



THE SIDE TRACK

WINTER

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

2009

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by John DeHaan

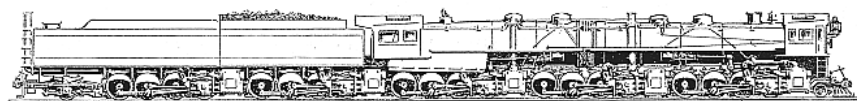
Well, the Holiday Season is upon us so let me first wish all TTOS members – near and far, young and not-so-young, a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year. Our layout gang has been busy preparing the layout for the big weekend at the Sacramento Railroad Museum and we will all be resting up after charging all manner of trains around the tracks for three solid days. (With our new MTH transformers, that will be a lot easier than in years past!)

There have been reports circulating that TTOS National is bankrupt. According to the information I just received from Brian Fields, that is not true. They have sold a lot of “old” cars in their Roundhouse Sale, they have had a good response on this year's cars, and are anticipating the return of a lot of annual renewals. They are re-negotiating the 2009 contract with Lionel for TTOS cars to extend the payment schedule. Randy Giroux has been reinstated as Executive Director and has taken a voluntary pay cut to help ends meet. NOW is the time to pull together to help out National (believe me it will be a lot more difficult and costly to do it on our own!). Get your dues in right away, pick out one or two items from the Roundhouse sale flyer, and start making plans to attend the National Convention in sunny San Antonio in August. If you can see your way clear to pitch in a few extra dollars as a donation, that's even better.

The Curtis Hall at Sierra 2 Center is going to be remodeled after February 1 (with new rest rooms and better access). The project is expected to take three months (but possibly longer), so the Center has been working with me to try to find alternate rooms at the center. We will be discussing their offers at the meeting on Dec 5. If you

know of a location in the general Sacramento area that is willing to host us on a trial basis for those three months, please call me as soon as possible. We have been searching for a new home for over two years and there appears to be little of suitable size at a reasonable cost in the area. Finding a place that will guarantee us use every month on a Saturday morning is a real challenge. We are presently paying \$380 per Saturday (for four hours use). We may consider shifting once or twice to a Saturday afternoon schedule to improve our chances. Let me know what you think. For now, the Center is willing to extend our rental contract for 2010 (with a discount if we have to use smaller rooms at the Center for a few meets).

On a negative note, however, we have had several incidents recently of verbal altercations between a few of our members and Rudy the custodian who opens up the building and sets up tables. One was triggered by inadvertently parking our layout trailer in a newly restored Handicapped Zone. We have agreed not to park there in future (since we can be ticketed for doing so). It will be a little further to push the layout pieces but the new ADA access should make even that easier on our aging backs. It is not clear what triggered the other arguments. I must emphasize that while Rudy may have been overzealous in making his points about access to the building, we are GUESTS at this facility. I will not hesitate to suspend the membership of anyone who is seen fomenting arguments with the Sierra Center staff. We are supposed to be grown-ups, not school-yard scrappers. I will be meeting with the Center staff to discuss these problems. They have stressed that we are welcome because of our long-standing rental agreements and general good behavior. They will rescind our rental agreement, however, if problems arise again and escalate to confrontations. Grow up, and learn to play well with others (with our TRAINS)!



HOM€ LAYOUT TOURS

by Jack Hornor, Chairman and SVD Vice President

September 4th - You may have had this experience. It is the night before you are holding an open house to show off your pride and joy – the layout you have worked so hard to build. Those beautiful trains run flawlessly and every accessory works like a charm -- bells - whistles - flashing lights - everything. Now it's the next day and your guests are standing alongside the layout, eagerly waiting to be impressed. Nothing works! Silence. Not only that, you can't figure out what's wrong. Well, the same things happen on the Hornor layout, but Jack has learned some of the same sleight-of-hand tricks that **Bob Remley** uses to run the layout he brings to train shows. His many accessories never fail, do they? And you'll avoid many embarrassing moments if you learn this little secret. When one thing goes wrong, try to draw attention away from the problem by focusing on some exciting thing that is going right. If there is a lot of activity all over the layout, people won't notice the logs that missed the log loader or even the engine that took a curve too fast and turned over. Those of you who were at our open house on September 5th can now try to remember the incidents when things were a little strange. Yes, even the Hornor trains misbehave on occasion (and of course it's when we have guests).

George Ann has her own secret for a successful party. She invites **Donna Shelgren** and **Mary Leins** and sits back with her feet up. **Curt Darling** helped set up the patio, and **Mark Boyd** and **Jim Groth** were the photographers. Thank you.

Now - what's coming up? We are invited to **Jim Henson's** in January to see the improvements he has made since our last visit. And in March, **Tony Basile** has invited us to El Dorado Hills for our first look at his extensive layout. We will furnish the details in the upcoming meetings and by the e-mail reminders.



Divine intervention - sometimes the 0-5-0 switcher has to be deployed



Can you see anything coming out of that tunnel?



Passenger revenue is up on the GASP RR, but overcrowding on the station platform presents a safety hazard



SVD members enjoy the food, hospitality and especially the trains at the Hornors'.



Show and Tell

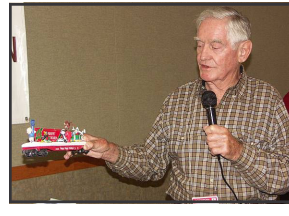
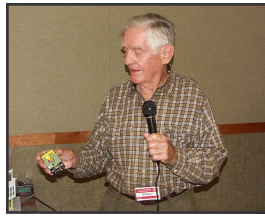
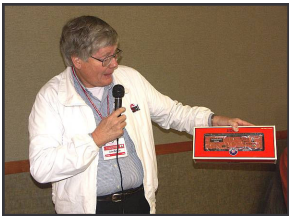
By Bill Wilson, Chairman

November's Show and Tell was based on Whimsical/ Cartoon cars plus any good finds at York. Contributions were made by **Jack Horner, Jerry Azzaro, Richard Zanotti, John DeHaan** and **Bill Wilson**. There were many interesting items from the whimsical side as well as from York. Thanks to all who contributed.

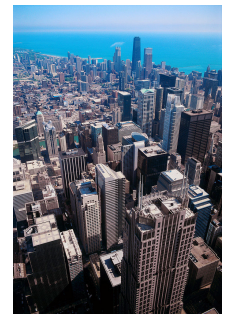
December is Christmas donation time and January is layout tour time so the next Show and Tell will be February 6. I think it is time for those folks with favorite cars to bring them to this S&T. Let's call this "Your favorite engine/car and the reason why it is your favorite"

I have been your S&T person for a couple years and am running out of thoughts and ideas for this program. I would appreciate it if someone would volunteer to take over Show and Tell after the February meet. I have the information on past S&T's that I can pass along.

RECENT SHOW AND TELL HIGHLIGHTS



LIMITED EDITION SP EXPRESS CAR



To celebrate TTOS National Meets in Sacramento and Chicago, TTOS-SVD commissioned this custom-number (#5700), O gauge "INTER-DIVISION" car by Weaver. TTOS info on end panels only!

True to prototype, Scale 40' Express Car. Lionel couplers. Die cast trucks and couplers, 3-rail only

The original car was one of 50 built, and saw regular service between Chicago and Sacramento for many years.

Limited time price reduction: \$35 plus tax, available at our monthly meets



BOXCAR JACK'S WEB PICKS

Jack Ahearn surfs the web in search of great railroad stuff for you!

With the help of John Wayne, The California Railroad Museum, The Southern Pacific Historical Society and several experts of railroadiana...I finally tracked (intended) the location of this railroad roundhouse!

Being curious, I decided to try to find the actual locale. I realized it could be one of many similar installations, as railroads tended to save costs by reusing the same blueprints for different locales. Minor geographic field revisions were commonplace.

I placed this hunt and seek project on the back-burner until serendipitously, I was sent this Google video of a 1932, 12 part Serial, titled: "The Hurricane Express!" Starring, none other than a very young appearing Marion Morrison - a.k.a. John Wayne!

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7259475150816166663#> (**see below)

In the opening minutes (1min. 50sec.) of Chapter One, a railroad yard scene shows a similar turntable as the one originally pictured here. It was also an obvious Southern Pacific facility. Common sense dictated that in those early days, Hollywood wouldn't expend unnecessary dollars on distant locations shots...and certainly not for a Saturday Matinee cliff-hanger! So, I figured, to the outskirts of downtown Los Angeles, trooped the daring thespians to shoot this exciting and action packed thriller! All about good guy's versus bad guys and the dangers of doing dastardly diabolical deeds to the dynamic dynasty! (incidentally, the dialogue for that matinee hair-raiser was about overly melodramatic as this last line.)

Common sense alone, suggesting that the flick was filmed locally, failed to do two things. Firstly, prove my L.A. hunch was correct and secondatiously...which of the (then) several Los Angeles S.P. yards was the actual one used. My first stop was The California State Railroad Museum. Two research librarians and I spent almost two hours sifting thru reference material and then eureka!... we spotted a photograph in the "miscellaneous" stack (shown here) that closely matched the proverbial "needle"!

Next, I contacted the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society. They soon responded and I can now comfortably state that the location of the roundhouse, posted at the top of these threads, was located at: the Los Angeles General Shops Facility, just outside of downtown Los Angeles.

If you're wanting to visit; drive down Alhambra Avenue to the Lamar St. entrance and then you too can look at that roundhouse*, just as John Wayne had seen it...jest a bit 'o pony's hair over five an seventy yar'en ago! Naw, its not a bein' thar no maren...but ya'll can take some pleasure gawken at dem thar San Gabriel Mountains, jest a risen thar, as pretty a lookin' as e're!

*Well, ya can take a gander...but ya'll ne'er be a seeing it now-a-days...

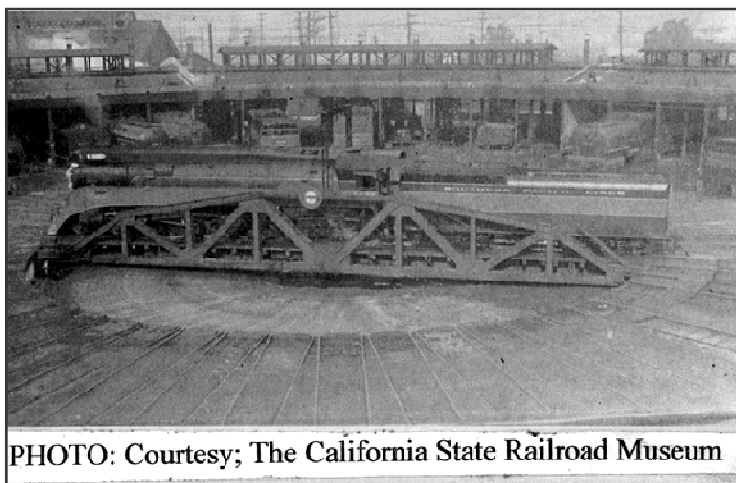


PHOTO: Courtesy; The California State Railroad Museum

This photo was at the bottom of the stack at the Railroad Museum...but worth the time looking! Incidentally, this Pony Truss table was the third type installed. Its years spanned the pit (intended) between 1928 and '44.



This tempting oil and smoke-scented photo (Shorpy Archives) got my curiosity and prompted my search!

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■ **Find the link to this and to previous web picks at the TTOS web page: <http://www.ttos-sv.org/BoxcarJack.htm> ■
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Meeting Notes

by Phil Fravesi, SVD Secretary

September 5, 2009

Curt Darling gave a report on the layout. The club has purchased two new MTH 4000 transformers. Will need help to get wired in before Scottish Rite Show. **Bryan Stanton** was not in attendance, hence no treasurer's report.

October 3, 2009 Scottish Rite Meet, no minutes.

November 7, 2009

Dues renewal begins in January. The Sierra Community Center is being renovated. Work on our meeting hall is scheduled to begin January 2010 and take approximately 3 months. We will be looking into alternatives for that period of time. The idea of a mid-winter Scottish Rite meet was brought up. Further discussion to follow. **Pete White** has made a generous donation to the club layout of a reproduction Standard Gauge train. It consists of a locomotive and five 500 series freight cars. There is a work party taking place all weekend at **Jack Ahearn's** for the club layout.

Board meeting: There was a discussion around the alternative sites during the renovation of the hall. Two members will be looking into possible sites. Discussion about building a new layout or repairing the old one. The vote was unanimous to repair/improve the existing layout over the next year. A motion was made to purchase DCS control for the layout. **Bryan** seconded the motion, unanimous approval. A motion was made by **John DeHaan** to allocate up to \$250.00 for the purchase of Christmas buildings, etc. for the layout after this holiday season. Seconded by **Phil**, motion carried. Due to very poor club car sales, **Bryan** made a motion to reduce the price of the cars to \$35.00 or 3 cars for \$100.00. Seconded by **Phil**, unanimous approval.

Treasurer's Report

by Bryan Stanton, SVD Treasurer

The 2009 River City meet was our best Scottish Rite train show to date with one of the highest paid attendances in recent years. All tables were sold, but some were empty due to sellers who could not make it. Overall, our club did very well on this show. Two door prizes resulted in the lucky winners receiving our 2009 Weaver TTOS club cars.

265 club cars are still available for sale. The price of these cars has been lowered to \$35.00 each or 3 for \$100.00. How about if each of our 131 members is responsible for selling or buying 2 of these cars, and then we can be done with them?

Meeting raffles have generated some much-needed additional income. The next one will be at the January

meeting where the lucky winner will choose one of five cars. Buy your raffle tickets from me at the sign-in table for \$1 each or 7 for \$5.

A new year is approaching, and along with it comes 2010 dues. Dues are due and payable at the January Sierra 2 meet in the amount of \$20 for individuals or \$25 per family.

Lisa, Jeremy and I wish all of you a happy holiday season filled with good cheer. May 2010 bring peace, love, good health, and trains, trains, trains!

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Stanton
Treasurer

Membership News

By Barbara Rohrs

Membership Renewals

It is that time again to renew your divisional dues for 2010. I will not be at the December 5 meeting but you can mail your dues this month with the completed form to me. I will begin collecting dues at meetings in January. Please remember to complete the renewal form & bring it with you. It will help update our membership records. You can pick up the form at our meeting or download it from the website www.ttos-sv.org.

New Members

We welcome new members to our division; if you have not met the new members, please introduce yourself and extend your welcome:

Scott Knerr **Jerry Manthey, Sr.**
Jack Dieres-MonPlaisir

Directory Changes

Please make the following additions and/or corrections to your division directory:

Pamela Richmond

7411 Toulon Lane
Sacramento, CA 95828
No email; phone number same

Jack Dieres-MonPlaisir

8290 Sunny Creek Way
Sacramento, CA 95823
(916) 682-7219

Scott Knerr

3307 El Pinole Way
Fairfield, CA 94533
(707) 421-9346
knerrs@hotmail.com

Jerry Manthey, Sr. – email: jereth@directcon.net

John Lewis – email: overthehill1930@yahoo.com

Warren Kennedy – email: warrenlkennedy@gmail.com

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BETTY

Members who attended the November SVD meeting had the pleasure of helping **Betty Musselman** celebrate her 90th birthday. The cake and ice cream were wonderful. Happy birthday Betty, and many happy returns!

Right: Past SVD president Geary Musselman and his mom Betty. Betty is a regular attendee at SVD meetings and is loved by all.



Christmas comes early for Ron G.

by Jerry Azzaro

One day a few months ago I struck up a conversation with Ron, another dog owner, in the parking lot at Fort Funston. This is a popular off-leash dog area in San Francisco. He noticed my American Flyer license plate frame and asked about it. I told him about the toy train hobby and about our group. "I used to have an American Flyer train . . .", he said, with that far-off gaze and soft voice reserved for lost treasures. It was the same story we have all heard - "I came home one day and my parents had discarded all my toys."

I asked him about his train, and judging from what he told me I determined that it was an inexpensive department store three-car S gauge freight set pulled by a #307 Atlantic loco. I have a drawer full of Atlantics, and I thought later that if I had a duplicate #307 I would give it to him. These common plastic locos have very little collector value.

I did not have a duplicate, but I was able to work out a trade with **Don Rosa** who had several #307s on his table at the River City meet. Little by little I have been able to help Ron reconstruct his train set. I gave him an oval of track and a little #1½ transformer, and he has promised to set it all up at Christmas. The gratitude is overwhelming. There is not enough space here to reproduce the e-mail messages of thanks I have received.

His mother is still living, now nearly 90 years of age. Let's hope she doesn't throw away his train again.



Be on the alert for these two



Jim Groth sent this photo of two suspicious-looking characters spotted at the Gold Rush Days event in Old Sacramento during Labor Day weekend. Jim says that one would attempt to fleece the crowd while the other kept an eye out for the police.

Meanwhile, George Ann says that **Ron Wong** and **Pete White** did not attend her and Jack's open house on the same weekend.

Coincidence? You decide.

Good Show!

George Ann Hornor's report on the recent Cal-Stewart meet

Here are my thoughts about the 2009 Cal-Stewart meet. Good weather, good friends, good food, and 53,498 square feet of trains. There were some special highlights - the Hudson display was amazing; **David and Carol Nissen** and family set up their beautiful circus layout with their colorful McCoy trains for the first time in years (Clarabell the clown looked a lot like **Barbara Jones**); and the train running upside-down around an upside-down Christmas tree drew a lot of attention. If you are interested in numbers, as of Saturday afternoon, almost 600 had



Bidders **Richard Zanotti**, **Bryan Stanton** and **Chuck Stone** at the Saturday night auction

registered and about 400 tables had been sold. The public attendance was good, and they hit the jackpot with the raffle - over \$2000 worth of tickets sold thanks to some very nice prizes. The Friday night party was again across the street in the Pasadena Masonic Temple. The dinner was delicious and you could go back for more. As you might imagine, our division was very well represented in the second-helping food lines. If you want to see some people having fun, go here:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mayer8ha/sets/72157622733234679/show>

Train Time for Santa

Late breaking news from CSRM - by Jack Hornor

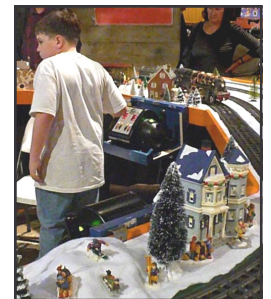
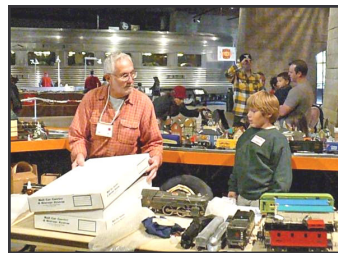


On the day before Thanksgiving the layout crew traveled up to the river and through the traffic, not to Grandmother's house, but to the California State Railroad Museum. Creatures were stirring all over the roundhouse as *Train Time for Santa* drew near. The layout went up without a hitch, thanks to the work completed in November at **Jack Ahearn's** club house. The modules were level, the track was smooth and the new transformers and accessories were all working well. Everyone agreed that the layout runs better than it has in years, and maybe better than ever. After set-up **Pam Richmond** and **Rod Walker** added snow and her spectacular holiday decorations. While the village was going up, garlands, bells, lights, and a Merry Christmas sign added the finishing touches. When the job was complete, there were many compliments from other clubs, the museum staff and visitors. **Curt** and **James Darling**, **Jim Groth**, **Jack Ahearn**, **Lee Deter**, **Carl Curtis**, **Jeff Silvera**, **Steven Bergdahl**, and I also helped that afternoon.

Friday started early for most of us, as we tested all the trains and equipment and added finishing touches to the decorations and lights. As the museum opened that morning, visitors could enjoy our layout as well as modular layouts from other clubs and individual layouts by our Division members. **John Leins** and **Dave Thomsen**, whose layouts are always crowd pleasers, were joined by our friend, **Joe Montgomery**. The handcar manned by Santa and Mrs Santa, as they desperately pumped away trying to avoid being hit by a train, probably drew the most oohs and aahs, but Thomas was a close second.

As I write this, there are two more days to go, and many of our members are signed up to run for a couple of hours at least. The public always has fun at this event, but we have even more. Let's keep it up.

Smooth operators (left to right): **John DeHaan** and **Bill Bender**; **Carl Curtis** and **Raymond Bergdahl**; **Mike Boyd**; **Zachary Leins**



Pam Richmond and **Rod Walker** added snow and structures to create a magical holiday look on our layout



Smaller layouts displayed by **Dave Thomsen** (left) and **John Leins** were crowd-pleasers



Do more with less

A simple modification to American Flyer switches increases versatility

by Jerry Azzaro

The trackwork on my S-gauge layout consists mostly of GarGraves flex track mated to standard Flyer 720A switches. One area has several through sidings and is made up of Flyer switches and sectional track. This is where I can “park” trains and where my operating accessories are located. The configuration of this section is limited by the design of the Flyer switches, which have the characteristics of a full curved section of track imposed on a full straight section with a bulky switch machine and signal housing at the throat. I have often been frustrated by the geometry of these switches, and have envied the 3-rail O-gauge switches with switch machines that can be moved to either side, and a small section of the diverging route which can easily be removed.

I tried the GarGraves 42” switches which came out a few years ago. These were very realistic-looking switches with small, unobtrusive switch machines, but my Flyer

equipment, especially my steam locos, derailed when passing through them. I gave up and went back to Flyer switches.

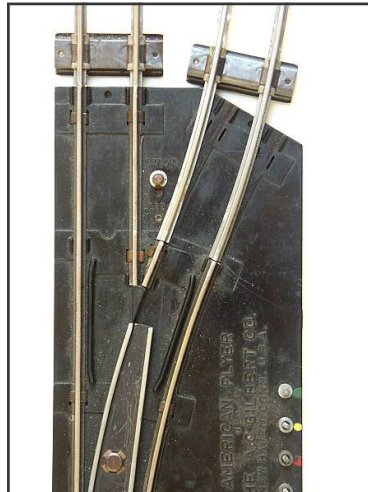
Relocating the switch machine was definitely out of my league, but I thought I might be able to shorten the diverging rails to achieve a more compact layout. Don Rosa gave me some “junkers” to experiment with. At first I considered cutting away the plastic base and the rails, but this would have interfered with the inner workings of the switch. I decided instead to cut only the rails, leaving the base intact. The result is shown in the photos. It was necessary to reconnect the jumper wire to the inner rail clip in order for the current to reach the frog rail. A piece of sectional track with ties shifted connects to the shortened rails and helps to hold them in place.

Installing two switches facing each other, both modified in this way and with a piece of straight track between them, forms a more graceful crossover between parallel tracks. Also, trimming the straight rails in the same way allows a curved track section to be installed closer to the frog, opening other possibilities. Depending on the configuration, it may be necessary to file off the raised nibs near the edge of the base.

Some creative ballasting or other scenic tricks should conceal the fake tie that leads off in the wrong direction.



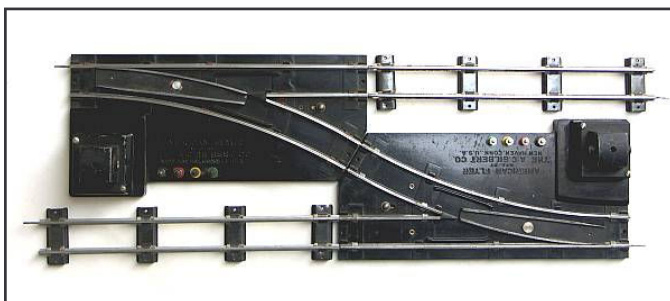
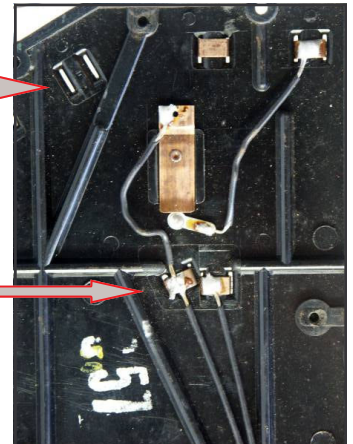
Standard and modified switch



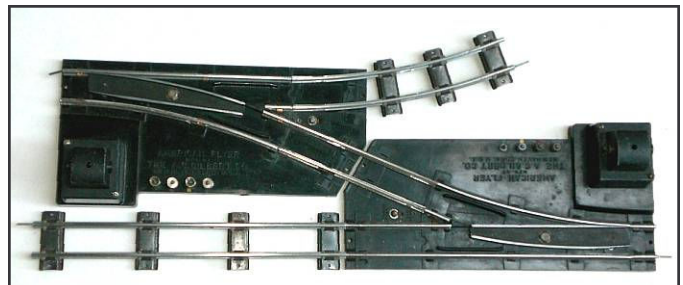
Detail view of modification

Unsolder the wire and remove the clip from **here**

Resolder the wire to the other clip **here**



Conventional crossover with two switches produces an awkward S-curve



Modified switches with straight rail sections between them produce a more gentle crossover. Vary the length of the straight sections to control the spacing. The upper switch also has its straight branch modified



River City Meet 2009 by Jeff Silvera



Bob Remley's action accessory layout is always a hit

I want to thank everyone who came out and made the October River City Meet a successful show at the Scottish Rite this year. Although I don't have any of the numbers on the attendance at this time, I do know by all of the activity that it was a good one. If I may have missed saying "thank you" to any one of you members, please know that all of your help and work are surely appreciated. Without your participation it wouldn't happen. What a great prelude to a Joyous holiday season! Let us strive to make it even bigger and better next October. Happy Holidays, Jeff S



Happy buyers and sellers at the big event

Well, I'll be!

Something else I wasn't aware that I didn't know
by Jerry Azzaro

One Saturday in October, the Western Railway Museum track crew took a lunch break in the shade of a cut of freight cars parked on the old Sacramento Northern mainline. These cars are not on display for museum visitors, but can be seen from the trolley cars as they travel along the museum's tail track. I looked up from my egg salad sandwich and noticed that one of the cars seemed vaguely familiar. After a few seconds I realized that the car was an air-operated side-dump car, the prototype of our Lionel #3469 and Flyer #919 action cars. I guess I never gave much thought as to whether these cars actually had a prototype, what with all the fanciful operating helicopter cars, rocket launching cars, aquarium cars, etc.

Like the toy train cars, this car can tip its bin to dump its load to the side. Also like the toys, the side wall of the bin is hinged and drops to form a chute which helps to direct the load away from the rails. Unlike the toy cars, it can dump to either side. These cars were built by the Differential Steel Car Co. (DIFCO) of Findlay, Ohio - so named because its unique cars could dump to either side.

The mechanism includes four enormous two-stage pneumatic cylinders, as big as trash cans, two on each side. The bin rests on hinge pins and is not secured to the frame, so activating the cylinders on either side will cause it to dump to the opposite side. There is a massive compressed air reservoir which provides pressure for the cylinders. (The cylinders and reservoir are clearly represented in the Lionel and Flyer models.) Compressed air from the locomotive's compressor is fed through a separate air pipe which can be connected through a train of these cars with hoses and "glad hands" similar to the air brake connections. In a pinch, the reservoir can be charged using air brake pressure.



The DIFCO electric railway car has an operator's cab and trolley poles at each end. This photo is from the Illinois Railway Museum's web page, www.irm.org © Illinois Railway Museum

These cars are normally used in mining or track maintenance applications, and so are not generally seen on the mainline in revenue service. The WRM car came from Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation and was used to haul copper ore from the mine to a nearby smelter.



DIFCO air-operated side-dump car at Western Railway Museum



Pneumatic cylinders and air reservoir



Hinge pin and drop-side lever



Pneumatic control circuitry on the side opposite the reservoir



Down the track

Upcoming events of interest to SVD members

December 5: SVD Meet, Christmas Party, Sierra 2 Center*

December 5-6: TTOS San Joaquin Valley Division Train Show,
Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, Turlock

January 2, 2010: SVD Meet, Sierra 2 Center*

January 9-10 : Great Train Expo, Cal Expo, Sacramento

January 24: Golden Gate Lionel RR Club Show
Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto

February 6: SVD Meet (time/location to be announced)

February 27-28, 2010: Great Train Expo, Cow Palace

March 6: SVD Meet (time/location to be announced)

March 12-14: Cal-Stewart Meet, Santa Clara

*meetings begin at 9:30 AM

