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DISPATCH

September/October 2023

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The DISPATCH

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The COVER

Beautiful picture of American Flyer engines from the article, "A Call for American Flyer Photos," in this issue.



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POP VALVE



S Scale Loses a Pioneer



WILFRED (Bill) BOUCHER, Jr.
1929 - 2023

Bill joined the Bristol S Gauge Railroaders (originally the Mt. Hope Bay Lines) in 1950. Although not a charter member, he was the oldest surviving member of the club, passing away on June 5th, 2023 at the age of 93. Bill graduated from New Bedford (MA) Textile Institute with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, and from Lowell Textile Institute with an Associate's Degree in Civil Engineering. He served in the U.S. Army Chemical Corps from 1951-1953.

Bill's career included employment with A&P Supermarkets, and then 36 years as a Civil Engineer in the New Bedford (MA) Department of Public Works. A lifelong railroad enthusiast, he served as a volunteer at Edaville Railroad in the 1950s and 1960s. He was a member of the New Bedford Model Engineering Society, the Bristol 'S' Gauge Railroaders, the National Model Railroad Association, the National Association of 'S' Gaugers, and the Circus Model Builders' Association. He was the recipient of numerous awards for his fine model building.

Bill was a true "Master Craftsman" and won many model contests with his perfect models. He also wrote the instructions for

all the Kinsman Freight and passenger car kits, and he made the steel Pullman car sides from card stock, which S Helper Service used as patterns to make the molds for its line of passenger cars.

The Bristol Club was able to purchase many of his award winning models, including the complete 22-car Royal Circus Train (displayed at the 2018 NASG Convention), Numerous scale structures, and a great deal of rolling stock. The club is presently looking for a way to display permanently the complete Royal Circus Train with its folding bleachers, animals in cages, and all of the other gear typical to a circus train.

Unfortunately, Bill developed macular degeneration and became totally blind in his final years. He is survived by two sons, two daughters, six grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

Paul Riley

More Track Cleaning

Dick Karnes makes some interesting observations on the use of various oils or chemicals for track cleaning. (So Here's What I Do," July/August 2023 issue)

However, there is another way to keep track clean that I learned many years ago as a youngster in the 1950's by reading my father's *Model Railroader* magazines.

One of the popular builders and authors of that time was a fellow by the name of John Allen. He was an artist and scratch builder in a time when that type of construction of trains and structures was far more common. At that time he was building a "basement-filling empire" in HO and holding "Operating Sessions" once a week, which required at least five people.

As you might imagine, track cleaning was quite a chore! He tried the various liquid cleaners and found them lacking. So he used imagination and a lot of test running

and came up with a track cleaning car. The car had a pad of 1/8" thick piece of Masonite (a thin type of wood used to make peg board) under it that was attached to the car with small nails glued to the top, which went into matching holes in a car floor. No weight was added to the pad. In this way, the device slid along rail tops. Since the nails were not fastened to the car but floated in the holes in the car floor, they could rise and fall as the rails required. He also rounded the lower edges of the pad to allow for crossing over switches, crossovers, and grade crossings without catching on them. They would run several trains on his layout on operating nights, and at least one train on each route had what came to be known as a "dragger" car. Each of these was rated at weighing the same as two regular freight cars.

As I have progressed through his hobby, I have worked in every scale and track gauge at one time or another, and made a dragger for each size. When I started doing train shows with a club I was in and for a hobby shop I worked part time for, I discovered a new problem for track cleaning: The massive foot traffic of people at the shows created a LOT of dust over the days and hours of the show. I got into the habit of putting a dragger car into a train for several minutes every hour, and this solved the problem! (Although it looked dumb to have a regular box car in a passenger train).

But then I realized that this track cleaning was going on AFTER the locomotive had run over the dirt! I started to put a dragger in front of the engine, but this looked ridiculous. So, I built "Snow Plow" gondolas that the locomotive could push and clean the track ahead! (I had considered a military gun car to go in front, but I was not at war with anyone.). I've done this in every scale and track gauge--it's cheap and works great. In fact, to pay for the 4x4 foot Masonite I used, I made dozens of these up and gave them to friends and other Model Rails!

Terry "Stumpy" Stone
Martins Ferry, Ohio

From the YARD OFFICE

NASG Board of Trustees S Scale Track Component Project (request for proposals)

The NASG President has created an ad hoc committee to pursue production of ready-to-use track components for S (standard gauge) equipment with scale wheelsets.

For many years, American Flyer and Hi-rail enthusiasts have had the ability to purchase sectional track, turnouts, and crossings from multiple sources. Companies such as A.C. Gilbert, GarGraves, Lionel, American Models, SHS, and Fox Valley have offered a wide variety of Hi-rail products that were easy to install out of the box. For scale enthusiasts, Tomalco Track has a fine product line, but installation of their turnouts and crossings typically requires extra work in hand-spiking the rail pieces to the ties. Shinohara, long a supplier of ready-to-lay-turnouts, went out of business when its owner retired a number of years ago.

There is a pressing need in scale-S for track components -- specifically, #6 turnouts and flextrack -- to attract modelers from other scales who might consider switching to S. Such modelers are accustomed to buying track components that are truly ready-to-use, and they are highly unlikely to choose S if no manufacturer is producing those items. Other than Tomalco flextrack, no such products are currently available in scale-S.

To remedy this need, the committee has prepared a request for proposal (RFP), specifying the #6 turnout in scale-S as the initial product. The purpose of the RFP is to solicit bids from current manufacturers with the goal of then negotiating a contract between the winning bidder and the NASG.

The BOT recognizes that any manufacturer of a new product will experience large start-up costs. The most significant factor is expected to be the expense of the tooling and dies needed to cast plastic tie patterns for the turnouts. Therefore, the BOT plans to underwrite a portion of the manufacturer's start-up costs, and then

recoup NASG's investment over time through product sales. This approach has been used many times before, notably in the offering of American Flyer commemorative cars.

Our RFP offers two possible mechanisms for the financial arrangements. In the first option, NASG will pre-purchase a certain number of turnouts at wholesale prices, with exclusive rights to sell the products until the investment is recovered. In the second option, the NASG will provide seed money with the manufacturer then managing product sales and paying NASG a royalty for each turnout sold. The RFP leaves open the possibility of a third option with terms to be proposed by the bidder.

It's important to note that the NASG is unable to estimate either the amount of the financial investment or the length of time it will take to recoup the investment. The BOT will need to wait until bids are submitted and the proposals are analyzed, and this step alone is expected to take a minimum of five months. It is possible that every one of the bids will require more investment than the BOT is prepared to commit, in which case the BOT may seek outside investors (i.e., silent partners), or deem the project impracticable and drop any further efforts.

The BOT is sharing this information with the NASG membership in the spirit of keeping everyone informed, and there will be periodic updates on the project's progress. Depending on the success of this first component, the BOT anticipates further expanding the scale-S product line.

These are the modelers who make up the S Track System committee: Gaylord Gill, Dick Karnes, Steve Lunde, and Lindsey Neas.

In related news, Larry Morton has announced his business, Tomalco Track, is up for sale. He has already been talking with several parties who have expressed interest in purchasing the company. Larry has stated he will do everything possible to ensure there is a smooth transition to the new owner.

NASG BOT Meeting, Monday, April 24, 2023

Members Present: Jim Whipple, President; Andrew Malette, Secretary; Mike Ferraro, Treasurer; Lou Templeton, Executive Vice President; Darby Marriott, Eastern/North Eastern Vice President; Brian Jackson, Central/South Eastern Vice President; Peter Gehret, Western Vice President, Dick Karnes and Gaylord Gill, Steve Lunde and Lindsay Neas were Esteemed Guests

Call To Order: 8:38 pm

Minutes approval (discussion and approval)

Mike moved that the minutes be passed.

Seconded and passed.

Treasurer report was that there was nothing unusual.

Old Business

There was further discussion of the report and proposal from track/turnout committee.

There was discussion about the layout section of the website being reorganized into Scale/Hi-rail/AF sections to coincide with the pamphlets. It was agreed that this be done.

Convention Committee

We have a new committee chair, John Ciarleglio.

We discussed the progress on 2023 convention in Harrisburg, PA area.

Pete moved that we have a charge of \$15 per day for non-member walk-ins.

It was seconded and passed.

A site is necessary for the 2024 convention.

Promotions Committee

Pete moved that all new photos for the RMC ad that were presented be accepted.

It was seconded and passed.

The Dispatch

Bill Clark has agreed to do an AF repair column.

We need a volunteer to handle a survey to be distributed amongst the clubs. Merlyn Jarmin also suggested an S Ambassador's Kit to be sent out to clubs. This could be coordinated with the website and *The Dispatch*.

New Business

Awards for 2023: Pete said that we need to get nominations in for all the categories.

We have a Continuing search for volunteers.

Ron Kemp is interested in being Assistant Treasurer

Chuck Kemper has resigned as chair of Annual Car Committee and has indicated that committee member Norm Bos is interested in taking over.

John Ciarleglio has agreed to chair the Convention Committee.

Announcements

The NMRA regional convention in Pittsburgh May 4-7, 2023 includes an open house at Penn Creek Valley (built by the late Sam Powell) on May 7.

The next meeting date is May 23 at 8:30pm EDT

The next meeting date for Tuesday, June 27, 2023.

The meeting ended at 10:48 pm

Dick Karnes to Retire

The Editorial Team at *The Dispatch* and the Board of Trustees would like to thank Dick Karnes for serving as *The Dispatch's* Assistant Editor for Scale for

more than a year. During that time, Dick has worked to encourage authors to submit their articles to *The Dispatch*, ensuring a steady stream of quality submissions. Thank you, Mr. Karnes! For those with a strong interest in writing and scale modeling, please consider stepping into Dick's shoes—*The Dispatch* would like to fill the position of Assistant Editor-Scale as soon as possible.



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BY GILBERT



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So Here's What I Do

By Dick Karnes

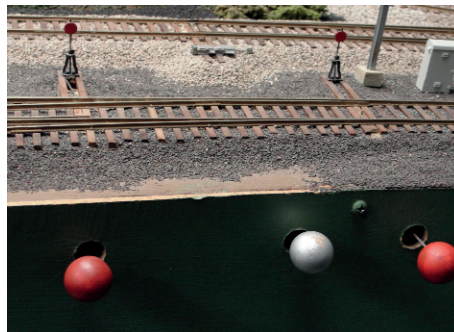


This is the only multi-color target location on the layout. The fascia knobs are to the right of the building (beyond the edge of the picture). The three switch stand targets visible in the photo are red (center), yellow (lower left center) and white (bottom right center next to building corner).

Switch Targets

I have a lot of turnout motors on my layout, but only where manual actuation is impractical. Everywhere else the turnouts are controlled by push-pull knobs on the fascia. I didn't want there to be any operator confusion as to which push-pull knob controls which turnout, so I came up with a simple solution: color-coding. The dummy switch motors next to all my mainline switch points are painted dirty silver. Their control knobs are likewise silver. All the other turnouts have switch stand targets that are red, as are their push-pull knobs.

This scheme works well except in one location: my float yard throat. The throat is next to a rear corner of a Railway Express building, and to make matters worse, the arrangement is such that the control knobs' positions are not in the same sequence as the switch points they control.



There's no mistaking which turnout points are controlled by which knobs in this location.

So there I used four colors: red, orange, yellow, and white. No operator has had any trouble there!



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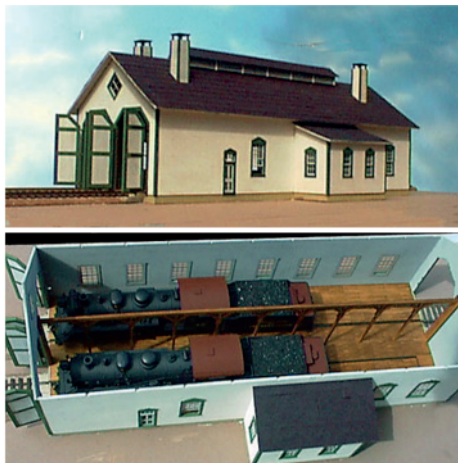
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NEW PRODUCTS

By Jeff Madden

B.T.S. has a re-run of its 2-stall enginehouse wood laser kit. The footprint 41'x 101' and side shop. \$229.95. Check the web for other S items.



www.btsrr.com

Cartesian Junction (E-Bay) has several 3-D printed houses mostly priced from \$25 and up.



ERTL has a barn set 1/64 is listed for \$24.99. It includes hay bales and fencing. It appears the right size for an S kitbashing project.



www.3000toys.com

Catzpaw Innovations has U.S. flags (48 or 50 star) including 30' staff and base. The flags are 100 percent cotton. Two flags and 2 poles for \$7.99.



www.CatzPaw.com

Hallmark stores have a 1/64 Christmas ornament fire truck this year, a 1956 Dodge pumper.



Jason' Brass Poles lists a 35-ton Northern Ohio Traction & Light Co.



steeply cab electric with one truck powered by a NWSL Stanton power unit.

<https://www.ebay.com/usr/brianweismanjbw>

Model Tech Studios has some smashed up pickup trucks that are built and painted. One is a Model T for \$56.99 and a 1930s Model A for \$69.99.

Side Impact
Axle/wheels
are bent



Door/ fenders / hood
are smashed in

www.modeltechstudios.com

New Creations Victorian offers a Bakersfield (CA) wood type gas station with a footprint of 3"x 2 and 1/2" for \$25.95 and an SP handcar shed for \$29.95. (See NASG Website).



Down at the Depot

By Carl Rudolph

While we've had a couple of hot spells around here, it has been mild compared to the tremendous long-term heat in the South and all the floods in other parts of the country. It is likely that this weather has had an effect on the production of newsletters this time around, but there is still plenty of news coming in to your scribe's desk. So here's what we've received:

The Bristol S-Gaugers are to be congratulated by all the rest of us. **Doug Peck** sent in this news: "The BRISTOL S-GAUGERS are celebrating our 75th Anniversary this year as "The Oldest S-Scale Club in the Americas". In late June, we held a picnic celebration for all current members and families, and also invited many former members and special guests to join us. The festivities were held on the grounds of the Waushakum Live-Steam RR Club, in Holliston, MA (<https://www.waushakumlivesteamers.org/>).

Members of the Waushakum club operated their live-steam, ride-on equipment, both steam and diesel, throughout the afternoon for the enjoyment of the gathering. Many youngsters as well as some older "youngsters" took advantage of chances to ride the trains over a one-mile layout. Meanwhile the club hired a food truck,

"Smokin 51", to provide a great menu of food from noon to 3 PM. An Anniversary cake, and other treats, were provided for desserts. The weather held off for us, and a great time was enjoyed by all, including the opportunity to re-unite and chat with several former club members." Great news! Seventy-five years is a long time and still going strong! Please see the nearby photo of some of the club at the live steamers (at the far left you can see some tracks).

The Pioneer Valley Model Railroad Club (Western Connecticut) met at **Gene Maag's** home in South Hadley where they enjoyed his layout and discussed general maintenance activities, both ongoing and future, for the Look Park Santa's Trains. As constant readers have already realized, this is a year-round project for the club because there is a lot to do to have a successful event. We are proud of them for their diligence--clearly it is rewarding for all concerned. Also, **Steve Allen** brought a couple of building projects to show that will be going into dioramas and **George Reneris** brought several figures and vehicles to get help determining if they are 1:64 scale or not (when the vehicles are the Oscar Meyer Wiernermobile and similar, it may be hard to determine!)

We are very pleased to have heard from the **Connecticut S Gaugers** again! New

correspondent **Bob Jordan** writes: "After a hiatus primarily caused by the pandemic, the Connecticut S Gaugers are pleased to report that our club has resumed not only our in-person club meetings but also our participation in local train shows that are starting up again."

Bob continues: "At our June meeting held at our club treasurer's house (**Dick Kramer**), in addition to some routine club business matters, we voted on which train shows we will set up our layout. The October show will be in Newtown Ct. and the July show became a special event as our club was honored to have been invited to show our layout at the annual meeting of the A.C. Gilbert Historical Society held this year in the New Haven area. As all American Flyer and probably all S Gaugers collectors/operators know, New Haven was the manufacturing home of post WW II American Flyer after A.C. Gilbert purchased the American Flyer brand in 1938 from its original base in Chicago IL. The current President of the Society is the grandson of A.C. Gilbert. Many of my fellow S Gaugers may be members of the Historical Society as well."

Further, Bob says, "The A. C. Gilbert Co. had been making various toys for kids starting in the 1910s, and the show featured many of the historical artifacts and actual toy sets and products made by the company throughout its history. The most famous besides the American Flyer brand of trains was Erector Sets. One of the most interesting (to this correspondent) was the production of a glass blowing kit. It is hard to envision anybody making that for kids today."

Finally, Bob finishes with the following: "This correspondent was approached by the Society's representative responsible for next year's meeting/show that is to be held in the northeast area of Ohio and requested the name of the S Gauge club in that area as they would like to invite its members to participate in that event. So here is a heads up to the Cuyahoga Valley club to expect a call from him. It is highly recommended and a worthwhile event to show your layout." Thanks for the news, Bob!

The South Jersey S Gaugers have had to go back to Zoom meetings because their



Some Bristol S-Gaugers members at their 75th anniversary celebration. Photo by Jim Abrams of the Waushakum Live Steamers.

normal meeting place (the Stratford Senior Center) has closed down for renovations. Speaking from experience, it is a pain to go back to Zoom, but the results should be worth it. By October they should be back in the usual digs. Meanwhile, like other clubs during the summer, they are doing maintenance on the layout modules and preparing for the next show at the New Jersey Military Museum in September followed by the Ocean City Music Pier show in December.

The Baltimore Area American Flyer Club was finally able to get a date at Leakin Park for their annual club picnic, the first since 2019! The picnic was a wonderful outing with great food, a lovely day, and a live steam miniature railroad to watch in action and to ride. The difficulty in getting a date resulted in a lower attendance than usual, but otherwise it was great. "A Wonderful Time Was Had By All" as the saying goes!

The North Florida Division of the Atlantic Coast S Gaugers met again at **Larry Shughart's** barn. This meeting's theme was "Take a Ride on the Reading, if you pass GO collect \$200," which means the meeting was all about the Reading Railroad and its home area. Lots of Reading locomotives and rolling stock much in evidence on Larry's wonderful layout. Next up was a meeting at **Lloyd Lippert's** where the theme was the Chicago North Western.

The Pittsburgh S Gaugers were preparing for the next Greenberg show; the hi-rail layout was thought to be in good shape with sufficient operators, but the modular layout needed more staff. At the meeting, **Lou Templeton** gave a presentation about Gilbert's changeover from the old three- to a five-digit inventory numbering system and the production anomalies that ensued. He brought some five-digit examples and also brought two nice Masonite buildings obtained at the York TCA meet. **Roger Schneider** demonstrated his new Lionel/AF NYC 4-8-4 and **Bruce Siarkowski** showed an American Models CNW road switcher.

The Cuyahoga Valley S Gauge Association (Cleveland area) had a good outing at the Model Train Day at the Painesville Railroad Museum. The heavy

rain quit just in time to unload and set up and the layout operated flawlessly other than a couple of AF 293 Pacifics that decided to act up. Layout maintenance is the watchword for the summer and the group plans on going to the show in Mt. Hope. Spree 2024 plans continue to evolve!

The Miami Valley S Gaugers (Dayton area) met at **Tom Hartrum's** home and thoroughly enjoyed and admired Tom's layout. Tom has great attention to detail and is very inventive in finding something to add to the layout that is realistic and fits the environs. The club also had its layout in the main building at the Carillon Railfest with success and lots of people coming by. The club is looking forward to the Lakota show in October.

The Southeastern Michigan S Gaugers met at **Joe Calamia's** home and were treated to some really interesting show-and-tell. New member **Dan Kempf** showed his scratchbuilt model of a fire station located in Georgetown, Colorado, near the famous Loop. Dan also displayed his scratchbuilt Sn3 reefer lettered for the Denver, South Park & Pacific. Both of these models are outstanding. A guest, **Corbin Bates** from American Models, showed an AM RS3 modified into an RS3M which also looked really good.

The Badgerland S Gaugers (Milwaukee area) are enjoying their use of the clubhouse that is jointly operated with the Gandy Dancers HO club. Not only do they have meetings there, but also they will be moving (or maybe have already moved) the club layout into a space in downtown Waukesha, WI and can have open house events. There has been plenty of discussion about improvements to make such as window displays to entice and inform the passersby. Sounds exciting!

The Chicagoland Association of S Gaugers are in the final stages of planning for this year's Fall S Fest. The Fest cars (Clark tank cars in two different colors by AM) are produced and registrations are already coming in as this is written. Should be a big success! Meanwhile they've had a meeting at **Chuck Hempfling's** home which is on a lake, so he invited members to bring their poles if they want to fish! That and the lunch on the deck sound like great fun!

Up in the Twin Cities area, the **Pines and Prairies S Scale Workshop** were invited to come over to **Ken Zieska's** to work on Ken's layout. **Tom Lennon** was there, working on the "downtown switching alley" and others could add scenery or just talk trains while enjoying a cool basement. As you may have noticed, this group doesn't have meetings as such, just go to each other's homes and work on layouts. The newest member is always the President of the club; duties of that office are somewhat undefined!

We heard from the **Gadsden Pacific Toy Train Museum** again! Correspondent **Lee Olson** sent in the following: "The Gadsden Pacific Toy Train Museum in Tucson has reopened for its new 2023-2024 season after resting for the hot Arizona summer. The museum is now open to the public each Sunday afternoon from 1 to 4 PM with closures on certain holiday weekends. This past season saw an increase in Museum membership as well as open house attendance. During the summer 'siesta', virtually every layout made improvements and the S Gauge layout also got in on the construction activities. A number of American Flyer display trains were also changed.

Lee continues: "Even the S layout has added a new member which has not happened for a number of years. The S gauge members are especially looking forward to the Museum's annual train show in November, the various Holiday activities in December and special open house activities during the year. Much more information is available at gpdtrains.org." Yes, it has been really hot in the Tucson area this summer--all will appreciate more temperate weather!

In the San Francisco Bay area, the **Golden Gate American Flyer Club** met again at **Rich Lenart's** and **Bill Riechmann's** homes in Walnut Creek. They had pizza courtesy of the club at Rich's but just an informal gathering at Bill's. On an off-topic note, **Dale Smith** noted that Anchor Steam Beer, the company adorning the sides of the latest Flyer Fest West commemorative cars, has gone out of business. But the latest news is that possibly the historic Bay area company will be revived.

The Southern California S Gaugers Club

is in the final stages of planning for S Fest West to be held September 9, 2023 at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, CA. If you are reading this as soon as it arrived in the mail, you should still be able to attend. **Ed Dickens**, Union Pacific Railroad Senior Manager of Heritage Operations and engineer on UP 4014 Big Boy, will be the banquet keynote speaker. Don't miss this one! See their ad elsewhere in this issue.

By the time you are reading this, maybe the wild and hot weather has calmed down for most of the country, and we can concentrate on our trains and friends. Keep trackin'!

The Dispatch Closing Dates

May/June:	March 15th
July/August:	May 15th
September/October:	July 15th
November/December:	September 15th
January/February:	November 15th
March/April:	January 15 th

Dates are tentative and subject to change.



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Five Digit Steam Engines

When I wanted to complete my collection of all of the Flyer K5 Pacific steam engines, the last one I needed was a 21115 engine, the rarest of the K5's. I was able to find one at the York TCA show in 2018. This engine has the plastic tender and a two step e-unit attached to the back of the motor. This was typical for most five digit steam engines.

Well, at the show there were three of the engines with the most expensive being nearly \$2,000 and the cheapest about half that. Of course, I bought the least expensive and when I asked the seller if it ran he avoided a direct answer. Now the engine is almost a C7 in appearance so I was satisfied with the purchase.

When I tested it in my train room my suspicion was confirmed as the engine was dead and not showing any sign of life. It took me about eight hours to get it fixed and in doing so I learned a great deal in the process. While I have a number of five digit steamers with the reverse unit behind the motor I had never had to fix any of them. This was a learning journey that I thought it would be good to write about for the column.

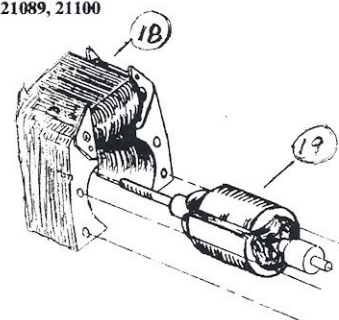
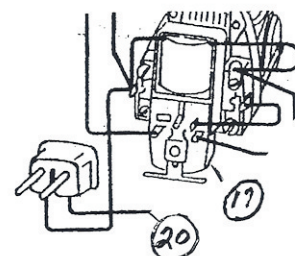
When I do a new repair project that I haven't done before, my usual tactic is to search past articles in magazines about the subject. In this case, I drew a blank on this topic. That means what follows here is written from my own experience in repairing my K5 and the reference source I used to help me. I hope my experience with my repair project will be helpful for other hobbyists.

To provide a reference point, I am including three diagrams of this engine type and a list of parts for the diagrams. These were taken from a book put together by Tom Seccia that combined information from a number other sources. His book is titled *Parts and Service for American Flyer Trains 1938 to 1966*.

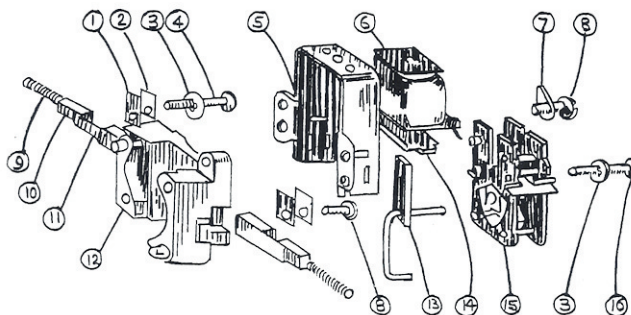
See Diagram top right.

5 DIGIT STEAM LOCOMOTIVE PARTS

Dia #	Part #	Description
1	PA13A129	Brush Tube Cover – Fiber
2	PA15A044	Brush Tube Cover – Brass
3	PA3769	Lockwasher
4	S-33	Screw
5	PA14A444	Coil Housing
6	XA14B433	Coil Assembly
7	PA6173	Solder Terminal
8	S-264	Screw
9	PA13A130	Brush Spring
10	PA13A128	Brush
11	PA13A131	Brush Tube
12	XA15A695	Brush Bracket Assembly
	XA9565A	Brush Bracket Assembly for 21160
13	XA14A435	Plunger Assembly
14	PA14C432	Coil Support
15	XA14A994	Contact Assembly
16	S-29	Screw
17	XA14C429	Reverse Unit Assembly
18	XA12A526	Field Assy for 21129-21130, 21139-21140
	XA9547	Field Assy for 21004, 21005, 21085, 21088, 21089, 21100
19	XA14B816	Armature Assy for 21129-21130, 21139-21140
	XA14B719	Armature Assembly for 21004, 21005, 21088, 21089, 21100
	XA11077	Armature Assembly for 21160
20	XA14A513	Plug Assembly
	PA15B200	Toggle Switch for 21160



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When I approach the problems of an engine I try to start with simple first. Since this type of engine has nothing in the tender except wires from the top of the trucks to the female plug for the male plug assembly (20) from the engine, I looked inside the tender to make sure the wires were connected and current moving through them.

Next I checked the male plug to make sure that the wires from the male plug to the e-unit were sending current to the e-unit. It was here that I found a problem as neither prong was touching the wire inside

the male plug. To fix this you put the ends of the plug prongs in a small vice and pry them out using the end of a screw driver. You can also pull the wires out of the plug with pliers. Next, I used a very fine drill that was smaller than the holes in the plug to clean out the plugs and make sure when I reinstalled the wires and plugs they would all make good contact.

The final step was to first bare about 1/8 inch of the wire and place the ends onto the plug. Once that was done I reinserted the prongs and tested to make sure the current would flow correctly. Once it tested OK, I

place a very small amount of super glue next to the wire and the prongs at the plug to hold them in place but not enough to make it impossible to take them out again if need be.

Now if the motor still shows no signs of life, the next step is to disassemble the engine so you can continue the search for its problems. With the reverse unit connected to the motor, there is a big difference for this process from earlier Flyer steam engines and, of course, the linkage is different by type of engine. The one step that is necessary for all of these engines is to take out carefully the red plastic smoke stack because the unit will not come out of the engine shell without doing this and to keep from breaking the plastic smoke stack, care is necessary.

Once the chassis is completely out of the shell, you can continue your work. The next thing to be done is to examine all the wiring to make sure everything is connected in the right place. On the diagram included here, you can easily check this for a problem. I also check solder joints to make sure they look right.

Now add power by connecting a transformer to the prongs on the male plug (20). Also you can see easily if there are shorts in any of the connections by looking for a spark. You can also easily see if the reverse unit is functioning right. If you see sparks, you can re-solder the break and again see if the motor will run.

If not, I recommend you put a sheet of white paper under the motor, so you can see if the motor's brushes are making contact with the armature's commutator. If you can see light, a brush may be gone or the spring behind it not providing the necessary push. In the diagram, these are part of the brush bracket assembly and numbers 9, 10, and 11. If you need brushes and springs, these are available from parts suppliers.

If the brushes are contacting the commutator and all the wiring is correctly done, then the problem has to be in the reverse unit, armature, or field. If the reverse unit is cycling when you give it power then, I recommend you use a spray circuit lubricant/cleaner such as that

available at Home Depot to see if cleaning it will make the circuit make connection.

If the motor still will not work, I suggest you disassemble the motor further, paying close attention not to break any wiring. Once that is done, examine the field coil and armature wiring to see if you can detect any breaks in their wire or burnt locations. If they're not apparent, it would be my guess that the problem is in the reverse unit.

This two step reverse unit is very hard to repair and will require a whole column to explain. In my 21115, the reverse unit was not working and my simple solution was to use one off of a Casey Jones style engine. I buy these at train shows for little or nothing just to get the reverse units.

If the field coil or armature is the problem, then you must search for a replacement or send them to a technician for repair. If you choose to do this, *The Dispatch* often has ads for technicians who can help you. You can do it yourself, but there is not space for me to explain it in this edition. If your engine has a large motor, finding replacements will be difficult and expensive.

If your motor's problem has been found and it now runs, I recommend you do some cleanup work while it is not in the engine shell. You can easily clean the commutator, lubricate the motor's bushings front and back, plus lubricate the driver's axles. Also put light grease on the worm drive shaft. I always put a little petroleum jelly on the insides of the smoke unit puffer to make it louder.

If your smoke unit is not performing as you wish it to, now is the easy time to replace its smoke unit heating element. The five digit steam engine uses a later

type smoke unit, and it is much different than the earlier version. One solution is to substitute a smoke unit from an earlier engine. .

After all these things are accomplished, it is time to reassemble the engine. Here I must caution you on a few things. First, if you look inside the cab section of the engine, you will probably find some sort of insulating material. This is there because the wiring of the reverse unit and motor are very close to the top of the cab and might short out. When you insert the chassis, watch to make sure you don't break your solder joints or have the joints touch the walls of the engine cab.

Another problem that can cause a short is where the bulb socket might touch the front of the smoke unit and cause a short when you put the front of the engine in the shell. This happened with my K5 when I assembled it. Since I have faced this before, I used a piece of electrical tape placing it on the front of the smoke unit.

I hope this article is a help to all who have a five digit engine that needs work. Again, I appreciate your emails with questions and suggestions. Communicating with fellow Flyer enthusiasts is what helps getting useful articles written. Please write me at billstrains@aol.com.



Yes, there is an NASG Facebook page. The group is designed with the goal of making S Scalpers aware of the NASG and the benefits it offers it's members. You do not need to be a NASG member to join this group, but we hope once you see some of the benefits of the NASG you will want to become a member. Go to Facebook and search "NASG".



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NASG Annual Convention: First Look

By Stephen Law



The 2023 NASG Convention in Harrisburg (July 25-29) was an overwhelming success story, especially after the slow years of the pandemic and its aftermath. With more than 220 registered attendees, the “vibe” in Harrisburg was just like old times!

Kudos first go out to the Lehigh Valley S Gaugers – the club that hosted this year’s “Susquehannock Convention” – and Jamie Bothwell and Dave Heine, who were the lead organizers of the event, handling everything from pre-registration to the wee hours of the traditional Auction at the close of the Banquet. The rest of the LVSG helped guide tours and man the registration table. Hugh Sinn was especially helpful in the Contest Room. Additional recognition goes to President James Whipple, who not only presided at the Awards Ceremony, but organized a very well-attended clinic on the logistics involved in both building “Modular Models,” and the preparations needed for making sure the buildings and trains can withstand the regular packing and unpacking.

The venue for the Convention was the chic and up-scale Sheraton Hotel in southeast Harrisburg, conveniently located near the airport and Interstate 283. The facilities of the hotel were first rate, and the in-house catering services amazingly professional. Especially at the Banquet, the food was gourmet quality and plentiful. We all must have put on a few pounds at this convention!

The scheduled tours were begun early Wednesday morning. Decisions, decisions ... right off the bat, one either took a bus to Altoona and the Horseshoe Curve, or to Gettysburg and the National

Military Park. The Altoona trip was led by Bill Moore and featured both the world-famous Horseshoe Curve and the Railroaders Memorial Museum. The weather was clear and quite warm, and the attendees enjoyed the fantastic scenery of southcentral PA. The Gettysburg tour was conducted by *The Dispatch*’s own Assistant Editor for AF/Hi-rail, Stephen Law, who knows the battlefield well and is the current “Commander” of the Gettysburg chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans. The tour went well – thanks to an air conditioned bus and the consummate driving skills of the bus driver, Don.





Commander Stephen Law, Gettysburg Tour

The tour also included the newly opened “Beyond the Battle Museum” of the Adams County Historical Society. But wait, there’s more: on Thursday another tour was launched to Rock Hill Furnace to see the historic East Broad Top Railroad. The pilgrimage to this National Historic Landmark was led by Mike Berus and Jim Eichner. Attendees at this tour first visited the railroad museum, and then boarded the train for a narrow-gauge ride through the



Gettysburg Tour Bus ready to roll out



East Broad Top Railroad Tour



wooded hills atop one of the higher ridges in Pennsylvania.

Thursday also saw the Vendor Hall open for business, with many of the familiar faces. Many gathered around the veterans who were contemplating retirement or selling their company to other interests. Case in point were vendors like Doug Peck of Port Lines Hobby Supplies and Dan Navarre of River Raisin Models. On one hand, Doug has taken to the road, and is enjoying a well-deserved tour of the country (and *not* on a motorcycle, in spite of a photo showing him next to some bikes!). Dan, on the other hand, is just closing up shop at River Raisin and is looking for a buyer for the legendary S scale company that brought us the best in brass. Dan and his wife, Annette, also took the time to put together a standing-room-only clinic that chronicled the history of River Raisin (and they provided the attendees with Excel spread sheets that listed literally everything that had ever been made by River Raisin.

We also shed a tear at the news that Tomalco Track was officially closing up shop; Larry Morton was there, selling the last of his stock.



Dan Navarre - The History of River Raisin Models.

Others in the Vendor Hall enticed us with their wares, be they original Flyer trains, S Helper, American Models, Des Plaines Hobbies, or custom models and buildings. Track-side structures, Artista figures, animals, trees, terrain construction ... the opportunities for making “further investments” in one’s layout or collection were seemingly endless. Vintage Flyer, of course, was a favorite of many, and vendors like David Bloom, Jack Kirby, and Frankie



Scale Trains Display with unannounced Wide-Vision Caboose display.

Merson (among others) were pleased to sell you one of those items you have always been looking for. A full list of all the twenty-six vendors can be found on the NASG convention website.

The Pittsburg S Scalpers also brought an exceptional switching layout to the Vendor Hall. This was no “basic” level switching operation either: it featured a half dozen finely detailed structures and an L-shaped backboard to give it depth and character. Always nice to see a top-notch modular layout, and this was another gem at the



Pittsburgh portable layout

Pennsylvania convention. The clinics began in earnest on Friday, and continued all the way until noon on Saturday. They were all very well attended,

and each had a post-presentation Q&A that elicited participation and further insights from the membership. Jamie Bothwell (the man of the hour) gave not one, but two important clinics, one on “The Trains of Harrisburg” (the State Capitol is also a historic rail hub for both passenger and freight services), and a “surprise” presentation on designing laser-cut structures. To everyone’s delight, Jamie related the escapades he had measuring an actual inhabited dwelling here in PA, but also the step-by-step logistics of designing, cutting out, and constructing the building from his prototype.

A similar “how-to” clinic was provided by Ben Trousdale on “Printing a 3D Hopper”; this was by far the best attended clinic, as many members are now interested in the magical process of seeing something emerge from programming to physical presence. Ben went through the trials and tribulations involved with complex areas on the ends of a hopper car; he also had each phase of his quest on display in the Vendor Hall.



Ben Trousdale explaining his clinic on his 3D-printed hopper.



Andy Malette’s brass example passed around.

Yet another clinic on technique was given by the Secretary of the BOT, Andy Malette. Andy works in brass, and gave encouragement to all of us to take the plunge (without burning our fingers!); he passed around a work-in-progress of a brass boiler with the cab soldered onto it.

Moving, indeed, was the account given by Jeff English, “My Journey with American Flyer: A Personal History.” Jeff’s sentimental presentation touched the heart and soul of those of us who began with American Flyer during the Golden Age of



Jeff English - My Journey with American Flyer, a Personal History.



Ready to feast at the banquet. (L-R) Geoffrey McDade, Ken Palmer, Hank Worrell of the South Jersey S Gaugers

Gilbert Trains. Envious – and touching – were the photographs of Jeff (even as a baby) and his family “sharing” a classic collection back in the 1950s and early ‘60s. Jeff has lived the life of model railroading, and after earning a degree in Civil Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute, became a specialist in highspeed rail and the use of jet engine motors. He flirted with HO (who wouldn’t while a member of the famed RPI Model Railroad Club!), but he finally came back to the ideal scale we all love.

The clinics continued with additional contributions by Willy Monaghan (The Beginning of Modern Railroading), Roger Gerhart (How to Repair Flyer), Dave Heine (DC Wiring, How I Do It), and Buff Buffington (Tools I Use for Building Structures). Furthermore, Dan Navarre gave a second clinic on Expert Wildlife Photography, and – bless his fortitude – Jamie Bothwell gave a third clinic on “Water Color Landscape Painting”!

Saturday afternoon was given over to the convention’s General Membership

Meeting. It began with the preliminaries and introductions of the BOT (including its newest member, Lou Templeton, who will be a Hi-rail representative), and then Andy Malette proceeded through a reading of the minutes of the last BOT meeting. Various reports were given, including a Treasurer’s Report and a review of the current activities of *The Dispatch* (given by Stephen Law). We are in good financial health, and – not surprisingly – always looking for new articles for possible inclusion in this very magazine. The search for new NASG members received considerable attention, and President Whipple reminded us that the NASG is now classified as 501(c)(3). This means we have status as a charity, with an obligation to “educate” others about railroading. Thus, engagement with the public is a part of our mission. We were also advised to familiarize ourselves with the rules for “charitable work” done in accordance with 501(c)(3) organizations. The general meeting finished up a bit early, providing more time for socializing with others. Libations were available in the lobby and in the hotel’s cantina.



The Banquet, as already mentioned, was a highlight unto itself. Sent in waves from our seating positions, we moved to a sumptuous buffet that seemed to go on forever. Salads, veggies, perfectly roasted potatoes, and a triple play set of entrees: Boston baked cod with a coating of panko, porkchops sautéed in a classic brow gravy, and a gigantic hunk of roast beef with au jus and horseradish (carved on the spot to one’s preference). Seconds? You bet! And then they brought out the most decadent desserts on the planet; favorites rallied to the best of cheese cakes ever.

The Award Ceremony was officiated by President Whipple, and the Model Contestants honored. (More coverage about this to follow in the next issue of *The Dispatch*).

Last but not least, there was the legendary end-of-the-banquet NASG Auction. Hundreds of objects adorned the table along the wall, and all were inspected by eager eyes. Young Fergus Monaghan led the way, by not only doing the first bid ... but the first bid of almost every item. “One Dollar!” he would shout, and the game was on. Amazingly, Fergus came away with more than his share of the loot. There were many “steals” and a few bidding wars that moved into triple digits. It was a delightful event, and proved that Jamie Bothwell had the stamina to push through to the very end.

Truth be told, the 2023 Susquehannock Convention was so successful, that everyone applauded Jim Whipple’s announcement: the 2024 Convention will also take place in Harrisburg. If you missed it this year, you absolutely won’t want to miss it next year!

Next issue we’ll have the contest winners and more coverage!



PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

Tips for Taking Layout Photos with a Cell Phone

By Brooks Stover

Photos and illustrations by the author unless noted



Phone photography? Really? It sounds like a contradiction in terms to a guy like me who for years has enjoyed the hobby of creating images with ‘traditional’ digital cameras. However, phones have revolutionized picture taking. In this article I discuss how to get the best images possible of your layout from a cell phone camera. With the right phone and some care, you can create images good enough to share in publications like *The Dispatch* even when using the

FIGURE 1 - BC&G Consolidation #14 has arrived in Swandale from Dundon where she’ll swap empties for loads of lumber. The photo was taken with an iPhone12 using the 13 mm lens with aperture of f/2.4. Notice both the foreground and background are in focus. In this article Brooks offers some tips on how to take publication quality layout photos like this one using cell phone cameras.

camera as you normally would, handheld and without special apps or add-ons.

Getting Things Into Focus

To be successful, a layout or model photo must be sharply focused from the

foreground to the background. The amount of an image that appears in focus is referred to as the Depth of Field (DOF). Getting a large DOF is one of the biggest challenges in model photography.

FOCAL LENGTH (35mm EQUIVALENT) & APERTURE					
	iPhone 6s PLUS	iPhone 11 PRO	iPhone 12	iPhone 13 PRO	GALAXY S10
ULTRA WIDE		13mm f/2.4	13mm f/2.4	13mm f/1.8	12mm f/2.2
WIDE	29mm f/2.2	26mm f/1.8	26mm f/1.6	26mm f/1.5	26mm f/1.5
TELEPHOTO		52mm f/2.0		77mm f/2.8	52mm f/2.4

FIGURE 2 - This table shows the names, 35 mm equivalent focal lengths, and apertures (f-stops) for the lenses found on several popular cell phone cameras. All things being equal, the smaller the aperture (larger numeric value) the greater the DOF. That is, lenses with f/2.0 to f/2.4 will have greater DOF than lenses with f/1.6-f/1.8. The WIDE lenses are the default lenses and have the largest aperture, trading DOF for better photos in low light.

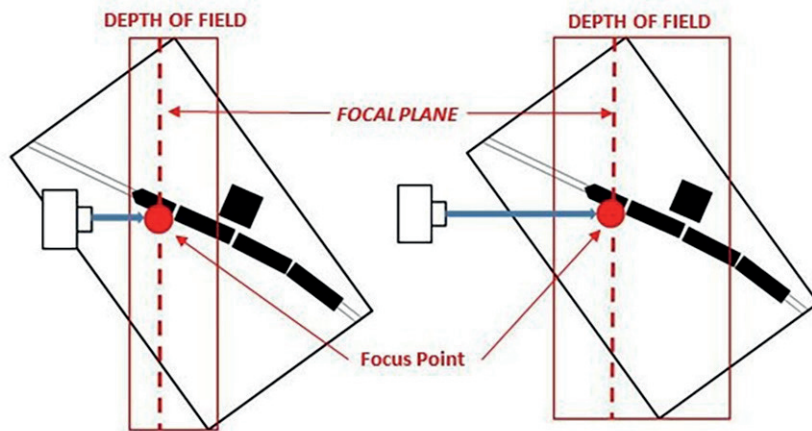


FIGURE 3 - In black is a small diorama with a train and switch tower. The red dot represents the 'focus point' where the camera is focused. The red dotted line is the theoretical 'focal plane' which is the only part of the image in perfect focus. The red rectangle, however, represents the Depth of Field (DOF), the area of the image that will be in 'acceptable' focus. Notice that 1/3 of the area in focus is in front of the focal plane and 2/3 is behind it. On the left, the camera is close to the focus point producing a shallower DOF than in the right hand example where the camera is positioned farther from the focus point. On the left, the locomotive and first car will be in focus, but the switch tower will not. In the right example, the engine and first two cars and the tower will be in focus plus some of the track in front of the engine.

DOF - The single biggest factor in determining the depth of field is the size of the opening, or aperture, of the lens. All other things being equal, the smaller the aperture, the greater the depth of field (see FIGURES 1 and 4). With a conventional camera lens and its adjustable aperture, the user selects the smallest one before shooting. Unfortunately, because of the extremely small size of phones, their apertures are not adjustable. It stands to reason that to get the largest DOF, we would want to use a phone with the smallest aperture we can find. And, in the case of phones that

have multiple lens, we want to use the lens on the phone with the smallest aperture. This sounds easy enough but, unfortunately, the apertures are not called out anywhere on cell phone cameras.

Apertures for each of the lenses of several popular cell phones are shown in FIGURE 2. Research will produce similar information for whatever phone you may have. Nomenclature for apertures, known as the 'f-stop', is confusing as the higher the number in the f-stop expression, the smaller the aperture. Looking at the table, then, the lenses with apertures of f/2.0 to

f/2.8 are smaller and will produce better DOF than lenses with apertures of f/1.6 to f/1.8.

Focus Point - A second factor affecting DOF is the distance from the camera to the object it is focused on (FIGURE 3). The closer the camera is to the focus point, the shallower the DOF will be. In any case, about 1/3 of the area in focus will be in front of the focus point and about 2/3 behind it. Fortunately, cell phone cameras make selecting the place where the camera will focus a simple matter of touching the screen at the desired point.

Phones with Multiple Lenses

Conventional cameras have one lens. If that lens is a so-called 'zoom lens', it is possible to change the angle of view from wide to narrow ("zoom in and out") by changing the focal length. This is done by physically moving the glass elements within the lens, hence the lens's relatively large size. There is no room for 'moving parts' in a cell phone and consequently their lenses have fixed focal lengths. For that reason, many phones now have a second, and sometimes a third or even fourth lens, each of a different, but fixed, focal length. While it appears to the user that he can zoom through a



FIGURE 4 - This image was taken using with the 26mm lens of an iPhone12 with its relatively large aperture of f/1.8. Both the foreground and background are out of focus and the train is out of focus from the tender rearward. The camera was focused on the smoke box. Compare the DOF to that in FIGURE 1.

continuum, the reality is the camera transitions from one lens to the next and uses ‘digital zoom’ (simply digitally enlarging the image) between them. When you select a level of zoom on a multi-lens phone, you have determined which lens the camera is using (FIGURE 5).

Understanding this is critical to getting quality layout photos from a multi-lens phone because, as we’ve seen, the lenses have different apertures and therefore produce different DOF.

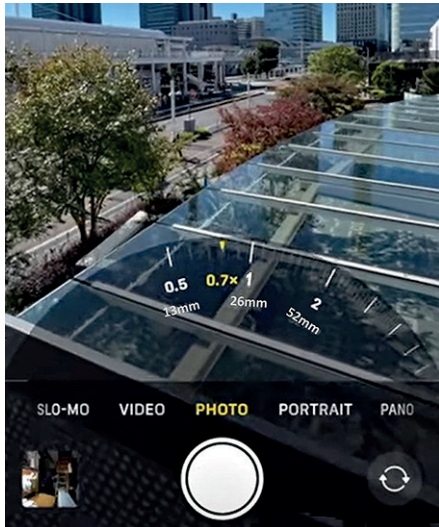


FIGURE 5 – This circular graphic appears on iPhones and is used to select zoom level. The white numbers (.5X, 1X and 2X) show the three lenses (13mm, 26mm and 52mm) and the yellow type shows the camera is “digitally zoomed” to .7X (about 18mm). Also shown are the 35mm equivalent focal lengths of each of the 3 lenses.

Getting the Most From Your Phone

If you have a single lens phone, your only control over DOF is the distance between the camera and the subject. Through experimentation, you can determine how far away you need to have the camera in order to get an acceptable DOF. Remember you can always crop off the unwanted parts of the image if you’ve had to move farther from the subject than you’d like. If you are buying a single lens phone, check the aperture size. Older phones often have smaller apertures than newer versions as most users want the



FIGURE 6 – This stunning desert scene of massive modern diesel power was captured by Craig Wright on his D&RGW layout. Craig used the camera in his Samsung S10 phone and the data shows the lens at 52mm and an aperture of f/2.4. This photo was featured in the NASG promotional ad that appeared in the September 2022 RMC.

improved low-light performance provided by “upgrading” to larger apertures, exactly the opposite of what DOF needs.

If you have a multi-lens phone, check the phone’s specifications to learn which of the lenses has the smallest aperture. Select that lens and frame the image by moving the camera in and out, remembering that farther away is better for DOF. If you choose to use the digital zoom feature, be sure that you do not transition to one of the other lenses with a larger aperture unless that’s your intention.

Now, there is no free lunch here. Often the lenses with the smallest apertures will be the ones with the widest fields of view. These ‘ultra wide’ (fisheye) lenses distort objects at the edges of the frame. In most cases it’s best to zoom in digitally, stopping just short of the transition to the ‘wide’ lens with its larger aperture. A notable exception is the Samsung S10 which has a small f/2.4 aperture on its 52mm lens...a great combination for layout photography. In any case, finding the right balance between aperture, level

of zoom and the camera-to-subject distance is a matter of experimentation, and some patience is required.

Post Processing

Most experienced model photographers use some ‘post processing’. Invariably, dark steam locomotives or other areas in shadow like freight car trucks, will benefit from lightening. So-called keystone distortion from wide angle lenses can be removed and white balance can be adjusted as well. Most phone cameras now include software for at least some basic manipulation of images to correct issues like these.

Image Resolution

At one time the number of megapixel a camera was capable of recording was all-important. Today’s cell phone cameras generally have sensors that create 6 megapixel images or more which, even when cropped substantially, produce photos with plenty of resolution for use in magazines. Just be sure when shooting

layout photos that you set the camera to record the maximum resolution images it's capable of recording.

Some Final Thoughts

It's fair to say that photographing S scale layouts would have been the last thing the designers of phone cameras would have had in mind. Cell phone cameras are primarily tailored for outdoor landscapes and taking snapshots of human activities as is evidenced by the focal lengths of the lenses being heavily shifted to wider angles. In fact, what iPhones call "Telephoto" is just a 'normal' lens by tradition. But if not asked to do things beyond their capabilities, cell phone cameras can be used to create some very nice layout images, images of high



FIGURE 7 – This photo by Bob Hogan was taken with the 29mm f/2.2 lens on his iPhone 6s Plus. It demonstrates that nice photos of individual models like those used in magazine how-to articles can be taken with phones. The focus point should be about where the SP logo is.



FIGURE 8 – Bob Hogan took this stunning image with an Apple iPhone 6s Plus using its 29mm lens with an f/2.2 aperture. This image is sharply focused from front to back and is presented here uncropped. The black trucks were lightened in Photoshop.

enough quality in terms of resolution, sharpness and color to be published in your favorite S scale magazine. I would not try to make the case that phone cameras can replace traditional digital cameras for ultimate image quality, but

they can produce satisfactory images for reproduction in smaller sizes.

MEMBERSHIP YEAR

The Membership Year is determined by the date that one enrolls, guaranteeing 6 issues, starting with the next issue. All applications, renewals and membership questions should be directed to:

NASG Membership Secretary

Dick Kramer

P.O.Box 268, Middlebury, CT 06762

e-mail: membership@nasg.org

CHANGES

Must be reported to Dick Kramer at the addresses above and received 30 days prior to publication of *The Dispatch*. No replacement issues sent after that.

DEADLINES

For time sensitive articles and advertising are:
November 15th for the January/February issue
January 15th for the March/April issue,
March 15th for the May/June issue,
May 15th for the July/August issue,
July 15th for the September/October issue and
October 15th for the November/December issue.

These dates are because of supply chain issues with coated paper used in publishing *The Dispatch*. We hope to shorten these deadlines in the future.

News Flash!

Mobley Library Update

I've added a new feature to the Library:

Measured Drawings of Prototype Rolling Stock

The Library page now has an Excel Spreadsheet that contains a list of available rolling stock drawings; so, if you find something you'd like to have, send me an email. If you need a drawing and it's not on the list let me know what you're looking for and I'll see if I can find one to add to the library. All drawings are the same size & format as when they were initially published; that means some are letter size, or maybe legal or tabloid (or larger) size. Drawings that were printed on multiple pages have been stitched together by me so that you won't have to do any cutting & pasting; I'll let you know what size they are when I email them to you. Tabloid and large sizes will have to be copied onto a thumb and taken to someplace like Staples to be printed. Non-S Scale drawings will be resized to reflect 3/16-inch equals 1-foot.

Dale Minard, NASG Mobley Library Librarian

A CALL FOR **AMERICAN FLYER** PHOTOS

By Brooks Stover / Photos by Austin Birkey



It's been my pleasure to coordinate the campaign that the NASG has been running on the inside cover of each issue of *Railroad Model Craftsman* since May 2022. In that campaign, a photo of exemplary S scale modeling is presented along with information about how to find out more about S scale modeling on the NASG website. Unfortunately, that campaign, and the limited amount of AF material in recent issues of *The Dispatch*, has led some American Flyer enthusiasts to conclude that the NASG's overall emphasis has shifted away from American Flyer and hi-rail modeling to scale modeling. That is not at all the case! Any shortage of AF material in *The Dispatch* is simply the result of AF members not submitting material. Dan Dawdy, *The Dispatch* editor, can only publish material he receives. As it says on the cover, the magazine is "of, by and for the members". There is no 'staff' writing for *The Dispatch*. All the material, be it AF, hi-rail or scale, comes from us, the members. So, consider this article an official 'call to service' for the NASG's AF community!

Crewmen exercise the age-old tradition of inspecting an 0-6-0 and 0-8-0 double heading a string of box cars as it rolls past. The clean backdrop focuses attention on the train and the arched passenger shed roof provides color and texture. This scene could have been in an AF catalog! The background 'clutter' of the original image was re-moved in Photoshop. Austin took the photo with his Google Pixel 5 phone.

Prime the Pump

To prime the pump, I set out to find an AF fan who would be willing to provide some photos of his layout for *The Dispatch* readers to enjoy. In the May/June 2023 issue, there was an interesting article by Austin Birkey, an enthusiastic AF collector and promoter who also happens to have an excellent YouTube channel (Austin's American Flyer trains). Austin graciously agreed to provide some additional photos of his layout.

What you see on these pages are photos that Austin took of his layout. They are interesting and instructive for several reasons. First, Austin's layout is not finished. There are places where bare plywood is visible, not all turnouts are wired, and in some places, structures aren't in their final positions.

Nonetheless, by carefully framing each scene, accenting the good and minimizing the rest, Austin has created some really nice images, several of them looking every bit like they leapt from the pages of an American Flyer catalog. In fact, AF catalogs from the 50s and 60s are great sources of inspiration for photos!

The photos are also interesting because they were taken with a cell phone camera. In this case, Austin uses a Google Pixel 5 which features two lenses, but all the makes of phones have very similar cameras. Elsewhere in this issue is an article that provides tips on getting the best possible images of models and layouts from a cell phone camera.

Creating a Good Photo

As we began working together, Austin asked me what to look for in the viewfinder when framing an image. First and foremost, a good photo needs to be uniformly lighted and the vast majority of the image needs to be in sharp focus. As for composition, there should be a clear 'main character' or event. The main subject should be near the center of the image, or situated so that your eye goes directly to it, and be in perfect focus. The story of what's happening should be clear...why was this photo taken? And, there should be very little in the image that doesn't relate to the story or theme. Avoid distracting backgrounds, a common problem in layout rooms, which often are filled with shelves of trains.

Strong graphic elements are desirable. Let the track or train form a strong diagonal or arrange structures and trains in dramatic geometric patterns. Finally, make sure things that are supposed to be vertical are vertical. Leaning trees, poles and figures will spoil an otherwise good image. The good news is that there'll naturally be lots

of color in a photo of AF equipment! Don't be afraid to try a little humor or whimsy; after all, these trains are for fun!

One last important point is that good photos are not often "found"—they must be created. By that I mean you will almost certainly need to move trains, vehicles, figures, and details around to create a nicely arranged scene in the camera. In some cases, moving objects just a few inches is all that's needed to avoid one thing hiding another or to get a splash of color in just the right place.

Additional information on composing layout images, and other aspects of digital photography, can be found in a 30-page "Model Railroaders Guide to Digital Photography," which I prepared a few years ago. The guide is available to read or download on the NASG website at: www.nasg.org/documents/ModelRailroadersGuideToPhotography.pdf

There are several software programs commonly used to make adjustments to photos after they've been taken. These adjustments are referred to as 'post processing'. Most phone cameras have

some basic post processing tools like brightening a dark image and cropping. Don't hesitate to use these tools to fine tune your images. The software program Photoshop was used to make adjustments to some of Austin's images presented here.

If you would like to share photos of your American Flyer trains with readers of *The Dispatch*, send them to Dan Dawdy, editor (dispatch@nasg.org), or Stephen Law, Ass't Editor for American Flyer/Hi-rail (doctorstephenlaw@gmail.com). Together let's make sure we have good images of American Flyer trains in every issue of *The Dispatch*!



BONUS VIDEO FEATURE

Austin Birkey has created a video on how he takes photos with his cell phone camera. The video is on his YouTube channel "Austins American Flyer trains". Be sure and check it out! <https://www.youtube.com/@AustinsAmericanFlyertrains>



A pair of T&P Geeps pushes a flat car loaded with 3D printed bumpers that Austin produces for sale while a colorful A-B-A Santa Fe PA set holds at the Mystic station. The graphic pattern of the track and the recurring blues and oranges, and a streak of yellow, create a striking image. The slightly higher vantage point was used to insure the shelves in the distance were not in the picture. The only post-processing adjustment made was cropping. Notice that the lighting is uniform across the entire image.



From Snap Shot to Composed Photo

by Austin Birkey

Figure A

While I'm new to taking photos of my American Flyer trains, and I still have a lot to learn, it's been a fun journey so far! One of the things I came to understand early on in reading the material Brooks Stover provided, and through exchanges with him, is the difference between a snap shot and a composed photograph. It is very easy to take a snap shot because all you do is point and shoot at an existing scene. But the results are often not very impressive. A composed photograph takes considerably more effort. Describing what was involved in creating the photograph of the smoking steam engine rolling through the grade crossing, Figure A (above), will clarify what I mean.

I have an AC Gilbert grade crossing located on a curve on the corner of my layout. There are lighted cross bucks on either side. My first photograph of this scene (Figure B—next page) was created by quickly positioning a train in the scene and snapping a photo. Notice that the ceiling of the room and the basement walls create a distracting background: the train is mostly blocked by the cross buck and the auto and shanty dominate the scene.

A second effort (Figure C—next page) improved things by raising the vantage point to have less of the distracting background visible. This also reduced the impact of the foreground shanty and crossbucks. However, the image is still a snapshot without a strong sense of what the photo is about. For one thing, the locomotive is going away from the viewer. I've come to appreciate that seeing the front of the locomotive is usually preferred.

When Brooks challenged me to think about what could be done to

make the image more dramatic, and based on some experiments I'd previously done using a black background, I came up with the following ideas. First, I wanted there to be smoke coming out of the steam engine, and the engine needed to be coming toward the viewer. Second, I wanted both the headlights in the engine and the cross-buck lights to be lit. I wanted to add one or two figures to add life and detail. I wanted to add some splashes of color that were purposefully arranged, and finally, I wanted to use a black back drop so the steam engine smoke would show.

And so I began a series of several photo sessions. After the first series of shots, I found too many issues: dirty crossing shanty, engines not properly positioned, backdrop gaps, switching tower roof crooked—things I never noticed until I began to look at the scene as more than a snap shot. So I fixed those issues and shot again. During each shoot, I paid attention to what my phone was doing with focus and magnification as I wanted a good depth of field, i.e., things in focus from the front to the back. I held my phone on a tripod so I could focus on what was in the viewfinder.

After completing my second session using varying magnification, angles and framing, I reviewed my pictures on my larger laptop screen, which made it even easier to see new opportunities. I realized that the second track presented an opportunity for another train. I picked NH diesels with their bold graphics, and a blue boxcar. In the final picture, notice the blue of the truck and the BM freight cars, the orange of the New Haven diesels and the distant New Haven box car and then the red box cars, red trim on the shanty and red crossing lights—these repeating colors help create movement throughout the picture.



Figure B



Figure C



(Left) A soldier says goodbye to his girl, an event oft repeated in train stations around the world. The shallow depth of field works in this case as the subjects are a uniform distance from the camera. The repeated reds and yellow echo the simplicity of the composition.

(Right) We can only publish American Flyer photos if we get them and if you don't submit a photo or two, who will?



Austin created this stunning view (above left and cover) of two locomotives awaiting departure under an AF passenger station. After taking the photo, it was discovered that two American Flyer catalogs (right) featured the same two locomotives on their covers! Post processing of Austin's image included cropping, adding the clouded sky, and adding lit headlights. American Flyer catalogs can be a great source of inspiration for photo ideas. Catalog covers copyright by Lionel Corporation.



This photo was a 2-pronged experiment. First Austin wanted to see if the three openings in the wall could contain three separate 'mini-scenes'. On the left is a small family 'greeting' a cow. In the middle are some passengers waiting for their train arriving behind a K-5. On the right is a worker sweeping out a box car. The second part of the experiment was to attempt a little humor...a family 'greeting' a cow in a passenger station! Each reader can decide how well the experiments worked. Austin made a detailed video showing exactly how he conceived and created this photograph. The video is can be viewed on his YouTube channel, "Austins American Flyer trains" or use this QR code (right).



The easiest photos to take are broad views such as this one that shows most of Austin's layout. Because the camera is so far from the subject, it's easier to get everything in focus. In this case, showing the trains displayed on the far wall are part of the story of what the layout room is like and add, rather than distract, from the image. The three bold water towers create a strong graphic element. The trains were carefully arranged for this photo as they always should be. Having the engine lights illuminated adds life to the scene. The only modifications were cropping.

Out Along The Line

photos by



NASG members

Dave Campbell

An American Flyer Santa freight rumbles through Hillside Junction on Dave Campbell's Fourville Branch Line. Meanwhile, a Baldwin switcher waits to move logs into the Hillside Lumber Mill and pickup the cut lumber. Structures and scenery are O scale to be compatible within AC Gilbert accessories. Track and turnouts are code 139 from S-Helper Service. Photo by Brooks Stover.

**SUPPORT THIS
NEW FEATURE**

If you have a favorite photo of your layout or an individual model, be it American Flyer, hi-rail or scale, we'd love for you to share it with readers of *The Dispatch*! Send photos to Brooks Stover at bestover@comcast.net. Be sure to include a caption.



Jim Martin

CNR H-6-d class Ten Wheeler 1533 is switching the fish plant on Jim Martin's Port Dover Branch layout. Just out of sight to the left, the tracks end at the beach on Lake Erie. Commercial fishing and tourism coexist here. The iconic Erie Beach hotel in the background is a great place for both rail and marine fans. 1533 is a brass kit from S Scale Locomotive & Supply, designed and built by Simon Parent. Trackage is a combination of code 83 Tomalco flex and FastTrack turnouts. The scenery base is two-inch foam insulation board. The turntable is a modified Heljan HO item, while the sheet aluminum backdrop is hand painted with photographic inserts. Photo by Jim Martin.



Classifieds

All NASG members may place non-commercial ads here at no charge. Ads are limited to 750 characters. Email ads to dispatch@nasg or mail to Dan Dawdy, 407 East Chippeawa St., Dwight, IL 60420. Include membership number. Ads will run three consecutive months unless canceled.

WANTED: American Models uncouplers and roadbed.
Fritz Raab, fraab@gmrr.biz, (515) 275-2141 (3)

Wanted: A) Pacific Rail Shops "SOO LINE Potato Car", Lake Special 1999 NASG Convention. B) SHS #00478, Reefer Unlettered – Orange. C) Crown Model Products undecorated refrigerator car shells. **Email: tpatterson31@wi.rr.com.** (3)

FOR SALE: FOR SALE: PHIO-R Wireless DCC System, 10 Amp P1018 Power Supply, America Models C & O 4-8-4 Steam Loco and Tender, 10 C & O , Coaches, S Helper 2-8-0 B & O w/ sound, 7 B & O American Models Budd Passenger cars, American Models FA-B & O Diesel set, American Models C & O FB "DX" AA Diesel set, C & O EMD Road Switcher, B & O, Baldwin S-12 Loco, Rex Engineering O-4-0 Switcher, Rex O-6-O Switcher, Rex O-6-O Mogul, (All Rex engines assembled and test run), 4 boxes o 48 " flexible track, 2 boxes of Showtime 15" straight track, 2 boxes Showtime 26 " radius curved track, 10 American Models freight cars, 25 S Helper freight cars, Lehigh Valley Models Valley Models Station kit, LMV2 Water Tank, LVM3 Coaling Station, Potomac Valley Norfolk Southern Sand House kit, 2 Pacific Rail Shop Fruit Express kits, 6 Sunshine Model kits, 6 Ambroid Model kits, 50 feet 125 ns rail mounted on Miller rubber tie strips, pair of 125 ns switches, 8 pks of 155 ns rail joiners, 6 pks KD style couplers card packs, 3 pks animals, park benches and passenger car figures, small 25 drawer cabinet with truck, misc. freight car parts and small wood working tools.

All must go. One Lump Sum.
tomlinsonz@aol.com, Proctorville, OH. (2)

WANTED: American Flyer UP SD70ace (non-power dmy) 6-48167 #8349
Charles Albietz, mjica@sbcglobal.net Email for discussion (1)

FOR SALE: For sale 9 copies of new book about railroad timetables. It opens with form and function; then photos of timetables, sample schedule, map and notes for each railroad. Ends with interesting tidbits. 46 B&W pages. Covers 26 RR and 56 TT. Period 1931 to 1970. 7 western, 13 eastern and 6 other subjects. For writing style see NASG website: model style-model with A.F.-Cinder Sam document. Price \$10, my cost to print, free postage USA. **Harry Noble**, 1124 Old Springfield Pike, Xenia, Ohio 45385. Phone 937-372-3908. (1)

FOR SALE: American Models (AM) PRR FM Trainmaster #8700, Scale DC w/Kadees, TRO \$275.00 - AM PRR FM Trainmaster #8702, Scale DC w/Kadees TRO \$275.00 - Both for \$525.00, AM Wabash FM Trainmaster #551, Hi-Rail DC TRO \$250.00, AM PRR EMD GP-9 #7016, Scale DC w/Kadees, Needs Handrails/Couplers Attached TRO \$175.00, AM PRR Alco FA-2 #9624 Scale DC with AM Couplers TRO \$200.00, AM IC Baldwin S12 #1502, Scale DC with AM Couplers, Missing 1 Cab Handrail \$150.00, AM BN EMD GP-35 #2507, Scale DC with Kadees NIB \$200.00, S Helper Service (SHS) BN EMD SW-8 #99, Hi-Rail TRO \$200.00 (Continued on next page)

Calendar of Events

S Fest West 2023

September 9th, 2023
Knott's Berry Farm Hotel, 7675 Crescent Ave., Buena Park CA 90620 Hosted by the Southern California S Gaugers Club:
Trading, Raffles, Layouts, Banquet Speaker
For more information Email: SoCalSGC@yahoo.com or visit:
www.SoCalSGaugers.org

Fall S-Fest 2023

November 2-5, 2023
Georgios Banquets Quality Inn & Suites Conference Center
8800 W. 159th St., Orland Park, IL
110 tables of Flyer and S scale. Two S-Fest 2023
Commemorative Cars by American Models
Home layout tours. Call Joel Lebovitz at: 847-212-3541

The Barry King Memorial Train Show

Oct. 16, 17, 18, 2023 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Reliance Fire Hall, 1341 West Market St., York, Pa 17404|
This York tradition continues with all the dealers you are looking

for with American Flyer, American Flyer Parts, American Flyer HO, Lionel, Marx, Plasticville, and Marklin. Free admission, free off-street parking, rain or shine.
FLYER-NUT Meeting Thursday OCT. 19, 2023 7:30-9:30 p.m.
at Reliance Fire Hall. For info email: trainsmore@aol.com.

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American Flyer/Lionel (AF/L) CB&Q EMD SD-9 #373, Repair Step with AF/L CB&Q Wide Vision Caboose New In Box (NIB) Both \$240.00, AF/L BN EMD GP-20 #8007, Box Damage with AF/L BN Square Window Caboose Both for \$225.00, AFL AT&SF Dockside Set, Display Only \$ 275.00, AF/L U S A F Set, Display Only \$300.00, AF/L 1991 to 2020 Christmas Box Cars, Used or NIB \$40.00 Each. Shipping Included. Will Consider Trades. Ask About Purchasing Decade (10) Sets or All 30 Christmas Cars. If you are looking for something in particular, ask. **Will Holt, williamholt@comcast.net, 630-881-9025.** (1)

FOR SALE: American Flyer post-war catalogs: 1964 X264-6, Consumer catalog, P-9, \$12; 1965 X165-12 REV, Revised Dealer catalog, P-9, \$8; American Flyer by Lionel 48359 Happy Holiday boxcar, C-10 Mint, \$30 + shipping; American Flyer 802 Illinois Central reefer, C-6, \$8 + shipping, no box” and “American Flyer by Lionel 48269 ATSF Grand Canyon reefer, C-10, \$60 + shipping, factory sealed carton.” Also, add “American Flyer M2984 Instruction Book, P-7, \$3 free shipping.” Email: t916-429-2764, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm PST. (1)

Contributing Members As Of June 30, 2023

Allen L. Ambler
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Al Baker
Kenneth Baker
Jeff Bakst
David T. Belusko
Jon R. Beveridge
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New Members

May 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023

American Mode	Grand Forks, ND
Joseph Baio	Whitmore Lake, MI
David Clark	Millerton, NY
Bill Clausing	Severn, MD
John Crandley	Englewood, OH
Kevin L. Curry	Sacramento, CA
Brian L. Dow	Joppa, MD
David C. Garnes	Poughkeepsie, NY
Hakkarinen, William	Bedford, TX
Dave Hunt	Mechanicsburg, PA
Tom E. Hutton	Cockeysville, MD
Thomas Keegan	Earlville, IL
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Ed J. Vallier	Freemansburg, PA
Ronnie D. Wallace	Port Orchard, WA
Larry Youngberg	Morgan Hill, CA
Jeffrey C. Zimmerman	Levelland, TX

Let's all reach out and extend a warm welcome to these new members!



In Memoriam

Rick Fritz	Dawson, NE
Dan Olson	Lake Forest Park, WA

The NASG extends sincere condolences to the family and friends of these members.

James Scarsella	Colin Stewart
Douglas A. Schleef	G. Leigh Swanson
Larry Schliessmann	Louis E. Templeton III
John F. Shirey	The Model Railroad Resource LLC
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