

INSIDE:
"Beginner's Mistakes"

Railfan Ranting

Keeping on Track - Tips for Laying a Better Right-of-Way

Autumn Edition 2012

HOTBOX



The Official Publication of the Teen Association of Model Railroaders

CSX GP38-2 leads the windmill parts train, as it roles into Churchville, NY at sunset on May 26, 2009 - by Charlie Wood



FEATURING

Beginner's Mistakes

by Lukas

pg 4

Railfan Rantings

pg 6

Keeping on Track

by BJ Karnavas

pg 7

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Hotbox Readers,

It has been a busy last two months! Unfortunately, I have fallen under the curse of senioritis, and my desk has been flooded with homework assignments and college applications. Yet, it made me both proud and delighted to see my Facebook Notifications and Email constantly notify me on new pictures and videos that I am overjoyed to put into this Hotbox issue. I am so glad that many of our members have taken it upon themselves to contribute in order to continue the legacy of this great magazine going. So without further ado, please enjoy the combined October and November Hotbox!

- Rigel Janette,

CONTRIBUTING TO THE HOTBOX:

The Hotbox is always in need for new material; your contributions are what make the magazine great! Any submitted articles, photos, or videos are welcome, and greatly appreciated!

The Hotbox is made up of anything that TAMR members wish to share. This can range from a railfan trip, to your home layout's story! Sizes can range from a paragraph, to a feature story!

Do you have any ideas or tips on layout improvements? Got a million reasons why EMD is better than Alco? Sounds like you need to write a monthly or bi-monthly column for the Hotbox!

Got a great photo collection that you want to show off? Got a notebook full of railroad cartoons, or layout logos? Get them published in the Hotbox today!

Catch any Heritage units lately? Got a video on YouTube of your newest ballast set up, or maybe some highlights from your latest railfanning adventure? Send a link!

SUBMISSIONS CAN BE SENT TO TAMRHOTBOX@GMAIL.COM

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF TAMR:

Dear TAMR Members,

The leaves are falling, the temperature is dropping, and the days are getting shorter. The college applications are being filled out (for some) and the bags of Halloween candy are becoming smaller and smaller. The end of the year is approaching fast, bringing this year's railfanning memories to an end and opening up new days to experience another ride on that old steamer at your favorite railroad museum. It is also that time of year where we ask for you to support our organization that brings us together. This year, membership prices are going to change - for the good. Membership prices will remain the same at the current rates if you receive your Hotbox by mail. If you receive The Hotbox by email, your membership price will decrease for the next year. This is an incentive to receive The Hotbox electronically. If you have not done so, contact the editor at tamrhotbox@gmail.com to sign up for electronic delivery. Don't worry, if you are a lifetime member and receive The Hotbox by mail and do not have an email address or internet connection, you will still receive The Hotbox at no charge. If you recommend a friend to the TAMR and you receive The Hotbox by email, you and your friend will get a special two year for one price deal for joining and renewing your membership. The Hotbox is always in need of content; please consider helping the TAMR by submitting a short article about something train related. It can be about where your layout is based off of (if it is), or about how you built that trestle bridge. You don't have to write a book, a few sentences or a paragraph is fine. Don't want to write? Send in a photo of your current layout, or even a drawing of what you plan on doing. Just email The Hotbox at tamrhotbox@gmail.com to submit content. Forms to renew your membership are here <http://tamr.org/application.pdf>. The new membership price for the electronic Hotbox will be announced in the next issue.

Until next month, Happy Railroading!

Josh Cohn
TAMR President



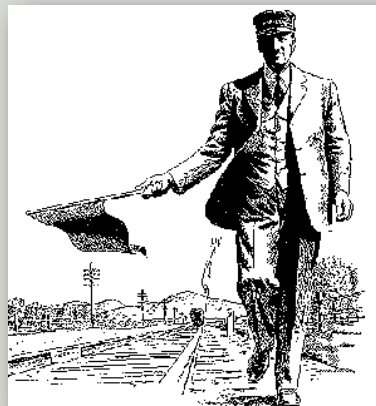
WWVR's excursion train south of Metamora IN, July 2012 by Tim Vermande



There's something I love about running this engine long-hood-forward. Too bad it needs to go to the shops for repairs. - by Will Ebbert



CSXT 18 in Garrett IN at the end of September by Tim and Sherrie Vermande



Beginner's Mistakes

By Lukas

As someone who is just beginning Model Railroading, I made several mistakes, and several decisions that led to a lot of frustration on my part, that I will tell you about, and hopefully you will avoid.

So, it started when I wanted to put a grade on my Layout. The grade was cut with a Woodland Scenics Wire Foam cutter, but it went down too sharply at the end, and was breaking the couplers off of the cars that went up the grade. So I dismantled the track, and then leveled off the part that was too steep, and made the grade a little more shallow. I glued the track down, but was very eager to keep working, so I cut more of the grade and laid more track, running a few cars over the track to test it. Unknowingly, I picked up a little bit of glue on the wheels of the first and second cars. I noticed the glue on the tracks, and wiped it up, but not on the wheels. As they were rolled along, they picked up the grime from the tracks and the table, which turned the glue black, hiding it from visibility. So the next day, when I tested some track, I rolled the test cars up the track, and they derailed. I figured that it was an imperfection in the track, so I dismantled that section of track, and relaid it with different track. The same problem occurred, and I tried with different track and different roadbed. But the cars still jumped off the track. I figured it had something to do with the Grade, so I dismantled the entire grade, along with all the track that I had laid along the grade, and laid new track. Imagine my frustration when I rolled the test cars along the curve, and they still jumped the tracks. I took a break for a few days, and came back, determined to find the source of the problem. I brought in more light, and rolled the cars along the track very slowly, and eventually saw that one side of the wheel truck was higher than the other. I had finally figured out the problem. After going over the wheels meticulously with a knife, I finally got all of the glue off, and then rolled it over a pad of diluted rubbing alcohol.

My point here is that when you are a beginner, sometimes you need to take it slow. Sometimes rushing (even if you are doing a good job) can cause you problems. Having since removed the grade, I don't think I'm going to put another one in, unless it is a professional one. (Woodland scenics makes some wonderful grade starters and grade maintainers.)

The last thing I'll divulge is about sanding and soldering. Early in my plan for my layout, I was going to have a European-style staging area beneath the table. I laid the track going up to the top, and soldered the gaps. I then sanded them down so that they were flat, and tested them by running cars up and down. I then hooked up my DC system to the end-rails, and tried running some engines to the top. But they would stop at the places that I had soldered. This puzzled me, so I relaid more of the track; but then after going to Eastside Trains (Down in Kirkland Washington, one of the largest Model Railroading stores in the Pacific Northwest) I talked to the guy who deals with HO, and he explained that sanding the places where I had soldered had likely rubbed some of the top part of the rail away; the part that conducts electricity and runs it to the wheels of the engine. This failure was enough to make me scrap the idea of the European-style staging area, and put in a small staging area in the corner of my layout.

I hope that you beginners who have read this article know a little bit more about what to avoid when laying track.

Railroad Pictures



I got was bored a few days ago, and so I built a BSRR Coke Gondola from a Atlas 90 ton hopper - by Radisson Burke McGuire



All of my Custom BSRR rolling stock - the two hoppers that I kitbashed, the lo side from a 90 ton to a 80 ton hopper, and the high side from a woodchip gondola from Athearn. The Gon is from BLMA and I have since changed it. I took the white strips off, added yellow tape, and have moved the Data boxes - by Radisson Burke McGuire



Here's that car with the load, "PROPERTY OF THE US GOVERNMENT" - by John Reichel



Valley Railroad #3025 Sept 15th, 2012
picasaweb.google.com

Photos by Ben R, Sep 15, 2012 - charter fantrip for the 50th anniversary of the New Haven RR Historical & Technical Society

<https://picasaweb.google.com/112317697584688550109/ValleyRailroad3025Sept15th2012>



Comment on "Southern 630 Employee Specials Irondale, Al"
www.youtube.com

Nice catch of two NS, pushing a steam engine.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LrpCgorCNE&lc=O9Ftf-DYNopIMAU_0avBKXIy8514yxvxM2QFcZzCm0&lch=email&feature=em-comment_received



Here's former Conrail 8281, a GP38-2, now Helm Leasing 3840, at Martinez, California, along with UPY 557, a GP15-1, pulling some tank cars and a single car with a military cargo. - by John Reichel

Railfan Rantings

This month's question:

Where is your favorite railfanning location?



Will Ebbert, Alabama

My favorite railfanning location is Folkston, Georgia.

Ben Rechel, Connecticut

Although I don't railfan much, I like the Old Saybrook, CT Amtrak & Shore Line East station, which conveniently contains my favorite restaurant (Pizzaworks) which has mostly train-related decor and two HO display layouts. Your president, Josh Cohn, has joined me there on a couple of occasions.

P.S. 4 cheese pizza vs. chicken pesto.... 4 cheese wins

Rigel Janette, Connecticut

My favorite place to railfan is in New Haven, at the State Street railroad station. All of the Amtrak traffic that stops at Union Station goes right by the platform, as well as Shore Line East trains and some Metro North Railroad trains.

Perhaps my favorite part of this station is that there are signals visible for each track, and each direction. While railfanning, it is easy to check and see when to start up my camera and wait for a train.

The station is pretty quiet during the off-peak hours. It is easy to find a nice place to set up your camera, and to hang out on a bench (when it is a nice day). Be warned, though - the small platform can get very crowded at Rush Hour!



Valley Railroad #3025 by Ben Rechel

Keeping on Track

Tips for Laying a Better Right-of-way

By BJ Karnavas

Track is the defining part of a model railroad, the unifying feature that distinguishes it from a dead diorama with some models on it. If laid well, it will provide years of happy operation and work effortlessly. Laying it isn't hard, but care shows. Nowadays, so much is done for you it seems almost as if the track lays itself . . . almost, but not quite.

If you are using one-piece track with roadbed molded on (which I sometimes wish I used) then just put it down according to plan. Sectional track and flex track are trickier. Step one is a detailed scale plan, allowing for easements on curves for flex track and precisely plotting sectional track. Working carefully from the plan, **lay your roadbed so that the track sits neatly centered** on top. There's nothing I hate more than track off-center on the roadbed, but a good plan and experience will eliminate it right away.

While planning and laying, be very mindful of the "grade" of your track - that is, its slope. Grades are measured by the number of feet risen in a hundred feet, and are shown as a percent. Keep in mind that small scale trains are **much** weaker on grades than real life locomotives (my calculator says that a locomotive 1/160th of the original in length is over *four million* times lighter if it is scale!). Even real railroads take great pains to keep their track as flat as possible. I would suggest a gentle grade for N scale trains of 1%, a steep one of 3%, and being very careful and testing anything steeper than that with your own locomotives. **When in doubt, smooth it out** some, and your trains will thank you.

Turnout is another name for a switch, used to differentiate the track-piece from, say, a light switch. Whatever you call them, turnouts are nasty biters sometimes, especially in N scale. Luckily there are some things you can do to make them run better. File the points (moving rails) of the turnout if they are blunt. Clean turnouts extra-thoroughly because trains love to stall there. But the most effective thing you can do is this: not select a brand of turnout simply because it is the cheapest (like I did! \$12 vs. \$30 may seem like a lot, but the difference is between fun and frustration. Cheap, cruddy turnouts will curse your operations forever, while good ones work so well you forget they are there sometimes. Trust me, if you use just one tip from this article, **buy good turnouts!** It might be the best deal in the entire hobby.

In summary, your trains will run better on carefully laid track that is high-quality and relatively flat. I only have a few paragraphs to discuss a deep topic; I can't possibly cover it all here. I would recommend reading some of the many brilliant books on the subject that can be easily found at your local library or bookstore. But while there is a lot you can learn from reading about model track, ultimately you just have to get out there and do it. Good luck, and have fun!

Great Train Extravaganza, 2012
Brought to you by Upstate Train Associates and
Hudson-Berkshire Division, North East Region, NMRA
Albany, NY, Sunday December 2nd, 2012
10 AM to 4 PM

The Update Train Associates and the Hudson-Berkshire Division of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) are proud to bring you the annual "Great Train Extravaganza."

The event will be held at the Empire State Convention Center in downtown Albany, NY with easy access to I-787. 10 Am to 4 PM. Price is \$7 for adults; pre teens are free when accompanied by an adult.

There will be operating layouts in most if not all gauges

Following a highly successful trial run the last two years, the Roaming Railroad will be returning with train rides for kids and grandkids.

The ideal place to do your holiday shopping, there will be more than 200 tables of model trains, train sets, parts & accessories, scenery items, books, videos, DVDs, prints, railroad memorabilia and related items for sale.

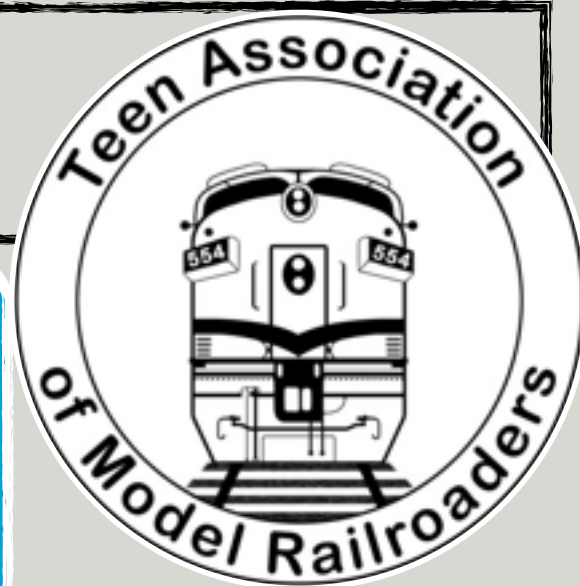
In addition there will be educational displays and free Seminars.

Many other family activities are being held at the adjoining Empire State Plaza the same weekend so why not bring the entire family for a fun day out. These activities typically include food and craft show, Christmas tree lighting, meet Santa and special holiday activities at the New York State Museum.

For more information please go to our web site: www.gtealbany.com or call (518) 668-9892 or send e-mail to trains@gtealbany.com.

THE TAMR HOTBOX

Issue 451: Autumn 2012 Edition



TAMR on Social:

Join the TAMR Yahoo eMail Group at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TAMR/>

Join the Facebook Page at:
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/2218322454/>

Follow TAMR on Twitter at:
[@TamrWebsite](https://twitter.com/TamrWebsite)



Indiana Transportation Museum 200 and train at the Earth Festival in Atlanta IN, Sept. 2012 by Tim Vermande

The TAMR is a non-profit organization created to promote, foster, and encourage young persons in the hobby of model railroading, the activity of railfanning, and the preservation of the history, science and technology thereof. Reprinting of the Hotbox is prohibited without the express written consent of the Teen Association of Model Railroaders.

Membership to the TAMR includes an eleven month subscription to the Hotbox, the annual directory of members, quarterly regional newsletters and an election to participate in all TAMR events. The available membership categories are as follows: Regular (under 21)-\$15, Associate (21 and over)-\$20, International (outside US)-\$18, and Iron Horse-\$25+

To become a part of the TAMR, or to renew your membership, contact:
Tim Vermande, TAMR Pivot Pin, 3645 Toronto Ct Indianapolis, IN 46268 USA
Membership forms are available online at www.tamr.org