Special Issue **The Trolleyville Times** Special Issue

June 2010

Watch for the July announcement of the next Bowser HO scale trolley!

The MTS Imports SD-100 San Diego Light Rail Vehicle!

[A Classic In Brass!]

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Custom Traxx and the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) were proud to be selected to review the pre-production model of the MTS Imports, Inc brass model of the San Diego Siemens SD-100 LRV, series 2001-2052 early last month. Fifty-two of these vehicles were placed into service in San Diego in 1993, complementing the 71 Siemens-Duwag U2 vehicles placed into service in 1980, 1982, 1986, 1988 and 1993. In 2004, 11 Siemens S70 Light Rail Vehicles were added to the fleet, bringing the total fleet to 134 cars. This is believed to be the highest number of electric railway vehicles ever used at one time in San Diego! The next photo is of the production sample as evaluated!

This is one of those rare occasions where we have access to the prototype and provided data to MTS Imports, Inc. along with photos that we took on a recent trip to San Diego, so we can say that this model is really prototypical. The model arrived painted in the correct red color with black roof which appears to be extremely accurate for the latest paint scheme shown on car 2011 below.

The model seems to follow the prototype dimensions accurately (76.71 ft long, 8.7 ft wide and 12.4 ft high). Our model arrived minus any markings. According to MTS Imports, Inc, the San Diego Metropolitan Transportation System (SDMTS), who had previously allowed the use of their herald on the SDMTS U-2 model produced in 1992 without paying "tribute", changed its mind and citing budgetary concerns, demanded what amounted to an exorbitant amount per model. Decals containing numbers and all other non-herald markings will be provided by Custom Traxx. Contained with this model were mirrors to be attached by the modeler and plastic window inserts. These inserts have protective covering on both sides to ease in the installation. Modelers may prefer heavier tint for the side windows.

While this model looks and runs great, there were minor discrepancies that will need attention. The front windshield and destination sign do not have the black rubber grommet noticeably present on the prototype. Some detail on the roof is missing. The pantograph also needs considerable work. The hold down is rigid and will eventually break off after several pantograph raising and lowering cycles. A small spring on the base of this hold down might have been better idea. The upward spring pressure is insufficient per NMRA Specification S-5. S-5 requires between 0.2 and 0.3 ounce upward pressure. The geometry of the pantograph does not allow both contact blades to ride on the wire correctly. Both slide shoes should be parallel to the ground or the wire at all times or there could be some serious fouling of the pantograph with the overhead wire in normal operations. The

Trolleyville Returns to China!

[We really couldn't wait to go back!]

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Just as we were beginning to feel that our previous trip to China in 2008 was a dream, the opportunity again presented itself to return to Hong Kong and Guangdong Province, P.R.C. Armed with 20 CDs of Simon & Schuster's Pimsleur Cantonese Chinese course (we only made it through two of them), we intended to learn more about the people and customs of this land that some of us never intended to visit during our lifetime. We at least knew how to say hello [Ne Ho] or Good Morning [Jo Sun]!

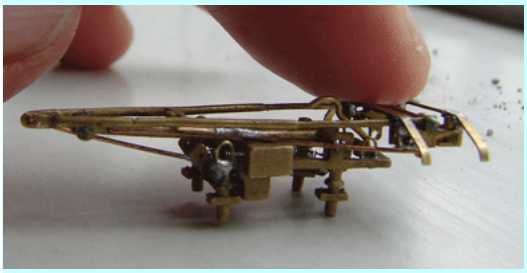
Our meeting at Bowser in April was a prelude to this trip. So on May 7, 2010, the quartet consisting of Lee English, Bowser Manufacturing; Matt Herman, Bowser Manufacturing, George Huckaby, Custom Traxx; and Craig Martyn, BLMA took off from San Francisco just after noon in a United Airlines 747 bound for Hong Kong. Fourteen hours later, they touched down in that island city. Some new Bowser trolley cars and some overhead wire parts were on the table for discussion during this brief trip with the first being announced at the National Train Show this summer.

Travel to China is an adventure in longevity by itself. This time all four travelers were to meet at San Francisco International Airport (SFO) to board United Flight 869 to Hong Kong (HKG) on Friday, May 7th at 12:38PM. Lee and Matt had left Newark earlier that same day from Newark, NJ at 6:20AM. George was coming from LAX and Craig from Long Beach. George would be taking both his shortest (LAX to SFO - 1 hour) and longest (SFO to HKG - 14 hours) airplane rides. Someone in the United Terminal in San Francisco decided to remove all the computerized "Arrivals" signs. Only the "Departures" were shown. This made its very difficult for the first arrival to find the other three. Anyway they managed and all four travelers boarded flight 869 for Hong Hong at 12:38PM and arrived in Hong Kong Saturday afternoon around 6:00 PM. Lee could not wait to try out his Cantonese Chinese at the airport. When the bilingual airport employee stated that he could understand what he said, Lee was extremely happy. Within one hour, They were checked into the Gateway [Marco Polo] Hotel in Harbour City, Kowloon. A usual all the facilities are first rate with great beds covered with the same white striped comforters noted in our 2008 trip. Harbour City is Hong Kong's largest shopping mall covering an area of two million square feet and is one of the main tourist attractions in an area called Tsim Sha Tsui. It contains over 700 shops, 50 restaurants, 2 cinema and 3 luxury hotels, the Marco Polo Hong Kong Hotel, the Gateway Marco Polo Hotel, and the Prince Marco Polo. We spent four of the five nights in Kowloon at the Gateway Marco Polo. Our only night in mainland China was spent at the Nanbei Garden Hotel in Dong Guan.

Work never ceases on a trip this far. You can't afford to travel these distances and miss something that you can correct in seconds. Despite not hitting the sheets until 10:00P.M. Saturday evening, George and Lee woke up at 3:30AM on Sunday and spent a little more than one hour refining the design on a new power truck using AutoCad for one of the planned Bowser trolleys (see below left). Not willing to mess with success, the new drive will take many of the features of the now proven 125XXX traction drive and Bowser plans to incorporate those features into any new HO scale traction car that they do.

contact blades on this pre-production model were painted black which would make overhead operation impossible.

A revised pantograph is in the works and is shown in the next photo:



The vehicle was operated on the SCTC test track and it ran smoothly but there is a restriction in the ability of the third truck to swivel. This lack of mobility in that truck and the prototypical closeness of the main body sections will most likely limit the car to curves of slightly more than 12" radius. The sides of the two main body sections touch each other at that point, eliminating the negotiation of any tighter radius turns. We could not get the car around any of the 12" radius curves without the the last axle of the rear truck derailing. Modelers will find it difficult to get the model to traverse smaller radius curves without increasing the distance between the main body sections. We are not aware of the actual minimum radius for the prototype SD100 but would not be surprised if the prototype, like all light rail vehicles, has similar restrictions. We also would recommend that .5 to 1.0 ounce of weight be added on the power truck end and another .25 to .5 ounce on the non-powered end to improve tracking on curves. Power pick-up is from the eight non-powered wheels in the center and rear trucks. There is a slide switch under the floor adjacent to the center truck that allows the user to chose between overhead wire and track power. This switch merely transfers power from the four wheels on the left side to the pantograph. We did get the car to operate via overhead wire on the SCTC test track.

MTS Imports, Inc. emphasizes that all discrepancies will be addressed prior to issuance of the production models.

Delivery of the first production models should be happening as you are reading this. By the way, technology may cause this to be among the last of the HO scale brass traction models so you may want to own one. Consider the value of these models in five years.

Woodland Classics Trees
[A Product Review]
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In early May, Custom Traxx received the following items from Woodland Scenics for review as to their applicability on traction layouts and modules:

The trees evaluated are shown from left to right above:

Woodland Classics TR3534 3" to 5" Waters Edge Trees (3/pkg)
Woodland Classics TR3569 3.5" to 5.5" Blue Needle Trees (3/pkg)
Woodland Classics TR3513 5" to 6" Sun Kissed Trees (2/pkg)
Woodland Classics TR3511 4" to 5" Cool Shade Trees (3/pkg)

All trees are advertised for N, HO and O scale but we estimate some of them, especially the larger ones are really too large for a typical N scale application.

Most traction layouts take so much time with track laying and erection of operable overhead wire that there is so little time for attention to heavy scenic details. Woodland Scenics makes this

Then we took a break for breakfast and it was George's turn to try out his Cantonese Chinese with Hidy (above right), the desk clerk on duty at the time. She was the first Cantonese speaking Chinese person who admitted that she understood him after months of study and preparation. Believe me, that was no easy task. Overall, the Chinese seem to be very happy to see us in their country. We were made to feel welcome at every turn. Every single person that we met seemed to make us welcome, even when they could not speak a single word or English or just say Hello, Welcome or Good-Bye!

Then immediately after breakfast, we started working on and evaluating the sounds that we hope to incorporate into a DCC/DC sound systems for PCC cars.

Sunday was spent largely exploring the Tsim Sha Tsui district of Kowloon. This is an extremely old area that is a mix of older buildings and newer high rise structures.

The fire station is one of the older structures. The apartment building in the next photo is typical of the newer buildings going up constantly. We hope that everyone does not try to go to work at the same time in any of these buildings.

We enjoyed some of the local restaurants and and saw some of the sights. Shown below left to right during a lunch meeting are: Matt Herman, Lee English, George Huckaby and K. K. Ku.

task easier with their trees, scenery materials, personnel scenes and accents. So we turned these trees over to the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) to get their reaction. They told us that the first thing that they liked was way that they were packaged so that they will not be damaged until they needed them and you can remove one tree at a time and store the rest. The second thing that they liked were the bases being separate from the tree itself.

The club could install the bases and cover them with grass, weeds, etc and then install the tree. The tree could also be removed for layout or module maintenance so it would not be damaged. Since the club does a lot of city modeling, the base can be cut to fit between sidewalk sections for tree installation as shown in the next photo.

The section of sidewalk has yet to be painted but you can see that with some weeds or grass added around the base, that a very realistic city tree scene could be created. In the final photo, the tree was temporarily installed.

The Chinese have a sense of humor. During Sunday afternoon, we stopped at one of the more noteworthy "watering holes".

The largest difference in this trip from the previous 2008 visit was the means of transportation to the AFFA Technology plant in Shilong. Public Transit was used all the way from the Marco Polo Gateway in Kowloon to the Shilong Railway Station. For a glimpse of the transit map, please click here. We started at the Tsim Sha Tsui MTR station and rode commuter trains up to 12 cars long to mainland China before clearing both Hong Kong and China Customs. These commuter trains all have "bowling alley" type seating. There are five large doors on each side of the car and only four seats between each set of doors.

They are designed for crush loads as there are only four seats between each sets of doors. Then we walked to the Shenzhen Train station to board the Hi-Speed Train that took us from Shenzhen to Shilong at speeds in excess of 100 mph.

One digressing comment here. The Customs agents in China were much more personable at Lo Wu this time than they were at Lok Ma Chau in 2008. Everyone was professional; ...still no smiles...but, no scowls.

Another thing liked by the club is the fact that when overhead wire repairs are required near any of these trees, the trees can be removed from their fixed base and placed back into their original packaging to prevent damage. Tree lined streets with tracks and overhead wire, especially with span wires, can now be maintained in a much more efficient manner. We like them.

Bowser Baldwin Pacific Electric VO-1000 Progress!

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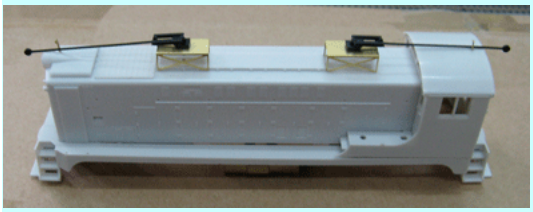
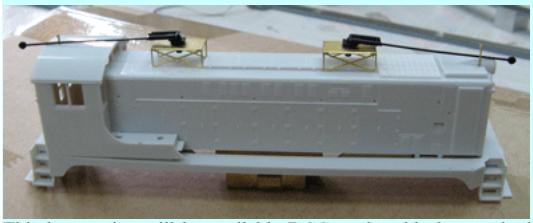
While at the factory, we also got a look at the Bowser Pacific Electric Baldwin VO-1000 equipped with two trolley poles. The two dummy trolley poles are the same ones used on the recently introduced F-line PCC cars but the trolley pole bases are etched brass so avid traction modelers should have little problem getting power to any replacement operational poles for overhead wire operation (if so desired).





This locomotive will be available DCC ready with the standard NMRA 8-pin plug or supplied with DCC & SoundTraxx (Tsunami) sound. For larger photos of each side, click here (Photo 1, Photo 2).

Progress Continues at Brookville!

[Muni is really serious about restoration!]

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Recently the Trolleyville Times received some updates on the restoration work being done at Brookville Mining & Equipment Company on several of the Muni F-line cars. Right now, San Francisco Municipal Railway cars 1, 1006, 1008, 1040, 1071, 1078 and 1080 are currently at Brookville in various stages of renovation. The first photo shows progress on car 1008, the former wrecker. The first of the four Torpedo's (1006, 1008, 1009, 1011) under renovation is due for completion and delivery in November 2011. The second is due three months after that while the last two are due thirty and sixty days, respectively after that.

The next photo shows car 1040 being totally rebuilt, eliminating all the deterioration. We can not wait to see this car when it is completed. This car is currently due to be completed on November/December 2010.

Riding a high speed train is somewhat like an extended take off roll of an airplane. It is like watching the runway go by just before aircraft lift-off, except lift-off never comes. The eight-car train is so quiet except for a very low electric motor whine as the train accelerates and decelerates. The loudest noise, similar to a sonic boom, comes when another Hi-Speed train passes in the opposite direction. Then you very briefly watch the lights of the passing train zip by your train. The ride we encountered was the smoothest of any form of travel that we have experienced, including aircraft. Only a Boeing 747 comes close. The tracks used by the high-speed train are NOT shared with other trains although there are other tracks that share the same general right-of-way and they share the same stations, although, again, there are different platforms. We did pass the same freight train three times and it passed us only when we had stopped in one of the three stations en route to Shenzhen to pick up and discharge passengers. You board through a single aircraft plug-type door in the center of each coach and you can pass though all cars. Seats are assigned on your ticket. There are restrooms in each car with the same exterior "Occupied/Not Occupied" signs found on any current jet aircraft. There is also an attendant in each car. The seats are aircraft type but, at least in our coach, which had a "drivers compartment", the seats did not recline, although there were tables between some of the seats.

[more about China on page 2]

Progress Continues at Geneva!

[Muni is getting serious about protection!]

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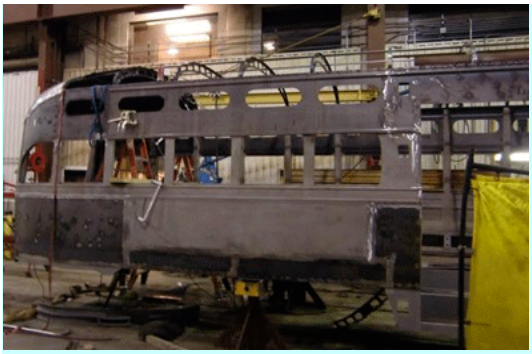
Tuesday, May 18th was another red letter day in the construction project at Geneva for cover for the heritage cars as the steel arrived for the erection of the structure. If you look closely, you can see the foundations for the structure that have already been constructed.

The next photo clearly shows the wall supports for the rear of the structure.



Several of the former ex-Newark PCC cars also at Brookville getting completely rewired and having their GE electrical equipment, which is no longer available, exchanged for Westinghouse components which are still available. Below is car 1078 (San Diego), which is one of a few of these cars that actually saw limited service in San Francisco prior to being sent to Brookville.

The next photo shows car 1071 undergoing the same electrical equipment upgrade while new window posts for Car #1 are in the foreground.

Note car 1080 in the background. The first car of the 1070-1080 class is to be delivered around November/December 2010. The second car is scheduled for arrival three months after that. The remaining nine cars are scheduled to arrive every thirty days after that. Speaking of Muni Car #1, the next photo shows the current status of that car's renovation. As Muni intended, this is a complete rebuilding. As originally scheduled, this car was due to return to Muni in June 2010 but Brookville has requested another four months to complete the car.

As is evident from the photos, the overhead wire has already been removed and the erection of the beams should begin almost immediately. There are hardly any PCC cars to be seen at the Geneva facility at this time but all 26 currently serviceable cars are kept at Geneva. All out-of-service cars are being stored at Metro East.

But Johnstown 351, long stored at the Mint, has been moved to Geneva and placed at the end of one of the stub tracks.

The very next day, erection of the steel structure began.

By Saturday evening, May 22nd, the scene appeared as shown in the next photos:

It appears that this car will have a great second 100 years of life, when this restoration is completed! Someone intends this car and all the other cars to be around for a long, long time!
Hats off again to Muni!

Bowser Continues to Increase Presence in Traction Market!

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During the recent trip of the Bowser/Custom Traxx team to China, Bowser issued requests for proposal for a future new HO scale conventional streetcar. The car prototype chosen, after evaluating all the inputs provided from trolley lovers, has operated in more than one city and several are currently in service or in museums from coast to coast. To complete this car, the current Bowser traction drive will be modified to accommodate a new truck wheelbase but all the proven features of the current design will be maintained. At this time, Bowser has decided to continue upgrading their 1999 drive because it works, it runs well and is virtually maintenance free. The next Bowser trolley, to be announced at the National Train show this summer will also use an improved version of the 1999 Bowser drive but have an operating trolley pole of a new design with a more prototypically appearing trolley shoe. Consideration is being given to a streetcar in another scale. Work is also underway to develop a PCC sound decoder. The decoder should be able to be used on any PCC car regardless of scale. Also bids are being sought on a new trolley pole and some overhead wire fittings. This could result in increased availability of traction items.

Next Version of the Train Control Systems M4T now available!

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Last November, Custom Traxx introduced the Train Control Systems M4T decoder specifically for the Bowser San Francisco F-line PCC car. The San Francisco F-line PCC cars obtained from Philadelphia in 1992 had been rewired so that they have automotive type taillights that illuminate when the headlight is turned on. These versions 49 and 51 of the M4T decoder were defaulted for the F-line PCC. **Version 52** will be defaulted for the traditional PCC without taillights. It can also be used on some conventional cars that had brake lights such as the Baltimore 6001 series Peter Witt produced in HO scale by Bachmann Industries and should work with the HO scale Con-Cor Air-electric PCC car soon to be released. However, changing CV61 from the default value of 9 to a value of 137 will activate the taillight function for the Bowser San Francisco F-line PCC cars. **Version 52** of the M4T decoders have been under test by Custom Traxx for 60 days and found to live up to all expectations. These decoders will be available from Train Control Systems in addition to Custom Traxx. Even more features will be added both the M4T and other Train Control Systems decoders in the coming months. As they become available, we will be reporting them to you.

This was the picture by Sunday evening, May 23rd.

By Wednesday, the long unused sand tower was finally removed and work on the roof had begun.

By the beginning of the three-day Memorial Day holiday weekend, the progress had reached the level shown in the final photos.

Cover for these cars can't come too soon for us!
