

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION DISPATCH

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION



ARIZONA
CAJON
LOS ANGELES
SAN DIEGO



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Convention Snapshots 2022



Did you enjoy 2021's PSR Regional Convention? It's not too late to get 2022's event in San Diego on your calendar!

"Back on Track in 2022" is coming!!

September 7—11, 2022.



Gateway 2022

NMRA National Convention

August 7-13, 2022

Marriott Grand, St Louis, MO
Information/Registration at gateway2022.org





FROM THE WAYCAR

Pat Raymer—President

Conventions, conventions, conventions...

Greetings PSR members!

I have conventions on my mind lately, and for good reason. Conventions, both National and Regional, have been at the core of the NMRA since its inception. Did you know that the first NMRA National Convention was held in 1935 and it was at that convention that the NMRA was formed? This stemmed from several model railroad clubs who would travel to operate on each other's layouts and found that their equipment was incompatible. At that first convention, with 71 attendees, officers were selected and the beginnings of the Standards and Conformance Department were formed. It wasn't until 1943 that the National bylaws were changed to allow regions to hold their own conventions. (If you would like to learn more about the history of the NMRA, go to the nmra.org website, scroll to the bottom, and click on "about us". There is a link to a great article by Dave Thornton written for the 75th anniversary of the NMRA.)

From these humble beginnings blossomed our current convention structure. Why do I bring this up now? Many times we don't appreciate what we have until it is gone. Circumstances precluded a PSR Regional convention and the National Convention in 2020 and forced the 2021 National Convention to a virtual format. Division level meets were either foregone or forced onto the Zoom platform. After going through those tough times, I came to realize more than ever how important it is that we gather. It is when we gather that we form bonds, share knowledge, and get the most value from our organization. I am by no means putting down virtual meeting technology. Without it, we would have had very little to offer our Division members during those dark days. The virtual meeting definitely has some advantages, and can be convenient.

The main problem with virtual meetings, as I see it, is who we don't see: the new person. It's that person who is attending their first Divisional or Regional meet, and doesn't know anyone there, and stays under the radar. It's that person that, if we are doing our job properly, would be noticed and greeted. There would be time to talk, get to know them a little, and for them to get to know us. The average Zoom meeting doesn't usually offer a lot of extra time to get to know a newbie, if they are noticed at all. When there are many Zoom windows open, overflowing onto the next screen(s), and many with their video off and their microphone muted, that newbie could be easily overlooked. I would like everyone to keep in mind that that newbie is the future of our organization.

But I digress... the subject was conventions. Some may accuse me of burying the lead but, in my defense, the news I am about to share with you just came to light in the last 24 hours. I am also writing this portion almost a week after my deadline, but I felt this major news was very close to being confirmed, and didn't want to wait another 3 months to tell you. If The Dispatch is a little late, you can blame me.

If you read my last column, you are aware that the Pacific Southwest Region will be hosting the 2024 NMRA National Convention and National Train Show. You also saw that we were considering a couple of locations in which to hold the convention. I am pleased to announce that, after months of consideration, Long Beach has been chosen as our 2024 convention location. The details of the contract still need to be hammered out, which will be occurring within the next few days. I am relieved that we have gotten past this hurdle and can now focus our energies on moving forward with specific convention planning.

This will be the first in-person National Convention in California since 2011 and the first in Southern California since 2008. This is a wonderful opportunity for the PSR, and Long Beach will be a wonderful place to spend a week in the summertime. As you can imagine, there will be much more information about this coming up soon. Stay tuned!

Until next time-see you down the line!



THE PSR BACKSHOP

Gary Butts, MMR
Vice President

Well, just as it looked like we were finally getting out from under the Covid spell it looks like LA is back in trouble with one of the new variants. I sure hope this one is ineffective and short lived. My area of Orange County has not seen this uptrend yet and we were really starting to get back to some semblance of normal. Sandy and I along with all of our close friends have all been back for our second vaccine booster shots which helps in the comfort level when getting together. I trust and hope you are well and doing fine.

The Cajon Division held another one of their in-person meets last month and it went off without a hitch. Masks were optional and most felt comfortable enough to go without and, as far as I know, there were no resulting problems. It was great to have several of our LA and San Diego Division members show up for the event and, as always, fun to get caught up with what everyone has been up to with their model train interests. This event was a bit different for Cajon in that the meet and Pizza lunch was completely free for NMRA members. There was plenty of swap meet action as well as three good clinics including one "hands on" structure weathering with stains that was really well received. A short membership meeting was held with award presentations, model show and tell. Of course, the famous Hobo Auction wrapped up the meet.

Cajon Division has continued with their "Cajon Connection" series with the latest session being held in person outdoors at the Cajon meet. Three groups got together to discuss model rail electronics, operations and scenery. Think: "mini" special interest groups. These sessions continue once each month via Zoom and are open to all NMRA members and especially everyone in our PSR Region. Feel free to drop in and share your latest doings or maybe get an answer to a nagging modeling question. The next session is

scheduled for the 27th of May and may pre-date this issue. If so, just keep an eye on your email for the next Zoom session next month. Pre-registration is required to get the zoom link but is completely free.

It is essentially confirmed that the Pacific Southwest Region will be hosting the 2024 National NMRA Convention. We are down to selecting one of two remaining venues: Pasadena or Long Beach. The PSR initial "Convention committee" has visited several hotels and convention centers and are working with NMRA headquarters for the final venue selection. This should happen within a month and then it will be time to get rolling on all of the preparations that will need to happen in the next two years. This is a big deal for our Region and will be a lot of fun, but will require an "all hands on deck" effort from all of our PSR Divisions. No big deal if we all take ownership of some small part of the project, so start thinking about what you could contribute to the effort. What a great opportunity to show the rest of the international model railroading community what we have to offer in the Southwest part of the U.S. and getting to the Convention will be really easy for us that year. Nice!





Cajon

Harold Helland, Director

The Cajon Division held their Spring Meet on April 30 and it was a great success. The meet, held in Buena Park, was free to members and included a free lunch. Sixty-five (65) members who participated in the day's activities certainly enjoyed the day. The day started with a Swap Meet which included about ten sellers who were happy to move some of their equipment to other model railroaders. The contest room included several models, but I am sure there are more models that should have been brought to the event. It is important that model railroaders know that not every model brought to an NMRA meet needs to be Achievement Certificate quality. Many of our members have models that they are proud of and should be shown even though they are not interested in the achievement award. The modelers show and tell allows a time for those who bring their favorite model to tell everyone about the model and why it is one of their favorites.

The free pizza lunch allowed everyone to socialize, meet new friends, and discuss model railroading. The Hobo Auction followed lunch and provided numerous members the opportunity to go home with their favorite new piece of model railroad equipment. The main event for the afternoon was the Cajon Connection. Three separate discussion groups met to discuss Operations, Scenery and Electronics. This was the live version of the Cajon Connection held the fourth Thursday of every month via Zoom at 7:00 in the evening.

The Cajon Division Fall Meet will be held on Saturday, October 22, so please mark your calendars and be sure to attend that event..



Historian's Report

Per Harwe, Historian

Unfortunately I cannot report any progress in the area of the Historian in PSR. As I have mentioned in earlier reports, I am at the stage where I need input from members in order to go ahead. My call for help with the Convention Cars, Patches, and Pins had *very* good response and I hope that something like that can happen in the future as well.

My next big task will be to collect pictures from past PSR events and incorporate them in the pages on the website (<http://www.psrnmra.org/library/historians-corner>). This is an area where I *know* our members can help because I am sure that most of us have pictures hidden away somewhere and I am asking for you to share. I have taken one small step by adding one, yes, just one, picture. It's one of the officials and you can find it here: <http://www.psrnmra.org/library/historians-corner/officials-of-the-psr> .

Please contact me via email history@psrnmra.org with what you have and can contribute with. I can scan the pictures if all you have are hard copies, and if you give me a return address I promise you will get them back. (Well, there is always USPS – if they misplace the envelope all bets are off, but in that case you will get printed copies of the scanned pictures instead.

NMRA YouTube Channel

If you have access to the internet take a minute to check out the NMRA YouTube Channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBbDHVLodgxn8otpnudMsHdQMucCzcTWD>

While it is challenging to watch videos live during the week if you are a working person, these video recordings of the presentations give you access to many events you might not otherwise get to see.



Arizona

Terry Fearn, Director

Hello to all the PSR members from the NMRA Arizona Division.

With the easing of Covid restrictions in Arizona, we have resumed our regular schedule of meets in the spring, summer and fall plus attending swap meets to promote the NMRA. Monthly Zoom meetings are also scheduled on topics of interest. We had 70 NMRA members at the division spring meet in Scottsdale on March 26th. Clinics were presented on scratch building a caboose, weathering techniques and right-of-way details. We also conduct monthly Zoom meetings. The topic for the May Zoom meeting was how you can make drawings for your printer without a CAD program - using PowerPoint. The next scheduled meet is the summer meet in Prescott on June 18th. We are currently searching for a location in Tucson for the fall meet in November.

Bruce Petrarca continues in the role of Division Superintendent, in addition to being the Division's AP Manager. The newest MMR in our chapter is Bob Ginger, who was given his award at the Scottsdale meeting. Other chapter members are earning points towards their MMR designation.

Planning is continuing for the 2023 PSR convention, hosted by the Arizona Division. The name of convention is the Grand Canyon Special, to be held in Flagstaff, AZ on June 7-10, 2023. Clinics are planned for model railroading topics and a clinic sequence built around northern Arizona history. A planned activity for one evening will be a railfan event at the Flagstaff depot, with food trucks providing snacks and drinks. Over 80 BNSF trains travel through Flagstaff daily. For those interested in traveling by Amtrak to the convention, the Southwest Chief stops daily in Flagstaff. On the last day of the conference, we are in final negotiation with the Grand Canyon Railway to charter a special train behind steam locomotive #4960. A range of car classes and ticket prices are planned. More information will be available soon.



Los Angeles

Vic Cavalli, Director

The Los Angeles (L.A.) Division traditionally starts off each new calendar year with its annual General Membership Meeting. This year, it was held on March 20, 2022 interactively via the Zoom app. On even numbered years, L.A. also uses this opportunity to install its newly elected Superintendent and Chief Clerk/Paymaster officers. For 2022, however, there was no installation of officers for the simple reason no Division members stepped forward to run for either office.

Interim-Superintendent Vic Cavalli therefore, prior to his term ending, chose to separate the Chief Clerk duties from that of the Paymaster's; appointing Nick Lisica L.A. Division Chief Clerk and Kevin Spady L.A. Division Paymaster. Both appointments to remain in effect until the next bi-annual elections are held.

To fill L.A.'s vacant Superintendent position, the Division's Advisory Board suggested, then voted unanimously, to combine the duties of L.A. Director and L.A. Superintendent for the duration of one year.

Looking forward, L.A. is scheduled to continue/start holding or conducting:

- Monthly *Sand House Chat* "Zoom" Sessions – first Thursday of each month.
- Bi-Monthly Division Sponsored Home Layout Visitations (approx. 3-4 per year).
- Offer subsidized NMRA *Rail Pass* memberships (during visitation and attended shows).
- Conduct NMRA members "satisfaction" surveys to determine how our limited resources may be best spent within the Division.

Continued on next page



Los Angeles

Vic Cavalli, Director

Much of what we would like to undertake during the remainder of 2022 will heavily depend on the Division's ability to attract new local volunteers – a problem we have been wrestling with for many years now.

To learn more of what is happening with the L.A. Division, I highly recommend you read though the latest issue of our quarterly newsletter, the *LA Coupler*, www.ladiv-nmra.org/index.php/news-and-information/la-coupler-newsletter/current-edition, for among other things, a complete list of known area-centric events (usually listed towards the rear of each issue). Likewise, check out the *Events* section of our website, www.ladiv-nmra.org, to learn more about what's happening in the northern-west corner of the PSR.

Drop me a line should you have question or comment. Until next quarter's report, happy model railroading to you.



San Diego

Pete Steinmetz, Director

We are very busy planning the 2024 PSR convention. We feel that this will be an outstanding convention with a combination of layout tours, OP sessions, prototype tours, clinics, a Saturday swap meet, and a banquet with speaker model railroader Shotgun Tom Kelly. We will have a first time tour of the Pasha auto loading facility. We all see auto carriers moving in trains. Now is a chance to see how the autos are loaded into these cars.

Our clinic lineup will feature remote clinicians presenting their clinics on Zoom. All but one will be live and able to answer questions from the audience. This allows us to have clinicians that aren't able to be with us in person.

San Diego — Continued

The San Diego Division has monthly events for our members. We have quarterly meets that feature a lot of activities starting with food, clinics, and auctions. We are starting to promote our activities to members of the LA and Cajon Divisions. All E Mails will come from the San Diego Division Mail Chimp account. We welcome members and guests from other divisions to attend our monthly events.

The 2022 NMRA National Convention and National Train Show will be held in St Louis from Saturday August 7 – Sunday August 14, 2022.

https://www.eventsquid.com/event.cfm?preview&event_id=13724

The 2023 NMRA National Convention and National Train Show will be held in Grapevine, TX (Dallas) from Saturday August 19 – Sunday August 27.

<https://www.2023texasexpress.com/>

Co-Sponsors are BNSF and Union Pacific Railroads.

The 2023 PSR Convention will be presented by the Arizona Division and held in Flagstaff, AZ. Dates are July . Stay tuned for more information.

The 2024 NMRA National Convention and National Train Show will be held in Long Beach, CA. Dates TBD. We will be looking for volunteers to help us plan the convention.



Random Photo from the NTRY.



Achievement Program

Carl Heimberger, AP Chairman

Second Quarter 2022 AP Report

The Pacific Southwest Regions Awards Program is kind of like a roller coaster with many ups and downs. We did not do bad this last quarter but have done better this may be contributed to more activities opening up. I know for me it has been attending train shows with my modular club.

Congratulations go out to the following members who did find some time and put items into their divisions meets.

Golden Spike Awards

Tim Gilliland – Arizona

Merit Awards

- Geoff Ham - Arizona, 1 for Cars
- Alan Olson – Arizona, 1 for Motive Power
- Charles Schwartz – Arizona, 1 for Structures
- Chris Thompson – Arizona, 2 for Structures and 2 for Cars
- Gary Butts Cajon – Cajon, 1 for Cars
- Steve Cole – Cajon, 1 for Cars
- Gary Stenberg – Cajon, 1 for Structures

Awards Program Certificates

Terry Dorsett – Arizona, Volunteer

You did not see your name on the above lists? Well not all is lost you have just over three months to get some of those half finished project completed and entered into the contest room at the PSR Convention this September “Back On Track In 2022”.

Do not want to mess with all that paperwork? Really, it is just one page with 5 short paragraphs and a few supporting photos or drawing. Not sure what you should write?...you are in luck there is a local AP Manager in your Division. All you need to do is ask for some help. We are all overwhelmed the first time, heck I was clueless. But with just a little help I got the

paperwork filled out and even got my first Merit Award. Just like everything in your life a little competition sharpens your skills and pushes you to do better. And remember your final score is NOT based on how well you compared to others but ONLY based on your work. Each entry is evaluated on its own merits.

So, if you spend just one hour a day between now and the San Diego Convention you will have around 95 hours available to complete some of those half-finished projects. So, put down that phone, I pad or whatever you have in your hand and have some real fun by getting back to working on a really great hobby..... Model Railroading.



PSR Treasurer

Joel Morse, Treasurer

TREASURERS SUMMER 2022 DISPATCH REPORT

During the period February 1, 2022 through April 30, 2022 there were quite a few PSR financial transactions, both deposits and credits. On the deposit side, the Region received its’ portion of the proceeds from the Orange Blossom Special Convention (\$2,645.28), the Division Membership Rebate from National (\$883.00), and a rebate from the Amazon Smiles Program of \$10.27.

On the Credit side, we paid out the \$883.00 Membership Rebate, and paid \$25.00 to the California Department of Justice as a fee for our annual 501c3 registration.

The April 30, 2022 Bank Statement indicates that the Region has \$32,463.29 (compared to \$29,584.74 on January 31, 2022) in the Region Checking Account.

Since the Region became a corporation, the 2021 PSR Tax Return will include income and expenses from each of the Divisions. The 2021 Federal Tax Return (990N) was filed on May 7, 2022, along with the required annual CA Treasurers Report (CT-TR-1) and Registration Renewal

Fee Report (RRF-1).

PSR Wells Fargo Checking Account:

- **Region Assets as of February, 2022: \$29,584.74**
- **Region Assets as of April 30, 2022: \$32,463.29**
- **Net Change this period: \$2,878.55**



Education

Michael Allee, Chairperson

BECOMING A MODEL BUILDER OR A BETTER MODELER

In today's world we seem to "not be able to wait". Cars roll through stop signs and whisk past us on the freeway at speeds way faster than the speed limit, darting from one lane to another. This has come to our hobby. A couple of decades ago commercial models were ok. Plastic modeling wasn't what it is today. Today's steam engine plastic shell in some cases has more and better detail than a brass engine from years gone by. In early days most modelers built their own models mostly from wood or metal kits. It was practically the only way to create a train desired. Now we have wonderful kits made from plastic or resin with detail we'd have died for back in the day. The manufactures have gone so far as to provide preassembled models that are wonderfully detailed. For you fast movers or impatient ones with an extra twenty or more in their pocket they're yours.

There's a group within the railroad hobby that enjoy building models from kits or scratch. This article and future articles are for that group. For you impatient ones, if you haven't already done so, it's time to place your attention elsewhere or follow along and you may find a part of the hobby you didn't know you would enjoy. Although let me warn you....."patience is a virtue".

For the beginner don't buy a new expensive kit. Go to a swap meet and but an Athearn "Blue Box" or other old plastic kit. They have few parts with easy to follow instructions. Hone your modeling abilities on a few of these; familiarize yourself on the use of a hobby knife or scalpel, how to use/handle the different glues and cements, perfect your painting techniques with hobby paint spray cans before choosing an airbrush, handling decals, etc. Begin building your tool collection. After a few experiences you're going to want to make the model perform perfectly.

The National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) has a set of standards on their website that any

modeler can access without membership. Weighting the model to a standard so it doesn't easily venture off the track. The trucks with their axles and wheels are not really ready to run, they need fine-tuning. Trucks have received much attention over the years with many modifications that have improved their performance. The trucks in a Blue Box are not ready to be used. With some attention they can be made to work well.

Today's unofficial standard in couplers is the Kadee coupler which can be fine-tuned though most modelers don't fine-tune. Now that Kadee's patent has run out several manufactures are copying the coupler but in my opinion with little success. Each subject is an article/clinic/video or more by itself. As a member of NMRA you can access the many videos they have on these subjects. The National, Regional, and Division conventions and meets are great sources for clinics by experts. As for clinics it's not only the clinics but the interaction with fellow hobbyists and the friendships that develop from those interactions.

Structures and scenery are two more areas that one can delve into and, if you're thinking of creating your own layout, require additional learned techniques. Again, many articles, clinics and videos are available to help advance ones abilities.

Now for those of you who've been down many if not all these roads mentioned above one begins to wonder how do I get better and if your a new modeler still reading you will find what I'm going to suggest beneficial in perfecting your skills. We've all been at some layout and seen fantastic structures, trains, and scenery and wish we could even get close to doing as well. Envy comes to mind. Most of us have a few friends in the hobby but for the most part we avoid having others critique our work. There is a way around this even though the method doesn't appear to be designed to avoid others critiquing our efforts. The NMRA has a Master Modeler program with the intention of making one a well-rounded active modeler, I believe. Don't scoff, give me a chance to explain. Part of this program can be used by you to self-evaluate your efforts.

Education

Continued from page 8

In this article we're only interested in the evaluation of models built, not in the other parts of the program.

So let us begin. Go to the NMRA website. At the top of the page there are three colored rows, click on "Education" in the dark blue row. Scroll down to "Contests" and click on it. On the righthand side the blue column click on "Forms". Click on D "Model Contest Judge's Score Sheet #902" and print the sheet also save the page on your computer. You're going to want to use this page for every model. By the time you're ready to evaluate your model you're going to want to fill this page out while built your model. If you do it after you've finished you're going to forget some of the stuff you did.

Now go back to the previous screen, "Forms", and click on "AP Judging Guidelines". There are ten pages that evaluators (judges) use to evaluate a model. These are the pages you'll use to self-evaluate looking at your model and referring to Form 902. It probably will be easier to print these out and do your evaluation at your modeling site rather than in front of your computer. In each of the five categories there's a list of "Points to Ponder" use these points to evaluate. The more you can agree with the better your model.

At the bottom of some of the pages is a scoring matrix. After you've compared the "ponder list" with your model use the matrix to give yourself a score. It's not the score you're after it's the evaluation you performed before you put down a score.

If you're interested in how well you did towards receiving a Merit Award for your effort. A Merit Award is issued with a score of 87½ points out of 125 possible points. From your high school days what does that mean. $87.5/125 = 0.7$ or $0.7 \times 100 = 70\%$. In my classroom that was a "C-" in fact the lowest "C-" possible. Remember this isn't in your minds-eye. This is what you've put down on Form 902 and how you evaluated what was on that form and what you saw in your model using the evaluating guidelines.

I know you're saying to yourself I did this and this is good enough for self-evaluation, but writing it down makes you think about what you did and helps you remember what you did. Doing this is what is going to make you a better modeler. Along with practice.

Let's take the first category on the form, "Construction". From the Judging Guidelines "...focuses on the *quality of workmanship* as demonstrated by proper handling of materials, applied labor, modeling skill, and craftsmanship as demonstrated by the finished model." "...the starting point for the model, the materials and techniques used and ...major steps of construction. Form 902 Construction box "Model Basis" or what was the starting point. (The > and < signs are percentage of forty points. Depending upon the "ponder" evaluation a model score that could be given.) "Construction Techniques" or what did you have to do to complete the model. This category evaluates the quality of the construction involved and nothing else. Let's look at the "Points to Ponder About Construction".

- Quality and skill of workmanship and complexity
- Handling and selection of materials
- Quality of assembly of components and pieces
- Neatness of glued parts, ladders square, roof walk centered, etc.
- Components fit (no spaces between open or otherwise)
- Siding mismatched, off-vertical or not square
- Roof material spacing and eaves overhang even
- Wood quality, unsanded, fuzzy, wood fibers, saw, blade or file marks, uneven ends (finished cut), dents, etc.
- Window, doors, hatches plumb
- Repeat parts evenly spaced
- No glue or solder visible
- No handling marks i.e. fingerprints
- What did you try to do
- Did you do it

Not all of them will pertain to your model. Yet, are the things you should think about as you build and review your model.

To be continued with "Detail", "Conformity", "Finish & Lettering" and "Scratch building".

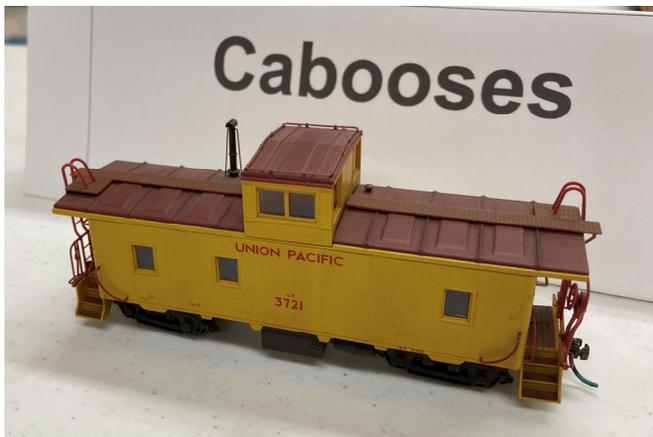
The Show Room

Editors Note: As most of you may now know, James Keena is leaving the Los Angeles area and heading to the wilds of Idaho. I can only say that he will be very, very missed in our Region. James has been an integral part of the LA Division and of the PSR Region. He has managed contests at most of our events and been a masterful coordinator of a very complex set of activities in the judging of models. Personally, I will miss him a great deal and wish him the best in his new Division up north!

You still have several opportunities in 2022 to display your models and have them reviewed for Merit awards. Here are a couple key events to get ready for. Bring your work, even if it's just for display (I do this often).

- NMRA National Convention - August 7 to 13, 2022
- National Train Show—August 12 to 14, 2022
- PSR Regional Convention—September 7 to 11, 2022

Here are a few photos of the contest entries from the recent Cajon Division Meet for your viewing pleasure:



UP Caboose—James Keena



G&S Ice Refer—Gary Butts



Pacific Electric Baldwin Locomotive—James Keena



Southern Pacific Gondola with pipe load—James Keena

The Show Room



1 Square Foot Module—Joel Morse



Water Tower—Trow Davis



Small Bridge—



Favorite Trains Display

pudding River Lumber Company train—Kevin Spady

Santa Fe refer train—Arie Korporaal



Southern Pacific Narrow Gauge Stock Car—



“BACK ON TRACK IN 2022”

by Don Fowler, MMR

Have you signed up for the biggest model railroading event of 2022 right here in San Diego? The Pacific Southwest Region (PSR) presents their annual convention every year in September and this year it is the San Diego Division's turn to host. This year's convention will take place at the Four Points by Sheraton centrally located in the Kearney Mesa area. The hotel offers many amenities and is providing a very special room rate for our big event.

Our Convention Committee has worked very hard to provide a fun filled week of model railroading enjoyment. Attendees will be able to participate in many activities, learn a wide variety of new techniques and experience a wonderful time of fellowship while enjoying our great hobby. As our Convention name attests, we are all very happy to get “Back on Track” with our lives (and our hobby) after Covid's interruption.

The Convention will officially open on Wednesday, September 7th with registration, PSR Board Meeting and clinics. That evening we will gather for a special reception with light refreshments at the world-famous San Diego Model Railroad Museum.

On Thursday, September 8th, the day will begin with our annual PSR Membership Meeting and complimentary breakfast. This will be followed by a full day of new clinics, layout tours, prototype tours, operating

sessions, and non-rail activities. The evening will close with exciting games of Bingo for Trains.

Friday, September 9th will continue with the same type of activities with the notable addition of two very large model railroad auctions. The first is our traditional Hobo Auction where we anticipate more than two hundred items to bid on. The second will be a silent auction for more exclusive model railroad items.

The Hobo Breakfast will kick off Saturday, September 10th followed by a large model railroad swap meet which is free to vendors who bring their own tables and convention registrants. Later in the morning, the swap meet will be open for paid admission to the public with children under twelve free. All the regular convention activities will continue throughout the day. That evening we will gather to enjoy our annual Awards and Recognition Banquet. The featured speaker is our own “Shotgun” Tom Kelly. Tom is a famous radio announcer and TV personality.

Sunday, September 11th is the last day of the Convention and will offer more home & club layout tours throughout the County.

As you can see, it will be a full week of model railroading enjoyment. We are capping (closing) registration when we hit 200 and hotel rooms are filling up fast. If you have not yet registered and booked a room, I would encourage you to do it today (<https://psrconvention.org/BackOnTrack2022>). We would hate for you to miss out on this great event. Hope to see you there!



Your purchasing power can help our NMRA Region!

Do you shop through Amazon? Did you know that every time you have something delivered to your doorstep by Amazon, that non-profit 501c(3) organizations like the PSR NMRA could receive a donation from Amazon?

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How Does the Pacific Southwest Region benefit?

Each quarter the PSR NMRA will receive an electronic funds transfer from Amazon for the total of the donations during the prior period. I personally do quite a bit of shopping online and I just recently switched my contribution over to the PSR NMRA once we achieved our 501 c (3) designation. Last year my contributions totaled over \$20.00. If just half of our regional membership contributed at that level, we would be contributing over \$10,000 annually to the PSR. Imagine what could be done with that amount of funding to give back quality content, events, and benefits to you, our members!

AmazonSmile is available at smile.amazon.com on your web browser and can be activated in the Amazon Shopping app for iOS and Android phones.

Give it a try!

Kevin Spady, PSR Editor

The Oops File – A Commentary

By John Watts, MA

I am a fairly new model railroader. And an ardent observer and collector of new information; I revel in it. As a modeler I soak it up and store it away for future use. I look in the railroad modeling magazines for rolling stock and layouts that grab me, and I often ask myself, *Is that a photo of a model, or is it the real thing?* To grudgingly modify a recent movie title, Fool me if you can!... I love it when they do. I have a whole file folder full of photos and articles torn bodily from train magazines, (mostly mine), that I ogle with unbridled passion for their detail and authenticity.

Ooh, that my layout should eventually look like theirs!

That brings me to the true subject of this article. There is nothing that catches my eye faster than a layout where the builder has all the correct and well-built features, but they just don't look convincing. I don't care how much you soft-focus your camera, it still doesn't cover up the mistakes or omissions that scream, 'This is an artificially contrived scene'.

I know that some modelers would rather run their layouts than build them, and they are satisfied with 'use it like you bought it' items. This article probably won't interest those folks very much, and that is perfectly okay. We all have our favorite ways to do things.

Others, like myself, would rather take the time to precisely detail things to maximize the realism effect on each feature, car and engine; (although I draw the line at detailing the undersides of my cars with every counted rivet head).

.....And now to the meat of the subject...The Oops file.

Here are a few of the more glaring Oops's that I have encountered, and I believe are worth commenting upon; Perhaps you will agree.

Vehicles: A very noticeable realism killer is a road vehicle that doesn't exhibit the weight it should. Go out and look at your car or a delivery truck. The tires aren't round. The lower edge bulges slightly and is flat on the bottom. This is an indicator of weight. A loaded truck should also 'squat' in the rear more than the front. Heat, (not melt), your vehicle tires and press them against a flat surface to bulge them slightly on the extreme lower edge.

They will look so much more realistic than a vehicle sitting lightly on four perfectly round tires that barely make ground contact, especially when sitting on hard pavement where it is most noticeable. If they are on soft ground make the tracks up to the vehicle deeper to indicate weight.



A truck with flattened tires, indicating weight.

Structures: Additionally, I have seen the most strikingly well built buildings that simply are set lightly on the surface of the ground and you can see a major shadow line or gap under the edge where they are not in full contact with the soil. Even if your buildings are removable they should still make full contact with the earth to complete the visual effect of realism and mass.



Building set “into” the soil

If nothing else, use a perimeter of weeds, plantings or junk to close the gap. Buildings that are built separately on a flat commercial base piece that are then scrunched into the soil also look artificial. Especially when each manufactured base looks completely different than all the others around it.

Regarding those same buildings; the worst are the plastic kit buildings that are used right out of the box, retaining the cast-in colors and satin sheen. Yes, it is easier; but they look clunky and patently fake. Not many (if any) buildings have

pristine paint like the cast-in color a styrene model provides. Rain kicks up soil color to the lower edge of a wall. It also streaks walls (and fences) with lime and rust, even just the slightest hint makes a world of difference and is easy to add with a dry brush and a little pastel chalk powder.

People bump walls and leave dings and not so well-done patch jobs. Mess up a doorframe, ding a door panel or wall, (especially an exterior wall), and add dirty hand staining to door edges

Up under the eaves the paint is usually brightest. Windows get dirty quickly. Dull them a bit or even break some. Make your buildings look lived in and well used, if not over-used.

In an older building I would expect to see discoloration around the doorknob and on the door edge where people grab it as they enter. How about dirt and wear at thresholds where shoes have worn them down. Shoe prints appear where people lean on an exterior wall and put their foot up on it; show some grime.

Roofs are never the same new color for long, and they age irregularly as well. The edges of shingles should be less than perfect. A shingle roof is almost always victim of ladders leaned on it or weather damaging them by lifting shingles here and there. A real tin roof almost always shows damage and corrosion to some degree. Bend some corners or install some sheeting irregularly, like a home repair.

If your building is over fifty years old, something should be out of square, replaced or well worn. Roofs need a little sway-backing if they are old. A ruler straight ridgeline looks phony and detracts from the whole layout, because it is just too perfect.

Lean some junk against it, or put some bird droppings on the ridgeline or chimney. Also, don't forget that if a roof is sway-backed, the siding will be slightly off as well.

If your layout is steam era there should be a lot more coal dust around and on most everything than on a strictly diesel era layout.

Scenery: Let's address the ground itself. Things don't sit *on* the ground; they sit in it! Things just naturally sink in a bit, especially heavy stuff. Railcar trucks are exceedingly heavy, as are cast-iron engine parts or the old, abandoned donkey engine. They should be partly buried in the soil to look convincing. Debris also drifts up against things that are left in place for a while. Nothing looks more patently false than added details that are just 'placed', not melded into the scene; or a scene with no small items strewn around in out of the way places. Folks just naturally drop stuff and walk on, and the wind blows papers against fences, walls and bushes.

Groundcover is great and adds a lot of elegance to an area, but a huge expanse of static grass looks like a carpet. Throw in some variety like clumps of weeds or wildflowers, or even bare spots of dirt with some tire tracks through it, or a puddle or two.

Rubber sponge bushes truly suck! And lichen clumps aren't much better. They each look too uniform in shape, texture and often in size. They are all too frequently badly rough trimmed with scissors, like a kid's first haircut.

Really good layouts use armatures made of real weeds or twigs to give variety to bushes and brush. Even trees can use larger weed skeletons and small dried-out bush branches very successfully.

Yeah, I know; you need three hundred trees in your forest. Well, you can get it done in no time by buying a mass of pre-made twisted wire trees that resemble bottle brushes, or you can build them individually for people to gawk at and coo over about how you really hit it out of the park with your uniquely created forest of one-of-a-kind trees.

Please, no more commercial pine trees that look like ballpoint pens with branches stuck in them like so many darts. Hand made pines are always superior, and ones that don't use chopsticks for trunks can be really outstanding.

A 'sort-of straight' trunk made from a branch off your wife's favorite camellia bush can be a very convincing pine tree trunk. (Just don't lose your focus and brag about it to your wife).

Equally as important; not all pines grow straight up. Some are curved slightly (into the wind); and some grow at a slight angle from the perpendicular. How about some damaged trees as well, like a lightning strike or a downed tree that is growing a new tree out of the old horizontal trunk. It also helps to include some small saplings and a rotten old stump or two.

Discarded stuff adds a lot to the ambiance of a scene, but don't forget, how many times in real life have you seen discarded items that don't have some trash littered around or on them. (Just look beside your garage). Not so many. Trash is good!

It would be nice if we didn't, but America is prone to litter. An absence of it is an anathema to the eye. (I've always wanted to use that word).

Sidewalks are almost always cracked or broken down somewhere. They also are non-uniform in color, and even wave or have cracked surfaces as they pass a parkway tree.



A downed tree adds interest. (horizontal line is plexiglass protection)

I have yet to see a layout where there is a bicycle track that was left as the sidewalk cement was drying, (or a kid's initials scribbled in the wet cement). Why not? I see them in my neighborhood quite often.

Asphalt roads are almost all patched and somewhat irregular. Potholes are usually present, or the marks where they were filled in, or where cracks were tarred. Create slight dips and changes in level to indicate minor settling or uneven grading.

Painted street lines should show wear, especially on busy streets and at intersections. Why not semi-erase some and restripe them, (just like in your neighborhood). They need broken and blurred edges, dirt on them, and a few skid marks. The lanes need darker shading in the center and especially on the far side of a dip where over time cars have dropped oil as they drove by. (A little airbrush work makes this fun as well as prototypical).

Parking lanes need stains where parked vehicles have left puddles of oil or coolant; especially if you have an auto parts store or garage on your layout. (They always have oily parking spaces in front of the doors). If you have parking meters and street signs on your layout bend one or two a bit; just like the mayor's wife did in your neighborhood.

Think about real roads. Where would water collect? How would it be drained away. Your layout should reflect the realities of weather as well as wear.

Your workshops, factories and service stations need stains on the floor in logical places; and how about some uncoiled hoses or rope being tossed aside. Shop rags are usually present in a real shop. Few layouts have them; they should. Most mechanics aren't very neat as they touch walls, doors and toolboxes with dirty hands.

I hate it when I see a factory with a clean roof and walls. Every factory known to man has fallout of some kind on it; not to mention bird poop smears and slopped liquids like paint or oil.

Figures: When you include people on a layout there are some considerations that can make them look realistic or, if ignored, can make them look like chess pieces waiting to be moved.

Contrary to common belief, there is more than one company that makes nicely sculpted engineers and firemen, and even those can be re-posed to add individuality.

My eye gravitates, (negatively), to layouts that use easily available and out of the box posed figures with stock paint



Figures modified to carry items.



Note man pouring from bucket

jobs. Change their garb with paint. Give a fireman tan Dickies instead of the ever-present blue coveralls. Also, not all engineers wore the billed cap; some wore bowlers or fedoras. Today they wear baseball caps and Hawaiian shirts. Not too long ago, I rode to Santa Barbara with a young engineer who wore a 'T' shirt, shorts and flip-flops. Talk about culture shock!

When you paint your figures resist the urge to use primary colored gloss paint, and clothes are never glossy, (Unless you are Lady Gaga or Madonna). Most have a dull finish and faded or worn spots. Use a light ink wash to accentuate folds and make clothes appear more realistic.

Why not use modeler's putty to sculpt a custom hat or two? Place a few figures in unique poses. A triangular jeweler's file will cut a wedge out of a leg or arm so you can heat it and close it up a little. A jeweler's saw cut allows you to open up an angle, raise an arm or create a running figure. Putty the gap and file it smooth. It will really give some 'pop' to your layout to have original positions for your figures.



German Shepard castings modified into coyotes

Most figures you buy will be standing, sitting or reaching with one arm. Why not have a squatting worker; one kneeling or one reaching for something. Create unique poses that have people asking, "Where did you get that figure; I've never seen one like it before". (Drive 'em crazy, don't tell them you modified the pose on a stock figure).

When buying figures, be careful of the ones that are cast from white-metal. I found out the hard way that some of those alloys are so hard you can't bend it, file it or cut it, to save your soul. Those, you have to use in their stock poses. (Want some? I have several I'll give away, gladly).

Rolling Stock and Track: Regarding your rolling stock. Smaller scale engines, (N, HO and even O scale), especially diesel-electrics come with handrails that are way to fat. In real-life they would be three inches in diameter or more. They should be replaced with fine wire that more accurately produces a look that is proportional. I know, it is difficult, especially in N scale; but it pays-off in the end to get rid of the puffy handrails that were easier to cast by the manufacturer, but look completely unrealistic.

On an engine I expect to see grab irons bent, chipped and discolored, not uniform engine black or bright yellow with no hand soiling or chipped paint. Steps are always worn and discolored, and often are bent, as are most handrails. It is not logical to see a nicely weathered engine with pristine handrails and pilots. They are always getting busted up some.

Railroad rails look much better if aged rather than having bright brass or silver sides and tops. Yes, that too is a huge investment in time. But once completed, your layout will look enormously more convincing. (If you are laying new track some manufacturers now offer pre-aged rails).

One superior layout I saw was completely overshadowed by the fact that the rail ties were left the shiny, uniform commercial plastic brown, right out of the box. You can save some work weathering ties by not painting the ones deep inside your tunnels; how about that?

Roadbed looks really artificial if all you use is the standard cork base covered with a thin layer of stone to a uniform width; and especially if you don't color the ballast to show a natural and always present color change from grease dripping off of engines and journal boxes. In a yard, the ballast is usually almost the same level as the surrounding area. It is not raised like it is out on the main line. Incorrect ballast level is an all too common 'Oops'.

A line of track is seldom without a few weeds, even between the rails on a well used mainline. A siding normally has quite a few weeds in the center of the track and along the right of way.

Now about tunnels; what's with the clean tunnel openings on a steam layout. Get some smoke on the roof of that tunnel and entrance. (The same goes for the doorway and inside roof of your engine house). In the engine house the soot also drifts down along walls and on top of cabinets.

I have made note below of what I brought away from looking at the fine work by several very accomplished modelers of layouts and especially competitive dioramas. Things that impressed me most about their work and made me look a second and third, (maybe fourth), time, are listed here. Diorama modelers seem to go the extra mile quite often. When you think about it shouldn't we all be doing the same thing on a broader scale with our layouts?

Here is what they do that is so special:

1. They place their people in little vignettes that make a scene within a scene.

Some things have to be seen from a totally different angle to be noticed; like when looking in a window or through an open door. Things like having a mechanic working under the hood of a car with a boy looking over his shoulder, in the service bay of a gas station.

2. They don't skimp on the minute details:

- ◆ Birds sitting on wires.
- ◆ Bird droppings on light poles or roofs.
- ◆ Cats, dogs and chickens in yards and under porches.
- ◆ Litter in corners or along roadbeds and streets.
- ◆ People in non-standard active poses, not just standing upright like statues.
- ◆ Wear and tear on objects. (Scratches, chipped and peeled paint).
- ◆ Tiny graffiti or hand written notes in out of the way places.
- ◆ Weathered handbills and advertising on buildings and posts.
- ◆ Forest litter under trees and small creatures in out of the way places.
- ◆ Things absentmindedly set down and forgotten.



Vignettes with multiple people in action

All in all, I hope my ramblings make sense. It is coming from someone who is relatively new to model railroading, and thus I'm definitely less locked into the 'The way I have always done it' mentality.

I hope I help some of you think about increasing the 'reality factor' on your layouts. Besides, it will give me more to look at and covet for my layout.

HOn30 modeler and ardent observer of great layouts and dioramas.



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