The Trolleyville Times

June 2009

The pre-production samples of the first four Bo

The 19th East Penn Meet (Part 1)

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Repeating the venue used in 2007, the East Penn Traction Club held its meet at the Villanova Pavilion, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania. The construction that interfered with the last meet had been completed so entrance, egress and parking was much easier. The East Penn Club has the same philosophy as the Southern California Traction club as to the strategies needed to acquire new traction hobbyists, so Custom Traxx and the Southern California Traction Club decided to support the meet by providing one of their more detailed modules for display and operation. The 36" by 33" module, known to the club as module 970, can be operated by DCC or DC. It was driven 2700 miles cross country by George Jones, one of the club members. He left early Thursday morning, May 21st, from Los Angeles and was in Pennsylvania by Sunday, May 24th. Shown below is George after loading the module in his SUV after building a rack specifically to handle it.

Custom Traxx displayed many items that will be interesting to trolley fans. In addition to the Custom Traxx TS series of kits (Kansas City (KCPS) PCC, San Francisco (MUNI) Milano Peter Witt and the Toronto (TTC) CLRV models, the first development shell of the Boston, ex-Dallas double end PCC was also at their booth. When asked about this project, we were told that Custom Traxx explores all avenues to ensure that the model is a close to prototypically correct as possible before production. They do not like having to notify customers of problems, quirks or omissions after the sale so they take longer to bring a kit to market.

Also, as a bonus to the show visitors, pre-production models of the Bowser San Francisco PCC cars were available in both the powered and souvenir versions. One of the models was equipped with a Train Control Systems Z-2 decoder and was operating on the module for the entire show.

Jim Rivers displayed an overhead wire splice that requires no soldering. We will talk more about this item in the next issue.

Our newest reporter, Jonathan Werner, observed some resin kits being made by a suburban Philadelphia Company. These cars were the Shaker Heights 1948 Pullman-built PCC cars, series 71-95. These cars were ordered in October 1946 and delivered in late 1948. They were unusual in that they were 50' 0" long and had inoperative left-hand outward folding doors. The Shaker Heights model is advertised as a one-piece resin body shell with all details cast in place with a plastic frame that should accept the Bowser's 125100 traction drive, clear flush-fitting window inserts, super resilient wheel covers and dummy couplers.

HO scale Girder Rail Update

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In our May issue, we reported that there may be a problem obtaining HO scale girder rail in the not-to-distant future. During the East Penn Traction Club Meet late last month, Custom Traxx reported that shortly they anticipate selling girder rail similar to that sold for the past 6 years and previously sold by Richard Orr as soon as they exhaust the supply of rail acquired from Richard Orr in 2003.

They told us there is good news and bad news in all of this. The good news is of course that the rail will still be available in the United States and that this rail will be sold in meter lengths, 39 inches or 10% longer. The bad news is that there will be a considerable price increase. George Huckaby told us that the Custom Traxx stock of rails was purchased in 1996 and the price for the 17 piece bundles was the same price charged by Richard Orr prior to the sale of the business in 2003. The new price for girder rail, all of which has been manufactured much more recently, will also include the cost of shipping from Europe. The new prices will be announced on the Custom Traxx web site in either July or August.

Another use for the ORR 2402 Wye Turnout

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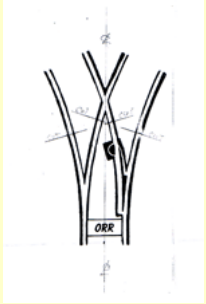
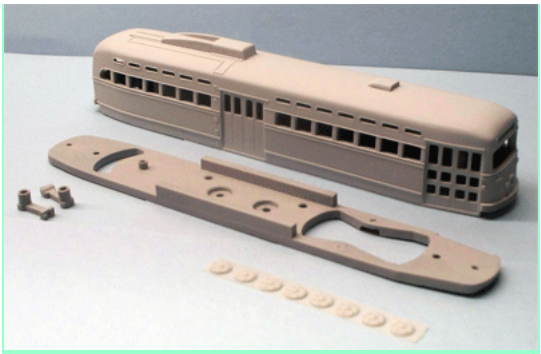
When Richard Orr designed his 2403 Wye Turnout some years ago, the specified application was to model the type of wyes used to turn the single ended cars used in Omaha. These wyes were usually at the end of a short single track run and they had two symmetrical opposing curves at the throat of the wye for which this switch was perfect. The wye turnouts had two opposing 6 1/8" radius curves which limited their use to smaller city cars. Most model traction pikes seldom have wyes due to the necessity to change poles by hand so the 2402 wye turnout is the least demanded of all the ORR turnouts and point-mates. That is, until now!

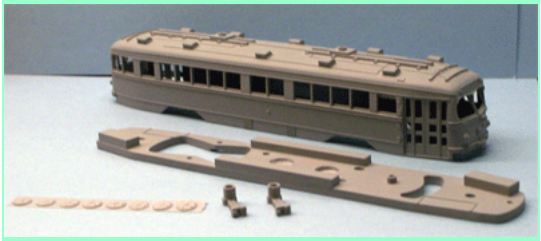
Recently, Tom O'Donnell of the East Penn Traction Club showed us a method he has developed to used these wyes for normal in-street passing sidings. The stock turnout is shown at left. He cuts the turnout in four specific places as shown in the diagram below left, allowing most cars to negotiate the turnout with ease. The result is shown directly below:



The final diagram is of the typical passing siding that Tom uses. The siding uses the club specified two-inch track centers and 8.5" radius curves.



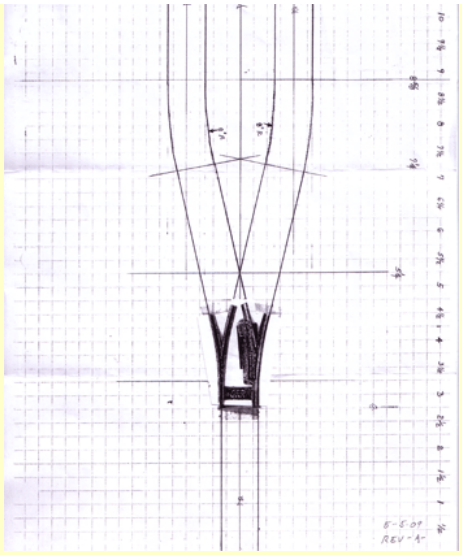
Another model of the Illinois Terminal 450-457 series of double-end PCC cars was also observed. These cars were ordered in 1946 from Saint Louis Car Co and delivered in October 1949. These cars were 50' 5" long and ran for less than nine years before being removed from service. These cars have many similarities to the 10 double-end PCC cars produced for San Francisco in the same year, with the main differences being the lack of the double folding doors at the rear and the couplers and MU equipment. The Illinois Terminal kit is advertised with a one-piece resin body shell with all details cast in place, with a plastic frame that should accept the Bowser 125100 traction drive, and with Super Resilient Wheel Covers and Dummy Couplers.



At first glance, the shells appear to be extremely accurate and detailed. This does not come as a surprise since some very knowledgeable sources have been mentioned for their support on the supplier web site. Jonathan acquired at least one each of these kits along with the third edition of the Philadelphia single-end Kawasaki LRV for evaluation. He along with the Southern California Traction Club will be testing these vehicles and will report such results in future editions. Meanwhile, if you wish more information on these cars, please see their web site.

SCTC module 970 was awarded Third Place in the Outstanding Operating Display category. George Huckaby is shown in the next photo during the presentation of the award. Directly in front of George are the four pre-production Bowser PCC cars that were available to all show visitors:

The award is shown next:



We expect that more traction modelers may find more use for these wye turnouts now!

Historic Charter in San Francisco!!

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At a few minutes past 10:00 AM on Tuesday, 26 March 2009, a special charter to celebrate the 8th anniversary of retired MUNI Motorman Peter Ehrlich's "SFMuniHistory" Group on Yahoo.com, commenced from the intersection of Don Chee Way and the Embarcadero, with Motorman Melvin Clark at the controls. Peter Ehrlich passed out a commemorative button to all riding this historic charter. The trip also honored Alberto Jori of Milan,
Italy, a friend of Peter Ehrlich who works for the Milan tramway system. Several "firsts" were experienced during this trip. For the complete story, click here.

Trolleyville Visits Train Control Systems

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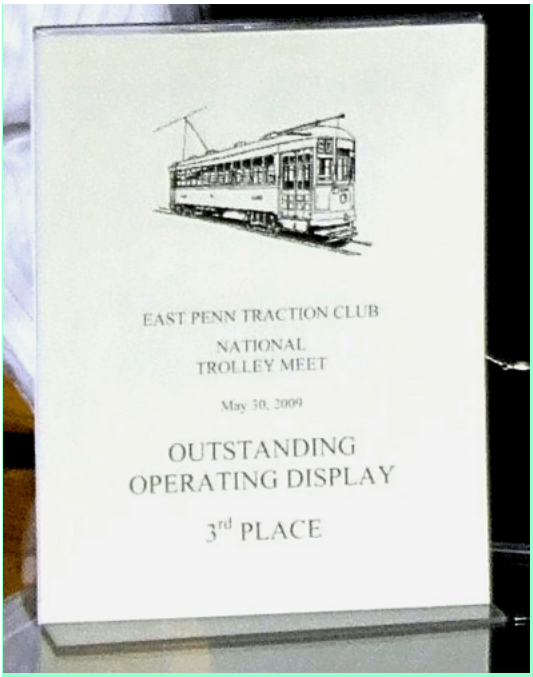
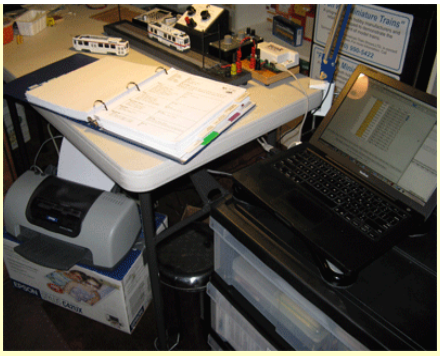
The Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) began to explore DCC in the summer of 2006 under the guidance of the late Bob Santelli (Allied Model Trains, Culver City, CA.). Starting with their now well-known subway car module, the use of DCC grew to include a complete downtown trolley line. From the very beginning, both the club and Custom Traxx were steered toward Train Control Systems (TCS) decoders. The main reason at first was their "goof-proof" warranty. This proved to be invaluable in that both the club and Custom Traxx would have to devise methods of installing decoders in HO scale model trolleys, none of which had been designed with DCC in mind. Additionally, trolley pole reverse would like to be maintained for DC operation. For that reason there could be many accidents, that is, decoders "burned up" due to wiring mistakes. And there were many mistakes and occasionally still are. It was then, we found out the second great thing about TCS. They have a vibrant staff of specialists geared to solve your problems. They are quick, thorough and competent. The SCTC told us that they would have never gotten as far as they have in DCC without TCS. Shown below is one of the club set-ups for programming their decoders using DecoderPro.



Because this meet basically ended late Saturday, May 30th, there was not a lot of time to assemble this article, so we have broken the article into two parts. Shown below is current Club Vice-President and President-elect Bob Dietrich with his now famous modules of Pittsburgh's South Hill Tunnel Junction.

More in our next issue.



When the above picture was taken, the club was in the process programming a recently installed TCS M4 decoder by to remap output 4 to button 3 and adding the rotating beacon effect to that same function. Both cars shown on the table, models of Philadelphia's well-known Kawasaki LRT vehicles have been the subject of the same reprogramming and have the rotating beacon emergency lights that work.

A complete DecoderPro report of each vehicle decoder is printed and filed for consultation. The club even constructed their own Resistor Substitution Box, shown in the next photo, to ensure that the correct amount of resistance is inserted in series with lamps and L.E.Ds.

In fact, George Huckaby (Custom Traxx) went as far as to tell us that the only problems that the club has with DCC are those with equipment and software outside of TCS span of control. On some occasions, they have even helped us with some of those. Make no mistake, they really love those people!

So it was no surprise that in conjunction with the East Penn Meet, along with customary trips to Bowser Manufacturing, a visit to Train Control Systems in Blossom Glen, PA was almost mandatory.

TCS is a young company with dynamic, competent employees. They have a team atmosphere at their facility, which is located in the really large basement of a very large farmhouse in the Perkasie, PA area. They test every single decoder before it leaves that facility. George Huckaby of Custom Traxx and Earl Johnston of Transquip Company spent half a day with these fine people. More about this fine company in our next issue.
