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**Journal of O Scale 2-rail**

*Linking the OS2R Community*

# O Scale South 2023

By Walter Horlacher



Earlier this year, I attended O Scale South in Atlanta, Georgia hosted by Dan Mason and members of the Southern O Scalars. This is the first time I have visited the show since 2019. My original intention was to attend this show each year since then, but as well intended as that was, a spin on the “Game of Life” landed on COVID, then on to retirement, selling the house and moving from South Florida, so it simply was not in the cards. But now that all that is in the past, I now live in North Florida which has made the drive up to Atlanta much easier than driving up from South Florida.

O Scale South is a small show but certainly a gem, what they lack in size they make up for with big southern hospitality, that coupled together with a modest but brisk sales floor, clinics and fantastic must-see layouts. So, hop on aboard and let me take you for a tour of “O” Scale South.

I departed Florida mid-morning and headed north, arriving just in time to rendezvous with Dan Mason and the rest of the table holders at the Crabapple Tavern in Alpharetta. There I shared in lively conversation over drinks and really great food. Seated next to me at the far end of the table was Charles Robinson, a member of the Railroad Club of Atlanta and a new friend. From what Charles explained to me, they have sold their building and are in the process of finding a new home. I will have more on that later.

Seated across from me were the DeBruin brothers, Jim and Peter. If those names sound familiar, they should as Jim has a regularly featured column in O Scale Trains and his brother, Pete, does some custom painting. After several hours of conversation and drinks, we departed the Tavern and turned in to get ready for what would be a very busy Saturday.

The next morning, I headed out to Roswell and the Cross of Life Lutheran Church to set up my table for the show which ran from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. While there, they held several intriguing clinics being conducted in the break-out rooms down the hall.

Any time I’m participating in a show I always do my part to represent O Scale Central. I made room on my sales table devoted to OSC membership materials. To make things interesting, anybody that joined OSC at the show received 5 free raffle tickets toward a chance at winning an A&O convention car. This resulted in 3 new members, Jim Herak from Monroe, Georgia; Tom Smith from Clarksville, Tennessee; and Phillip Stead from Ballground, Georgia. I also gave away one free raffle ticket to any OSC member that could present proof of membership as membership does have its privileges. Oh, by the way, Jim Herak won the car.



The salesroom room had to be moved to one of the classrooms as the main hall suffered water damage from a frozen water pipe in the weeks preceding the meet. Space was a little tight and some sales tables spilled over into the adjacent hallway. None-the-less, there were many deals to be had there. One individual, for example, had three tables loaded with well over 100 new-old inventory of Weaver/Quality Craft plastic kits at \$10 each. At first glance there was nothing I was interested in, but then later after all the boxes were unloaded, there they were: the four woodchip cars I've been looking for! I later stumbled across a large container of new Athearn trucks for \$3 each. I purchase just enough trucks to match up with the woodchip cars I purchased earlier. I could have easily purchased more of the trucks, but I really don't have a need for more than those required to complete the woodchip cars. I'm of the mindset to leave some bargains to share with others.

When the sales room closed, I quickly packed up my table and quickly headed out the door determined to get on the road if I were to visit all four layouts by 6 p.m. One of the layouts on the tour was the Southern O Scale layout in Canton. Since I was bunked in Canton, I decided to start at the furthest layout north and then work my back south to Canton.

With route plan set I would head to Steve Austin's Elkhorn Iron & Timber Company RR in Talking Rock. from there I would begin my journey south to the Historic Tate Depot, then continuing south from there to see Phil and Linda Stead's D&RG Alamosa Chama Subdivision, and then finally on to the Southern O Scalpers club layout in Canton. So, climb aboard and follow my journey with these next few pages.

First stop: Talking Rock, Georgia where we pay a visit Steve Austin's amazing and always entreating Elkhorn Iron & Timber Company RR. This incredibly detailed layout is set in the 1947 Appalachian Mountains and features logging, saw milling, steel manufacturing, coal mining and many of the ancillary industries necessary to make this all work. Most of the structures, scenery, and much of the rolling stock has been scratch-built by Steve. His work creating freelanced motive power has awarded him with top honors in local and regional modeling contests, and second place at the NMRA National Convention in San Diego, California. Steve's layout is well known and has been featured in the *Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette*, *On30 Annual*, *Scale Rails*, and *Model Railroader*.



I allocated space on my table for O Scale Central Membership. I made up what I refer to as a Membership Kit; this is simply a small 3 ring binder containing the latest color hard copy of The Coupler, as well as brochure's, membership application and business cards. I also made up a thumb drive with an OSC slide show. When it's time to pack up I simply take all the printed materials and the thumb drive and stick them in the binder pockets so I'm ready for the next show.

Things are bustling at the roundhouse on Elkhorn Iron & Timber Company R.R. My own take away from this railroad is that it's the type of model railroad you can visit a dozen times and with every visit you'll find a feature or detail you missed from your previous visits. If Steve added the third element of smell of fresh milled timbers and cinders to the amazing sight and sounds of his layout it would truly be a 3D experience.

As I was making my way south along a twisted and hilly area of Hwy 53, I could not help noticing the rail line running along the opposite hillside. I later learned this was the Georgia Northeastern Railroad (GNRR). Originally, from what was told to me, this line used to be narrow gauge and was later converted to Standard gauge. I would have enjoyed capturing videos of a train winding through these tight hills, unfortunately the railroad only operates Monday through Friday. hmmm... my thoughts were "Wow, this would make a great tourist line on the weekends."

Our next Stop is Ball Ground, Georgia. Here we will visit Phil and Linda Stead's Denver & Rio Grande Alamosa Chama Subdivision. When I arrived, I was graciously greeted by Linda who directed me to the staircase which led downstairs. This layout depicts the Alamosa, Colorado to Chama, New Mexico main line modeled in On3 and Proto:48 dual gauge during September 1949. The railroad is located in a 30 x 50 foot basement and features a 300-foot mainline. Trains depict climbing the 4% grade from Alamosa and Chama at 7,543 feet elevation to Cumbres Pass Summit at 10,015 feet. It was amazing to listen to the sound of the steam locomotives working hard moving their consist upward from Alamosa. I was offered a hand-held throttle let me fully enjoy this operation. The takeaway from this layout was how well Phil and Linda captured the feeling and sight of actually being along the New Mexico-Colorado border. Their attention to scenery that transitions according to the altitude is stunning, as is the the interesting dual gauge O/On3 track work in Antonito and Alamosa. Phil added that his close friend John contributed much to the layout as well.



**Pictured here is Paul's friend John Coaker, who actually worked in Durango on the railway and provided valuable insight on operations that lends realism to the Alamosa Chama Subdivision.**

Next Stop: Tate, Georgia. In this hamlet we visit the historic Tate depot. To my amazement I discovered the GNRR back shop with locomotives tied up there for the weekend. As I entered the depot I was cheerfully greeted by volunteers and learned about the Tate depot and more about the GNRR. I discovered that the GNRR is a subsidiary of the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway, so who knows, my earlier thoughts might come to fruition.



The members all belong to Tate Depot Train Society, and they offered me a beverage and took me on a tour of their professionally built layout that was donated to the group by its owner, Bill Gibson. The layout spans over the entire room leaving the center open for visitors. The volunteers did an outstanding job of blending the scenery to the existing layout. So well in fact that you would have never known it was not part of the original layout. Yes, this is an HO layout, yet I appreciate the level of detail that went into this exhibit and deserves an honorable mention on these pages.



**The Tate Depot Train Society.**

Finally, the last stop: Canton, Georgia. Here we will visit the Southern O Scalers. This is a superbly constructed, close tolerance O Scale modular layout measuring in at a whopping 18 x 45 feet, which supports a double track mainline complete with passing sidings, yard, and signals.



#### **The Southern O Scalers modular layout in Canton.**

While I was there, members were running exquisite brass locomotives, long passenger consists, and a military equipment train of flat cars that seemed to be endless as the cars rolled by with all its military hardware. Presently, the Southern O Scalers use this modular layout as their club layout, set up temporarily on the second floor of a law firm in Canton. As mentioned earlier, the Railroad Club of Atlanta is a historic, long-standing O Scale organization located in old Atlanta. As of this this writing, they are preparing to vacate their home of 72-plus years, removing what's salvageable, and placing what they can in storage until they find a new home. With both clubs seeking homes for a permanent layout, it makes for an interesting cooperative step forward in the works for both these clubs. With that said, it's my opinion that O Scale in Atlanta has an even brighter future ahead. I have no doubt

that these two clubs will emerge as the premier O Scale club the Southeast Region the United States. That sum's up my visit to O Scale South. If you live in the region or happen to be in the Atlanta area next year, you should mark your calendar and stop on by for some southern hospitality.



Photo credit: C.Donn Fletcher, Kalmbach publishing

**The Danville station on the Railroad Club of Atlanta's "Great Southern Line" The Danville station and has been saved for use on their future layout.**

**The next O Scale South event will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday February 24, 2024 at Cross of Life Lutheran Church, 1000 Hembree Road, Roswell, GA. Swap Meet & Modular Layout Display. Layout tours information at the meet. \$5 admission (spouses and children free). 8-foot tables cost \$30 (includes admission) On3, On30, On2, Proto:48, and 3-Rail Scalers Welcome!**

<http://www.oscalesouth2024.com>



Walter "Waldo" Horlacher is a lifelong railroad enthusiast. He retired in 2021 and moved to North Florida and just 3 miles north of Waldo, Florida. Walter has been modeling in OS2R since age 21. He's is a member of the NMRA and serves on the O Scale Central Board. Over the years he has been involved with 4 modular groups and has built well over 30 individual module sections. He started a new modular group 10 years ago with fellow NMRA member Stephen Pariseau. The 28 by 32 foot "L" shaped layout group includes 5 other NMRA members of the Florida and Southeastern Georgia "O" Scalers.