

North Atlanta O-Gauge Railroad Club



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

Issue #11- November 2009

Hobby Town Update

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

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Repairs are Fun

Marty the repairman at Trainz gives us an inside look.

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Train Dr. Ted

Dr. Ted answers questions about sick trains.

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Holiday Party Information

Reserve your spot at the NAOGRRC Holiday Party.

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Meeting Minutes

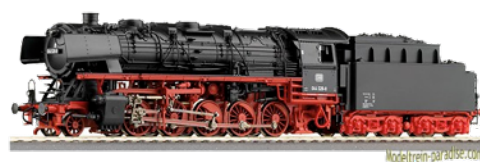
Just in case you missed the meeting, all of the minutes from the meeting are here.

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Calendar

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

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Icing on the Cake

by Rick B.

Sunday Nov 8 was a wonderful day, the kind of day that doesn't come around often enough. The weather was perfect, we got to visit some very nice layouts, and I had an unexpected surprise at the end of the day.

The Piedmont Pilgrimage Tour afternoon started out with a visit to Rick and Cookie's Raccoon Creek Scenic RR. The layout is progressing nicely (or should I say almost completed). The scenery is beautiful, and full of details (move over Max, this layout will probably be the next one in the magazines). It's a layout the whole family has worked on and can be proud of. They also had great food (especially the soup Rick). Throw in the



train talk with friends, many that I hadn't seen in a couple months, and the day was perfect.

Next we went to 2 HO layouts. Both were nicely done, but much smaller than Rick and Cookie's. I wore my O-Gauge shirt as a sign of support for the club.

That turned out to have a couple unexpected blessings. The first, Kathy, my wife, appreciated. I toured both of the layouts in record time with almost no interruptions of people wanting to talk trains. The only delay was waiting for people to clear the isles so we could get through. The second blessing occurred at the end of the second layout. When I found the owner of this layout, a gentleman was asking him about Standard Gauge Trains. I overheard him say something about having a couple of pieces in his trunk that he wanted the layout owner to look at. When he saw my shirt, he started asking about if they were the same as O-Gauge, etc. Of course, being the shy reserved guy that I am when it comes to trains, I enquired if I could join them, if they were going out before we left.

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Hobby Town Layout Update

A Year in Review

by Ron S.

If you remember, it was about this time last year (November 2008) that we delivered the benchwork with trains running to Hobby Town. That was a very exciting time after six months hard work at Bill D's warehouse. During the Piedmont Pilgrimage that followed shortly thereafter at Thanksgiving, the club was able to demonstrate all the good work that had been accomplished in the six short months since the start of construction in May 2008 on the Depot, the benchwork and electrical.

This year at our Piedmont Pilgrimage day (Friday November 27) the NAOGRRC team was able to review the electrical enhancements, changes made, and some significant lessons learned by the Electrical team. There is additionally a good bit of progress accomplished on the scenery.

Piedmont 2008

- We demonstrated trains running on four of the five loops designed into the layout.
- Bill D. had assembled and weathered the roundhouse and it was in place.
- But as far as scenery was concerned, there was none.
- The layout was an open skeleton just showing the benchwork construction.

Piedmont 2009 - Electrical

This year there no longer are five designed loops, but four! The Electrical team, during one of their many "dinner breaks", came up with the bright idea (I mean nice idea) to connect Loop-3 in the center of the layout to the small Loop-4 in the Ticket Booth making one longer double crossing Loop-3. The Loop-4 name would be reassigned to the old Loop-5 and no track would have the Loop-5 designation. Confused? That's OK, Ron S. was able to take all that and reconfigure the layout design into the "RR-Track" program to come up with the new four-loop design configuration. Truthfully, the Electrical team came up with a very nice added change to our layout track design.



The Electrical team has settled into an excellent solution for the four customer operating stations. Although on the surface not much visually seems to have changed, a lot of work and a lot of "Dinner Planning Sessions" went into the changes in effect today. Prior to these upgrades, the station operator was not sure which train they were actually operating. Today, each station is dedicated to one train and the actuator buttons have been upgraded to their current attractive design. Each station's train starts and stops in front of their respective station on the layout.

The Electrical team additionally installed and wired a pullout work bench with a dedicated transformer and test track that can additionally be used to configure DCS trains onto the layout.

Piedmont 2009 - Scenery

Many of you have followed the scenery progress throughout this past year. Much of the areas reachable from the sides of the layout have made significant progress.

Significant additions are the seven bridges placed on the layout. All but one built from scratch by Bill D. The latest additions from Bill placed just this past week are the Covered Bridge on top of Loop-4 and the large curved trestle bridge placed out in the Ticket booth area for Loop-4. There are two more bridges still to come on Loop-4. One is a cast concrete single arch



bridge that Ron S. is building from scratch and the last will be a Truss bridge to be installed early in 2010.

There has been a large amount of rock molds placed on the sides of the two mountain areas. A lot of current emphasis is going into the gorge area in the center of the layout. Right now the north (counter) side is well developed and some work has already started on the south (ticket booth) side. Starting in 2010 development of the mining and logging area in the north portion of Loop-4 will begin.

Changes this past year regarding scenery centered on opening up viewing avenues into the layout. The Arch Bridge mentioned above will somewhat open views into the center of the Ticket booth area of the layout. Instead of the previously planned mountain, there will only be a low ridge on the office side descending to a lower area in the center for a grist mill and more agrarian scenes that will flow out to the restroom side of the layout.

On the other half of the figure-8 of Loop-4 there was added a large vertical gorge cutting into the mountain necessitating the addition of a small girder bridge for Loop-4. That will be highest side of the layout with steep sides descending down to the Loop-1 level. A rock shed is planned over a portion of the track on Loop-1 to prevent boulders "falling" onto Loop-1 track much in the same fashion that snow sheds are used to keep mountain passes open. A mining area



and logging area are planned for the top of this area.

As more of the scenery is completed the intricate intertwining of the layout loops design becomes more apparent. The traditional loops of yesteryear disappear and the interaction between the different loops becomes more prevalent providing a more entertaining overall presentation.

Even the Roundhouse area has been enhanced with a short additional bit of track added off the turntable. During the Piedmont Pilgrimage there will be a TMCC crane operating there. You will also notice the development of the swampy area behind the Roundhouse including a discarded boxcar.

We have ordered a number of structure kits that will eventually be placed on the layout. Larry K., the electrical team and a few other members have started construction on these items. You may remember the outstanding farm barn that I brought to one of our meetings a couple months back that Larry K. completed. The Electrical team tried their hand at structure construction and dove right in with the intricate Mine structure. After assembling the mine, the electrical team was more than happy to turn over the painting portion to Larry's expertise. These structures are being completed now so that we can plan adequate footprints as the layout scenery develops. They will be kept off site after construction to prevent damage as scenery construction develops.

Featured Columns

Wisdom, advice, ideas and history in monthly columns.

REPAIRS ARE SUCH FUN!

by Marty from Trainz

3) WELL, JUST HOW BIG IS YOUR TORQUE WRENCH ANYWAY?

Today's models with their beautifully detailed shells are awesome. Most of these units are attached to their frames with screws from underneath which go into plastic screwposts to hold everything together. With most prewar & postwar locomotives if you wished, you could really tighten everything down to your heart's content to keep it 'tight.' But with today's units, in spite of their more durable plastic formulas, if you over tighten the screws you are bound to break the screwposts. This applies to almost everything from locos to rolling stock and especially to accessories. Some can be repaired; many simply can't. I personally make it a practice to put a little drop of oil on any screw that I remove from anything plastic. First, it makes it easier to put the screw back into the unit and easier to remove later if/when necessary. Throw away the torque wrench and go for finger tight.

4) THE SMOKE UNIT IS NOT AN AIR WICK.

Smoke units are addicted to smoke fluid. Breathing the vapors in when set on Max in an MTH loco with Vanilla flavor - AAAHHHH. Until you have to clean the printed circuit boards and just about everything else within arm's reach throughout the chassis. Boards and wire harnesses hate the stuff, the liquid that is. Some folks insist that less smoke requires more fluid. Others run out of fluid not realizing that there is typically a small switch to turn on/off when running conventionally, or, when running remote to hit Aux 1 & 8, in TMCC or Legacy. MTH has a simple on/off control on their DCS. So, next time you've added fluid and patiently waited for it to heat up and then there's no smoke, simply try lightly blowing in the stack to free the air bubble which sometimes occurs. Conversely, if you've let it run dry and forgot to add fluid, then the wicks wrapped around the heating element(s) turn into crispy critters. Then they have to be replaced - a messy job to say the least.

5) TIE A YELLOW RIBBON AROUND.....

Big Boys, Challengers, large diesels, etc., have wonderful handrails these days. When I open a new large unit, the first thing I do is pull the ribbons out by themselves and set and leave them aside. They are typically lying on their sides in the nice and tight styro packaging just waiting to get onto a track on your layout. If you use the ribbons to pull them out of the styro, guess where all the pressure is as you tug and pull them out? Yep, on the handrails which in turn are held onto their loco shells by these cute little stanchions. Instead of several pounds of expensive engine being spread around were are now talking about several pounds per millimeter by comparison. So, don't ruin your day with ribbons. Pull them out and turn the styro pack over and let it fall into your hands. Did I say carefully since yes, they are heavy. Consider throwing the ribbons away!

6) YOUR CAR WON'T RUN ON A DEAD BATTERY!

The 9V rechargeable for the 5V PS1.0 MTH systems have a shelf life. After a few years they'll take but won't hold a charge. MTH hasn't made a new PS1.0 unit for several years so most of those batteries, if they're white are probably ready to be replaced. So, if your PS1 units starts up during reset (AND, REMEMBER, NO MORE THAN 10VAC FOR AT LEAST 3 SECONDS!!) with 2 dings and runs and the horn/whistle & bell work - you only think it's OK. It's really ONLY OK if you get about 15 seconds of shut down sounds and the fizz after the power is off.

The 10V/3second statement above is critical, especially when kids are running your PS1 units. If they don't allow time for a reset, the unit - especially with a low battery - and junior decides all it really need is just more power, the chances of blowing the operating system in the sound file increase exponentially. Then you have to replace the sound file.

Finally, if you ever start a PS1 unit and you hear 3 CLINKS! - we call this the "Kiss of Death." The best advice I can give is to shut it off, leave it off and get it to an authorized service center (like TRAINZ) to be reprogrammed. If you keep trying to revive it you could blow the boards.

Tips 7-10 from Marty in the December Issue.

Featured Columns

Wisdom, advice, ideas and history in monthly columns.

Train Dr. Ted



The Used Train Lot.

It's the 'Holiday Season' and thoughts of purchasing trains are back on track. My **Dr. Ted** columns are usually about repairing and maintaining your trains and equipment. In this article I am going to discuss about not buying someone else's problem to avoid the repairs.

Should I call the trains "Used" or "Previously Owned" trains? Today, the term "Previously Owned" is used as it suggests a more positive 'spin' on the "Old Clunkers." "Buyer Beware!"

Sources for used "Bargain" trains:

eBay – a large source for trains and accessories. Usually the items that I receive which need the most repair work are the items purchased off of eBay. Just this year from Club members I have worked on - TMCC remote controls, several engines, transformers, and accessories that have been 'Patched-up' by the seller and sold to the unsuspecting buyer. When purchasing items that have mechanical parts as in engines and accessories - **BEWARE!**

Advertisers in train magazines:

This is a safer way to purchase trains as you are in a contract with an individual, usually a store. If the product does not perform to your expectations you have a person

to call. When purchasing, ask what the condition of the item is and does it work.

Buying from someone Local:

The best way of purchasing used trains is from a local merchant or someone with whom you continually do business. This gives you access to someone who cares about your business. For us that would be any of the local train stores such as Legacy Station, Memory Station and Trainz.com. Besides using the phone, these merchants are a short car ride away.

When buying "Used- Previously Owned" trains "Buyer Beware!"

One another subject - The Proper Transformer for Digital Trains:

When running the new digital trains and equipment make sure that you are using the new transformers to protect your trains. If you are using an old type transformer, such as post war, refer to your TMCC and DCS instruction booklet for the proper fuse protection. The new transformers have circuit protection that will cut the power off in microseconds. The old type transformer's circuit breakers take 2 – 3 seconds to cut-off the power which can 'FRY' the electronics. As some members already can attest to, this 'FRYING' can be very costly.

Happy Holidays.

Holiday Party



We will be holding our Party on Saturday December 12th 2009 at Mountain View Community Center at 3400 Sandy Plains Rd in Marietta Ga. 30066 from 11am - 3pm

Adults (18 years old and over) \$15 each and Children will be FREE

We will be serving food from 12:00 noon-1:00 pm.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
11/19/09 7:00 PM

Guests-2, Lillian J. and Michelle F.
members attending- 27
New members- Pat M

treasurers report from Curt

2010 dues are payable now until Dec 31st.
Checks preferred. Curt will email out the membership renewal form. Mail back to Curt.

Upcoming Shows:

Dec 5th- TCA- Southern Poly-Dave will need people to help

Parts order- Dec 14th is the deadline. Les can get MTH, Lionel and Marx

Dec 12th is the Holiday Party at Mt View CC- \$15 a person, no charge for children under 18. 11am-3pm. Will have a raffle. Some of the items were displayed at the meeting. Starter sets, cars, gift certificates etc. Buy tickets tonight and at the party. As of tonight- 53 adults and 14 kids are signed up. Give Les a check or mail to him.

HT layout report- Scenery update- most of the bridges and trestles are in. Only 2 more to add in January. We are designing and starting to build inside the 2 loops on track 4. We will have a breakout session on the scenery and how it will look on the inside track and what our ideas are. We are looking for ideas and suggestions from the membership also. We are still working on hard shell, rock molds, and the swamp.

Worksessions in December will just be Tuesday and Thursday. Volunteers needed for Dec 19th and 20th because we would like to have a lot of red shirted members to answer questions for customers. These are the biggest weekend shopping days before Christmas.

Rick and Eric gave tips on having a successful layout show and Lynn expressed how much it meant to her to go to the Piedmont Pilgrimage layouts as a new club member.

January meeting will be at Bill D's.

2 breakout sessions at the layout after the business meeting.

Next club meeting at HT on December 17th,

Icing-cont'd

Kathy and I finished touring the layout, again in record time, and when leaving, the gentleman walked out with us (apparently the layout owner wasn't interested). He opened his trunk and pulled out a bag of trains the size that even Mr. Ted would have been impressed with. In that bag, there were two Standard Gauge engines, numbers 402 (1923-1927) and 408E (1927-1936). I have been around toy trains most of my life, but I can not ever remember looking closely at Standard Gauge engines. I am absolutely positive that I have never picked up one. The trains needed to be cleaned and repaired, but they were still amazing to me. I don't think it was the size, because my daughter has G Scale, or the weight (not much more than my Allegany), or that they might be scale replicas (I never saw the proto-type to know), or how it was displayed (the trunk of the car), but something about them amazed me. I believe it was more that they had survived so many years of play (they were the trains that our parents or grandparents would have played with and modeled with), and the ruggedness and technology used when they were created. And although many would consider them to be too toyish, they were truly works of art from an earlier time, and with a little work, could be again. I invited the gentleman to our club meeting, so hopefully you can see these gems in person.



C A L E N D A R

December 2009						
		Dec 1 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	Dec 2	Dec 3 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	Dec 4	5 TCA Model Train Show  Southern Poly
6	7	8 6-9 PM Work @ at Hobby Town 	9	10	11	12 NAOGRRC Holiday Party 
13	14	15 NAOGRRC Hobby Town Support NO Layout work at Hobby Town	16	17 NAOGRRC meeting at HT at 7pm	18	19 NAOGRRC Hobby Town Support NO Layout work at Hobby Town
20	21	22 NAOGRRC Hobby Town Support NO Layout work at Hobby Town	23	24 NAOGRRC Hobby Town Support NO Layout work at Hobby Town	25 	26
27	28	29 NO Layout work at Hobby Town	30 New Years Eve 	1 	2	3 NO Layout work at Hobby Town