# The Crossbuck

**THE OSWEGO VALLEY RAILROAD ASSOCIATION**

**Newsletter, January 2025, Volume 3, #1, Kent Dristle editor**

**PO. Box 205, New Haven, New York 13121-0205**


## Report from the Train Shows

Just as in recent years, OVRRA exhibited in the holiday season's train shows for 2024, but there were some important differences. Recalling how exhausted many of us felt last year in November, this time around members voted NOT to take an operating layout to the Syracuse Model Train Fair at the State Fairgrounds this year. Instead, we opted for a static display that incorporated just the Parkway Bridge module along with two raffle items, a large quilted throw and a framed drawing of a New York Central Hudson steam locomotive. This afforded us the opportunity to talk to the general public about our club, and in particular our efforts to renovate the Grange building that will become our new home. In this way, the members of the public could see how we would use the donations we collected and it also made it easier for us to sell our raffle tickets.

*Figure 1: Raffle item: Framed New York Central Hudson Drawing*

The following weekend of November 9-10 we hosted our 42nd annual Holiday Express Train Show at the Volney Volunteer Fire House. As happened with our spring show, we had to shorten our layout from 32 feet in length to 28 feet to accommodate extra tables for vendors. Again, all table space was sold out! Combined raffle ticket sales income for both the State Fair show and the Volney show amounted to $375. Net income for the Volney show this year came in at $2354.00. Total attendance for the weekend came to 457 people. After talking with the show vendors, club secretary Charlie Hewlett commented that our train show in Volney is regarded as a "friendly" show. Apparently, we're not too big or impersonal. We must be doing something right as the vendors and the public keep coming back. We also had an enthusiastic group of youngsters who had purchased engines and rolling stock from the vendors and wanted to learn how to run them on our layout. It was a bit of a challenge for some of our adult club members to help as many as four kids at once manage their excitement. One thing that came out of this was the decision to remove the backdrops from our modules to help all of us, both kids and adults, keep our eyes on our trains and spot problems such as derailments and uncouplings, and to deal with them quickly and effectively.

On the weekend of December 7-8, OVRRA set up our layout in the basement of Washington Hall as part of the Christmas in Mexico celebration. Here, the decision to remove the backdrops paid off nicely for us. We now have

*Figure 2: Modules set up at Christmas in Mexico with the backdrops removed for better visibility.*

clear visibility of our trains at all times from both inside and outside of the big oval. Christmas in Mexico is not a money maker for us. Admission is free.

We see it as a fun time and an opportunity to fulfill our community service obligation. It's also special in the sense that members of the general public can come in and enjoy our displays, learn about the hobby of model railroading, and learn about us and our activities without the distraction of other things happening in the same room. Shawn Connelly brought his "carnival" module to both the Volney show and the Mexico show. It was a big hit in both settings. And even after being a part of our layout now for five years, the "Parkway bridge" module continues to generate interest, a few laughs, and endless proposals for how the State should "fix" the problem of overheight trucks crashing into the bridge. Interest in our club continues to grow—so much so that Charlie ran out of club membership application forms on Saturday at the Mexico show.

And now as another year's worth of train shows comes to an end, OVRRA wishes a happy holiday season and extends wishes for a prosperous new year to all its members and all other folks who are reading this newsletter. ■

# Update on Renovations at the Grange

During the last quarter of 2024, OVRRA members are still hard at work, preparing the first floor of the Mt. Pleasant Grange building so that it can become our organization's new home. With the painting of the newly sheetrocked walls completed, we moved on to installing the drop ceiling in the large meeting room and well as in two of the smaller rooms in the front of the building.

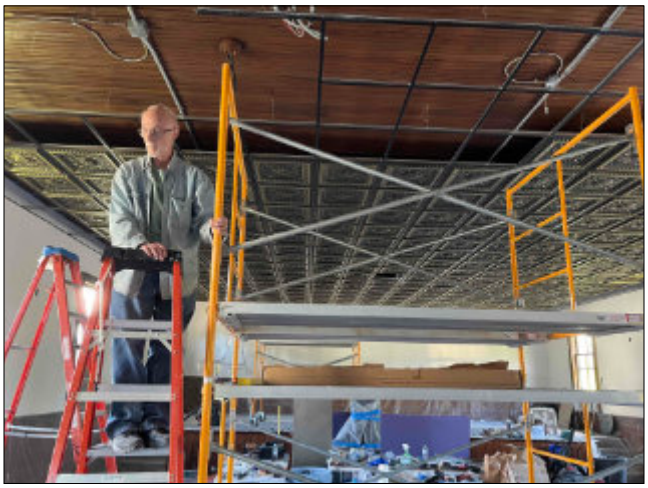


*Figure 3: Ceiling grid and tile installation*

The elaborate, deeply embossed ceiling tiles are certainly beautiful when used as whole tiles, but cutting them to fit around the borders of room turned out to be aesthetically and practically undoable. Therefore, the Grange president Pam Mossotti purchased a set of relatively flat tiles that look like hammered brass to use around the borders. This turned out to be a good solution.

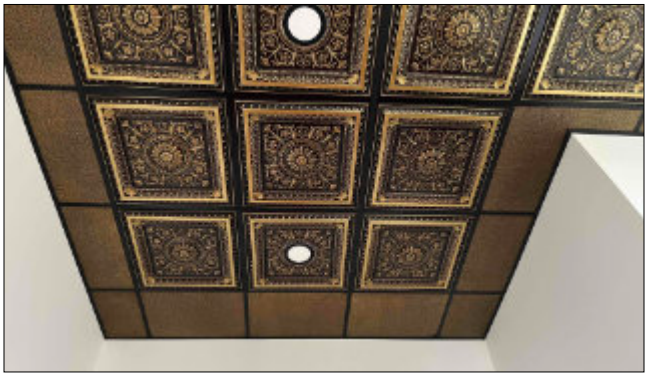


*Figure 4: Border tile effect in Office ceiling*

Pam's brother Bob Thorpe, our "resident" electrician, continued his extensive rewiring of the first floor. It now includes illuminated "Exit" signs, emergency lights, and smoke detectors, as well as a combination of antique style pendant lights and more modern recessed LED fixtures. All the floors (except in the basement) were sanded down and initial coats of floor finish were applied. The top coat will be applied after the building is heated to a high enough temperature for the finish to properly set up and cure.

OVRRA members have started work on an access ramp that, when finished, will lead from ground level next to the parking lot all the way up to a platform in front of the double door main entrance. Due to our late start on this aspect of the project, we don't expect to have the ramp system entirely finished until after the weather breaks in the spring. For now, we want to be able to pull a truck up to what we call the "first landing" where a ramp from the truck can meet that landing and enable us to load and unload our modules for transport in and out of the building.

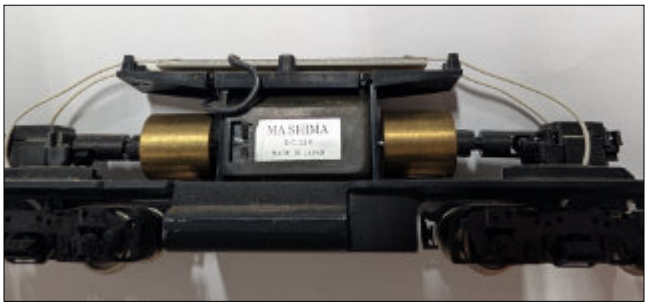
*Figure 5: Entry platform and first ramp section under construction*

So when does OVRRA get to move into the Grange? Two things have to happen first: The installation of the heating system must be completed and operational and the final coat of floor finish must be applied and cured. Even after we are moved in, there will still be work to be completed. New and refurbished moldings will have to be installed and insulation must go into the attic above first floor rooms.. When warmer weather arrives in the spring, the access ramp system will need to be completed. We will also be responsible for routine building maintenance.■

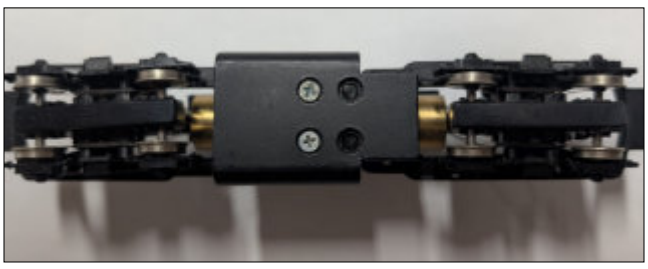
# The Stuff You Find!

**By Steve Rogers**

Over the past few years I have amassed a large number of HO scale locomotives and rolling stock from estates, purchased from other enthusiasts, or some have been given to me. Every show I attend I seem to have someone tell me, "I found this in the attic" or "this was in a bunch of (name another scale) stuff, do you want it?" Usually the items are from Bachmann, Life-Like, or Tyco train sets from the 1970's or 1980's along with the steel or brass sectional track, power pack, and any accessories that were included in the set. I have been sorting through the dozens of locomotives that have accumulated on two tables in by basement train room and workshop. I came across a locomotive chassis that I had given the once over a couple of times before and had decided it was a re-motored Athearn due to the Mashima can motor and the drive line setup. I put it on my 4' x 8' HO DC layout that I build with my son when he was 10 or so and use as a test track, it ran beautifully!




As I really looked it over I noticed the bottom of the trucks had "Pat Pend TAPP USA" cast into the plastic on the bottom of each truck, these are not Athearn trucks. I did a "Google" search and found a thread on a *Model Railroader* Forum that mentioned a company named Front Range Products that produced HO locomotives in the mid to late 1980's using parts from other manufacturers, mostly Athearn, to produce a more reliable and smoother running locomotive than the old blue box Athearn coffee grinders are.

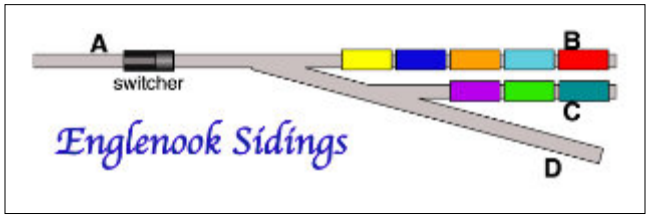


My next stop on the internet information extravaganza was HO Seeker, an unbelievable source of information on just about any manufacturer of HO scale items since the 1930's. Diagrams, catalogues, and lost of good information. If you have any instruction sheets, diagrams, or old catalogues, you can scan them and send them to the web master to be added to the literature collection. There are catalogs form 1987 and 1988 and a letter and product price list from 1989 in the HO Seeker collection. I also found an ad in the August 1989 *Model Railroader*.

Front Range produced GP9 and GP30 units in several different liveries as well as some rolling stock. I do not know what body shell goes with the chassis, I have almost a dozen Athearn body shells, but none in the roads or GP7-GP9, or GP30 that are listed in the Front Range literature. In one of the Front Range catalogues it was mentioned that the company was looking into using a different manufacturer's body shell, so I am not sure what I am even looking for. Basically a pair Kadee No.5's and a shell that fits and I will have another locomotive for the collection of for sale at a show.■

# Switching Puzzle #7
# The Inglenook, Revisited

In the July 2024 issue of *The Crossbuck*, we introduced you to Inglenook switching puzzles. The puzzle in that issue (puzzle #5) had some challenge to it, but it was relatively easy as Inglenook style puzzles go. This one, (puzzle #7) is a bit more difficult.




See if you can get the cars into the following order behind the engine: Dark green, orange, purple, red, yellow. Recall that track A (the headshunt track) has a maximum capacity of the engine plus 3 cars. The capacities of the other tracks are as follows: track B-5cars, track C-3 cars and track D-3 cars. ■

# Building with Cardstock
## by Kent Dristle

At one time, heavy card or cardstock was the go-to material for model railroaders who wanted to have scale model structures on their layouts. It's true, there were a few plastic structure kits around in those days—the Revell train station, the Atlas water tower and trackside shanty, but if you wanted to model industrial buildings or cityscapes, you were pretty much on your own. During that time period, *Model Railroader* magazine would often publish scaled drawings of prototype buildings and gave modelers permission to photocopy them to use as templates or even cut out and glue onto heavy card backing to create a useable model, but the end result still fell short of the level of realism found in the scale model engines and rolling stock that ran on the tracks.

Then, starting in the 1980s and especially in the '90s a large number of highly detailed styrene plastic structure models hit the market. Today, model railroaders can populate their layouts with high quality structure kits from the Walther's Cornerstone series, Design Preservation Models, Rix, and Smalltown USA, not to mention European suppliers such as Faller, Vollmer, and Kibri. Although the relief and detail found in these kits is remarkably good, they have one glaring drawback—namely that plastic shine! To get rid of it, the conscientious modeler must foster their skills in weathering techniques. (We plan to have an article on weathering in a future issue of *The Crossbuck*.)

Then, from about the mid 1990s and onwards through the 2000s computers and home printers became commonplace, along with their photo editing and drawing software capabilities. Strange as it might seem, the time was ripe for a resurgence of the cardstock model, except that this time around, it would take advantage of all that modern technology and appear *photo-realistic* right down to the effects of age and weather!

Here are some examples: My own first modern cardstock model is this "concrete" loading platform. It was a freebie from teamtrackmodels.com intended to introduce cardstock construction to those who had never tried it before. You download a pdf file containing all the images of the top and sides of the loading dock. You also download the instruction sheets.

*Figure 6: Cardstock model of a concrete loading dock*

The procedure is this: You carefully cut out the shapes of the image with a very sharp hobby knife. Then glue them to pieces of mat board or heavy card. What kind of glue? You may use glue sticks (the extra strength kind), PVA glue such as Elmer's (use the stronger version called "Glue All"), or the extra thick kind of CA glue (although it costs more, try to get the hypoallergenic kind). You may want to color the cut edges of the paper where they will show, such as on corners *before* you glue the paper on. What to color it with? Try a very light application of ink from a marking pen. Test it first on a scrap piece of paper first to check the color and to be sure the paper won't wick up too much ink. I use a set of Marvy Le Plume markers that come in a wide variety of colors. What about modeling paint? I've used that too but you may have to mix a custom color. In any event, you're going to use very, very little marking pen or paint because the highly detailed color image of the sides of the structure are already printed on the paper you cut out. It's only the raw cut edges that need this extra attention.

*Figure 7: Coal dealer office*

Another freebie was this masonry office building for a small coal dealer. This one came from a UK firm called scalescenes.com. This one was so well designed that nearly all of the cut edges are hidden. If you cut carefully and glue the paper to the correctly sized mat or cardstock, everything will fit together nicely. Of course there are larger structures available but they are rarely freebies. Even so, the cost to purchase the pdf download is considerably less than what you'd pay for an equivalently sized styrene or wood craftsman kit structure. If you make a mistake with one of these cardstock/paper models, there's nothing you have to repurchase. You've already paid for and downloaded the image files. You just print another copy and try again. One thing you should *not* do is give or sell the image files to a friend. That's considered stealing. You certainly may share the company's website address with others, like I'm doing in this article. In this way, the designers can benefit from your friends' business as well as from yours.


*Figure 8: Clever Models modular warehouse structure A mirror was used beneath the "bridge" between the warehouse and office structures*

Cardstock modeling never really fell out of favor in the UK like it did here in the USA. You will find a wide variety of UK companies selling cardstock structure images to customers on both sides of the pond. Don't let the fact that many UK cardstock images are sized for OO scale (1:76). They all come with directions for how to rescale the pictures when you print them so they come out in HO scale (1:87) or whatever other scale you are using. Here in the U.S. probably the company with the largest selection of paper/cardstock models is Clever Models (clevermodels.squarespace.com) with over 30 different structure kits and close to 150 different "textures" which are pattern sheets featuring images of brick, tile, various roofing materials, siding materials, wall coverings, flooring, and more. Figure 8 shows a photo of the Maple Leaf Paper Products building complex is a modular structure on my own home layout from Clever Models.


*Figure 9: Crystal Lake Bank from the Illinois Historical Society Collection*

Another great source of free paper/cardstock model kits is the Illinois Historical Society's historic building series (https://dnrhistoric.illinois.gov/preserve/construct-mainstreet.html). Here you find a collection of city buildings, historic homes, a state house, banks, a museum, and a train depot. Pictured here is the Crystal Lake Bank from that collection. Just be aware that the buildings in this collection have not been selectively compressed as are so many model railroad structures. They are faithful scaled representations of the actual buildings and can have very large footprints. Therefore, you may find that they absolutely dominate any scene you place them in. Depending upon how adept you are with photo-editing software, you are free to "shorten" or otherwise adapt the buildings to fit into smaller spaces while still keeping them in HO scale (or whatever other scale you model in) by reducing the building's depth or length.

Constructing a cardstock model is a bit different from building a plastic or even wood kit structure. It's always important to use a sharp hobby knife when cutting out parts, but nowhere else is this more important than when working with paper and cardstock. The last thing you want to do is to tear the fibers of the paper or card with a dull knife blade. You will have to change blades far more often than you are used to. Your cuts must be very precise. Use a magnifier and take your time. Expect that it will take you at least twice as long to build a cardstock structure as compared to a similarly sized plastic kit. You can compensate for the paper's lack of texture or relief by layering your model. For example, when I built the cardstock school building I printed each façade several time over. On one layer, I just used the doors and windows and glued them behind the cut-out openings in the next layer. I also cut out a separate layer for all the pilasters. Lintels over doors and windows and sills can also be on a separate layer. The building cornice is also constructed separately and then glued over the top of the main wall. Other touches that add realism include adding light fixtures over doors, vents and ductwork on the roofs, and custom signage. These extras don't have to made from cardstock. It's your model. You can use white metal castings, plastic parts, or even strip wood if you wish. There are many structures on layouts that are made of composite materials.

What I like most about cardstock modeling is that you end up with structures that people will look at with some curiosity or even amazement. I will hear people say, "Where did you get that?" or "The weathering on that building is just spot on!" That's when I explain to them it's made from paper and cardstock (which also amazes them) and that the weathering effects are all part of the image on the paper. I also like the low cost of paper/cardstock models and that, too, is a great selling point.

As good as they are, Walther's Cornerstone buildings seem to be popping up on layouts everywhere. I like for my layout to not look like yet another incarnation of someone else's layout. Perhaps, you feel that way too. I'd encourage you to get one of the cardstock freebies that are out there and give it try. ■

**OVRRA has a new website:**

ovrra.org

Concurrent with the release of our new website, we now have the ability to accept electronic donations!

**Help keep the trains running!**

**Make a donation to OVRRA.**

**Scan the QR code to the right.**

## "Oscar" and "Piker", the Shortest Passenger Cars—Ever!

**By Kent Dristle**

Coming in at a scale length of 21 feet each, Oscar and Piker never fail to bring a smile to the faces of almost anyone who has seen them. They are a definitely the shortest model passenger cars to be found. They look just like the standard heavyweight passenger cars of the early twentieth century, all except for their astonishingly short length. And when it comes to tight radius curves, no problem! They can go anywhere. People often ask me, are they based on a prototype? Was there a special car, perhaps for the railroad's president? Or were they salvaged ends of coaches that were in a train wreck? The answer to all of these questions is "No." Nothing as short as this ever existed in the real world. Nevertheless, there's a fun story behind the creation of these models which begins in the late 1950s.

According to Daniel Larkee in the customer service division of the Wm. K. Walthers Co., there was a group of O scale model railroaders from the Fox Valley area of Wisconsin who custom built a very short passenger car they named "General Atkins". When their friend Wm. K. Walthers entered the hospital, they decided to present their creation to him. Upon seeing it, it was said that he was inspired to create one of his own. At that time, Walthers had a passenger car kit on the market that made use of metal sides and a Northeastern Scale Lumber clerestory roof. These roof sections were milled in 25" lengths which could be cut into two 11" lengths to be packed into the HO scale kits. That left a 3" scrap piece, which was the perfect size for a very short HO scale passenger car like the General Atkins. And so "Piker" was born and first appeared in the 1960 edition of the Walthers catalog, the O scale model selling for $6.95 and the HO for $2.95. Several years later the miniature platform observation car, "Oscar" hit the market, selling for $4.25. They were a hit with modelers and stayed in production through the '70s and on into the '80s.

Oscar and Piker had a second incarnation as ready to run plastic passenger cars, actually Walthers very first such fully assembled passenger cars, appearing first in the year 2000 Walthers Catalog. They came in a variety of road names and featured full interiors. According to Larkee, they paved the way for Walthers current Proto HO scale name trains. Sadly, this more recent version of Oscar and Piker is also out of production at Walthers, but they do turn up frequently on the used market. I bought mine on eBay just a few years ago. Mine came with only some minor damage. I repainted and decaled them in "Middle Atlantic" which is my own freelance road. Soon after, I wanted to make up a whole train of shorty cars so I got to work kit-bashing some old Penn Line coaches. I ended up with two which I named "Quincy" and "Regina", one of which was a diner. To round out the collection, I kit-bashed two more cars together, namely a coach which I named "Sophie" and a no-name baggage car.

Back in 1960, Walthers intended the original Oscar and Piker to serve as an introduction to the passenger car kit-building process. In a similar way, I would envision my creation of additional shorty cars like Oscar and Piker to be a great introduction to kit-bashing, especially for kids who would like to get started in that aspect of the hobby. Happy model railroading! ■

# O & W Railroad History: The Chocolate Train Wreck

At 9 pm on September 29, 1955, citizens of the community of Hamilton, NY were startled to discover that an Ontario & Western train had derailed right within their town, demolishing a coal shed and sending the engine flying into the garden of a family living nearby. Much to the delight of children (and more than a few adults) one of the derailed cars had split open spilling its sweet contents on the ground. That car had come from Fulton's Nestle chocolate plant. It had been carrying Nestle crunch bars, chocolate chips, and bulk cocoa. Many youngsters helped themselves to the sweet treats as onlookers turned a blind eye until authorities put a stop to the looting. A total of seven cars had derailed, not to mention the engine which reportedly had become airborne, traversing 100 feet before landing upright on the ground. Fortunately, no one was killed. The engineer and fireman had leaped from the train before the crash and were taken to a local hospital with only minor injuries. Neither were the other two train crew members seriously hurt.

So what had happened? Apparently, the train had picked the switch to the siding leading to the Leland coal shed. The weather was rainy that night and by the time the engineer saw the condition of the switch, it was too late to be able to stop the train in time. It was reported that another train like this one, on its way to Norwich, had gone through the same switch earlier that evening without incident. Suspicions were cast upon a few individuals from the town but no one was ever publicly charged with tampering with the switch.

The first official commemoration of the wreck occurred in 1995 on the 60th anniversary of the event. In addition, a model of the chocolate wreck was constructed as part of an exhibit of the O&W railroad for the Hamilton Museum. Then, in 2012, a yearly celebration commenced called the Great Chocolate Wrecktoberfest sponsored by the Good Nature Farm Brewery and Tap Room. It's hard to find reports of another train wreck quite like this one that can be unabashedly celebrated. No deaths, no one seriously hurt, and sweet treats in abundance! ■

References:
"Wrecktoberfest remembers 1955 train crash that spilled chocolate in Hamilton", *Utica Observer Dispatch*, Maria Silva, Sept 9, 2022
"A Brief History of the Annual Great Chocolate Train Wreck Festival", *Bookstore Times*, Colgate University, Lauren Marshall, Sept 18, 2015
"The Chocolate Wreck: A Crash That Made National History", *The Colgate Maroon-News*, Brandy Bones, Oct. 14, 2014.

**OVRRA also has a facebook page**

**www.facebook.com/OVRRAinc**

## Membership Dues for 2025

| | |
|---|---|
| Regular members | $24/year |
| Family membership | $48/year |
| Junior member | $12/year |
| Youth member | $12/year |
| Associate member | $12/year |

If made in a single payment before the March meeting, you are eligible for a 30% discount.

## A Comparison of North American and European Railroad Terms

| U.S. and Canada | Europe |
|---|---|
| railroad | railway |
| engineer | Locomotive driver |
| freight car, passenger car | wagon (freight), car (passenger) |
| switching | shunting |
| cross ties | sleepers |
| Conductor | Conductor (but with fewer duties), guard |
| Inter-urban or streetcar line | tramway |
| train station | railway station |

Reference: *The Railway Dictionary* by Alan A. Jackson, Wrens Park Publishing, ©1992 Alan A. Jackson

**Officers and at-large Board members will be elected at the January business meeting. If you want to run for office, please let us know ASAP.**

# Solution to Puzzle #6

(from the October ‘24 issue of *The Crossbuck*)

We begin by moving the engine backward to clear the switch, then throwing the switch so the engine can move forward out onto track B, where it couples onto the light blue car. The engine backs up with the light blue car only (leaving the green car on B) and backs into track C. The switch is thrown and the engine moves forward with the light blue car, leaving it on track D. The engine runs around the light blue car using track F. The engine backs into the light blue, and leaves it off at the end of track C. Now the engine moves forward onto F, then backs into track G and couples to the dark blue car. It moves forward with the dark blue car until it clears the switch, then the switch is thrown and the engine backs the dark blue car into track C until it couples with the light blue car. Then the engine pulls forward with both the dark blue and light blue cars onto track F, moving as far forward as it can go without coupling onto the white car. The light blue car should have cleared the switch, which is now thrown and the engine backs the light blue and dark blue cars onto track G which fills that track to capacity. The light blue car will stay there. The dark blue car will be left there for now and moved into its final position later.

The engine (only) moves forward onto F, then back onto C, then forward onto track B where it couples on to the green car. The engine now backs onto track C until the green car clears the switch. The switch is thrown and the engine pushes the green car onto track D. The green car is left on track D while the engine uses tracks C, F, and E to run around to the other side of the green car. The engine couples to the green car and backs it onto track C until the engine clears the switch. Then the engine pulls the green car forward onto track B until the car clears the switch. The engine backs the green car onto track A, where it couples to the red car. Now the consist of engine, green car, and red car pull forward onto track B. They should all just fit as the red car clears the switch. Now the engine backs the consist onto track C, where the red car will be uncoupled. Now the engine takes the green car forward back to track B, then back up onto track A where it leaves it off. Now the engine returns by itself to track C where it couples onto the red car. The engine moves forward and leaves the red car on track D. The engine runs around to the other side of the red car, pulls it out from track D, then pushes the red car forward onto track B, where it leaves it off.

The engine now goes back to pick up the white car on track E. The engine backs the white car onto track D and leaves it. The engine runs around the white car and pushes it onto track C, leaving it off at the end of the track. Now the engine goes back to retrieve the dark blue car which it left off earlier on track G. The dark blue car is uncoupled from the light blue car. The light blue car if left on track G. The engine pulls forward with the dark blue car on track F and then onto track E. When the dark blue car clears the switch, the engine backs the dark blue car onto track D. Now the engine uncouples from the blue car and using switch back maneuvers goes to its final position on track A. Done! ■

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