

# PRODUCT REVIEW: LIONEL'S VISION GG1



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June / July 2017  
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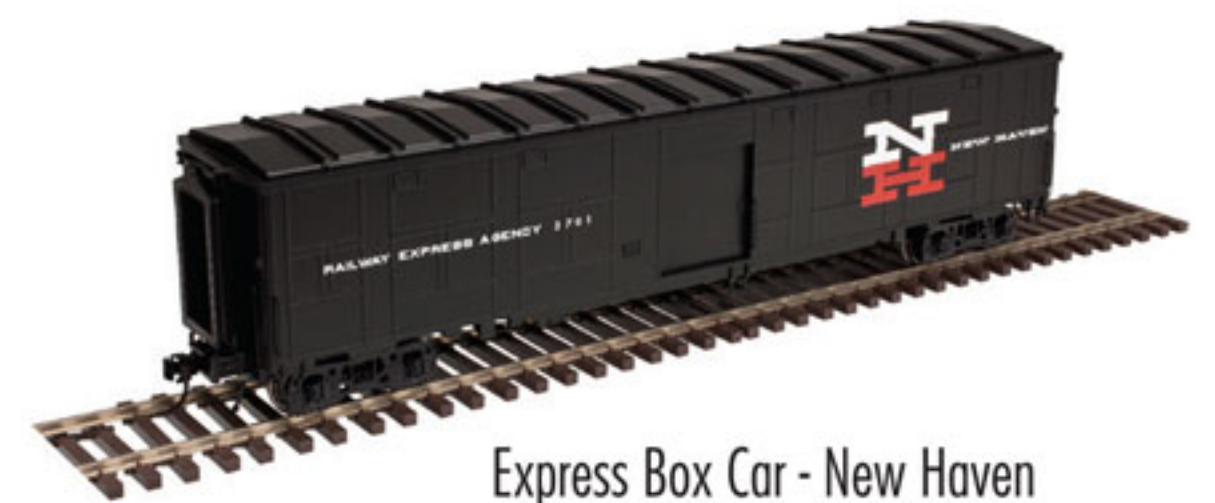
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# Why Made in America STILL Works

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

## ROSS MADE IN AMERICA

031 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
042 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
054 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
064 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
072 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
080 REMOTE.....	\$94.95
096 REMOTE.....	\$99.95
054/031 CURVED REMOTE.....	\$99.95
072/054 CURVED REMOTE.....	\$89.95
096/072 CURVED REMOTE.....	\$114.95
0120/096 CURVED REMOTE .....	\$134.95
031 WYE REMOTE .....	\$94.95
042 WYE REMOTE .....	\$94.95
054 WYE REMOTE .....	\$94.95
072 WYE REMOTE .....	\$94.95
11 DEGREE WYE REMOTE.....	\$94.95
22 DEGREE WYE REMOTE.....	\$94.95
#4 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
#5 REMOTE.....	\$89.95
#6 REMOTE.....	\$99.95
#8 REMOTE.....	\$114.95
#10 REMOTE.....	\$144.95
THREE WAY REMOTE .....	\$299.95
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#8 DOUBLE CROSSOVER.....	\$679.95
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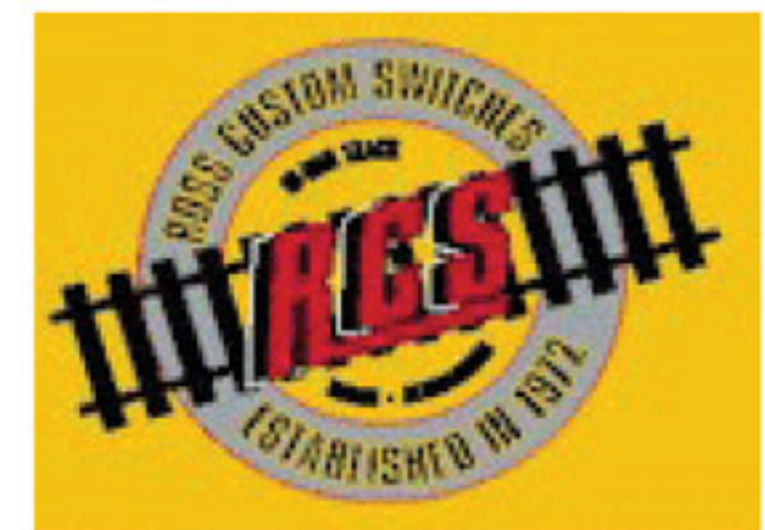
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036 .....	\$7.49
042 .....	\$7.99
054 .....	\$6.99
064 .....	\$6.99
072 .....	\$6.99
080 .....	\$7.49
084 .....	\$7.99
092 .....	\$7.99
096 .....	\$8.49
0100 .....	\$8.99
0104 .....	\$8.99
0112 .....	\$9.49
0120 .....	\$9.99
0128 .....	\$10.99
10 INCH STRAIGHT .....	\$5.99
29" STRAIGHT .....	\$12.99
GARGRAVES FLEX TRACK 37"...	\$8.95

## ATLAS MADE IN CHINA

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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	
072 REMOTE.....	\$104.95
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
#5 REMOTE.....	\$129.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
#8 REMOTE.....	\$132.95
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
DOUBLE SLIP SWITCH...	\$264.95
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	

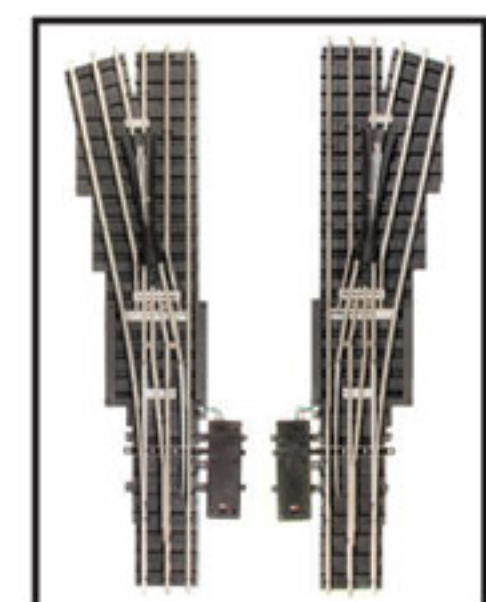
027.....	\$7.95
036.....	\$6.75
045.....	\$7.95
054.....	\$6.75
063.....	\$8.95
072.....	\$9.95 WOW!
081.....	\$11.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
090.....	\$14.50 WOW!
099.....	\$15.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
0108.....	\$18.95 WOW!
NOT MADE	
NOT MADE	
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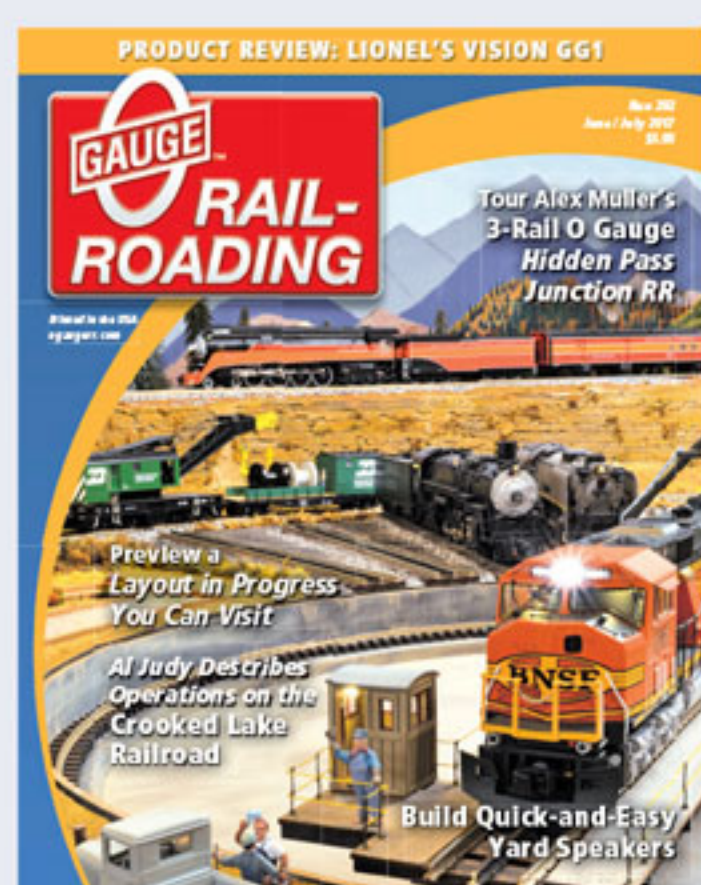
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## ON THE COVER

Contemporary BNSF motive power rides the turntable on Alex Muller's 3-rail O gauge Hidden Pass Junction RR while vintage steam resides on a couple of the storage tracks. A Southern Pacific passenger train adorned in the ever-popular Daylight paint scheme is passing through this scene on the high line.

*Photo by Alex Muller*





## Teamwork

I suspect a majority in this hobby tend to go it alone when building a model train layout, especially if it is a small or modest-size pike. That's all well and good, of course, because most hobbies are, after all, individual pursuits intended to provide the participant with a sense of accomplishment, a bit of welcome relaxation, and at least a brief respite from real-world stresses and concerns. Those are all very worthy goals, and I have yet to meet a doctor who did not recommend having a hobby as one component in maintaining a healthy physical and emotional lifestyle. I can state without qualification that model railroading has sure helped to keep me "on track" on a number of occasions.

But there's also a whole lot to be said for expanding one's involvement by engaging in and sharing the hobby with others. Reflecting back over my many years in model railroading in a variety of scales ranging from Z through small scale live steam (in my case 1:20.3 scale on #1 gauge track), perhaps the greatest satisfaction I've experienced has come from being involved with fellow hobbyists, be it by helping to construct a layout or by displaying a modular or temporary layout at a train show or other venue.

In the case of construction, everything tends to go a whole lot faster and smoother if you're lucky enough to have the assistance of one or more fellow hobbyists willing to share their respective talents or areas of expertise. One individual may have carpentry skills while another may be a whiz with things of an electrical nature. Still others may enjoy constructing flawless track work, building and detailing model structures, or demonstrating their artistic skills with scenery. The list is



Chet Lichota (left) and Frank Zarecky are checking overhead and side-to-side clearances on a wide curve prior to positioning tunnel portals. Ballasting of the layout's extensive network of track will follow soon enough.



Dave Minarik goes through contortions to retrieve and test fit a large block of Styrofoam that he will craft into a Great Lakes container ship.

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virtually endless because the skills and talents employed in building a model railroad are virtually unlimited (a definite plus in my opinion). The photos with this column illustrate just a few examples of how the camaraderie of our O gauge segment of the hobby works to the benefit of all involved.

Regular readers of the magazine will recall that I devoted this column to describing aspects of the early planning and construction of Brian Mount's large 3-rail O gauge layout in the Mercer, Pennsylvania, area. In "Starting Big" in Run 283 (February/March 2016), I introduced readers to Brian and his 24' x 60' room-filling benchwork. The Run 284 (April/May 2016) "Editor's Corner" was titled "Talk About Progress" and it touched on how much could be accomplished in a brief span of time with the help of a few talented friends. And in "By Popular Request" in Run 285 (June/July 2016), I responded to reader requests to publish the "final" track plan. (I placed final in quotes because most track plans presented first on paper, no matter how carefully prepared, rarely end up being followed to the letter.) In each of these columns, the contributions of friends and fellow hobbyists were noted.

But you are seeing this column a full year later, and in the interim track work has been virtually completed and trains are up and running with some wiring and control bugs being worked out. It's time to move on to giving the railroad a proper and realistic operating environment. The photos here depict just a few examples of how, in just one recent work-session evening, Brian and his friends were involved in moving forward simultaneously with multiple tasks designed to expedite achievement of the end goal: a scenic and fully functioning layout with diverse operational capabilities. I imagine Brian could achieve all of this working on his own, but I can assure you he is grateful for the assistance he is receiving from a congenial group of truly talented guys who make layout building a valuable educational experience and a whole lot of fun. 



Dave Minarik is seen doing the preliminary shaping and sanding of the ship that will be docked adjacent to the layout's container yard.



Brian Mount, Lynn Sontum (back to camera), and Sam Landfried (on table) are seen discussing locations for what will eventually be upper-level structures.



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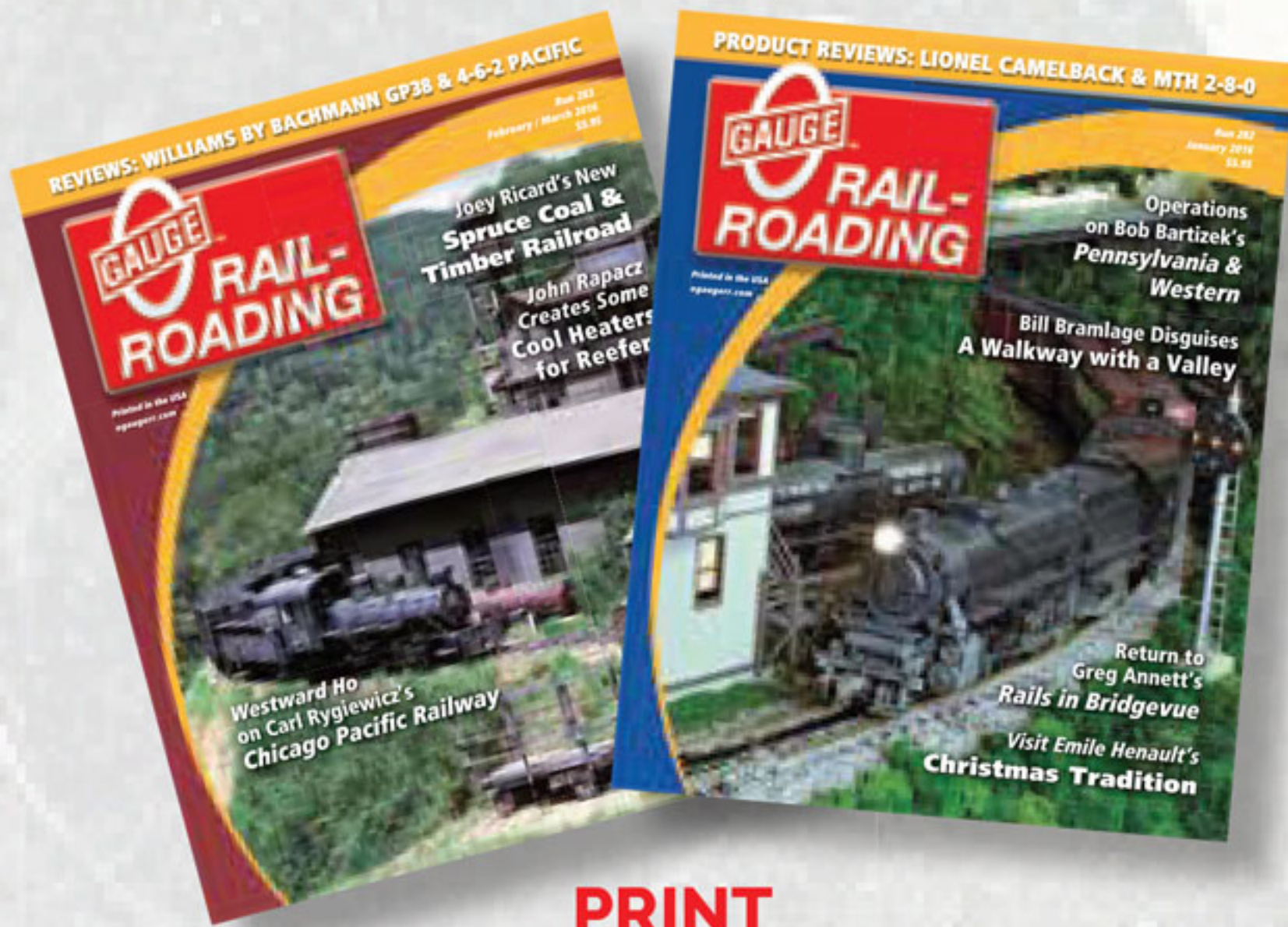
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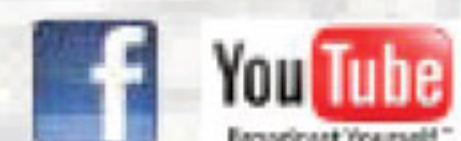
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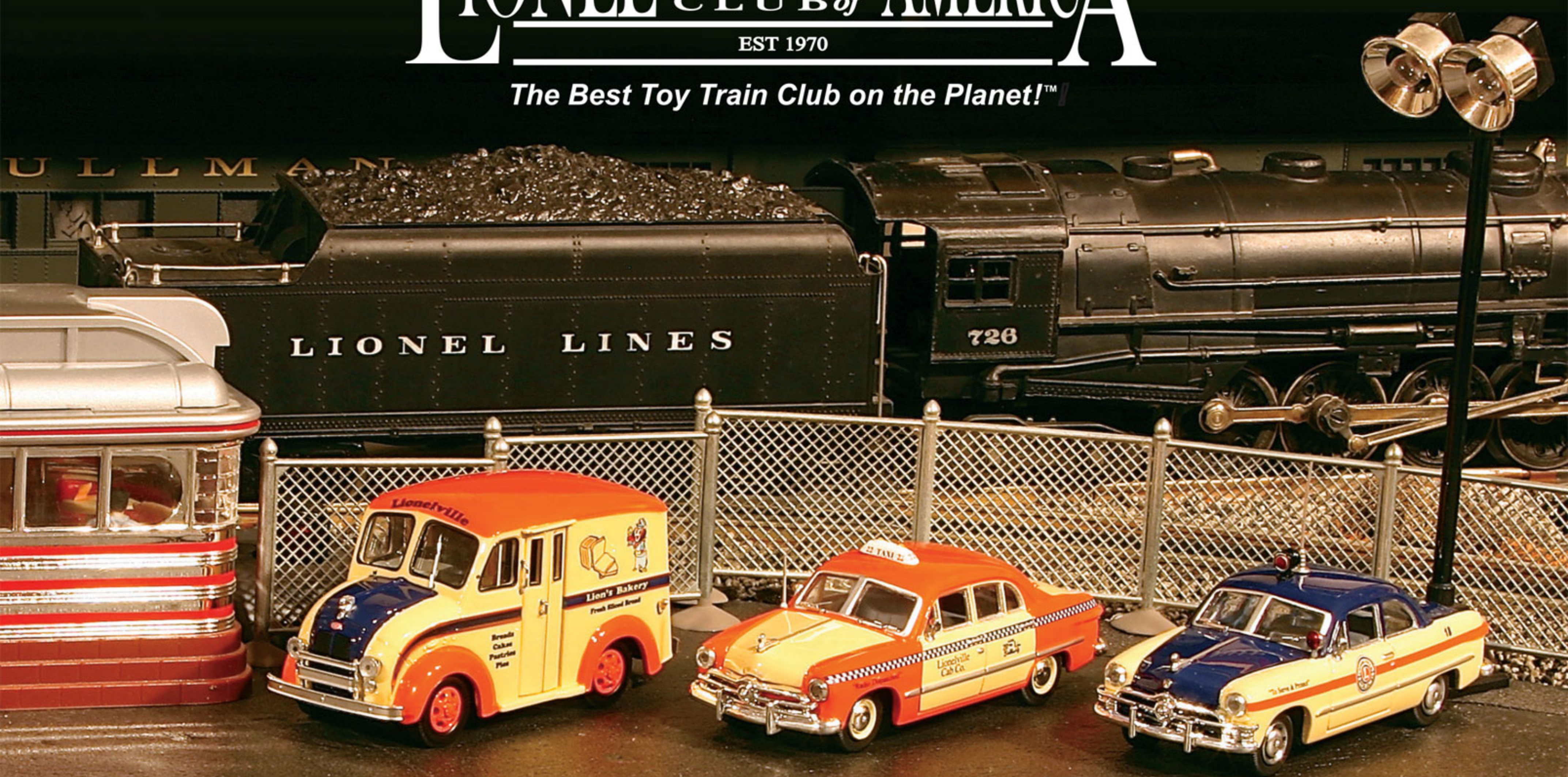


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Based on the massive 3-truck Shay No. 6 built for the Western Maryland, this new geared-locomotive release from Lionel represents the ultimate evolution of these well-adapted and versatile iron horses. Available now for the first time with full Lionel Legacy features and whistle steam, the new lineup includes Cass Scenic Railroad No. 6 (pictured), Western Maryland No. 6, West Side Lumber No. 3, and Elk River No. 20. Price is \$1,499.99. Find them at your Lionel dealer or online at [www.lionelstore.com](http://www.lionelstore.com).

### The View

With all-new tooling, this theater-style observation car is equipped with a high-definition WiFi camera that transmits live video and puts you in the CEO's seat at the rear of the train. The new lineup includes CSX (pictured), Union Pacific, Norfolk Southern, and Conrail No. 9. Price is \$339.99. Find them at your Lionel dealer or online at [www.lionelstore.com](http://www.lionelstore.com).



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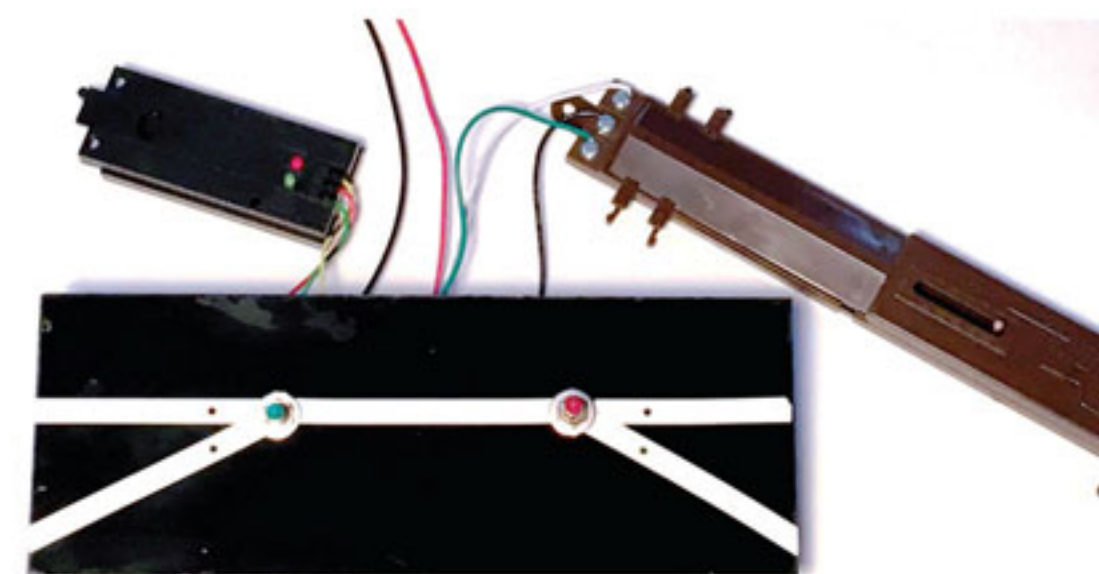
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## Easy Switching

Panel-mounted Switch Controls for Atlas and Z-Stuff for Trains switch machines are now available from Royz Trains. Each kit includes a PC board, switch, and LEDs. Screw terminals on the board enable easy installation. The AC power source used for the switch machines is also used for the switch control. For Atlas and Z-1000, two wires are required to each switch machine that is actuated with a double-throw momentary contact switch. For the Z-2500 only one wire is needed, and a momentary contact switch provides user interaction. The Switch Control supports TMCC operation when used with the Z-2500 switch machine. Each control has a buffered supply for LEDs to ensure positive indication when controlling one or several switch machines. For more information and pricing, contact Royz Trains at [www.royztrains.com](http://www.royztrains.com).



## Rolling Along

Traditional-size 3-rail O gauge rolling stock from Menards continues to expand. Recent releases pictured here include a Western Pacific covered hopper (279-3875, \$19.99), New York Central Pacemaker boxcar (279-3888, \$19.99), WWII Commemorative "Old Crow Express" nose art boxcar (279-3850, \$24.99), U.S. Air Force flatcar w/Air Force rocket fuel container (279-3187, \$24.99), Pennsylvania Railroad tank car (279-3958, \$19.99), and U.S. Army military tank car (279-3950, \$19.99). These cars and more O gauge trains and accessories can be seen and purchased at your local Menards store or online at [www.menards.com](http://www.menards.com).





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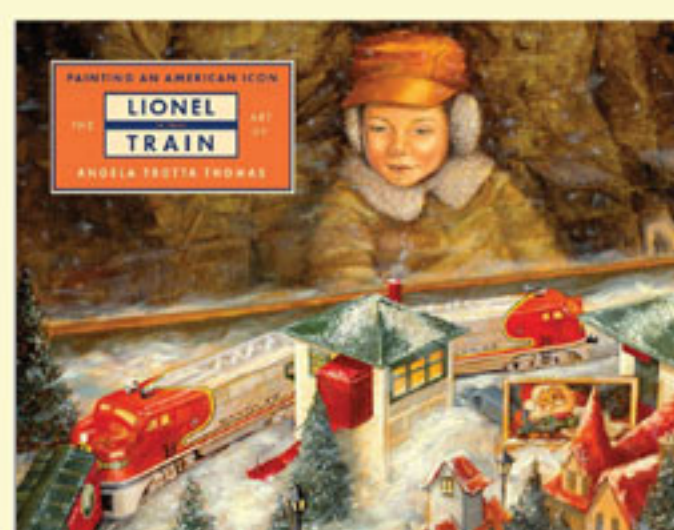


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### Freshly Shopped

Resplendent with a striking custom paint job, this Magner Steel Works 44-tonner is en route to its first task on David Minarik's 3-rail O scale layout. It's safe to say that by the next morning this little workhorse will be sporting a heavy coat of mill dust on its exterior. Dave enjoys customizing his locomotives and rolling stock, and virtually nothing on his expansive layout escapes the application of a bit of weathering as well.





## Subway "Art"

Looks like the taggers—the bane of property owners everywhere—have been busy on Jeff Mayer's 3-rail 0 gauge layout. Nevertheless, the trains still run on time and the "art" will be disposed of the next time the car is in the shop.



## Award Winner

This scratchbuilt pile driver, created and photographed by Ken Paynter, captured first place in a Train Collectors Association meet in 2016. The pile driver is mounted on a stock Lionel 027 flatcar, fitted with a new deck made of hand-cut bass wood. The main structure of the pile driver is also bass wood with various rails and fittings made of brass and copper. The hammer is hand-cast lead, and the boiler is a copper-clad dowel with a plastic funnel stack. Ken said the pile driver rotates a full 360 degrees on a patio screen door roller.



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# Product Reviews



## Lionel Vision GG1

Review and Photos by George Brown

In the 3-rail O gauge hobby, die-cast modeling of the venerable Pennsylvania GG1 all began with the postwar Lionel 2332 from the 1947 catalog. Of course this GG1 was significantly downsized in all dimensions so it would run on O31 tinplate curves. So when I unpacked Ed Boyle's two Vision GG1s featured in this review from their distinctive and understated black boxes, I had to place my restored 2332 next to each one of the new 1:48 scale behemoths: the five-stripe Brunswick green #4800 "Old Rivets" and the five-stripe Tuscan #4913. It was a fun exercise to see the first and the latest Lionel models of the GG1 sitting side by side. Both Vision models of the big Pennsy electrics are, in a word, awesome!

Other Pennsylvania decoration schemes for the Vision GG1s are the Brunswick green five-stripe #4935 and the Brunswick green single-stripe #4877. The model of the first real GG1 with its riveted body is available in two additional liveries: the Brunswick green #4899 original stripe pattern and the Conrail #4800 Spirit of '76 red, white, and blue.

### Prototype Notes

As with most locomotive development in the early 1930s, the Pennsylvania Railroad needed a more powerful electric locomotive to run under the catenary system. With the ever-increasing weight of the Pennsy passenger trains, the railroad's mainstay P5 series of electric locomotives were not able to keep schedules, plus they didn't track well at speed. High lateral stresses caused cracks in the main drive side frames that mandated excessive repairs.

In 1934, two high-power, high-speed prototypes were built and tested as possible replacements for the P5: the 5000-horsepower 2-D-2 (4-8-4) R1 from Baldwin-Westinghouse and the 4620-horsepower 2-C-C-2 (4-6-6-4) GG1 from General Electric. Although the performance of the two prototypes was nearly identical, the GG1 was ultimately selected as the new electric passenger locomotive primarily for its slightly better tracking over the R1 at high speeds.

The body of the prototype GG1, originally numbered 4899 but later renumbered to 4800, was built from riveted steel plates, thus earning the nickname of "Old Rivets." All successive GG1s had smooth welded bodies. Styled by the legendary industrial designer Raymond Lowey, the GG1 was unique in a number of ways on American railroads.

Including the prototype GG1, 139 were built between 1934 and 1944 with GE building the first 14 and the rest built at the railroad's erecting shops in Altoona. These engines weighed 230–235 tons with tractive efforts of between 70,700 and 75,000 pounds, depending on when they were built. The GG1 featured 12 traction motors of 385 horsepower each with two geared to each axle. All axles turned in low-friction Timken roller bearings. Each engine was rated at 4620 continuous horsepower at 100 mph and could develop up to 8500 short-term horsepower for starting and accelerating. To heat the passenger cars, an oil-fired steam generator was installed in every one of the GG1s including Old Rivets.





On the run between Washington and New York City, a GG1 with 18 cars in tow could sustain cruising speeds of 90 mph and make the 226-mile run in 215 minutes, including five en route station stops. With short trains coupled to it, the big electric locomotive could attain 128 mph.

Because of the reduction in passenger revenue and service in the early 1950s, 57 of the GG1s were assigned to freight duty but could work passenger trains if needed. Only #4800, Old Rivets, was permanently assigned to freight duty.

## Construction and Features

Die-cast construction is used throughout the GG1 including the body, which is mounted on a stamped steel frame. Other die-cast components are the pilots, front and rear engine frames, pilot truck blocks, side frames, and couplers.

Essentially, the model GG1 is a pair of articulated back-to-back 4-6-0s, similar to the real Pennsy electric locomotives. Each engine on the model has its own die-cast frame with the pilot and pilot truck assembled to that frame. Unlike on the real GG1, these frames are not pinned together. The two six-wheel power trucks, or engines, pivot underneath the GG1 with their pivot points slightly behind the second driving wheel. The motor for each engine drives the third wheelset through a metal worm and gear with sintered metal spur gears transferring the mechanical drive power to the other wheelsets. A pair of traction tires is on the wheelset closest to the ends of the locomotive.

Each pilot with a coil-operated ElectroCoupler is articulated on the front and rear engine, yet it tracks with the pilot truck underneath it. A wire torsion spring helps to center the pilot over its respective truck.

Removable rooftop covers for the controls are also die-cast and are held in place by magnets imbedded in the body. Four slide switches select operating or locked down pantographs, pantograph arc effect, smoke (steam) generator operation, and engine number programming. A manual volume control for the Legacy RailSounds is also included. All of the controls are explained in detail in the owner's manual.

Most of the Vision GG1's features and details can be seen in the photos or are listed in the sidebar. As with all





## Lionel Vision GG1 Features and Details

*Legacy version 1.6 required for full GG1 features*

- Legacy Command Control with Odyssey II Speed Control
- Legacy RailSounds
  - Dual speakers
  - Stereo or localized sounds
  - Quilling horn
- Engine-specific simulated dialogs between crew and dispatcher
- Smoke (steam) generator
- Dual flywheel-equipped DC motors
- Metal drive gears
- Twelve-wheel drive
- Four traction tires
- See-through cast drive wheels with nickel-steel rims
- Operating plastic pantographs with LEDs
- Spring-loaded opening doors at cabs and body ends
- Wire handrails, grab irons, and coupler cut levers
- Die-cast air and steam lines on both ends
- Metal cab ladders
- Screen-covered cooling vents
- Wire air lines with spring flexible section
- Lift-up walkways on both ends
- Directional LED lighting
- Illuminated number boards
- Legible builder's plates
- Brass-colored swinging bell
- Detailed cab with individually painted dial faces
- Painted crew figures
- Cab illuminated while locomotive stopped
- Clear glazing in cab windows
- Command-operated ElectroCouplers
- Infrared data transmitter under rear power truck
- 072 minimum curve

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Legacy locomotives, a memory module is included for loading the locomotive's pertinent data into the Legacy CAB-2 remote controller. The necessary data can also be loaded into the CAB-2 by hand, but the memory module makes the task a lot easier and faster.

To manually initiate pantograph-specific functions, the software in the CAB-2 and Legacy base must be upgraded to version 1.6. This version of the software displays icons on certain CAB-2 buttons shown in the owner's manual. These buttons let the operator raise or lower the individual catenaries and also select pantograph arcing light and sound effects.

However, nowhere in the owner's manual is there any mention of version 1.6. Information about how to obtain and load version 1.6 will likely begin with contacting Lionel or the selling dealer.

The good news is if the Legacy system is at some level less than 1.6, the engine can still be run and enjoyed using the CAB-2 or even with a CAB-1L/Base-1L system, all of which I have verified. Of course the few 1.6-specific features won't work, but all the rest of the Legacy and TMCC functions are available and fully functional. Regarding the GG1's simulated electrical arcing, a small LED is in the middle of the pickup shoe on each of the molded plastic pantographs. This LED flashes randomly in sync with the recorded sounds of electrical arcing from the sound system. To get ahead of myself for a moment, the effect is fun to watch. By the way, the plastic pantographs are strictly cosmetic and cannot be used as electrical pickup from a live overhead catenary.

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On the model of Old Rivets, the cast detail portraying the rivets and seamed steel plates is excellent and appears to be realistically executed, at least as far as I can determine from old photos. All the castings on both evaluation samples of the riveted and welded GG1s are excellent with the crisp detail I expected from a pair of newly tooled models. As to the model of the welded-body GG1, the castings on our Tuscan five-stripe edition had zero imperfections.

The paint and decoration on both locomotives are also excellent

and befitting of high-cost premium models that are the Vision GG1s. I was especially pleased with the smoothly curved pinstripes at the ends of both locomotives. They are among the most precise renditions of the Pennsy 5-stripe decoration I've seen on O gauge models.

A special detail mention includes the engineer and fireman cab interiors, especially those for the engineer. At close study, I've not seen this level of detail in any previously released GG1, particularly the instrument and signal panel that's visible through the appropriate cab windows.

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### At Trackside

In command or conventional mode, the GG1 wakes up in a software-choreographed audio-visual event that can be considered as spectacular. Lights come on, stereo sounds start with simulating blowers spinning up, both catenaries raise accompanied by sounds of creaking metal emanating from both ends of the locomotive, and then the default forward catenary lowers back down to its parked position to yet more sounds of creaking metal, but this time coming from only the front end. The big Pennsy electric is ready to move out with the headlight, cab interior lights, and soft sounds of cooling blowers running. This wake-up event will likely catch the attention of any visitors that see the Vision GG1 in action for the first time. It got mine!

As a side note, if the layout has bridges or tunnels that are less than

5-3/4" above the top of the rails, raised pantographs will not clear—they have to be locked down.

When running in the default forward direction, the rear pantograph is automatically raised while the front one is lowered. When putting the GG1 into reverse, the rear pantograph automatically lowers and the other one raises. This way, the GG1's trailing pantograph is up regardless of the direction of travel. A small "F" on each side of the body's bottom edge identifies the default forward end as does the location of the "steam generator" smoke unit, which is in the front half of the body.

With our standard scale passenger train in tow, the GG1 started and accelerated smoothly. Actually, either of our evaluation samples effortlessly pulled whatever O scale freight, passenger, or mail-express train I coupled to it. The two GG1s assigned into a







Legacy lashup and coupled to a freight train of 25 weighted 40' AAR boxcars plus a Pennsy N5c caboose proved to be a spectacular show of mid-20th-century railroading in 1:48 scale.


Both engines negotiated my floor-borne layout's O72 loop, which is the minimum diameter curve recommended by Lionel. With the sound system muted, only the rush of the engine's wheels on the rails was audible.

However, I was surprised that the articulated forward pilot on both of our GG1 models would not follow its truck and return to center when exiting a curve. Unless I manually centered it, the pilot remained cocked 1/2" off center as the GG1 traveled along straight track. Fortunately I have no trackside details or structures for the off-center pilot to hit and possibly destroy. Oddly, the rear pilots with the same mechanism operated as I expected.

With the scale GG1 sitting close to me, the stereo and localized mechanical sound effects were both novel and enjoyable. During the previously mentioned power-up, both pantographs are raised with the associated sounds coming from the speakers at both ends of the model. Then when the forward pantograph is

lowered, only the front speaker delivers the appropriate sound. Either way, the sound dynamics were outstanding as I have come to expect from the Lionel RailSounds recordings and reproductions.

### At the End of the Run

For the 1:48 scale GG1 aficionado whose layout has the necessary O72 or wider curves and switches, the die-cast limited-edition Vision GG1 from Lionel could be an appealing locomotive. At this writing in February 2017, several Internet mail-order dealers have one or more GG1s in stock at the full retail price. 

**6-82751 Pennsylvania #4913 GG1**

**6-83166 Pennsylvania #4800 (Old Rivets) GG1**

**Retail price: \$1,399.99 at authorized Lionel dealers**

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### Lionel Vision GG1 Legacy Performance

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

**Length:** 20-1/4" over closed couplers  
19-1/2" between pilots

**Distance Between Locomotive Pickup**

**Rollers:** 8-1/2"

**Weight on Driving Wheels:** 8 lbs, 5 oz

**Power Consumption at Idle @ 18 VAC:**

0.2 A, 3.6 W

**Tractive Effort @ 18 VAC:**

3 lbs, 5 oz @ 8 A, 144 W

**Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC:**

1 scale mph @ 1.2 A, 21.6 W

**Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC:**

60 scale mph @ 1.4 A, 25.2 W

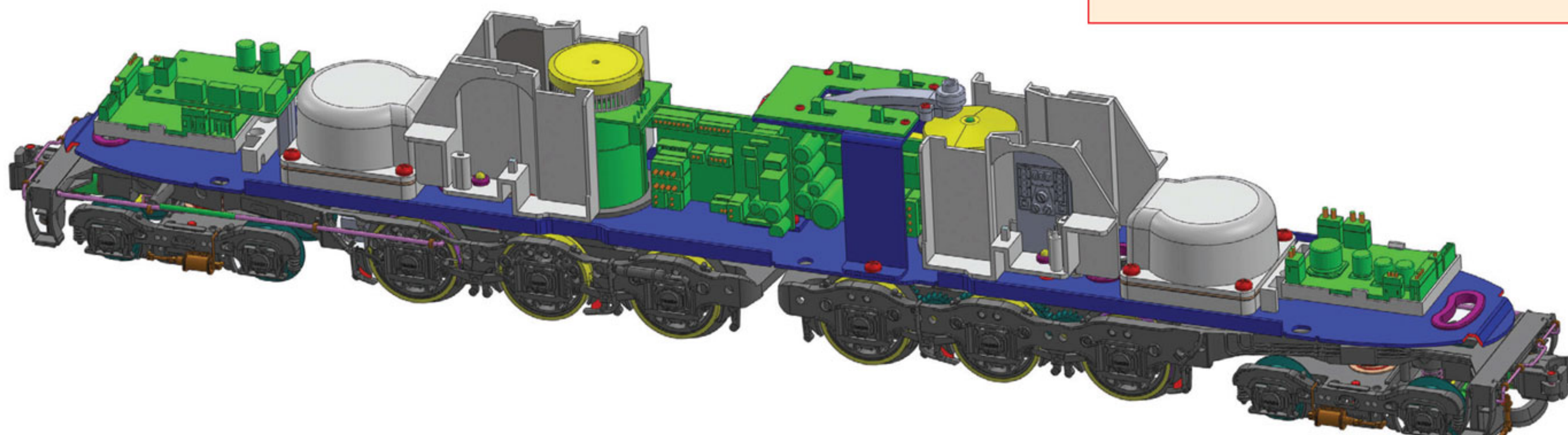
**Track and Switches:** Atlas 21st Century O72

**Power Transformer:** Lionel ZW-L

**Control System:** Lionel Legacy Base, CAB-2;  
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# Spectrum by Bachmann On30 DCC 2-6-0 Steam Locomotive

Review and Photos by George Brown

Although On30 trains run on HO gauge track and are rather diminutive when compared to scale or even traditionally sized O gauge trains, their dimensions reflect 1:48 scale. For example, the Spectrum by Bachmann DCC-equipped 2-6-0 Mogul is a scale 45' from the tip of the pilot to the back of the tender frame.

Compared to my previously released 2-6-0 without DCC, the new DCC On Board 2-6-0 with its unlettered bumblebee paint scheme looks the same, but it's not. It's a superior engine with its all-metal running gear. Upon seeing the yellow-trimmed locomotive for the first time through its box's clear plastic window and carrier inside, I instantly knew I had made the right choice of livery for me. Other liveries in the current release of the DCC On Board 2-6-0 are Pennsylvania with gold pinstripes, Denver & Rio Grande Western with a dark green boiler, and unlettered black.

## Prototype Notes

The mid-1800s saw the development of the 2-6-0 wheel arrangement, which gave greater wheel adhesion than the ubiquitous 4-4-0 of that time. Originally developed from the 0-6-0 wheel arrangement, the 2-6-0 type eventually became popular, especially with short lines. These small railroads including narrow gauge lines and even logging operations were not well capitalized and needed a low-cost light locomotive that had the rail adhesion to pull moderate-sized trains over light rails.

The name Mogul is said to have come from a 2-6-0 named *Mogul* built in 1866 for the Central Railroad of New Jersey by Taunton Locomotive Works. Although the 2-6-0 type wasn't as popular with railroads in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as



were the 4-6-0 and 2-8-0 types, over 11,000 Moguls were erected between the mid-1860s and 1910 when production by the major locomotive builders ended.

The builder's plates and number board on the On30 model of the 2-6-0 are legible with magnification and stated "Rogers Locomotive Works 1910." As a side note, in 1905 the American Locomotive Company bought the failing Rogers operation and continued to build Alco-Rogers locomotives until production ceased in 1913.



## Construction and Features

On the Bachmann On30 model of the 2-6-0, both the engine and tender are predominantly plastic with metal drive gears in the engine. The previously released Bachmann Spectrum 2-6-0 that ran on traditional DC power, or what the DCC world calls analog DC, had plastic gears. I especially liked the tender's lightweight archbar trucks with their brass wheels.

Several of the separate, small details are metal including the whistle, pop-off valve, coupler cut levers, handrails, and grab irons. Other separate details are molded plastic and include the sand pipes from the dome to the wheels, throttle linkage, steam lines, and drive wheel springs. Brake shoes and hangers are at each drive wheel, and a separate molding of the brake actuation rods is included for owner installation on the engine's frame. On the topic of the driver wheels, all three wheelsets have flanges.

The only oddity I noted on the engine was the partition that closes off most of the back of the cab. On a real engine, such a partition would inhibit crew access to the cab as well as any movement inside of it.

Inside the tender is the printed circuit board that contains the DCC receiver and decoder plus the driver electronics for the motor and headlight. This board features state-of-the-art surface-mount, low-voltage microelectronic components that make for thermally cool operation, thereby offering a reasonable expectation for operational longevity.

A six-wire tether cable carries power and feedback signals between the electronics in the tender and the motor and headlight in the engine. Connecting to the engine underneath its firebox, this cable with its individual wires is surprisingly unobtrusive as it hangs down slightly between and underneath the tender and engine.

As with previous offerings of Spectrum by Bachmann locomotives with DCC On Board, the 2-6-0 is sound-ready in that it has the factory-installed speaker and connections for installation of the separate-sale SoundTraxx Tsunami plug-and-play sound module. This module is easily installed on top of the DCC board. Only a #0 Phillips screwdriver is needed to remove the tender body from its frame for access to the board. Unfortunately, the sound modules for the 2-6-0 had not yet arrived from the Orient

## Bachmann Spectrum On30 2-6-0

### Features and Details

- Precision DC motor with hardened carbon brushes
- Hidden metal drive train
- Operating LED headlight
- Prototypical see-through clearance under boiler
- Metal detail parts
- See-through pilot
- Sprung center driver axle for tracking and electrical pickup
- Short-coupled tender with simulated coal load
- Frame-mounted E-Z Mate couplers
- Engine weight 11.5 ounces; tender weight 3.8 ounces
- Length 11-5/8" (over coupler knuckles 12-1/8")



in time for this review. However, based on my experiences with installing and enjoying the SoundTraxx Tsunami sound modules in my other two On30 locomotives, I will get one as soon as it is available for my bumblebee Mogul.

The molded plastic components of both the engine and tender are excellent, superb actually. On the pilot deck is a non-slip tread pattern while the surface of each of the two running boards on the boiler has a realistic wooden grain. Rivet detail is sharp everywhere as is the coal pile in the tender.

As to the Mogul's paint and finish, excellent could be considered an understatement. With the bright bumblebee paint scheme, color separation problems would be extremely noticeable, and there weren't any. For the modeler who wanted to add a road name and engine number, it would likely be easy to do with dry transfer lettering. To me, I like the little engine just the way it is.



## Spectrum by Bachmann

### On30 Open Excursion Car

Unless a 3-rail O gauge layout is set in the late 19th or early 20th century, an On30 line could look a little out of place. But even with a contemporary 21st-century setting, an On30 excursion train running through a parkland or mountainside tourist attraction would fit right in. One or more of the new Bachmann Spectrum On30 open excursion cars can realistically run behind any On30 locomotive, especially the bumblebee 2-6-0.



The excursion car features a molded plastic body that simulates a wooden car with underbody detail of truss rods and wooden flooring. The car rides on archbar trucks with metal wheels and has E-Z Mate operating couplers mounted on the car's frame. Handrails are wire, and molded bench seats run lengthwise on both sides of the car. Car length is 6-1/2" for a scale 26' between the end sills.

In addition to the unlettered yellow car with a silver roof, other unlettered cars are available in green with a red roof, red with a tan roof, and burgundy with a black roof. An H. Lee Riley in-memoriam car is also offered in green with a black roof. I've seen mail-order prices on the Internet in the \$45 range, plus shipping.

I found the yellow and silver open excursion car to be more than just attractive behind my bumblebee 2-6-0.

### #26003 On30 Open Excursion Car

Retail price: \$69.00 at Bachmann dealers

Bachmann Industries; [www.bachmanntrains.com](http://www.bachmanntrains.com)

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## At Trackside

To run and observe the DCC-equipped 2-6-0, I set up a temporary loop of 18" radius HO Bachmann E-Z Track on my train room floor. A Bachmann E-Z Command Digital Command Control System provided the power and command control functions. By the way, Bachmann recommends 18" radius as the tightest curve. On this radius curve, the 2-6-0 performed flawlessly and looked great.

With or without a train coupled to the little black and yellow Mogul, it started slowly and smoothly and ran in both directions without any hesitation or lurching. With the 2-6-0 under way, its motor was silent with only the wheels on the rails generating any noise. Considering that the E-Z Track rails are mounted on plastic roadbed, which usually amplifies the mechanical noise of a train running across it, the whisper-quiet 2-6-0 was delightful.

My test loads for the petite 2-6-0 included a five-car freight train, three-car passenger train, and the single excursion car featured in the sidebar. All of my On30 rolling stock is Spectrum by Bachmann, and both of my trains roll with minimal drag on level track. Additionally, On30 engines don't have traction tires as do today's 3-rail O gauge locomotives, but none are needed especially on the six-coupled Mogul. After all, narrow gauge trains are light and short in both 1:48 and 1:1 scales.

## At the End of the Run

On the Internet in early February 2017, at least one mail-order dealer advertises the Spectrum by Bachmann 2-6-0 with DCC in the \$210 range with the sound module nearly \$80, plus shipping. If you have an On30 layout or a narrow gauge line as part of your O gauge rail empire, the Spectrum by Bachmann DCC On Board 2-6-0 could prove to do the job at the head of a freight, passenger, mixed, or excursion train. When running beside the 3-rail O scale trains on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad, the little engine that could, did. 

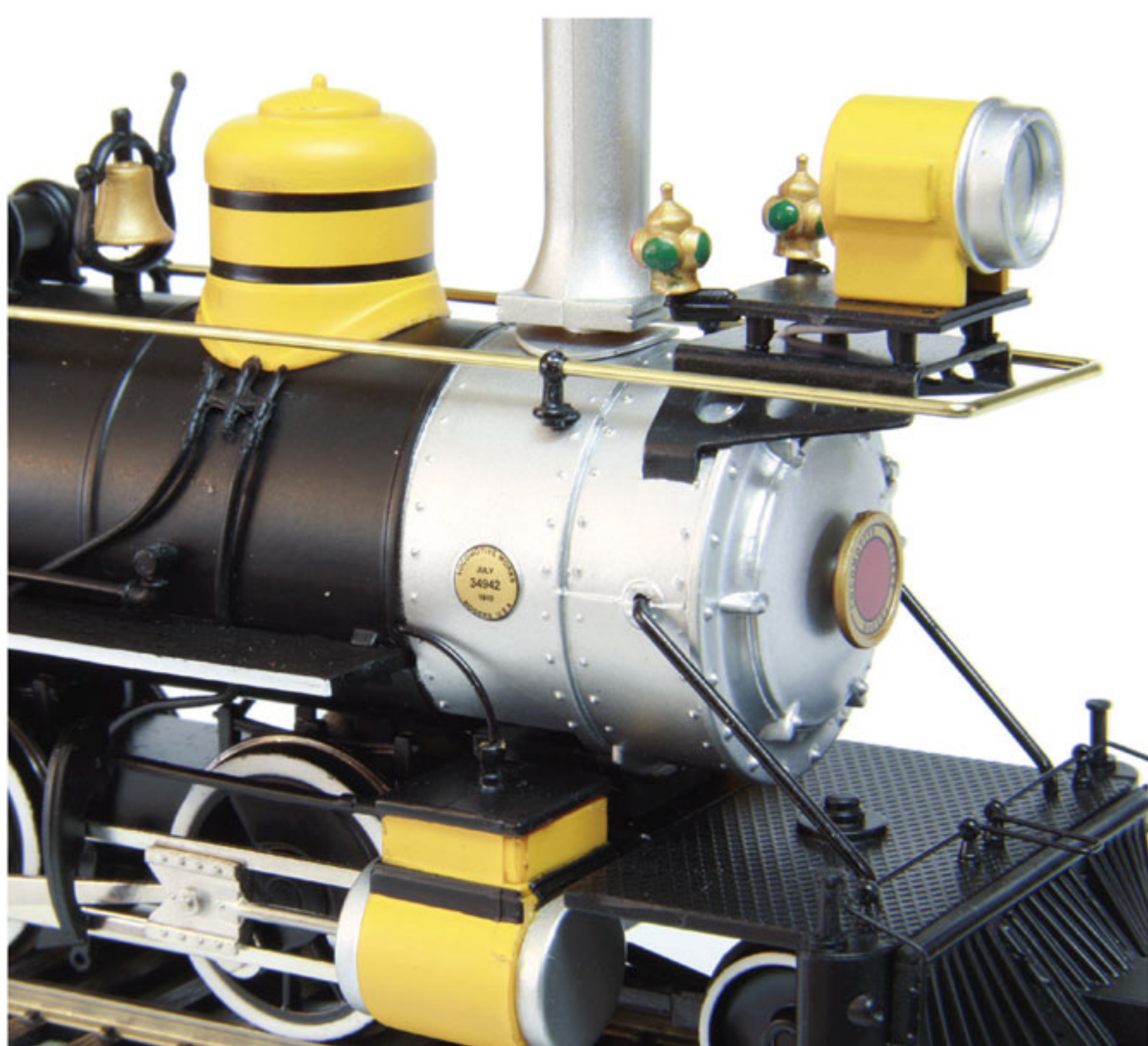
**#29302 DCC 2-6-0 Steam Locomotive**

**Retail price: \$349.00 at Bachmann dealers**

**#44957 2-6-0 Plug-and-Play Sound Module**

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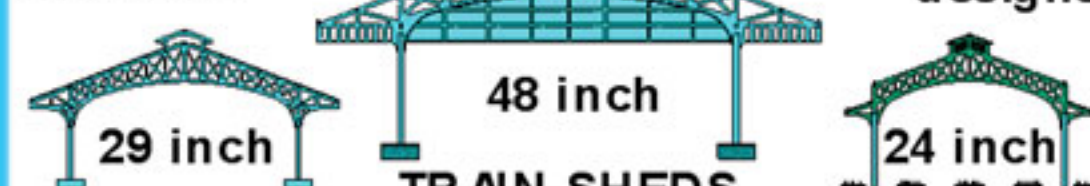
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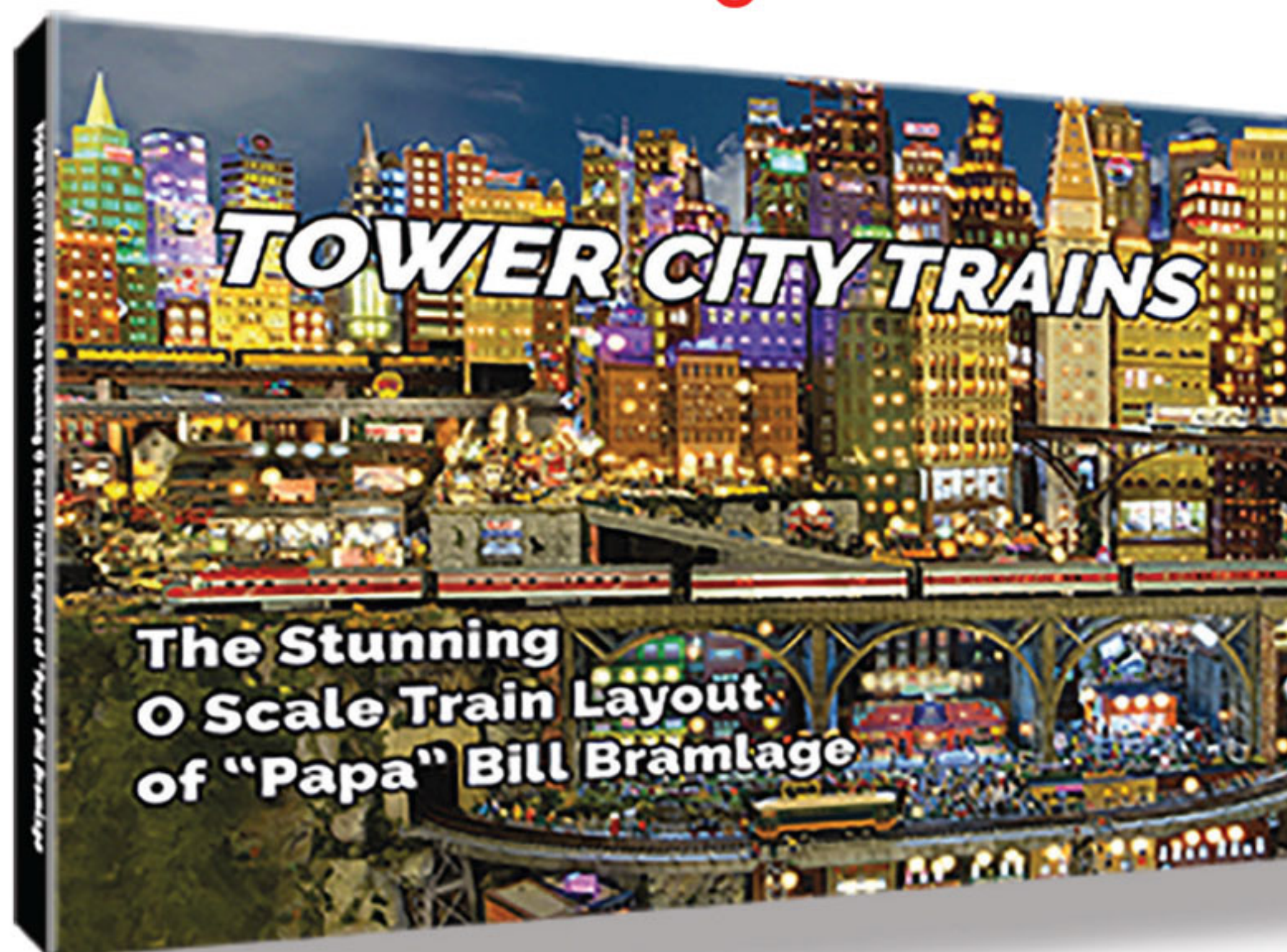


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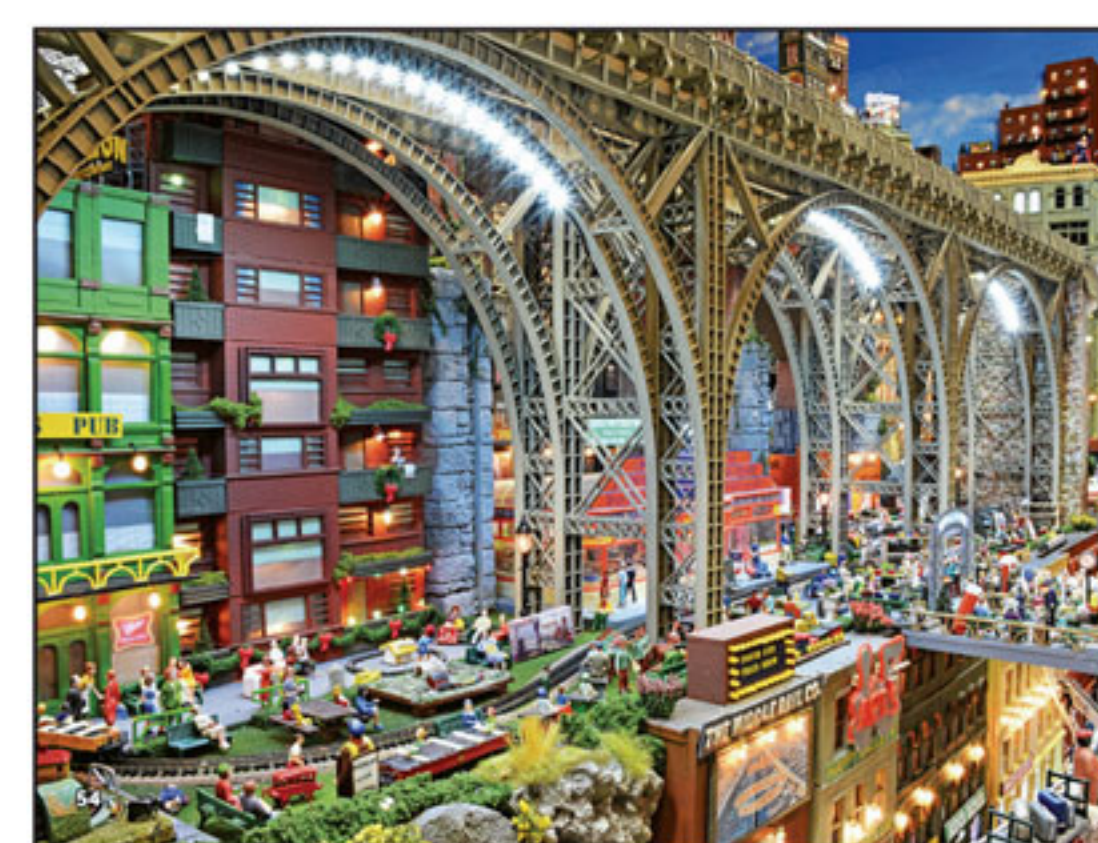


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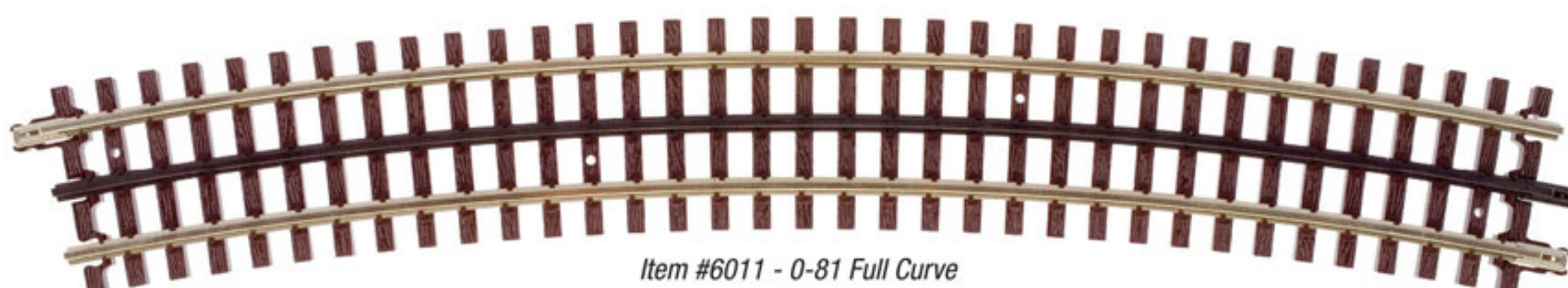


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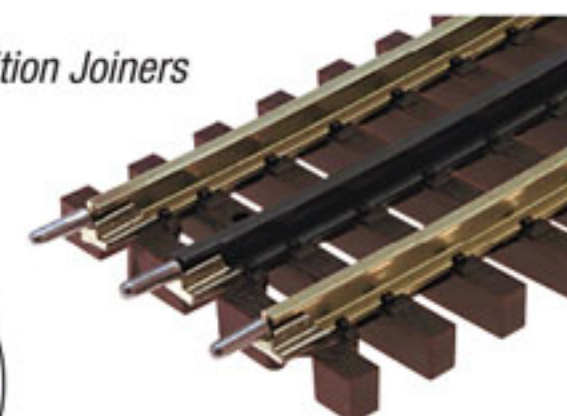
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Here is a view of part of the diesel facility, intermodal yard, and the Sunoco refinery at Etieca Valley.

# The Hidden Pass Junction RR

**Article, Photos, and Diagrams by Alex Muller**

As a toddler in Havana, Cuba, where I was born and grew up, I played with my dad's 1920s vintage Lionel tinplate train and with my two older brothers' Marx trains. When I was six, Santa brought me my very own Marx Southern Pacific 6000 set with two diesel engines, and at eight my grandmother gave me Lionel set 2065LTS with the 2065 Hudson.

After I came to the United States, I married a beautiful Indiana girl, Judy. By 1965 we had two sons in short order. They provided the incentive or excuse to get restarted with model trains. I built my first HO layout on a 4x8 shallow box that folded against the wall in the living room of our apartment. Over the following 20 years, four more HO layouts were built, each one more detailed and better than the previous, the largest of which was 12'x 20'. Two of these layouts were completely computer controlled.

## Rediscovering O Gauge

I disassembled my last HO layout in 1992 and did not pay much attention to model trains of any sort until 15 years later when I saw my grandson's new Lionel steam locomotive. I had not kept up with model trains and was blown away by the details and features of the new models. Judy and I went to a train show

around Christmas in 2007, and after seeing all that was offered, I thought I could build a close to 1:48 scale 3-rail layout in O gauge. I ordered a Lionel set from Strasburg Train Shop in Pennsylvania, and we set it up around the Christmas tree.

In January 2008 I ordered an MTH Union Pacific Premier F3 A-B-A set with matching passenger cars and an MTH Z-4000 transformer from now-retired train dealer Jimmy Sutter. Then I ordered RR-Track software so I could work with developing a track plan and followed that with an order from Ridge Road Station for the Lionel FasTrack needed for my first O gauge layout. Since Judy and I were planning to move to a different house in a few years, I considered this to be something of a practice layout because I would eventually have to dismantle it.

I finished that 140 sq. ft. L-shaped layout early in 2009, and that summer we bought our dream house. The new house had a large unfinished basement, just as I had long wanted, with 33'x 38' available for the train room.

I started finishing the basement immediately after we moved. I installed 14 fluorescent light fixtures, each with four T8 bulbs, plus 16 incandescent fixtures with seven switches to allow me to turn on almost any combination of lights. The cement floor was sealed, and I installed tile on the part that would not be under the





Big Boy 4006 rides on the turntable to go get ready for the next trip.



A Santa Fe passenger train enters Madera Heights Station.

layout. With the ceiling, lighting, and floor done, I painted the walls sky blue. The room was ready for the layout.

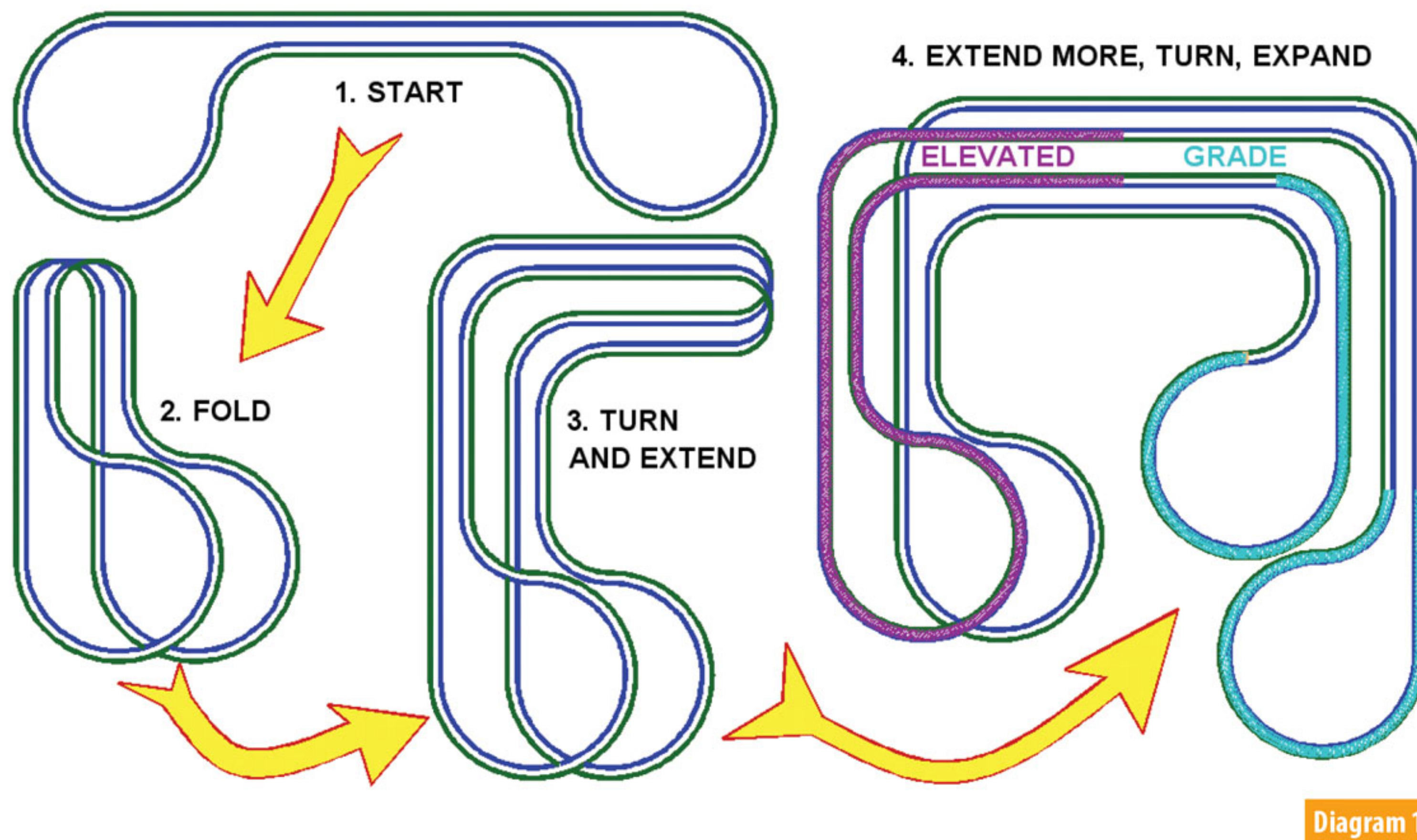
## The New O Gauge

The layout I planned would consist of two parts joined behind the stairwell. This junction would not be visible from the control center, so I called my railroad the Hidden Pass Junction RR. A modified dog-bone track configuration fit nicely in the train room (Diagram 1). Some of my objectives with the layout included:

- A full-length two-track main
- The largest available Atlas sectional curves
- Two main levels with no more than a 2 percent grade
- Dual reversing loops for each of the two mains

After exploring many variations, I finally reached a plan I liked (Diagram 2). In addition to the two main levels, which are approximately 48" and 57" above the floor, I added an El train 65" above the floor and a subway loop about 2" below the main level.





First order of business was to paint the backdrop directly on the walls. Since I now had a track plan to guide me, I knew what I wanted on the backdrop, but the question was whether or not I could do the painting myself. After watching a couple of YouTube videos on how to paint city skylines and landscapes, and using wall paint samples, I painted the backdrop. Though not a work of art, the results meet their intended purpose just fine.

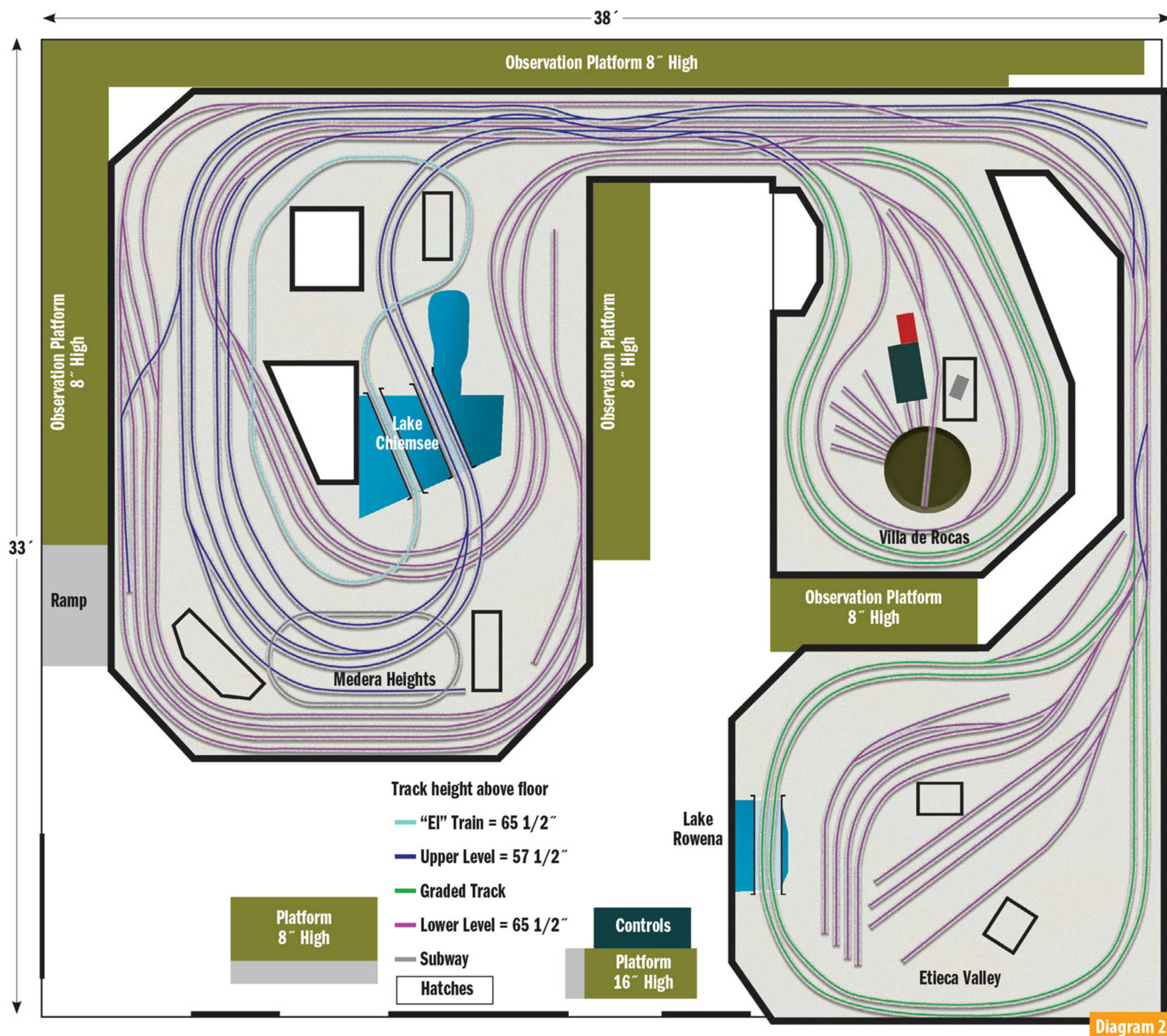
### The Heavy Work

Next on the agenda was the benchwork. My design called for 2x4s for the frame, topped with 5/8" plywood and QuietBrace. Since I do not own a truck, getting these materials would be more difficult than the construction. We had Home Depot deliver the first batch of 2x4s plus the plywood and QuietBrace. We still had to rent the Home Depot truck a couple of times, and Judy used her SUV to pick up the last four dozen of 2x4s.



Western Maryland Shay No. 6 is ready to pull a load of logs from the loading station.





The 2x4 frame with 5/8" plywood top required a minimum number of legs to provide a stout support, which left the space under the layout unobstructed for ease of navigating for wiring and other chores. I included 12 hatches throughout the layout to facilitate maintenance and allow easy access to almost any part of the layout. Thanks to Judy's help, and although I was still working full-time, by mid-April I had the basic framework completed and started laying track.

## Track

Atlas 108" and 99" diameter sectional curves were used for the mains, and I maintained a 4-1/2" spacing throughout. I used 90" curves inside the inner 99" main, and in a couple of areas used 81" curves inside their 90" counterparts. Altogether, we have over 900' of Atlas track with 59 turnouts: 47 are Atlas and 12 are Ross Custom Switches. There are seven crossovers between the mains plus four crossovers between the same main for reversing loops.

Another reversing loop is created by the track that surrounds the turntable. Some 150 pounds of ballast was used on the track, and almost all the visible track is ballasted.

The two double-main graded tracks that connect the upper and lower levels have prototypical 1.9 percent and 2 percent grades. The mains are approximately 275' long, providing a 2-1/2 mile long ride in scale. About one-fifth of the mains are hidden under the upper level. In addition to the main lines, there are sidings, spurs, and a four-track-wide yard with a very long lead.

## Scenery

The mountains, tunnels, rock walls, concrete walls, and so forth are made primarily of pink insulation foam board, mostly 1" thick. I also used plaster-impregnated gauze strips, which make plaster work practically mess free.

Most of the hundreds of trees are from Grand Central Gems, and ground cover materials are from Woodland Scenics. The track





An impromptu band is jammin' on the stage next to Deuce's Bike Shop.

ballast is from O-Gauge Connection, and I used its Ballast King railcar to spread the ballast, which makes this task a lot easier. Doors were added to the front façade of the layout, and Judy made very nice black curtains for all other areas.

Because the layout does not follow a specific time period, a wide variety of buildings and structures from MTH, Lionel, Atlas, Menards, and others are used, and I built some from scratch. Almost all of the buildings and structures have been weathered.

## Controls and Wiring

The layout operates with MTH DCS and Lionel Legacy/TMCC, but not in conventional mode. Track power is supplied by two Lionel ZW-L transformers with eight outputs connected to two TIUs with 12-AWG wires. I followed the star wiring concept and placed each



An Amtrak Superliner climbs the graded main at Villa de Rocas.



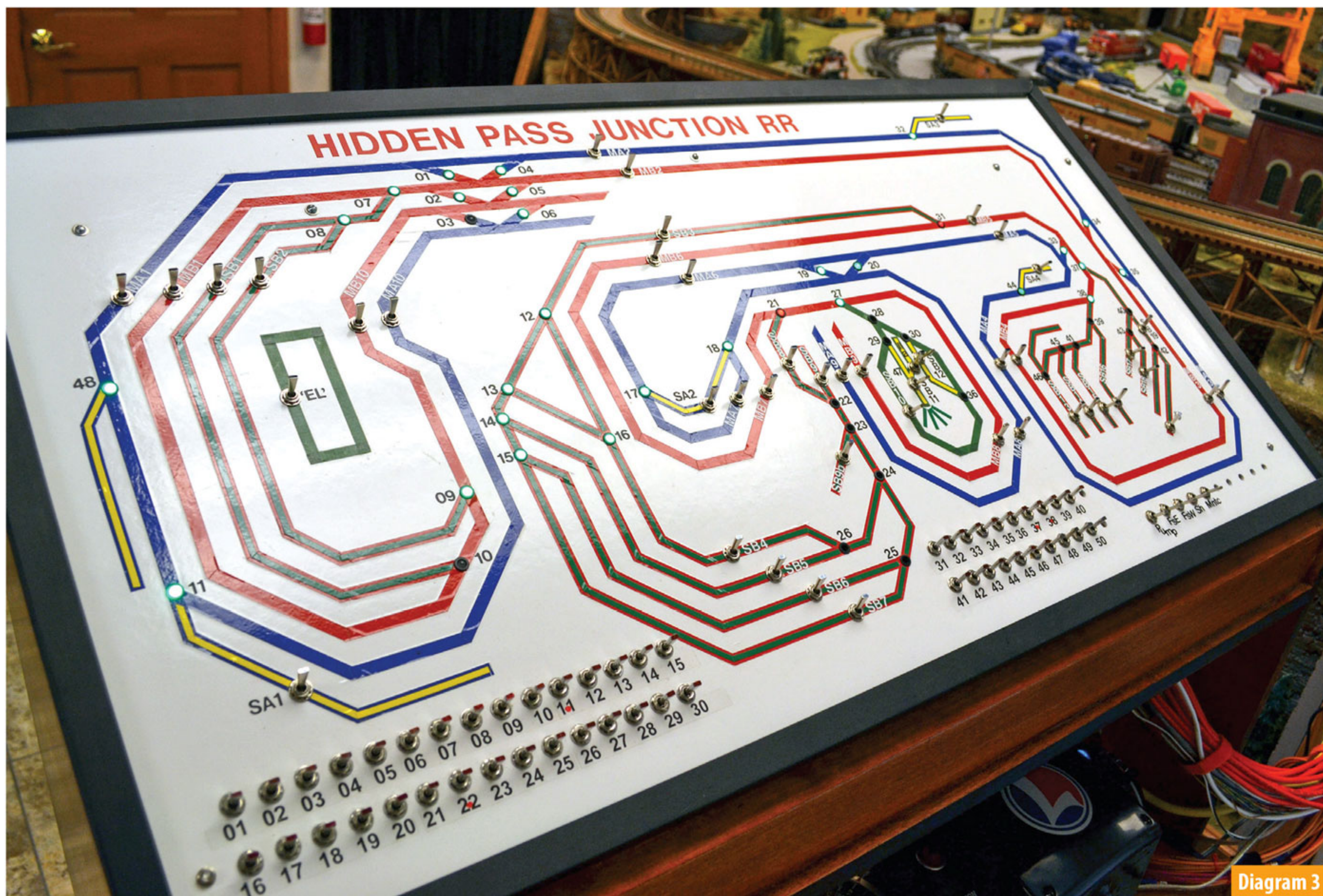


Diagram 3

of the two TIUs as close as possible to the center of the area they would serve. The four outputs from each TIU are connected to eight six-relay modules with 14-AWG wires, and each relay is connected to a track district or block with 16-AWG wires. There are 20 track districts comprising the mains plus 28 blocks for sidings and spurs.

The control panel has a 1/4" wide color tape representation of the track layout and toggle switches mounted on the corresponding track districts and blocks for on/off control via the relays. Turnouts are controlled with momentary toggle switches on the control panel or with the five parallel-connected AIUs. Being able to control the turnouts with either the panel toggle switches or the DCS remote is very convenient.

At each turnout location on the panel track layout, there is a bicolor (green-red) LED. These LEDs indicate the actual position of the points: green for straight through and red for diverging. If neither green nor red are illuminated, it means that the points are not properly thrown (Diagram 3). The true positions



A BNSF freight passes high above a team of lumberjacks who have been thinning trees near Villa de Rocas.





Locomotives of different eras line up at the end of the lower Madera Heights freight yard.



Neatly housed in this cabinet...



...is the layout's control center.





The ALARCO grain elevators are located in Lower Madera Heights.

of the points are detected by non-contact detectors, which operate completely independent of any other turnout or train control.

The ZW-L transformers and power supplies for the relays and turnouts are located at the control center. I also have over 20 power supplies of various AC and DC voltages scattered throughout the layout for the accessories, building lights, and so forth, and they are connected to remotely controlled wall outlets. Due to the expanse of the layout, I have installed approximately 2,600' of wire and still have quite a bit yet to add.

## Operation

I run both Lionel and MTH diesel and steam locomotives. The freight and passenger cars are from several manufacturers, but most are MTH and Lionel. When by myself, I run switching operations to make up trains and to test the operating accessories. When running trains for my guests, I prefer to operate trains with up to 40 cars.

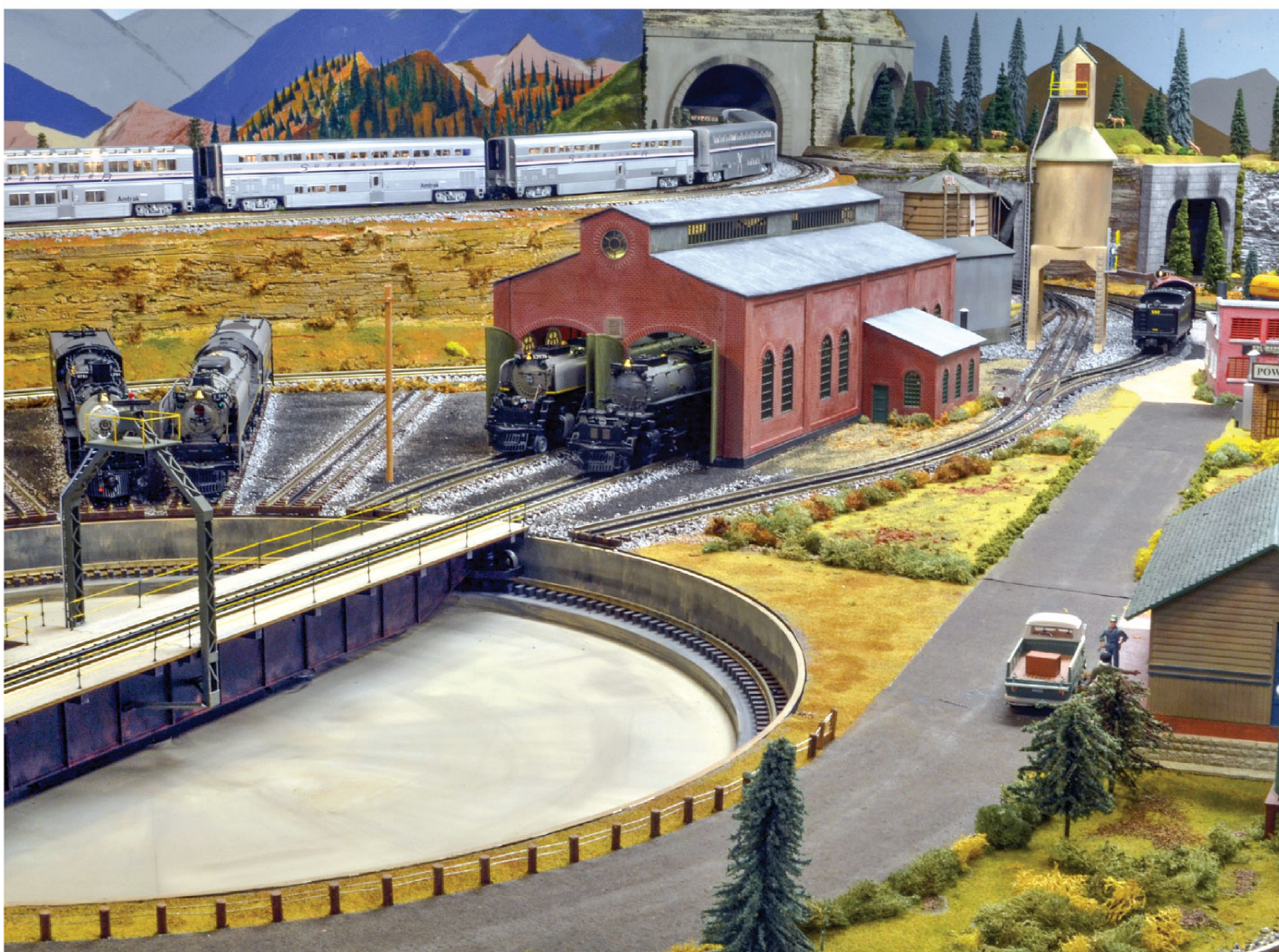


American Power & Light is located not far from the Etieca Valley switch tower.





This BNSF coal train is crossing the Judy Jane Trestle over Lake Rowena.



An Amtrak train disappears into a tunnel on the high line in this overview of the roundhouse facility.





The benchwork is adorned with a simple and functional fascia that allows access to areas under the layout.



Raised viewing platforms have lighted edges so they can be easily seen at night.





Past the freight yard is the Hidden Pass Subway Mall.




The Madera Saw Mill stays busy at Etieca Valley.

Together with the El and subway trains, which run on their own loops, I run a passenger train and a freight train: one on each of the mains going in opposite directions. After going once around, which takes about six minutes, two other trains are operated in similar fashion. I always have six trains on the layout ready to run at any time.

Since the layout is relatively high, there are viewing platforms around and in front. I find it fascinating to watch younger guests follow the trains around the layout to anticipate where the trains will emerge after disappearing into one of the dozen tunnels.

## Looking Ahead

I am now working on implementing a computer control system that will allow programming various routes and operations so the trains can run automatically and worry free without the risk of crashes or other mishaps. The work and fun are never done! 



Alex and Judy Muller



*An interesting addition for '70s-era yards*

# Rail Yard Speakers

**Article and Photos  
by John Penca**

In 1972 when I began my railroad career with the Penn Central, radios for yardmen as we know them today had not yet been invented. The only practical portable radios were known as “lunch box” radios, and as the name implied, were big like a lunch box, had a tall antenna, and were slung over the shoulder with a strap or carried by a handle (Photo 1). These were assigned to road conductors who rode in the caboose so they could maintain contact with the head end of the train. In addition, they could be carried around if the train had an emergency or if an online repair was needed somewhere on the train.

Communication in the yard between a crew and the yardmaster in the tower was conducted through a series of yard speakers. That’s me standing beside one of those yard speakers in Photo 2. This particular yellow yard speaker is actually the sole survivor at the Collinwood yard engine house in Cleveland, Ohio. Somehow, this one was overlooked for dismantling after two-way radios became smaller, negating the need for yard speakers, and I just happened to notice it one day. This particular speaker sports a coat of CSX yellow because it’s now classified as a yard hazard. How times have changed!

These devices were spaced about every other switch along the yard lead as well as in random spots throughout the yard (Photo 3). Basically, this consisted of a two-way speaker mounted on a



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*Photo courtesy of the Railroad Museum of Virginia*



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post cemented in the ground and had an extruded part about halfway down the pole that covered a pushbutton. When depressed, the button would alert the yardmaster so a conversation could begin. This was good for wrong car numbers, cars with defects to report, or if the yardmaster needed to change a designated move. The volume control had only one setting: LOUD! Hearing the speaker over the usual noise of railroading in such an environment was never a problem. Conversely, the yardmaster could see where you were standing and activate a speaker near you by pushing a button on his console.

One day I was looking through the drawers in our bathroom at home and noticed some brush roller curlers with a bunch of plastic pins belonging to my wife. Upon close inspection I yelled out loud, "Yard speakers!" Right there in my hand were essentially O scale models of those very speakers: the post, height, speaker with indentations on both sides, and the extrusions halfway down. It was amazing. I confiscated a handful of the pins and then headed downstairs to my workbench.

Before installing these beauties, the plastic needed to be painted a light gray or silver color, and a base needed to be created from styrene. I used Evergreen tile styrene. I broke off a piece of styrene, drilled a hole in the center, and pushed the point of the curler pin (yard speaker) through the base. These curler pins and styrene components are shown in Photo 4. This enabled me to push the pin into my layout ground-cover. I space these devices out about every other switch or so on my yard lead. I placed a figure next to the pole to add a sense of purpose. Photos 5 and 6 show a couple of the yard speakers installed on my layout.

This simple project I stumbled upon by accident creates an interesting detail of an era-specific (roughly late-1950s through mid-1980s) communication device once found in railroad yards across the country. It provides a great bit of historical information to share.



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## Operations on the Crooked Lake Railroad



Here is an overall view of the Crooked Lake Railroad as one enters the room. The yard is in the foreground.

# A Layout Becomes a Railroad

Article and Photos by Al Judy

*Run 291 featured the planning and building of Sam Pennise's On30 Crooked Lake Railroad. Now we'll take a look at how this layout operates like a real railroad.*

The Crooked Lake Railroad (CLRR) makes its home in the Finger Lakes region of New York. It operates just north of the Pennsylvania/New York border during the early 1930s. The 30" narrow gauge line is mainly a freight carrier but also offers some light passenger service between towns and to rural areas along the line. Timber and coal account for the bulk of the CLRR's revenue, but general freight to and from local vendors and manufacturers helps supplement its bottom line.

Coal from the Lone Pine Mine is produced at a level that requires several trains per day to be pulled from the holding tracks and delivered on down the line. This high volume of hopper traffic in and out of the mine's junction makes it a very active and busy place. As the loaded hoppers are pulled out and replaced with strings of empties, there are usually several road locomotives working the interchange along with one or two smaller locomotives handling the actual switching in and out of the mine's tipple.





Climax No. 5 waits to push a string of empties up to the mine once the outbound clears the block.





Heavily weathered Forney No. 8 is on a freight run around the town of Keuka.



Forney No. 6 rolls up the valley past a string of empty hoppers leased from the East Broad Top.

The service tracks from the mine meet up with the main line at the town of Keuka. Here the main line cuts around the valley and passes the logging line on the far side of town before heading back up the valley and through the town of Lone Pine (named, of course, for the large lone pine tree on the stony ridge overlooking the north entrance to the mine area).

Lone Pine is not only home to many of the local miners but is also a main stop on the CLRR. A large freight and passenger depot can be found near the center of town along with a large variety of businesses and small manufacturers. A large railroad hotel sits just behind the depot and is surrounded by multistory housing. Small shops, a company store, and restaurants line the main street, and businesses such as a blacksmith and welding shop, auto and machine repair garage, and a grain company can be found on the outskirts of town. Lone Pine also offers the





**A pair of Porters is working just outside of Keuka.**

miners and railroad men several places to relax after a hard day's work. Just up a small hill at the lower end of town is a bar, which on many occasions is the benefactor of a large chunk of the men's paychecks. But before heading downtown for the evening or over to the gin mill for a drink, many miners find their way to the bathhouse in order to relieve themselves of the day's dirt and grime. Located just outside of town for safety reasons is the explosives company. Many locals regularly voice their concerns about its proximity to town, but the owner assures everyone that safety is always his number one priority. Time will tell.

The logging line also interchanges with the main line near Keuka. This is where all of the timber cut from the mountains surrounding the town makes its decent down the 2 percent grade to the valley and main line below. Along with the large number of log buggies



**No. 7 heads up the mountain for its next load of logs.**





A view of Camp No. 1 is seen from atop the ridge.



Log buggies head up the mountain to Camp No. 2.

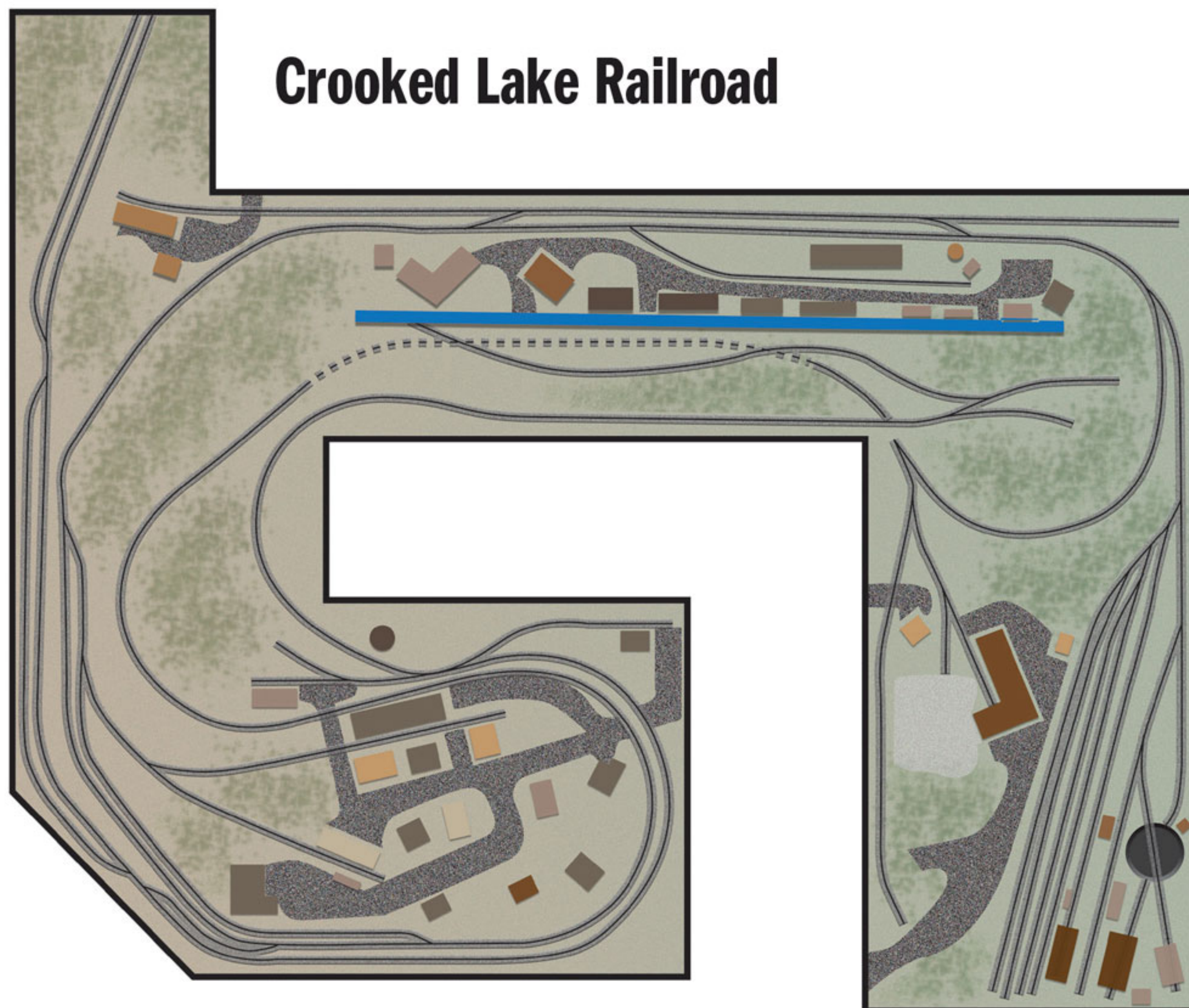
that travel up and down the mountain line every day, there are flatcars of logging equipment, boxcars of supplies for the camps, and even the occasional camp or kitchen car heading up the mountain. Motive power used to traverse this steep grade is almost always of the geared variety, and Shays, Climaxes, and Heislors are a common sight on the mountain.

Once the buggies of cut logs reach the valley, they head for the large sawmill on the other side of Lone Pine. The three-story mill can handle all of the timber the crews cutting above can produce, and then some. The mill's long unloading track allows for dozens of log buggies to be moved past the pond and unloaded for intake into the mill. Cars are unloaded using a stationary steam donkey and a pull cable system. When the timber is rough cut, the dimensional lumber is stacked in the yard or loaded onto boxcars where it is shipped to customers around the region.

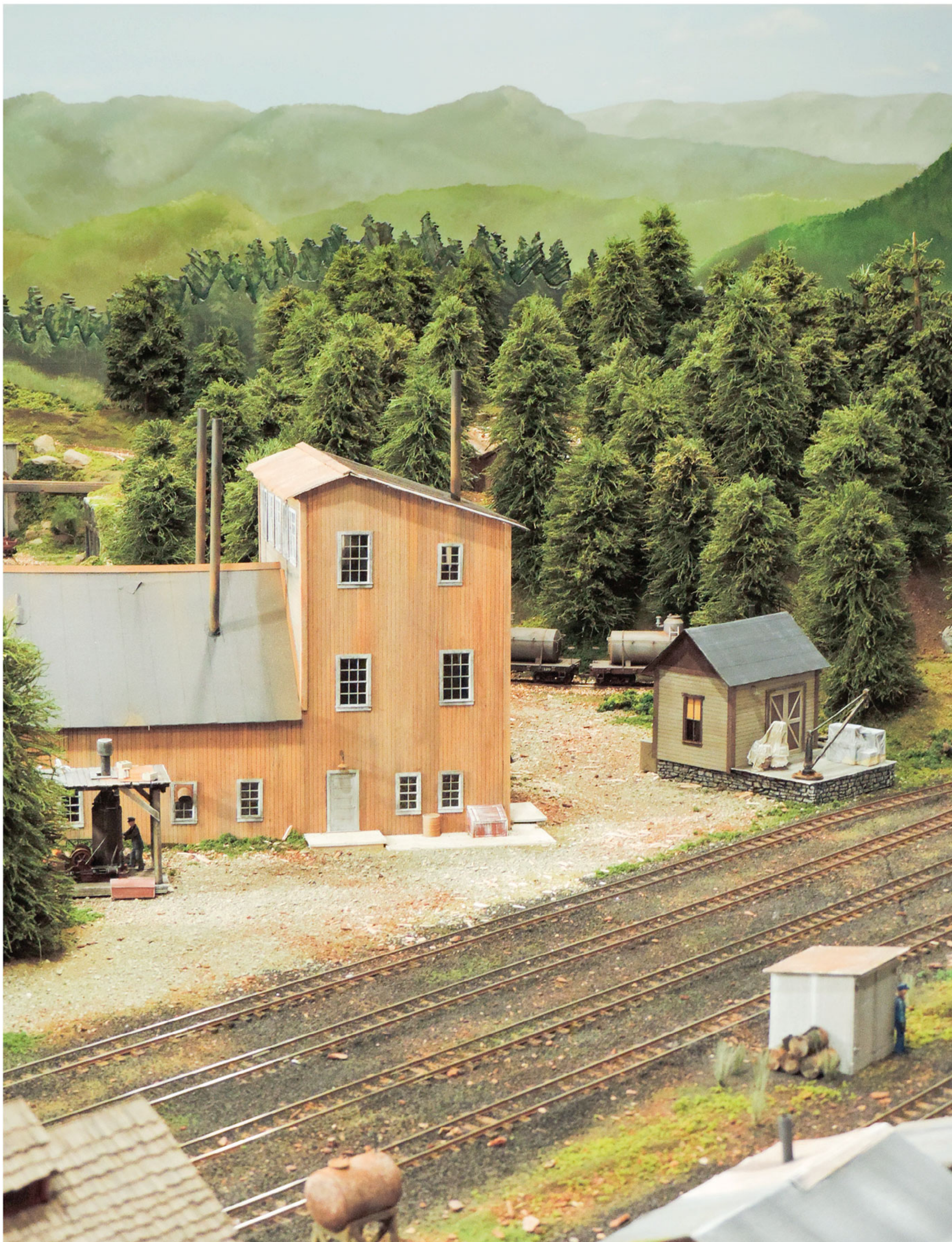




The last few logs of the day are being pulled up from the pond at the sawmill.







This view of the mountain looks past the sawmill.





A steam donkey gets a lot of service at the mill pond.



The ash pit receives a cleaning before the next hot load is dropped.





Locomotives are being readied for another day of hard work on the CLRR.



Night falls over the CLRR yard.





Orders are passed up for No. 15 as she slowly cruises by the tower.



The standard gauge interchange is a good place to see the difference between standard and narrow gauge equipment.



End of runs for the day.






It's a busy morning in Lone Pine as the local passenger run makes its way through town.



There is rail action at the Lone Pine station.

The CLRR maintains a large yard and locomotive facility. The freight yard is used to classify inbound and outbound rolling stock and as holding tracks for the manifest trains. The locomotive facility features full shop operations for locomotives and rolling stock, providing maintenance, service, and repairs for the railroad's equipment. The locomotive service area features a turntable; fueling, sand, and water supplies; and an ash pit for firebox clean out.

The CLRR's locomotive roster lists a variety of motive power ranging from diminutive 0-4-0 Porters up to 2-8-0s and 2-6-6-2s to handle the heavy hauling. Forneys, Americans, and the geared logging locomotives round out the stable of power. The CLRR has the equipment to handle whatever task comes down the line.

The Crooked Lake Railroad offers nearly unlimited operational possibilities with up to nine operators using either tethered or wireless controls. All of the locomotives are equipped with DCC and sound, which gives operators and their assigned operations an even more realistic feel. The 15'x 20' layout is located in its own dedicated space and features full-spectrum lighting, which shows off the true colors of the fully scenicked layout and its custom-painted backdrop. 





# The Background Story

Article and Photos by Eliot Scher

I heard the same question time and again until it hovered over me like a dark cloud. No one quite understood why I chose to dismantle my original Munoz Lines. It was too magnetic. Every day I was drawn to it, and time simply disappeared.

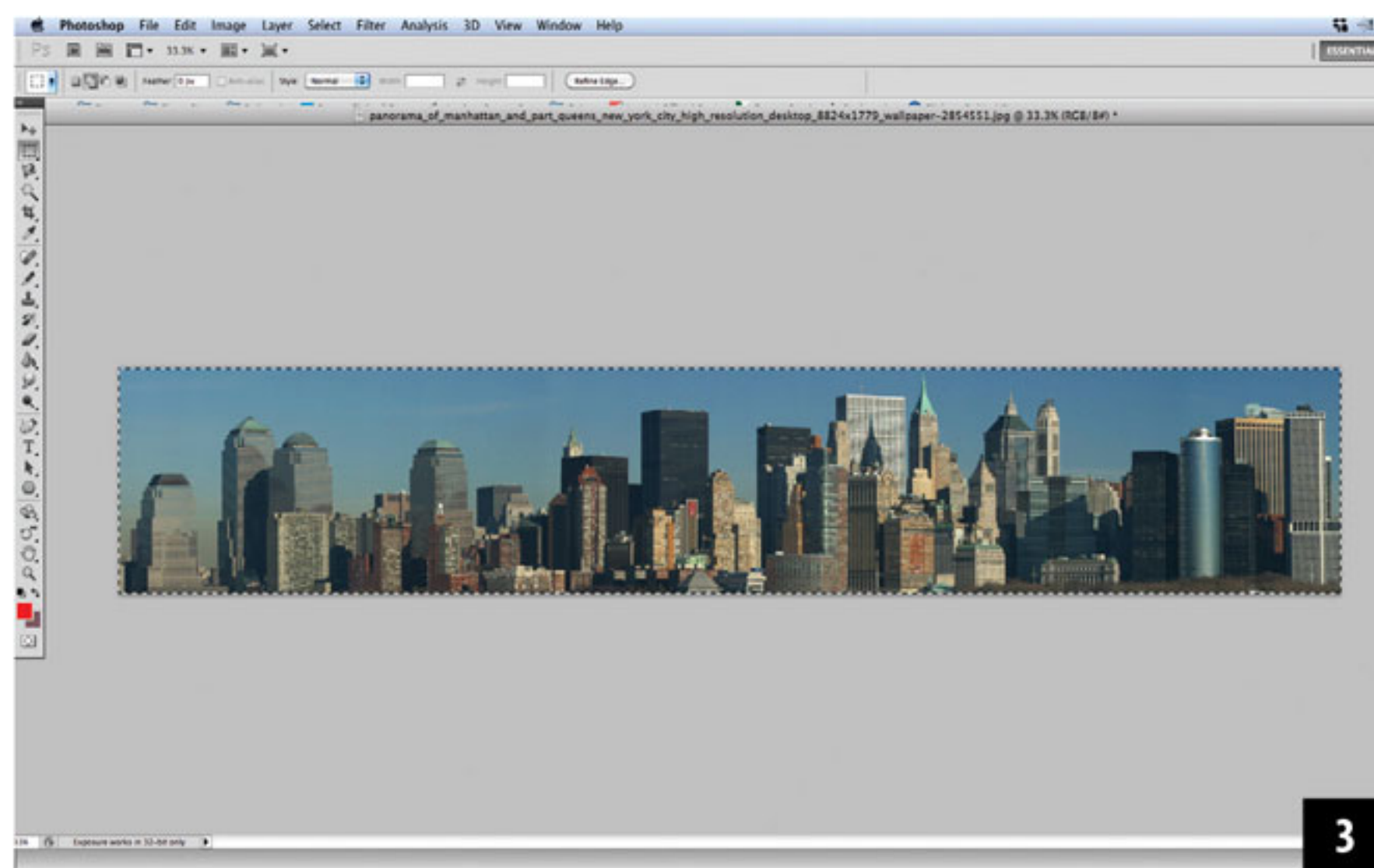
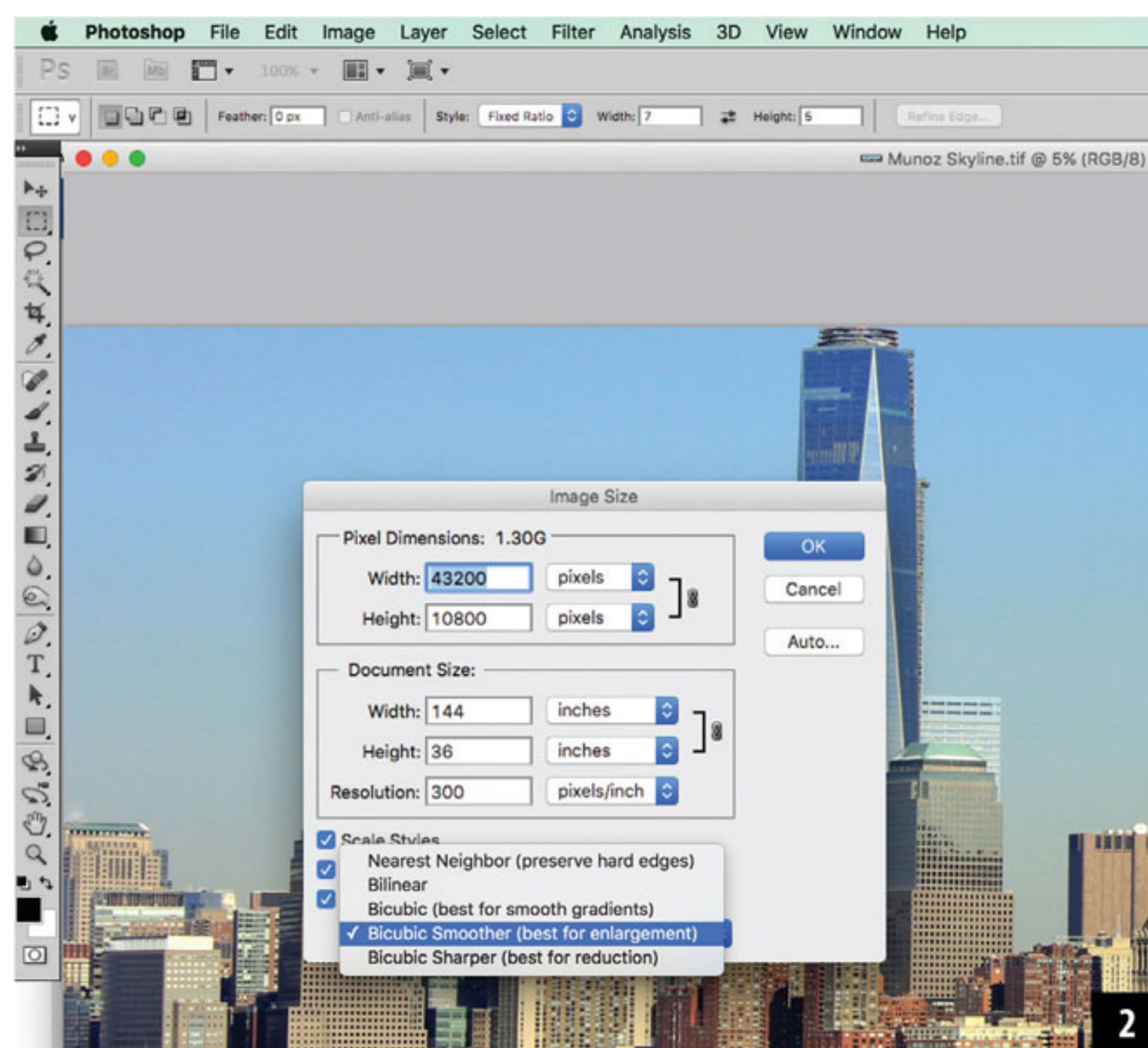
Many years earlier I had challenged myself to write a novel, but I realized that the level of concentration required to complete it meant that my original Munoz Lines would be no more. My wife, Ginny, understood. The novel is now finished. Now I'll set out to conquer a new challenge: the New Munoz Lines. The background story is about the backdrop I added to the New Munoz Lines.

The New Munoz Lines will be a railfan's layout. Though I liked my original Munoz Lines, there were lots of issues I yearned to resolve with the next layout. The most important goal was that I wanted to watch trains on the new layout the way I watch trains when I go out to photograph real railroads.

One of the worst mistakes made on my original Munoz Lines was putting in a backdrop after I had completed the foreground scene. Anyone who makes that mistake knows the trouble I encountered. I had to become a contortionist of mythic proportions, and anyone who knows me understands that I am not built for a high-wire act. I vowed that the next layout would have a great backdrop and would go in before any scenery was even contemplated. Little did I know that the backdrop adventure would be a bit frustrating.

On a railfan layout for a photographer like me, a backdrop has to be more than a backdrop. The distant view has to be realistic. It has to have the right subject and the correct perspective. It also has to be printed in high resolution, be the right size, and on and on. My backdrop search was threatening to become a difficult one.

Anyone who builds a model railroad understands that visualizing what the railroad will become is difficult. Unless you are reproducing a railroad from a plan or a photograph, creating a vision from scratch is a serious exercise in imagination.







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Since my trains would be traveling from Kansas City to New York and Grand Central Terminal was to the immediate right of the backdrop, I decided a cityscape of tall buildings would be just the ticket. I quickly learned that finding an image that coordinated with Grand Central just the way I wanted it was a challenge. Backdrop manufacturers had city skylines and some had New York City, but they didn't seem quite right. When I did find a backdrop that seemed acceptable, the resulting cost was quite high.

As a photographer, I worried I might not be able to find a high-resolution image and tailor it exactly to my needs. I am gratified to say the process was fairly easy, and the best part was that the total cost including shipping of my 12' x 3' high-resolution backdrop was \$63.00. Amazing, but true!

I did a Google search for "high-resolution New York City skyline" images. I got a number of hits, but many of the images were not really high-res nor were they the correct perspective. Many of the images were low-resolution, and most were shot from very high vantage points. My skyline had to be seen from the same plane of view as if I were on the ground watching trains, or the perspective would be off. I was persistent and finally found a great public domain image at the Wikipedia Commons website. The skyline perspective was right on, and the image was enormous and high-resolution (Photo 1). Now I had to use Photoshop to see if I could turn the image into the right size for the New Munoz Lines.

I opened the skyline panorama in Photoshop and was pleased with the quality of the resolution. When searching Google for an image, I click on it, and the image size expressed in pixels is visible. If both sides of the image are over 1,000 pixels, the image may work well. The image I chose was almost 9,000 by 2,000 pixels. The size alone does not guarantee good resolution, but often it does result in a good image. Resolution is really a separate subject. It is a way of measuring the clarity of an image. The skyline panorama image was great, but it would have to be resized to fit the space I needed. Using Photoshop, I found I could crop either the top or the sides of the image to keep the proper perspective, and for enlarging the image to the correct size, I chose "Bicubic Smoother" (Photos 2 and 3). As I changed image sizes, there was also





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the option to “Constrain Proportions,” which means if that box is checked, changing the width also changes the length proportionately. There were some occasions where I wanted to change one dimension but not the other, so I just unchecked that box.

As nice as my image was, I wanted to add a personal touch. Many people are familiar with the New York City skyline, so I wanted to come up with something for the New Munoz Lines. I was struck with the idea of a blimp with a huge “New Munoz Lines” logo flying over the city. I found a generic blimp using the Google search, copied the image, and created a separate file in Photoshop for the blimp by using the Lasso tool to separate the blimp from its background. Using the Type tool and the Layer, Layer Style, Drop Shadow functions, I added a logo to the blimp. I copied the blimp and pasted it onto my New York panorama image. I flattened the layers and then a blimp was flying over New York letting everyone know the New Munoz Lines was back in business (Photo 4).

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When I was finished with my New York panorama image at 146"x 36", I had a huge file of 1.4 gigabytes. It is difficult to e-mail an image file that large, and if I was going to have it printed, I would need to either take it to a printer or resolve the e-mail issue. Being a Rotarian, I had occasion to use a website called [www.stickersbanners.com](http://www.stickersbanners.com) for large banners our Rotary Club had printed. I was pleased with the work that outfit did, and the cost was quite low. So I contacted them, and they assured me they could print my image on a high-quality vinyl sheet, edge-to-edge, with no hem and no grommets. The cost would be \$63.00 shipped. I decided to go for it. They have an online process for e-mailing large files, and as soon as I uploaded my file, I was contacted by the website. I had my backdrop 26 hours later, and that was just astonishing. More importantly, the backdrop was absolutely dead on.

I immediately set out to construct a brace for the backdrop that would be mounted behind my benchwork using 1x4 pine boards. Since the New Munoz Lines is an island layout, I could not mount the Masonite onto a wall. The key was to mount the vertical members by screwing them into two or three horizontal members of benchwork for proper strength because the verticals would soar 3' higher than the layout edge of the upper level (Photo 5). Notice in the photos that the layout will be two levels, and the backdrop had to tower 3' over the upper level (Photo 6).

In some of the photos is my good friend Henry, without whose help I could never have accomplished this project. After the benchwork was screwed and bolted together and the horizontal and vertical members added, Henry and I mounted two pieces of Masonite 12' long and 3' high (Photo 7). We screwed the Masonite to the vertical members by making sure we countersunk the screws so the

backdrop would lay flat. The final part of the mounting process was to use an adhesive spray application and use of a brayer to flatten the image (Photo 8). If you use the spray, be certain to have a well-ventilated area and use spray masks that filter out anything you should not be breathing.

The process of applying the spray adhesive required a minimum of two people; three would have been even better. After the image had been glued to the Masonite, Henry and I clamped small pieces of 1/4" plywood and small sections of 1x4 pine against the edges of the backdrop until it dried (Photo 9). Even so, some of the corners did some curling, and I used carpenter's glue to achieve a final set.

I can hardly wait for trains to roll on the New Munoz Lines. When I add scenery to the ground in front of the backdrop, I will not have to worry about doing a high-wire act (Photo 10). I will proudly point to Backdrop 63 as in \$63.00. I'm a happy fellow! 



*An under-construction layout you can visit*



# LAYOUT BUILDING AS A FAMILY AFFAIR

**Article by Jackie Kulfan**  
**Photos by Anthony Kulfan**  
**and Tom Moore**

When I show my non-train friends photos of our work-in-progress basement layout, the reaction is pretty standard. They first see the 20' of built-in display shelves, 40' of rolling hillside along the back wall, and the floor-to-ceiling stacked boxes of engines and rolling stock. Then I look at their drop-jawed faces and proclaim, "I knew about this before I married him."

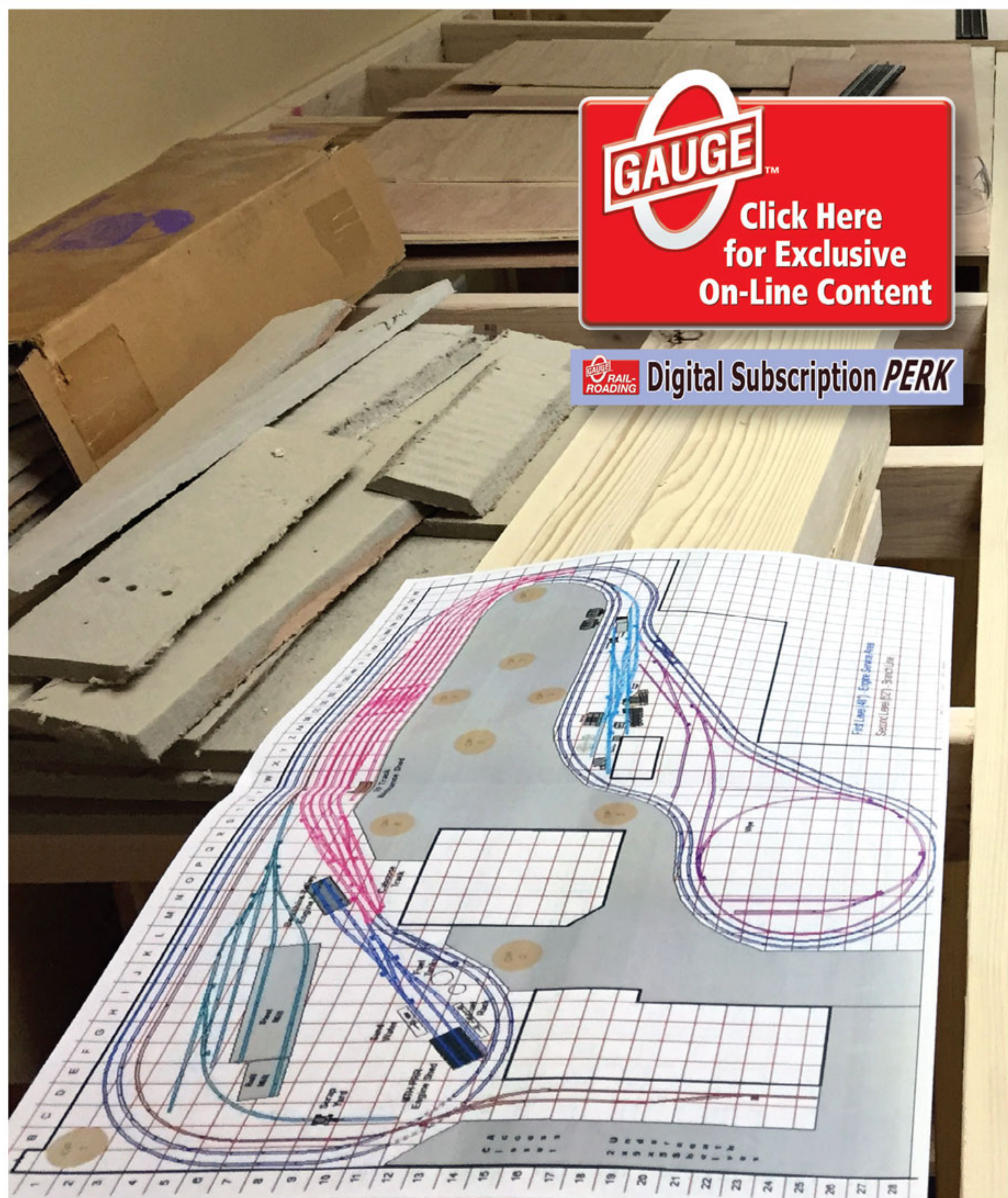
I learned of my husband Anthony's trains when we were dating. I stopped by his apartment one December day in 1998 and was cautioned to watch my step when I entered. I never expected to find a train running on the floor nearly blocking the doorway and following the perimeter of his apartment. I realized that if we were

going to make things work for the long haul, I had better embrace the trains.

Eighteen years later I've accepted certain truths. Trips to visit his family are routed past the Norfolk Southern Conway Yard. A train ride or museum is part of nearly every vacation we take. And when we built our home nine years ago, a full basement for trains was a basic requirement (building it a quarter mile from an active local line was a coincidence...I think). I appreciate Anthony's model railroading hobby mostly for the enjoyment he gets from it and the great friends he shares it with.

The first rule in building a layout is, or should be, finishing the space, which we

did over several years with the help of master carpenter and fellow train enthusiast Bob Feicht. The construction period gave Anthony plenty of time to devise a track plan. He wanted his layout optimized for realistic operating sessions with a long main line. We hosted a get-together at our house that I dubbed "Trainstorming 2012" with lots of food, beverages, and pencils and paper for a basement full of fellow modelers to sketch out track plan concepts. He made countless trips to Rochester and East Conway to watch trains, learn symbols, and understand the commodities that moved on those trains so he could effectively simulate real-world operation on his layout. He also credits



It starts, or most often should start, with a thought-out track plan.





The sky is applied to walls early in construction.



Early work begins on the backdrop.



Landform features are roughed in along one long wall.



The very first train, a Conrail freight, takes a test run.



Contours of hills and mountains are marked on the backdrop as a preliminary guide for the artist.

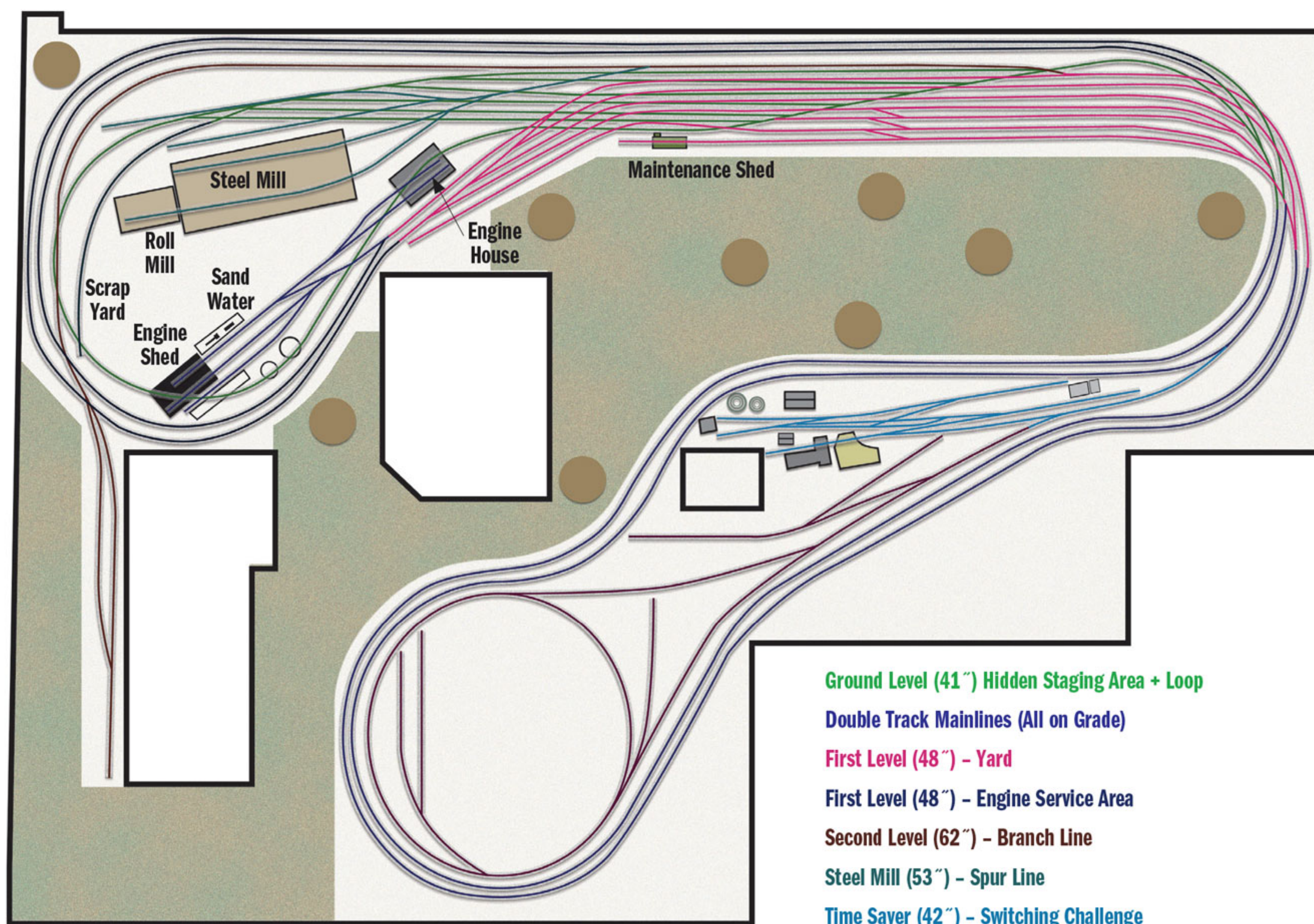
studying the ample photos in train magazines, various railfan websites, and his Conrail Historical Society membership for providing inspiration.

Three years later a detailed track plan was finally in place. Anthony's design is a prototypical operating layout emulating the Conrail system (including the former Pennsylvania Railroad) that he grew up with in Beaver County northwest of Pittsburgh.



Two Plasticville signal bridges are almost ready.





Layout construction started in 2015. His friends Tom Moore, Lynn Sontum, and Sam Landfried graciously gave up chunks of their weekends to help construct the open benchwork, weather rails, and lay the GarGraves flexible track and Ross switches. Anthony's first tip for making it through this layout-building process is to find friends to learn from and to help you. The construction goes more quickly, is more fun, and is less likely to go awry with multiple minds focused on the task.

The double-track main line forms a folded dogbone with a 170' continuous loop. The layout represents a line running through a rural landscape, a small industrial center, and a functional switching yard. It also includes a branch line serving several industries. This design, with the main line running through rural scenery, creates the illusion of distance between various points, making for more realistic operations. The plan includes a 25' hidden staging yard that not only provides storage but also serves as an off-layout origin or destination so trains, such as an autorack or double-stack, can logically

run on a layout where no actual automotive plant or intermodal yard is present.

Anthony is not modeling a specific rail line. His layout is a freelance design incorporating scenes representative of eastern Ohio and western and central Pennsylvania. He hopes to capture the feel of some of his favorite rail locations. Examples are the Cassandra overlook on the west slope of the Norfolk Southern Pittsburgh line; a hollow and cement plant along the abandoned Winfield Railroad in West Winfield, Butler County; and the wooden trestles on the former B&O Northern subdivision at Chicora, Pennsylvania.

The curved backdrop is made from 12' lengths of 1/2" drywall, slowly bent and then screwed and plastered in place. Drywall is inexpensive and less likely to warp than Masonite. Anthony spent quite a few afternoons on YouTube with artists Bob Ross and Chris Lyon learning how to paint realistic, early October rolling hills with just a hint of fall color. Countless sky photos were taken and test panels painted to capture the right washed-out blue of Western Pennsylvania skies. I think he nailed it!

No structures have been placed on the layout yet, but Anthony already has secured a collection of shops, houses, and factories from MTH, Atlas, Korber, Crescent Locomotive Works, and Woodland Scenics. He is building a signal bridge and the cement plant and is planning a small locomotive servicing facility. He looks to his friends Steve Hertzner and Dave Minarik, who is the owner of Mercer Junction Train Shoppe in Mercer, Pennsylvania, for tips on meticulous detailing and weathering. Anthony's second tip is to keep moving and to break the work down into small 20-minute projects to maintain progress.

The layout has three distinctive features: wide radius (not diameter) curves on the main line, a fully functioning realistic signal system, and design elements common to other smaller scales. The large curves add to the realism, but have created some challenges. Anthony had dreams of 72" radius curves in a 13' space but had to compromise to 68" or 64" radius curves because a train hugging the edge of the layout would not fit the scene. Also, his large curves





Support columns and other train room obstructions present challenges.



Jackie, Anthony, and son Mitchell



The layout will be one of the tour stops at the 2017 TCA National Convention in Pittsburgh.



This is Jackie's favorite and most appropriate beverage glass.

occupied so much space that they overlapped other track features. It's been difficult to align crossovers and switches within a continuous curve. He suggested that a few more iterations of his plans on paper may have minimized these challenges.


Anthony is installing a modular signal system from Terry Christopher of Custom Signals. It features realistic PRR-style position light signals that function prototypically, indicating not only the presence of a train but also its route and speed through interlocking track. Control boards for the signals to communicate use the same electronics as the Atlas signal system to ensure compatibility on the same layout. Terry designed a double-track bidirectional system that includes tumble-down control so a train entering a block will drop all of the

opposing signals to "stop" throughout the route. The end result will represent a CTC environment of real railroads.

Anthony's last tip, derived from modeler Neal Schorr, is to take inspiration and advice from modelers of other scales. Hidden staging yards are regularly used on HO and N scale layouts. He also plans to install view blocks or scenic dividers common to smaller scales to separate locations along the line to enhance the operating experience. At no point will the entire layout be in view.

Someday when all the tracks are laid and the wiring complete, Anthony and his friends will operate his large collection of locomotives and rolling stock. He runs Atlas, Lionel, MTH, and some Weaver locomotives, all diesels from the 1970s through 2000s. His rolling stock is from

the same manufacturers, with many intermodals, autoracks, coal and coke cars, and tank cars commonly seen in and around Pittsburgh. He plans to use both DCS and Legacy. To round out the experience, he will install a TV to view live feeds from cameras in the hidden staging yard, or perhaps to catch a Penns game.

Anthony and I along with our son Mitchell attended the METCA TCA National Convention near New York City in 2015, and I really appreciated the artistry of the layouts and the hospitality provided by the tour hosts. Anthony is on the planning board for the 2017 TCA National Convention in Pittsburgh from June 25th–July 2nd this year, and our in-progress layout is one of the tour stops. I hope you will come visit our layout. Oh my, I just called it "our" layout! 



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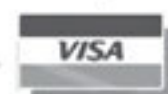
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## HOPPER CARS

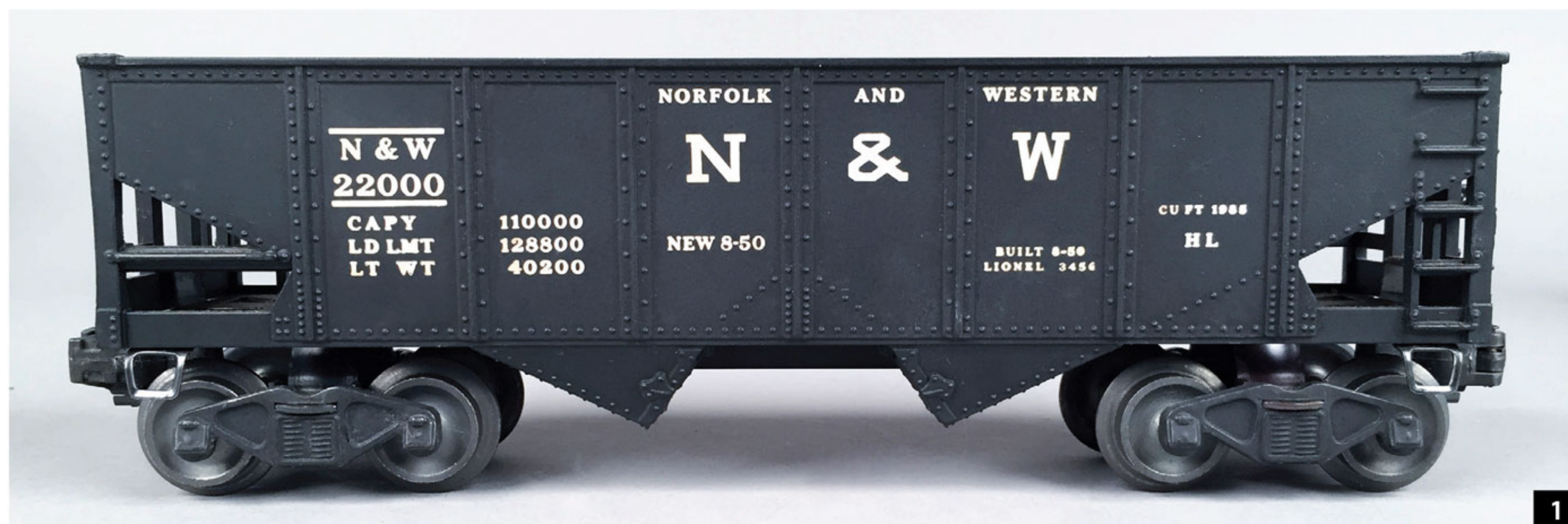
			
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## A Singular Find: Lionel 3456 Norfolk and Western Non-Operating Hopper

When Andrew Amante returned home from U.S. Navy service in Vietnam, he found that all of his Lionel trains that had been placed in the storage area of the family apartment building in Brooklyn were missing. There was just one set left, which he still has. Andy was determined to start all over again and replace what had been lost. That was several decades ago, and that unfortunate loss has turned into a lifetime hobby that has meant fun and fulfillment for him, his three adult children, and his soon-to-be seven grandchildren.

### Small Collection—Intriguing Back Story—Big Find

Andy is tech-savvy, which makes his methods of finding collections to buy so interesting. He retired in 2014 after a career in telecommunications that spanned 45 years in progressively senior positions with AT&T and successor companies. When I interviewed him, I expected him to rattle off all manner of sophisticated 21st-century ways to digitally find and buy trains. I was surprised to learn that he uses plain old-fashioned business cards and word-of-mouth referrals to attract would-be sellers and buyers from his part of northern New Jersey and surrounding states.

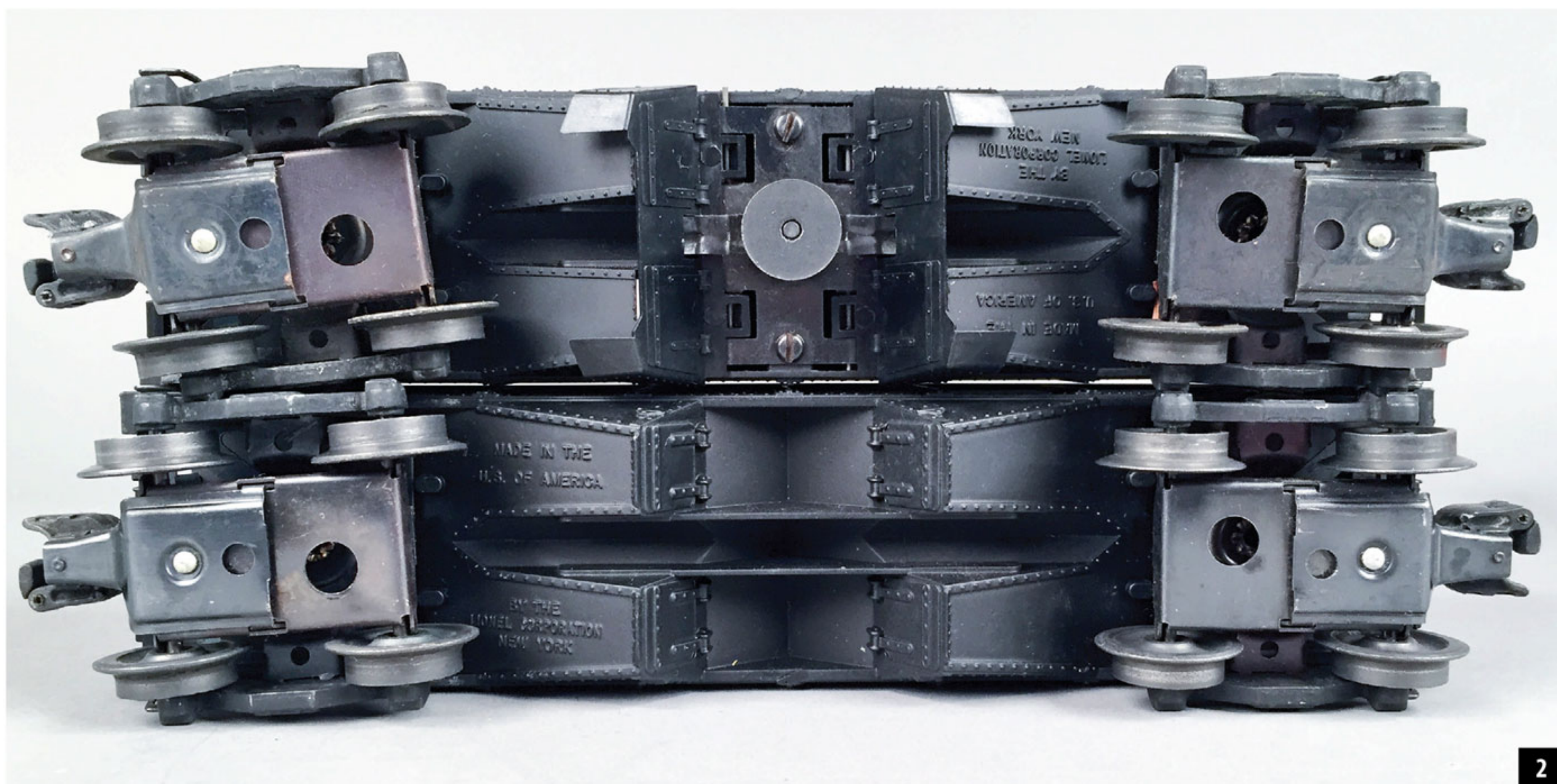
However, when it comes to doing research on the trains he buys, he is every inch a modern-day train sleuth. Andy relies on Internet sources, contacts with fellow collectors, and his extensive library of reference books, especially the ones put out over the

years by Bruce Greenberg and also the collector references published under his name in later times. It was one of the Greenberg books that allowed Andy to discover more about his find.

Now let us get down to how Andy came to acquiring the very unique Norfolk & Western 3456 non-operating/operating hopper seen in Photo 1. It is the story of the belated discovery of a rare postwar treasure among a pile of ordinary trains and homemade junk in a small collection purchased under slightly weird circumstances.

Andy met the seller on a residential street in New Jersey and viewed the collection as the items were put out on top of a low stone wall fronting a house that may not have been the seller's. This was just a little strange, but the seller explained somewhat bitterly that these were all the trains he had because another family member had taken everything else. As a result, he did not want them to know what he was doing; hence, the location of the meeting. As Andy went through numerous handmade bridges, towers, and a pile of rusty tubular track, he found cigar boxes filled with unpainted and unassembled Lionel parts, along with factory inspection tags, and learned the trains came from the estate of the seller's grandmother who had worked at the New Jersey Lionel factory from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Where the trains came from proved helpful in the later detective work of learning more about the non-operating/operating N&W 3456 hopper and establishing it as a legitimate postwar piece.





## The Hopper Was Initially Ignored

Andy bought the collection in May 2016 and concentrated on repairing and restoring the 671 turbine locomotive from the 2179WS 1952 set that was included. After all, he had acquired the set box plus all the cars and individual boxes from the set that he discovered in the jumble of stuff he purchased. That took priority over whatever was in the two separate Lionel boxes marked for hoppers, which languished unopened until he got around to them in August or September. Then the fun really began.

## The Regular-Production 3456 Operating Hopper

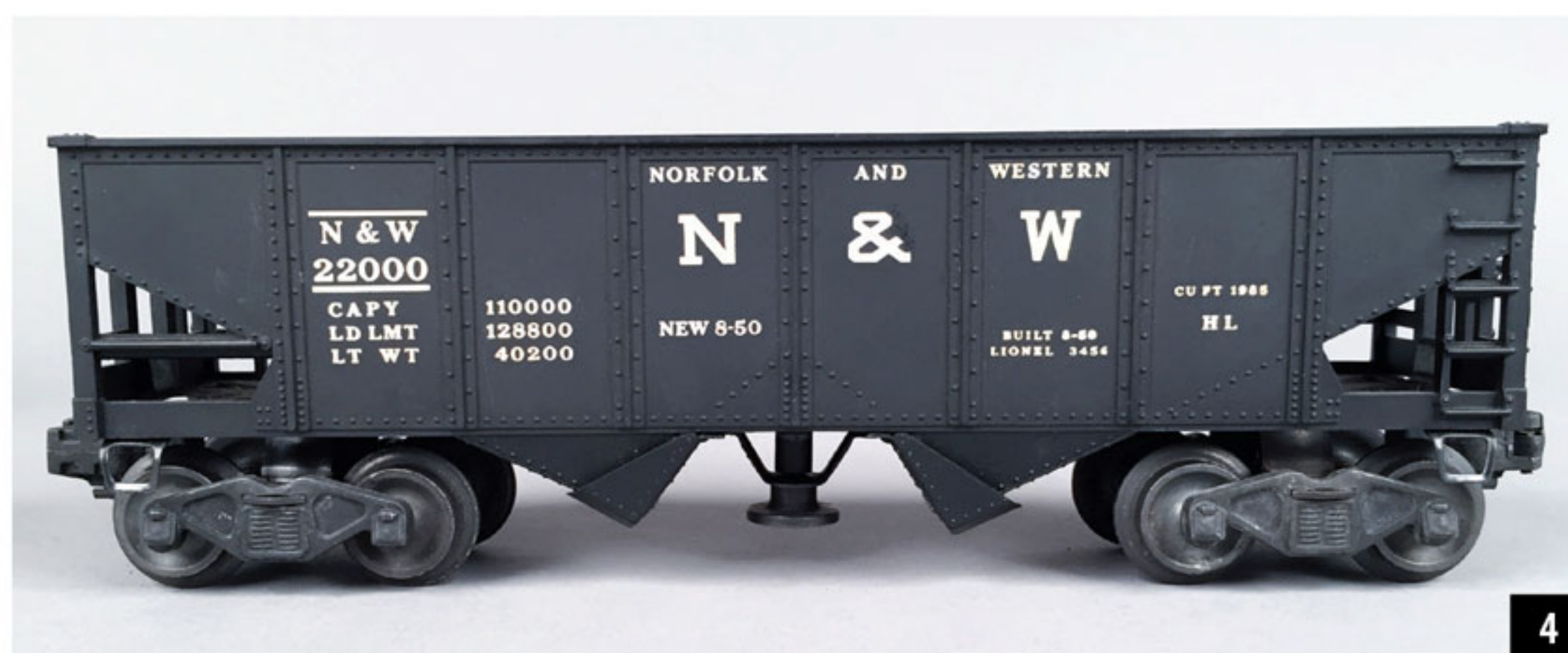
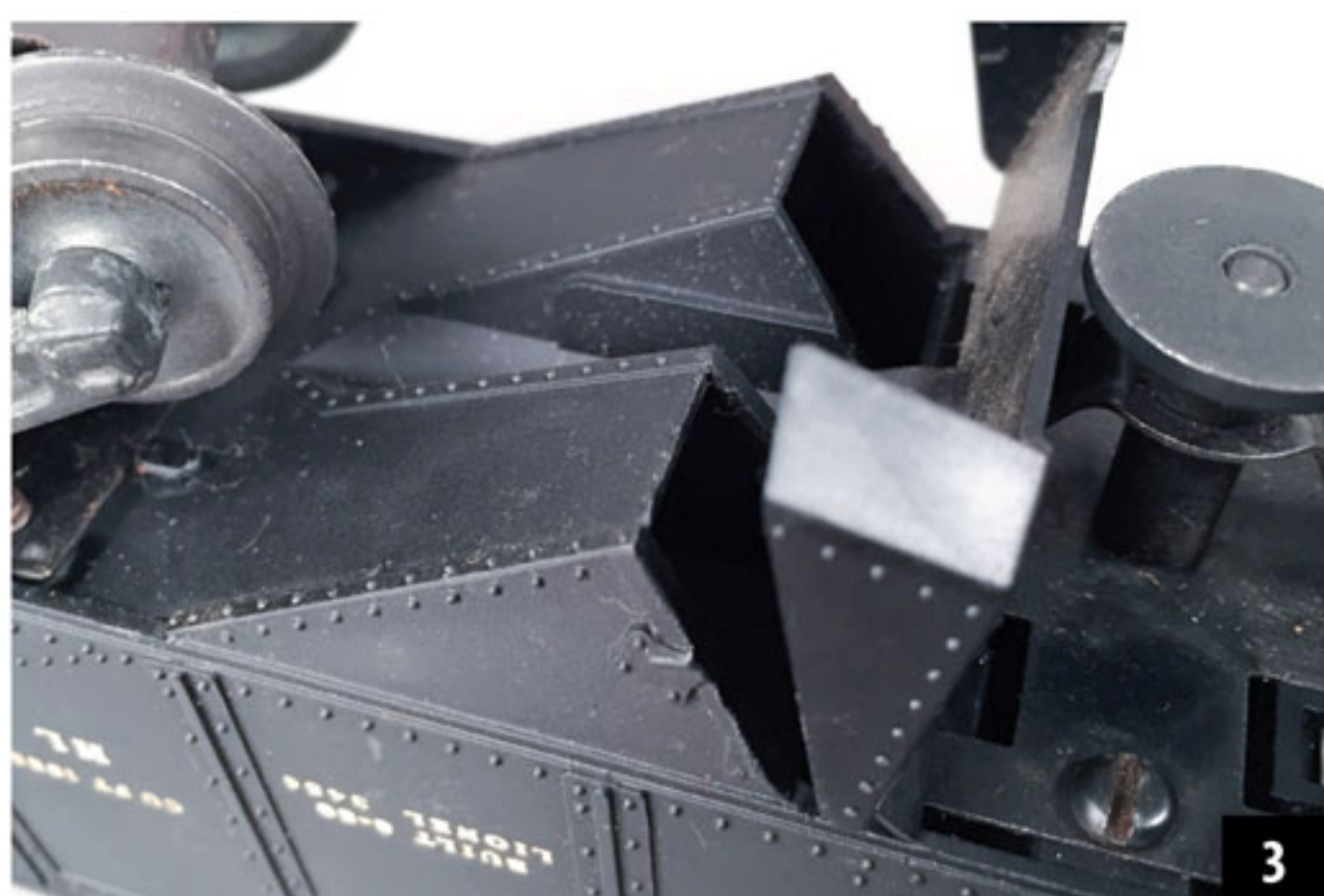
The first hopper was a regular-production 3456 operating hopper, complete with working mechanism and opening hatches, made after 1952 (the top car in Photo 2). Of minor interest was the fact that the bottom of the hopper by the hatches had some rough edges (Photo 3). That was unusual for production of the time but did not affect collector value. The bar-end trucks under this 3456 date the car as post-1952 production (Photo 4). Of more interest is this view of the inside of the operating hopper that shows the heat stamping of the lettering that bled through to the inner walls (Photo 5). The hopper and the box were worth maybe

\$40 in today's market, but it was much more important as a measuring stick to compare with the non-operating/operating 3456 hopper in terms of markings, paint finish, and type of trucks.

## Comparison

The stacked view of the two hoppers dramatically reveals the differences between the standard-production 3456 and the non-operating/operating version. It is obvious that the operating mechanism and movable hatches were never installed in the rare version. Two photos looking from the top of each hopper also emphasize the difference between the cars. Photo 6 is of the regular-production 3456 confirming that it has opening hatches, and Photo 7 shows the inside of the non-operating/operating 3456, which you can clearly see does not have movable hatches.

The two 3456 cars placed side by side show their similarities (Photo 8). They are painted in the same shade of flat black, their white heat-stamped letters and numbers use the same font and style, and they are both shod with the same Lionel metal bar-end trucks. All this indicates they were built in the same factory at about the same time, which tends to reinforce the authenticity of the rare 3456 non-operating/operating hopper.





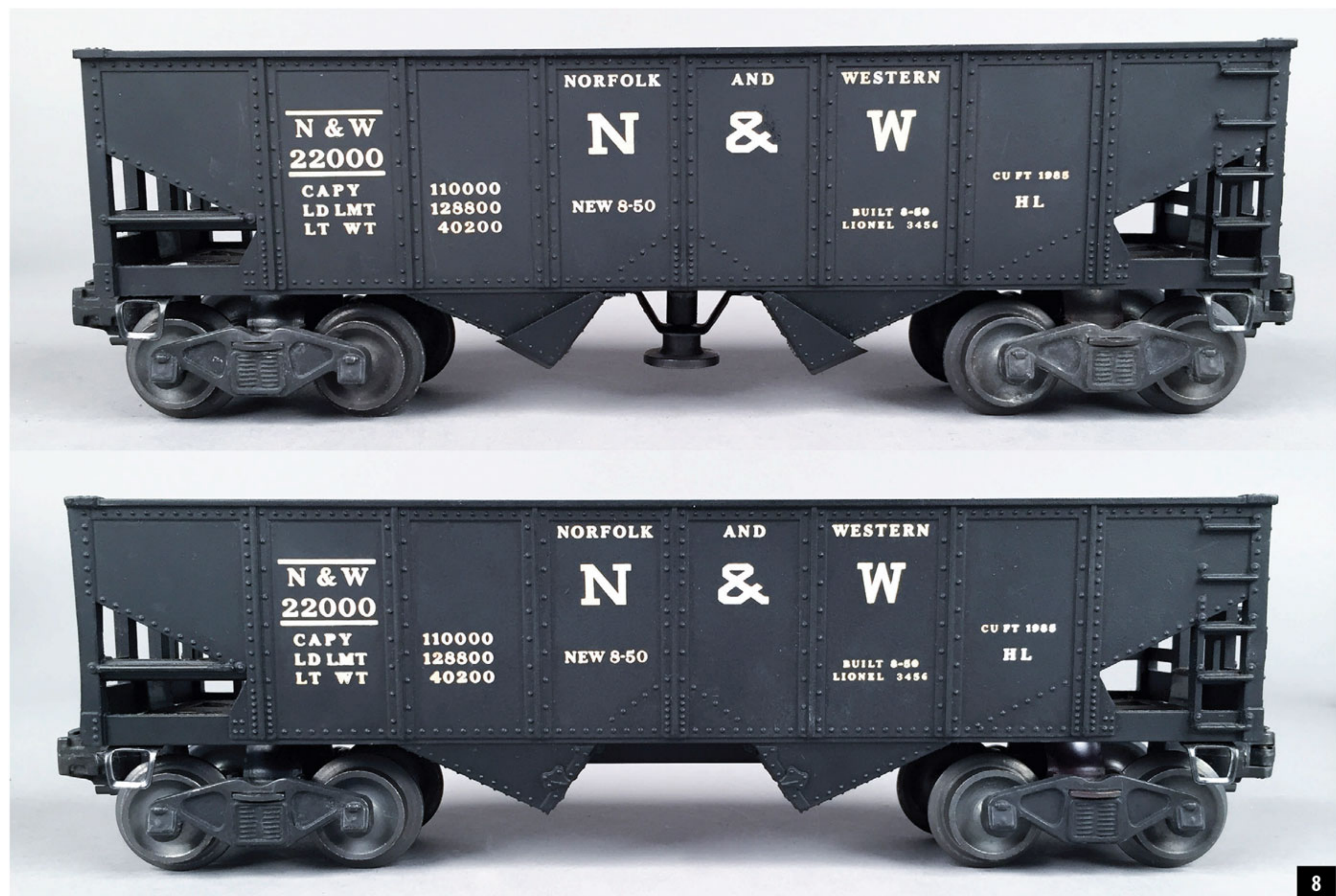
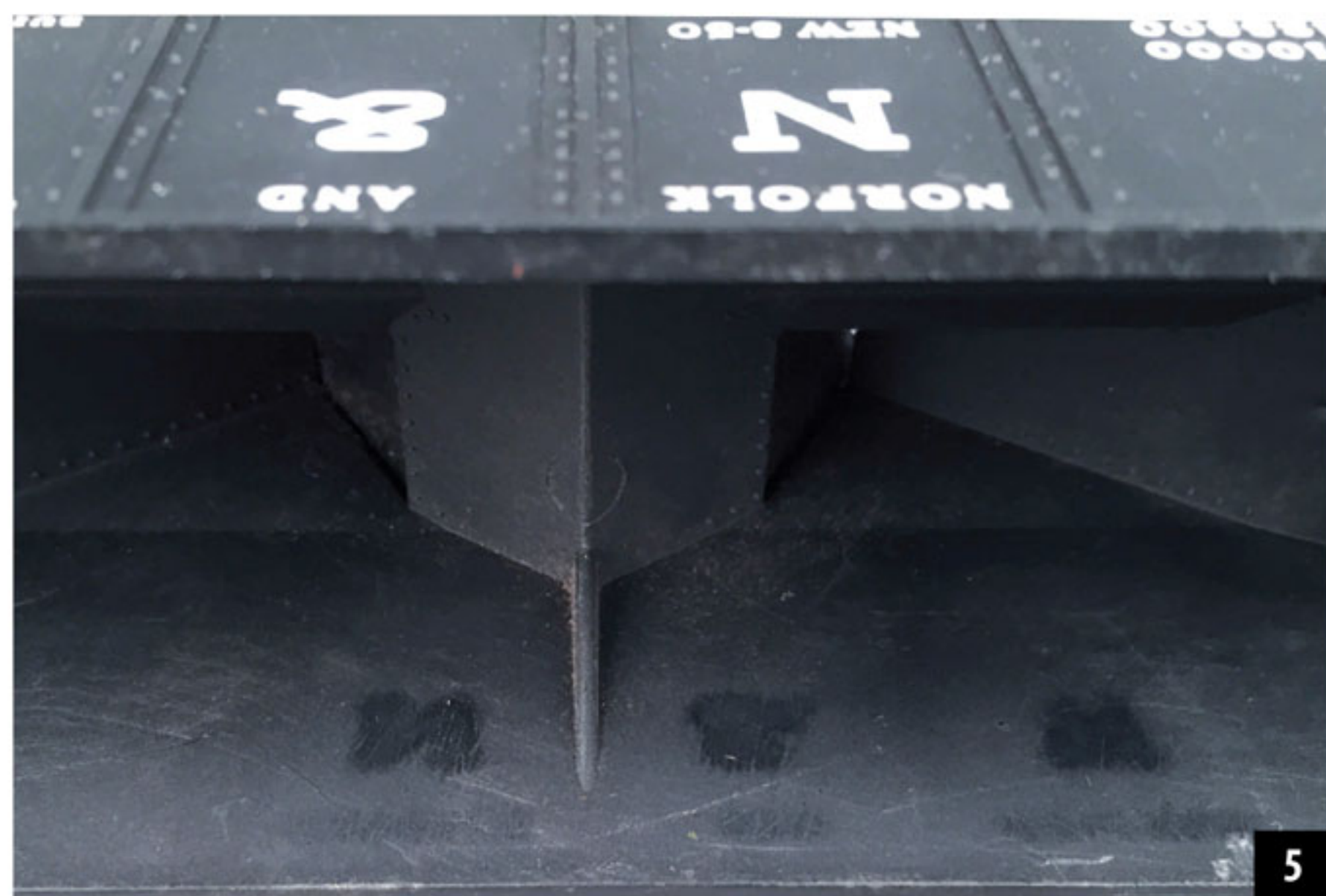
## Searching and Finding

Once he realized he had something special, Andy set out to learn more about the hopper. Initially he got nowhere. None of his contacts, including several very knowledgeable collectors like Lou Palumbo of the Underground Railroad Shoppe, were able to tell him anything about this very special 3456.

In the fall of 2016, the 3456 hoppers were taken to the TCA York meet where Bruce Greenberg was going to photograph them and give both hoppers a further examination. Bruce had some technical issues with his camera, and my partner Rich Melvin offered to do the photography that was needed for the record. That is one of the reasons we are able to share this story with you. Another is that Andy is a personable fellow and was ready, willing, and able to work with me on the back story of the 3456 find. In addition, he is knowledgeable about collecting, and it was a pleasure to deal with him.

## Breakthrough and Finale—for Now

Andy's organizational skills, gained from years in telecommunications management, coupled with his enthusiasm for collecting postwar trains were a great combination as he continued to research his 3456 non-operating/operating hopper. He struck pay dirt when he looked through *Greenberg's Guide to Lionel Trains, 1945–1969, Volume II, Behind The Scenes*. On page 29 he found a picture of the so-called Boys Set, which was believed to be "a very colorful salesman's sample." Here is a blowup of just the blue





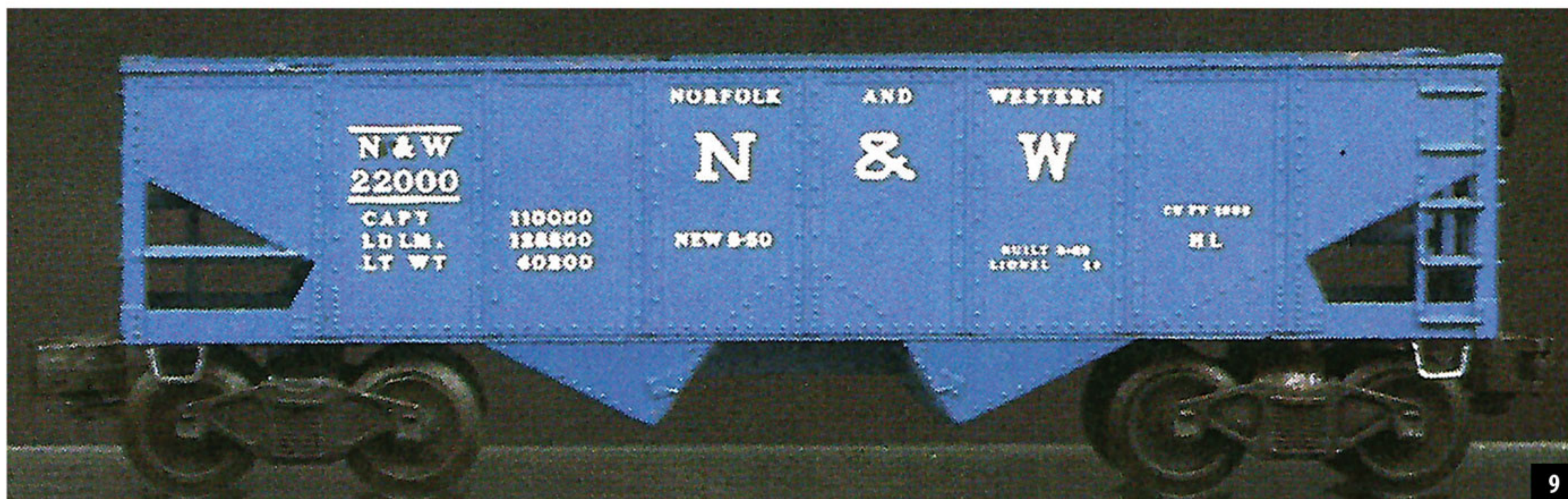
hopper from the set picture (Photo 9). What was important to Andy was that the markings on the blue non-operating hopper were identical to his 3456 *except* the “34” had been deleted from the heat stamp and only the “56” remained.

This is as close as anyone has come so far to a similar item to the black 3456 non-operating/operating hopper in Andy’s possession. The bottom line here is that it is highly unlikely that the rare 3456 is not a true Lionel product. Andy reports that the seller knew nothing about trains and certainly did not have the background to make a convincing heat-stamped replica of a 1952-era piece of Lionel rolling stock. Plus, the relatively modest price

asked and paid for the collection tends to corroborate that fact. At the time of the sale, neither man knew what was in the two boxes with the 3456 hoppers.

The identical appearance of the paint, the lettering and numbering, and the bar-end trucks with magnetic couplers that equip the companion standard-production 3456 adds credence to the authenticity of Andy’s find. For now, it is the only example of the breed that has surfaced in the last 65 years.

By the way, Andy usually operates all the postwar trains he keeps for himself, but I am willing to bet he won’t be running his non-operating/operating 3456.



9

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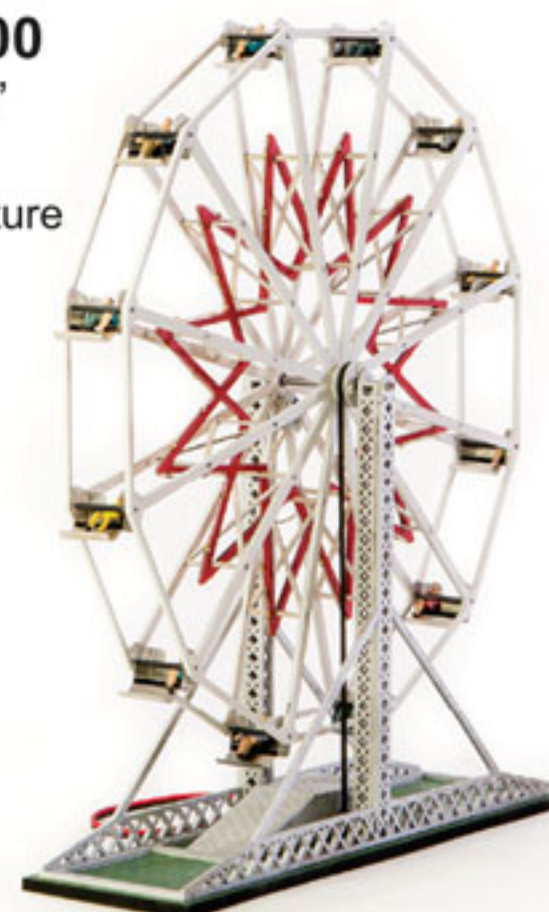


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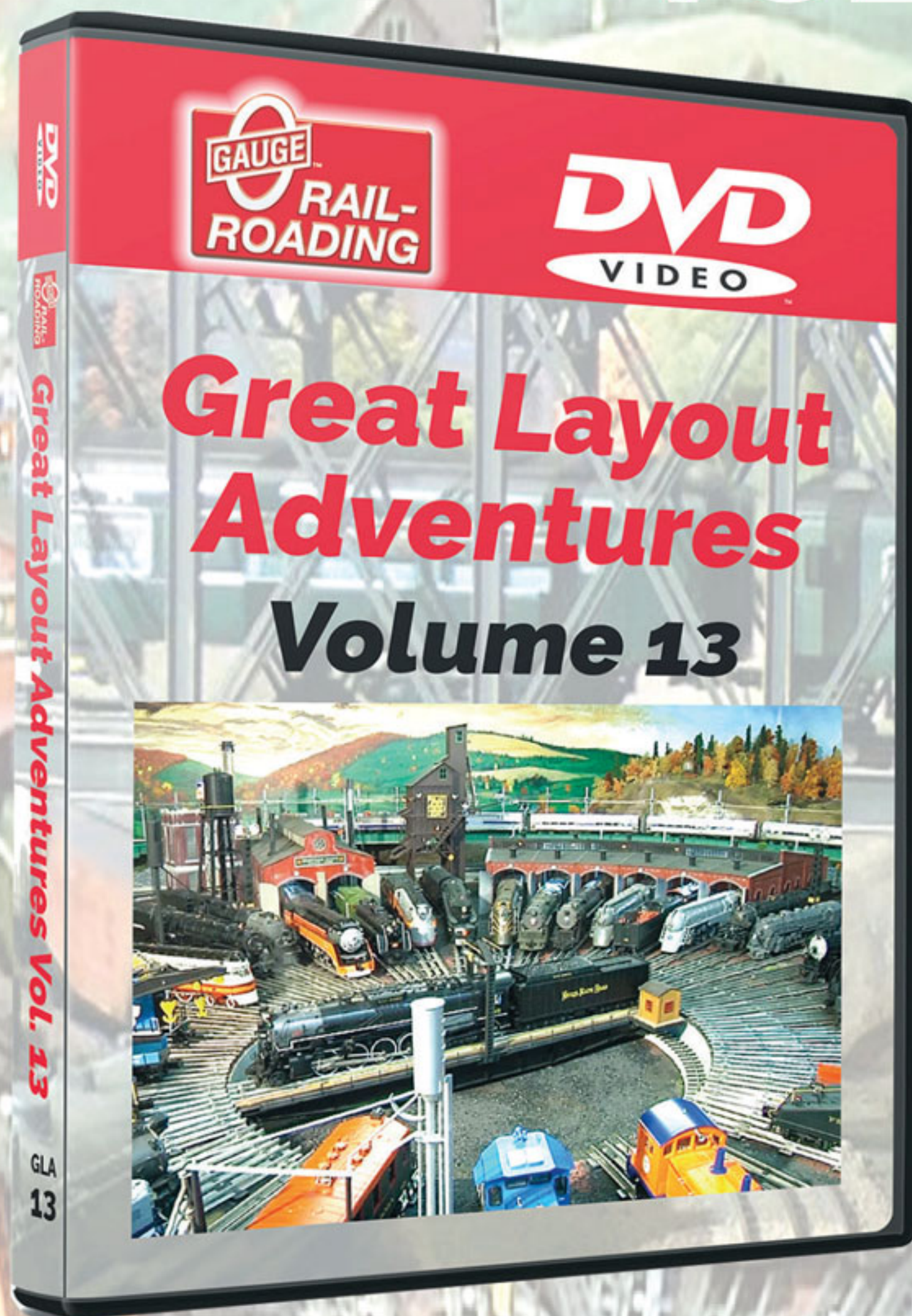


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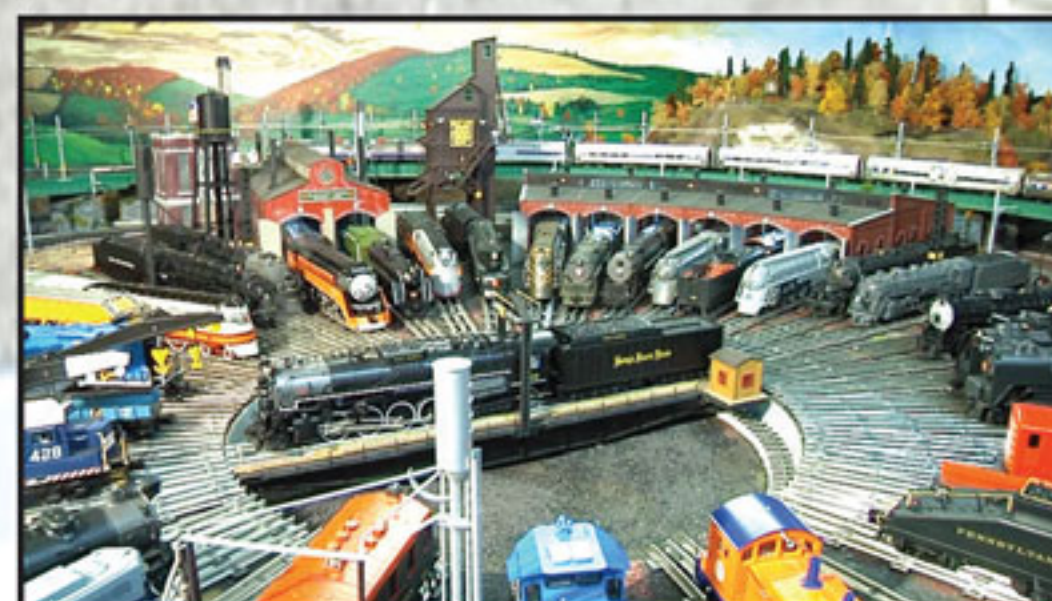
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## Reflecting on Our Roots

Book Review by Allan Miller

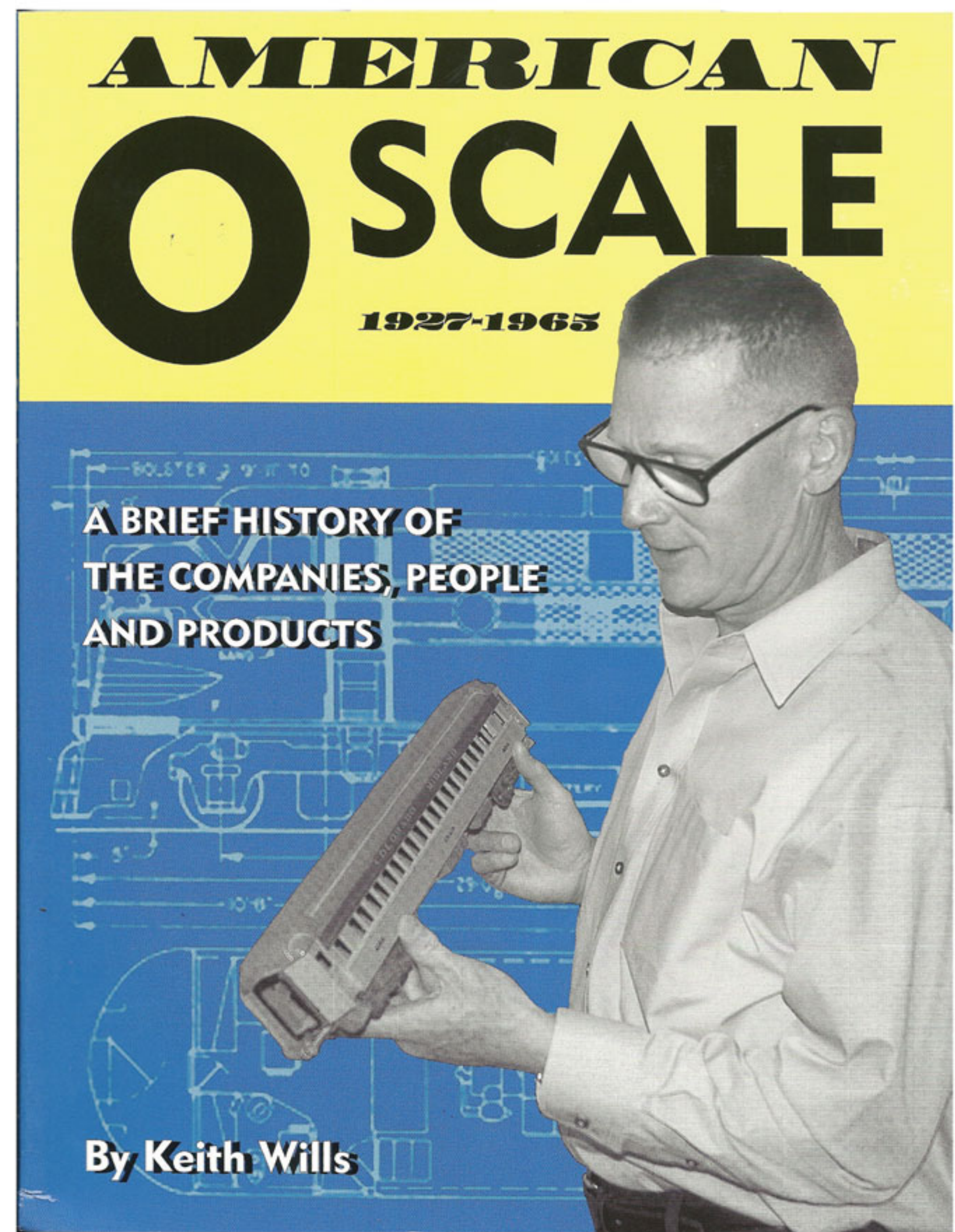
*Keith Wills, American O Scale 1927-1965: A Brief History of the Companies, People and Products from White River Productions, Bucklin, Missouri, soft cover, 100 pages. \$19.95 plus shipping at <http://shop.whiteriverproductions.com>.*

Do you remember being an O scale hobbyist back when O was *the* leading scale in model railroading in the United States? If you do, you're probably among the truly seasoned citizens in our hobby with a very long record of participation dating back for more than half a century.

O scale was truly a pioneering scale in the hobby in the early part of the 20th century along with gauge 1 and gauge 2 (designations adopted by Marklin in Germany). The O designation is derived from "0 [zero] gauge" or "gauge 0" that was smaller than gauge 1 and other then-existing standards in Europe.

Today's most popular model railroading scale, HO, owes its own designation to O (HO is half of O), a clear indication that O definitely preceded HO on the evolutionary scale. HO has dominated the hobby in the U.S. since around the late 1950s and early 1960s—the point at which interest in toy trains began to wane and increasing numbers of enthusiasts began demanding more realistic models that could be presented in more realistic operating environments. Almost simultaneously as American homes became smaller in the post-World War II period, the amount of space that could be devoted to model railroading also became an important consideration leading to the rise of HO.

It's probably safe to assume that most of us in the O gauge/O scale hobby today, and especially those who have partaken of the 3-rail O gauge boom period of the 1990s and first decade of this century, tend to think in terms of products from contemporary manufacturers such as Lionel, MTH, Atlas, 3rd Rail, Williams by Bachmann, and the somewhat recently departed K-Line, Weaver, and RMT. Too often forgotten or



Book cover

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GAUGE

### SCALE MODEL ENGINE OF THE CENTURY

page 28

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No. 700E5—Complete tender assembly.	\$11.00
No. 700E6—Whistle unit and controller.	\$ 4.45
No. 700EW—All six kits, complete.	\$54.75
No. 700E—All kits except whistle.	\$52.35


Lionel's scale Hudson of 1937 was available in a six-section kit form.



overlooked are some of the true scale-oriented pioneers in this segment of the hobby whose contributions were varied and often significant. Keith Wills has addressed that situation and written a book he describes as a brief history of the companies, people and products, which goes a long way to correcting this oversight.

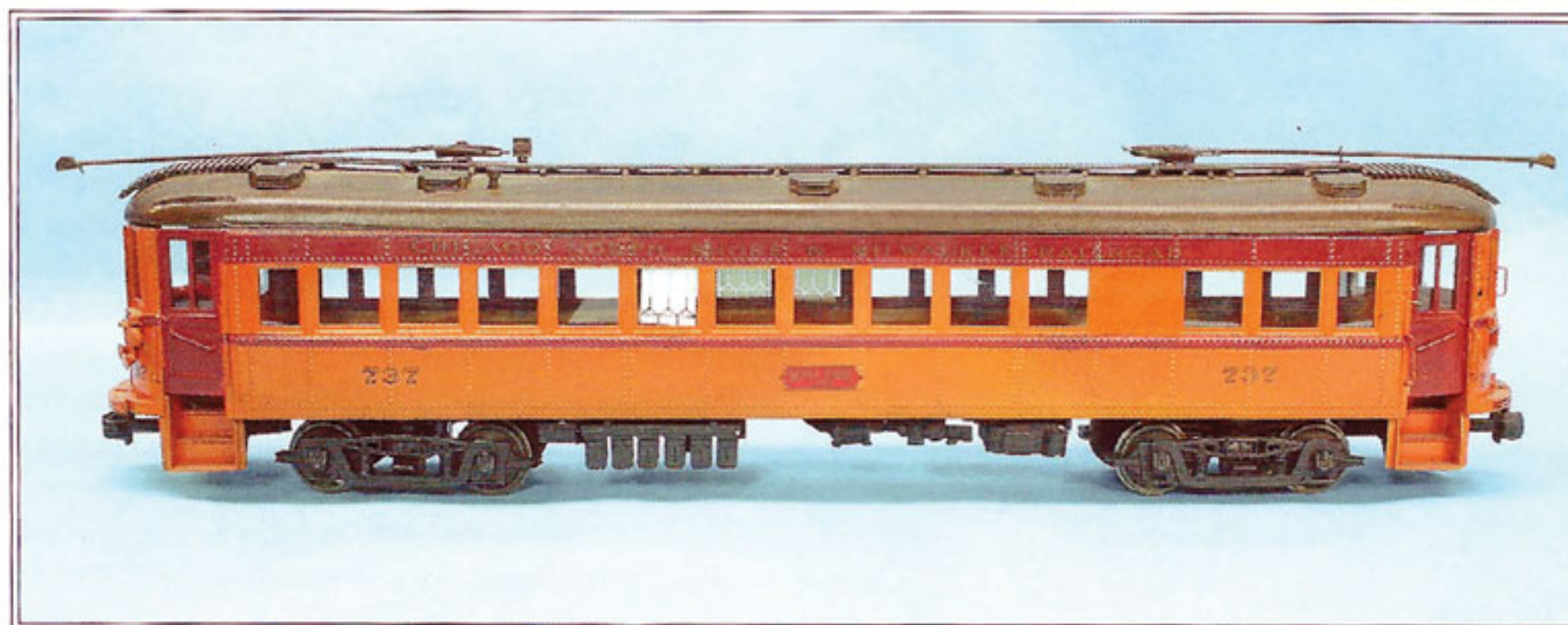
Keith Wills, who for 32 years wrote the "Collector's Consist" column for *Railroad Model Craftsman* magazine, tells the story of O scale as it was back when O was the dominant scale in American model railroading. In the 38-year period covered by his book, 23 manufacturers served the O scale community. Some like Lionel and All-Nation are known and readily recognized names while many others such as Acme, American Model Engineers, Saginaw Pattern and Mfg., Congress Tool & Die, Parmele & Sturges, Fred Icken, Hine Lines, and a number of others are virtually lost to history or perhaps represented in a few scattered personal or museum collections.

An interesting aspect of Keith's book is the efforts he made to place the manufacturers and their products in the context of the economic times and social conditions in which they existed.

If you are interested in the formative history of this model railroading scale, you're sure to find this book easy to read, instructive, informative, entertaining, and a fine addition to your library. 



A Walther's North Shore Line car. Model and photo by George Riley.



This photo from the book shows the Walther's North Shore Line car.

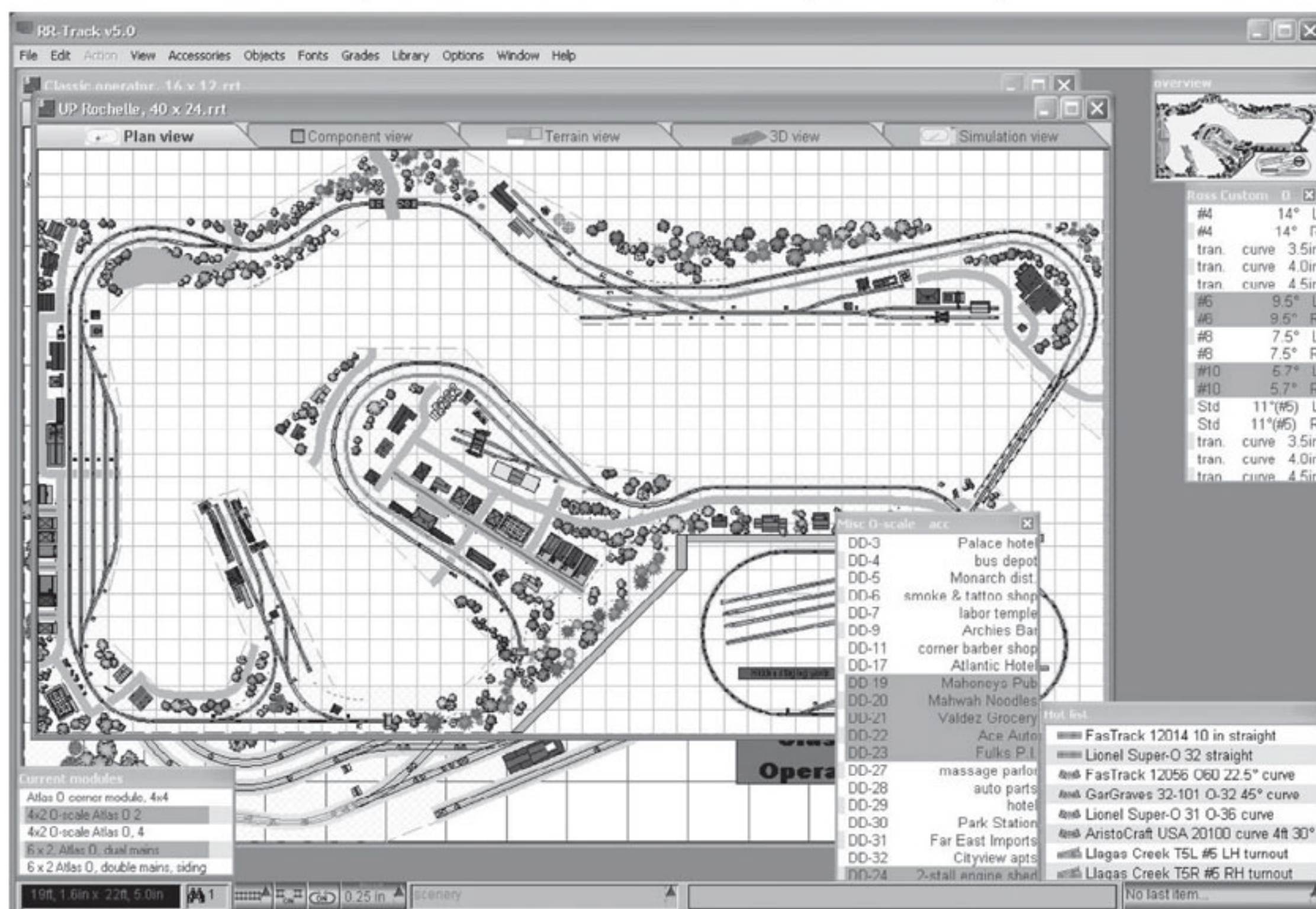


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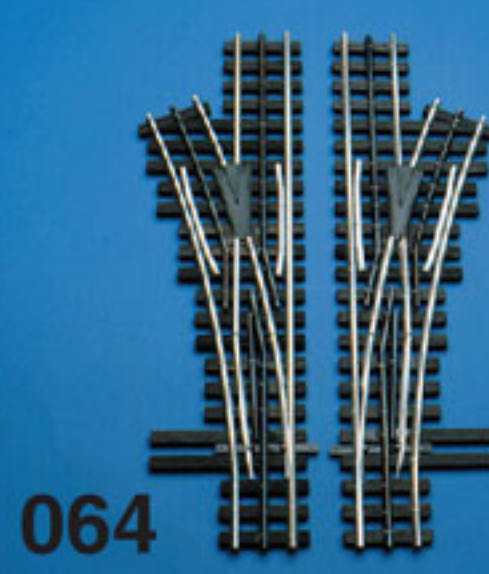
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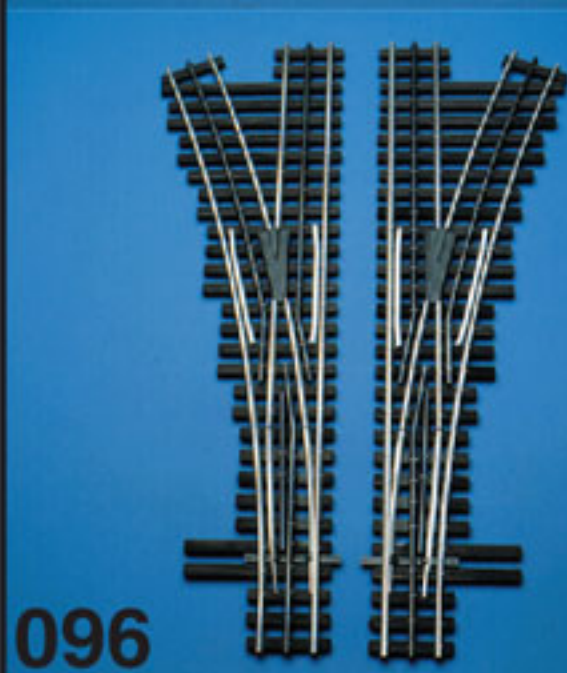
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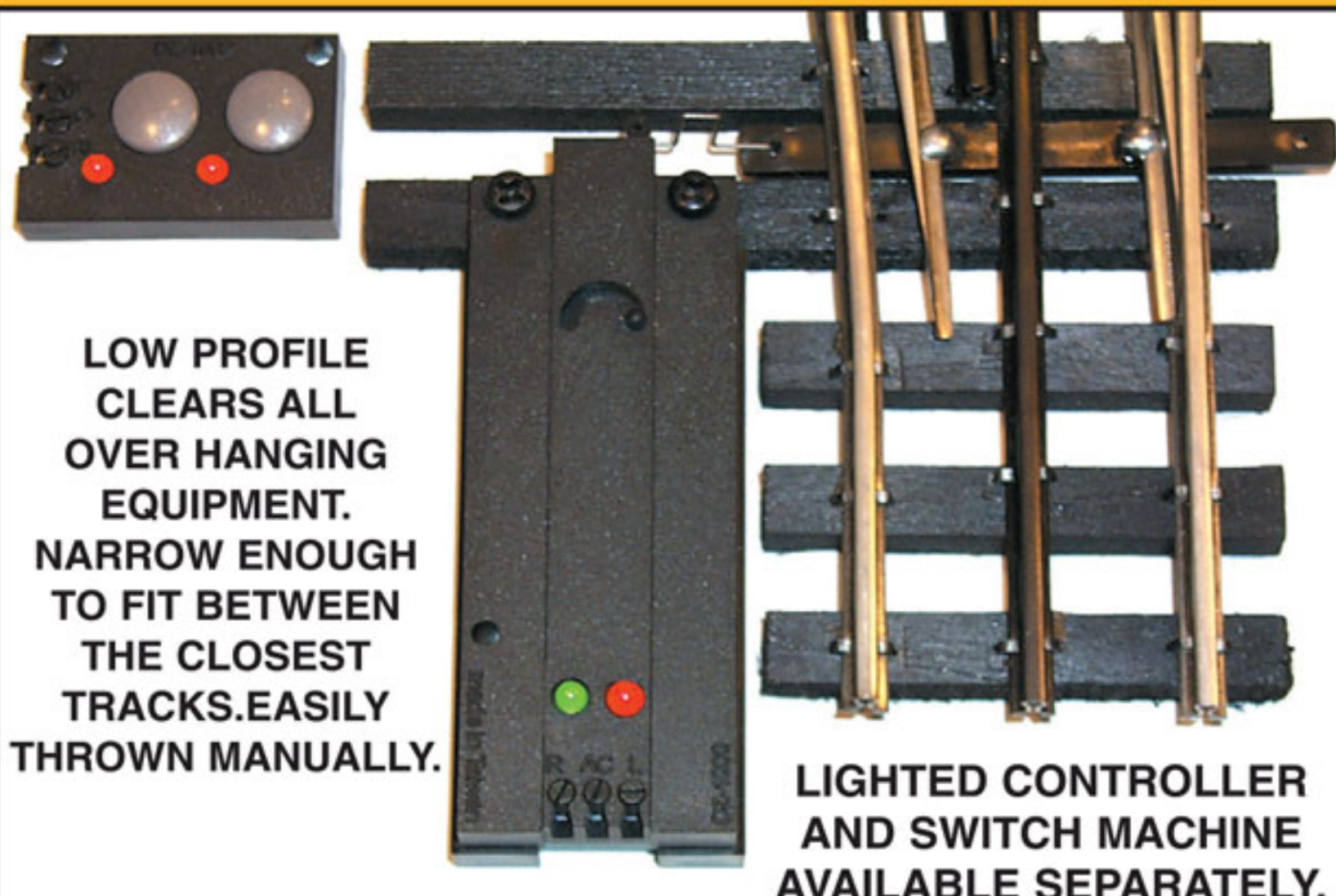
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# Backshop Letters

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

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

As a long-time subscriber, I enjoy and learn from *OGR*. I just read the "Backshop" column in Run 270 (April/May 2014, Building a Layout: Making Hinged Sections) where you wrote about making special-shaped hinges to use for lift-up panels on your layout. I want to suggest an alternative to bending hinges. The principle is the same. Use small blocks to raise the hinge point above the rail level. Thanks for all your contributions to our hobby.

—Ken Morley

*That is indeed the way I've tried it before. What I want to do this time is to make the hinge so it can be all but totally disguised in the end run. I failed to emphasize that in the article since I hadn't added scenery yet. But later in the series I'll have a before and after photo of the hinge to show how it can be so easily disguised.* —Jim

As usual, your "Backshop" articles are very informative. Keep up the good work. In Run 273, (October/November 2014, Building a Layout: Create a Removable River Gorge), I was intrigued by Photo 10 that shows raised curve track sitting on a perfectly cut curved roadbed. Also there is a raised platform just showing a bit at the top of the picture.

I am in the process of building two upper levels on my layout. I wonder if you will elaborate on how to support the raised track firmly so there is no movement when heavy trains pass over the track supports. I have learned a lot in this series and would like to see more of your great ideas including the raised track issue.

—Frank Nardo

*If you look closely at that picture, you will see that the raised roadbed and track are resting on a piece of curved cut-out 1/2" thick plywood. I make a beam compass out of a simple hardware store wooden yardstick and add something called "trammel points," which are a set of clip-on compass needle and pencil lead holders. Then I make arcs on the plywood allowing for the width of the cork roadbed and clearance inside the tunnel and cut the curved plywood support piece out with a jigsaw. It seems like a lot of work, but it isn't really. Once you've done one, the rest of them are a snap.*

*I then support the plywood with cut-off scraps of a 1x4 at the right height to smoothly support the curve. I screw down the support legs with drywall screws through the edges of the 1x4 at the ends of the support board to attach them to the table surface. Then I screw down the raised curved plywood with some more drywall screws onto the supports.*

*Hope this helps.* —Jim

I just want to send you a brief note to let you know how much I'm enjoying your layout construction article series. This is a great approach with some real-life obstacles you wouldn't encounter with a 4' x 8' layout.

—Tommy Mabry

*Gee, I'm glad this helps you. It's always hard to get the right information out to help. If you have any questions on what you are doing, just go ahead and e-mail me, and I'll see if I can help you out.* —Jim

I just wanted to write and tell you how much I'm enjoying your series on "Building a Layout." I normally pass my *OGR* magazines on to a friend, but these issues with your photos and articles are keepers for sure. On the West Coast you

have a huge fan of this series, and I'm really looking forward to the next issue.

Obviously, the demographic of train buyers is older even though the industry has tried to get the next generation involved. I have given serious consideration to opening a train store in my area. I think there is still a place for a store under the right circumstances. The nearest stores in any direction are over 20 miles from where I live. Any tips or advice?

—Roy MacKinnon

*I think model railroading will still be around long after I'm gone. But it won't be the same as it has been in the past. On opening a store, my advice would be to consider that a contemporary train store won't be successful unless it also sells through the Internet, or at least sells using mail order as well as being a brick and mortar store. There is a small store near me in Mason, Ohio, that opened within the last 20 years and is operated by my friend Rocky Lane (Dixie Union Station). He is both a brick and mortar store and a mail-order store using advertising in *OGR*. His winning formula is for pricing fairly (not the cheapest, but also not the most expensive). He is quite successful. Getting started in a new area will take time before you can expect to turn a profit. Advertising will be your key to kicking off a new business.*

*I know of your pain on the West Coast as far as the number of train stores. I didn't realize how lucky we were here in the Midwest until after we had bought the magazine and I had done some traveling.*

*Thank you for the comments on my series on "Building a Layout." I wish it could go faster. I'll be on this series for quite some time. If you have questions that you need answered, be sure to go ahead and ask that question in the form of an e-mail.* —Jim



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As usual, your responses in the latest issue were fantastic. I run MTH exclusively and have had lots of problems with steamers and diesels throwing tires. Can you elaborate on CA glue, particularly on where I can find it? Can it be used on steamers also and do you put enough on with a toothpick so you cover the entire circumference of the tire? Someone told me that placing Lionel tires on MTH diesels would also solve the problem. If so, where can I order Lionel traction tires?

Finally, I am building a small layout surrounding my pool table using MTH Real Trax. I have divided the layout into seven separate power sections by removing the copper connectors and opening a gap with my Dremel tool across all three rails where the sections are separated. I am using the MTH power connectors. Therefore one rail is dead when tested. Do the dead rails have to line up by having the power connectors inserted consistently on one side of the track? Should I solder the two ground rails together or does it really matter?

—Tim Petta

Buying Lionel tires won't make any difference in the problem except to probably make it worse. Each tire is engineered for the wheel it is to be mounted on. The thickness of the rubber, the width of the rubber, and the diameter of the rubber tire all come into play. While it may have been true for some particular modeler or for some particular trains, it is otherwise just sheer luck that it actually worked.

CA glue is found at most hobby shops and at Hobby Lobby. Using CA glue on

the tire is done with only two or three tiny drops placed under the tire at equal spacing around the rim using only the tip of a toothpick. The reason tires fail is that they are stretched due to the engine pulling a hard load for some period of time. Then when they stretch, they no longer stay in the wheel. Simply locking them on the wheel at a couple of locations usually solves the problem for years. It is not necessary to use the spray-setting agent usually used when using CA glue. The spray liquid is just an accelerator. If you use the CA without it, it will still set up on its own. All that's needed is a drop or two at a few locations.

Maintaining a ground or AC common through both outside rails is not necessary to the operation of the engine. Only one side needs to be grounded (or attached to the black AC- post of the transformer). There is still an advantage in connecting both outside rails to the same AC ground. In cases where the locomotive is progressing through a switch, there will be brief instantaneous times when only one side or the other may be in contact with a live ground rail. I ground both outer rails unless I am relying on one of the outside rails to be insulated, using the presence of engines and cars (solid steel axles) to act as an electrical switch to complete a ground from one outside rail to the other to activate an accessory. —Jim

I was wondering if it would be possible for you to add some 18-, 20-, or 22-gauge wire in 2 and 4 conductors to your products being sold through your "Backshop" column? I'm using the

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wire you have right now for my layout. I really like it and would like some smaller sizes with more conductors for accessories.

I probably won't personally be buying a lot of it because my layout isn't that big, but I thought others might also be interested.

—Tom Frye

*Sorry, but I have been unable to find a supplier for wire in small gauges effective enough for us to be able to wholesale to our dealers. You might try Home Depot or Lowes for spools of smaller wire gauge sizes such as 20 or 22 gauges. If all else fails, try [www.allelectronics.com](http://www.allelectronics.com) on the Internet. They have all sizes and quantities for sure. —Jim*

Somewhere I remember seeing a diagram you did showing how to hook up a TMCC Command Base and a DCS TIU. I just can't find it. Can you help?

—Bob Beckett

*Well this is one time when yours and my memory are in agreement. I too can't find the photo and diagram that showed the hookup either. It is however basically simple. Just connect the black wire from the output of the TMCC Command Base to the output side of the AC common (black leads) coming out of the left side(s) of any and all TIUs you use. The TMCC signal gets introduced to the track wiring after the TIU inserts the digital signal into the track wiring. That should do it. —Jim*

I read your article in a recent issue where you said you no longer think Homasote is necessary for sound deadening. I would like to know what you think about screwing the track directly to the plywood. I am using FasTrack on my new layout.

—Brad

*I was specifically referring to GarGraves or Ross track, but with Lionel FasTrack you will definitely need to use something to help deaden the sound transmission. As I noted in my article, nothing quiets down a layout as well as full scenery. That is because scenery materials added to the train table actually increase its mass and therefore reduce its ability to vibrate. In addition, soft things like tree foliage, grass, and so forth soften the sound waves emitted by the tabletop and the wheels of the trains.*

*If I were using FasTrack, I would probably use cork roadbed at the very least to help reduce the noise from the trains on the track. You can screw it to the roadbed, but try to keep direct attachment of the track to the plywood to a minimum where you can. I realize there may be a time when that is just not practical, but the fewer hard connections you make from track to plywood, the quieter things will be.*

—Jim Barrett

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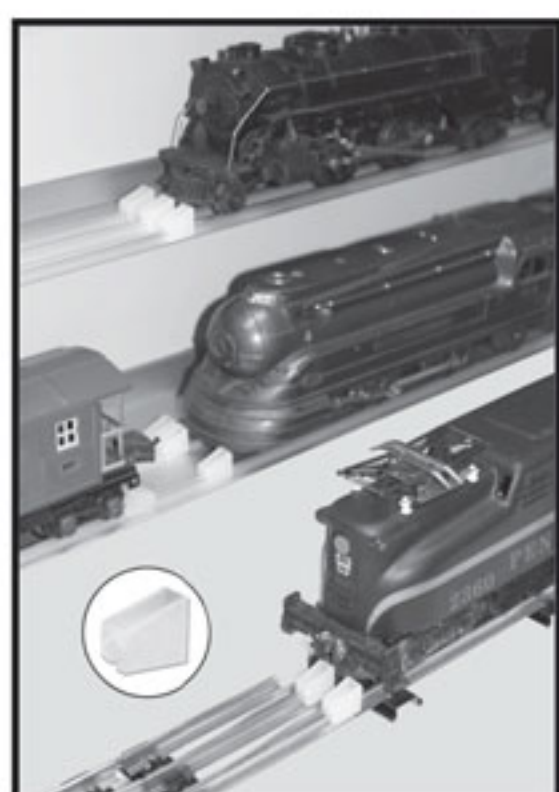


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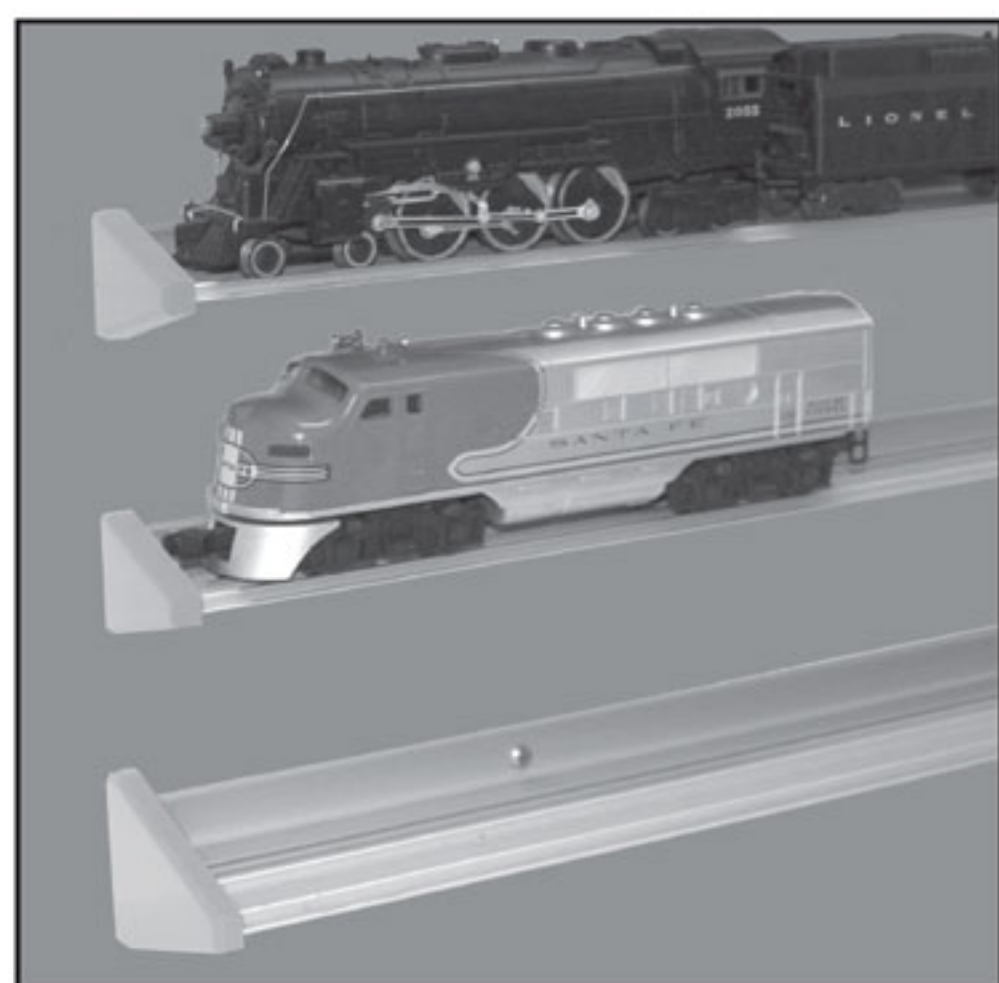
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## Playing with the LionChief Universal Remote

Here's the scenario for this evening's operating session. Three LionChief Plus locomotives are on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad with a Hudson on the outer loop pulling a passenger train, a GP7 on the inner loop with a freight train in tow, and an RS3 in an industrial siding ready to come out and shuttle cars from either train. To the outside of my floor-borne oval layout and next to my power bench is the new Lionel No. 6-83071 LionChief Universal Remote Controller and its owner's manual. At the list price of \$44.99, this remote is replacing three dedicated LionChief controllers: one for each of the three LionChief Plus locomotives I'm about to run. Those three controllers are parked on a shelf—I don't need them. As to the new bright orange universal controller, I can set it down anywhere in my train room and spot it instantly, even from the other side of the room.

I've already read the entire 16-page owner's manual describing each of the controls, most of them familiar, on the LionChief Universal Remote, how to assign or "pair" each locomotive to one of the three Engine Selection buttons, and how to control

each locomotive including adjusting its sound volume. You see, although the universal remote is relatively simple, it has a few setup and operating procedures that are easy to do but are not intuitive.

Because the manual adequately explains each of the procedures, getting the locomotives and controller into operation together is a snap. Before doing anything with the layout and locomotives, I clear any prior locomotive assignments from the universal remote following the instructions in the owner's manual.

To pair the first locomotive with the universal remote, the Hudson in this case, I apply power only to the Hudson's track and just tap the #1 Engine Selection button on the remote. In this and every other case, the procedure automatically establishes radio communication between the universal remote and the locomotive and loads the engine's identification into the remote's memory. Until I pair a different locomotive to the #1 button, it always selects the Hudson. The remote retains identifications for all three locomotives when it is turned off and even after replacing its batteries.





For the second engine, the GP7 on the CCRR's inner loop, I power up its track and tap the #2 Engine Select button. Voilà, the GP7 and the universal remote are working together.

Because the industrial siding comes off the CCRR's outer loop, I power down the loop, put the engine on the track, turn the track power back on, and tap the #3 Engine Select button on the remote. Actual time from powering up my ZW-L to pairing all three engines with the remote, including putting the RS3 on the track, is 57 seconds according to my stopwatch.

Running the three LionChief Plus engines using the universal remote is an enjoyable exercise in whimsical fantasy, especially as I view train action from trackside floor level; that is, after mastering the remote's speed control quirk. O gauge railroaders who are used to running multiple locomotives at the same time using TMCC, Legacy, or DCS may find the LionChief throttle control procedure somewhat esoteric, as I did, when switching control from one engine to another.


Merely pressing the button for the newly selected engine lets you initiate horn, bell, or dialog sounds from that engine. But to smoothly change the newly selected engine's speed, I have to first match the position of the throttle knob to the engine's current speed. To do that, I rotate the throttle knob one direction or the other until the red LED at the top of the controller's case flashes at the rate supposedly reflecting the engine's speed. Afterwards, rotating the throttle either direction increases or decreases the engine's speed accordingly.

Another way to change the newly selected engine's speed with possibly unwanted results is to press the target Engine Selection button a second time. To quote the owner's manual, "This may result in an abrupt change in speed and/or direction." It will for sure! The target engine immediately accelerates or decelerates according to the throttle knob's current setting. For example, if the previously selected engine is running at high speed and the newly selected one is stopped or running slowly in forward or reverse, tapping the target button a second time will cause the slow train to accelerate immediately to the high speed set on the throttle knob. I can readily imagine a train of light cars in a tight curve with their engine suddenly leaping forward, or even backward—train wreck!

As a brief explanation behind the universal remote's behavior, throttle control of any LionChief locomotive is absolute in that a specific speed setting of the remote's throttle knob, "forward-10" for example, causes the associated engine to run at forward-10 speed. This is a simple and easily implemented remote control paradigm for a product line of low-cost command-controlled toy train locomotives. But it has its quirks when dealing with multiple locomotives controlled from a single universal remote.

The new universal remote is compatible with the second-generation LionChief products in addition to all LionChief Plus locomotives. However, as noted in a letter from Lionel to its value-added dealers (see sidebar), the first-generation LionChief locomotives listed in the communiqué won't work with the new LionChief Universal Remote at this writing, which is in late January 2017. Hopefully, this will be a short-term situation.

Additionally, Lionel publicizes Bluetooth capabilities for the remote, but at this time it appears to be a future feature. Apparently Bluetooth capability is built into the universal remote's electronics, but no apps are currently available. It is not known if any apps are being written at this time.

I enjoy running multiple LionChief Plus engines on the CCRR using the new LionChief Universal Remote. It sure beats keeping track of three separate remotes: one for each engine. A quick search on the Internet revealed mail-order train dealer prices for the remote from the high \$30 to the low \$40 range. With the universal remote, there are a lot of play-value hours available for about the cost of a good roadside-cuisine dinner for two. 

Dear Value Added Dealers:

We wanted to update you with some information on the non-pairing of the Universal Remote (6-83071) with some of the first-generation LionChief locomotives.

The first-generation LionChief locomotives are not supported by the Universal Remote with original production firmware. These LionChief products use a different masked-type of RF signal. We are working on a software update later this summer that should reduce some of the below items from the non-compatible list.

Below is a list of first-generation LionChief locomotives that are *not* supported by the LionChief Universal Remote:

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6-30183 Lionel 2-4-2 Remote Scout Steam Set  
6-30190 Thomas and Friends Remote Set  
6-30205 2-4-2 Remote Xmas Set  
6-30206 Alien Invasion Remote RS3 Set  
6-30207 Santa Fe RS3 Remote Scout Freight Set  
6-30214 Peanuts Halloween 2-4-2 Remote Set  
6-30218 Polar Express Remote Set  
6-30221 Thomas and Friends Diesel Set  
(Separate sale 6-18775)  
6-30222 Percy Set  
6-30223 James Set  
6-30228 0-8-0 Chattanooga Set  
6-30233 Pennsylvania Flyer Remote Set  
6-81031 Lionel Junction Dinosaur Diesel Remote Set  
6-81101 Remote Polar with 10th Anniversary Logo  
6-81259 PRR 0-8-0 Remote Broadway Limited  
6-81262 Union Pacific Flyer Remote (0-8-0)  
6-81263 Jersey Remote RS3 Passenger Train  
6-81286 Little Steam Remote Set  
6-81287 Union Pacific Steam Remote Freight Set  
6-81288 Lionel Junction Pet Shop Diesel Remote Set  
6-81331 Iron Arry  
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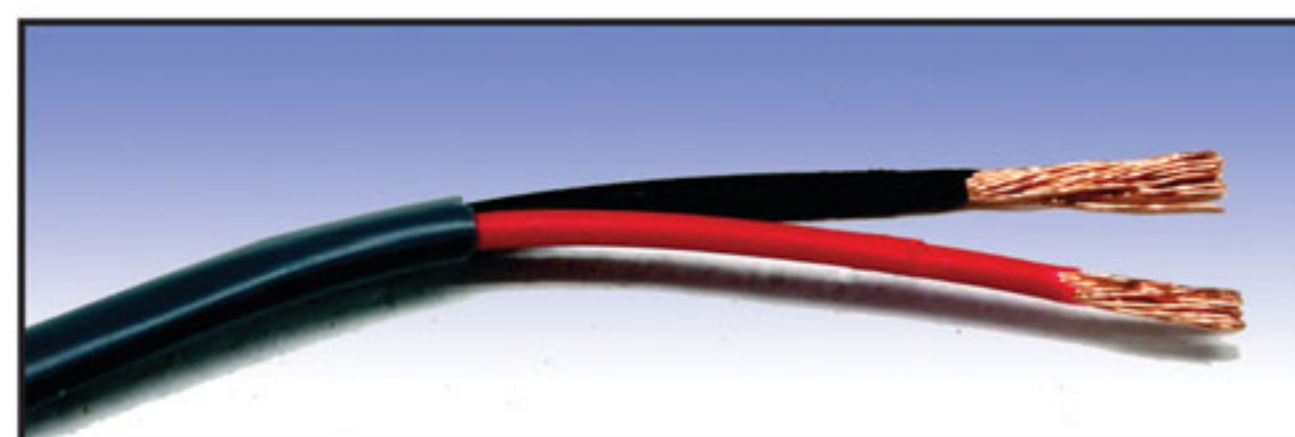
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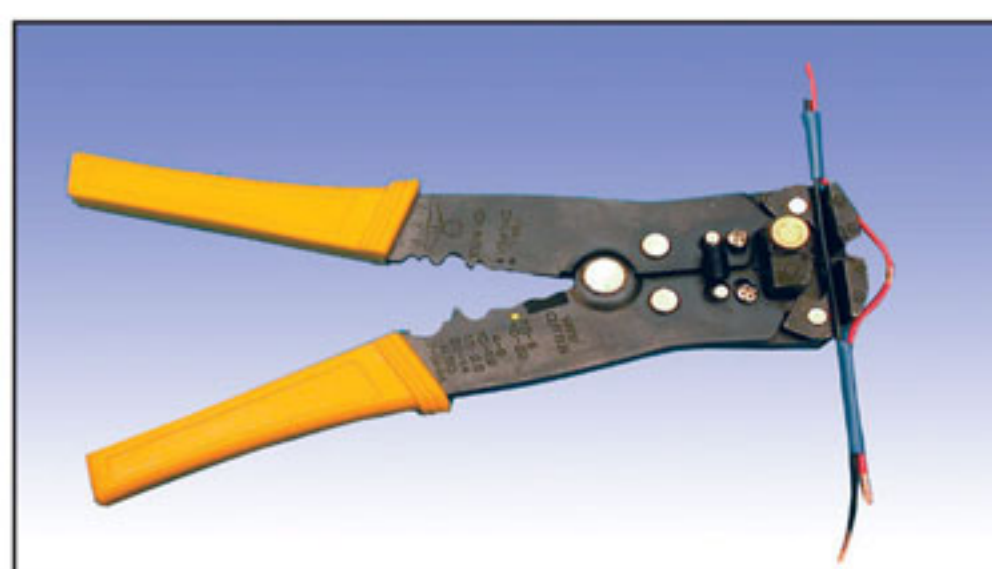
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**May 20, 2017**

**SAN ANTONIO (GARDEN RIDGE), TX** – Train Collectors Assn. 40th Annual Spring Train Show, Garden Ridge Community Center, 9500 Municipal Parkway. 10:30a-4p. Adm: Adults \$6, \$9 per family. Info: Pat Halpin, 210-661-4238, [pathalpin@aol.com](mailto:pathalpin@aol.com).

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**June 3-4, 2017**

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**TAMPA, FL** – Tampa Model Train 17th Show, Florida State Fairgrounds, Special Events Center. Sat. 9a-5p, Sun. 10a-4p, Adm: \$9, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, 703-536-2954, [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com), [rrshows@aol.com](mailto:rrshows@aol.com).

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**July 22, 2017**

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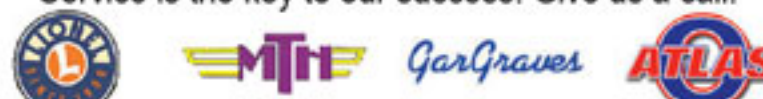


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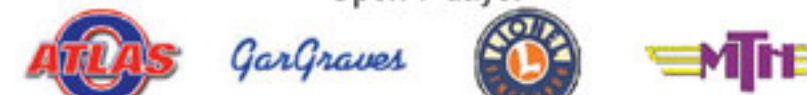


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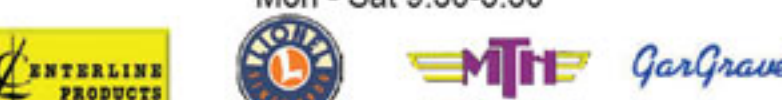


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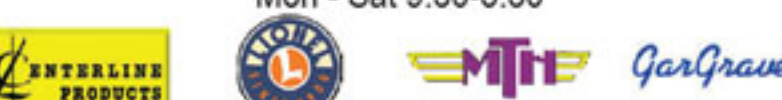


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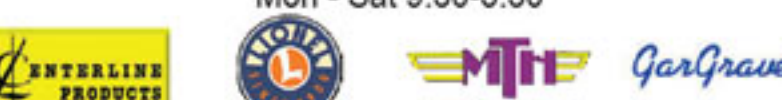


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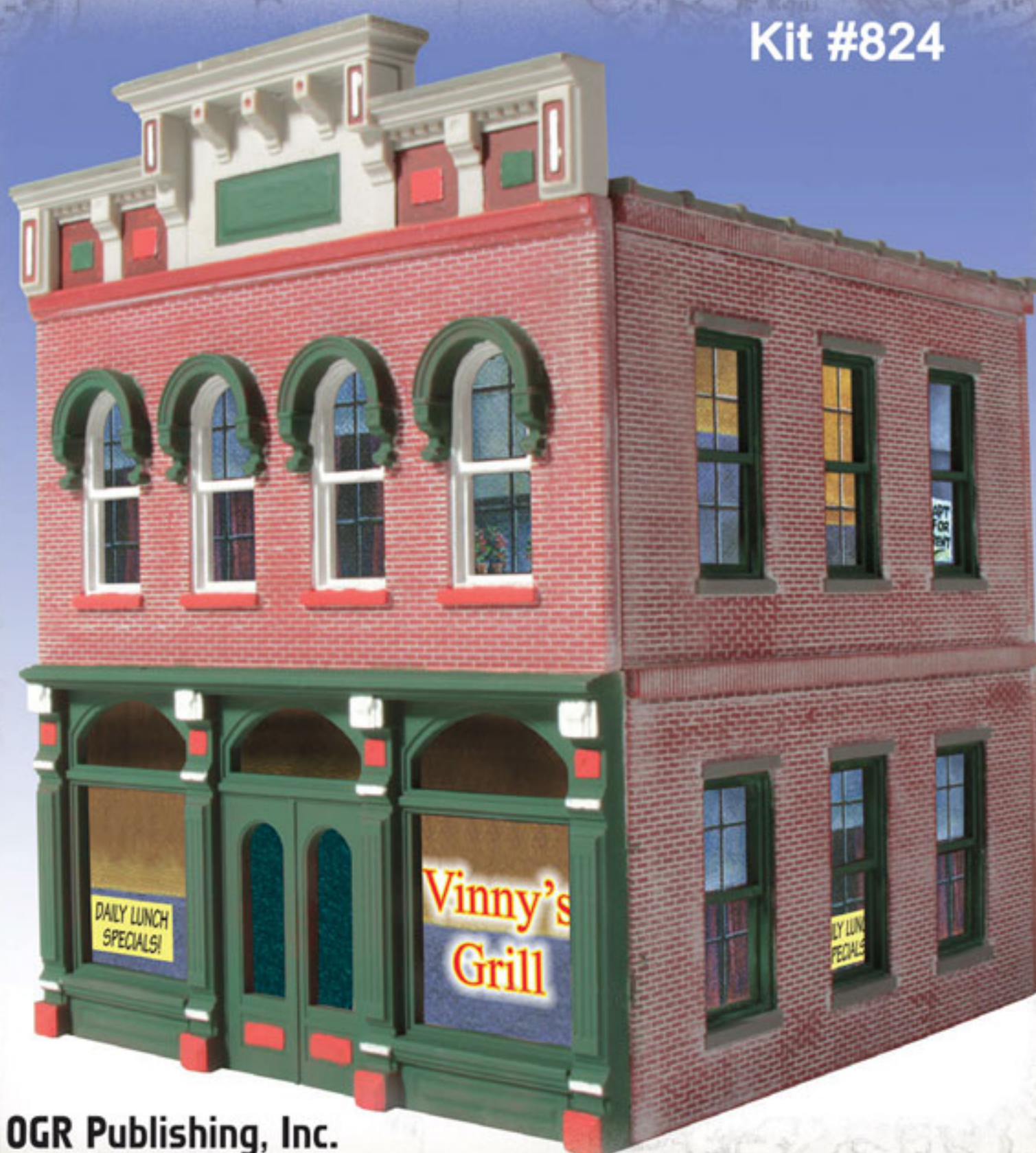
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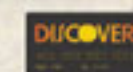


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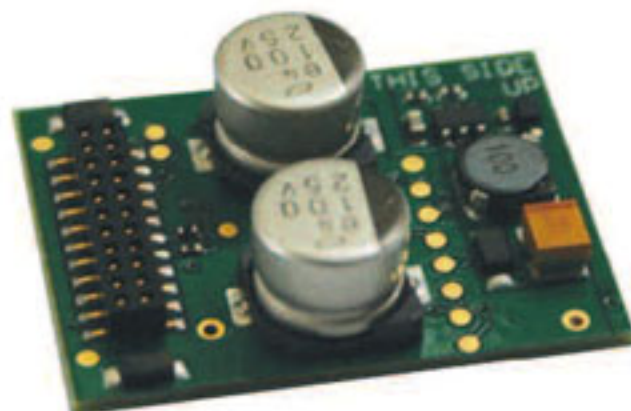
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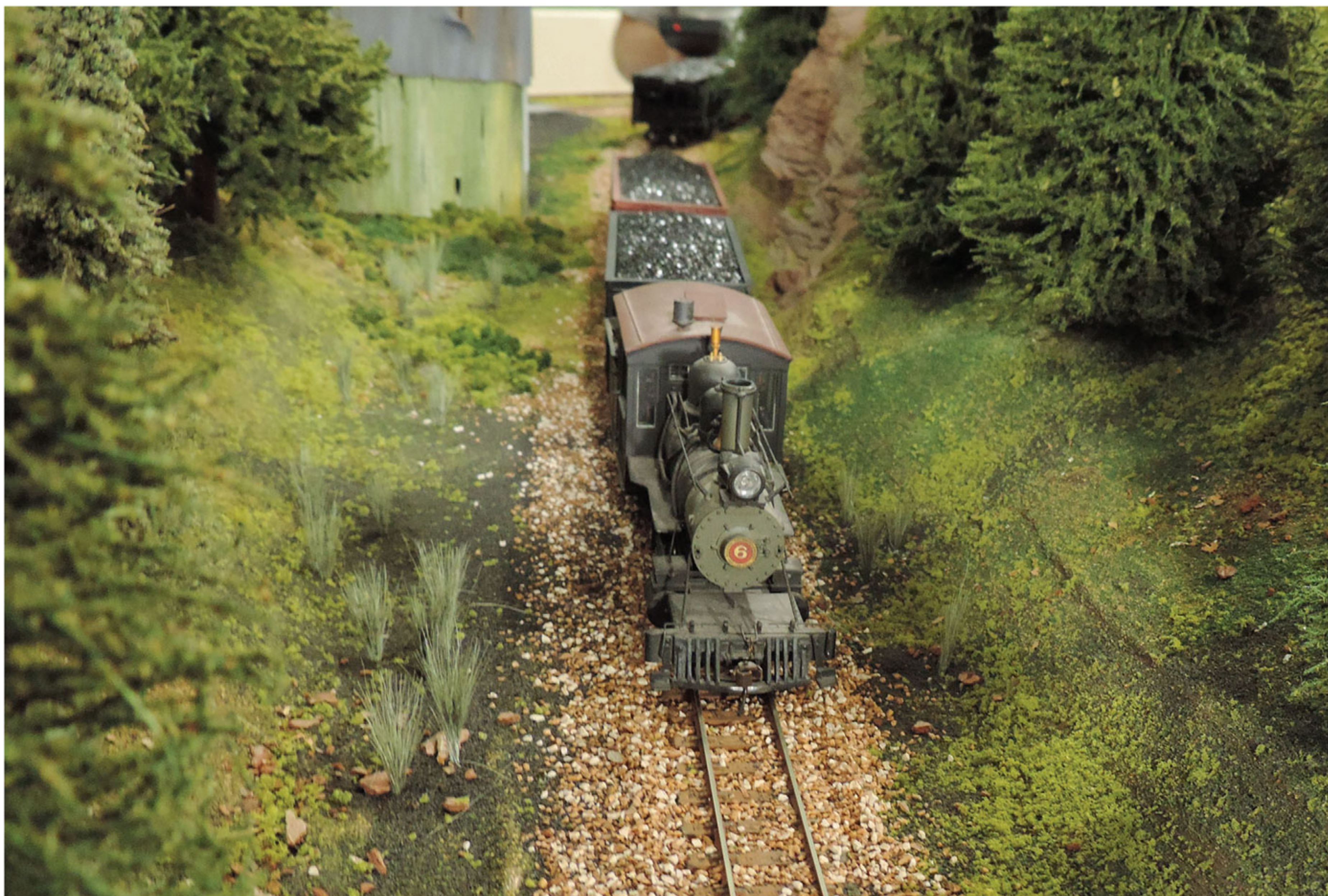


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