

SIERRA CENTRAL HERALD

Official Publication of the Sacramento Model Railroad Historical Society, Inc.

“Under The Hard Hat” by *President Bob Rohwer*



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*Look for these and other interesting
articles inside this issue of The
Herald.*



We are little less than three weeks from the November Open House. Preparation is going very well and we have a good number of train submittals for the open house. Certification of the open house trains continues. As a reminder all equipment used on the standard gauge layout must go through the certification process. You should also run your train submittals around the layout and have Rick Hansen certify them. If you have not submitted a train please contact Rick. Our goal is to have all members participate in the open house. On Friday night we tested the new barbeque by fixing hot dogs for members who arrived early. It works great. Also be sure to signup for the various positions needed to run the open house. The form is posted on the wall. We have planned a diner at the Spaghetti Factory Saturday night after the open house. A signup sheet is posted.

Railfaire is also approaching quickly. We are now collecting items to sell at the club house. So bring them in. You can either donate your items outright or they can be sold with a 10% sales commission paid to the Society. This provides you an opportunity to clean out all the boxes you have stored and help the Society. See Dave Megeath if you have any questions.

If you have been reading your e-mails you should be aware that the Society has started a mentor program. In the last board of director's meeting it was discussed that many members and board members do not fully understand the operation of the standard gauge layout. When you combine DCC, prototype signals, two turntables, two programming stations, train operations, dispatching, five yard/switching operations, and radio communication there is a lot to know. With this thought in mind the board divided the members into groups by board member for the mentoring. You will be contacted by a board member to go through a list of items to determine what support you may need. We are doing this training on a one on one basis since the experience and knowledge varies greatly for member to member. From an initial survey every member has a lot to learn. We will need your tolerance on this program since we are all learning. If you have any suggestions or comments, please let me know. In addition we are preparing an instruction manual for the standard gauge layout that will explain how to operate the layout. As an example it will include how to turn on the layout, how the turn on the signal system, how to operate each turntables, the proper way to talk on the radios and many other items.

In May 2006 the Society was one of the sponsors for the “River City Express” PCR Convention. We put on an open house for the convention and chaired the layout tours committee. I also made arrangement for a SP Shop tour for the group. As a result the convention was very successful. Since we were a sponsor we shared in monies the convention made. We received two check totaling \$323.00 for our efforts.

On Friday, December 8th we have our annual Christmas party. Since our Society has grown we are moving the party to Taylor school, 4350 Taylor St., Sacramento 95628. Thank to Pam Zine, Brian's mother for making the arrangements. The party will be pot luck and start at 5:00 p.m. About 8:00 p.m. we will return to the club house to enjoy each other's company. We may even run a few trains. A sign up sheet for the pot luck dishes will be posted. You may bring an entrée, salad or desert.



Maximizing the Mainline Run by Karl Griffin

By the time you have built and operated several home and or club layouts you should have come to some conclusions as to what you really consider to be important design requirements for your 'lifetime' layout. That is, your final masterpiece. It may or may not become fully completed from a construction standpoint at the end of your lifetime but it should represent what you have decided is the best compromise of design desires and limitations of the space available.

Perhaps as you are approaching retirement age you can foresee the time when you will have the time and funds necessary to buy your last home that provides the opportunity to construct your dream layout. Everyone has different ideas as to what that layout should look like but I thought wouldn't it be interesting to rough design some ideas that I've been kicking around for the last few years for those of you whose number one priority is for a truly long mainline run. The really important goals should dictate how the design turns out. If you aren't truly satisfied you will not be happy and will tear the layout down and start over again and again until your number one priority is met.

Layout designers have come up with some basic ideas to attempt to achieve this goal. Let's take a moment to examine them and then I'll tell you why I'm not excited by any of them. Following that discussion I'll present a solution that I think has some better possibilities.

Idea #1-'The spaghetti bowl'. As bad as the name sounds, it is an accurate description of what the track plan looks like. The mainline runs essentially around and around itself going up and over or down and around itself all twisted and tangled up in a desperate attempt to maximize the mainline distance traveled. In doing so it also removes most of the available real estate for industrial siding switching and most of the scenery is dedicated to hiding track in tunnels. Both

on paper and in practice this solution looks like a disaster both from a construction and especially from a maintenance access standpoint.

Idea#2-'Use your imagination'. This idea requires you to run 'laps' to increase the mainline distance. After you leave the yard you enter a large oval track which you go around several times and imagine that you have traveled a long distance. You then leave the oval and proceed onto your final destination-usually the same yard you started from. This solution usually is for the smaller room.



Idea#3-'The Out and Back'. This idea has you traveling through the same area two times possibly at different elevations (foreground and background) on the same shelf area. While this does in fact double your mainline distance, esthetically and from a purist standpoint it is a severe compromise.

Idea#4-'The Two Level Approach'.

Two shelves, one at the three foot level and one at the five foot level with the lower level being perhaps 3' deep and the upper level being 2' deep. By the time you have constructed several layouts your talents should allow you to build something a bit more complicated like this plan calls for. You have doubled your mainline run and things are looking much better.

Idea#5-'The Mushroom'. A complicated arrangement that requires high ceilings and stepping up and down for the operator(s) as he navigates his way thru a maze of twisting aisles. When done right it can be awesome. This design really requires some extensive construction and design talent. We are now getting closer to a good solution.

These ideas all have merit as solutions to the vexing problem of figuratively or literally extending the mainline run problem. But what would happen if you carried these ideas even further to the extreme? How far can one go to achieve your number one priority while giving up other less important goals? In order to answer this question let's take the time to examine

Maximizing the Mainline Run *continued by Karl Griffin*

what most people consider shelf and aisle requirements. A 30" deep shelf is a realistic maximum depth that one can reach to construct and maintain. Anything deeper really hurts the back. A peninsula that allows access from both sides would allow for a 60" depth. However in looking at this in a pragmatic manner, maximizing shelf depth takes up lots of floor space. And that is what kills this idea for increasing mainline runs. What you are aiming at is length not shelf depth.

Aisle width-There are some things that you shouldn't forfeit in your quest to maximize length. And one of these is aisle width. 36" is as narrow as you should allow for as it is the minimum that two reasonably sized people need to safely pass each other sideways. Tempting as it might be, don't compromise here!

By now you should have some clues as to the solution I'm going to propose. If you minimize shelf depth and maximize the number of levels, you will attain the longest possible mainline run that you have determined is your number one priority without going through the same scene twice. With those two key thoughts in mind let's get started on our ultimate solution. So what are the realistic maximum number of shelf levels that can be constructed one on top of the other? My suggestion is three. If you are of average height place the shelves at 36", 48" and 60". The three foot level is an easy sit down level for construction and maintenance. The four foot level is an easy stool height level. And standing up or standing on a small long bench makes working on the third level also very easy. The construction of a tri-level shelf assembly is not an inordinately difficult construction project and viewing all three levels while operating the trains is practical.

What is the realistic minimum shelf depth for HO/HOn3 scale? My suggestion would be 12". This width allows for very comfortable four track wide interchange yards or five track wide assembly yards and plenty of space for passing sidings and where single track is going through an area there is ample placement area for structures either in the foreground or background. Building flats are still an option but not a necessity with this depth. Scenic opportunities are only moderately limited. The lowest level can have major bridges with sub-level water areas if so desired. The upper two levels can have shallow water with bridge supports if desired. I would also suggest a maximum thickness of 2" for the shelves (thickness of wood shelf itself and space for switch machines, wiring runs and lighting). A trim peice on the front edge would dress up everything nicely and a quarter

inch high lip would help stop rolling stock from falling off.

180 degree turnbacks-If you have a 12" deep shelf on either side of a 36" aisle width you have a total width of 60" minus 4" for track centers. That gives you a 56" diameter 180 curve or a 28" radius. That is wide enough for all moderate sized locomotives and freight and passenger cars. Remember, this design's goal was to maximize length of mainline run rather than to try to accomplish everything.

By now you should be asking-how do I connect the three levels? There are two realistic possibilities to accomplish a major height change...a helix or a long climbing grade preferably with a long sweeping curve for asthetic reasons. A 2% grade climbing 1' has to be 50' long. A 50' long helix with an 8' diameter requires 720 degrees of curvature (2 full turns). An open and sceniced helix like this would look beautiful if you have the space for it. If not then a 50' climbing grade can be fitted down, back and around an end peninsula.

Since you have three levels you have two major grade changes. Having one of each type as described above would look much better than both of one type. Your room configuration and overall dimensions will probably dicatate the best solution. If you design this layout as a true point to point railroad it simplifies things enormously! You only have to design two major grade changes rather than three or four.

Duckunders-it is better to design a swing up or down section for the 1st or 3rd level. The middle level would have to be a 180 degree swing around section. Better yet design it so that the beginning and ending of the mainline start and end on opposite sides of the entry door to the train room. The middle level goes out onto a peninsula for the grade change. If you lived back East and had a basement with stairs you wouldn't have this challenge at all!

I haven't attached any drawings to this article because the primary idea here is to make you think of the possibilies rather than to draw something that wouldn't fit in your particular space. If you had a 10 or 12' ceiling to work with, then a mushroom setup could incorporate all of my ideas to the very fullest. You would then have to decide if going up and down several steps as you follow your train around is something you want to do or not. This is where a custom home shines to maximum advantage. If you have a masterplan then designing the room to fit the plan is a possibility rather than the other way around.



The Bath & Hammondsport Railroad by Karl Griffin

Is it mere coincidence that the better model railroad layouts are based on a specific prototype rather than being freelanced? No! Specificity demands research and attention to detail which instills a sense of discipline in this hobby, something that is easy to overlook in its importance. When you freelance you are at best making educated guesses as to what would go with what and then having to justify the results to yourself and your guests. This causes some detachments from reality which is so unnecessary! Look long enough and there is or was a prototype to cover just about any type of interest you might have and it is this diversity of interests that make this hobby so very enjoyable.

A lot of modelers also seem to think that since I live here I should model a railroad from around here. Hmm-Not so fast. Since most of us model objects from the distant past (1950ish) living next to a modern day railroad isn't the great help one would think it would be. You still will need to do a lot of research of what things looked like in the past for your layout. As one of those purists out there I enjoy looking for those elusive shortline point-to-point railroads that have character, small town charm and amazingly still exist as a going concern. That last quality is important if you want the option of a range of time frames to choose from.

Such is the case of the Bath & Hammondsport Railroad. Imagine the improbable - a nine mile long shortline railroad that opened for business in 1875 and is still a going business! Located in the wine countryside of upstate New York is what I would call the east coast version of our Napa Valley RR only it is a freight only rather than a passenger only operation at least after 1917. You could change that if you wanted to...

In order to model this railroad you don't need a turntable and roundhouse nor a wye or balloon track to turn trains around-The B&H doesn't have any of that. Hammondsport is a deadend terminus and Bath interchanges with Conrail and before that with the

Erie Lackawanna RR. Sidings serve as runarounds tracks for the locomotive(s) and stub sidings serve all the on-line industries. If you got excited by my previous article on long narrow shelf railroad modeling this is what you are looking for. One or two diesel switcher locomotives, a caboose if the time period is right, a few home road name freight cars, some foreign road cars, a couple of tourist passenger cars and you are in business!



Beginning at the western end interchange connection is the small town of Bath. Travel east about six miles after crossing a few streams and serving a few wineries and you enter the town of Rheims. It then continues east and terminates in the town of Hammondsport which is located adjacent to Lake Keuka where a truly distinctive depot is located as well as a two track TOFC ramp and two stall engine house.

Prior to 1917, passengers would arrive at Bath via the Erie RR and ride to the terminal at Hammondsport via the B&H where they would then hop on the ferry at Lake Keuka to go to tourist spots on the north side of the lake. In summertime up to eight trains a day would bring vacationers and tourists to visit the wineries and lake area.

In addition six freight trains a day handled the grapes, finished wines and champagne going out and the incoming products included bottles, liquid sugar and blending wines from California. Other logical product shipments could include furniture, small factories and warehouses.

Use your imagination or do more research. Excursion trains are easy to portray since they are full going both ways unlike a lot of freight cars.

Gently rolling hills, autumn colors, shallow streams and quaint town buildings that have been around longer than any of us add to the charm of this railroad. In an effort to motivate you further I've included a number of pictures to help you visualize what I'm talking about.



The B&H RR *continued by Karl Griffin*

In addition to this remarkable railroad there is the historically important figure of Glenn Curtiss who flew many of his experimental aircraft here in direct competition with the Wright brothers.

You see there really are some railroads that are really unknown to the general public but offer some truly outstanding modeling possibilities. If you want something unique from what everyone else is modeling-this is just one interesting possibility!



Our Mentoring Program *by Bob Rohwer*

Each board member will mentor about eight members to determine on a one on one basis that each member understands the following.

1. Basic understanding of the operation of the layout.
 - a. How to turn the layout on.
 - b. Turn on track power from the DCC control station
 - c. Reversing blocks
 - d. Right side running
 - e. Signals
 - f. Operate both turntables
2. DCC (This will not include decoder installation.)
 - a. How to use the DT 400's.
 - b. Re-acquire a locomotive by plugging in the throttle.
When to plug it in.
 - c. How to consist locomotives.
 - d. Turn on functions.
 - e. Read a decoder.
3. Train order operation
 - a. Review the form
 - b. Review the train order process
4. Radio protocol
 - a. Identification, message, closure
5. Certification of equipment
 - a. Review the certification process sheet
 - b. Discuss the common problem with cars
 - c. Detection
 - d. Resistor axle

This is the beginning to what we hope will be a most successful program. Items will be added or deleted as required. We're all learning so please feel free to contact me with any suggestions of comments you might have.



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Sacramento's First Railroad Depots

Researched at The CSRM Foundation, edited by Karl Griffin

Most modern-day Americans aren't aware that their towns ever had railroad passenger stations. This situation is repeated in Sacramento. Here, at least seven different structures have served passengers for the myriad lines once operating within city limits since the mid-1850s. Unlike many American cities, Sacramento is blessed with the survival of two grand 20th-century depots plus a third, reconstructed 19th-century station. Among these, the Amtrak (former SP) station is currently receiving attention due to increased passenger traffic related to the successful San Jose-Oakland - Sacramento Capitol Corridor trains. Let's journey back through time, and examine the first three railroad passenger depots of Sacramento and their places in history.

The Sacramento Valley Rail Road—California's first, running from Sacramento to Folsom—opened as a through route on the first day of 1856. Both freight and passenger trains departed from the Sacramento River waterfront, near Front and "L" streets.

Within a matter of weeks or months, a large, roofed structure with open sides to expedite freight and a ticket counter in one corner was completed. No separate, enclosed passenger depot existed. Enclosed passenger stations had begun appearing along America's existing railroads only a decade or so earlier. The CPRR could boast little better when it started building east from Sacramento in 1863. The company's first trains operated for the benefit of construction materials and crews, not the public. Once rails reached Roseville in 1864, the CP's first scheduled passenger train was run. The CPRR had no shops, few tools, and only several miles of track ready for the reception of motive power. The biggest building they owned was a small tool house on the levee. This was later used as the first ticket office for the road. The little building stood there on the levee near the foot of I Street until it was demolished.

The SVRR was acquired by the CP in August 1865. CP trains may have called at the SVRR's old freight shed depot near Front and "L" Streets for the next year, although by 1866 a small, purpose-built passenger depot had been erected near the foot of "J" Street. The railroad's owners knew this could not handle the expected traffic, especially since completion of the Transcontinental Railroad was imminent. Front and "J" Streets—The following excerpt from the Sacramento Union of August 27, 1867, tells of the inception of what we today know as the CPRR

Passenger Station in Old Sacramento, reconstructed in 1976 as the first portion of the California State Railroad Museum complex: "Board of Trustees... Application was made by Mark Hopkins, on behalf of the CP, for permission to erect a one story frame depot building, seventy-five feet wide by two hundred feet long on the west side of Front Street, between I and J streets. On October 2, 1868, the Sacramento Union reported that the "CPRR made application for permission to erect an open shed thirty by seventy-five feet on the north end of the passenger depot. At this juncture, the depot began to take on an appearance that closely resembles the impressive, rambling structure found today along the Sacramento waterfront. In



February 1870, the Sacramento Union noted that workers were busy making yet another addition to the depot. This time around, they were "enclosing a small space, to be kept as a refreshment stand (The Silver Palace Restaurant today occupies this general area in the reconstructed depot). By July, workers were "fitting up rooms

north of the restaurant for offices of the Assistant and Division Superintendents and for a telegraph office. The adjacent apartments are to be turned into a waiting room for ladies." The final addition to the building appears to have been made in 1873; a baggage room located at the north end of the structure.

The depot was the center of life in Sacramento—as elsewhere. By the mid-1870s, horse-drawn streetcars trundled along Front Street past the depot, transporting CP passengers to and from Sacramento's hotels and other business establishments. Acquisition in 1869 of the (first) Western Pacific Railroad assured CP of an all-rail route to the Bay Area via Stockton, Tracy, Altamont Pass, Niles Canyon, and San Jose. A year later the CP arrived in Sacramento from Vallejo, crossing the Sacramento River via a large, wood truss bridge near the location of today's "I" Street bridge. Since the "Cal-P" was a CP competitor, it initially did not connect with the tracks of the Central Pacific. Instead, it built a berm just north of "I" Street with a short section of track and a turntable atop the berm—but apparently no depot. The result of all this activity was increased traffic through Central Pacific's depot. Today, the reconstructed CP Passenger Station shows what Sacramento's main overland gateway looked like in its fully developed form, circa 1876. Opened to the public a century later, during the nation's Bicentennial, the rebuilt depot (along with the restoration of Old Sacramento) stands proudly as a part of California's

Sacramento's First Railroad Depots by the CSRM Foundation, edited by Karl Griffin

largest historic redevelopment project. Interestingly, today's structure has served CSRM longer than the original structure did for CP.

By the late 1870s, Sacramento had become a "rail crossroads" for the CP/SP RR system. The Big Four's expanding rail network encompassed lines running north-south and east-west through California, intersecting in the state's Capital City. As passenger traffic overtaxed the CP's Front Street depot, the railroad made plans to erect an entirely new structure by filling in what was left of Sutter Slough, in the area bounded roughly by "G", "I", Front and Third streets. Known as Arcade Station, this new "through" depot involved a complete reworking of trackage; trains would be able to arrive and depart without the constant need for back-up movements or other switching, as had been the case before this time in the stub-end depot on Front Street. The new Arcade Station was touted as the finest building of its kind west of Omaha. The general style of the building is Gothic and its architectural appearance is impressive and beautiful. It consists of a central pile of buildings, a portion being two stories in height, faced by a depot arcade or sheltered avenue, seventy feet wide and 414 feet long. This arcade contains the tracks on which the different trains enter and leave the depot. The roof of this portion is corrugated iron. The pile of buildings referred to is 164 feet long. CP's detailed description goes on to tell of the ticket office; separate ladies' and mens' sitting rooms, furnished with "marble wash-basins, mirrors, and other conveniences; a dining room and bar room; telegraph office, baggage room, and upstairs offices for a number of high-level railroad officers. Arcade Station served its purpose well through the last decades of the 19th century.

Served at first by horse-drawn streetcars and later by electric trolleys, the depot was a source of local pride for its first 20 years. Its distinctive architecture and wooden construction unfortunately were not well-suited to changing operating needs and cultural tastes, however. As time marched on, the depot seemed more of a monument to the Victorian age than a suitable gateway to California's Capital City. As early as 1908, according to several articles in the Sacramento Bee, city leaders and merchants began pressuring the

conservative CP/SP management—both locally and in San Francisco, the company's headquarters—to fund a replacement for the now-unstylish Gothic depot. Convinced that the structure was severely outdated in terms of design, function, and location, citizen committees harangued the railroad, to little avail, in



the years leading up to the United States' entry into World War I. The Southern Pacific finally conceded that it was time to look into the matter shortly before the United States Railroad Administration nationalized

America's railroads—dashing any such plans for years. Probable cause for this local "depot discontent" was completion in 1910 of a new Sacramento depot by the Western Pacific Railroad (the second railroad to hold this name in California). This newly completed transcontinental line was affiliated with the Denver & Rio Grande Western and Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroads in order to reach Chicago. It erected a fine, modern Mission Revival depot, designed by the firm of Willis Polk—one of California's most distinguished architects—between 19th and 20th, "I" and "J" streets. The new railroad and its depot opened to considerable local fanfare because of the simple reason that the WP was not controlled by the CP/SP and thus competition seemed likely. In order to complete its Oakland-Feather River Canyon-Salt Lake City main line via Sacramento, the WP purchased considerable property running directly through the heart of the city's main residential district. A number of grand 19th-century houses had to be demolished to make way for the tracks and the railroad's new Sacramento depot. In service through the demise of WP's famed California Zephyr streamliner, the depot lay dormant for several years until its 1970s sale and conversion into a restaurant.



Today this gracious structure survives in its original location, converted into one of many nationwide Old Spaghetti Factory restaurants. The distinctive Mission Revival styling has been maintained and even embellished inside and out, with the former open-arch train platform enclosed as the establishment's bar. A popular spot for residents and tourists, the depot remains a wonderful train-watching location—situated alongside the UP's former WP main line in the heart of California's Capital City.



Editors' Comments by Karl Griffin

My wife and I recently completed a 3400 mile cross country motorcycle trip to Las Vegas, Phoenix, El Paso, Denver, Cheyenne, Salt Lake City and Reno. The UP and BNSF mainlines parallel a good portion of this route and from what we saw business is good for our nation's railroads. This trip also provided the inspiration for the first article in this issue of the newsletter-mainline run'. 'Maximizing your the city there is still an incredible amount of open space. Modeling this sense of 'vastness' is a challenge but with some serious foreplanning you can go a long way towards getting that feeling. Knowing what your real desires are in order of importance is the first step in the creation of a layout that will truly satisfy you. Get out and visit other layouts-talk to their owners. Has their layout met expectations-if not, why not. Their answers might surprise you!



**Articles for inclusion in the
Jan / Feb issue are due NLT
the second Friday of December!**

The Sacramento Model Railroad Historical Society, Inc. is located at 1990 Grand Ave., Sacramento, CA 95838 and is open every Tuesday and Friday night at 7:30 p.m. It is the home of the **Sierra Central Railroad** which is modeled in both HO Standard and Narrow Gauge. Telephone (916) 927-3618 for info and directions. Visitors are always welcome!

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**Next General Meeting is the last Friday of
December, 2006**



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