

O Scale Trains



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*Celebrating
the art of
1:48 modeling*

US \$ 7.⁵⁰ • Can \$ 10.⁵⁰ Display until
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THE SOUTHERN O SCALERS

GENE CLEMENTS AND DAN MASON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GENE CEMENTS, CHRIS WEBSTER, AND OVIDIU TRIFANESCU

The name says it all. "Southern" for the club's location in the northwest Atlanta metropolitan area (not the Southern railroad), and "O Scalpers" to describe the people, people who build and operate 1/48 scale equipment to the standards we are all familiar with. The 1999 National O Scale Convention in Atlanta was the first inspiration to form the Southern O Scalpers, and it was in 2001 when several in the area gathered for an organizational meeting at Dan Mason's house. We started with four members, Dan Mason, Richard Morhard, Bob Peppel and Gordon Ralph. Since then, we have shown our layout at over 40 shows in the Southeast, and have been awarded Best-of-Show at many. Our club continues to grow with a present membership roster of ten members. It is not necessary to be an O Scale two-rail modeler to become a member of the club. There are several members who model in other scales and others who might be called railroad enthusiasts who enjoy the fellowship and what is possible in our O Scale world.

The club's purpose is to show the public and modelers in other scales two-rail O Scale model railroading, and to create an informal setting for members to meet, model, and assist each other with their various projects and enjoying the hobby. Currently meetings are held at least once per month where the layout is housed, assembled and operating in an upstairs office of member Dan Mason, when not out on tour. Being modular in construction, it is transported to and operated at special events by the membership which, in itself, qualifies as an informal meeting. In actuality, there are two layouts that can be displayed. At the 2017 O Scale South meet in Atlanta, the layout you see in these photos was open to show-goers in its home while the second, a smaller but expandable oval design, was on display in the show venue.

The Layout

As noted earlier, the layout is of modular construction in order to facilitate transport and setup. After reviewing numerous two- and three-rail module designs, we settled on the C.H.A.O.S (Chicago Association of O Scalpers) module design that appeared in a four-part series by Dave Miecznikowski in *O Scale News* (#97-100) in 1988-1989. We felt this particular design represented the best ultra-light design and construction in the O Scale world at the time. Rather than allowing each member to interpret the somewhat complicated plans for the modules, we chose to enroll Don Boyer, a meticulous wood craftsman, into our club. Over a period of time we developed the final plans for the modules that were approved by the rest of the members.

The usual display configuration is of multiple modules attached together to form an 18' x 45' double-track oval layout. All modules are fully scenic'd and set in the timeframe of the 1930s forward. Several of the modules do belong to individual members, though it isn't a requirement for club membership.

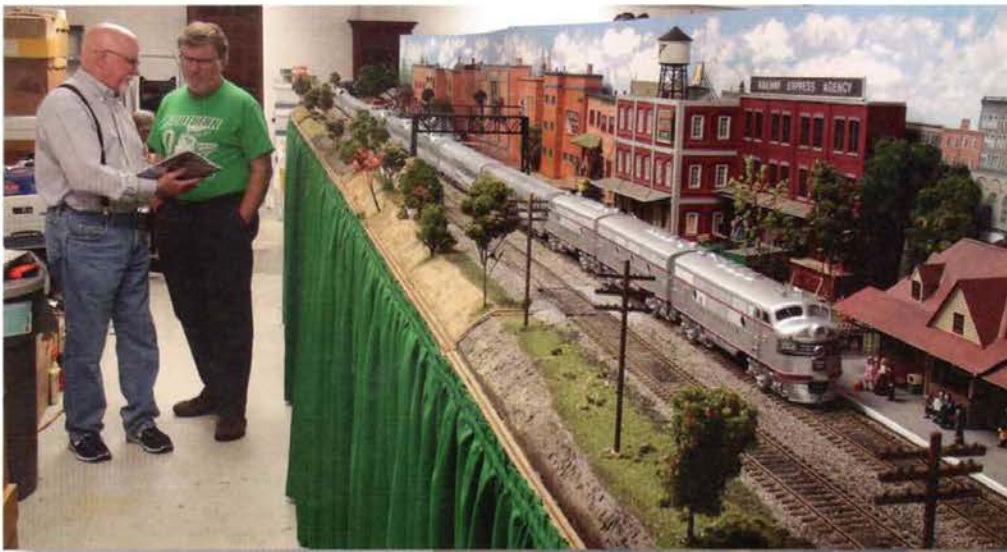
The basic structure is of lauan plywood and two-inch

foam-board, chosen for lightness and stiffness. Our module construction includes folding legs that are permanently attached to the module, a front and rear fascia design for skirting and backdrop placement, and front plexi-glass protection from overzealous viewers. The minimum radius is set at 84", which allows the largest steam locomotives and longest rolling stock to operate without severe overhang. Track height is approximately 52" from the floor which allows an adult to get up close and personal with the trains in operation. We use cork roadbed with Atlas Code 148 flextrack and Atlas #5 and #6 switches. The modules are landscaped using carved foam with a variety of commercial scenery materials and hundreds of trees from many manufacturers. There are two modified modules, built by member Richard Morhard, that assemble into a small yard configuration, and a special curved module with a lift off mountain and tunnel portals built by member Gordon Ralph.

We have tried just about every control/throttle system, including DCS, TMCC, DC, and DCC. Our opinion is that DCC and DC are the most reliable for our railroad in a commercial show environment. We use two NCE ten-amp power supplies with NCE wireless throttles. Many of our DCC engines have NCE, Digitrax, Soundtraxx/Tsunami, ESU-Lok-Sound, and QSI decoders. Each mainline track can be operated separately using either DC or DCC, depending on the locomotive's requirements and capabilities. The DC throttles are also wireless, allowing operators to walk around the layout with their trains. Under the modules we use 14-16 gauge color-coded wiring, two circuits for track power and one accessory power circuit.

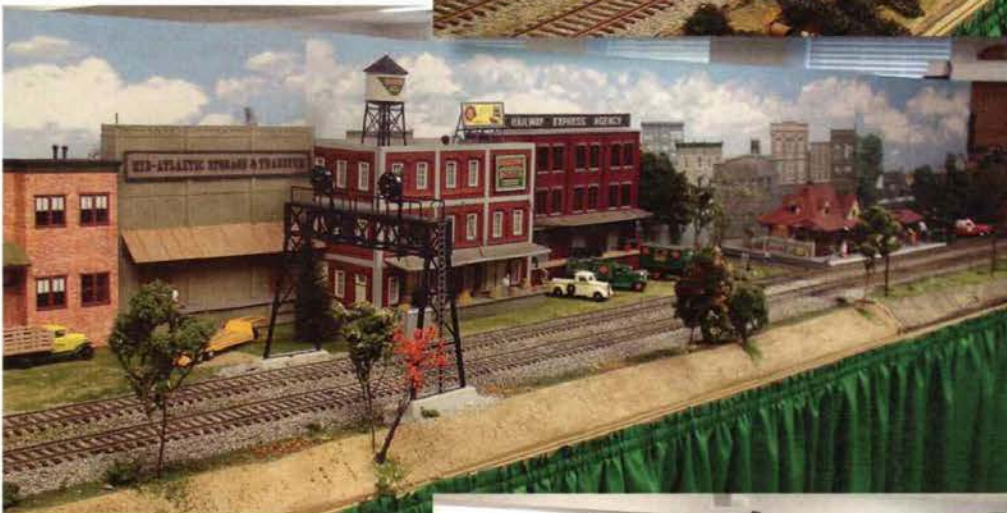
We run both diesel and steam power that represents almost every manufacturer of two-rail equipment. We generally use metal wheels on our rolling stock with Kadees and promote weathering of engines and rolling stock. All the rolling stock is member-owned, so you never know what will be running at any given time. Viewers at shows especially are interested in our WWII/Korean military train that consists of over 30 loaded cars, usually pulled by a UP Big Boy or Challenger. This may be the largest scale military train model we have seen or heard about.

The club is also a member of O Scale Kings [<http://www.oscalekings.org>], a national O Scale two-rail organization. Anyone interested in O Scale model railroading is welcome and there is no admission fee to regular meetings. Train shows and NMRA events where the layout is on display will usually have an admission fee. If you would like to contact the Southern O Scalpers concerning membership or for other information, visit our website [<http://www.southernoscalers.com>] or contact Dan Mason by e-mail at Daniel@southernoscalers.com or Richard Morhard at dirimore@bellsouth.net. It's not a requirement to live in Georgia to be a member. Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy the photos.



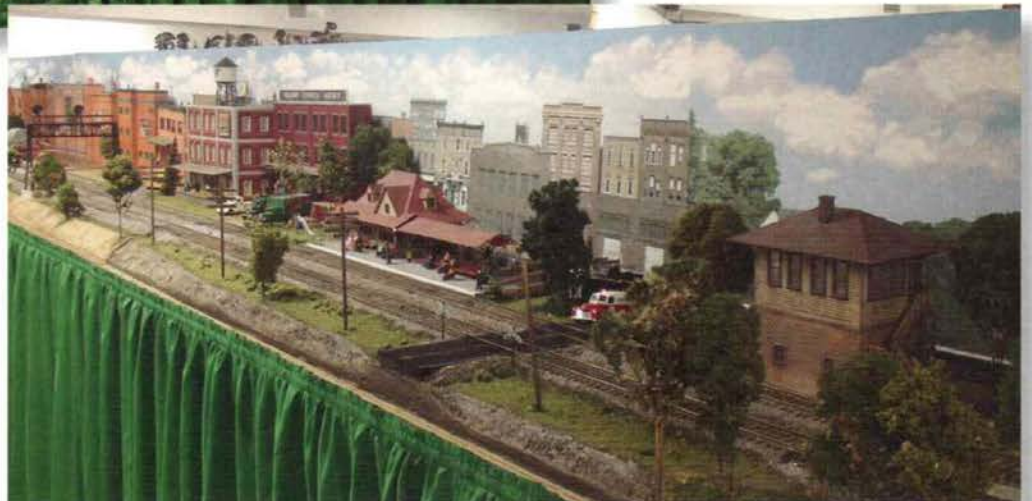
The view that greeted visitors during O Scale South; CB&Q F3s lead a Zephyr.

Let's walk around, starting with this downtown view.



Further along, we pass Mid-Atlantic Storage, the Railway Express Agency house, and a well-kept passenger station.

On the other side of the street stands the interlocking tower which controls this section.





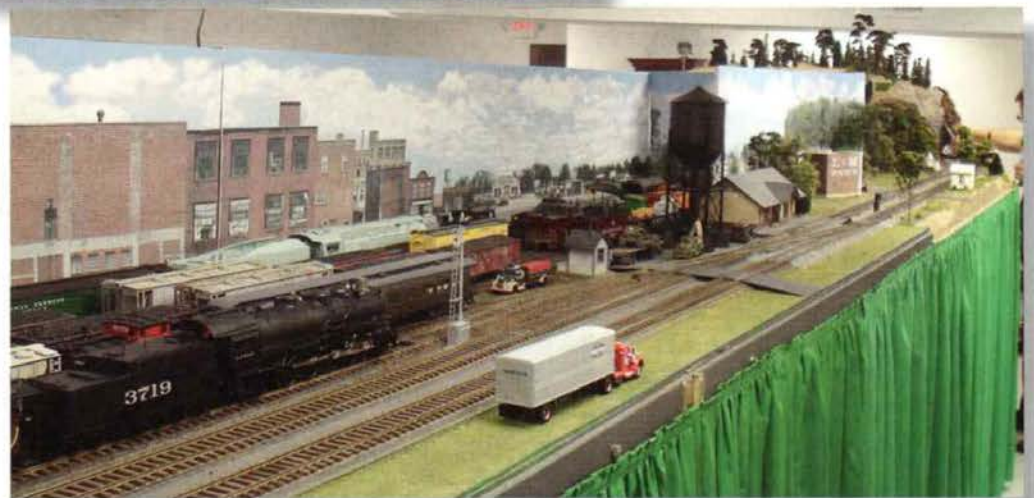
A Santa Fe passenger train curves around below the main street.

Continuing on, we're standing at one end of the yard.

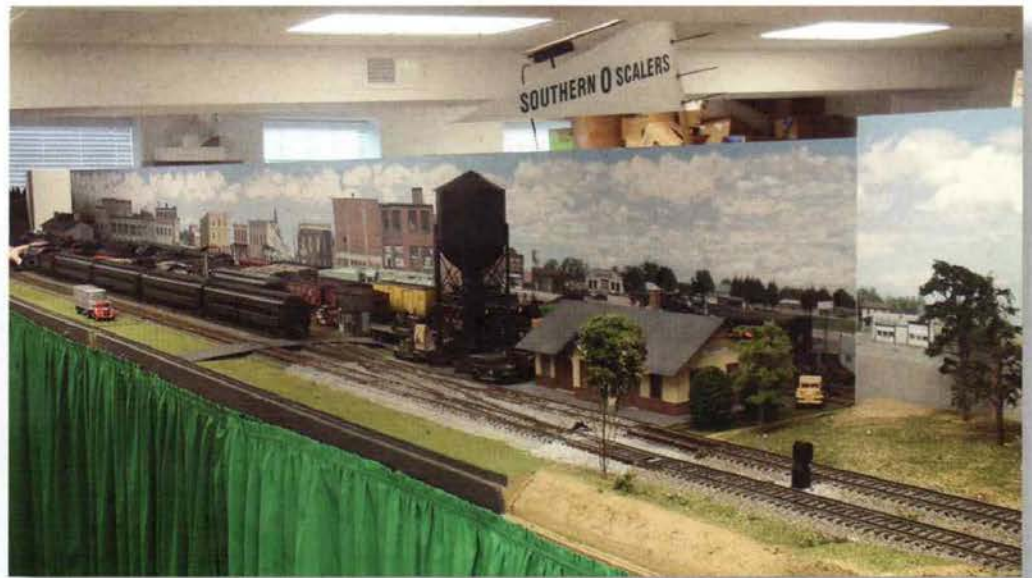


Looking back at the yard, where locomotives and passenger equipment are serviced.

Further down this side is the water tank, another station, and the infamous L&M Pawnshop



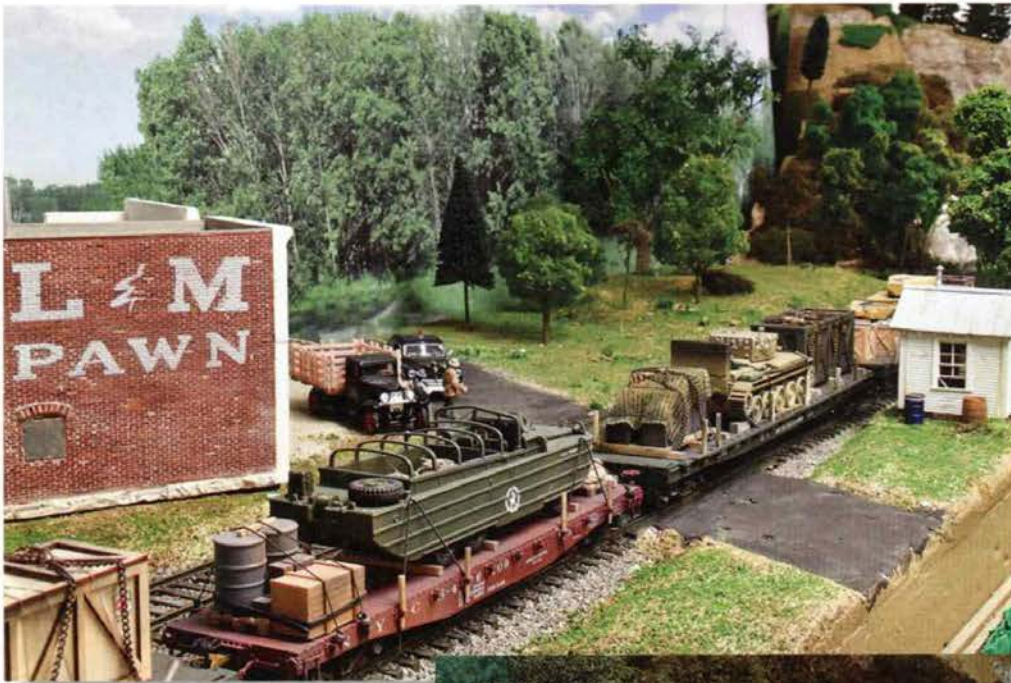
We finish our walk-around with a look back at the station. A four-car local has just departed.



A Great Northern articulated drifts down the main...

...pulling a train of military traffic. Here we see a couple Dodge command cars.





An amphibious 2-1/2 ton DUKW, the ubiquitous "Duck", makes an interesting load. Where there is the Army, there has to be a pawnshop.

This military train is owned by Dan Mason, and is one of the signature consists on the railroad.

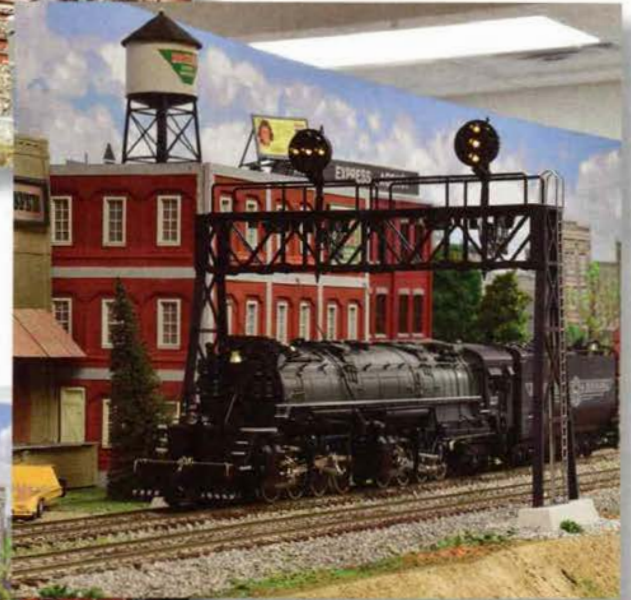


A last view of the Army as a Sherman rides off into the tunnel. Just off the scene is the signal maintainer's truck, just arrived to figure out just how it went to clear so early.



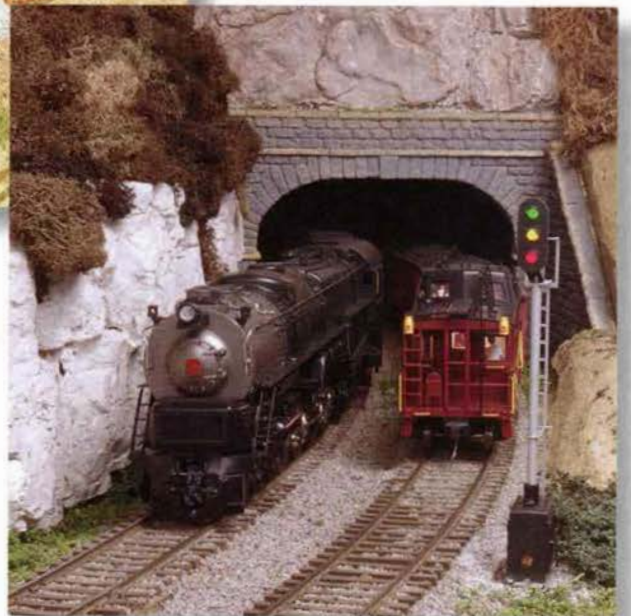
A wartime build, ATSF 2-10-4 5011 faces a lower quadrant semaphore.

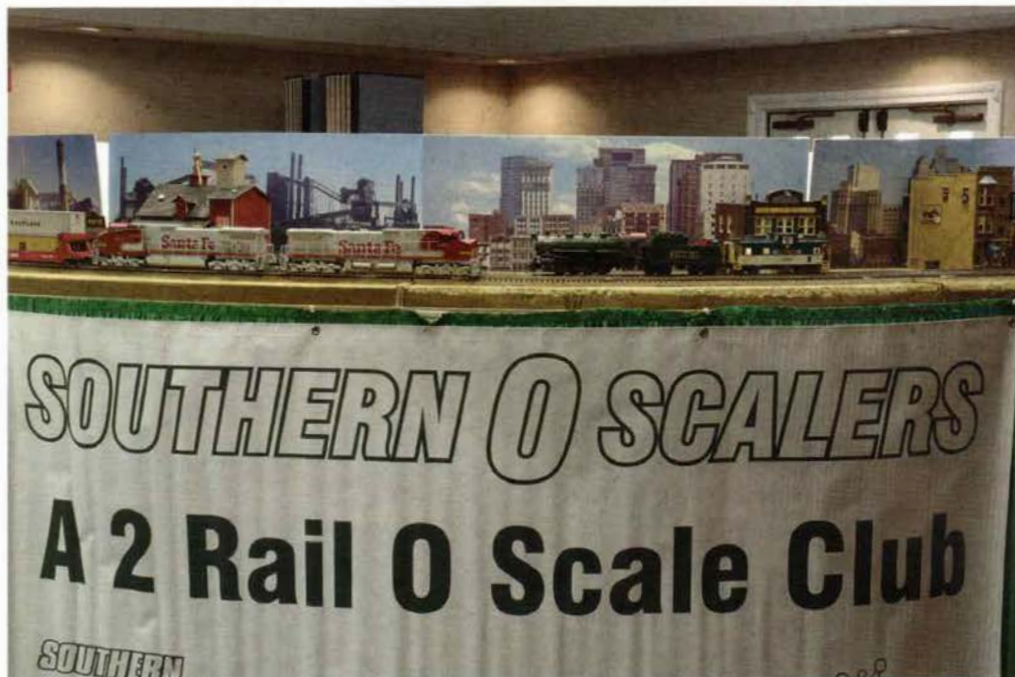
Coming the other way is a DM&IR Yellowstone.



The Yellowstone long gone, a PRR M1 carefully passes the signal bridge with an oversized "high & wide" load.

Turbines South! PRR S2 6200 passes a coal train as we thank our hosts, the Southern O Scalers.





Gene Clements (AT&F) and Dan Mason (SOU) trains on the Southern O Scaler's modular layout.

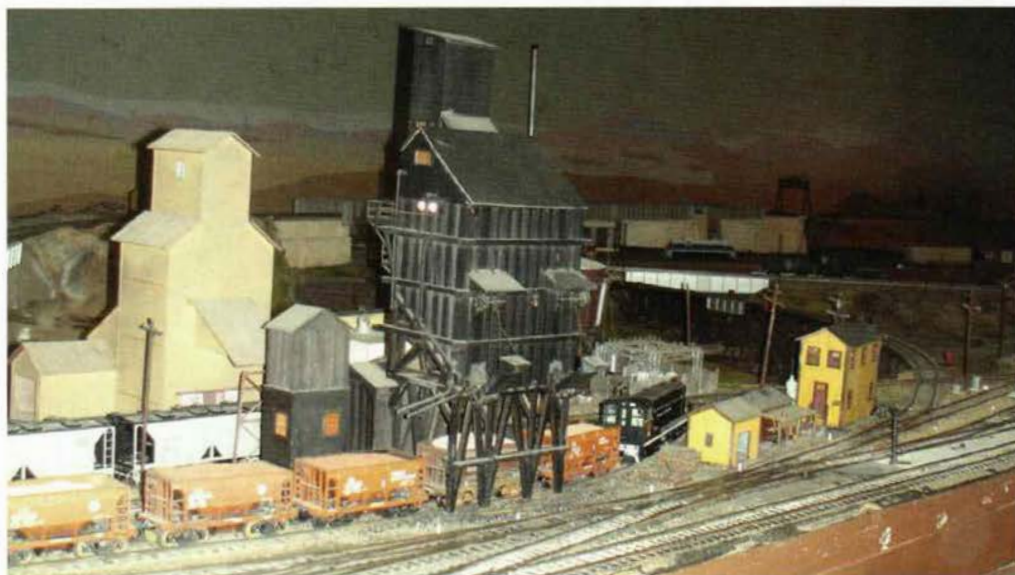
January 14 saw the third year of the O Scale two-rail modelers meet sponsored by the Southern O Scalers and the Railroad Model Club of Atlanta. While this was my first year to attend, comments by various members indicated that this was the largest meet to date by attendance. Multiple tables were stocked with various kits, rolling stock, and locomotives as well as a good selection of parts. Custom-built models were also on display, as well as an operating two-rail modular layout that featured both DC and DCC operating locomotives.

There were a total of four layouts that were open for visitation on both Saturday and Sunday evening. Two were layouts of club members, Richard Morhard's Tuscarora Mountain Railroad, Mountain Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad and Dan Mansfield's Georgia Railroad, Camak Division. Time restraints on my schedule did not permit me to visit and report on these two layouts but I did visit the Great Southern Lines (featured in *OST* #83, Jan/Feb 2016), and the modular layout of the Southern O Scalers (featured in this issue) of which I am a new member.

The Great Southern Lines of the Railroad Model Club of Atlanta is one of the oldest operating layouts in the country, being established in 1938 and still in operation 78 years later. The members were in the midst of an operating session during my Saturday afternoon visit. By current standards the GSL could be considered "old school" as crew members located at various locations pass hand and verbal signals to engineers located in an overhead control location. Their mode of operation reminded me of the early days in my railroad career which were very similar in nature to prototypical operations.

The Southern O Scalers modular layout, set up in the upstairs office of member Dan Mason, was open to the public as well on Saturday and Sunday evening. It can operate on either wireless-control DC or DCC, and any member is welcomed to operate their personal equipment at any time. I saw this layout on display at the NMRA convention in Atlanta a few years ago and was impressed by a WWII/Korea-era military train and the layout itself.

The display layout at the train meet itself also belonged



A visitor's view, made possible by the Railroad Model Club of Atlanta, one of the co-sponsors of "O Scale South"

to the Southern O Scalers. It is a similar layout to the larger system, and can be expanded even further than it was in the hall, when space allows, by adding straight modular sections. The photos here are of the second "display layout" in the hall itself; for a look at the larger modular layout that was open at the "offices" for visitors, see the Southern O Scalers feature on page 4 of this issue.

The modular concept stuck in my mind to the point that my new Alco Belt layout was constructed using a single six-foot straight-track section, then applying their design principals to construct the remaining modules to complete the new layout. I did take one liberty with the SOS standards; they use an 84 inch minimum radius while I used 72".

As the photos show, the scenery is very well done and, while only two feet deep in places, gives the effect of being larger. It was my understanding that a couple of track areas have been reworked recently and still require some detail work which is something most of us can relate to. The overall concept reminds me of the modular layouts that I have seen at the O Scale National and Indy meets, such as the Ohio Valley group, where individual members build modules to club standards and display their work at meets or public shows. This method of club display is also very popular in other scales but

the larger models have more presence in O Scale (an objective opinion, of course).

Though smaller in size compared to a national meet, regional and local shows can have an advantage. By their nature, a local show can reach out to individuals through local sources to attract long-time hermits, local modelers in other scales, and even people with a beginning casual interest. I'm a case in point; this year was my first time to attend. I plan to go back to the next meet not only to buy new items for my collection, but also to thin out items (those things I'm rediscovering in my ever-ongoing re-organization process) I've had stored away for years and no longer plan to use.

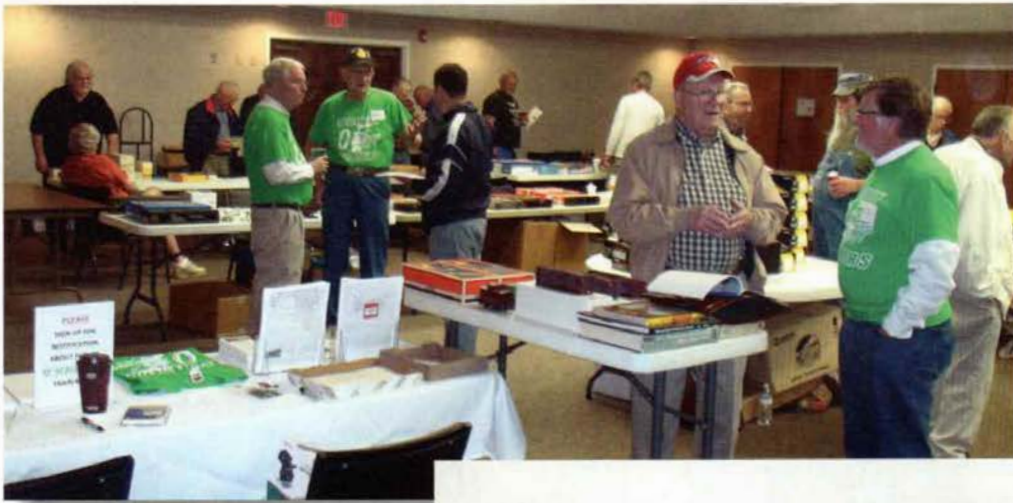
Most importantly of all, I met a number of fellow O Scalers who I never had the opportunity to meet before at the nationals, see some great projects that others have been working on, and to visit a piece of O Scale history, the Great Southern Lines. Hopefully the modelers in the Southeast will one day compete with the larger O Scale groups located across the country and sponsor a national convention. One last thing for sure, the weather was great, clear and sunny with temperature in the lower 70s. Where else can you find that in January but the Southeast!



Railway Express Agency traffic adjacent to the Ensley station on the Great Southern Lines

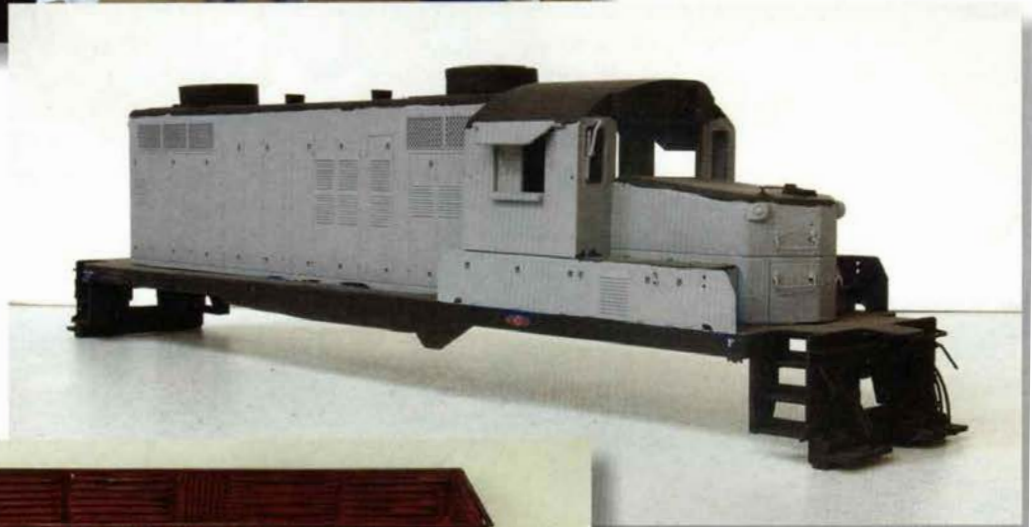
What could be a better day?
A Santa Fe double-stack train
passes a discussion.





More discussions over the trading tables

Steve Holding displayed his progress kitbashing a Red Caboose GP9 into a low-hood GP18



Steve also showed these CB&Q gondola models, along with the molds used to convert them from Intermountain kits.

CB&Q 72100-72130
 CB&Q rebuilt the USRA GS gons with recycled boxcar end to replace the worn out wood sides. Model is rebuilt Intermountain USRA GS Gon with custom cast ends to replace the wood sides

Another of Steve Holding's projects is this landing craft (LCM) load.

