

## A Visit to English's Model Railroad Supply!

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Most model railroaders have heard of Bowser Manufacturing and, if they have ever been in North Central Pennsylvania, may have visited English's Model Railroad Supply (EMRRS), which is now in its 62rd year of operation. Recently, EMRRS ignored the current economic situation and doubled its size, moving from the 3,000 square foot location that it occupied since 1961 into a new facility with 7,000 square feet of floor space.

EMRRS began in 1947 with a shop in Sunbury, PA. In eight years it grew and moved into facilities in Muncy, PA. In another 6 years, it would relocate to 21 Howard Street in Montoursville, PA where they conducted business until the summer of 2009 when they moved into their present location at 201 Streibeigh Lane, adjacent to the Bowser Manufacturing facility. If you are used to going to the Howard Street address, and go there, you will find a [large sign in the front of that location directing you to the new location](#).

Rich Cox, shown in Figure 4, has managed the store since 1995, and been associated with the store for 21 years.

The view when entering the facility is far different from any other store. You will pass through a short corridor lined with several built-up steam engine kits to your left and a wall full of notices about new items, coming items and specials.



The new store shares the Bowser Manufacturing main entrance. EMRRS is now a combination of a retail store, a warehouse and in one area, a swap meet. Customers are allowed to browse through the warehouse to find those unusual items that they might otherwise miss. There are several large tables in one area of the store where there are bargains for the shopper.

The new store maintains most of the layouts that were staples in the old store including O scale (Figure 6) and an HO/N scale layout (Figure 7). The HO & N scale layout can be operated in both analog and digital modes. There was even a pre-production model of the new Bowser PCC car on display. The store boasts a large repair area with a more than adequate stock of parts, including those for engines no longer made. The repair facility is run mainly by Vern Trego, shown in Figure 5, who has also been with EMRRS since 1996. Some views of the store are provided:

## New Decoder Coming from Train Control Systems for the Bowser PCC!

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Train Control Systems (TCS) with support from Custom Traxx has developed software for DCC decoders with some new features designed for trolley cars. One of them will simulate the rear brake light of a PCC car and a few conventional streetcars. This achievement had its roots in the HO scale Bachmann Peter Witt modified by Charlie Long of the East Penn Traction Club some time ago. Another one of these features, which will be a default feature on these decoders, is intended for the DCC-ready Bowser San Francisco F-line PCC cars. This feature will simulate the brake light function when the car is slowing down or is stopped. The brake lights will also function as taillights when the headlight is illuminated. There will be an evaluation period conducted by both the Southern California Traction Club and the East Penn Traction Club. After that is completed, the decoders will be introduced along with the Bowser PCC cars sometime this month. These decoders initially will be only available from Custom Traxx. We had these features demonstrated to us on October 9th while at the TCS facility and they are really impressive. John Forsythe and George Huckaby are shown in the next photo during the [demonstration](#) of the new decoder.



We can just picture this feature on a PCC car operating on a computer controlled DC layout with automatic car stops. Custom Traxx will shortly begin evaluation of the prototype decoder, now called the M4-T, in one of the Bowser PCC cars as soon as they arrive. Another will be provided to Charlie Long of the East Penn Traction Club for his input. After these evaluations, the decoders will be available. Watch the [Custom Traxx web site](#) for more information.

## Progress Continues in San Diego!

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San Diego, the city that really started the light rail revolution in the U.S., is now slowly engaged in its own heritage trolley project with three PCC cars. In a real twist of fate, the cars that they are using for the project are eight years newer than their original PCC cars and they ran in both Saint Louis and San Francisco before they were officially retired in 1982. In late September, we received these photos of former MUNI 1122 being converted to San Diego 529. This paint scheme really brings out the air-electric heritage of these unique all-electric PCC cars.





Fig. 1 - Store Entrance



Figure 2 - View from the Rear of the Store.



Figure 3 - Another view (this place is huge!)



Figure 4 - Rich Cox, Store Manager



These cars were the result of William T. Rossell, who was brought from the Brooklyn & Queens Transit in 1939 to assume the presidency of the Saint Louis Public Service. He was the driver in the elimination of compressed air systems from the Saint Louis PCC cars. Other items spearheaded by Rossell were force-ventilated traction motors and super resilient wheels. The cars did not use the body normally reserved for the all-electric PCC cars but rather grafted the standee windows into a 108" wide air-electric car body. The cars were to run in Saint Louis from 1946 to 1959 when they were purchased by San Francisco, where they would soldier on until 1982. San Diego acquired three of these cars, formerly San Francisco Muni 1122, 1123 and 1170 and these cars will form the basis of their "old-time" trolley line.

## NEW TRACTION ITEMS COMING FROM CUSTOM TRAXX!

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Custom Traxx is finalizing the design of some HO scale pun-pewter floors for various resin-bodied traction kits that use the Bowser traction mechanism. They are slowly converting their aluminum floors to spun-cast-pewter to help eliminate the weight issue with many powered resin-bodied traction kits. Low weight affects the ability of the cars to run under powered overhead wire, up grades and around tight curves. Custom Traxx initially adopted aluminum floors as an improvement since these floors weighed about one ounce compared to a resin floor which can be as light as .4 ounce. They also provided a good surface on which to attach weights, under the floor between the trucks. A similar spun-pewter floor weighs over 2 ounces. With the Bowser and Con-Cor PCC cars representing a large portion of PCC cars operated, making models of some of the other PCC cars using the Bowser mechanism makes good business sense. The new Custom Traxx TS-16 Boston, ex-Dallas PCC kit will contain one of these new pewter floors, which will be available separately as part #125166. Also soon to be available will be replacement floors for two resin-bodied kits with substandard floors made by a suburban Philadelphia firm and identified in recent Trolleyville Times Reviews.

The second floor, part 125164, will allow owners of the first run of the GHB imported brass models of the San Francisco Muni 1006-1015 double-end PCCs and the Illinois Terminal 450-457 series double-end PCCs model to install a Bowser drive to replace that vertical can motor drive which did not run as well as others. It can also be used to replace the inferior resin floor provided in the recently released resin-bodied Illinois Terminal (IT) 450-457 PCC car. The original floor in



Figure 5 - Vern Trego in the repair area



Figure 6 - O scale (Lionel) layout



Figure 7 - HO/N scale layout

English's Model Railroad Supply has moved but it did not leave its roots behind. They have a large selection of detail parts and an unbelievable stock of repair parts that may not be available except in very few other places. The detail parts are on large slide-out shelves shown in Figure 8 for the customer to easily view and select.



Figure 8 - Detail Parts

The store is always ready for the beginner with a more than ample supply of train sets in Z, N, HO, S, O and large scales. Just a portion of these are shown in Figure 9.

that kit was examined and found to warp easily among other problems as reported in the [August 2009 Trolleyville Times](#). The pewter floor will have the correct 22' 11" truck center-to-center truck wheelbase.

The final floor being developed, part 125165, can be used to replace the inferior resin floor in the recently released resin-bodied Shaker Heights 71-95 PCC car. This floor could also be used for a model of the Detroit 181-286 series of PCC cars which also had the long 25' 1 1/2" truck center-to-center wheelbase. This lightweight resin floor was also found to warp easily as reported in the [July 2009 Trolleyville Times](#). We have had customer reports of the resin floors breaking during installation of the Bowser power mechanism. Both 125164 and 125165 pewter floors will be made available at a low price with an old resin floor trade-in.

Custom Traxx was at Bowser Manufacturing last month and participated in the creation of the molds and the [spin casting](#) of the 125165 and 125166 floors. Shown next is a pre-production PCC shell with the first run of the 125166 pewter floors.



We assembled and installed a Bowser drive and tested one pewter floor. While the performance was acceptable, we felt that improvements could be made. So we made the needed changes in the pattern for another mold and castings. We also examined patterns for floors for both the Illinois Terminal (125164) and the Shaker Heights (125165) cars.

Upon examination of the pattern for the 125164 floor, we found that the truck center-to-center wheelbase was not the correct 22' 11" (273"). Unfortunately, we had based our pattern on the original floor. So we opted to make another aluminum pattern, which would be made off-site.

The pattern for the 125165 was initially thought to be acceptable except for the opening for the power truck. We enlarged the opening per Bowser specifications and submitted this one for another crack at a mold and spin casting. Shown next is the Shaker Heights shell with the original resin floor and our initial pattern before the changes were made.



Unfortunately, we found another problem which a sharp eyed reader can see. While not obvious unless you are looking for it, the mounting holes for the Bowser motor mounts, parts 1279, on the pattern are farther from the bolster mounts than they should be. Compare the pattern with the original floor. We redrilled the six holes where they should have been, about 8mm closer to the bolster and resumed testing. The Custom Traxx 125165 floor is undergoing rigorous testing on the Southern California Traction Club modules before it's release for sale. Shown in the next photo is our pre-production floor with the mechanism and A-line flywheel installed with the original warped floor immediately below.





Figure 9 - Athearn and Lionel Train Sets

As mentioned earlier, the store has a swap meet section shown in Figure 10. These green covered tables will hold great bargains and hard to find items. Behind this area is the warehouse portion of the store. Customers are allowed and encouraged to browse this area of the store. Electronic video surveillance has been added for those with bad intentions.



Figure 10 - "Swap Meet" area and warehouse.

This new store is definitely worth the detour from Interstate 80 when crossing Northern Pennsylvania. There is so much to see and examine. We noted many customers in the store most of the time. Just take the Interstate 180 north to the Fairfield Exit and follow the [map](#) provided. It's a combination of the warehouse store of today, the hobby shop of yesterday, a little of that informal swap meet atmosphere and, we think, the complete model train store of tomorrow!

The advantages of the pewter floor now become obvious. We have two Shaker Heights PCC cars. One, SHRT 87, is equipped with an aluminum floor while the other, SHRT 79, is equipped with the new pewter floor. The assembled power mechanism for car 87 weighs 5.6 oz while the identical mechanism for car 79 weighs 7.0 oz. Both cars have a Bowser 125100 mechanism with the A-line 20040 flywheel kit added. With the one ounce shell added the total weight of car 79 is 8.0 ounces. We could only add .5 ounces to the roof of the car 87 and even with that the car barely hit the 7.0 ounce mark.

While we were at Bowser finalizing designs of these three floors, there we even participated in the assembly of some Bowser traction trailing trucks as shown in the next photo:



George Huckaby (Custom Traxx) assembling trailing trucks.

When these floors are available, they will be announced on the Custom Traxx web site and there will be some special offers accompanying the initial announcement so keep an eye on their [web site](#).