

# BAY AREA GARDEN RAILWAY SOCIETY

# TRELLIS AND TRESTLE

FEBRUARY 2025



## *In This Issue...*

- *Goodbye Spring Cleaning— Hello April Railroad Opening, by Mick Spilsbury*
- *Adding RailPro to the 3-D Printed SW 1500, by Roger Nicholson*
- *Plus, all of our regular features!*

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## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVES



### MY PENULTIMATE PERSPECTIVES

In my years on the Board, many initiatives have been implemented but there are two that we have not had the bandwidth to move on. **You could help us get them rolling.**

### #1 WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

We don't do the greatest job of welcoming new members. We send them welcome notes and encourage them to go to open RRs and the Annual Meeting but could do so much more.

Many organizations like BAGRS have some form of 'Welcome Wagon' that reaches out to new members to understand why they joined and makes appropriate connections to established members.



### A BAGRS WELCOME WAGON!

We need one or two members (in each of our areas like the South Bay and the East Bay) willing to receive information about new members and reach out to them.

On average, we get one to four new members per area per year, so this is not an onerous responsibility.

We offer a few suggestions about topics to cover, but each welcoming member can handle this in their own way.

If you can join our Welcome Wagon Team, please send me a short email:

[president@bagrs.org](mailto:president@bagrs.org)





# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVES



## #2 GETTING PEOPLE IN FRONT OF A GARDEN RAILROAD

This is best way to promote our hobby and BAGRS. 99% of Americans don't know that people have railroads in their yards. Even if they happen across a video of a garden railroad, they don't experience the magic of seeing a garden railroad in person.



We respect that many BAGRS railroad owners are not disposed to open their railroads to non-members. Limited viewing space and security are common concerns. On the other hand, some BAGRS railroad owners have been opening their railroads to non-members for years. They enjoy showing off their railroads to more people. They love watching younger children awe-struck by the trains. They enjoy people's questions and surprise that there are model railroads in yards.

**We want to identify railroad owners willing to have non-members visit when they have an open railroad.**

### WHY?

We get a steady stream of emails from non-members enquiring whether they can visit a railroad. If we know which members would welcome non-member guests we can:

- ◇ Share an open RR date and location with the enquirer
- ◇ Copy the railroad owner so they know to expect the guest

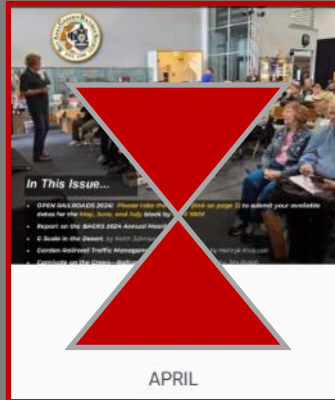
**If you are willing to have non-members attend an open railroad, please send a short email: [president@bagrs.org](mailto:president@bagrs.org)**

*You can also ask us how some BAGRS members are using Next Door and email lists to get lots of open railroad visitors with no security concerns.*



# TO MEMBERS YET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

This will be the last edition of *T&T* we send you until you renew.



To remain on the *T&T* mailing list and to be sure to get new editions, please renew your membership by February 25.

Its never too early to catch the train...

Now is the time to renew your BAGRS membership!



## From the Editor's Desk



**Roger Nicholson** lives in Union City, California, and operates the [Crystal Cove & Rose Railroad](#).

**On the Cover.** The Mt. Tamalpais Gravity Car on Steve Smith's Vista del Bahia railroad. Photo by Jeff Namba.

**Something very encouraging is happening . . . It is related to our new website.** I am now getting a steady stream of email messages from folks who have apparently seen our new website. Here are a few examples:

*—Please do put me on your list for events! Our 3-year-old grandson is in love with trains—model and real! (and I suspect his little 6-month-old brother is not far behind!) We would love to bring him to see some of these events!*

*—I live in Lafayette and was curious if any garden railroads are in the East Bay Area. My 4-year-old son has come obsessed with trains. I was at that age (and still might be). Also any information about events would be great!*

*—Hello! I have a 2-1/2 year-old grandson who is fascinated by trains. Can I be notified of open houses please?*

I'm going to put together a list of folks who make these inquiries so that we can inform them whenever we have a public event. The interest in the hobby is certainly out there . . .

**“Shay la vie.”** I've been really busy rebuilding the lower loop on the Crystal Cove and Rose. I removed all of the code 332 track for transport to Utah, and I've been slowly installing the code 250 Llagas Creek track that I obtained from Ray Turner's layout. The lower loop is almost complete and functional once again, and I received an unexpected but welcome surprise as I worked my way along the mainline. I spotted something odd at the base of a rose bush. Upon picking it up, I realized that I had located my long-lost 3-truck Shay smokestack.





Let me back up a bit here. During the 2023 NGRC open house, I was running my 3-truck Shay on the upper loop. There was a busload of people taking photos.

What were they looking at? Well, it was my 3-truck

Shay, and I suddenly realized that it had no smokestack! Jeff Namba from the Sacramento club was taking pictures of it as well. Here is a beautiful Namba photo of the Shay “sans smokestack.”



I was appalled. The missing smokestack was nowhere to be found around the upper loop. I quickly considered what to do.

Running into my garage, I cut a piece of copper tubing to an appropriate length, then jammed it onto the Shay. It's a Shay . . . you can pretty much hang anything you want on one of those things and it will look okay. Now, I wasn't going to be quite as embarrassed by the photos. Eventually, I painted my makeshift smokestack black.



One year and a half later, and I encountered the missing smokestack in a completely different area of the yard out on the lower loop. It is now happily back in its proper place. I think I'll epoxy it. *C'est la vie . . . or, in this particular case, Shay la vie.* ■





# GOODBYE SPRING CLEANING— HELLO APRIL RAILROAD OPENING

By Mick Spilsbury

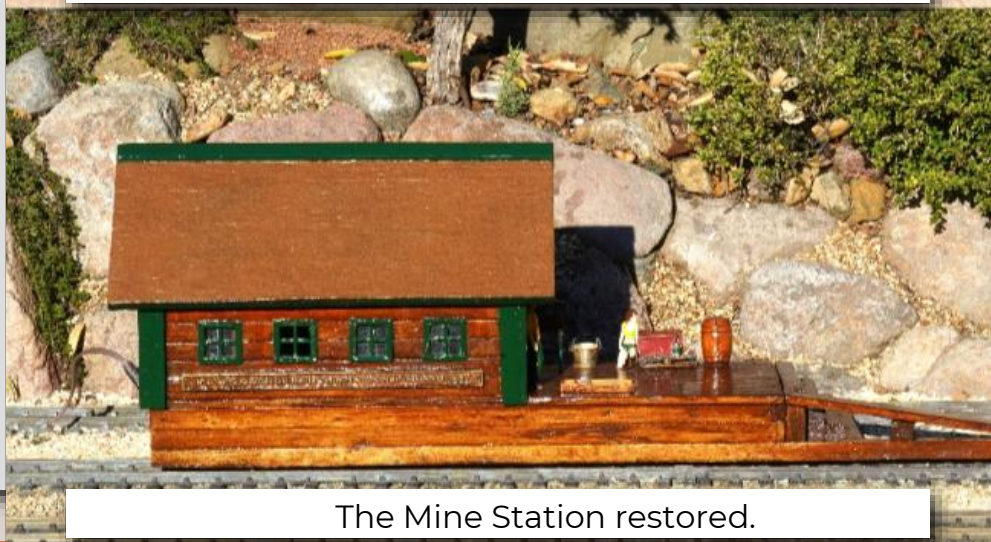
**April would be a great time to open a garden railroad in the San Francisco Bay Area. Winter rains are usually over.** In between April showers, it's sunny. Gardens are bursting into life. Leaves are lovely shades of green. Spring flowers are blooming. There's just one problem. Almost no garden railroads are ready to open in April, mine included, because 'Spring' renovations and maintenance are still underway, or even just beginning.

April 2025 is going to be different for my Black Canyon Railroad because 'Spring' cleaning and maintenance started in November, outdoors between storms and in my garage during deluges.

All structures were inspected in the Fall. Necessary maintenance was recorded and has progressed as winter rains filled our reservoirs. For example, inspection of the Mine Station revealed that rats had been chomping on the back foundation wall, which is hidden from view when it's in place. They had also been gnawing on a barrel and a security guard. By early December, rat damage was fixed, and the Mine Station was restored to its 'new' condition when it was built 7 years ago.

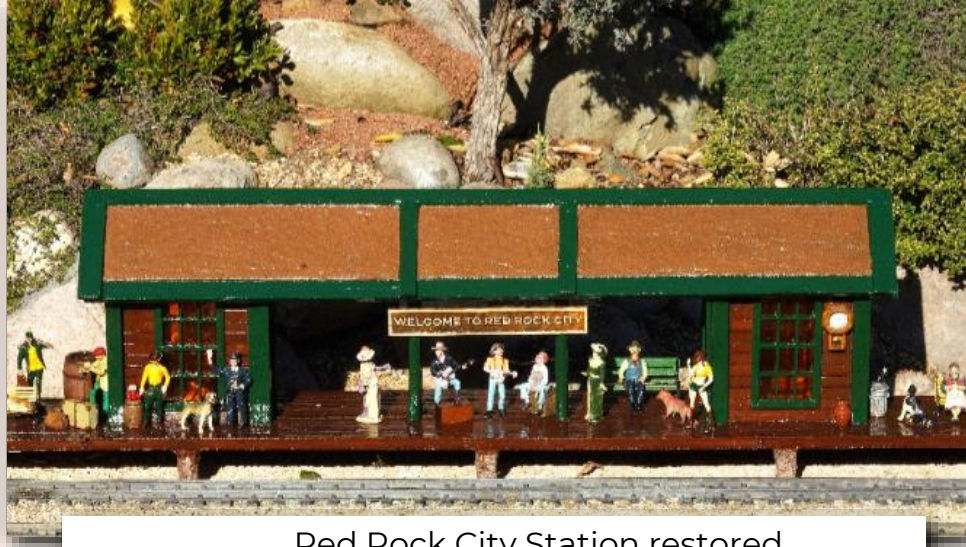


Rat damage at the foundation of the Mine Station.



The Mine Station restored.





Red Rock City Station restored.

Other structures had escaped rat attacks but were showing wear and tear from a combination of the fierce sunlight of 6 summers and the damp conditions of 5 winters, so they have been getting some TLC.



The roof of the Last Resort Hotel was repaired.



The global headquarters of BS Ventures could not be omitted from the restoration program.



Other features of the Black Canyon have also been getting winter attention.

- Before the end of November, struggling plants were replaced with plants proven to do well in the RR's challenging southern exposure.
- Irrigation adjacent to the RR was reconfigured to serve landscaping that had been significantly modified since the irrigation system was last reconfigured.
- Small gaps at rail joints and ballast were filled.
- A 150 feet/15 structure lighting circuit has been modified to 2 circuits with lesser loads.

Rats had also chomped their way through some of the wiring to track side sounds powered from the tracks of the railroad. Dealing with that required a different approach. New heavier gauge wiring encased in flexible tubing now runs from two small 12-volt transformers independent of track power. The wiring has been laid to existing trackside sounds and to three new locations.

When it starts raining again, I will create sounds for the coaling tower, the whiskey distillery, and the church. Speakers for all sounds will now be waterproof speakers designed for boats.



New lighting circuit being laid under the watchful eye of a random dinosaur.



New 12-volt transformers for lights and sounds.



New wiring for new sound at the coaling tower.



Thus, much of the work to get the Black Canyon Railroad in 'show-off' condition by April 2025 should be completed by March.

There will be some right-of-way maintenance to do in March but that will not be onerous because my track/ballast is glued in place and 'dirt' next to my tracks is red lava fines glued in place. Landscape rocks are also glued and cemented.

Track and areas close to the tracks can be cleaned with a Shop Vac.

Switches have been inspected and all passed. However, on average, one main line switch (out of 10) fails each year, so replacement LH & RH switches are on hand. Track power, used only to light cars, will be serviced by a fleet of LGB Track Cleaning Locos.

So, unless the weather gets out of order, I will be scheduling my first open railroad in late April.

Of course, the best laid plans of mice and men don't always work out, so I will be sure to report the date of my first open RR in 2025. ■



New waterproof speakers for all trackside sounds.



Naturally the RR's most important structure—a whiskey distillery—also got some TLC.



# The Battery Conversion Department

## Adding RailPro to the 3-D Printed SW 1500

By Roger Nicholson

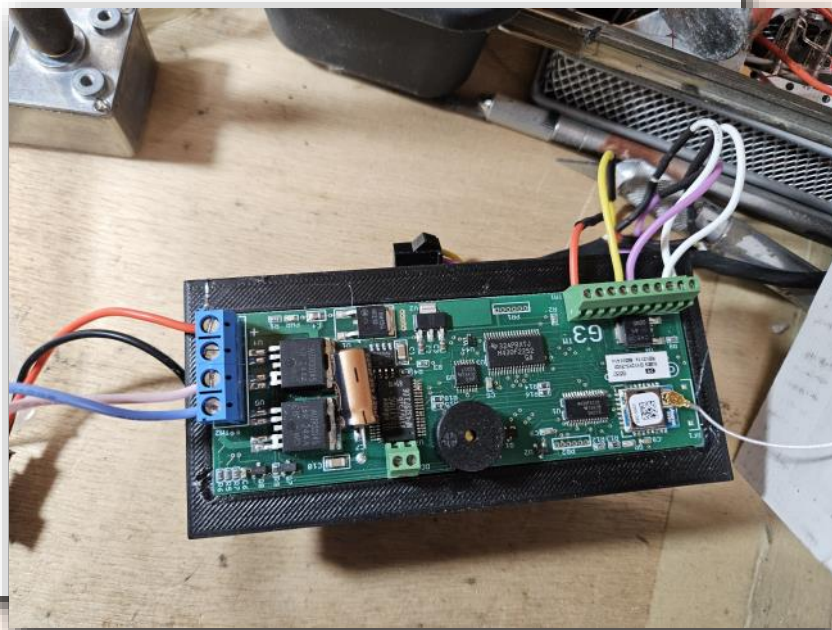
**My fleet of four 3-D printed SW 1500 locomotives had so far been “silent runners,” with each of the four having AirWire G3 or G4 boards installed, but no sound cards.**

I hadn't planned for them to have sound. One of them, #2682, has already made its way to the home of the BAGRS member who commissioned it in the first place, on the Monterey Peninsula. I planned to keep the 1:32 scale Southern Pacific unit, and the 1:29 “Crystal Cove and Rose” unit that I made out of “scraps” and “failed prints.” (You can't tell visually that it was made from scraps as it looks indistinguishable from the others, but I *know* where all the skeletons are . . . )

That left my second Southern Pacific prototype #2683, which caught the interest of an individual whom I had met online. He really wanted to have it, and I was willing to part with it, but he asked if I could convert it from AirWire to RailPro. Sure, why not? I didn't know a thing about Ring Engineering RailPro, but it sounded like a new challenge.

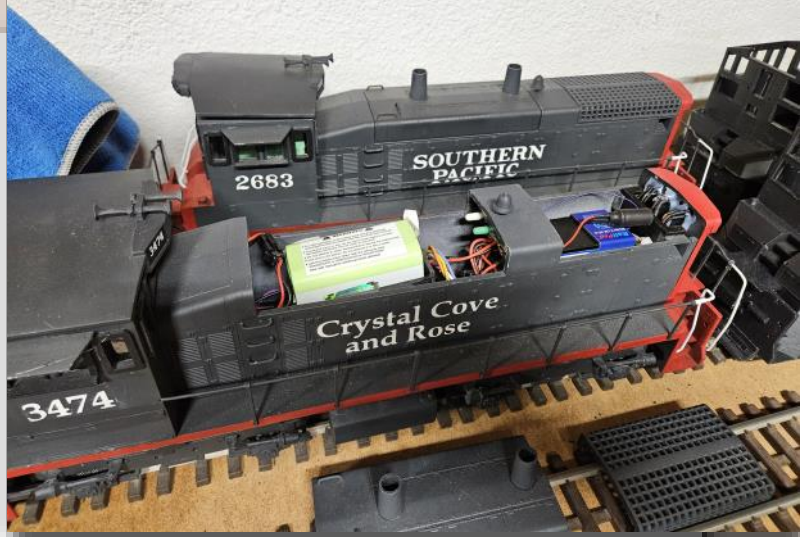
I figured that in order to properly do this, I needed to order my own RailPro transmitter and receiver and then convert my own “Crystal Cove and Rose” #3474 from AirWire G3 to the new system. Meanwhile, my online friend mailed me his own RailPro receiver and speaker to install in #2683. While I was working on modifying his future locomotive, he was off in Southern California fighting fires.

Removing the AirWire G4 board was easy, since I had all the wiring hooked up through connectors and the board itself sits on a 3-D printed platform. I removed the entire AirWire platform and set it aside to eventually be installed in a different locomotive. Now it was time to contemplate how to arrange the RailPro components in the locomotive. The 3-D printed SW 1500 doesn't have an abundance of space, so the positioning of the components had to be carefully planned.





The RailPro receiver needs a path to dissipate heat, so my previous receiver location in the center of the locomotive would not do. Fortunately, when I modified the OpenRailway SW 1500 design, I turned the front top fan cover into an actual grille with openings, rather than the original solid plastic piece. I also added openings to the front grill. I decided that the place for the RailPro would be right at the front of the locomotive under the front top fan cover, which provides the maximum ventilation. This means that the Li-Ion battery pack moves from the front of the locomotive to the center.



I designed and 3-D printed a platform to hold the RailPro receiver that fit into the front of the locomotive. This allows the wiring for the front lights to run under the platform, and it moves the top of the receiver just under to top fan cover.

Now I just had to figure out where to put the speaker. The only place left in the locomotive was the floor of the cab, which is covered by a removable interior piece. Luckily, not only did the rectangular speaker fit perfectly on the floor of the cab, but the speaker holes actually lined up with the holes in the cab that fasten it to the base. I'd like to say I planned it that way . . . but it was a fortunate accident. I drilled an array of holes in the bottom of the cab to allow the speaker sound to come out, then fastened the speaker in place. When the interior was reinserted, the speaker was totally hidden.



Now that #3474 was completely converted, and with sound and lights connected, I learned how to operate the RailPro. It makes an impressive sound. After verifying everything on #3474, I was able to fairly quickly install my friend's RailPro receiver and speaker in #2683.





The “road test” of both #3474 and #2683” were very successful, and all functions (motor, bell, whistle, lights) worked as expected. Hearing sound on these SW 1500 locomotives added a whole new dimension to the operating experience.

Then, I figured I would try something else. Since I had two operating RailPro locomotives (at least temporarily), I should be able to “link” them together. It turned out to be fairly easy to do. I “linked” the two locomotives using the RailPro transmitter, physically coupled the locos together, and turned on the “motor” sound for both of them at the same time. This was exciting . . . They worked perfectly together.

If you would like to see these two 3-D printed locomotives running together, check out the YouTube video here: [A pair of 3 D printed SW 1500s on Crystal Cove and Rose Garden Railroad - January 2025](#) ■





# Carnivale on the Green: A Railcar Based Traveling Carnival

## RAILCAR #80: FLO'S FUNNEL CAKES

By Jim Ralph



**Jim Ralph** is a member of BAGRS as well as the *Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society*, and is the brother of BAGRS member Bill Ralph.

**Always a carnival favorite, this cousin to the simple donut always had a mystic appeal about it.** And Flo's funnel cakes were no exception. Funneling her special mix into the hot oil by Flo was a sight to behold. Her funnel cakes were truly a work of art, but the eating was even better. First would be a powdered sugar finger lick. Then the challenge to uncoil the delicate tubes of cake would begin, followed by the savoring of each bite. It had been rumored for years that there was a secret ingredient in Flo's batter that made it heads above all others, but it was never proven, or admitted to by Flo. True or not, it didn't matter, her funnel cakes were the best.

### MEADOW MUFFIN

Flo's funnel cake recipe wasn't actually a funnel cake recipe, nor was it Flo's, nor was Flo her real name.

The recipe and name traces back to her grandmother Florence Finley of Fargo. One day while gathering up the ingredients to bake a cake, Florence accidentally grabbed a funnel instead a bowl. Being a bit senile, Florence proceeded to mix the batter in the funnel . . . and you already know . . . the batter was slowly draining out onto the countertop. Being a thrifty farm wife, and not wanting to waste the pile of dough, she scooped it up and tossed it into an iron skillet of hot oil.





And there it was. A MEADOW MUFFIN (cow patty) . . . At least it looked like one. Sharing it with the family and friends, it became a hit, and the name stuck. And to this day, the MEADOW MUFFIN is still a Midwest County Fair favorite . . . TRUE.

### **MEADOW MUFFIN'S DEMISE**

With Grandma Florence's passing, the family sold off the original recipe and name, but with no right to the usage or image of a funnel. The food service corporation quickly found out the population at large didn't get the Midwest 'MEADOW MUFFIN' joke, greatly hurting sales, so they quickly rebranded the MEADOW MUFFIN calling it a CINNIBON . . . ALSO TRUE.

### **FUNNEL CAKE**

A generation later, the funnel was passed on to granddaughter Betty Finley, also of Fargo, who went into the bakery business, changing the MEADOW MUFFIN recipe by adding her 'secret ingredient,' which gave the finished product an almost indeterminable green tinge, being rumored as fennel. Legally unable to call it a MEADOW MUFFIN, she simply called it a 'FUNNEL CAKE' . . . The rest is history.

EPILOGUE:

Now famous, Betty Finley, from Fargo, married Charles Crocker, owner of the General Mills Flour Co. becoming Betty Crocker . . . go figure, which explains the bigger than life lady, funnel cake in hand that appears at every funnel cake shack.

### **CATCH PHRASES**

FLO'S 'statue', has generated many monikers through the years: SHE'S A PILLAR OF SUCCESS, A TRUE HEAD ABOVE ALL OTHERS, A GIANT IN HER FIELD, SIMPLY OUTSTANDING, A DOMINATING FIGURE . . . I'll stop there.

### **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

It was discovered later that the 'secret green-tinged ingredient' in the funnel cake mix was fennel. It seems cousin Frank Finley, also of Fargo, owner of FINLEY'S FENNEL FARMS OF FARGO, was the supplier.





# THE GARDEN DEPARTMENT

## Devinely Blue

By Richard Murray

**BOTANICAL NAME:** Cedrus deodara, 'Devinely Blue'

**COMMON NAME:** Devinely blue deodar cedar

**USDA ZONE:** 6–9 (down to -10F)

**Cedrus deodara 'Devinely Blue' is an evergreen dwarf conifer.** It is a fine selection that grows as a flat-topped shrub when young. As the plant matures it will develop apical dominance, eventually becoming broadly conical. Branching is typical of the species, growing outward with a slightly pendulous form. The blue-green to powder-blue foliage is quite attractive. In the spring, new growth contrasts a pretty bright blue green. The short stubby trunk is grey and smooth. The plant is propagated by grafting. After 10 years of growth, a specimen can measure 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide and can have an annual growth rate of 3 to 5 inches. My plant in the photo (next page) was planted from a 3-gallon nursery bucket and has been in the ground for about 10 years. It has been pruned every year to keep its small and slightly weeping shape. It has been kept to about 15" tall.

This cultivar originated as a seedling selected by Angelica Nurseries in Maryland, USA. They named it in honor of Bill Devine, a retired propagator there. The name is a delightful play on his name and is often seen misspelled as 'Divinely Blue.'

### **CULTURAL NEEDS**

It will grow best in regions where the summers are not dry, although it is drought resistant once established. It does best on acidic soils in the cooler areas of the Pacific Northwest and does well in warmer areas, too. A sunny location suits it best to develop the strongest foliage color.





## USES

It is deer and verticillium resistant. Because it is on a short trunk, it can be tucked into any sunny spot in the garden with plants growing beneath it or grown in a pot surrounded by annual flowers. Its moderate height fits into practically any garden space. It can be used on slopes for erosion control, grown in a pot, used in small gardens, or used as a small specimen tree. For some ambitious souls it could even be placed somewhere on a garden railroad! If you get tired of the monotony of 6" tall plants, 'Devinely Blue' is your answer. It's even a low maintenance plant. ■



# Dave's Corner

by Dave Frediani



**Dave Frediani** lives in Sonoma, California and, among his many talents, constructs 7/8 scale rolling stock.

## SMALLER 7/8 SCALE CARS

I needed some smaller 7/8 scale cars to tow behind my Westside Jitney that I built awhile ago, so I thought I would start building a couple of smaller two axle cars.

After looking around, I found four small LGB two-axle cars that I could use for the framework, and the bodies would be built of 1/8" and 1/16" styrene.

Here's one of the two-axle flatcars that I used before removing everything above the deck, and adding metal wheels.

Below you can see the main pieces of 1/8" styrene that I cut to build the tank cars' framework.



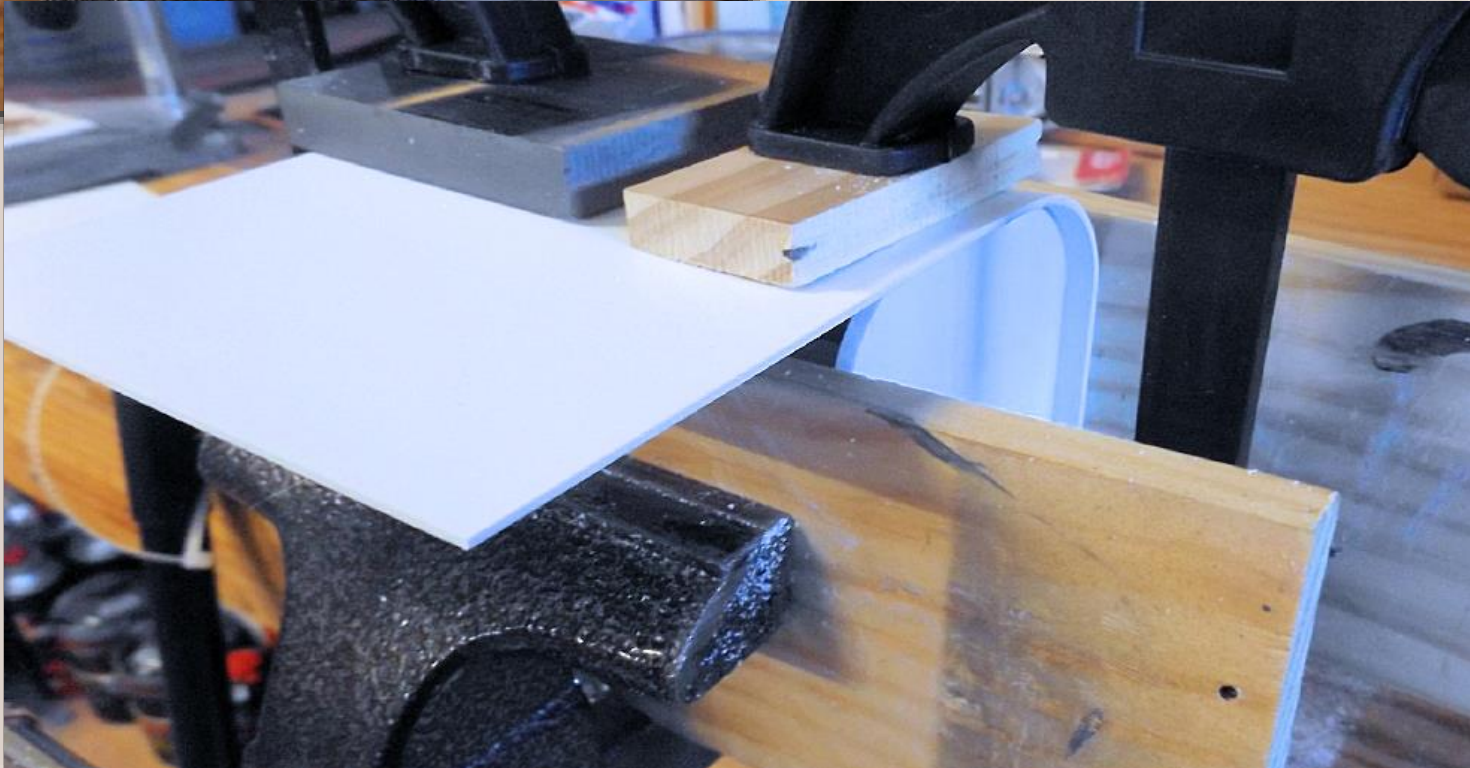


Here's the finished framework of the tank car, ready to have the 1/16" styrene wrapped around to form its tank.

Below, I used the vice and a couple of pieces of wood to anchor one side of the glued 1/16" styrene covering to the framework of the soon to be tank car.



With the body still in the vice, I wrapped the 1/16" styrene around the top section and glued it in place with the help of two C clamps and more wooden blocks, and waited for the glue to dry.



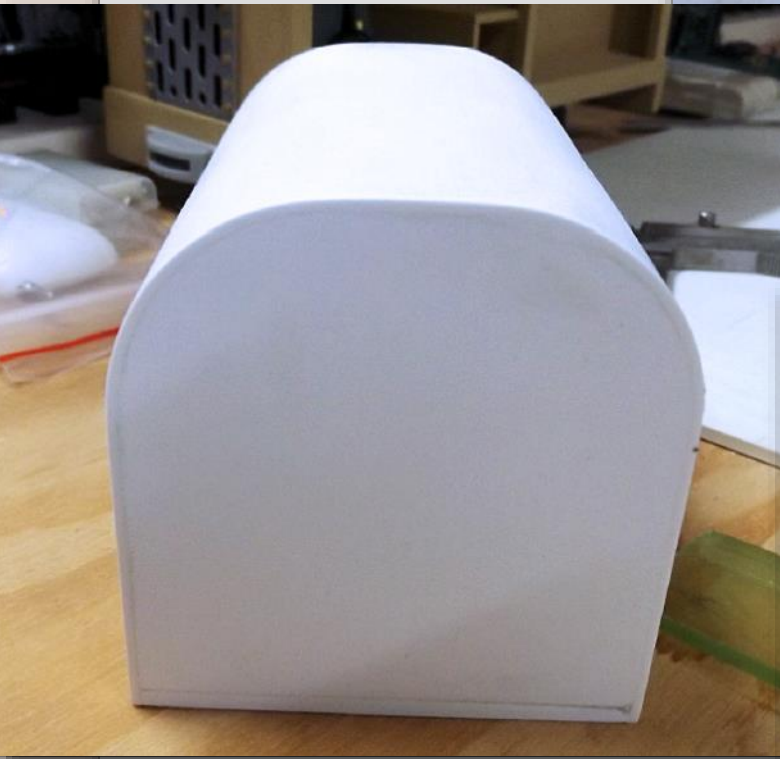


Next I turned the body over in the vice and glued the other side and clamped it in place.

With all the sides glued, I removed the body from the vice and trimmed the sides so that they're flush with the bottom of the body. After that I trimmed the ends of the covering to meet the ends of the body.



Now that the basic tank body is finished, it's time to mount the body to the LGB flatcar.



For the mounting of the newly formed tank to the flatcar, I just drilled two small holes through the bottom of the flatcar and the tank, and screwed them in place. All that was left was to add couplers, hatches, and paint.

After building one tank car I decided on building another tank car. With two tank cars, why not build a small open-air passenger car?



Here's the start of the open-air passenger car. This time using the framework of a different type of LGB two-axle car, I added metal wheels and started on the bodywork.



Using 1/8" styrene, I cut out the four main pieces of the open-air passenger car. Next, I etched simulated wood planking and simulated woodgrain to the inside and outside of each piece.

Here's a look at a finished open-air passenger car with the track superintendent checking it out, before putting it into service.

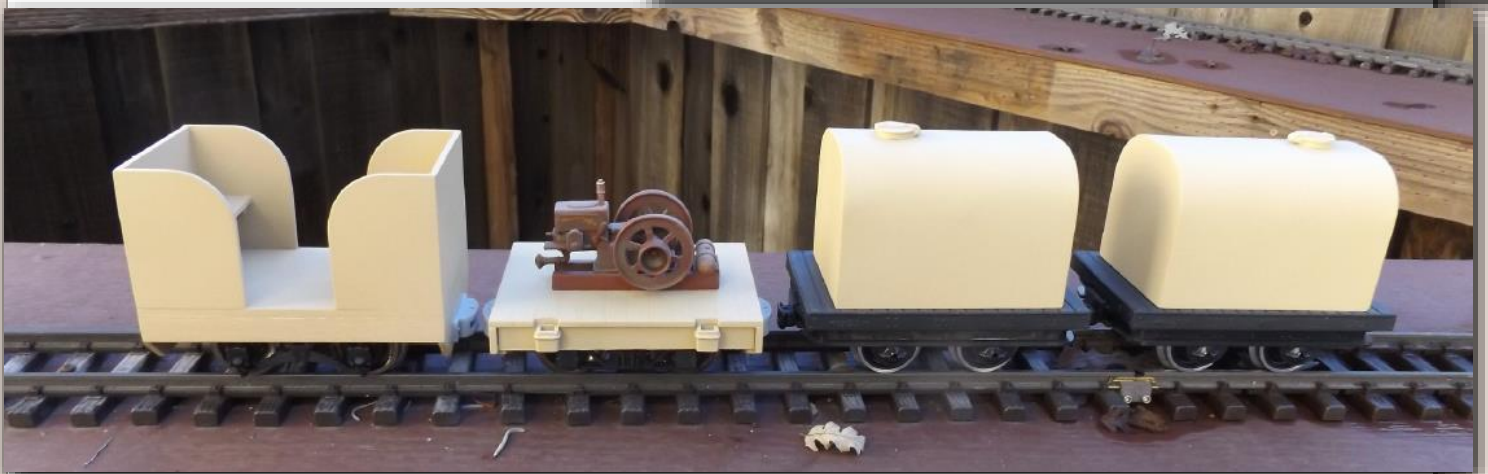
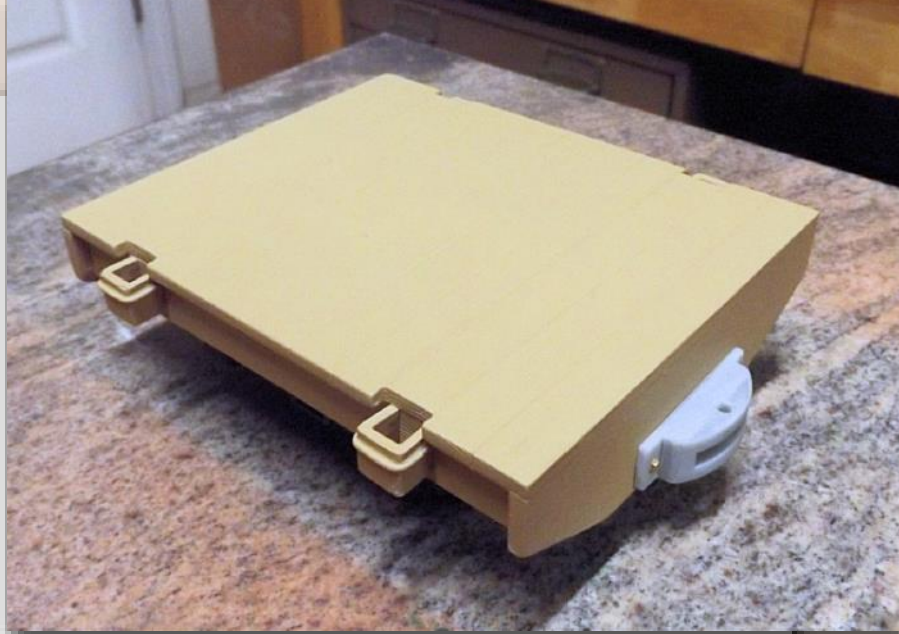




After finishing the open-air passenger car, I decided on building a small flatcar as well.

I already did an article on building 7/8 scale flatcars back in April 2022. The only thing I did differently was change the length and width to fit the LGB two-axle flatcar.

Below, all four of the finished cars wait to be picked up by the Jitney.



Here's my 7/8 scale Jitney with its gaggle of newly built cars. I purchased these small two-axle LGB cars for \$5.00 each at the last BAGRS swap meet, not knowing what I would do with them. It just goes to show, you don't have to spend a lot of money to have fun. ■





# East Devil Hills Modeling Group

by Henner Meinhold



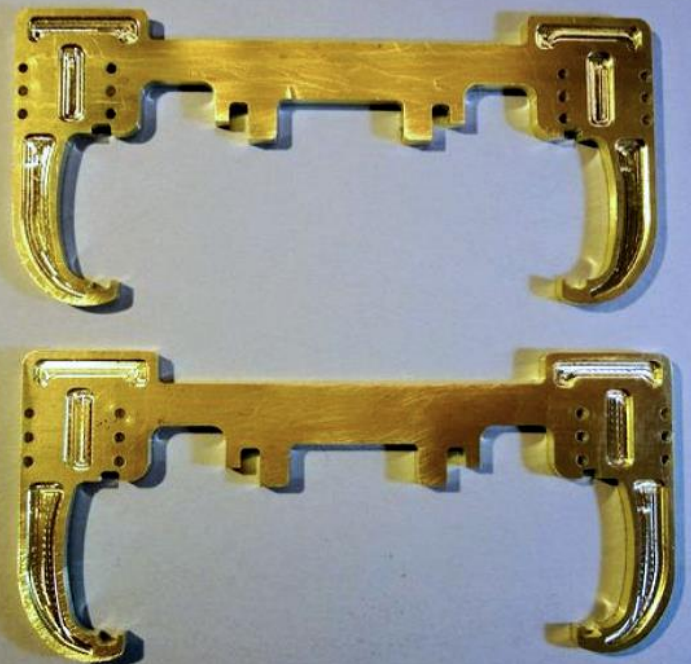
**Henner Meinhold** resides in Berlin, Germany. The *East Devil Hills Modeling Group* meets regularly to create, collaborate, and share incredibly machined models.

**Bill Allens project is currently a bit on hold due to a health problem, which prevents him to use his workshop.** We wish him a speedy recovery. Nevertheless he was able to make drawings for Dennis, so he could CNC-cut the parts for his Cab-Forward. Here are some examples:



Expansion links

The complicated crosshead brackets





Various bits and pieces, which would be very difficult to machine without a CNC-mill.



The front truck.

And the return cranks.



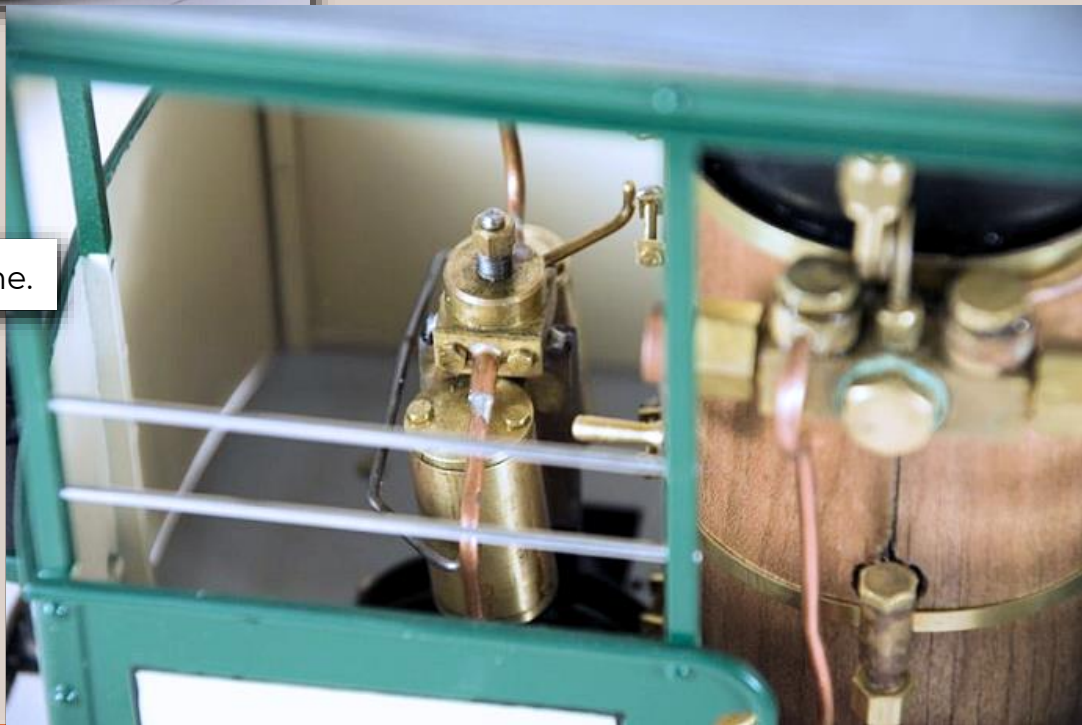
Again, these are parts with a complicated shape. By the way, the “pockets” in these parts look somehow rough, but this is an artifact caused by the reflected light. After painting they look perfect without any texture.





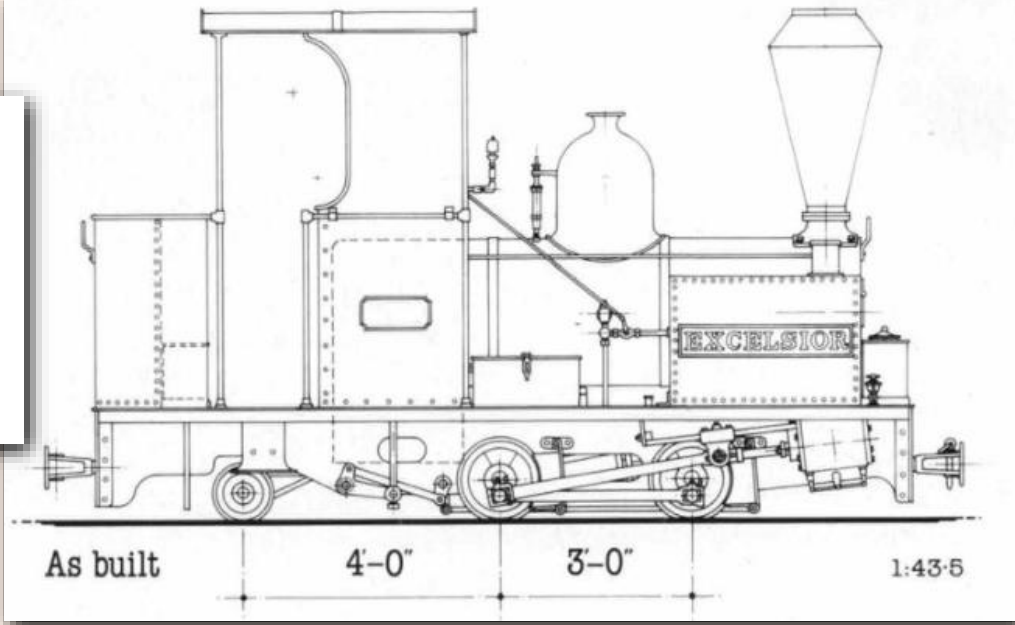
Marc Horowitz painted his beautiful tram loco. Here are some pictures of the finished engine.

The oscillating steam engine.

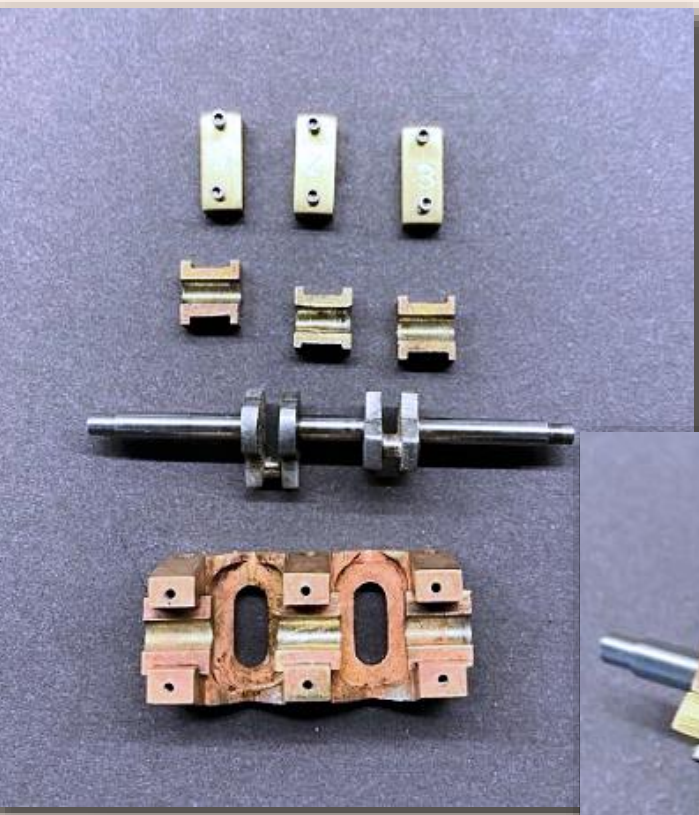
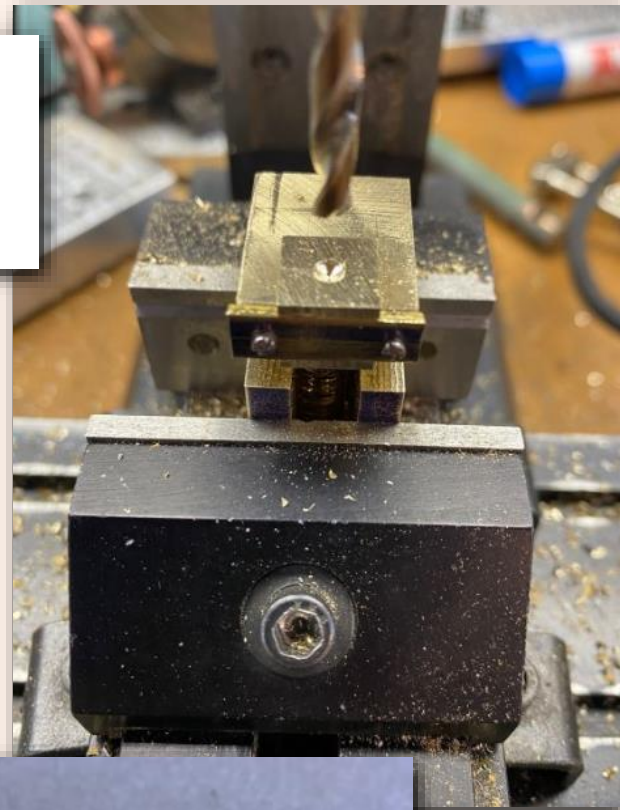




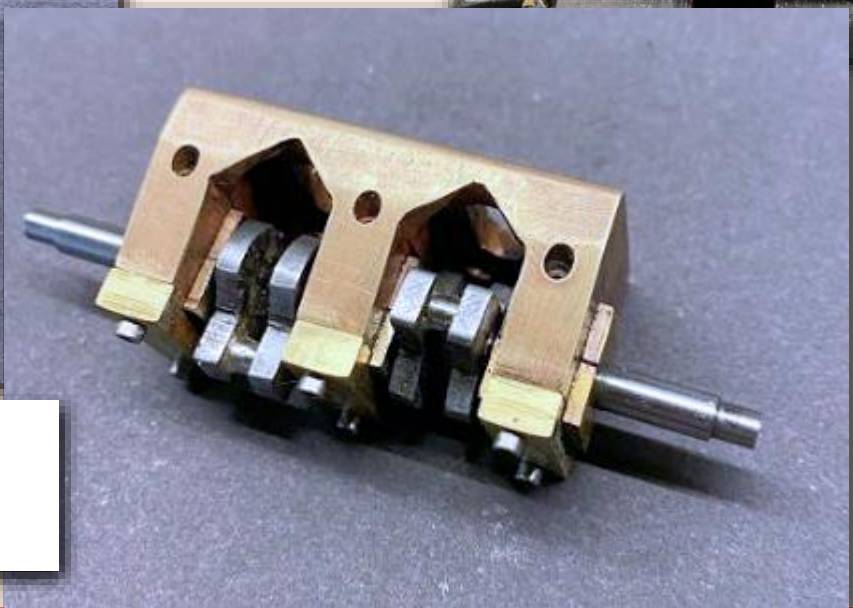
Marc has already announced his next project, an 0-4-2 in 7/8 scale. It is the Excelsior of the Kerry Tramway. Here is a drawing of the loco. Check out the tiny wheels!



Ron Malouf continued with the steam engine of his Shay. Here he is boring the bearing blocks, using a fixture. He does all the work on a Sherline mill, which is used to its maximum capacity.



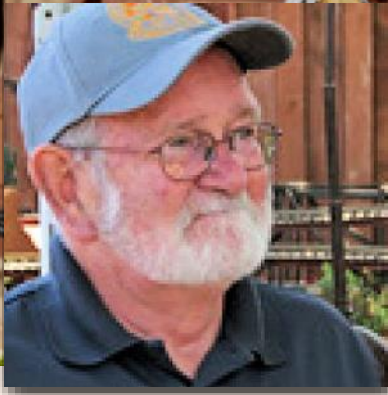
Parts of the crankshaft and casing and the completed assembly. ■





# Railroad Snippets

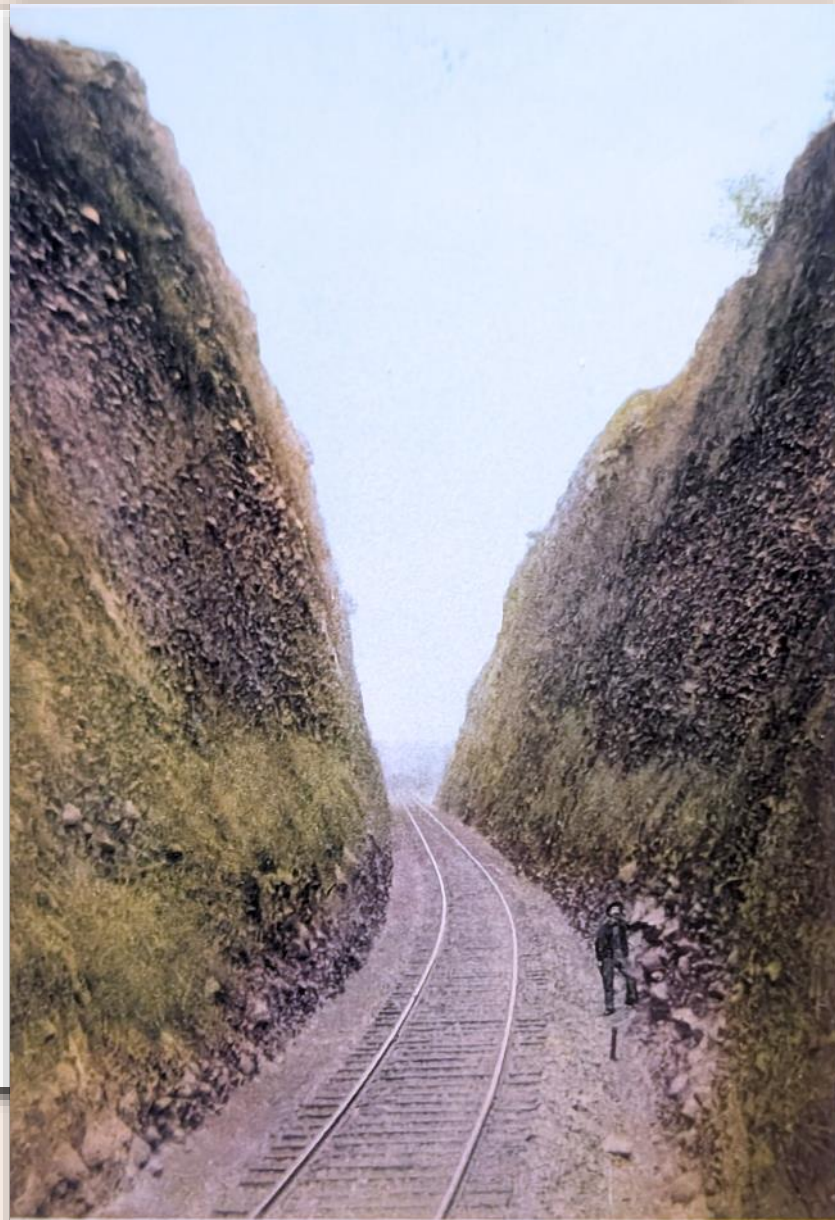
By Bill Ralph



**Bill Ralph** operates the [Porcupine Gulch Railroad](#), and knows a thing or two about amusement parks and postcards.

## BLOOMER CUT

Not long after the Central Pacific began construction eastward on the first transcontinental railroad in 1864, the railroad ran into their first seemingly insurmountable barrier just thirty five miles out of Sacramento near Auburn, California. For trains to reach the crest of the Sierra Nevada mountains with a slow manageable upward grade of no more than one hundred sixteen feet per mile, the railroad would need to find a way around, under, or through eight hundred feet of solid rock conglomerate. While roadbed preparation and track laying proceeded beyond the barrier at Bloomer Ranch, a small band of workers armed with picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows, began the tedious backbreaking task of cutting a passage through the near impenetrable ridge.



BLOOMER CUT—110 FEET DEEP, NEAR AUBURN, CALIFORNIA  
DEEPEST RAILROAD CUT IN CALIFORNIA.

BLOOMER CUT—110 FEET DEEP, NEAR AUBURN,  
CALIFORNIA. DEEPEST RAILROAD CUT IN CALIFORNIA

Vintage postcard from the collection of Bill Ralph



James Strobridge, Central Pacific's head of construction, quickly realized that breaking up and clearing the natural cement type conglomerate rock was going to be a far more difficult task than planned and made the decision to use black powder to loosen the rock for removal one wheelbarrow at a time. Tons of the explosive, as many as five hundred kegs a day, were hauled from the railroads staging area in following months to be used in blasting the cut. There were few serious accidents, at least fatality, and countless sore, blistered, bleeding hands, and crushed knees resulted from using the explosive. Strobridge lost an eye while investigating a charge that hadn't gone off.

Dubbed "The Eighth Wonder of the World," Boomers Cut was completed in fifteen months connecting the Central Pacific Railroad to the Union Pacific Railroad with the eight-hundred-foot-long, sixty-three-foot-deep V-shaped cut that after more than 150 years, still continues to be a critical link in the nations railroad system. ■



## **MORTON GROSSER**

**1931–2024**

**Engineer, Inventor, Writer**

### **Morton, one of our most distinguished members, passed away on December 26.**

Educated at MIT and Stanford, Morton earned a doctorate in the history of science and astrophysics and a postdoctoral fellowship at the UCLA Medical Center. Mort was also a writer. His literary talents were recognized when he was accepted into the prestigious Stegner Creative Writing Program at Stanford.

Mort and his wife Janet were pivotal contributors to the Gossamer Albatross project, the historic feat of human-powered flight across the English Channel in 1979.

A prolific inventor, Mort held numerous patents that reflected his dedication to solving complex challenges. His work included advancements in lightweight composite materials and pioneering efforts in nerve regeneration innovations that underscored his commitment to improving lives through engineering.

Mort was a lifelong model railroading enthusiast, specializing in both HO and G-Scale, a member of BAGRS and a Live Steamer for many years. We extend our sympathies to his second wife, Sharona, and his son Adam. ■





## FROM THE ARCHIVE

Vol. XIV, No. 5

<http://www.bagrs.org/>

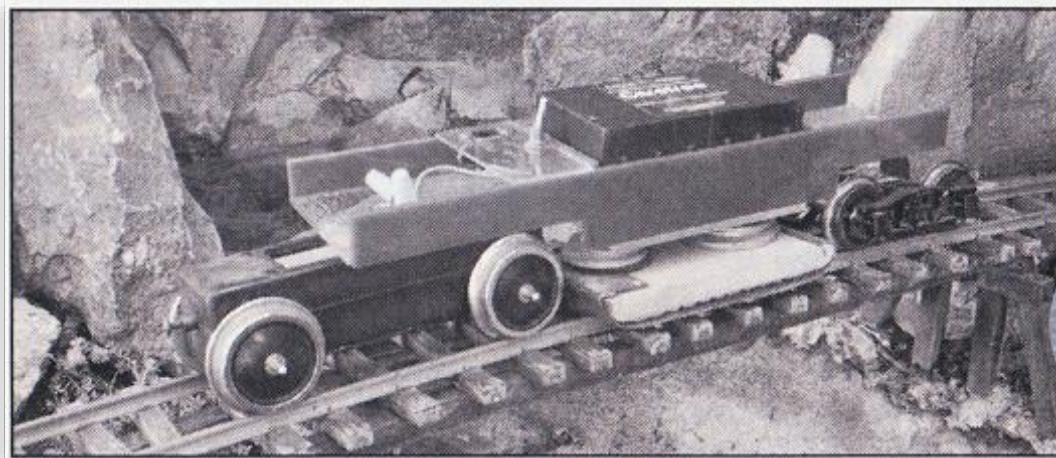
May 2001

### **Build a handy track-cleaner, by Bruce Jahn**

When our railways were young, cleaning track was a duty that was handled with interest and enthusiasm.

When it became a chore, we started thinking about battery power. But I like track power, and running a track powered track cleaner on dirty track didn't make sense to me.

My solution was to build a simple, cheap cleaner that works good no matter how bad I've let the track become.



The primary cleaning surface is a shaped wood block wrapped with drywall sanding "screen." Determine by a half sheet of sanding paper, a 3/8-inch thick, 3 1/4-inch wide by 4 1/4-inch long piece of wood with the bottom ends rounded, was the right size.

A razor saw slot cut in the top on one end allows the screen to slip in. The screen is pulled around the end, sandwiching a layer of compressed sponge from the grocery store. The other end of the screen is held in place by a piece of brass and two tiny wood screws in the top of the wood.

The sanding bloc is allowed to float along the track, but weighted down by several large washers. I added this weight until the drive wheels began to spin when going over a switch.



Mine is powered by a motor block, which I got with a phone call from AristoCraft parts department, but any power block should work. If your motor block uses skates, you probably should remove them.

I like working with plexiglass, but wood would work also.

Before actual construction of the frame, I lined up all the parts to see how short it could be. Width was determined by the battery laying on its side.

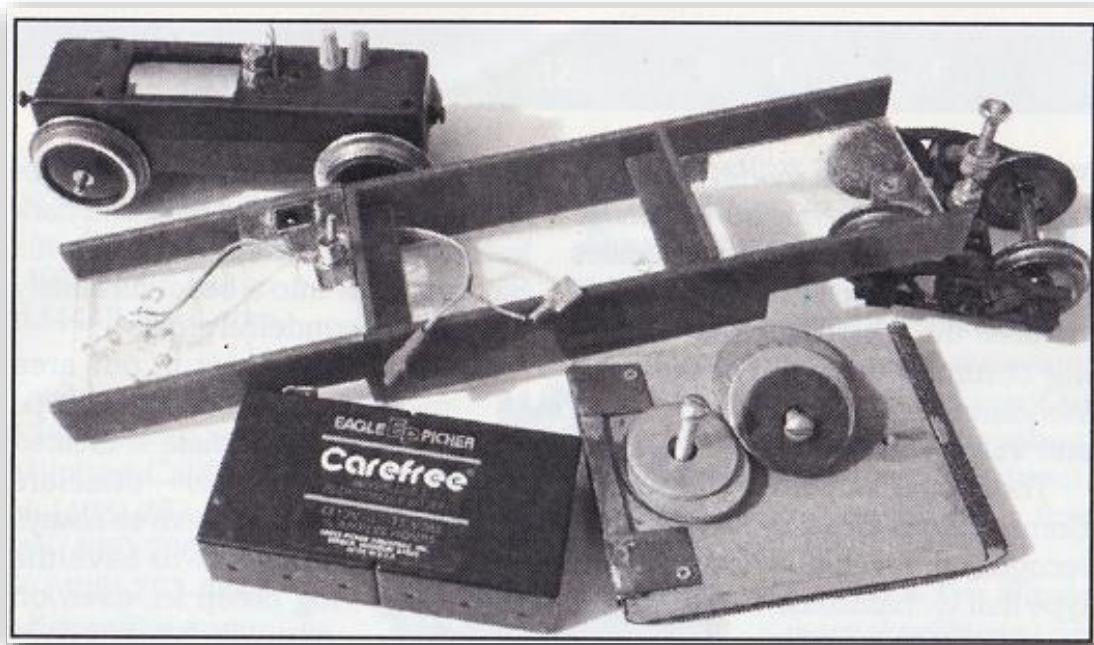
The frame consists of the two side rails, three spreaders, which mount the motor block, rear truck, and sanding block, and small angles that hold the battery in place. I added another thin piece for the switch and charger plug.

The bottom spreader has two oversized holes drilled on the machine center line, which hold 10/24 screws that screw down into the wood sanding block. The end two spreaders have holes drilled on the center line to mount the motor block and rear truck.

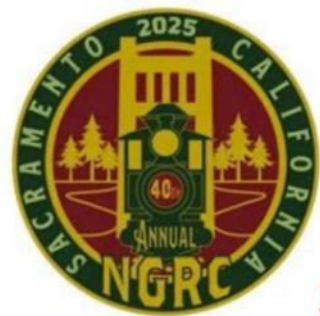
Small one-half-inch-by-one-half-inch Plexiglas angles are used to hold the battery in place. In this case, the battery is a 12-volt one-half-amp-hour gel cell available at most hobby stores.

It's wired through a small socket, which is a plug-in for a battery charger, then through a toggle switch to turn it on. Twelve volts make it run a little faster than I'd like, but simple wiring is paramount.

When running, I merely place it on the track and let it run for about a half hour till the battery dies, then plug it back in and leave it till next time. Gel cells don't have the memory problems of nicads, so leaving them for months on the charger is no problem. ■







*40th Anniversary*

# National Garden Railway Convention

**June 18 - 22, 2025**

**SAFE Credit Union Convention Center - Sacramento, CA**

The 2025 NGRC site is now live. You may sign up now for the Ice Cream Social on Thursday, the banquet at the California State Railroad Museum on Friday, and purchase your convention car and/or convention engine as soon as possible before they run out.

<https://www.ngrc2025.org/>





## GARDEN RAILWAY CLUB NEWS

BAGRS has a policy of reciprocal sharing of newsletters with the following garden railway clubs. We do not share private member information such as home addresses or tour information without the express permission of the particular member. We provide links here to the most recent editions that have been made available to us. For other clubs wishing to obtain a copy of the latest BAGRS *Trellis & Trestle*, please contact **Roger Nicholson** at [communications@bagrs.org](mailto:communications@bagrs.org)

[Central California Coast Garden Railway Society—November 2024](#)

[Central Ontario Garden Railway Association—Autumn 2024](#)

[Denver Garden Railway Society Newsletter—January 2025](#)

[Gold Coast Garden Railway Society—July 2024](#)

[Puget Sound Garden Railway Society—November 2024](#)

[Redwood Empire Garden Railway Society—October 2024](#)

[Rose City Garden Railway Society—December 2024](#)

[Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society—February 2025](#)

[The Garden Whistle New Zealand Large Scale Newsletter—November 2024](#)

[Garden Railroading News—November/December 2024](#)

The 2025 NGRC 2025 will be hosted by the Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society.  
[ngrc2025.org](http://ngrc2025.org)





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The upper-left corner has a pull-down menu to select ALBUMS. Then click on the album of interest.



# THE LAST PAGE



In 1867, during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, Chinese workers built this retaining wall to support the track bed by laying one stone at a time. The “China Wall” is clearly visible from Donner Pass Road. The wall is just east of the famous Summit Tunnel, and is one of the most easily identifiable vestiges of the Transcontinental Railroad.

## TRELLIS AND TRESTLE

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