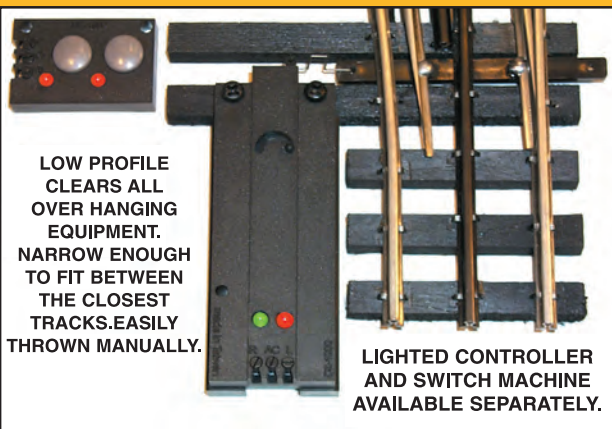


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Pictured here are just some of the more than the 40 models of switches Ross makes. Ross gives you the flexibility to do anything the real railroads do. We all know how model railroads can change or expand over the years, as unforeseen ideas pop into our heads. If you use the other guys limited offerings, will you be able to do the things that you can do with Ross? Almost all have made their stuff compatible with Ross, but what of the hodge podge of trackwork you will have? Ross Custom Switches, for thirty years we have been running our trains through these things. Time tested reliability, smooth as silk, hand built right here in the USA. Call for a free catalog!

Why use anything else?

P.S. Did you know RCS makes sectional track too?



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Collector's Gallery

Ed Boyle



Modern-Era 6464 Boxcar Series Part 3: Last Nine Cars Plus a Surprise

The Lionel Classic Trains 2001 Volume 2 catalog contained a surprise for collectors of the modern-era 6464 boxcar series. The copy next to the image of a new orange Western Pacific 6464-250 with diagonal blue feathers on its sides read, “When we first reissued our classic series of 6464 boxcars, we overlooked one, the Western Pacific 6464-250, originally cataloged in 1966... Wrapping up our reissue series with this car seems appropriate since we began this series 48 years ago with another Western Pacific boxcar, 6464-1....” The copy further admonished, “Don’t miss it!” I had! I only became aware of the existence of this car while researching this column. So the 6-39236, Western Pacific 6464-250 became the 31st and last car produced for the modern-era 6464 boxcar series and the only one packaged and sold individually. The 6-39236 had been made in China (Photos 1 and 2). All of the others had been sold as 3-packs, and all of the previous cars, except for those in Series X, had been made in the U.S.A.

Postwar original 6464-250 orange Western Pacific boxcars

with blue feathers in C8 condition or better, with boxes in the same shape, are currently going for north of \$300 on popular auction sites. The 6-39236, 6464-250 modern-era replica I bought for this story cost me a little over \$50 with shipping, and it completed my collection of modern-era 6464 boxcars, which are going to look great displayed on shelves when construction in my basement train room is completed. Oh, the financial sacrifices I make in the name of completeness when I do a “Collector’s Gallery” column!

6464 Series VIII, 6-29267

The original 6464 cars from the 1957–1958 Girl’s Set break-ups can go for thousands of dollars in C8 shape with boxes, which is the main reason the modern-era cars in the 1999 Series VIII set usually cost more than other 3-packs. The 6-29235, New York Central Pacemaker 6464-510 with its pastel body and soft

yellow door, neatly compliments the pastel yellow 6-29236, M-K-T 6464-515 with blue-green doors that match the body color of the NYC Pacemaker car (Photos 3, 4, and 5). They have the distinction of being the only two cars in the postwar 6464 boxcar series that have nonrealistic “fantasy” paint schemes. In 2001 Lionel made the cars again as part of the Postwar Celebration Series Girl’s Set, 6-31700 (Photo 6).

The red Minneapolis & St. Louis, 6-29237, 6464-525 is labeled as a Girl Boxcar on the box flap, which shows you just how deeply the Lionel caption writer got into the whole Girl’s Set phenomenon. The originals are not too hard to find and go for between \$50 and \$90 at the present time (Photos 7 and 8).

6464 Boxcar Series IX, 6-29289

The last 3-pack set made in the U.S.A. Series IX boxcars were introduced in the Lionel Classic Trains 1999 Volume 3 catalog and were available in 2000. Interestingly enough, they did not appear in either the epic Lionel Classic Trains 2000 Volume 1 catalog, which celebrated the centennial of Lionel, or the 2000 Volume 2 catalog, although Volume 2 featured a 3-pack spinoff called the 6565 Heavies. More about these 6464 boxcar line extensions as we go along.

The Rio Grande, 6-29290, 6464-650 was just as colorful as its postwar predecessor with silver roof, yellow upper sides and ends, and the bottom sides finished in silver with the two side colors separated by a black band (Photo 9). The originals were cataloged in 1957, 1958, and again in 1966. Current prices for a car in C8 condition with a box range from \$100 to \$125.



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The modern-era version of the 6464-700, 6-29291, reproduces the Santa Fe red car with white lettering and prominent graphics that is a pretty good stand-in for the 1961 and 1966 Santa Fe originals and a lot less expensive to boot. Postwar cars have asking prices of \$180 or more in C8 condition with boxes (Photo 10).

The orange New Haven, 6-29292, 6464-725 with black lettering and black doors rounded out the Series IX 3-pack (Photo 11). The postwar 6464-725 was cataloged from 1962 through 1966 and again in 1968 and 1969. The boxes for these cars were imprinted with the 6464-735 number. In 1969 a black New Haven orange door version 6464 was cataloged and sold as a 646-425 but was stamped with the 6464-725 number. By that time it just was not worth it for Lionel to make the correct tool to put the 6464-425 number from the earlier 1956–1958 versions on the 1969 car.

The top of both the Series VIII and Series IX 3-pack boxes carried the Lionel American Legend circular logo. That was about to change with the final set box in the series (Photo 12).





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Expansion and Dilution

The continuing popularity of the modern-era 6464 3-packs led Lionel marketers to try expanding on what they rightly considered as the magic of the 6464 brand to garner additional business. Lionel went through the dusty Michigan archives looking for 6464 boxcars that had been made in prototype form but had not attained production status.

The Lionel archive 6464 3-pack debuted in the Lionel Classic Trains 1999 Volume 2 catalog, and one of the promotional blurbs for it gushed, "A Collector's Dream! Your Heirs May

Thank You." Looking at the illustrations of the three cars from the perspective of a decade and a half, the answer is "probably not." There were good reasons for some prototypes not becoming production articles, and the images of the cars said it all to me. The same catalog also displayed examples of a 6464 Overstamp 2-pack. One of the cars was a black New Haven with orange doors, but the Tuscan Reading boxcar had never been produced during the postwar years.

The 6565 "Lionel Heavies" used the same tooling as the modern-era boxcars, but instead of the plain stamped steel frames that had been used for decades for 6464 boxcars, the 6565 cars sported an entirely new detailed die-cast chassis and used attractive railroad paint schemes; they were also more expensive than the modern-era cars (Photo 13). There was even a series of scale-proportioned cars that the catalog described as "9464 More Heavies" (Photo 14).

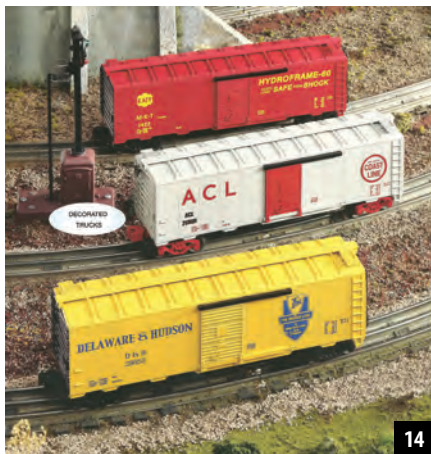
The proliferation of 6464-themed series and individual cars certainly diluted the impact of the modern-era 3-packs that portrayed the original 6464 boxcars. Added to this was the significant number of "one of" cars that were cataloged, uncataloged, and made for train clubs and civic organizations that traded on the marketing magnetism of the 6464 brand with collectors and operators.

At this point I began to wonder whether the folks at Lionel at the turn of the century in 2000 had not seriously considered just slapping 6464 markings on a variety of colorful decorative bricks and equipping them with die-cast sprung trucks for operators to tow around their layouts.

The 6464 Series X, 6-39203

The final threesome (almost) Series X cars represented the end of a long eight-year road for 6464 modern-era collectors. It was part of a new era of overseas production in China for Lionel, designed to make the company more financially competitive in the millennium marketplace with MTH, K-Line, and Williams as major rivals.

The 6-39204, 6464-725 represents the 1969 version of the black New Haven car with orange doors, which is hard to find as an original (Photo 15). The 6-39205, 6464-825 is a close replica



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of the strikingly decorated blue and yellow 1959–1960 postwar Alaska Railroad model, including the D of “RAILROAD” positioned after the last line of rivets on the sides in the same way as the postwar car (Photo 16). Last but not least is the jade green 6-39206, New York Central System 6464-900, which was cataloged in the postwar era from 1960 to 1966. It also has the distinction of having the highest number on its flanks of the 6464 boxcars actually made during the postwar years from 1953 to 1969 (Photo 17).

The new packaging for the individual cars utilized the Lionel circular “Since 1900” logo positioned in the upper middle of the orange and cream window box (Photo 18). The same logo was also printed on the top of the Series X 3-pack box (Photo 19).

The truly last car of the modern-era 6464 series is, of course, the 6-39235 orange Western Pacific modern-era 6464-450 with blue feathers on the sides, which we pictured at the start of this article (Photo 20).

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18




20

Conclusion

The 31 modern-era 6464 series boxcars make up a relatively affordable, representative sampling of the original 6464 boxcars Lionel manufactured during the postwar years. They are not a complete grouping by any means because the modern-era cars do not cover any of the variations of the 6464 boxcars Lionel produced from 1953 to 1969. The analog manufacturing techniques of the time, and the multi-year availability of some cars, virtually guaranteed that there would be different versions of a particular car made by Lionel during production runs. If

Lionel had attempted to include all the major variations of the postwar 6464s in the modern-era series, the number of cars could have easily swelled to another two dozen, defeating the purpose of providing Lionel collectors and operators with high-quality replicas they could afford.

Will there be other attempts by Lionel to bring 6464-type rolling stock to the marketplace in the coming years? You can count on it! The 6464 magic is too powerful for the marketing types at Lionel to resist. It is almost like asking if Lionel will ever produce a new batch of Santa Fe warbonnet F3 diesels for the next generation of O-gaugers. 



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Ten-Minute Recipe for a Better Boxcar

Article and Photos by David B. Ross

The employees on my railroad have been a little sloppy of late. Many of the boxcars that clatter by have their doors left wide open! It also appears that the railroad has fallen on hard times because every boxcar is empty (Photo 1). I will not be addressing the employees' lack of care but will explore a quick and easy way to load those boxcars. Maybe with the increased revenue, the railroad will be able to do some training to correct those open doors.

The tools and supplies needed are a small screwdriver, glue, foam, plastic or wood to mount a piece of paper, a hobby knife, scissors, and a computer with Internet access and a color printer. Let the fun begin!

I chose a Conrail 40' boxcar made by Weaver in honor of its 50 years of producing fine models. I popped off the roof to get an idea of the size of the fake wooden floor and the size of the cavity I was going to fill with a load (Photo 2).


I decided to weather the floor while I was in there. Some folks do this with an airbrush, others use spray paints, and still others use acrylics. I am not a great painter and can never seem to get the color right for weathered wood. Using my computer, I found a picture online to laminate to my floor (Photo 3). I also set about locating a picture of some boxes to use for a load.

Once appropriate images were located, I copied them into

my word processor and played with the size until things scaled out correctly. I then printed them out in color and headed for my workbench. It was a simple matter of trimming the images to fit the floor and shell of the boxcar (Photo 4).

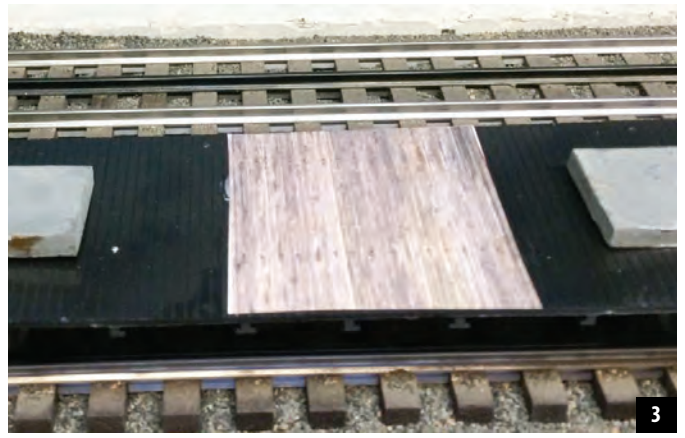
Once the pieces were sized and test-fitted, I cut some inexpensive foam from a dollar store to the size of my box image. Wood, plastic, or anything else can serve as a mounting surface for the boxes. I attempted various methods of securing the materials to the boxcar floor and the foam. I had intended to use wood glue, but that was not to be. I found that the wood glue worked well on the plastic flooring but caused a lot of bubbling and ripples when I mounted the boxes to the foam. I ended up using spray adhesive for the second box mounting. The spray adhesive bonded things well but presented challenges of its own in that it made it a little harder to line everything up. I could always peel it off right away and try again.

With the wood flooring secured, I slid the boxes into place in the car shell (Photo 5). When I was happy with the placement, I applied a small amount of hot glue and let it cool for 30 seconds. At this point it was simply a matter of attaching the shell to the floor (Photo 6). Project completed!

Now it's just a matter of shipping everything to the right destination. 



2



3



4



5



6

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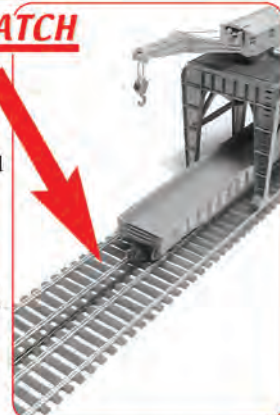
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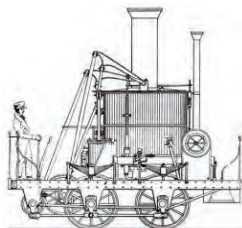


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Building a Layout: Working on Main Street

The main streets of America are indeed the backbone of nearly all small towns in the country. Interestingly enough, railroads can also trace their history right back to these very same small-town main streets (Photo 1). In fact, many small towns originated from nothing more than the railroad construction camps where work crews and supplies were headquartered while building the railroad.

All over the country, you can see the connection between what became American highways and the railroad tracks that often parallel them. As the forward surveyors and engineers made wilderness camps along the way, they laid out the route of the railroad toward their location. As construction gangs approached, they eventually passed through the camp and pressed on to the next site.

The previous camp often became a train station, and the train station became the railroad's headquarters and the freight hub for developing commerce in the area. And so the small towns of our nation were born around them.

Connecting these stations across the landscape involved not only the railroad tracks but also the leftover construction trails that often paralleled the tracks. These construction roads later became natural roadbeds for highways, so it is natural for your train layout to have a highway and streets roughly paralleling the tracks.



This concept lends itself well to around-the-room layouts like mine. Besides, what a wonderful excuse for displaying all my O scale vehicles! There now are so many different makers of appropriate vehicles that the cars and trucks you collect can be used to help set the time period of your layout and the equipment you run on your trains.

Large train layouts can support big cities. Small and medium-size layouts generally need small towns, particularly in our scale. When I began planning my layout, train table space was at a premium, of course, so my basic vision was to create what would appear to be a double-track main with a highway running alongside. A double-track main can actually be a giant loop that turns around on itself at the ends of the layout. Scenery can disguise the fact that the track just folds back upon itself so it looks like a double-track main line.

When planning a main street business district, there are some key businesses that were key to a town's success. They included the train station, police station, drug store, grocery store, gas station, movie theater, clothing store, hardware store, bank, and restaurant. This list doesn't imply that your main street needs to incorporate all these businesses; it is meant to be just a list of primary businesses to pick from as space permits.

Among the more important considerations to keep in mind when planning your own town's Main Street are infrastructure items such as pavements, sidewalks, grade crossings, and road-bed—all of which have varying thicknesses.

You already know that I love to make use of 1/8" black foam core board. It is a great product to use for scenery in so many ways. My complete Main Street will lie between the building at the far end of Photo 2 and the corner of the wall shown in the foreground.

I want to make use of some beautifully detailed plaster-cast buildings I obtained many years ago while on a trip out west. They are shown in Photo 3. I've also added Weaver's beautiful brass water tower at the corner of the room. It will make a nice separator between Main Street and the rest of my layout world, and it detracts nicely from the unwanted "corner effect" of the sky.

But I also want to use some parts of OGR Ameri-Towne structures as well. One basic problem is that the bases of my plaster-cast structures are over 1/4" thick, making their threshold height (the height at the bottom of the entrance doors) much higher than the thresholds of the Ameri-Towne buildings. That means the Ameri-Towne structures must start out a full 1/4" higher than the plaster buildings to remain in scale proportion to them.

Using two layers of 1/8" foam core board to vary the height of buildings from one brand to another is very easy. But there is another consideration that is also very important. Since my Main Street is also going to make a grade crossing over the double-track main line, I need to make the grade crossing believable and in proportion to the track height as well. With my Main Street's pavement still coming up 1/8" lower than the rail height, the street height must rise up to meet the rail height.

Photo 4 shows a number of things in one shot. It shows a base layer of foam core board plus another layer of foam core board representing the street level on top. It also shows the cork roadbed of the track, then the ties, then the rail height. I've intentionally left the ballast off some of the ties to illustrate the height differences. The surface of the street comes out nearly even with the tops of the ties—just about another 1/8" too low to bring the street up to the rail height.



4



5



6



7



That means the final piece of foam core board for the street must rise up so the bottom of the pavement thickness will rest on top of the track's ties. If you look closely at Photo 5, that's what I've done where the road crosses the track. Simply gluing the underside of the foam core board onto the wood ties with Elmer's white glue does the trick perfectly. The scrap wood in the background held the foam core board down firmly to the ties while the glue dried. I've got another method for filling in the spaces between the rails while leaving a gap for the wheel flanges, which I'll cover in a later "Backshop" segment on details.

The road pavement must now drop all the way from rail height down to the train table surface and off to the right in Photo 6. The use of foam core board now makes this a smooth and even slope by simply gluing the starting edge of the road-way to the ties of the track. Then over some reasonable distance determined by the amount of drop needed in the pavement, you simply glue the other end of the pavement piece directly to the table.

Once both ends of the pavement piece of foam core board have dried firmly to the ties on one end and to the table on the other, inject some bathroom tub and tile caulk directly into the gap between the pavement piece and the tabletop. The caulk will cure in a few hours to provide firm bedding for your road pavement that will neither expand nor contract over time. You can fill in and smooth out the slope between the edges of the pavement and the tabletop with some spackling compound the following day.

Photo 7 shows more base layer and pavement layer being added to the hinged tabletop piece. Photo 8 shows this process continuing down what will become more of my Main Street. I intend to use the plastic sidewalk pieces of the Ameri-Towne kit under my buildings, but I can't do that to the rounded-roof building to the right of the photo. The sidewalk will make the plaster base of that building sit up too high. I'll have to cut a hole into the two foam core board layers, using a utility knife, for that building to sit down into the two layers of foam core covering. That will make that building come out just about right in its height proportion. A similar building "socket" is already finished just to the right of the building in the photo. Believe it or not, that is a fairly easy job to do with foam core board.

Also note that the hinges for the tabletop are gradually beginning to disappear into the pavement. The nice gray blacktop appearance on my Main Street pavement piece is due to the application of a single coat of Woodland Scenics Road System Top Coat #ST1453 Asphalt. Thankfully, it is one of those products that works perfectly as advertised. If you want concrete instead, then use #ST1454 Concrete. Either is easily applied with a simple 1" to 1-1/2" trim brush. When dry, you can streak "wear marks" into the surface with nothing more elaborate than your fingers. Good stuff!

The sidewalk pieces that we at OGR offer in the Ameri-Towne kits are also available from us separately in pairs. The nice thing about them is that they measure out to be a little over 1/16" thick, making them scale out to be about 4" to 5" high. That's perfect for curbs in O scale. I painted them with the concrete paint. You may need to trim them in length or make some curved ends with a little cutting and sanding. Paint them when you are finished, glue them down with Elmer's white glue, and you're in business for curbs and sidewalks.



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12



13

photo also shows progress in filling in the slope in the road pavement going up to the grade crossing as well as beginning to lay out the locations of a police station with a jail on the second floor and also the town's movie theater.

Also note the crossing buck. I had to modify the base of the MTH crossing flasher by turning the base 90 degrees

I'm showing you Photo 9 just for fun. It's a real photograph in a brochure of a main street in the small town of Orleans, Indiana. I grew up near there and was always fascinated by that corner building. I found the plaster-cast building shown in Photo 10. I plan to add the Styrofoam cone top to the building and make it look like the roof of the real building in Orleans. It will be a challenge that I hope to reveal to you at a later date. Stay tuned! This

to make it fit beside the road. Photo 11 shows that by digging into the foam core layers, I can sink the ugly base of the crossing flasher down and out of sight into the "earth."

With the addition of Woodland Scenics Street Accessories #A2764, the devil is in the details. What a difference rust-colored paint on the sides of the rails makes! I left the rust off the rails below the crossing flasher to illustrate what a dramatic difference that little detail

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makes. Add a little gravel, as shown in Photo 12, and now look at the difference that made in the base of the crossing flasher and the realism of the scene.

The real difference comes with the addition of ballast added to the tracks, as shown in Photo 13. Now just a little brown earth shows through between the tracks, which can be littered with weeds, junk, rusty fish plates, derelict pieces of old rail sections, spikes, and other details of your choice.

There is enough real estate to add four more main street buildings, too! Nearly all of small-town America is made up of two-story, not three-story buildings, which is why we came out with our two-story Ameri-Towne building kits. Three-story buildings were more often a function of larger cities back in the first part of the 20th century.



Those common small-town two-story buildings are almost all located side by side. It was a common architectural practice back then to actually use the walls of two adjacent freestanding buildings for the walls of another one built between them simply by adding a front and back. How they got away with that I'll never know, but I've actually seen many instances of that construction practice still existing in small-town buildings.

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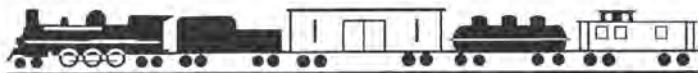
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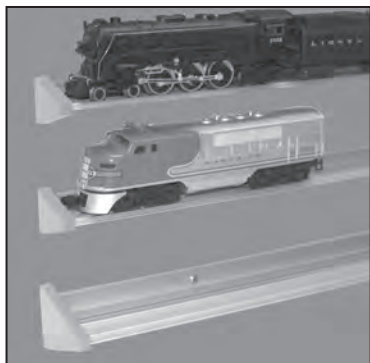
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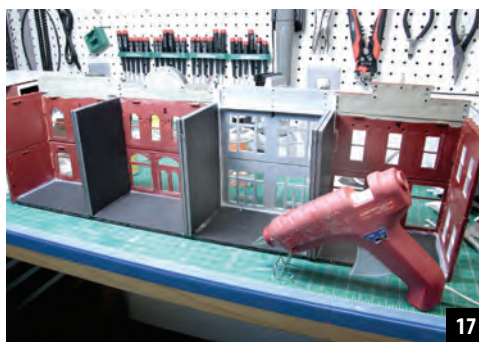
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16



17

on the work desk, with one sidewall at each end. But I have intentionally cut the depth of the sidewalls off by about one-third. That will give me the parallel parking space I need along the street in front. Also notice that I will intentionally set the limestone front of the bank building slightly out in front of the other three buildings.

If you wish to imitate that early 20th-century small-town main street appearance, it is not necessary for you to actually buy four Ameri-Towne building kits. Just buy one full kit and then buy three additional building fronts of your choice.

Take a look at my workshop in Photo 14. Since I also want some parallel parking like my own small town had, I have laid out my four building fronts and two sidewalls

That was also a common practice intended to make the bank buildings appear a little more imposing than the brick fascia of each of the neighboring buildings. Photo 15 shows the bank building front positioned slightly forward by adding 1/8" thicknesses of plastic to the back sides of the edges. I used a very thin strip of styrene (1/32" thick by 1/4" wide) to seam the fronts together firmly.

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18




19

To firm this all up into one assembly of building fronts, I have added a piece of foam core board cut to fit snugly between the end walls of the whole assembly. The foam core interior base is glued to the plastic fronts and ends with nothing more technical than a bead of low-temperature hot glue. Photo 16 shows the nice dramatic effect of the bank's offset building front up close. Photo 17 shows the addition of interior walls made from individually cut foam core panels.

With the addition of foam core roof panels and back walls, the finished dramatic effect is shown in Photo 18. The whole finished assembly of building fronts sits on top of the sidewalks attached earlier. The assembly is light and easy to move around and will be permanently

attached to the hinged base panel, allowing the whole town section to swing up and out of the way to gain access to the closet behind the town.

Photo 19 shows the addition of gravel between my Main Street and the tracks plus the addition of parking meters, fireplugs, trash cans, manhole covers, and a bench or two from the Street Accessories detail kit from Woodland Scenics. Now all I need are some people, a train every couple of minutes, and a sound module of honking horns to be right at home in good ol' Mitchell or Orleans, Indiana!

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Shift

Much has been written or discussed about the state of the model railroading hobby in general and the 3-rail O gauge segment in particular. From my personal perspective as both a hobbyist and a member of the model train media, I have seen model train stores go out of business, several manufacturers enter the market and then fail, and even some old-line manufacturers cease operation. But if you look at the history of just about any segment of consumer products, those enterprises that manufacture them as well as the associated distributors or retailers come and go. It's a natural economic cycle, and even the marketplace for the O gauge hobby is not immune.

During my early years in O gauge, 1:48 scale passenger and freight cars were built from wood and metal kits such as Ambroid, Athearn, Kasiner, Westbrook,

Walthers, and others (Photo 1). Or, they were constructed from the ground up using raw materials, what today is called built from scratch. Some locomotives were offered as kits, a few were manufactured, and many were erected from brass sheet and bar stock on a basement workbench or even a kitchen table. Except for a few operating toy train accessories, specialized materials for building a layout were extremely limited or simply not available. When it came to creative use of strange materials, Heloise was an amateur compared to creative model railroaders.

In later years, I found and bought plastic kits from InterMountain, Red Caboose, Chooch, and others that were enjoyable to build (Photo 2). As a side note, I've stashed several wooden and metal car kits plus an unreasonable number of plastic kits to build at my leisure after I retire. But I digress.

Today, rolling stock kits in the O gauge market are just about extinct, and locomotive kits are nonexistent. In their places are the myriad of types and road names of ready-to-run traditional and scale-sized locomotives and rolling stock. The sheer magnitude of trains available today is staggering with offerings regularly released from Atlas, Lionel, MTH, 3rd Rail, and Williams by Bachmann. This cornucopia of motive power and rolling stock on both new and secondary markets was unimaginable when I reentered the hobby in 1990.

What I view as even more staggering in today's O gauge train marketplace is the availability of ready-built and kit structures of all types from single-family residences to commercial and industrial buildings. In place of the homemade wood and cardboard structures of yesteryear are the

contemporary plastic, resin, composite, or ceramic buildings from a number of *OGR* advertisers including but certainly not limited to Atlas, Lionel, MTH, Menards, *OGR* Publishing, River Leaf, and Woodland Scenics. Of course, railroad-specific structures are also available on the market from various suppliers. Structures can be as-designed, modified with parts from kits, or altered with pieces bought separately and combined to create unique single or grouped multiple buildings to suit the individual hobbyist. Custom-constructed structures are also extremely popular with a number of *O* gauge railroaders.

Aha! And therein lies the biggest element of change in *O* gauge railroading. What used to be centered on just running trains, with a number of them built one car or locomotive at a time, has evolved into creating Lilliputian ecospheres for today's ready-to-run trains. Because of this...well, let's simply call it a paradigm shift into what many hobbyists now want, specialized materials are now offered for constructing realistic, downright convincing scenes that are art forms within themselves. Names like Athearn, Westbrook, and Walthers have been replaced by Silflor, Heki, and Noch. Where Bowser was a commonly revered marque in the 1950s, Scenic Express has become a household name around today's layout platform.

Additionally, specialized and individualized structures and scenery have fostered cottage entrepreneurs who, instead of producing custom-built railway equipment, create complete scenes in the form of ready-to-install modules. Examples of such modules from my personal experience are



the InstaRamas from Frank Mullen's *Layouts Refinements* (Photo 3). As can be seen in these two very personal scenes that Frank created for me, the modeling skill to create such a convincing art form is totally different from that required to build a car kit, to say nothing of the materials involved in the construction of the pieces. No, they are not a train, but they would make for a showcase neighborhood on a museum-quality *O* gauge layout.

In my position on the *OGR* staff, I have had the pleasure to study photos of fabulous scenes on many of our contributors' layouts. In studying these photos and appreciating the work and widely varying materials

that went into building the subject layouts, and especially the exceptional modeling skills, I've seen that the *O* gauge railroad marketplace is no longer a vertical market of locomotives and rolling stock, track, and a few rail-related accessories. It is a broad horizontal market with specialized lumber and electrical wire, track and switches, dedicated power supplies, electronic remote control systems, detailed structures, human and animal figures, small industrial details, highway and byway vehicles, scenery supplies, and on and on. To be candid with this shift in how the hobby is now plied and enjoyed, we as *O* gauge railroaders never had it so good. 🍷



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COLUMBUS, OH – 58th Buckeye Model Train & Railroad Artifacts Show, Ohio Expo Center (Lausche Bldg.). 9a-4p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free. Info: Gordon Hartranft, 58 Creed Circle, Campbell, OH 44405, 330-755-1914, nlion02@aol.com, www.gserr.com.

December 12-13, 2015

PALM BEACH GARDENS, FL – 7th Annual Toy & Train Show, St. Marks School Gym, 3395 Burns Rd. Sat. 9a-3p, Sun. 11a-3p, Adm: \$7, under 12 free, family \$12. Info: Wil Wagner, 561-373-9603, wwainc@comcast.net, www.Derrickwagnerfoundation.com.

December 13, 2015

MASSILLON, OH – CJ Trains Winter Train & Toy Show, Knights of Columbus Hall, 988 Cherry Rd. NW. 10a-3p, Adm: \$5, 12 and under free. Tables: 148 at 8 ft. \$20 ea. Info: Jon Ulbright, 941 Buchholz Dr., Wooster, OH 44691, 330-262-7488 (after 6 pm EST), cathijon@sssnet.com, www.cjtrains.com.

December 19-20, 2015

TAMPA, FL – 14th Tampa Model Train Show, Florida State Fairgrounds, Special Events Center. 9a-5p on Sat., 10a-4p on Sun., Adm: \$8, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, rrshows@aol.com, www.gserr.com.

December 20, 2015

KIRTLAND, OH – Christmas Train & Toy Show, Lakeland Community College, AFC Main Gym, 7700 Clocktower Dr., I-90 and Rte. 306. 10a-3:30p, Adm: \$6, 6-12 \$3, family \$12.00. Info: 440-256-8141, www.cleveshows.com.

January 23, 2016

LARGO, FL – TCA Train Show. MinnReg Building, 6340 126th Ave. 10a-3p, Adults: \$5, under 12 free. Displays, layouts, door prizes. Info: Charles Anyan, 727-345-0288, canyan1@tampabay.rr.com.

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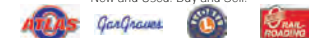
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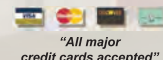


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