

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

SUMMER

2022

"A camel is a horse designed by a committee" - Sir Alec Issigonis

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by Ed Strisar, SVD Interim President

Good people:

TTOS-SVD is on the move! We now have a very comfortable, centrally located, and affordable meeting place for our monthly meetings. We also have a very healthy bank balance due to the expertise of our Treasurer, **Bryan Stanton**. Thank you Bryan!

In addition to our monthly meetings, we also have some upcoming events:
The annual River City Toy Train Show will again be held at the Scottish Rite Center on October 1.

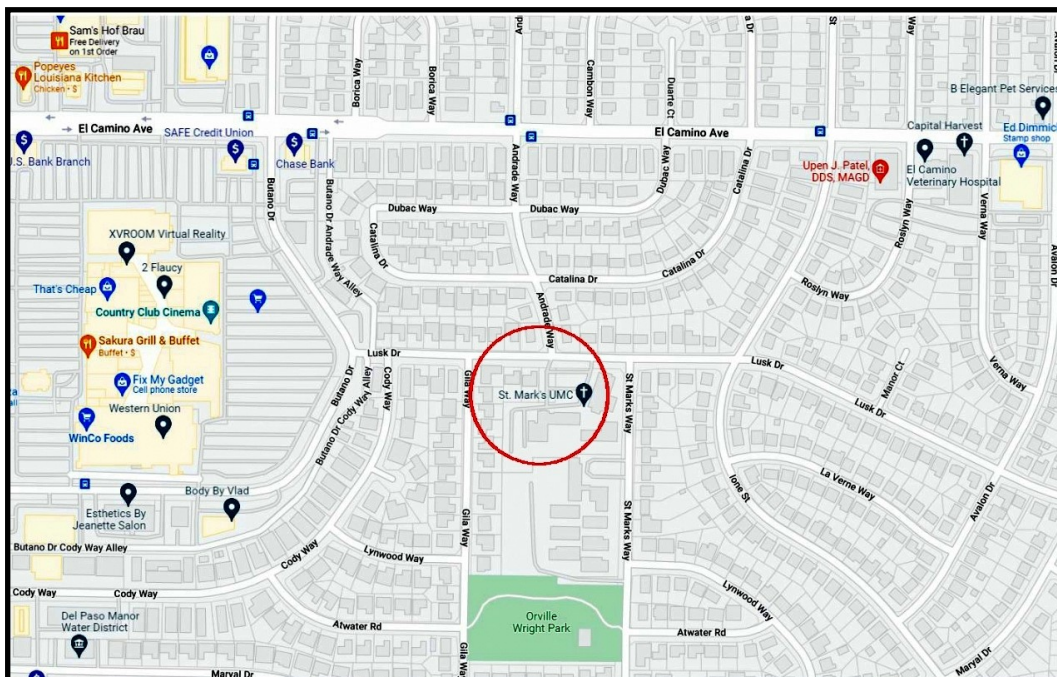
Then, on October 15, **Phil Fravesi** has generously offered to let us visit his fantastic large train layout. In addition to the main layout, Phil has other related railroad objects in his backyard and has recently constructed an "annex" displaying prewar American Flyer. This is an event everyone should see and enjoy. In addition, there will be light snacks.

Finally, in December we will be celebrating our Annual Holiday Potluck in the Grace Café at Saint Mark's.

Your Board members are planning to visit railroad related attractions in the local area. They would welcome any attractions you, as members, would like to visit.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the next monthly meeting.

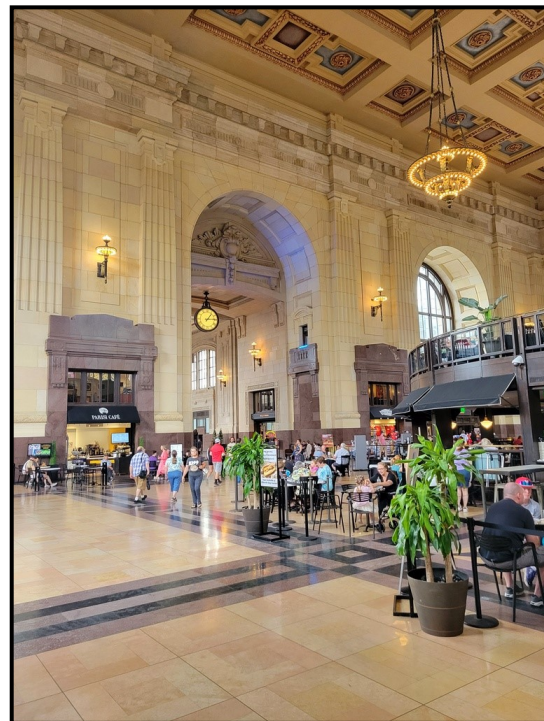
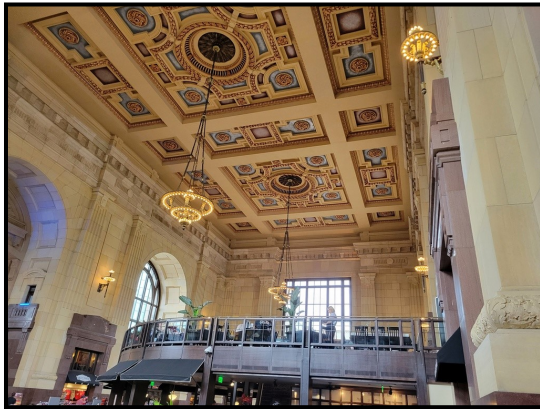
-Ed Strisar



Views from the 2022 TTOS Convention

Photos and text by Phil Fravesi, TTOS Secretary

As TTOS National Secretary, Phil attended the annual convention held in Kansas City MO. He shares these great photos with us.



At the KC union Station. There are eight layouts in the station. Something to behold. Built in 1914, the station underwent a \$250 million restoration in 1996.

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One layout has a tornado. It lights up with lightning. Look closely an you can see farm animals and a car caught up in it.

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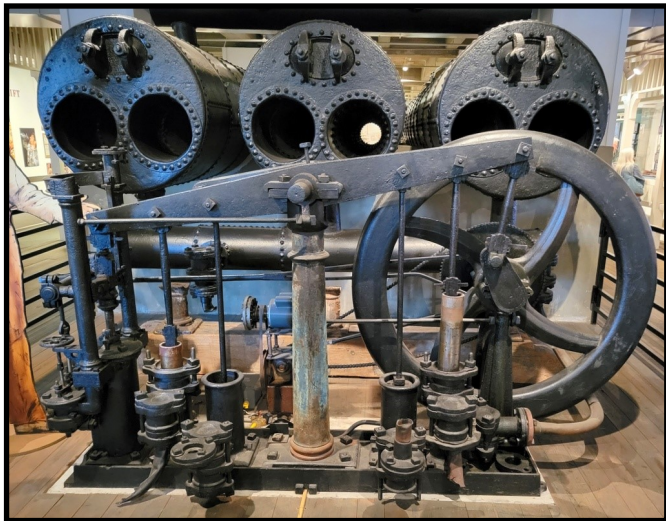
The Freight House Pedestrian Bridge (renamed Michael R. Haverty Freight House Bridge in 2014), formerly the Pencoyd Railroad Bridge. Built 1892, closed 1970. Originally a three-span through-truss railroad bridge, it was relocated to Kansas City freight house district and repurposed as a two-span pedestrian bridge in 2006. It is 250 ft. and spans several main tracks. Great for train watching!



These are photos from the National Toys and miniatures Museum. I didn't include photos of the miniatures. Here are some photos of the toys. The circus is a Schoenhut Humpty Dumpty Circus. 1903 - 1935. There was something for everybody from the 1800s to the 1990s.

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From the Arabia Steamboat Museum. This was a mind blower. This ship hit a submerged tree and sank quickly into the mud. Everyone survived. The piece of wood below was found in the excavation. It's what remains of the tree. The other photo is the only piece of the hull left intact. It sank in shallow water so the hull went under and the superstructure was above the water. Wind and water made short order of the structure. That's where all the passengers belongings were so they are all gone. All the stores below deck were nearly perfectly preserved in the mud. The cargo was previously purchased merchandise going to general stores all over the country. There were hundreds and even thousands of items in near perfect condition. The display went on forever. These are the boilers and walking beam from the boat.



Small Layouts Are Fun!

By Jack Ahearn

There's been a lot of talk during our monthly meetings lately about small layouts. Those remarks were coupled with encouraging comments for other members to join with the several whose small portable layouts have become a featured attraction at our regular meetings, our River City Show and other area train shows. (Yeah, a subtle innuendo in there.)

One comment made by a member at a recent monthly meeting caught my attention. The point made was a reasonably simple and logical fact; the name of our club is the Toy Train Operating Society. We should have

some trains running during our meets for our enjoyment and especially for guests, visitors and, most especially, prospective members.

When we were meeting at Sierra 2, I joined, on a fairly regular basis, Dave Thomsen, Bill Bender, John Leins and a few others by displaying a small carriable layout. It was always the same table top but never the same track plan. Not quite what Lionel catalogs hyped as "Empires"! I've pictured a few of those "short-line railroads" herein. Enough talk. Let's look at some, "not quite empires."



I believe many of our members, being kids at heart, look back with a very personal remembrance of their first train set. I know I do! For most of us, those warm moments coincided with an exciting and yet, deeply emotional mind and body smile evoked reaction. It certainly brings such a reaction to this writer. The prewar Lionel train set pictured is a later-in-life purchase of the same set as my Dad gave my brothers and me. It was on that magical Kodak morn-

ing in 1942. The train and its tracks were set on a white bed sheet (snow). Placed on that, my dad had also gifted us with a Marx crossing gate, caution sign and a

Junior Bridge Co. trestle. This stories photo shows dozens of accessories that I would not buy for the next sixty years,

So, at the ripe old age of six, on that December 25th morn, I decided I wouldn't run-away from home anymore. I had something to stay for. I loved that train and I just knew it loved me back. NOTE This late series of 1600's, as produced, are a bit odd. See THE TTOS BULLETIN, May1996, pages 6,7 & 22.

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This photo shows me making my debut as a traveling iron rail fan at the Railroad Museum's annual Thanksgiving Show (sigh). I was positioned along with the previously mentioned trio of veteran show presenters, Dave, Bill and John, in the front lobby. Along with the line's interesting circular route, passengers always bought round trip tickets and could take pre-era selfies in C.S.R.M.'s lobby

wall mirror (note the two Yule trees and two Boxcar Jacks). The 1998 exhibit on the right featured many of my very first purchases since joining TTOS in the mid '90s. Both the circular railroad and the display shared a six foot table, three feet each. An interesting mention about the photo is that it was snapped, from the second floor by Jack Hornor!

I'd say it would be fair to call this 4x5-footer a good example of the term "Tin Plate." One might even refer to this layout as the Tin Plate Route. I think I brought this to a Sierra 2 meeting. OK, "a SVD meet at" and so on. These two photos show all the pieces placed on this round-tripper are made of tin. Even the track connector is at least, half tin. However the exception would be the carved wood cars.



I'd say if they were carved by hand, the person who produced them must have quite a jigsaw or lathe. As for the buildings, they're easily recognized manufacturers except perhaps for the two European ones. Yeah, I could have gone a little heavier on the scenery, but frankly, I liked this plain and illustrative presentation of a long ago art form, Lithography! And, the reasons I like making a

quickie layout such as this portable 4x5-er are that one can come-up with a theme, spend an evening creating it, show it a few times and in an hour or so clear the track, think of another idea and within a few hours, Shazam! There's a train running around it! Try it, I wish you well and look forward to seeing your ideas realized at a future meet.

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A mix of cardboard buildings and tin accessories and pine trees are viewed by passengers from a 1930s Lionel passenger train. Also catching their eye is the town's pond, which

they just passed over on a Lionel bridge. Those aboard are extremely safe due to the installation of three, count them three, semaphore signals. All those for a twelve track section, 4x5ft. *around-we-go* layout. Unless they get off at the next station, (on this Route, it always is next) they'll pass thru the lines only tin tunnel (or any other kind.) If the excessively curved train line gets too many complains, its Top Brass can always replace it with another self-built creative short-line railroad. We should all settle complaints like that!



Here's an oldie, not goldie but papery. These paper models are made from one of Lionel's annual catalogue silver quarter *mail-a-way-fers*. It, of course included their 1948 Catalog and several other goodies. The completed vintage suburban street seen here is not my 1948 effort, but rather a discovery of the 36x24 inch sheet of cut here and there plans

found at a train show. You wouldn't want to see my 1948 efforts. The models here came from years of scale modeling I was involved in my pre-TTOS days. The planning sheet also included a "suggested" purchase of accessories needed to complete one's architectural triumph. Those accessories were not paper but a lot of paper would be needed to purchase them!

The "suggested" street scene sat on an 8x4 split board and rode in my then Dodge Ram van neatly. I took the layout to several shows and finally removed what you're looking at and condensed the streets size. As you see it now, it sits on a card table, very portable - and when we get more new members who likely didn't see it years ago, I'll likely head to a monthly meeting with it. You can see my full how to and how not to do story in the November— 1998 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*.



Here a completely curvaceous trolley line second to none except for its prototype, the famed roller coaster like "Toonerville Trolley!" As some of you know, this scene is

the upper level of my ever-present living room Christmas Tree layout. That is to say; I take it all down and put it all up on every June 30th. The famed trolley is an original to me, as it's the first one I ever got. Count them: the never opened Twelve Days of Christmas presents are wrapped and ready to be delivered. But not delivered by the red suited, white bearded one. On the rear platform of the famed trolley, stands a seasoned couple, perhaps on their way to our upcoming River City Train Show! It all goes to show you - regardless of age, Toy Trains are Fun and that's what SVD-ites are trained in!

In closing, I wish a Very Merry Small Train Layout to All *and to me too!*
-Boxcar Jack

My unique Unique train set

by Jerry Azzaro



I wish I knew more about the Unique Art Manufacturing Company.

I know that they made a bunch of tin-litho clockwork toys, similar to Marx. Their Ferris wheel can often be seen at train shows, I know that the factory was located at 200 Waverly Avenue in Newark NJ, a street that no longer exists, and that there was a sales office/showroom at 200 Fifth Avenue, New York. I know that they got into and out of toy trains about 1950. I'm sure the company has been written up somewhere in one of our hobby publications.

I had never heard of them until about 1950 when someone gave me a used Unique tin-litho F7 diesel A-unit locomotive in Rock Island livery, #2000. Of course what I wanted was a set of those swell new Lionel diesel streamlined locos - the 2343

Santa Fe, the 2344 New York Central, or the smaller 2023 Union Pacific - the only one which would have run on my mishmash of Lionel and Marx O-27 track. (This was before I was bitten by the American Flyer bug.)

I had never seen anything like it. It was big and long, probably more accurate scale dimensions than the Lionel models. It was better-looking than anything from Marx at the time. It had one motor truck and one un-

powered truck which carried the 2-step E-unit. The shell was all tin-litho except for a red plastic nose piece which had a light bulb sticking out of it. The trucks pivoted on screws that passed through the roof of the shell, held in place with chrome-plated acorn nuts. It ran well. These were sold in A-A sets (one powered, one dummy), but I received only the powered unit.



The couplers were cleverly designed to mate with most other toy train couplers of the day. They were basically a tab-and-slot design, but the tab turned upward and would engage a Lionel knuckle.

In my childlike way I decided to "upgrade" it by trying to make the stamped metal truck side frames look more like Lionel's. Needless to say, that failed.

Eventually the loco got packed away with the rest of my toy train items and stayed there.

Fast-forward to about 2002 when I spotted a pair of unpowered (dummy) Unique diesels in nice condition for sale at York. Thinking of my powered unit, I bought them. When I got them home, I switched the trucks from my powered unit into one of the dummies, using the better side frames from one of the new units.

Now I had something I could sell and recoup my investment.

However, the more I looked at my Rock Island A-A diesels, the more fond of them I became. I decided instead to search for the "correct" cars that would have been with them when sold in a set. Trolling eBay resulted in a 3-car train, including the rare "Benny the Brakeman" operating caboose.

My Unique Art train fits into a category I like to collect - "stuff made by other companies who wanted to hop on the Lionel-Flyer bandwagon".



Benny the Brakeman, at rest and at work.



Down the track

Upcoming events of interest to SVD members (SVD events are in **BOLD**)

August 20: SVD meeting, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento*

September 17: SVD meeting, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento*

October 1: River City Train Meet, Scottish Rite Center, Sacramento

October 15: Phil Fravesi Home Layout Tour, Carmichael

November 11-12: TTOS/TTM Show, International Agri-Center, Tulare

November 19: SVD meeting, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento*

December 17: Annual Potluck Luncheon, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento

***Meetings begin at 9:30 AM**

BRING YOUR SVD and TTOS NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Contact us:

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Membership questions: Barbara Rohrs - (916) 730-1415 tjbrr@hotmail.com

TTOS-SVD Mission Statement:

Our mission is to bring together persons interested in the hobby of collecting and operating toy trains. The focus of activities shall be on promoting the best interests of the hobby through fellowship, a sense of good will, camaraderie within the membership, and exposing the general public to the hobby, encouraging greater interest in it and increasing membership.