

December 2020

Hello everyone,

First an update from Russ about next year's convention.

Russ continues to liaise with the hotel but they are still unclear as to what will, or won't, be allowed in March next year. At present the signs are not good as the latest government restrictions run until at least April. However, if you're still interested in going, provided the hotel is able to take us, can you let Russ know if you will be attending, by email if possible, to

russcook1@hotmail.co.uk

This issue I've got an article by Alan Cross on his home layout, another of Russ Kaufman's 'Spotlights' and a message from Neal Carnaby so without any more of my prattling: -

Neal Carnaby Writes

Dear Ralph:

Announcing the N-TRAK TRAK FT Locomotives. This is a special run being done for us by MicroTrains. The first number, 1973, commemorates the founding of NTRAK. The second number, 2000, commemorates the founding of T-TRAK. The engines will be done in Blue and White utilizing the same mask as the MTL Battleship Row Series FTs in order to keep the cost down. Both Locomotives will say NTRAK AND T-TRAK on the side and they are DCC ready.

Deposits are being accepted on the NTRAK website at \$30.00 per locomotive. I am fully prepared to bring them with me to avoid extra shipping costs. They aren't due until at least April, so presumably ... major presumption ... September for the N Gauge Society Show. As of this writing, there are 26 locomotives left split evenly between road number 1973 and 2000.

Any questions, please feel free to email me at nealsngauge@aol.com.

Thanks!

Tehachapi - My Railroad by Alan Cross

Some history.

My present N scale home layout is now about 30 years old and slow in growing. It is the fourth US layout of five all told. Why so slow? Well in the late 80s we needed some extra room for our maturing family and decided on a 2 bedroom(?) extension. Of course, more sensible people would have gone for a master bedroom with an en-suite bath room which gives you an idea of size. However, the bathroom size room became the new layout room and the slightly larger old layout room became a much-needed bedroom. This move did have advantages as the old layout was in a room with windows on two

sides with the baseboards above the windowsill height. Rails here were always subject to the chemical effects of the sun and a cat who broke in when no one was looking and curled up on the rails in a sunny corner!

The layout was based very loosely on the Kansas Mexico & Orient Railway, another British trans-continental white elephant that was finished to the Mexico Pacific coast by the Mexican government in the early 1960s, whilst the US portion had become part of the Santa Fe Railway in the late 1920s.

Much of the Santa Fe portion and the cross-border section has since been abandoned. Trying to rebuild the model based on this railway was a step too far. Although I still have an affinity for Arthur Stillwell's lost dream, a new mind set was required. (If any one viewed the recent Channel 5 travel log on the Copper Canyon train, this is part of the passenger railway that remains.)

What did I want of the new layout? Ideally, a main or secondary bridging line with at least two passing places working from two staging yards, whole train reversing facilities and a continuous running facility. Mostly a layout to run opposing trains both local and express of passenger and freight types with the facility to run a timetable. Common return dc wiring with two cabs. The budget decreed that I repurpose as much of the old layout as possible. Not much then!

The layout was supposed to be based on Santa Fe Railway, a personal favourite, but how to run a small main line with passing places and some local traffic in an L shaped space approximately 7' x 7' 8", with room to move, with a door, window and radiator

under in the way. I seem to remember at the time that I had been much impressed by a Swiss style exhibition mountain layout and wished I'd modelled European prototype - nah! I then obtained John Signor's book (then current) called simply, "Tehachapi", and was hooked. Of course, I turned a blind eye to the fact that the roadbed belonged to Southern Pacific Railroad which included their architecture and furniture with the Santa Fe Railway just having running rights.

So, the first thing to say about the prototype is that it is a bridge line in that it connects the California Central Valley at Bakersfield with Los Angeles via Mohave. Both roads split from one another at each end onto their own roadbeds. It is the only route leading to the Bay area for Santa Fe but a second for SP which also has the Coast line. Also, much of this mountain line is still single with passing loops.

A Quart in a Pint Pot.

So, what could I pack into this space using reworked base board frames? The main frames are all based on 2" x 1" planed wood, one is 3' 2" x 3' 6' bolted to the other at 7' 8" x 4', the whole Rowl bolted to the walls. I decided on paper that they could just accommodate Caliente depot area and its loop plus Tehachapi Loop (Walong Siding) and at greater height, Tehachapi depot and possibly a form of Monolith Cement sidings. When drawn out, Caliente Loop became a transitional 9" radius and Walong siding (the mile round loop), had to become more lozenged shaped and certainly much shorter. To get the effect of a 70' scale rise between entering the short single line tunnel No9 (which on exit becomes a double line), climbing round

to be above the loop same tunnel, a whole circuit within the tunnel was built before it lines up with same tunnels entrance to apparently be 35' higher, then actually move round and up the loop to about 70'.

Therefore, both loops have inbuilt optical illusions of sorts. Basically, going Eastbound, you start at ground zero from a yard under the spiral called Bakersfield, work up the mountains to the highest elevation at Tehachapi Depot then start down again, the line becoming screened then tunnelled down the same Tehachapi spiral (crossing the same ascending main line within tunnel No9 to reach the same common yard but now called Mojave (for Los Angeles or points east). The real line continues to climb from Tehachapi Depot to a place called Summit Switch (where helpers used to detach) and it levels out for the run into Mohave.

All the elevated and spiral trackage base is 1/2" pin board, supported by 3/16" threaded studding which was easy to make fine gradient adjustment and even provide some superelevation on curves. This studding is used for various construction throughout the layout. The ruling gradient is about 1:40. At yard level there are two opposing turn back loops, 4 long holding loops and 4 sidings. A late addition was parking for about 10 locos, all electrically isolated. It would have been good to have additional holding loops but there just wasn't room. On the hidden spiral I managed to slot in 2 passenger holding loops which allows for 10 coach trains to be hidden. At Caliente I fitted in a layout much as it was in the 1920s. Walong loops are a representation of the real thing but with

the lower point positioned to suit a standard lead. The east bound loop also contains the maintenance siding.

The prominent hill on the loop is removable and you can actually stand in the middle of the spiral which is handy for maintenance. At Tehachapi depot there is no pretence at the prototype, the facilities were always minimal so I've put in two passing loops, a house track and a small yard with switching facilities. The main line remains double after passing the depot area but starts its decent after the depot.

A small siding, pretending to be Monolith is included before the line disappears behind the ascending line rather than tunnelling to becomes single again under Walong. It then rejoins the spiral, crosses the ascending line on a hidden flat diamond crossing and heads down to the yard (Mohave). On its way down there are the facing points leading to the 2 long loops which hold additional passenger trains, then a choice of a long yard lead or a yard avoiding line which allows continuous running.

These two lines can also be used as an additional passing place. Whilst the east and west bound yards are shared, there is separated sidings for local way freights to be made up. Passenger trains consist of a Santa Fe train from the east and an SP Sunset consist, and SP sleeper/mail, and a Santa Fe limited mail. A local secondary service is run by SP. The line can run up to 4 through freights plus a way freight.

Although the layout will take long, modern freight cars and stacks, visually it's better with shorter cars. The whole layout is wired for common return dc

with power isolation provided by 3 position centre off rotary switches (allowing use of two controllers) with some additional local isolation provided by single pole switches.

The two reverse loops are provided with additional changeover pole change switches which also indicate which entrance/exit is set. Sockets are provided for the two dc controllers. The only unusual bit of wiring is within the spiral block. Hidden within the spiral the west and eastbound tracks have to cross each other on the flat and, back in the day, it was found that certain locos would short out on this crossing because of opposing polarities present within the "v". To stop this, I wired into the block switch common feed a 16-way switch which only allows the east or west bound spiral to be energised at a time (a good safety feature). The extra switch contacts were wired to arrow type LEDs which show the direction a travel (belt and braces).

The wiring also allows dcc working. By switching all the power switches to position 2 and unplugging the dc controllers, plugging in a dcc control system whose output socket is wired into the position two common feed, dcc control is facilitated. There is no problem with the reverse loops which work as with dc using the pole change switch when the train has stopped.

Track and points are all Peco using their point solenoids and micro-switches for detection with LEDs. There is a problem with these micro switches in that they are designed for OO and N scale. In OO/HO set up they are fine but they are right on the edge of their adjustment in N scale.

Now in the main spiral the hidden yard wrapped itself around it including two reverse loops. Then the rest followed including the hiding of two key mainline points. At the time I thought this would be okay because they were just accessible from underneath. That was 20 years ago with all my body parts still fully functional.

One of these Peco points failed in an unusual way. The tie bar fractured allowing the locking spring to force one of the switch blades to raise above the stock rail. I had been testing new engines which were quite heavy in the trailing direction and all seemed well but then coming back in the reverse direction - oh dear! Luckily, I have an extending examination mirror and surgical instruments. From underneath the view of the points is obscured by two surface mounted point motors and another three mounted above on the next level. I now admire surgeons who practise key hole surgery, it took me over a week to get the point relayed and its associated plain line. I now plan to move some of the three hanging point motors above track. The moral in this little tale is, make sure you can get at everything planned for maintenance, especially when personal creaking sets in!

Finally, some photos. The first is a wobbly pan view of the whole layout (note that the hill above Walong siding is removable and indeed, is removed). You might make out a Santa Fe manifest awaiting clearance to pass Monolith and onwards to Mojave and a Daylight train climbing Walong. The second is taken above Caliente, the offending point I mentioned is below where Caliente loops come together before entering the loop. Note the

various use of studding. The upper-level train passing Monolith Switch is the eastbound hi-level San Francisco - Chicago portion of the "El Capitan" (my invention). The third shows a SP secondary day train taking a leisurely journey towards Los Angeles, climbing towards Tunnel No9 and the loop where it will wait whilst the Sunset train gets clearance.



Spotlight: 'Taking It to the Streets' By Russ Kaufman

The first street markets or bazaars were believed to have been organized by the Persians around 500 BC. Since then, they have been the central meeting and trading area in nearly every civilization. Often, they were permanent installations that were set up daily on a particular street or square. Almost every city or large settlement had or still has a 'Market Street' or 'Market Square'. They are usually bustling with people, animals, carts and wagons filled to the brim with fruits, vegetables, fish, meats and household wares. Street entertainers and prepared food vendors were often added to the mix to lighten the daily drudgery of finding the next meal for the family (especially in the days before refrigeration).



More on Markets

Russ's article on street markets could not have come at a better time. As many of you may know, Christine and I are both big fans of the German Christmas markets – the real ones, and in a normal year would, at the time of writing, either be on our way home or sorting out the photos we'd taken. But this year there was to be none of that

nonsense! STAY HOME was the cry. So, I decided to try bringing the Christmas market home by building a small N scale reproduction of one. Not the vast Cologne style ones mind you, time is finite, but a smaller one typical of many German towns and small cities.

This task has been simplified by the availability of some lovely little laser-cut wood and card kits from Modellbahn Union / DMToys and Noch. I'm still working on this project and building kits but I've placed some photos of the work so far below but please remember, these are N scale models!



Photo 1 These strange pagoda shaped towers can be seen at many markets. Originally more prevalent in the Eastern parts of Germany they have now spread to all parts. The lower tier normally houses a drinks vendor. An etched kit by DMToys with the provided figures painted by me (one reindeer even has a red nose!)



Photo 2 No German market is complete without a nativity scene, this one by DMToys uses etched, pre-printed figures.



Photo 3 Another essential is the beer stall (or Kolsch in Cologne). This wood and card kit is by DMToys features pre-printed signs.



Photo 4 Two chalet style stalls by Noch. The larger one would be for a food vendor or similar and the smaller is a Glühwein stall; another essential for any German market.



Photo 5 A basic vending stall by DMToys. They come in packs of three and take about 10 minutes each to build.

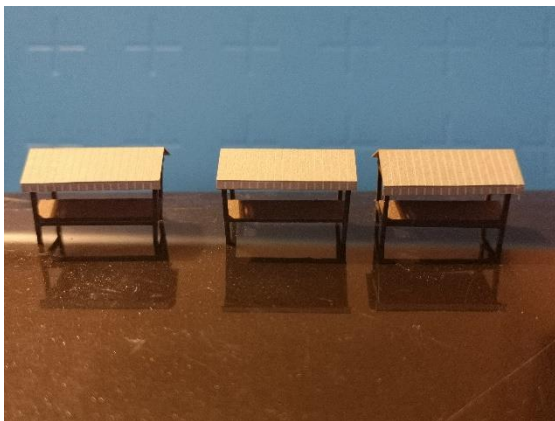


Photo 6 Open market stalls by DMToys. Yet to be detailed and stocked



Photo 7 The all-important 'facilities'. Another kit by DMToys, this brick-built toilet block would be a permanent feature of the square where the market is being held, maybe near a tram stop?

All these kits are easy to build, apart perhaps from the pagoda and the beer stand, which need some tricky alignment of parts, even though the assembly is mainly tab and slot.

Nothing though that a bit of care and patience can't overcome. The nativity in Photo 2 comes complete with a set of pre-printed etched two-dimensional figures, but this style of figure is not unusual in real-life market crib scenes.

I've enhanced(?) the basic market stall by adding a photoshopped layer of sweets to the counter. This was actually taken from a picture of a market stall in Barcelona! After a trip to a local garden centre, I'm currently working on pictorial interiors and counter displays for the other 8 stalls of this type and the three open market stalls. Still to be built are some Metcalfe card picnic benches to provide seating for the locals consuming their Kolsch, Glühwein and Bratwurst!

I'll include more pictures in a later issue when it has all, hopefully, come together.

Thanks

I'd like finish by taking this opportunity to thank the many contributors who have helped keep me sane and provided material for this year's newsletters and also to thank Christine for patiently proofreading each issue and correcting my appalling punctuation. It's been a difficult year for everyone so to those who have 'gone the extra mile' my heartfelt thanks.

I'll finally finish by wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a peaceful, safe and healthy New Year.