

# North Atlanta O-Gauge Railroad Club



The Monthly Newsletter of the North Atlanta O-Gauge Railroad Club

Issue #12- December 2009

**Hobby Town Update**

Follow the progress of the NAOGRRC layout at Hobby Town USA in Kennesaw, GA.

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**Meeting Minutes**

Just in case you missed the meeting, all of the minutes from the meeting are here.

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**Calendar**

Keep up to date on what the NAOGRRC is doing in the next few weeks.

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## Christmas Party

The annual Christmas Party was held on December 13th from 11-3 at the Cobb Community Center. Members and their families totaled sixty-seven people.

The Children's Layout was well visited by the children in attendance. In fact, the trains ran for almost the entire 4 hours!

The annual Raffle went well as many hopeful members cheered for the winners. It seemed that the front table had all the winners! I am sure that next year this will be a coveted table.

Raffle items were donated by Trainz, Legacy Station, Memory Station, and several individual members.



Children's Layout and Raffle items at the Party

Next year's Christmas Party will be held on December 11th, 2010 at the same location.





# Hobby Town Layout Update

## Ideas and creative minds needed

We started the south end of the gorge scenery. Next we will be moving inside the middle of the layout. Another insert will be placed in the table so we can work in the middle. Work will be more difficult because we will have tighter work spaces. All of the center mountains will lift out so we can work under it or take the work elsewhere. This amazing engineering challenge is being designed now. We need your ideas to make it happen.

The swamp is getting swampier and the hobos have found their ground at the ticket booth. We will also be building a structure called a rockshed, which is similar to a snowshed. The arched bridge is coming along-it is a learning experience. This bridge is modeled after a poured concrete arched bridge on the Pacific Coast Highway.

It may be hard to understand where we are going with the construction at times. This is why Bill and Ron are available to discuss what they envision. But the main idea is that we need member's ideas also. Please feel free to ask questions on work days or even by email.

We probably have about a year and a half more work to finish this masterpiece. After the bridge constructions and main greenery, we will need to develop scenarios and scenes that make the layout come to life. This is where we can use your ideas and imagination.

Work days are back to the regular schedule of Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6-9 pm and Saturday from 10-2. We will commence work on Jan 5th.

See the last page of this newsletter for a work calendar.

# Featured Columns

*Wisdom, advice, ideas and history in monthly columns.*

## Train Dr. Ted



## DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH TRANSFORMER POWER TO RUN YOUR LAYOUT?

*Captain Kirk on the Starship Enterprise says: "Scotty, I need more power."*

*Scotty answers, "Captain we're at 110%. I can't give you any more."*

With toy train transformers the above statement is the same scenario. At this time of year there is a good chance that many members will receive more motive power, more lighted cars, and more accessories that will need more power.

The engines and consists show when they are under powered by not having enough 'Juice' to pull the train. A transformer only has so much wattage to give before it begins to breakdown. Fortunately, there are several warning 'signals' to look for before the power source is harmed.

The silent and more dangerous power source, if not closely monitored, are the separate transformers used for running auxiliary power for light, switches, and accessories. As time goes by, these transformers are asked to handle more and more items reaching a point of being overloaded. A transformer that is being asked to deliver more than its wattage capabilities will let you know in several ways.

- One sign is the casing of the transformer will become very hot in a short amount of time unlike a transformer that can handle the load and will just be warm.
- A second warning occurs when the circuit breaker 'breaks' to keep the transformer from being damaged.
- A third sign of overload is a voltage output drop – for example the transformer is set on 16 volts yet a volt meter only reads 12 volts.

**When transformers are over worked the results is given off in heat.**

Recently, I visited Dean B. and saw his fabulous train layout. Dean has a 'ZW' to power his trains which is plenty of power to run 3 or 4 trains at a time. His accessory transformer is a Lionel 'V' (150 watts) model. Deans had added more and more accessories until the "just one more" accessory caused the "V's" circuit breaker to react. When I touched the transformer it was running extremely 'Hot.' On inspection, the transformer was running over 30 turnouts, 2 bulbs always 'ON' per turnout, along with many other separate lights on the layout. (Unless actually running accessories they have no 'current' draw until activated.) The voltage output was less that the voltage set on the dial. All 3 warning signs were in place. This could cause a core meltdown and be a potential fire hazard as the coatings on the wires of the transformers begin to breakdown. Since my visit, Dean has purchased a second transformer, a Lionel 'ZW' adding 250 watts of power to run his current layout. Dean has split his accessories and now uses two transformers delivering 400 watts to supply power to his layout.

On my own layout, I have expanded table after table for 25 years. I began with one auxiliary transformer. After noticing that the transformer was getting too hot I added another transformer to handle the load. Every time I found that I had a 'Hot' transformer I added another. I currently have 11 transformers of various wattages running my layout's incandescent light bulbs.

For the Club's layout, LEDs are the choice of lighting. With 180 watts of power and another 180 watts in back-up we can potentially power hundreds of LEDs. Assisted by the modular wiring under the Club's layout, LEDs can be simply added any where at any time.

Toy trains are a hands-on hobby. So, every once in a while, put your hands on your auxiliary power transformers to check to make sure that you are not overheating them. If you take care of your transformers they can last you a life time. Many of the auxiliary transformers I use are well over 70 years old and function the same as the day they were built.

**Have a Happy and Safe New Year.**

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## **Airbrush Weathering- Part 2: Choosing Your Paint**

In part 1 of this article, I discussed the equipment you will need in order to weather your trains with an airbrush. In this second part, I will discuss the types of paints typically used in airbrush weathering. In general, there are 2 types of paints you can use for your airbrush weathering jobs: water based acrylic paints or solvent based oil paints. There's no "wrong" choice here. Each type of paint has its pros and cons.

First, let's talk about water based acrylic paints. The big positive that acrylics have going for them is that they are non-toxic. Remember that an airbrush is creating a fine mist of paint and it's unavoidable that some of that mist is going to circulate around the area in which you are painting, even if you're using a paint booth. Having non-toxic acrylic paints greatly reduces the risk from fumes and requires less protection as a result. Acrylic paints also have the benefit of a very short drying time...usually measured in minutes. This means the time between painting to handling is much less and therefore might appeal to the child-like impatience that many of us train guys have. Finally, acrylic paints are easily thinned with distilled water, which makes for easy cleanup. The downside to acrylic paints is that they are more fragile than solvent based paints. By that I mean if you handle a train weathered with acrylics, it's more likely you might rub off some of the paint. This is because acrylic paints do not bond as well to non-porous plastic and metal surfaces as their solvent based oil counterparts. This is why all of the train companies paint their models with solvent based paints and not acrylics. Since all trains are going to be handled on occasion, using acrylic paints for weathering requires the application of extra sealers to insure that the paint stays on the model. There are many companies that make acrylic paints suitable for airbrushing, but most people out there will either use

Poly Scale or Tamiya. Most railroad modelers usually chose Poly Scale.

Next, let's talk about solvent based oil paints. The big selling point for solvent based paints is that they adhere very well to plastic and metal surfaces. Once they are on, they are pretty much on for good and will only rub off with extensive handling. The downside of solvent based paints, however, is that they contain toxic chemicals and the fumes created by airbrushing with solvents is very bad for your health. For this reason, extra protection is needed when airbrushing with solvents. You will need to be in a well ventilated area or use a paint booth and you will need to wear a high quality respirator to prevent inhalation of the toxic fumes. Solvent based paints must be thinned with mineral spirits (paint thinner) and cleanup of these paints is a little more involved than their acrylic counterparts. There are several manufacturers of solvent based paints suitable for airbrushing, but the major brands used are either Floquil or Scalecoat paints. My personal recommendation is Scalecoat paints. Scalecoat is sold by Weaver Models and it's what they use to paint their own products.

As for my choice, I weather my trains exclusively with solvent based oil paints. While the extra protection needed when using these paints is somewhat cumbersome, I feel that the end result makes it all worth it. In my opinion, solvent based oil paints adhere to the trains better and just "look" better when it's all said and done. In my upcoming airbrush weathering workshops, I will be demonstrating both acrylic and solvent based paints, but most of the work will be done with the solvent based variety. Don't worry, I will have plenty of protective gear on hand for everyone!

Part 3 of this article will cover painting tips and techniques. I will be holding the first airbrushing workshop sometime in January and will send out an email when I have an exact date.

# Featured Columns

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## REPAIRS ARE SUCH FUN!

by Marty from Trainz

### 7) READY - SET - RESET - RESTORE

I don't know why, BUT - - we sell a lot of Lionel TMCC & Legacy units. Many are brand new, some are like new, etc. Would you believe that 75% of phone calls, complaints and returns on these for various issues (won't run, no smoke, lights won't come on, back-up tender lights) are resolved in less than 5 minutes? The first thing I do after a thorough visual exam is to change the run/program switch to program and reset to restore the unit based on the specific manual for that unit. An example for a diesel with a smoke unit with an ID of 1 would be: ENG 1, Set, Eng 1, Aux 1, 8. I should hear the horn after pressing Set and again after '8.' It's amazing. Be advised you MUST use the correct number found toward the rear of the manual. For example, if your unit has a Mars light and you used "8" as a guess, the light will not work.

Even MTH has a Reset feature with DCS - also solves a lot of issues. At home, I make it a habit to reset all of my units on a regular basis, about once a month. The same should be considered for PS1 units and doing a Reset 18. (Can't explain it here, read the manual!!!)

### 8) TRANSFORMERS - NOT THE KIDS CARTOON VERSION!

First, think SAFETY! When's the last time you looked at the cord on your transformer? Do yourself a favor - if it's more than a few years old then go ahead and inspect it. After all, its 115VAC and your friends and family will appreciate not getting a shock that makes their throat feel too small for their heart. Or worse, it could cause a fire. Enough said!

The most frequent question I get is, 'Which transformer should I buy?' My usual answer is, "That's a strategic question!" How many trains do you want to run - will you plan on a remote system - what about switches & accessories? If no remote is planned, how many throttles do you need? Finally we agree that the customer should do some planning.

I've repaired hundreds of ZW's, KW's and just about everything else. They're all good units if they are serviced and maintained properly (hmmmm, cleaned your coil and whistle contacts or checked your rollers lately?).

There are some issues between the modern transformers with variances in waveforms that could cause some problems between Lionel & MTH locos. My MTH DCS units will start up with the horn/whistle blowing if the voltage is high from my new ZW. So, I just hit start up at around 10 volts and there's no problem.

### 9) WE'VE STRUCK OIL!

Wow! I just got this new Big Boy and can't wait to get it on the layout. Well, I guess I better read the manual and look at the illustrations that explain what kind of oil/grease to put on it and where. Hey, maybe I should clean my track first. And, Oh Yeah, I guess I should clean some of the collector rollers & wheels on my other stuff too.

Because if I don't do this once in awhile, the next time I buy something, especially something digital, it just may not work as well as it should and then I have to return it, or call Marty. Now, Marty is a really nice guy, but someone just returned a Challenger (true, believe it or not) that was on a layout on a rug, on the floor. It had 2 speeds - fast & faster. It came off the track at 80MPH, the drive rods were spinning as the wheels left the 027 curve and the eccentric crank was the first to hit the carpet, which was probably an old shag, and you wouldn't believe how long it took me to dig those fibers out - most one at a time.

Anyway, my original point was - take the time to clean the rolling stock and the track. Your trains will love you for it.

**Tip # 10 on Page 6 ----->**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
12/17/09 7:00 PM

Guests: Tom B.

New member- John C.

Members Present- 28

Ron-HT layout- update- see page 2

Dave- next show is Jan 16th-need helpers

Scott- informed the club of a new Lionel store in Atlanta

Les- submit parts orders before Jan 14th

Summer picnic? John L. and others suggested several places to have a summer picnic. All members present agreed it would be a good idea to all meet with families twice a year.

Curt- treasurer's report

Mike- asked for club to consider upgrading the children's layout-adding Fastrack and another loop. The kids want to see the modern looking things. We will also hide all the wires.

Ted- asked that the club purchase the track cleaning car. When we have it, we will also need a track cleaning crew of at least 2 members (not Ted)

Les- 2 motions on the floor  
1. upgrade the children's layout  
2. buy track cleaning car  
both motions passed after discussion about the cost.

Ted- updated the members on the aquarium car- still not resolved since administration at the GA Aquarium has changed. Dale S. is still handling.

Max's article was in the January issue of O-Gauge Magazine. Max signed a few autographs.

**Next meeting on January 21st, 2010 at Bill D.s House with ' Business Meeting' at 7:00 pm- don't forget. Bill is opening up his layout from 5-7pm, meeting at 7pm then after the meeting there will be a small workshop on weathering with powders. Bring a car, brushes and powders.**

REPAIRS ARE SUCH FUN- cont'd

10) PURPOSE

I really consider myself quite fortunate to work for a great guy, Scott G. at Trainz. It's really a super feeling when we give an occasional tour to see the looks on people's faces and seeing the 'little kid' light up when they see something that held in the hands in their youth.

Every now and then I get a little cut, poke myself with a hot soldering iron, drop something (only once really), mix up the polarity, lose a screw, curse my inability to understand something simple, and wish I were as smart as the pros @ Lionel, MTH, Atlas, etc.

Then, it dawned on me - I've fixed thousands of trains. Someone, somewhere had to get me thousands of parts, tons of advice, hundreds of phone calls & emails. We had to have special tools, electrical equipment, screws, rivets, reference books and so on.

And after all of this came together, someone had to buy it before the misfortune of having it repaired. None of this would happen without you - our Trainz customer.

LUCKY ME!!

Marty

C A L E N D A R

January 2010						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 	2 NO Layout work at Hobby Town
3	4	5 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	6	7 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	8	9 10 AM-2 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 
10	11	12 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	13	14 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	15	16 Train Show  North Atlanta Trade Center
17	18	19 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	20	21 NAOGRRRC Meeting at  Bill Dischinger	22	23 10AM-2 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 
24	25	26 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	27	28 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	29	30 10AM-2 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 
31	Feb 1	Feb 2 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	Feb 3	Feb 4 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	Feb 5	6 10AM-2 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 