

## Pomona Model Railroad Trade Show

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On Track Productions, producer of the highly successful Large Scale Train Show each June on the Queen Mary in Long Beach, CA conducted an All-Scale Model Train Show at the Pomona Fairplex in Pomona, CA on March 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Such a show happening in the Los Angeles area was so significant We decided to delay the March issue of the Trolleyville Times a few days to include a report of this show. We are glad we did because we think that this show is the greatest thing to hit Los Angeles model railroaders since last National Train Show was in Long Beach in 1996. Because this show is run by other than Great American Train Shows, LTD, we thought it would be interesting to see how these promoters approached the conduct of a show. We were very pleasantly surprised. Just before tearing down after a fun two days, we realized that for the first time in any Trolleyville vendor's recent experience, they had heard no one complaining about anything, especially vendors who are known to do exactly that. In fact, when the 2004 show dates were announced, there was a mad rush by vendors to sign up for that show, including both Trolleyville vendors. One noted brass model importer has already committed to the 2004 show. [The unanimous conclusion of the Trolleyville vendors was that this was the best and most enjoyable train show ever attended.](#) We estimated that over 4,000 visited the show on Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup>.



First, to ensure quality displays for the visitors, set-up was allowed on Friday from 8:00 AM to 11:00 PM. If any vendor could not get his display honed for for public in 15 hours, well, that vendor needs a new display. Second, to ensure that the public actually gets

## “What’s Really Wrong with the hobby?”

An Editorial

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For some time now, no model railroading magazine publishes too many issues without an article about “...what is wrong...” with the hobby or what “... needs to be done...” Looking at this from the electric railway modeling perspective, it becomes much clearer to see as electric railway modelers are a distinct minority in a minority hobby. We are known as the “...crazies...” as the great majority us string up overhead wire and supply electrical power to our operating cars from it. As difficult as most non-electric model railroaders feel that operable overhead wire is to erect, one can become a Master Model Railroader (MMR) or even a Grand Master Model Railroader (GMMR) without ever hanging one foot of it.

A standard sentiment expressed is that model railroad hobby participants are aging. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure that one out. Just attend a local model train show. There are many more Preparation H users than those carrying Boom Boxes. One recent study concluded that the average model railroader is over 50 years old. These now elderly modelers started modeling with what they saw when they were younger and moved toward other areas. The business end of the hobby knows this. That is why there are fantastic HO scale models of Union Pacific Big Boy 4-8-8-4 steam engines, Alco DL-109 Diesel Engines and soon a GG-1 Electric with full sound.

When Lionel began their serious advertising program after World War II, it picked the target population and went to them with models of the current trains of the day, namely the Pennsylvania GG-1 Electric Locomotive, the Santa Fe F-3 Diesel Locomotive, the New York Central Hudson 4-6-4 Steam Engine. Most of us have seen the picture of the freckled-faced boy with the Santa Fe F-3A in his hands, drooling at the sight of the red and silver engine. Every one of these locomotives were capable of being seen daily and even hourly in their operating areas. But trains were everywhere and took you everywhere you needed to go. TV was black and white and there was usually only one in the home.

Times have changed. There are now computer games, internet, Sony Play Stations and all the other items that youth embrace today. Trains are harder to find in many areas. In the Los Angeles area, there is only one rail activity between my workplace and my home, the MTA Green Line. That would not have been the case early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I would have to cross Fe and the Southern Pacific to get home, assuming I

to see the items, every vendor was met at a special gate set up for Model Train Expo vendors. Every vendor was checked against a list, given a wrist bracelet and a name badge. The wristband was to be worn for the entire weekend. No one was allowed through the gates initially unless they were on the list and after that only if wearing the blue wristband. Brian Curry, shown below, the owner of On Track



Productions, demonstrated his personal, hands on style of management as he was at the gate and personally put a wristband on this Trolleyville vendor.

Second, the tables provided were high quality, relatively new, solid and lightweight as shown below.



The show aisles were large (15 to 20 ft) and crowding around vendor booths was minimal making it easier for the patrons and harder for the “shoplifters”. Brian did his homework on show thievery and had security in the high vantagepoints during move-in and during most of the show hours to keep an eye on “undesirables”.

Lastly, as a vendor, it was good to see the show close at 4:30 PM on Sunday, giving that extra half-hour to tear down and get ready for Monday’s activities. Tear Down was organized and as pleasant as such can be.

Trolleyville was represented by Alpine Division Scale Models, Custom Traxx and the Southern California Traction Club. Vendors reported that sales were excellent to “out of this world”. One vendor reported that they had their best show sales in six months. So make sure that you

was driving a car, otherwise I would have been riding a trolley or taking a bus. Trains now run in very select areas. The demographics of the young people who see them are not the same as those fifty years ago.

Many cities have some sort of electric railway service from their airports. There have been numerous light rail lines opened in the last 20 years, almost all of them with different vehicles. To mention a few, there are Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, San Diego, and Sacramento, Salt Lake City, Denver and Saint Louis. Almost everyone who goes to LAX sees one or more of these vehicles on the MTA’s Green Line. Yet not one ready-to-run model in HO scale of any of these highly visible vehicles exists. Many young school students received tours and rides on these new systems as they were opened. The response to these systems was the same as when some of us took our first rides on the then new PCC cars. Meanwhile, some of these PCC cars, themselves over 50 years old, have re-emerged in at least two cities and are extremely popular in one. They stand neck-and-neck in popularity with the famous cable cars in San Francisco today. There is no ready-to-run model of these cars in HO scale, the most popular of the railroad modeling scales.

Wouldn’t one light rail vehicle with a circle of track and throttle make a neat starter train set? Maybe even a station with automatic stops?

Yes. There may be many problems in the model railroad hobby but most of them would be solved if it became the model railroad business and marketed to those young persons who still like and appreciate trains! If you market to young people, you get them. Just ask Nike!

GLH

## Port of Los Angeles Holds Open House on the San Pedro Trolley line

The Port of Los Angeles held another Open House on February 22<sup>nd</sup> to show the excellent progress being made on the San Pedro Heritage Trolley Line. The line is completed. Car 1058 is operational. Car 501 shown below is inches away from its first run. Car 500 is coming next. The only “cork in the a--h--e of progress” is none other than the California Public Utilities Commission. They just continue to thwart the dedicated management and workers of this very efficient organization from completing their desired task, running a simple 1.5-mile trolley line.



reserve some space and time for the February 2004 show. It is worth your time. We will be there!

## ‘Final?’ Sahuaro Central Swap Meet

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After years of successful indoor swap meets. The Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation and Society hosted what was supposed to be its final “indoor” swap meet on February 15, 2002 at the North Phoenix Baptist Church in their Family Life Center. Custom Traxx had been participating in this meet since 1992 both in this location, the Postal Union Hall prior to this location and the BCI Bingo Hall before that. The meet was normally held three times each year, in February, May and October.

Last year, when the costs of the hall at the North Phoenix Baptist Church rose close the club’s budgetary limits, the club decided to take the gamble and move the swap meet nearer to their Railroad Park facility. However, the club has decided to have one more indoor swap meet at the North Central Baptist Church on May 17, 2003. Barring, further developments, this will be the last indoor meet. This meet will be held in the roller skating rink. This is a nice facility but not as brightly illuminated as the meeting hall. Anyway, if you are near Phoenix, Arizona on May 17<sup>th</sup>, get over there. There are some unusual items not normally seen elsewhere at that meet. It is surprising how many small model train vendors live in and around the Phoenix area.



In the photo above, car 501 is almost ready to run, lacking only trolley poles, trolley retrievers and seats. Seats for all three cars are being built by the dedicated carpenters working on the San Pedro Trolley project. One of these seats is shown below.



Those of us on the West Coast have always been reminded of the excellent restorations that have been done on the East Coast where they use winter to work on the cars. We are willing to wager that car 501 will out shine any of them. Make us wrong and make sure to see the car in the next two months. Before you know it the “corks” will be removed and the line will be running.

As is usually the case, members of the Southern California Traction Club were on hand to assist the Port of LA in getting their message to the public. Below is the SCTC operating mini-layout with a model of a Brooklyn car rounding the nearest corner.



There will be another open house on March 22<sup>nd</sup> at Pier 155A in Wilmington. Check the web site, [www.railwaypreservation.com](http://www.railwaypreservation.com) for more information.

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