

The Trolleyville Times

June 2007



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The 18th National Trolley Modelers Meet!

The East Penn Traction Club held its biennial Trolley Meet at the Palladium at Villanova University on May 4-5, 2007. This is a fine facility with both clean restrooms and refreshments. However, adjacent construction made attending the meet, vendor loading and unloading something just short of a nightmare. With only one entrance for loading without stairs located at the end of a narrow walkway, only one vendor could load or unload at a time. Backing trucks down this narrow walkway was time consuming and exasperating for some vendors not used to such problems.

Once inside the meet, all was interesting. Many quality products from reputable small vendors were available to view and to purchase. Image Replicas displayed their line of commuter cars.



GHB showed the pre-production model of their 1936 Air Electric PCC. This model is one of the best models seen to date. Look for this 1:24 scale model in many authentic road names soon:



Other vendors present included Dr Harold Cox, Imperial Hobby Productions (IHP), Transquip, Rivers Traction & Trolley, MTS Imports, Inc, Custom Traxx, Kevin Farrell, and Berkshire Car Shop. Even the SEPTA store was represented. The number of vendors is one good reason for traction fans to make sure that they plan to attend the next show in 2009. Three members of the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) visited the meet and purchased many items. Some of them will be seen on the modules of the SCTC in the coming months, including a model of the newest American streetcar, Philadelphia's PCC-II, used exclusively on Route 15, Girard Avenue. We obtained this IHP model immediately upon seeing it as we were scheduled to ride the prototype on the very next day (See article in this issue). The model sells for \$195.00, ready-to-run,

CIA, Inc sells Great Train Expo & Greenberg Shows

On May 8, Competitive Intelligence Agency announced the sale of the Great Train Expo to Bill Grove and the Greenberg Shows to Randy Bachmann, both long time experienced model train show promoters. Trolleyville is completely familiar with the background, qualifications and management skills of both Bill and Randy. So Trolleyville expects both fine train shows to continue and to improve. For the complete news release, [click here](#).

Meet the Folks at Bowser Manufacturing

Last month, Trolleyville spent some time with the fine people at Bowser Manufacturing. Bowser has always been a key supplier for model trolley lovers due to their four trolley models, originally developed and produced by Pennsylvania Scale Models. Every HO scale traction modeler usually has at least one of their PCC, Brill, IRR or Jewett models along with their brass, wood, styrene or resin models. For a history of the origins of Bowser, [click here!](#) Bowser consists of two major parts and they have two separate facilities in the peaceful town of Montoursville, PA. Montoursville is located just east of Williamsport, PA on Interstate 180. The main factory is on Jordan Street on the east side of town. The second facility is English's Model Railroad Supply, located on Howard Street. This is one terrific hobby shop. They seem to have everything in every scale. With the passing of so many hobby shops in the last few years, it is so great to visit one and enjoy it. The store is on the first floor of a two story building. It is very professionally run by Richard Cox, shown below, and six other knowledgeable employees.



The shop has a very robust repair department and they are an authorized Lionel repair facility. Often modelers seeking parts are sent to English's by the manufacturers themselves. The store has the atmosphere of the old train displays that used to dominate the Department stores of the 1940's and 1950s. As soon as you enter the store, you can hear trains running, smell the smoke of model steam engines. The next photos are taken in the store.

unpainted with a sprung trolley pole but no decals supplied. The model is shown in the next photo.



What really steals the show are the modules in various gauges with their streetcars and interurbans running from live overhead wires. So, we have decided to show some of the detail on many of the modules that were present. Some scenes on the HO scale modules are shown below:



This store is well worth the detour if you are traveling on Interstate 80 in central Pennsylvania. The factory, retail store and their suppliers are linked electronically so Bowser knows exactly what they have in stock and when out-of-stock items are due. Gerry Selleck, shown in the next photo, is responsible for the web advertising to both retail customers and dealers.



Both the store and the factory are under the direction of CEO Lee English. Lee is shown below ordering parts for Bowser's O-scale turntable. He takes personal interest in the quality of every single product and does not hesitate to initiate product improvements. Lee is largely responsible for the trolley mechanism that HO scale traction modelers have grown to appreciate since they were introduced eight years ago.



Lee is the youngest son of Lew English, the creator of Bowser as it exists today in Pennsylvania. As CEO of the company, he is responsible for the direction of the company. He was instrumental in the recent overhaul of the company's business methods, the acquisition of Stewart and the continuous process improvement of all Bowser and Stewart products. He is a working CEO, respected and liked by all employees. They unanimously refer to him as the "best" boss. His father, Lew, now 89 years of age, is still involved in



the day to day decisions and resides above the hobby shop. His residence contains the most unbelievable complete collection of older toy trains. We were privileged to get a guided tour of this collection. Shown below is Lew English (center) with George Huckaby of Custom Traxx (left) and George Jones of the Southern California Traction Club (right) with a very small portion of his collection in the background.



Bowser employs the services of several small businesses in the Northumberland area. One of them is Smith Machine on Spruce Hollow Road, shown below, in an old gas station/local store, which has been modified many, many times.



The business is owned and operated by Charles K. Smith, a craftsman that can get the best out of any machine, regardless of age or type.

With the increased interest in subway cars due to Life-Like's recent HO scale R-17/21/22 offerings, we photographed one of several great O scale elevated modules.



This is a "must attend" meet for any traction fan no matter what area of the world that you call home. More from this meet will be reported on the [East Penn Traction Club web site](#).

Charles holds a patent on the Squeeze-EZ, a product that helps you get all the product out of a toothpaste tube. Some of Bowser's injection molding is done here. Boyer Machine is another Bowser injection molding supplier. While Smith Machine is older and experienced, using several older but capable machines. Boyer is really computerized and has fewer but newer machines.

The PCC II Inspection Tour Sunday, May 6, 2007



The East Penn Traction Club normally has a fan trip on the Sunday following the meet. This year the trip involved two PCC-II vehicles on the 15 Girard Avenue line and portions of the 10 Lancaster Avenue line. Two PCC-IIs, 2320 and 2322 arrived at the 63rd & Malvern loop at 10:15 AM. and followed the service car south on 63rd Street.

The car continued south on 63rd Street on non-revenue trackage until Girard Avenue when the cars turned east and posed for the first photo stop.



The tour, guided by SEPTA employee of over 30 years, Ed Springer, followed the normal Route 15 line on Girard Avenue. Another photo stop was made around 49th Street with well-known Philadelphia row homes in the background. The portion of Girard Avenue was the last curb-to-curb cobblestone major street in the city when it was "improved" during the preparation and upgrade of the tracks for the arrival of the PCC-IIs.



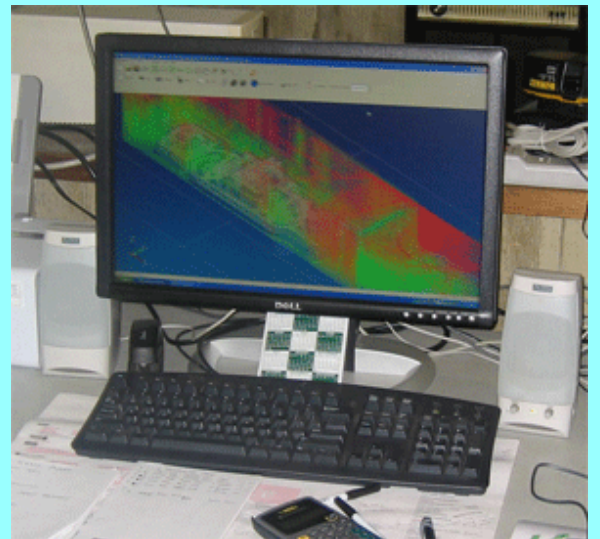
The trip continued along Girard Avenue and stopped at the Zoo stop at 34th & Girard where the first of the two Kawasaki vehicles serving the line passed the tour.



The tour continued over the Schuylkill River Bridge until 26th street. The cars then took the left turnout at West College Avenue and looped around West College Avenue, Girard Avenue, 26th Street and Poplar to allow the eastbound service car to pass. the



While there, we observed a computer simulation of the process of making a mold for a Z-scale passenger car truck.



We found Bowser Manufacturing and English's Model Railroad Supply to be a great place to work and Montoursville a great town with nice residents. Trolleyville encourages model railroaders to visit Bowser. They are always glad to see you. You will enjoy it.

[PCC Tour, from Col. 1]

He was at it again in 1999 with LRT 9079. In the photo below, l. to r., are his wife, Gloria, Billy, Dorothea & Sean Monaghan, three children of Bill Monaghan, a fellow operator, and Tamika and Kelvin Mason.



Unfortunately, the pride in the cars exhibited by Gary Mason, Ed Springer and other SEPTA operators on this trip is **NOT** matched by the senior surrogate management of SEPTA. Despite the fact the SEPTA "promised" to return streetcars to the three routes (15, 23 and 56) from which they abruptly removed them in 1992, it is obvious that the company did not want these fine streetcars and that they were forced into it by the now Governor of

trip then proceeded to Richmond-Allegheny when there was a rest stop. At the loop were the two PCC-II cars, LRT 9088 and a Route 60 Articulated Bus. [Click here](#) for a view of the loop in olden times when there were three tracks under the three wires.



Service car 9088 had just arrived at the loop when the above photo was taken. The PCC-IIs were augmented by at least two buses and two Kawasaki LRTs on this Sunday. They only have 18 PCC-IIs and four of them were out of service for various reasons at this time. One of them, LRT 9088, arrived at the Richmond loop while we were there. After allowing service cars to pass, the cars proceeded west back to 26th street where the looping was done again to allow the service cars to pass and then proceeded to Lancaster Avenue. The cars then proceeded west on Lancaster Avenue to the loop at 54th Street. After allowing the service car to proceed, the two cars went eastbound on Lancaster Avenue to 40th Street. There a right turn was made and the subway diversion route, used when the subway tunnel is inaccessible for some reason, was taken south to 40th and Filbert. Turning right on Filbert and another right turn on 41st Street, the cars proceeded north on 41st Street to Lancaster Avenue and back to 63rd & Malvern. In all, the tour took a little over four hours and the weather was gorgeous with beautiful blue skies and fluffy clouds for photo backgrounds.

The operator on the first car, 2320, was Gary Mason who was accompanied by his son, Kelvin. Both are trolley fans and potential modelers. Gary has been an operator for over 21 years and has



Pennsylvania. Both cars have dings and scrapes on them. Despite that promise, they have slowly but systematically dismantled the other two lines and have **NOT** been held accountable.

The appearance of the overhead wire is the worst ever seen....anywhere. PTC (1940 to 1968) and PRT (pre-1940) overhead wire crews were so artistic on their work. They took much pride in the neatness of their work. They ensured that the wire was over the center of the track. Of course, the use of trolley wheels until the late 1970's demanded some attention to detail. Trolley shoes are much more forgiving and that is fortunate for the SEPTA trolley riders. The wire is seldom over the center of the track and just looks sloppy. Looking from the front of the car ahead on perfectly straight track, one can easily view the wire wandering all over the place. All of this just causes more wear on trolley shoes. Wire frogs are used where they are not necessary at Richmond loop and worn frogs do not seem to be replaced in a timely manner. The wire over the former third track is still hanging despite the fact that it has not seen a trolley pole for over 20 years. The westbound overhead frog at 26th & Girard is so worn out that poles will NOT take the diverging route. Both cars diewired both times the diverging route was taken. The following photo of typical SEPTA quality overhead wire work was taken at the Richmond Loop. Only the extreme right wire is needed and neither of the two frogs shown are needed. In fact, almost every established procedure for proper overhead wire construction is violated somewhere in the SEPTA system.



Almost every PCC-II or Kawasaki Light Rail Transit (LRT) vehicle seen seemed to have some scrape, ding or dent from some altercation. We shudder at what the cars will look like in another two years. The fifteen PCC cars that escaped from Philadelphia fifteen years ago and are now revered in San Francisco have turned out to be the lucky ones. Hopefully, someone might rescue these fine cars some day. We are sure that the magic hands of the Municipal Railway in San Francisco would really take proper care of the system and these cars. The former Philadelphia PCC cars, after twelve years service, appear in better exterior shape than these PCC-IIs. As of today, if you are a trolley, any place short of a scrap yard will get you better treatment than Philadelphia!

been featured in many past issues of Railpace Magazine for the holiday decorations he places on his cars. He has decorated cars for both Halloween and the Christmas Holiday seasons. Shown below is LRT 9021 that he decorated for Halloween in 1998. Note the "goblin" hanging from the trolley rope. Both of the next two photos were originally published originally in Railpace magazine.



[See PCC Tour, Column 2]

Next issue:

Trolleyville Times introduces the HO scale Transit Classics San Francisco Muni Class K/L kit with BullAnt power. See cars recently completed by Bruce Battles at right. This review was scheduled for this month but our completed car was seriously damaged in transit to the East Penn Meet.



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