

## The 19th East Penn Meet (Part 2)!

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The 19th East Penn Meet was held last month on May 29-30, 2009. It was fun and great success. We believe it to be the best meet ever and if not, the best since the days at the George Washington Motor Lodge in King of Prussia in the 1980s. The EPTC started its traction meets [back in 1973](#) and they have steadily grown to the level to which they are today.

Many of the major players in the model traction hobby were present or had their products presented at this show such as:

Jim Rivers of Rivers Traction & Trolley has developed a new wire splice which requires no soldering to use. This splice could be used by the module clubs at the module interfaces when the normal brass and fiber washers prove unreliable.



Norm Hauser was on hand displaying his excellent custom painted models.



Burlington County Traction Company, with their line of Saint Petersburg O-scale models:

## Model Railroad Shows & Model Railroad Clubs!

A Required Partnership!

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Last month, On Track Productions (OTP) held its annual Big Train Show in Ontario, California at the Ontario Convention Center (OCC). Ontario is about 50 miles east of Los Angeles, CA on Interstate 10. This is the same show that was held for years as a purely Large Scale Train Show on the Queen Mary in Long Beach, California normally during the first weekend in June. Naturally since this was now open to all scales, most of the better local modular large scale model railroad clubs wanted to investigate about appearing at this show.

The situation surrounding model railroad clubs has changed dramatically during the years. Just a few years ago, clubs could manage to find some building space or an empty warehouse and set up a huge permanent operating layout. They usually were able to find a building with low rent for one reason or another and this worked out for both parties.

Enter the increase in property values and this option has virtually disappeared. So the modular club concept was born. Under this concept, each member builds one or more 4ft to 6ft long modules and using some interface rules, an operating display can be assembled at times. But then these modules have the same problem, that is, finding a place to set up and run.

Enter the model train show. The major model train show was for years, the Great American Train Show (GATS). For years this show was synonymous with excellence until sold in 2001. But the original GATS developers, model railroaders themselves and members of model railroad clubs recognized the importance of model railroad displays. They had two different ways of compensating their clubs for appearances. You could enter a layout contest and win first, second or third prize while every layout got a small consolation prize, or, you could ask for a small honorarium but in all cases never did these promoters fail to provide some form of compensation to the clubs. Eliminating compensation was **NEVER** considered by these promoters.

Model Railroad clubs spend considerable amounts of money on their modules. It is not uncommon for an individual to have \$2,000-\$5,000 invested in a single module. Clubs sometimes build corner modules so that a rectangular display can be assembled. Some clubs have even invested in the purchase of or modification to trailers to carry their modules.

In 2003, 2004 and 2005, OTP previously conducted all-scale shows. The first two were at the Pomona Fair Grounds in March and the third was at the Queen Mary in January. The Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) participated in all three shows and a small honorarium was offered up front by OTP and accepted. The OTP honorarium was much smaller than provided by GATS.

Model Train Shows consist of dealers with products to sell. These dealers depend on the show promoters to get the public into the show so that they can either show and/or sell their products. To do this they are willing to spend sums like the following:

1. Booth Prices - \$250.00 to \$1,125.00
2. Stools - \$16.50 to \$18.00 each (rental)
3. Counter Tables/ Drapes - \$48.00 to \$79.00 each (rental)
4. Booth Carpeting - \$48.00 to \$79.00 (rental)
5. Electricity - \$88.00 to \$2,519.00.
6. Telephone Services - \$225.00 to \$300.00
7. Internet Access - \$200.00 to \$500.00

The show floor plan shows over 150 booths available for the show. Now consider this. How many successful train shows have you ever seen without moving model trains? Right! **Absolutely None!**

The bottom line is that it is the operating model trains that make model train shows. Look at the advertising for most shows and what do you see. Model Railroad layout photos permeate the ads, such as the next photo:



Custom Traxx brought some of the last of the yard-length ORR Girder Rail along with ORR turnouts and crossings; an ample supply of Bowser traction mechanisms for the growing number of resin bodied kits being made for their use and their extensive line of traction decals, plus their award winning module 970:



Module 970 was constructed in 1997 to demonstrate the feasibility of operating HO scale trolleys from overhead wire. Although commonplace in the eastern half of the United States, it was seldom seen on the West Coast at that time. Custom Traxx started taking this little 33" by 36" module to shows and swap meets in Bakersfield, Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, San Diego, Sacramento, Ventura and Las Vegas. At first it was powered with an Innovator 3500 from ITTC. About two years ago, it was decided to demonstrate overhead wire operation with DCC, so the module was wired for powering with a Digitrax Zephyr in addition to the Innovator 3500. DCC allows so many things to happen that never could have previously been considered. Now we have the choice to run with or without headlights. We can have illuminated interiors, flashing lights, turn signals and stoplights all controlled by the user. In the case of SEPTA vehicles we can have operating controllable emergency beacon lights. Shown on module 970 at the show were two resin shell SEPTA Kawasaki Light Rail Vehicles with emergency lights operating. Also on the module were a Bowser PCC painted as PTC 2128, the Safety Car using Custom Traxx decals and a resin shell PCCII model with Bowser power and finished with Custom Traxx and Bob Dietrich decals. Running on the module for the entire show was a pre-production model of the new Bowser San Francisco PCC car in Pacific Electric colors. All cars on the module had been equipped with Train Control Systems M1, M4, MC4 or Z2 decoders and except for a Suydam 1100 not visible in the next photo, all cars running in the module were equipped with the new Bowser drive with an A-line 20040 flywheel.



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There is no question that if it were not for the module clubs, there would be very little, if any, operating model trains at these shows and without operating model trains, many of these shows would probably be various levels of failures.

Now enter the 2009 version of OTP! Although the modular clubs are a significant part of the advertising aimed at the public to come to such a show, it appears they were not considered in the overall planning of the June 2009 show. Although the show was advertised as early as March 2009, module clubs did not receive any communication from OTP until May 6th and that was to merely a form email asking for a first and second contact. After inferring that the clubs would have to pay for parking at the rate of \$8.00 per day with no "in-and-out" privilege, any other questions went unanswered until May 18th when it was announced that the layouts would NOT have to pay for parking. Then it took another few days to tell the clubs that they could park their trailers on the grounds for free. These questions were only answered after module clubs repeatedly asked.

The subject of an honorarium was brought to the attention of OTP by the SCTC and up to mid-June, it was ignored, not refused, just ignored in a highly insulting manner. Naturally, when the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) considered the refusal of Brian Curry and OTP to even discuss an honorarium, they regretfully withdrew their request to appear at the show. They refused to display their hard work to benefit what appeared to be a greedy show promoter.

We managed to visit this show on Saturday, June 6th. For traction fans, five of the Bachmann HO scale PCC cars were displayed in five paint schemes, (EI to r) St. Louis, Brooklyn, Los Angeles, Philadelphia & Chicago.



We also got a peek at the new Con-Cor Air-Electric PCC car. This is a pre-production model with many changes still to come!



The pre-production Bowser San Francisco F-line cars, just received that morning, were shown to Dave Swanson and Michael Stephens and they were impressed.

Since many model railroad clubs are desperate for a place to set-up and run, we initially concluded that OTP apparently had abandoned their policy of honorariums and established a policy of taking advantage of the clubs. In order for their show to be successful and profitable, they have decided to let the clubs absorb all the expenses of appearing at their show including the expense of driving to and from the show on three or four days, setting up the display, manning their exhibits for two complete days and tearing the displays down at the end of the show. Remember that this show is intended to be a profit-making enterprise. It is not run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. We are not discussing an appearance for a charitable or non-profit organization. What we appeared to have here is just plain old taking advantage of the module clubs desire to find a place to set-up and display.

Then we visited the show and were informed, incorrectly, that the show had been previously sold to the Ontario Convention Center (OCC) and that these policies were from the OCC and not Brian Curry. It was not until after the show, that we were contacted by [Joe Delia, PPW A-line](#), who told us that he spoken to the

Custom Traxx told us that ORR girder rail will be available in meter lengths after the current supplies are exhausted. They had the first four pre-production models of the new Bowser San Francisco F-line PCC car. The cars will be available in powered and souvenir (unpowered) versions. Cars 1061 (Pacific Electric) and 1055 (Philadelphia Transportation Company), both powered and 1052 (Los Angeles Transit) and 1057 Cincinnati, both unpowered were available for inspection of show visitors. Also in the upper left corner of the photo is an unpainted preliminary shell for the ex-Dallas Boston PCC cars. Custom Traxx hopes to have a complete kit for this car available by the end of the summer.



Shown below is the souvenir version of San Francisco Car 1057, Cincinnati Street Railway:



Shown below is a photo of all four cars shown at the meet. For closer views, please visit the [Bowser web site](#):



A very unique item demonstrated at the meet is Elwood's Elevated. Using a logo reminding you of the Blues Brothers, this firm sells the necessary items to build an elevated railway similar to those in Chicago or New York. Since the Southern California Traction Club is considering a small section of elevated railway in the expansion of their DCC operated City Streetcar Line, there was a lot of interest here.



General Manager / CEO, Bob Brown and other members of the OCC staff and that they sounded interested in information and advice relating to the proper conduct of a model train show. He advised the Times to contact the CEO and talk directly to him. Trolleyville, represented by George Huckaby, met with Bob Brown on June 29th for a very informative hour. We found out that the show was only in process of being sold to OCC at the time of the show, the operation of the show was totally under the control and direction of Brian Curry and On Track Productions. So at this time, we hold Brian Curry, and On Track Productions solely and totally responsible for this attempted injustice against the modular model railroad clubs. OCC, according to Bob not only disagreed with that policy but they had NOT acquired the show at the time. So one of their first actions taken when they formally acquired the show was to provide honorarium checks to all participating modular groups over the weekend of June 19-20. Bob Brown discussed his in-depth background and experiences with running shows prior to his joining OCC and we left convinced that Bob will do all in his power to bring a quality model train show to the OCC. George Huckaby and Bob Brown are shown below at the conclusion of their meeting.



The meeting concluded with a mutual understanding of the goals of both the modular clubs and the OCC. The Times is committed to support any train show at the OCC under the current management.

## A Serious Warning to Quality Modular Model Railroad Clubs!

*(Trolleyville Editorial)*

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Because of the recent fiasco with On Track Productions (OTP) and Brian Curry, we are putting all quality modular model railroad clubs on notice that when they appear for commercial shows without adequate compensation, they are being taken advantage of by firms with possibly greedy motives. Transportation costs in attending a show can be huge, in many cases considerably much more than the parking expense at the shows. Why should club members bear these expenses just to help some show promoter make money?

Do you really think that in this current economy, that the public is visiting model train shows to spend money? They come to see model trains operate. They are willing to spend \$8.00 to park and up to \$12.00 to get into the show and even more money to have a hot dog, fries and a coke. The clubs are the ONLY economical source of those model trains. Just think of what it would cost the model train show promoters if they had to build layouts for their shows! This would be a lot more than a small honorarium for the clubs....right?

The leading professional model train show promoters like the World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, The Great Train Expo, Greenberg Shows and now the Ontario Convention Center seem to have no problem compensating module clubs and layouts, so why shouldn't everyone else? Asking model clubs to present at commercial shows without compensation shows absolutely no respect and appreciation of the work that these clubs have done. Most clubs have expended large amounts of personal funds, time and labor in perfecting their displays. This did it for the enjoyment of it and to share it with others but certainly not for the benefit of greedy show promoters.

Appearing at commercial shows without sufficient compensation is not helping the clubs survive these times. So we can't urge clubs enough...**DON'T DO IT!** It is not in the best interests of the hobby, other clubs and your own club! You are not doing anything that will help preserve model railroad clubs. In



Meanwhile, the next view is of the large scale Fallon Street Elevated, some nice N-scale layouts, some done by younger modelers, along with the usual HO and scale modular layouts.



The generous space permitted around the modular layouts was not afforded in the vendor section as this location was a who's-who of the traction dealers, modelers and enthusiasts.



Imperial Hobby Productions (IHP) displayed some new products including models of Shaker Heights PCC cars (#87153), the Illinois Terminal PCC cars (#87169) and Philadelphia single-end Kawasaki LRVs (#87154). One of our reporters acquired examples of these very promising models. He will be assembling and testing them and will be evaluating his impressions of these kits. Custom Traxx will be running a [Summer Special](#) for Bowser drives, trolley poles and decals to finish many of these kits. Don't miss it if you have a kit to complete.

IHP also had an HO scale model of the SEPTA single end LRV model running on a small display track. This is the third version of this car released by IHP since 1997. We will be looking at this kit and reporting in a future issue.



The first kit to be assembled and evaluated was the Shaker Heights car. This car caught our interest because it is a model of a Pullman-built PCC. The kit is shown below as pictured on the manufacturer's web site.

fact, a good case can be made for the contrary.

*[Comments to this editorial are invited!]*

*[TCS, from Column 1]*

We were curious why he used these decoders when they used Digitrax for everything else and he told us about their "goof-proof" warranty.

After Walthers took over Life-Like, the cars started being produced as DCC-ready so that we could add our own decoders easily. The rest is history. Then we turned our attention to streetcars. Bob converted our first streetcar, PTC 2128 during the summer of 2006. George Huckaby, under direct supervision of Bob, installed a TCS M1 decoder in a Bachmann Brill Holiday Trolley re-equipped with a Bowser 125144 mechanism. By the we met John Forsythe at the National Train Show in Anaheim last summer, the SCTC had over 25 cars with decoders. TCS is a forward-thinking young company with none of the inhibitions that limit most businesses. The business offices, research areas, test facilities and production operations are located in a centralized "stealth" facility on property owned by the business owner. There is a family-type atmosphere which pervades TCS with everyone knowing their job and doing it in the most professional manner.

When you contact TCS for any reason, you are likely to encounter Dana. She is the person that "makes it happen". Serving as an office manager, she seems to integrate all the functions of the facility in one way or another. Dana was caught packaging a set of decoders due to be shipped that day.



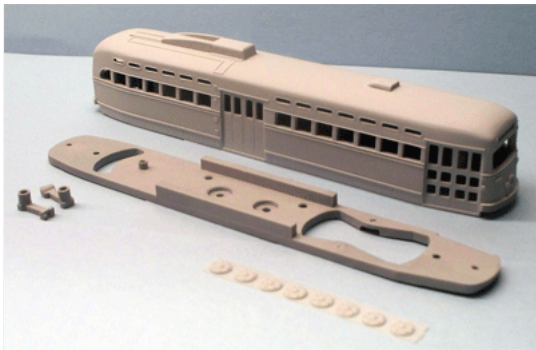
While we were at their facility, production of decoders was in progress using their latest "Pick & Place" machine. This remarkable machine takes the various components from the tapes shown on the machine and places and solders them in the correct locations on the circuit boards.



We were given a great tour of the extremely clean and neat production facility shown below. Everyone seemed to be very involved in their work and also seemed to be enjoying what they were doing.



Of course we had a reason to be there and that was the Bowser F-line PCC. Since this car will be DCC ready, we were investigating



For a review of the Shaker Heights PCC Car kit, shown above, [click here!](#)

## More Great Trolley News From San Francisco!

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We had heard the rumors for a long time but finally Peter Ehrlich provided a photo. San Francisco Milano 1888 will emerge for the shops in the next few months wearing the two tone green livery of 1930-1970 Milan. It will join car 1818 in the same livery. [More great news from San Francisco!](#)



## Visiting Train Control Systems! (Part 2)

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Last issue we began to describe our trip to the facilities of Train Control Systems (TCS) in Blooming Glen, PA. We had started using their decoders at the insistence of the late Robert Santelli. Robert had been the DCC guru at Allied Model Trains until his passing in 2008. He had been instrumental in persuading the Southern California Traction Club to investigate, and finally adopt DCC. When the club decided to build the subway car module, that was all it took.

The first subway cars to be used on this module were the then Life-Like subway cars which had to be converted to DCC. Bob took this on for us and converted the first two using TCS decoders.

*[See TCS, column 2]*

the feasibility of a plug-in decoder for the car. George Huckaby, not pictured, Earl Johnson of Transquip Company and John Forsythe, TCS owner, are discussing this very item in the next photo. Note the Bowser cars in the lower right corner of the photo.



Make no mistake that this is a model train oriented company. They have an active model railroad in the workspace and they use it to evaluate new products and have advised us on many items. We will be asking them in the next few days for their input on the best TCS decoder to use for the new Con-Cor HO scale Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee Electroliners.



The company keeps tabs on the other DCC systems. they use most of them and know all of their strengths and weaknesses. We noted the following systems on one of the test workbenches.



Stay tuned. This dynamic company is working on DC related projects that will interest anyone who has embraced Digital Command Control. Some real surprises from this company are coming and sooner than you might expect!