

# LA COUPLER



<http://www.ladiv-nmra.org>

Fall 2020



***Inside this issue:***  
***A day on Beaumont Hill, Dan  
Wexler's Hamlin & Valley Central  
and more!!***



## Publication Information

### The L. A. Coupler

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Thank you for supporting the Coupler !

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### LA Coupler Deadlines:

Winter Issue - December  
 Spring Issue - March  
 Summer Issue - June  
 Fall Issue - September

The LA Coupler is also looking for submissions, articles, or photos. Please forward them to the Editor at;  
***airplanedad@yahoo.com***

### *On the Cover...*

**Pacific Locomotive Association's beautifully restored #4 operates on the ex-SP line in Niles Canyon.**

**Photo by Kevin Spady.**



# Superintendent Report

## Silver Linings...

On any given day, it is easy to find examples of how the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to negatively impact our daily way of life. We have seen our Division's annual SpringRail celebration, the Region's Van Nuys Local 2020 annual convention, and L.A. County's Great Train Show all cancelled. Clubs, modular groups, and special interest organizations have had to suspend their regular schedules due to social distancing or gathering restrictions. It wouldn't be difficult to list additional negative examples, but why?

But, wait! What if a few silver linings could be derived from this all? It's exactly those opportunities I would like to present to you in this report.

For months now, your L.A. Division Advisory Board has been brainstorming ways more value could be received by local NMRA members. While some ideas still require more thought or refinement before being introduced, a few are ready to be piloted or rolled-out.

In the last issue of the L.A. Coupler, we started the "On the Workbench" column – a place where any of us may share the latest project(s) we've been working. Been productive lately? Then why not forward a paragraph or two (along with a couple of photos) describing your activities?

Two other columns we would like to add are: a "Featured Member's Profile" and a regularly occurring personal, club, or modular group's "Layout Visitation" story. Know a member or layout others would be interested in learning more about? Then forward your suggestions to me and we'll get the ball rolling.

The Board also has been investigating ways to hold gatherings again. With an assist from technology, the L.A. Division will start piloting virtual conferences using the Zoom interactive app this September. By the time you read this, a members' interest/ability survey will likely have been completed too.

Borrowing from our northern PCR neighbors, we're eager to start piloting a "Buddy" program – a way in which to connect newer (or even older) members with others in the Division whom can offer advice or assist in mentoring them. Needed, however, is a coordination overseer. Could that be you?

Finally, a comment about the L.A. Division Advisory Board itself. We're really just a bunch of friendly, informal model railroaders; people, just like you. Volunteers who give back a bit of time and energy to a hobby we all enjoy and care about. I invite you to become a part of this group. Maybe start by listening in on one of our monthly videoconference meetings. Should you hear something that excites you, speak up. Likewise, if you feel we're moving in the wrong direction, let us know. Got an idea no one else has mentioned yet, jump in and share it! Interested? Contact me directly for more details.

Until the next L.A. Coupler, be safe, remain healthy, and happy model railroading to you,

- Vic Cavalli

Superintendent, Los Angeles Division of the PSR/NMRA, Inc.



# Directors Report

Hello Los Angeles Division Members,

I hope this finds you and yours safe and well.

The L.A. Division Advisory Board has now obtained an account with ZOOM to facilitate virtual meets that would include, "Discussions, Show & Tell, Clinics, Layout Tours and any other items of interest". A survey was sent out by email to each member requesting your input about attendance and participation so we can make these virtual meets ones that will be of interest to you. I would like to send a huge "Thank You" to everyone that responded - your participation in completing the survey is greatly appreciated! Please watch for future surveys. Your input will assist the L.A. Division in providing the best experience to our membership.

Due to the current restrictions for in person gatherings, the Arizona Division, Cajon Division and San Diego Division are already having or preparing to start virtual meets via the ZOOM app as well. Virtual meets may not be our first choice to be able to get together, but there is nothing that is more important than the safety and health of all of our members!

The Pacific Southwest Regional Board of Directors continue to move forward with formally obtaining a 501-C3 status for our Region encompassing all four Divisions. We are in hopes of receiving notification soon that the process has been completed.

Since we had to cancel the Van Nuys Local 2020 due to the current restrictions, I have missed seeing all of you at our convention. That being said, I look forward to seeing you at the 2021 PSR Regional Convention – The Orange Blossom Special, where we will once again be able to do this:



At this time, due to Los Angeles County and site restrictions, I must unfortunately inform you that the Los Angeles Division has to cancel the following event. We look forward to seeing you next year!

Dec 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>: **\*\*\*CANCELLED\*\*\*** Frosty Freight (formerly Freight Fright held in October)

South Coast Botanic Gardens, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd. Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

Until next time...Happy Modeling! And, above all else, stay safe!

Mona Raymer

Director, Los Angeles Division, PSR, NMRA

# From the Website Guy



## A Day out on Beaumont Hill

On Sunday July 19th, fellow L.A. Division member and friend, Scott Sackett, his son Sam and I decided to see what Covid -19 era railfanning would be like. We chose Beaumont Hill because we haven't spent much time there, even though the line is well used by the Union Pacific Railroad. It turned out to be an excellent day. Rather than write a long report describing the experience I am going to let my photography do all of the talking.



A Canadian Pacific visitor at West Colton.



San Timeteo Canyon.



A nice detail shot of the radiator and dynamic brake section of an ES44.



Meet at Cabazon.

# From the Website Guy



Attacking the grade in San Timeteo Canyon.



A mixed merchandise train at Cabazon.



The mixed merchandise had mid train distributed power.



A stack train approaching West Palm Springs.



Rear end distributed power on the stack train.



The elegant and luxurious Palm Springs Amtrak depot.

# From the Website Guy



A late afternoon mixed merchandise train at Cabazon.



Rear end distributed power for the late afternoon train.



Surprise meet at Cabazon.



Attacking the uphill side of Cabazon.



Same train, just a bit closer.



Same train in San Timeteo Canyon.

# From the Website Guy



A BNSF stack train at the Colton crossing.



Your classic over/under.



Southwest Chief at the Colton crossing.



# Membership

By Bob DeMoss and Vic Cavalli

In the Winter 2020 issue of the L.A. Coupler, the many discounts available through the NMRA Partnership Program were discussed. To summarize, National Headquarters has entered into agreement with various model railroad manufacturers; each offering current NMRA members discounts... some as much as 40%. For a complete listing, visit:

[www.nmra.org/Membership/Member Home/Benefits/Partnership](http://www.nmra.org/Membership/Member Home/Benefits/Partnership)

But, in addition to the Partnership Program, did you know many local hobby shops offer discounts too? That's right, DISCOUNTS! Simply show them your NMRA membership card at checkout.

Here's a list of the shops we currently know of (may be subject to change):

Arnie's Trains/Milepost 38 Model Trains, Westminster, CA

Burbank House of Hobbies, Burbank, CA

Marty's Hobbies, Thousand Oaks, CA

The Original Whistle Stop, Pasadena, CA

RailMaster Hobbies, Bellflower, CA

The Train Crossing, Costa Mesa, CA

The Train Shack, Inc., Burbank, CA

Upland Trains, "G" Scale, Upland, CA

Of course, these aren't the only shops in or near the immediate L.A. Division area; just those we know about who offer NMRA members a discount at their store. Should there be others, please pass the information on to us!

Speaking of Los Angeles Division members, as of June 30, 2020 our membership remains steady at 205 individuals. Please welcome our newest members:

A.J. Clift of Sylmar, CA. A.J. joined 9/1/2020

Samuel Kerr of Lakewood, CA. Samuel joined 9/1/2020

In Memoriam, we regret to announce the passing of:

Tom Carlson of Palmdale, CA. Tom was a Life member, joining the NMRA 1/1/1976

That's it for now. Should you have any question regarding your membership, feel free to contact either Vic or Bob. Our contact information may be found towards the end of every L.A. Coupler issue.



# Financial Report

11:05 AM  
08/28/20  
Accrual Basis

LADivPSRNMRA  
Balance Sheet  
As of August 28, 2020

	Aug 28, 20
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
Checking	
Advisory Board	
Expenses	1,050.01
Total Advisory Board	1,050.01
Bank Fees	2,170.71
Banquet	
Expenses	3,398.09
Income	-2,385.00
Total Banquet	1,013.09
Build a Memory	
Income	-1,200.89
Total Build a Memory	-1,200.89
Childrens Coloring Boxcar	
Expenses	506.37
Total Childrens Coloring Boxcar	506.37
Coupler	111.64
Elections	
Expenses	1,042.49
Total Elections	1,042.49
Freight Fright Modular Meet	
Expenses	1,224.12
Income	-851.43
Total Freight Fright Modular Meet	372.69
NMRA Promotional Events	
Expenses	2,354.43
Income	-1,621.15
Total NMRA Promotional Events	733.28
Regional Convention	
Expenses	42,245.07
Income	-42,554.31
Total Regional Convention	-309.24
SpringRail	
Expenses	6,625.13
Income	-9,400.40
Total SpringRail	-2,775.27
Checking - Other	4,990.13
Total Checking	7,705.01
Savings	
Intrest	-6.92
Savings - Other	5,107.56
Total Savings	5,100.64
Total Checking/Savings	12,805.65
Total Current Assets	12,805.65
TOTAL ASSETS	12,805.65

James L. Keena  
Chief Clerk/Paymaster  
LA Div. PSR NMRA

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# Dan Wexler's Hamlin & Valley Central RR

Interview by Vic Cavalli, Photos and Diagrams by Dan Wexler

*Dan's layout is one of two dozen layouts that was scheduled to be open during the Van Nuys Local 2020 PSR convention. As attendees were prevented from visiting this excellent model railroad, due to COVID-19 virus restrictions, we thought we'd bring the layout to you instead.*

*- Vic Cavalli, Van Nuys Local 2020 Layout Tours Chair*

**Vic:** Hi, Dan. Thank you for allowing the L.A. Coupler to visit [virtually] your home layout. Why don't you start by giving us a quick overview of what it represents.

**Dan:** My HO scale railroad, the Hamlin & Valley Central (H&VC), is a freelanced short line located in the general Central/Southern California area with access to a port to the west and high desert to the east. It is a subsidiary of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad (Santa Fe), so you'll see a lot of older Santa Fe equipment such as first generation Alco GP-7s; even an occasional F unit working the line.

**Vic:** So what time period does the H&VC exist in?

**Dan:** Roughly August/September 1964.

**Vic:** Tell us about the layout itself.

**Dan:** The pike is point to point, and fills a 360 sq. ft. garage (18' x 20'). It is double decked with two branch lines. The main line run, from the bumpers at East Yard to the bumpers at Port, is 405 feet.

Last year was the 40th anniversary of the H&VC. The present pike was started in 1992 and rebuilt in March 1994, after the Northridge Earthquake destroyed most of the previous pike. A lower second level was added in 2010.

Bench work is L-girder using 3/8" plywood for a base, resulting in a 3/4" thick roadbed. Track is a combination of codes 83 and 100. Code 83 was used exclusively during the construction of the second level in 2010. There are 72 turnouts on the H&VC, controlled either by Tortoise Switch Machines or ground throws.

**Vic:** Overall, the H&VC appears to be nearly finished. Is it?

**Dan:** Well, yes, it is and it isn't. While I consider the pike to be completed and fully operational, scenery is constantly being upgraded. I'm always including more animation: operating oil wells, flashing lights on fire trucks; lit streetlights and neon signs.

The operating track signaling system, I think, is really "cool"; as well as the flashing road-grade crossings.

**Vic:** What about the layout's structures?

**Dan:** Most of the H&VC's structures are either scratch built or kit bashed. A current project of mine is to add more lighting to them. Another really "cool" feature I like, is a pair of Broadway Limited operating water tanks. They're especially useful when we have steam operating sessions.

# Dan Wexler's Hamlin & Valley Central RR

**Vic:** You just mentioned “operating sessions.” Tell me about them.

**Dan:** A typical session requires five operators and takes between 3-4 hours depending on the operators' skill levels. There are over 50 on-line industries allowing us to run 6 trains per session. Train lengths are short; typically 12 cars maximum due to siding length limitations.

Switch lists are generated by RailOps. West bound trains are assembled at East Yard in the town of Vincent (located in the high desert) eventually terminating in the Santa Fe's Descanso Yard. Descanso is the midpoint of the railroad. From Descanso, trains can travel on the Tyler/Gentry branch to work the port area. Cars coming from or going back to the Santa Fe are interchanged here at Descanso.

Trains traveling east (back to Vincent) almost immediately begin a 2.3 % climb to Rio Vista (an actual run of 80' in what I call a “no-lex” – a helix with only two turns in a dog bone shape). At the top of the grade is the town of San Benito; headquarters of the H&VC. San Benito is the place where trains working the Oro Grande Branch re-enter the mainline. Dispatching is performed by train order. Our “ATC” (Automatic Traffic Control) signaling system was designed and built by Jim Goodell.

Trains are controlled by Digitrax DCC, using PSX power distribution. I have difficulty hearing so sound decoders are not really too important to me. While all my newer locomotives are sound equipped, whether the sound is adjusted properly is questionable.

**Vic:** This last question goes back to my days as a hiring manager. It's one I ask nearly everyone. In hindsight, what are you most and least pleased about your model railroad?

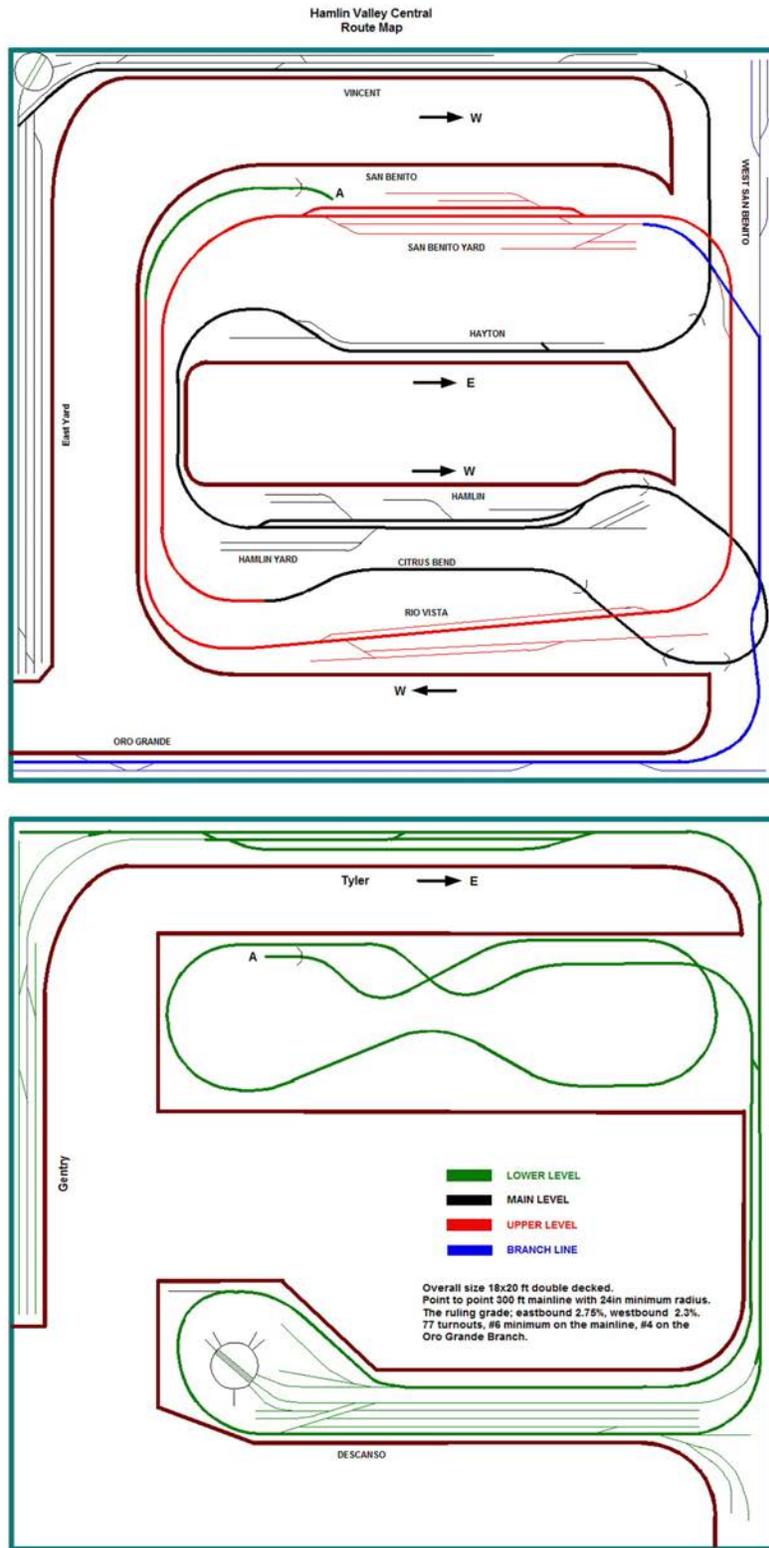
**Dan:** When I started building this version of the H&VC in 1992, which I call version 4.0, I was 46 years old. Having a duck under at 47” to access the center aisle was not an issue. If I were to do it again, I would rethink that part of the track plan. Another dislike of mine are the aisles. They seem to have become narrower over time.

What I really like about the railroad is that I am always in awe of it! Over the years, I have never grown tired of her. It runs flawlessly, except during open houses, and it always gives me pleasure.

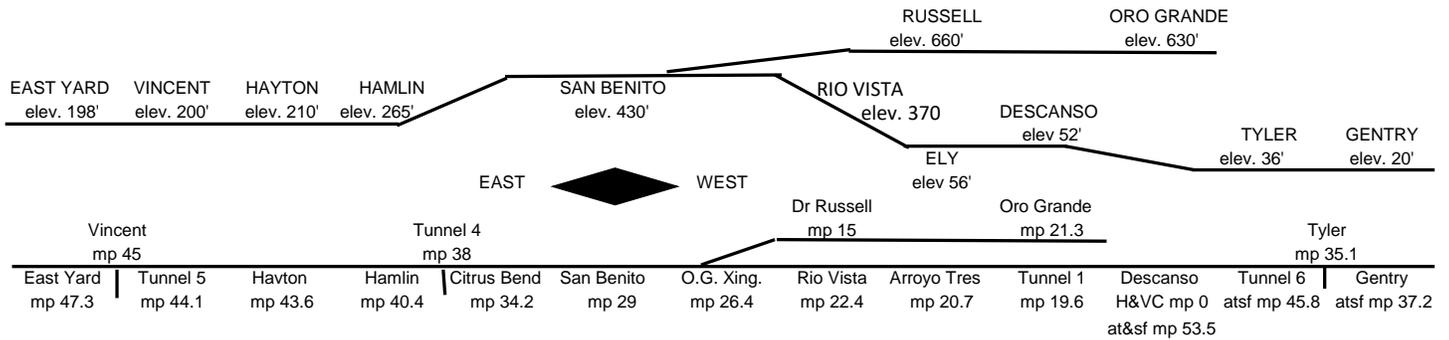
**Vic:** Well, Dan, it's been a pleasure to visit you and your railroad! Thank you for providing the L.A. Division this virtual tour.

**Dan:** You're welcome. I genuinely enjoy having people over; whether it's to operate or just watch and rail fan.

# Dan Wexler's Hamlin & Valley Central RR



# Dan Wexler's Hamlin & Valley Central RR



Business specials meet at the twin bridges.



Eastbound Train #121 climbing grade to San Benito.



Eastbound UP 4-8-4 #844 at Tower OG.



Engine servicing facility at Vincent.jpg

# Dan Wexler's Hamlin & Valley Central RR



Historic look back photo - H&VC Decapod #1109.



It's a busy day at San Benito.



Meet at Tower OG crossing.



Refrigerator cars waiting to be iced at Vincent.



Switching at Oro Grande Cement.



Westbound Train #123 entering Rio Vista.

All photos by Dan Wexler

# How to print the “Coupler”:

## 1) *From the Webpage:*

Open the “Coupler” issue which should come up as a PDF file. Right-click, or hover cursor over top of document - and choose “Print File.”

## 2) *From the PDF:*

Once you have download the PDF, or able to open the “Coupler” in a PDF reader, you should be able to select “Print File” and choose options like Color/B&W - and print quality.



L.A. Division Board meetings  
are held electronically the  
second Thursday of each month.  
Contact Vic Cavalli, Division  
Superintendent, for details.

## Join us for LA Division “Show and Tell” November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 at 1:00

On November 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:00 LA Division of the PSR will be hosting a one hour long “show and tell” event for Division members via Zoom! Do you want to showcase your latest build, your layout, or just share news of the day? Now is your chance! Our Division is really interested in increasing member participation and engagement and this is the perfect opportunity to get to know other members in the Division, ask questions and generally share our hobby interests!

Individuals will be given a chance to present for 3 to 5 minutes sharing a model railroad technique or project. Using Zoom, you will share your screen with everyone in the meeting. Sharing with photos using a viewer program or Power Point is the easiest and best way to share. More details about how to participate in the event will be coming out via a MailChimp email shortly.

The meeting will be via RSVP only. Once you RSVP a log in email will be sent to you with details on how to enter the discussion!

We look forward to seeing you there! Look for the MailChimp email with details!

# LA Division Facebook Page



## **Do you want to know more about what's going on in the Los Angeles Division of the NMRA?**

Are you searching for more connection with the NMRA? Do you want to hear and learn from others about the Model Railroading Hobby?

***Become a part of model railroading in the Los Angeles area and join the NMRA Los Angeles Division Facebook page! Give it a try!***

It is open to all NMRA members and provides a valuable tool for learning about local events, activities of your NMRA Division Board, and just general modeling information.

Go to the link and ask to join! No obligation and one of the few things that are free! Be an active part of your local Model Railroading community!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1960134804039677/members/>



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# MODEL TRAIN & RAILROAD EVENTS:

Area Covered: Counties of Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Mono, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara & Ventura + National Conventions

Last updated: 9/19/2020

*Due to the ongoing public health concerns, we recommend checking with organizers to confirm event status.*

## 2020

~~October 2, 3 & 4 - Central Coast Railroad Festival, San Luis Obispo Area <<< CANCELLED~~

~~October 3 - L.A. Area Prototype Modelers Meet, Bellflower <<<CANCELLED>>>~~

October 3 & 4 - Los Angeles Model Railroad Society Open House, Hawthorne

October 4 - T.T.O.S. Southwestern Division Meet, Arcadia

October 10 - North County Model Railroad Society Open House & Swap Meet, Oceanside

October 10 - San Diego Division Layout Tour, Oceanside

October 10-12 - Travel Town Depot Days, Los Angeles

October 14 -18 – Calrailfans’ Tehachapi Event, Tehachapi

October 17 - Roundhouse Gang Swap Meet, San Bernardino

October 24 - Cajon Division Fall Meet, Buena Park

October 31 - Train Collectors Association/Western Division Meet, Arcadia

November 1 - T.T.O.S. Southwestern Division Meet, Arcadia

November 4, 7 & 9 - Highland Park Society Open House, San Gabriel

~~November 7 - Santa Susana Depot & Museum Swap Meet, Simi Valley <<< CANCELLED~~

November 7, 8, 11, 14 & 15 - Southern California Railway Museum’s Day Out with Thomas, Perris

November 14, 15 & 17 - California Southern Model Railroad Club Open House, Norwalk

December 5 - Los Angeles Model Railroad Society Open House, Hawthorne

~~December 5 & 6 - Frosty Freight Module Meet, Palos Verdes Peninsula <<< CANCELLED~~

December 6 - T.T.O.S. Southwestern Division Meet, Arcadia

*Special Thanks to Jeff Smith, RailMaster Hobbies  
for printing of this issue of the “Coupler”*



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