



Garden Railroading News No.3 Mar/Apr 2021
A Digital Magazine

Garden Railroading is alive and well!

As we anticipate seeing garden railroads in person again, it looks like we'll find lots of enhancements and innovations. Garden railroaders have been busy during the pandemic—laying/re-laying track, upgrading landscapes, building new structures, adding rolling stock, converting live steam engines to coal fired locos and so much more.

We look forward to sharing all this activity in future editions of *GR News* and via our **Facebook Group**: www.facebook.com/groups/gardenrailroadingenews and our new **Instagram** channel: @grnewsimages

The National Convention in Nashville, May 30 to June 5, will present an opportunity for some of us to see the results of such industry in Tennessee. *GR News* will be there and will host a discussion to get input about the future of *GR News*.

Please share the *GR News* and support our vendors. And *Thank You* to all the editors of club newsletters who made this edition of *GR News* possible!

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How to Download a PDF & Customize Page View to Your Preference.



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or www.facebook.com/groups/gardenrailroadingenews



Photo by Warren Stringer

Above: A Class 50 DR locomotive hauls a military train past the main station in Reichenbach, a European town on Dean Ellicock's layout in New Zealand.

Below: Denver & Rio Grande Western #346, an Accucraft C-19 2-8-0 live steam engine, passes the cooling tower and water tank on Jeff Campbell's Foothills Railroad.



Photo by Carla Brand Breitner

*MAY
WE SUGGEST...
Something New*



The 2021 NSS National [Seasonal] Steamup is planning an Autumn return to celebrate the ability to run live steam among friends again. From Wednesday, Sept. 28 through Sunday, Oct. 3, multiple tracks will be available in the NSS's new home base, the Lodi Grape Festival & Events Center. Details are being worked out now. Information will post soon at: www.steam-events.org



World's Greatest Hobby Is Back!



Look for Greenberg's Toy & Train Shows, Great Train Shows and Great Midwest Train Shows to return mid-summer 2021. Check the schedule at: TrainShow.com

Coming Soon: Constructing a Viaduct Part Two

by Bob Dransman
from the Greater Cincinnati Garden
Railway Society The Branch Line



Photo by Christopher J. Palermo

The Magic of Scale Model Railroading Exhibit Opens at the California State Railroad Museum

The California State Railroad Museum is open again from 10 am to 5 PM, masked and socially distanced. A new exhibit on model railroading presented by the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) takes the viewer through a history of the hobby, multiple layout examples, explanations of both scale and gauge, and much more. A passenger train on an impressive, wall-filling G-scale trestle bridge with an N scale version of the trestle and consist nestled in the center of the large scale trestle greets the visitor. All scales are represented in the exhibit. The CSRM members' preview tour can be seen on YouTube and an article on the exhibit is on the NMRA website. Visit if you're in the Sacramento area. Info at: www.nmra.org/magic-scale-model-railroading-gallery

www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5y8SLis9s8

www.californiarailroad.museum

G-Scale Train Sets Musical Record

During COVID-19 closure, the crew of the Miniatur Wunderland in Hamburg, Germany, got together and set a Guinness World Record with a "musical" train on a custom-built track running through the G-scale railroad and airport normally on display. The classical music medley plays for around 5:40 minutes. At that point, skip or watch the brief commercial, but stay around for the high speed edit showing the work that went into the video. Kudos to the phone camera crew that smoothly passed a phone back and forth to make the record-setting video.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBNHmUT3GPg

If you want to learn more about Miniatur Wunderland, more videos can be found on YouTube and their website is: www.miniatur-wunderland.com

San Juan Model Co. as San Juan Details is now manufacturing Grandt Line Large Scale Architectural Parts and Details

In 2019, San Juan Model Co. of Arvada, Colorado, acquired Grandt Line. San Juan Details was born. They have been adding Grandt Line items gradually and now have a number of "Large Scale" windows, doors, and detail parts available.

Info at: www.sanjuandetails.com



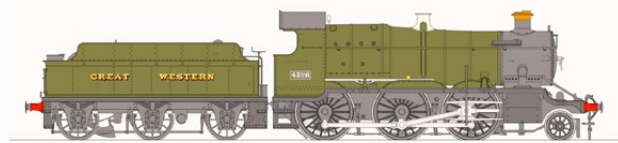
Accucraft 1:32 Southern Pacific P-8 Finishing Production

Live steam SP P-8 locomotives will be arriving soon. Order as a kit MSRP \$3995. Ready to run \$4495. Existing orders have locked-in prices.



Accucraft UK Starts Production on GWR 2-6-0 Locomotives

Accucraft UK 1:32 GWR 43XX 2-6-0 Live Steam will be the next British Gauge One model for production. MSRP \$2695-2795 kit, \$2895-2995 RTR.



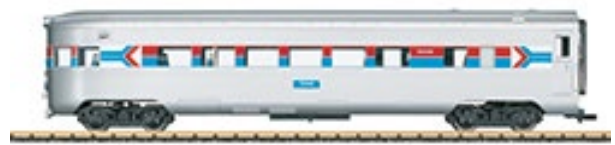
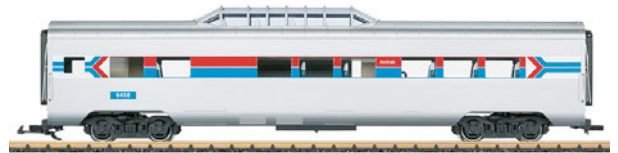
Bachmann Plans G-scale GE Dash 9 Locomotive

Bachmann is in the tooling-testing phase of production on Large Scale GE Dash 9 locomotives in five road names with two numbers each. Look for their new product announcements mid-year.



LGB Celebrates Amtrak's 50th Year

Next fall, you can run an Amtrak Sunset Limited, or make up a consist of your choice, with F7A & B units and passenger, dining, Vista Dome, baggage and observation cars in the *50 Years of Amtrak* series.



PIKO America Teaser for June

PIKO America next "new arrivals" in late May will include these UP wood cars. The UP Drover Caboose would have been converted wood passenger cars to carry the drovers who fed and water the cattle on a livestock train. These cars were in use from around 1927 to 1937 on Union Pacific, but used until 1957 on UP subsidiary railroads.



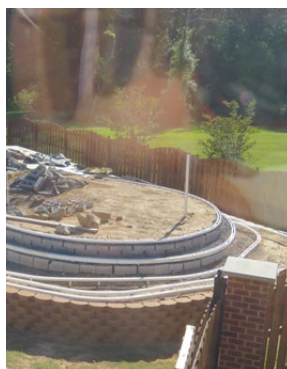
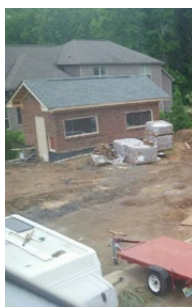
38655 UP Wood Combine #1922
MSRP \$132.99



38656 UP Drover Caboose #1953
MSRP \$209.99

2021 Nashville National Garden Railway Convention Pre-Tours

Pre- and Post-Convention Tours are available as you drive to and from the NGRC. GR News can recommend the layouts near Atlanta, Georgia, (seen by your editor during the 2018 NGRC) and the Huntsville, Alabama, layout being built by an ex-President of the Santa Clarita Valley Garden Railroad Club, Grant Sweer. Below are slices from progress pictures of Grant's layout from 2018 to March of this year.



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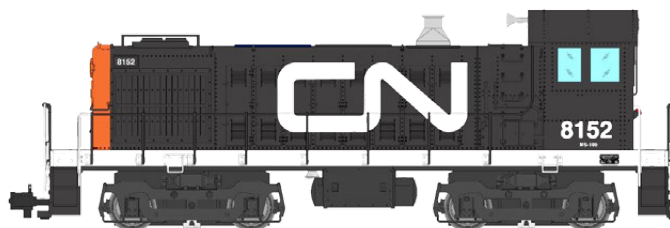
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The J2A Railroad • Steve & Malinda Jungst, Proprietors

The J2A Railroad: Years in the Planning, Still Expanding, Modeling Mainline Rail Running

By Steve Jungst

Building my first garden railroad started Memorial Day weekend in 2011. However, my love of this hobby started at Christmas 1993 thanks to my brother Roger and his family giving me a LGB Rio Grande Davenport locomotive and three cars. For several years I accumulated locomotives, rolling stock, and many feet of track with the goal to build my own outdoor layout. I subscribed to *Garden Railways* magazine in 1994 and could hardly wait for the arrival of the next issue so I could learn more.

During this time, I read as much as I could about garden railroading from any source I could find. Mick Spilsbury from the Bay Area Garden Railway Society published two articles in the Nov-Dec 1992 and Jan-Feb 1993 issues of *Garden Railways* about building his garden railroad. These articles were very influential to my understanding of the hobby. I read and re-read these articles numerous times. Last year, I had the opportunity to talk with Mick about the upcoming Nashville Convention and I mentioned that his articles from years ago were still influencing me to this day.

In addition, the classic series of articles in *Garden Railways* written by Jack Verducci on scratch building structures



Prototypical agricultural operations bring farm to table by rail on the J2A.



Intermodal Train passing Timbers Station

using different materials also influences me today. Malinda and I have worked to incorporate diversity of buildings into our layout. Examples include the several Garden Texture building kits I have completed along with buildings I have scratch built. I am proud to say the Garden Texture "Timbers" station is my favorite building on our railroad.

Another major source of inspiration has been the National Garden Railway Conventions we attended prior to building our first layout. These conventions just added fuel to the fire to build a garden railroad. Because of a career change and time constraints, I delayed taking that first step for a while, but attending the national conventions made enjoyable vacations for Malinda and me while we learned

from others and their experiences. At these conventions, walking the aisles in the vendor hall looking for bargains was always a thrill. Visiting layouts allowed me to see what others had done on their railroads and ask questions. I must confess that I have “borrowed” many ideas from these layout tours and included them on the J2A railroad, so “Thank You” to everyone for opening up your railroads and taking time to answer questions!

Our house sits on a 1/3 acre lot with a 6% slope leading down from the driveway to the backyard. A gentler slope runs from west to east across the backyard where the layout sits. This presented the first challenge, but also an opportunity to build a railroad with different elevations. I wanted to keep the track grade at 2.5% or less, but I also wanted elevation changes to allow for the track to loop around and cross over itself to take advantage of the natural slope in the yard.

Working on a shoestring budget, I decided to build up the lower area with a stone wall and backfill the 25 x 40-foot area as needed to create my layout. After deciding on a track plan, I built 7- and 24-foot trestles out of western red cedar and set two concrete piers to support an Eagle Wings Iron Craft steel bridge to make my crossover loop a reality. I decided to use a “ladder” system to support the track using PVC pipe and stringers, which seemed the easiest way to set a 2.5% maximum track grade.

A neighbor helped with wiring the control box and pulling wires to connect to the brass track to power our layout. By August 2011 the mainline was finished. Appropriately my brother and niece were on hand for the “Golden Spike” event; their initial gift of the LGB Rio Grande locomotive and cars made the inaugural run. By the end of 2011, I had increased the layout to include 225 feet of track and completed much needed backfilling in anticipation of purchasing plants for landscaping the following spring.

We wanted our layout to be a true garden railway by incorporating many different living plants to add realism to what we were trying to create. Unfortunately, very few nurseries around Nashville sold plants appropriately sized for our garden railroad other than several varieties of thyme, various ground covers, and small flowering annuals. Fortunately, Malinda and I attended the 2013 National Garden Railway Convention in Cincinnati where we took a detour and scouted out local nurseries. We hit the jackpot when we found four businesses with plants that would work well on our layout. Over the next several springs we made road trips to the Cincinnati area to shop. The thrill of the hunt for the “right” plants was great fun for us and added to our enjoyment of the hobby.

In terms of our climate, our annual rainfall is 52 inches, most of which occurs between November and April. From May through October, rain comes in the form of afternoon thunderstorms. This area can also go two to three weeks without receiving any meaningful rainfall during this time period, which is problematic for a plant-filled garden railroad. Therefore, supplemental watering is a necessity.

I closely followed plant descriptions Nancy Norris published in *Garden Railways* and paid close attention to the planting zones and sunlight requirements. In my experience, many of the conifer-type plants others use with success in other parts of the country cannot handle the 90 plus days with 90-degree temperatures and high humidity we have in Tennessee each summer.



Mixed Freight Train on Truss Bridge



Trestles reduce the natural grade for ease of running.



Gathering eggs as cows graze.

Through trial-and-error we have found a mix of boxwoods, Mugo pines, Chinese elms, white cedars, and Japanese maples grow well on our garden railroad along with ground cover plants such as Blue Star Creeper, Elfin, and Wooley Thyme.

A few years after the initial construction of the J2A railroad, I was reminded that I am not a civil engineer because disaster struck!



Wishing well in the park.



Frost Heave Damage

January 2014 was a very cold and wet month and was not kind to our garden railroad. Upon returning home from a business trip, I found several feet of the rock wall had collapsed and sections of track were a twisted mess. Frost heave of our heavy clay-rich Tennessee soils, that do not drain well, was the culprit and the source of much displeasure and reflection. My thinking had been the slope of the yard would

allow for adequate drainage, but mother nature had other ideas. We were so disappointed that removing the railroad was considered.

After a couple weeks of discussion, our love for the hobby and the gardening aspect of it pushed us to revitalize and re-engineer our beloved layout to be even better than the original. I talked with my close friend and work colleague, Jon Anderson (i.e. the "A" in J2A), about the damage and how to fix the problem. We concluded the course of action was to remove the track and install a 4-inch drain pipe packed in gravel with the track laid on



Freight train running along stone retaining wall.

French drain pipe before packing in gravel "roadbed."



top. This became a French drain and would get the surface water off the layout quickly and keep it from further saturating the clay soil.

To further improve the layout, I also installed drainage pipe next to the stone walls to move the water away and out of the layout to keep the pressure off the wall. All of the PVC pipe and stringers originally installed three years prior were removed and today the track still rests on top of the drainage pipe. By late May 2014, I had completed the renovations and was back to running trains again. I am happy to report frost heave has not been a problem after these improvements.



Main Street is getting busier ahead of the 2021 NGRC.



Above: Street paving; Building pads are also sidewalks.
Below: A spur became a second street in town in 2019.



Japanese Maple street tree

This decision involved major modification to the layout by moving the stone wall out by up to 10 feet in certain areas. I also built a new 8.5-foot trestle for the second mainline. The three levels of trestle one can now observe from below the layout adds a lot to the eye appeal and enhances our use of different elevations in a small space, which has guided us from the start of the railway in 2011. By the end of October 2020, the expansion was completed and we had added another 125 feet of track. We love the appearance of two trains passing each other in opposite directions and now wish we would have made this upgrade sooner.

In 2019, we added another street to our town by removing a seldom used spur and replacing it with 4 inches of asphalt patch, our road material of choice.

On July 4th of last year, as a pandemic project, Malinda and I decided to put in a second main line so two trains could be run at the same time.



Railroad expansion made room for an Intermodal Yard.

As I read about Alan Wright's Valentine and Heartland Railroad in the Jan-Feb 2021 issue of *Garden Railroading News*, I can relate to many items discussed. Specifically, don't be afraid to remodel your layout to make it better and to simplify things. After many trials and tribulations over the years, my main objective is to have a garden railroad that is reliable and trouble-free.

Many people model eras in railroad history appropriate for their favorite railroad, locomotives and rolling stock, which is great and makes for many, many beautiful layouts we observed over the years at the national conventions. However, due to my 41-year career in agriculture, I have taken a different approach; many of the scenes on our railroad are agricultural scenes, primarily related to livestock production.

Since I am now retired and have more time to devote to the hobby, many of the commercially available buildings currently on the layout will be replaced over time by scratch-built structures. We have seen many of the same buildings year after year at the national conventions and, as a result, we are actively customizing our railroad with our own creations and those hand built by the skilled craftsman of this hobby who create works of art.



A tank car unit train on the new mainline passes a grain unit train.

Several buildings on the railroad have already been scratch built by Malinda or me, or have been purchased from Michael's Custom Woodworking at the national conventions or the East Coast Large Scale train show. My favorite construction material is western red cedar from local home improvement stores. I over-build my structures since I don't leave them outside for extended periods, leading to a lot of handling and moving. Therefore, robust construction materials and methods are needed.

I have discovered running trains to be a great stress reliever. During the summer I set a train up in the early evening and run until 10 PM and enjoy being outside when it is cooler. Garden railroading is a great hobby we love for multiple reasons. Malinda and I are excited about opening up our layout for tours during the 36th National Garden Railway Convention in Nashville, Tennessee. We extend you an invitation to stop by and see our railroad.



The business of agriculture is evident throughout the area served by the J2A Railroad. Horses, cattle and chickens thrive and grain shipments are a regular source of revenue.



A grain unit train passes Timbers Station on the original mainline. The stone wall (seen in the freight train photo on page 9) has been moved and now supports raised roadbed for a second mainline.



Grain cars are loaded on the Grain Elevator spur.

Steve and Malinda Jungst's J2A Railroad will be on the Wednesday, June 2, layout tours during the Nashville 2021 National Garden Railroad Convention. Register at: www.ngrc2021.com



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ON DEMAND GARDEN RAILROADING Part One

by Mick Spilsbury

My first railroad, featured in *Garden Railways* in 1992, was built to impress, but a pain to maintain. When visitors dropped by, they often asked, “Can you run a train for me?” Mostly, my answer was, “Not right now.” When building my second railroad in 2015, I vowed that I would be able to answer, “Yes,” and thus my commitment to ‘on demand garden railroading’ was born. The commitment influenced track design and placement, the copious use of glue, the choice of motive power, vegetation management and lighting. All will be addressed in this series of articles, starting with track design and placement.

TRACK DESIGN

My first railroad had 22 remotely controlled switches, many in less accessible areas. Big mistake! Switches attract tiny pebbles, tiny twigs, berries, and deceased bugs, then get jammed. Unjamming required up close and personal removal of the aforementioned items using a small screwdriver and tweezers, often on my knees. I got so fed up with this activity that I simply left the switches set one way, which rather destroys the purpose of having switches.

My new railroad has a dozen switches all within easy reach and all switched by hand, simply moving the switch rail from one position to another. I removed the switch plates because they were another source of jamming. The incidence of jamming has been dramatically reduced by gluing down everything that can be glued down anywhere near the switches. (More on that in the next article.) When a switch does get jammed, I can remove the source of the jam without getting on my knees. Switch jamming, which deterred running my first railroad, is no longer a problem.

Aside from switches, tight curves can be a source of problems. I have mostly 8 foot radius curves and a few 5 ½ foot curves, which do not create problems for my Moguls, Climax and Shay, though might need to be larger for longer locos.

TRACK PLACEMENT

The core message is — not on the ground. I could only reach a third of my first railroad while standing at a retaining wall. Maintaining the other two-thirds required groveling on the ground, which I did not enjoy and 30 years on can no longer do. My new railroad is all raised above ground and 95% is reachable while standing beside it. Aside from hand switching and hand cleaning switches, this makes detailed tidying up straightforward.



Overview of my first RR: Note the retaining wall far right and the per cent of the railroad not near it.



Current RR switch placement: The entire switching yard is raised and within easy reach of the retaining wall.



Current RR switch placement: The gold mine yard is raised and also within easy reach.

NEXT TIME: Gluing it all down and I do mean ‘all’!

Garden railroaders have different priorities. Mick Spilsbury, Vice President of San Francisco’s Bay Area Garden Railway Society and Marketing & Distribution Director for *GR News*, has made ‘On-demand Garden Railroading’ one of his priorities. This is the first in a series of short articles explaining the what, why and how’s of ‘On Demand Garden Railroading.’

Walt Thompson Projects

Similar to the West Side Lumber Co. and most of the smaller independent railroad companies around the country, the GRITFY Timber & Mining Co. had to shut down its lumber mill but they chose to remain in the immediate area. In an effort to Keep the shops working during these trying times when most everything has been in a mandatory lockdown, the management has been busy with the development of new equipment to be added to their roster.

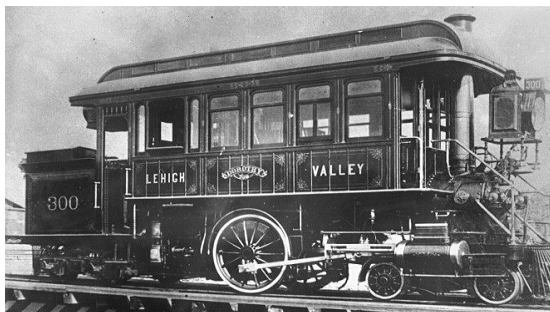
Although historically narrow gauge railroads didn't have a Superintendent's locomotive or a rail inspection car, somehow after seeing examples of some that the major railroads had in the past, the GRITFY had to have one. This project was launched with the intentions of putting to use some of those extraneous parts and pieces that had been accumulating in the shop's junk parts box that were just too good to throw away. It is based on what the Lehigh Valley RR had built back in the 1880's as 'Dorothy', their locomotive #300, and is a combination of parts from Bachmann, LGB, Lionel, PIKO, REA, and Scientific Toys, plus stuff from the shop junk parts drawers, all "kitbashed" together. It is battery powered, R/C controlled and is complete with the sounds of steam, bell & whistle. Seen here parked at the CEO's Alpine house on its way to the shops for finish paint touch-up, graphics and finalizing of equipment installations. This one I feel deserves something better than a rattle can paint job but hey, whatever it gets, it gets? We'll see how it goes

.....Walt Thompson

The GRITFY's "BLUE ROYALE"



(Where the inspiration came from)



"Dorothy" #300 was the inspiration for this project (one of). About "Dorothy" - Dorothy was a Lehigh Valley Inspection engine built at the Wilkes-Barre shops in May of 1884. She was designed by Alexander Mitchell and used to haul the Superintendent and other officials over the road. She was kept in active service until 1934, then sold to Mr. John B. Vaughan of Kingston, Pa. (sadly, she was scrapped for the WW-II efforts)

CONSTRUCTION of GRITFY's 2-2-4 PRIVATE CAR-LOCOMOTIVE – cont.

(NOTE: THE WAY I GO ABOUT MY MODELING, I WOULD BE KNOWN AS A BLACKSMITH OF MODEL BASHERS)



The TENDER

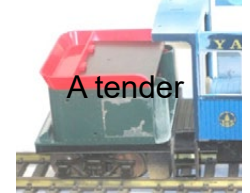
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All parts shown as acquired - No drive axles or wheels.



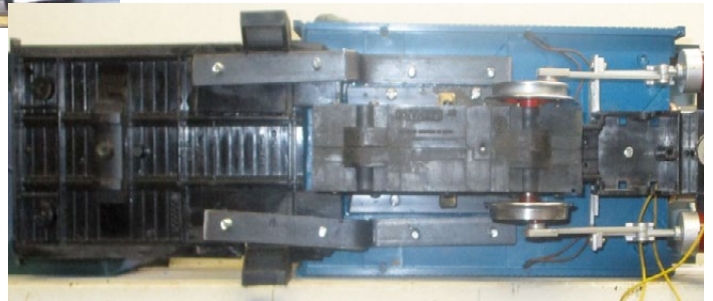
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A tender

Original REA Passenger coach conversion

Locomotive #19 parts purchased

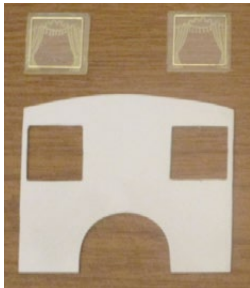


Preliminary MOCKUP for tender alignment

tender attachment brackets



New front wall



new Bulkhead wall



new stack & cow guard



graphics design



New spiral front steps

A personal note: It seems I'm best at creating "something like" what at one time existed, but not always so! At least I'm having a good time with the challenge of creating my models,

Ed. note: Walt always seems to keep busy. In addition to his model building he also does the newsletter for his car club. Thanks for sharing Walt.





LGB® Garden Railroading Get on board and join the fun!

Amtrak is all set to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2021. For five decades, Amtrak trains have been taking passengers where they want to go. LGB is proud to announce a special series for the anniversary “50 Years of Amtrak.”



21581 F7B Diesel Locomotive



21580 / 21582 F7A Diesel Locomotive (different road numbers)



36601 Coach Passenger Car (#4813)



36600 Baggage Car



36603 Vista Dome Car



36602 Coach Passenger Car (#4817)



36605 Observation Car



36604 Dining Car

Running sounds for the digital F7A Amtrak Locomotives work in analog operation.

The famous “Sunset Limited” train can be assembled using the new Amtrak cars. All cars include built-in LED interior lighting.

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Joe McCummins introduced houseguest and longtime friend Mark Mueller to the joys of garden railroading and the challenges of the Inglenook Siding switching puzzle.



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Mike Williams had an Etsy customer from Denmark send him a book about Scandinavian wine trains. So, based on authentic photos, Mike has designed and 3-D resin printed several different cars in 7/8's scale depicting wine industry trains.



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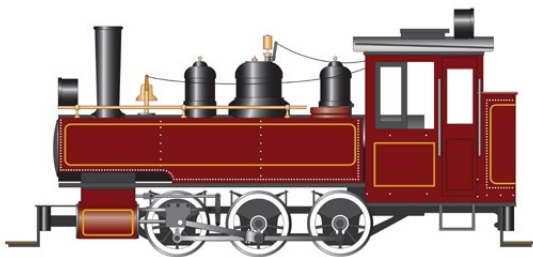
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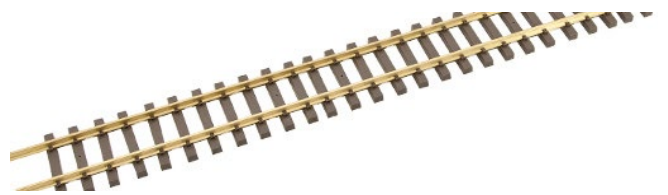
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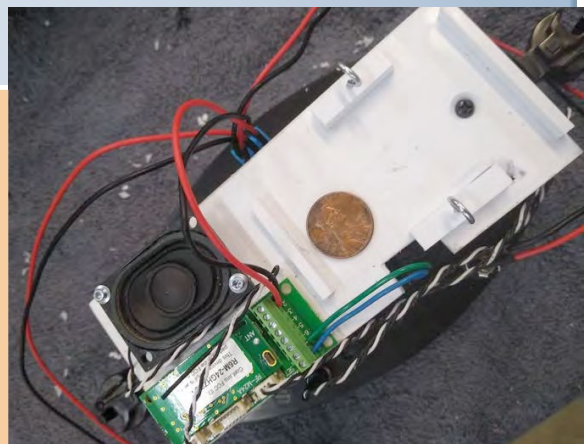
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Product Review New Revolution Micro-receiver w/sound

At the recent Beginners Battery Conversion Workshop, we had the occasion to try the new micro receiver with sound from Revolution. This new card is much smaller (See Pictures) than their standard receiver. The specs say it is for HO, O, and smaller G scale applications. During the workshop, we installed the new card in 3 new Bachmann Thomas engines and an Aristocraft Egliner. The installs went perfectly and worked just as their full-size receiver does. Both the Diesel and Steam versions have similar sound files as their full-size receivers. The receiver does not have the trigger function for a chuff sensor nor will it run a smoke unit as their full-size. The small size would not perform well in a full-size G scale loco. But for the smaller engines that in the past posed a bit of a challenge with full-size receivers this is something worth considering. As it is smaller it has a smaller price of about \$80. For those few new to battery power, you can see the space for the new 14.8v 3400 mah Lithium battery that will go into the egliner. Compare that size to the only 2300 mah battery that was recently taken out of an Aristocraft U25B that was upgraded to a Lithium 6800 mah of a somewhat smaller size. So overall this new card is a good option for your smaller locos you might want to change over to Battery power.

Happy railroad, Mike Fisher



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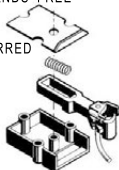
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Carl Vanderspek's White Pass & Yukon Railroad

A Look Back: Carl Vanderspek's White Pass & Yukon Railroad

By Carla Brand Breitner

Gary and I spent several hours admiring Carl Vanderspek's garden and G-scale railroads in Vancouver following the 2001 Seattle NGRC. There were two railroads. One surrounded a pond in a garden of miniatures; the second layout filled a large room with a model of the White Pass & Yukon Railroad through a mountain landscape sculpted by Joel Bragdon and friends. (Grant Sweer plans to use Bragdon molds to sculpt his mountains.) We recently learned that Carl Vanderspek passed away February 5 this year. Here is a look back at his two railroads.



The train collection has been donated to the West Coast Rail Association (www.wcra.org), a Canadian historical rail society that is restoring the Royal Hudson that carried Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip across Canada years ago. They plan to relocate the White Pass & Yukon layout, as well as some of Mr. Vanderspek's collection of hundreds of White Pass locomotives and rolling stock, for display at the Railway Museum of British Columbia. Part of the rolling stock collection, including an LGB US Army train with several dozen cars, will be sold through the WCRA Gift Shop.

<https://west-coast-railway-gift-shop.myshopify.com/>

The Wet Cut: A Clean Trim By Todd Brody

With all of this beautiful weather, at least here in Southern California, I offer a gardening tip. When trimming thick foliage with cross-cut hand shears, you can avoid “gumming” up the blades if you occasionally dip the blades in water.

Starting with a clean pair of shears, these photos show the build-up on the blades after clipping just one “pom” on my dwarf crape myrtles (*Myrtus communis* ‘Compacta’). Now imagine the build-up on the blades after doing over a dozen poms on each tree, with eight trees to do. The shears become pretty much useless after the first pom and end up tearing out, rather than cutting off, the unwanted foliage from subsequent poms, taking much more than desired and leaving a ragged edge.



In the past, I would clean the blade using a wire wheel on the drill press. It works well but must be done often and takes a lot of time away that could be spent trimming. But what if there was a way for the blades to clean themselves with each cut?

One day when trimming the myrtles immediately after watering, I noticed that the wet leaves were actually cleaning the blades with each pass. Savvy to what was happening, I started to water each myrtle before trimming it, making the task far easier and faster. But who wants to kneel in the mud in a wet garden trimming wet plants and getting wet while doing so? There had to be a better way...

...And there is. I found that wetting the shears occasionally had the same effect as pre-wetting the trees. In fact, it works better because when wetting the trees, much of the undergrowth stayed dry and, on a warm day, the tree would dry way before the trimming was completed.

Simply dipping the blades in the water, with a few squeezes for good measure, accomplishes this same thing without the mud or continual re-spraying with the hose. The picture to the right shows the shears after cutting just one of the poms (without dipping) as well as the plastic container used to hold the water.



And here we see the shears after dipping/redipping them in the water occasionally, and cutting just the small pom, to the left of the previously cut/shown pom. Note that the blades are now totally clean.



And, when you get done trimming the tree, use what’s left in the container to water it before moving on to the next one. To avoid rust, don’t forget to wipe the water off of the shears when you finish.




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Guatemalan Railroad Maintenance of Way car in 1:20.3

Article and photos by Don Rose

Single sheathed outside framed boxcars were once very common on American railroads and are well represented by the various manufactures of O, HO and N scale rolling stock. In G scale USA Trains makes a little outside braced boxcar in several road names. But there aren't any outside frame boxcars in 1:20.3 scale. I like that!



As a scratch builder I am always looking for something a little different. An outside braced boxcar would be nice. So when I found some plans* for an outside frame-single sheathed-narrow gauge box car that had been converted to a maintenance of way dormitory car/caboose that ran on one of the “banana railroads” of Central America and that had a corrugated metal roof— well—how much different can you get ?

I wanted to match the subtle color and texture difference between the steel frame and the wood sheathing of the prototype. I could have built up the sides with the steel frame members simply glued to the side sheathing but that would have made it difficult to paint and achieve the metal-wood contrast I was looking for.

So first I built the metal skeleton. Using styrene strips and angle shapes plus some rivets and bolt heads the frame with the outside brace sides was constructed.



A brief endorsement of “plastic” wood. I almost never use real wood in the construction of my models. Some people can build beautiful models with wood—but not me. It cracks, it warps, and the glue takes too long to dry. It doesn't take paint uniformly and it is hard to control the

grain. I can never make wood look like metal but I can make plastic look like either metal or wood.

So, on to the lumber. The sheathing on prototype was “shiplap” siding. First I used some old saw blades to scratch some “wood grain” into the surface of the plastic strips. Since I was going to detail the inside of the car I scratched both sides of the strips. I used a simple jig with a cutting burr to notch each side of the boards.



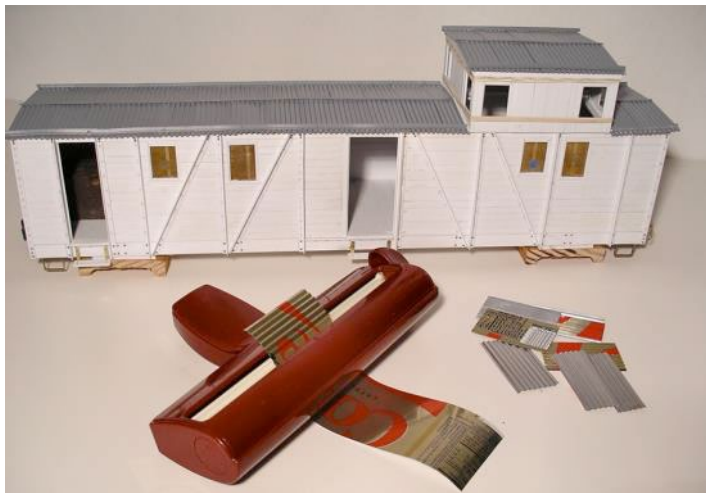
* Plans were drawn by J.R. Dunlop.

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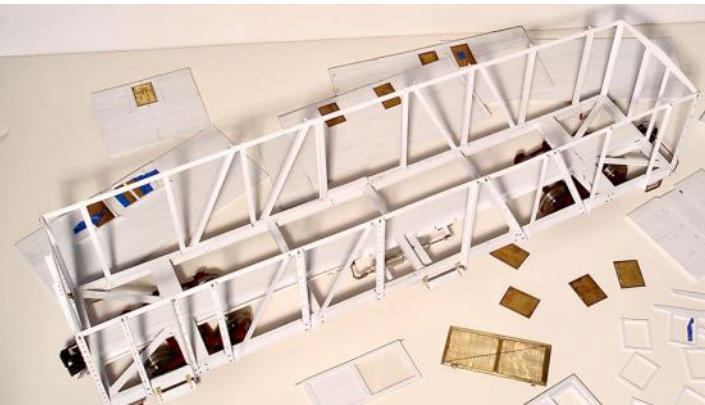
Once everything was adjusted and secured to the work bench it only took a few minutes to notch enough “lumber” for the car sides. Because they were individual pieces it was easy to get slight separation and variety of textures of the side planks that made up the actual car sides.

The wooden walls and floor were built up to fit the frame plank by plank. Because of the shiplapping when the planks were glued along the edges the wall and floor panels were quite rigid. Windows and doors were also fitted but nothing was cemented to the frame so that the “wood” and the “steel” could be painted separately.

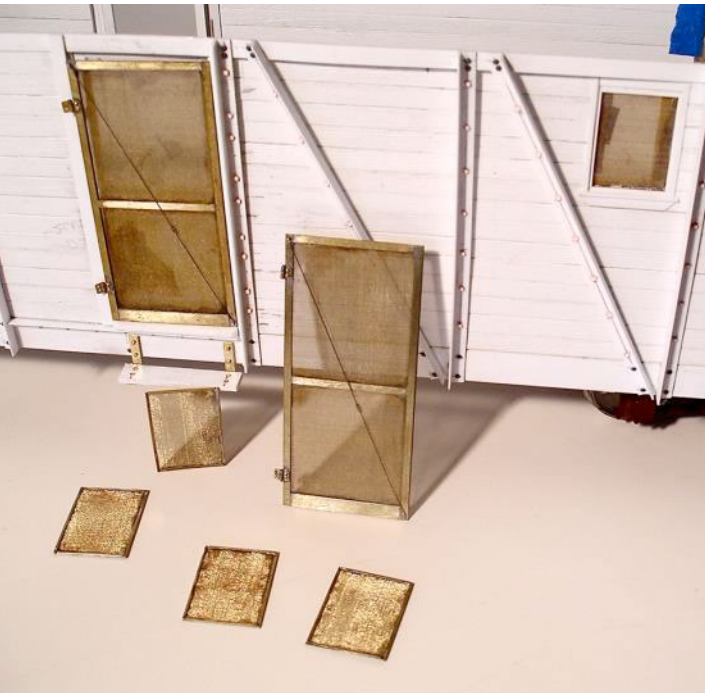
mented to the side frame. The metal frame was also weathered separately. This produced the contrast I wanted to achieve.



The scribing on the inside of the sheathing was also painted and weathered before the final attachment to the wall framing. A small kitchen was located in one end. To keep out the tropic sun, metal shades were placed above the windows.



There are a lot of bugs in Guatemala so screen doors were added along with screen wire over the windows. Some fine mesh screen from “Clover House” was soldered to some brass strip.



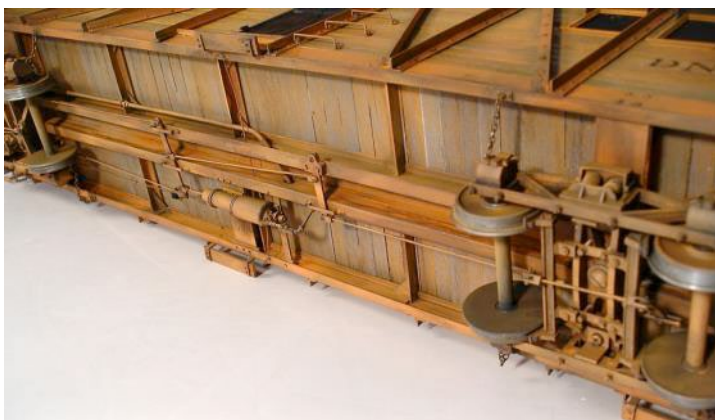
The corrugated metal roof was made with a crimper from a local craft shop. Soft drink cans supplied the raw materials.

The sides and frame were taken apart and the wooden sides were painted a couple of shades lighter than the metal frame. The wood panels were weathered before being ce-



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I made some “war surplus” bunk beds from brass wire and brass strip with plastic window screen for springs. After all, this started out as a box car. No Pullman berths on this car.

The cook stove is based on a picture of an antique stove that I found on the internet. The two tanks on the roof contained a supply of drinking water.

Although it is far from luxurious the track gang now has a place to call home when they are out workin’ on the railroad. A couple of gondolas full of cinders and the work train will be ready to roll.



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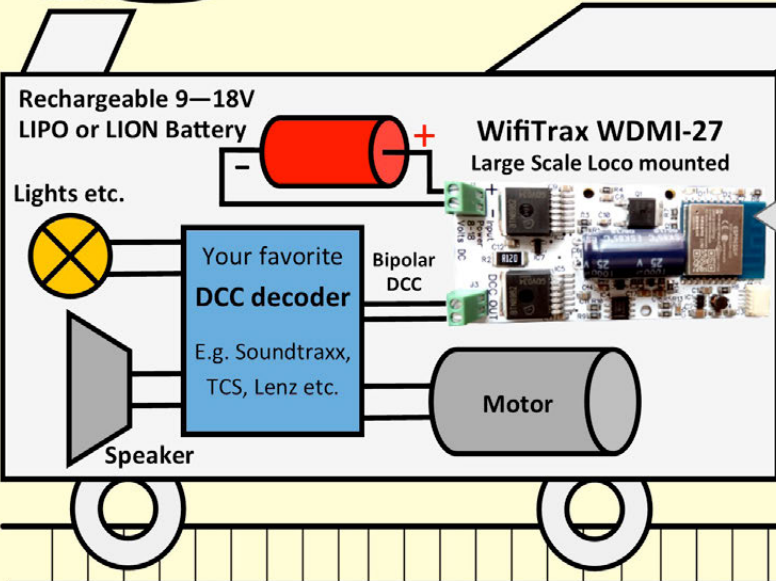
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Ballast Solutions

(Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society, Northern California)

By SVGRS Club members

New SVGRS member Jim Hearn submitted the following question:

Do you know of a good source for ballast? I have been to most of the landscape places (Hasties, Nimbus, etc), but have not found what would seem ideal. The smallest crushed or lava gravel I am able to find is 3/8". Hasties has a 1/8 X 3/16 Birdseye (river rock), but I'm not sure if this will pack. Has anyone used the Birdseye effectively and is there something else that is available locally since so far I am striking out?

Dick Friedman: Ballast is a hard problem to solve. River rock is basically washed and round. It probably will NOT lock up. Some experts recommend "chicken grit," which is small stones they eat to help them digest their food. The only type I've found here in CA is full of oyster shells, which blow away in the first puff of wind, and doesn't look like ballast to me. Most landscape places around here don't have small enough rock -- best would be 1/4 minus granite, or perhaps lava. The lava will be red, but Santa Fe in northern AZ uses it everywhere. Many folks use decomposed granite, as it's relatively small, locks up pretty good, and retains the shape of ballast. Unfortunately, it seems to disappear over time, and needs to be redone after a few years. If you mix decomposed granite with a small amount of mortar or cement without stones, and apply it dry, then sprinkle water over the whole thing, you'll get ballast that will last a long time, but if you want to change it, it will break up easily. For something quick, I'd go with decomposed granite and a little Quikrete™ (about 80% DC by volume). What we really need is a member with a small stamp mill to pulverize gravel for us! LOL.

Mike Epstein: I use a mix of powdered cement (Bob Dean knows what it is) and decomposed granite. It's about 1/3rd cement & 2/3rd granite. I buy a bag of decomposed granite from Nimbus and use a screen to get the fine particles. Don Turos found some good stuff too.

Robert Couch: I located mine on eBay sold by Patrick M White, 243 Flint Haven Drive, Coldwater, MI 49036.

Dennis Winger: McCloud River RR and others have used red lava rock for ballast. AREMA doesn't list a standard for it that I could find, but it must be allowable. When ballasting the branch line to Spenser Gem Mines on my Folsom Eastern Rail Road Company (The Feline), I wanted to simulate the red lava rock ballast. Turns out pigeon grit (available at feed stores in 25 pound (?) sacks) is perfectly sized, colored and shaped. It has a minor amount of foreign material, but the "rock" tamps nicely. Also, although I can't think of any place offhand that might have it, you could use your Google machine to look for suppliers of "quarter minus" rock. It's just what the name implies: one quarter inch or smaller. It is crushed, so it should tamp well. It also has a lot of "rock dust" in a load, which would work to your advantage if you want to fix your ballast in a semi-permanent area. A little sprinkle, tamp and repeat a few times. Lastly — I would recommend against any "pea gravel" type ballast. With smooth surfaces you'll get no "locking" of the ballast when you tamp it. Good luck and happy railroading!

Chuck Maley: I've used a lot of things over the years, what works best is something called "crusher fines". They sell it at any sand/gravel company. It has teeth and is about 1/8 in diameter. Generally gray but sometimes with a bluish tint. It will stay in place for years. Occasionally I'll add a little stucco powder if it's a high drainage area. Hope this helps.

Ballast Solutions continued

Bill Iwan: I have found that path fines work really good and are close to scale for G as well as F scale. They look good and hold tight. If mixed with 3-1 Portland cement, you get a very durable ballast that can be blown off and resists erosion. You can get it in Lincoln behind the casino at Rock Pros or in Loomis /Rocklin at Sierra Rock. Rock Pros have two colors, a dark grey and a white and grey mix. Sierra has a blue grey.



Dick Thomas: I have found useful rock products at Cascade Rock on Kiefer in SAC.

Nancy Norris: Different names like 1/4 minus or quarter by dust will allow compaction but won't "go away" because of dust. Both are the same material called DG or decomposed granite.

Vern Luke: Best local ballast is Cascade Rock Inc in Sacramento. What you want is 1/4" Table Mountain. I used it all the time but my electric transport vehicle won't make it that far and back. I now settle for more local 3/8" which is far less desirable.



Valley Flyer

Volume 31 Number 9

September 2020

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Ballast Solutions continued

Jeff Namba: We used 1/4" Table Mountain (dark gray in color from Cascade Rock on the first phase of our layout. I placed it, let it settle for more than a year, then filled it in with crusher fines (lighter gray). Despite the Table Mountain's angular shape, it needed the fines to keep it locked together. We used plain old decomposed granite for phase 2 and it held well this last 6 months. Given our temperature extremes, there will always be movement.

Jerry Abreu: Bill Iwan turned us on to the pathway fines at the place behind Thunder Valley Casino. They are great as you don't have to sift them. We stabilize it with a 50/50 mixture of concrete glue and water.



Valley Flyer

Volume 31 Number 9

September 2020

Alan Wright, Proprietor of the Valentine & Heartland RR featured in the Jan/Feb 2021 *GR News* added this note when sharing the *SVGRS Valley Flyer*: There is some good information about the different types of ballast. Not mentioned was the type I've used: #5 roofing rock, comes in 60 lb. bags, cost around \$20 a bag. I found it at J.B. Roofing. The Chatsworth location carried it, but call before you go to get current availability and cost.

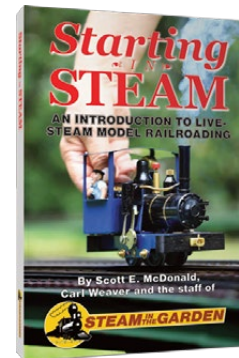
Steve Jungst, Proprietor of this issue's featured railroad in Tennessee, and **Grant Sweer**, Proprietor of the Grant Funk Railroad in Alabama, both are using 1/4" gravel around their track to encourage drainage during downpours. Both these layouts will be on layout tours either during or ahead of the 2021 Nashville National Garden Railway Convention.

Choice of ballast material can be dependent on where your layout is located. If you have suggestions based on your experience in different geographies, please send a note to: editor@GRNews.org



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ANIMALS FOR THE GARDEN RAILROAD: COWS, BULLS, AND CALVES

Text by Don Herzog
Photos by Becky Herzog
Article edited for GR News



1. Safari Ayrshire Cow



2. Schleich Holstein Cattle



3. CollectA Hereford Cattle



4. Mojo Highland Cattle



5. Papo Limousine Cattle



6. Papo Andalusian Bull



7. CollectA Spanish Fighting Bull

The five manufacturers of toy animals that I usually purchase from—Safari, Schleich, CollectA, Mojo, and Papo—have really done it up right with the cows, bulls, and calves. In all, there are seventy plus animals available in every conceivable type from around the world this year.

In the West, farmers primarily raise Holsteins for milk and Angus or Herefords for beef. In the Midwest and East, you might find Guernsey, Jersey, Charolais, and other types of cows. There are so many types available that you should be able to find something suitable for your layout.

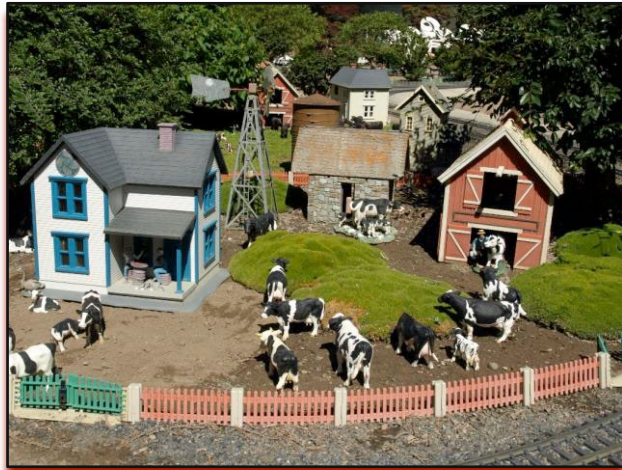
They usually come facing forward, sometimes facing right or left, and occasionally grazing, but rarely lying down. There are also many older figures in many positions available on eBay. The older figures are usually about 1:24 scale and the newer ones are about 1:20 scale. The mixture of new and older pieces makes for fantastic scenes. Whether you use one cow, three to fifteen in a field or 40 in a herd, they all make a very nice scene.

While this year there is a plethora of cows, don't expect this bonanza to be available every year! CollectA has a family of Brahmas which I have never seen before and some manufacturers have calves laying down which is a rarity. It would be a good idea to purchase now for the future those items that interest you.

Manufacturers drop items when they feel that the market is saturated and then bring out new ones. I have found during the past 30 years or so of collecting animals that they are usually only available for about four years. Check each manufacturer's website for their availability.

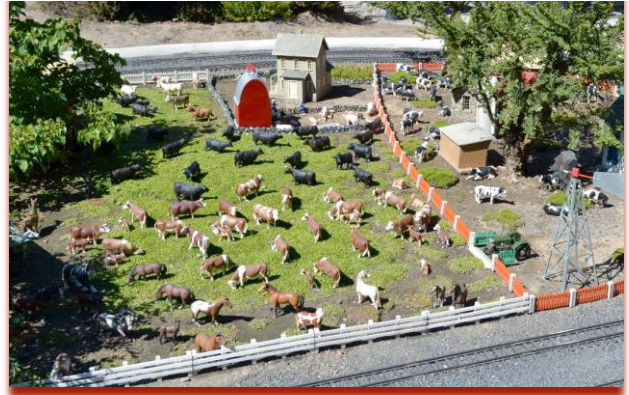
While you are at the manufacturer's websites, check the clearance pages; a listing on clearance often indicates to me that production for these items is over. Time to purchase for use when you set up your layout in Spring.

MORE OF DON'S COWS...



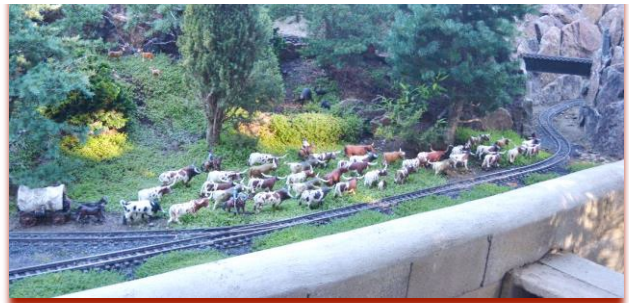
Dairy Ranch

GR News Editor's Note: Many figures and furnishings for your layout are on the seasonal and toy aisles of your local stores. Keep your eyes open and purchase when you see them. As Don Herzog notes, these items can have short shelf lives.



Farm Scene

Herding Cattle



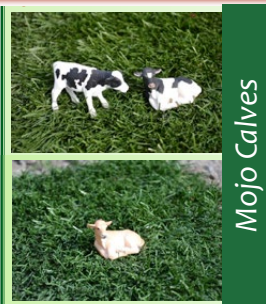
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Here's a peek at more layouts that will be open during the 36th National Garden Railway Convention in Nashville. Register now and support garden railroading.



Tyler and Angela Black
Tuesday June 1, 2021

Ain't Misbehavin' Railroad I With over 2,600 feet of brass track and still expanding before the Convention, the Ain't Misbehavin' railroad is one of the largest layouts in the Nashville club. On this sprawling layout with two main lines, 10 to 12 trains can be run simultaneously. There are four ponds with live fish, waterfalls and two bridges the trains cross. The railroad is mainly elevated track and most locomotives are battery powered. There is one line that is track powered. More than 90 structures, either scratch built or built from kits, are found on the layout.



Garrett and Katie Rea
Wednesday June 2, 2021

Nameless Victorian Estate Railway I This Victorian era light railroad uses British and American prototype 2-foot gauge live steam locomotives and rolling stock. Trains run on 32 mm O gauge track which makes the trains 1:19 scale. This scale and track gauge combination is commonly used in Great Britain, with roots tracing back to the 1930s. Built as a "Covid-19 sanity project" in May 2020, the layout is elevated on pressure treated lumber using PECO (UK) SM32 track. The layout is 60-feet in length with 48-inch radius curves, a single passing siding and a locomotive "steam up" bay to prepare the locomotives for running. Freight and passenger rolling stock are typical light industrial and estate type, the vast majority built from kits imported from the wide range of suppliers within the United Kingdom.

Bobby and Ruth Ann Veach
Thursday June 3, 2021

Veachwood Express Railroad I The Veachwood Express railroad has 185 feet of brass track and meanders around Ruth Ann's flower and herb garden, a koi pond, and Bobby's practice putting green. On the layout is a 16-foot-long bridge along with four feet of cribbing. Structures on the railroad have been scratch-built out of cedar and pressure treated wood.



Chris and Denise Bamberg
Tuesday June 1, 2021

The No Name Railroad I First constructed in 2016 as a raised roadbed railroad with about 350 feet of track powered brass rails for the sole purpose of running larger modern equipment. In 2020, a second loop of track was added at ground level for running smaller locomotives and rolling stock. Two small town scenes are on the expanded part of the railroad. The owner is slowly adding to his layout as time allows.

Ken Miller and David Hamilton
Wednesday June 2, 2021

Nashville Chattanooga Railroad I Construction of this freelance railroad started in 2017 with multiple railroads running on the tracks. Unfortunately, the railroad received extensive damage from a tornado in March 2020. Rebuilding of the new railroad started in late April 2020. With over 50 damaged trees removed from the 2-acre lot, the owners had to be creative on the track plan and appearance of the new railroad.



After much thought, they decided to model the City of Nashville and some of its famous landmarks: Union Station which was built in 1900, the AT&T building (aka "batman building"), Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, and the Johnny Cash museum. The railroad consists of more than 4,000 feet of brass flex-track, 50 turnouts, and a long passing siding. One of the loops of track is electrified for DC operation and other loops are unpowered for battery powered and live steam operation. The track is signaled for bi-directional running. Freight trains with 30 to 40 cars and long passenger trains are run on the layout. As an engineer for CSX Railroad, Ken tries to use his knowledge of railroading to build and run the railroad in a somewhat prototypical manner.



Larry and Pam Webb
Thursday June 3, 2021

West Franklin Short Line I The railroad is on a raised bed and encompasses a little over 350 feet of track. Track is wired in blocks controlled by a switch panel Larry built using two Bridgewater power supplies. The railroad is in a L shape with the largest width is approximately 25 feet and with a length of 45 feet. There is a 14-foot curved wooden trestle, a 5-foot-long curved chord truss, one deck girder bridge, one through truss bridge and another trestle that carries two tracks for about ten feet. A highlight is the artificial rock work, which Larry crafted and painted on site. A number of buildings are scratch built, and have been on the railroad for many years. Many dwarf plants, some over 20 years old, are on this layout. The railroad is lighted for night time operations using period lighting.



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O NE WAY TO BUILD A VIADUCT - Part 1

by Bob Dransman

After a multi-year hiatus, the "Manistique Railroad" is once again on the way to becoming a more full-featured garden railway. (Notice I didn't use that ugly word "complete.") After the rail raising in July of 2016, I'm sure many of the participants thought that the work was in vain, never to progress beyond a simple "lazy eight" on stilts. Plans called for a small suburban town, a mining town and a logging town, the addition of a roundhouse and turntable, and a drive-in train shed. The operation of a basic turntable was shown at the Christmas party that year, 63 trestle bents had been built and installed, but work beyond that was nonexistent. Other non-railway projects took precedent.

But back to this project. **Planning** for the bridge mixed with some preliminary **prototyping** was critical. I knew that I wanted the look of a viaduct, so I went to YouTube to see what others had done in the way of structures that were made to stand the elements. I found three projects, and that was enough for me to realize my project was feasible.

Since I didn't find exactly what I wanted to build, the videos turned out to be more important for construction tricks than for design. The real breakthrough came when I casually mentioned my general intent to a non-railroading friend. He ultimately provided pictures of the "Jacobite Bridge" (aka "Harry Potter Bridge", or "Glenfinnan Viaduct") in Scotland that he had ridden over last year.

The BRANCH LINE

DESIGN: I learned from Wikipedia that the arches on the real bridge were a nominal 50' wide. I drew the bridge to scale by taking direct measurements from a picture. Unfortunately, the real bridge is 100' tall, but mine is only a scaled 40' at its tallest point. The structure looked "squat" when 25" wide to-scale arches were drawn.

I drew a second drawing with 18" wide arches. Still squat, so I drew them with a 10" width in a third drawing. The arches looked OK, but the columns appeared spindly and possibly weak. I liked the taper of the columns, but I widened them by slightly more than double, to 4" at the top and 5" at the bottom.

Thickness at each apex appeared to be prone to cracks, so I thickened the roadbed as well, about double the prototype.

I did like the small walls that bracket the roadbed, and the drains through the floor of the bridge that appear over every other column. I plan to cut 3" strips of 1/4" "HardieBacker Cement Board" to do this. 1-1/2" will protrude above the roadbed, which, although only scaled at 3", should give a nice effect without being prone to damage. Stucco will be used to smooth the walls into the overall structure.

The train will pass through a 6-1/8" wide corridor between these small walls. This should be more than adequate for even my largest cars since both curves in the bridge are on an 8' radius. Centering of the track will be easy and accurate, done by using spacers between the walls and the ties, below the ballast.



Fig. 1: Steam Train on the Glenfinnan Viaduct

Photo by Nicholas 17, Creative Commons

THE BUILD: Since my entire layout floats at ground level above the frost line, I decided not to go below the frost line for the viaduct. I dug a trench 9" deep, making sure the trench bottom followed the slope of the ground. I put small grade stakes in the bottom of the trench every 2' or so that stuck up 4". I then added gravel to the trench just below the tops of the stakes, or at about 3-1/2". (If a full 4" of gravel were used, the stakes tended to be covered by the gravel.) The stakes were removed and the gravel was tamped to ensure that it was fully compacted.

Forms for the arches are made using a stack of four pieces of foam board, each glued to the other with five globs of hot glue. (Don't try to use a spray contact adhesive like 3M 77. It will melt the foam board.) Three pieces of 2" foam and one piece of 1" foam yield an arch width of 6-3/4".



Fig. 2: Arch glue-up pressed together. (Motor used for weight)

JULY 2020

After the glue dried, I evened the surface of the arch with my belt sander. I further smoothed it with 50-grit sandpaper on a sanding block. You'll then want to mark the centerline of each foam piece so you can position it later.

I decided to use $\frac{1}{4}$ " OSB for the sides of the forms, allowing an 8' long pour in a given session (about nine 50# bags of concrete). I doubled the width of the top of both boards with a 1-1/2" strip of OSB to form the ledge for the wall.

Finished forms are held together by $\frac{1}{4}$ "-20 x 9" threaded rods, two per arch. The centerline of the first foam piece is 16" from the edge of the form. This allows the form to be clamped to the previous wall section that had been poured. (Exception: For the first wall section I positioned the first foam piece only 9" [not 16"] from the edge of the OSB, and capped the end of the form with a board. I also added a small board at the top to leave a ledge for a



Fig. 3: Smoothing the arch



Fig. 4: Gluing strip for wall notch to the OSB form

board so the track could continue away from the bridge. (See Fig. 7 next page to see this ledge.)

With one piece of OSB lying on the workbench, I positioned the foam arches one inch below the 1-1/2" OSB strip and 4" apart. I

then placed the second piece of OSB on top of the forms to complete the sandwich, straightened and leveled everything.

To get the arch vertical in spite of the sloping trench, I initially affixed each foam arch with the top threaded rod only so they could swivel. I then temporarily placed the assembly in the trench, used a plumb bob to get the first foam piece vertical, then drilled its bottom threaded rod hole and installed the rod. I then installed the rest of the foam pieces at 14" intervals to yield the proper spacing and orientation.

Once the sandwich was completed, I used a hand saw to cut off the bottoms of the foam pieces flush to the OSB. I placed the form into the trench, shimmed it up as necessary to match the slope of the track, then leveled it vertically and across the OSB side boards.

I had some old wire fence with 2" x 4" holes laying around, so I used that for "rebar". I propped it away from the foam so it would not leave rust streaks later.

You can see the threaded rods and rebar in Figure 5. (The bottom threaded rods are in there but are hard to see.) Note the small piece of wood on the foam piece closest to you. This board has the rebar extending through it to tie the next section



Fig. 5: First form, ready to pour. Note wire fence rebar between arches.



Fig. 6: The first section, poured

in. I also am placing 1/32" pieces of rubber between sections. I made these from an old heavy-duty inner tube.

It took me less than two hours to pour the entire 8' section. I let it sit overnight, then stripped the forms. The OSB parts of the forms are reusable as long as you don't get them too wet. I did keep the top of the concrete watered overnight to help with curing but didn't soak the forms too much.

Note that I had wrapped my track in stretch wrap, but that proved not to be necessary.



Fig. 7: Removing the foam

The BRANCH LINE

The foam comes out fairly easily if you use a sawzall to make a u-shaped cut, as shown in Fig.7. Just knock the center section out, then rip the rest of the foam away from the concrete. Be sure to wear gloves because your knuckles will tend to find the sharp edges of the concrete.

The final picture below shows where I am at the time of this

writing. Note that I need to get better at getting the concrete mix correct and getting the air out of the concrete. Thank goodness for stucco, which will be coming up.

Part 2 will lend attention to pouring the curved sections, building the small walls at the top, stucco and paint.



Fig. 8: First two sections poured



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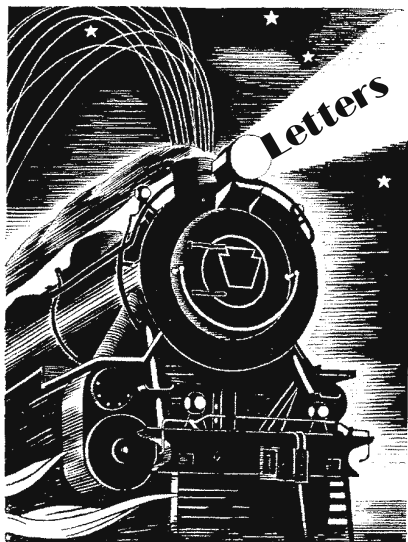
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STRAIGHT FROM THE IRON HORSE'S MOUTH

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Garden Railroading News • An Online Magazine Explainer

by Carla Brand Breitner, GR News Editor & Santa Clarita Valley Garden Railroad Club President

A magazine online reads differently than a magazine held in hand. I'd like to share some tips for digital magazine reading and explain how *GR News* is laid out.

Most of our content comes from club newsletters we receive each month. I select a variety of articles that have wide appeal to the garden model railroader. Featured layouts, "May We Suggest," and occasional "Specials" are written for *GR News*.

A digital magazine is generally read from front to back, rather than the "open to the middle" approach often used with a print magazine. We do not automatically "flip" to the back to look at the ad on the back cover. The digital magazine doesn't sit on the nightstand to browse all month. To keep *GR News* from seeming endless, we'll try for around 40 to 50 pages with a story to ad ratio of 3 pages story to 1 page of ads.

GR News is planned to be read like a print magazine: cover first, then two pages side by side. You'll find the Letters column, Ad Index and Affiliated Clubs at the end of the magazine. News & Notes and the Featured Layout will be at the beginning. The order of articles and ads in the middle of the magazine changes with each issue.

Your comments as a reader are very welcome. Please share your experience with us, so that we can make online "reading" easier for us all.



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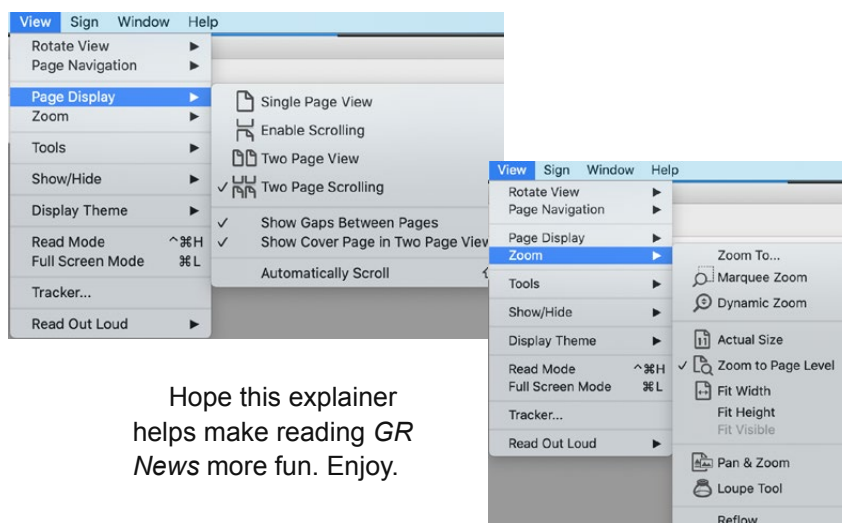
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