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Disneyland Favorite in On30
ATSF and UP in Victorville
Desert Fantasy in Grand Scale
On-line Meets and Clinics
LDSIG Board Election



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The LDSIG's goal is to act as a forum for the members' exchange of information and ideas, and to develop improved ways for hobbyists to learn the art and science of model railroad layout design.

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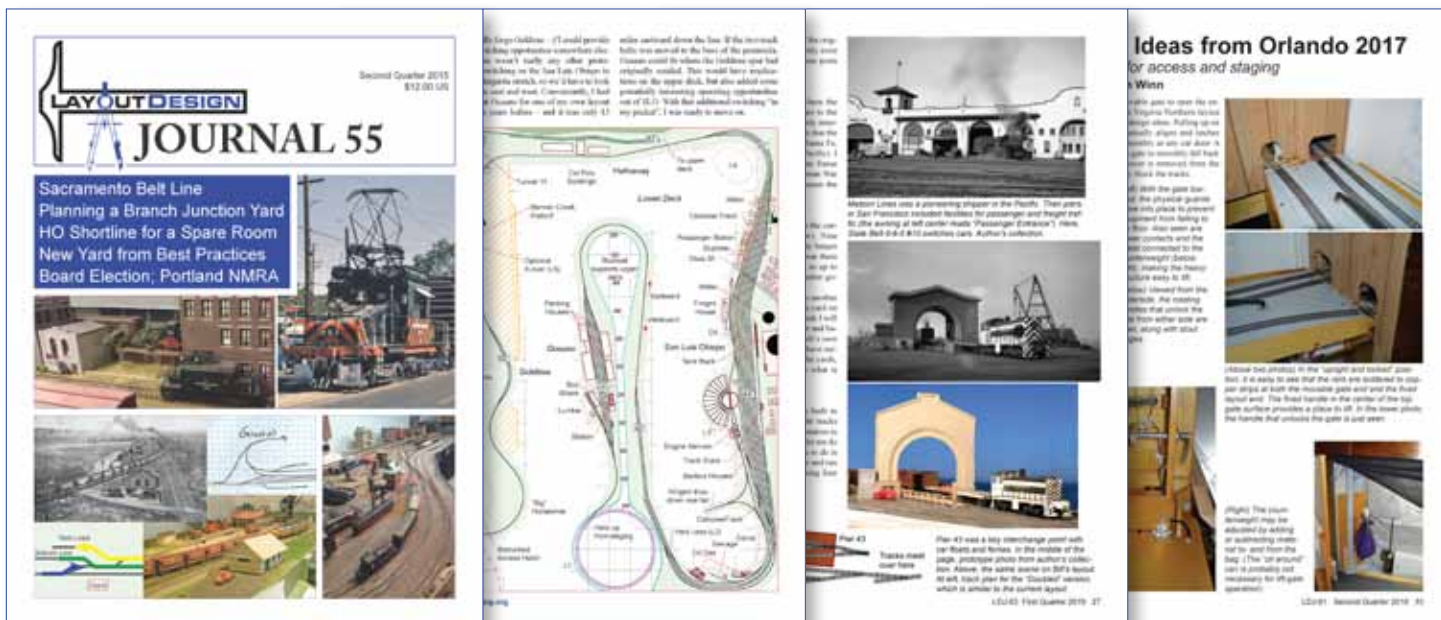
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showed the entire attraction and all of its wonderful features. My eyes pored over the fantastic details: all the waterfalls, rivers, forests, deserts, mining towns, glowing caverns, and the winding train track through all of it. Being a model maker – specifically a model railroader – the light bulb went off in my head: this would be a great model railroad.

A quick start in a modest space

Looking back on its now 15-year history, this model would have started a lot differently today; I would have undergone months of drawings, sketches, CAD drawings, and endless planning to make sure that I had every detail covered and accounted for. But for a sophomore in high school at the time who had only worked with HO Snap-Track, I was anxious to get going on my first full-blown model railroad.

Using Christopher Merritt's illustration as a guide, I scribbled out a figure-8 configuration, much like the original attraction, on a notepad. The model railroad would be (and still is) a selectively compressed layout, pulling together all of the features of the original prototype and squeezing them into the space I had available. In this case it was a sheet of Masonite measuring 5' X 7'.

If I had done everything to proper scale, the layout would have been three times the size. Since it was the closest thing I could find to the original attraction vehicles, an On30 Bachmann 0-4-0 Porter became the first train on the layout and established the model's scale of 1:48.

Nature's Wonderland RR under way

The newly repainted locomotive in bright yellow and red trim wound its way through the earliest iteration of the model, consisting of crude paper mache scenery. The mining town of Rainbow Ridge was scratchbuilt from cardstock and a condensed version of Rainbow Caverns existed in the hillside with a cutaway window allowing views into the blacklight-illuminated cave. The track work of Atlas HO flextrack was sketchy at best, but it worked for what I was doing. Over the course of the following decade, the model would often hit the

(Right) Visitors return to Rainbow Ridge to disembark after a glorious trip through the wonders of the West.



Rocks teeter, sway, and roll around precariously above riders' heads in Balancing Rock Canyon approaching the tunnel portal into Rainbow Caverns. Sam recreated the wobbly movements on the model.



The attraction included bright blacklight-illuminated cave and water features in Rainbow Caverns. Viewers of the model can look in from slots in the side of the layout to see this similar scene.



Modeling Victorville, California

One town, four railroads, helpers, switching, and scenery

by John Thompson

I have to begin with a confession: I've been just an armchair model railroader for my entire adult life, collecting lots of HO trains for 50 years but never building a layout to run them on. I had the usual Lionel train set as a child, I built a 4x8' HO layout when I was 14, and I've belonged to model railroad clubs during all of my adult years. But I've been more of a dreamer and a planner than a builder, just studying layout designs and all the articles and books about them.

When I got my first steady job 50 years ago, I decided that before I bought any new HO trains, I should pick a particular prototype railroad, location, and time period to model. I had grown up watching the Milwaukee Road in Minneapolis, but when I looked through my Athearn catalog (the main source for HO trains then), I noticed that I could get many more HO models painted for the Santa Fe or the Pennsy. I chose the Santa Fe because I loved their Warbonnet passenger diesel

scheme, and I could also run their blue and yellow freight diesels and their zebra-striped switchers (three paint schemes for the price of one!).

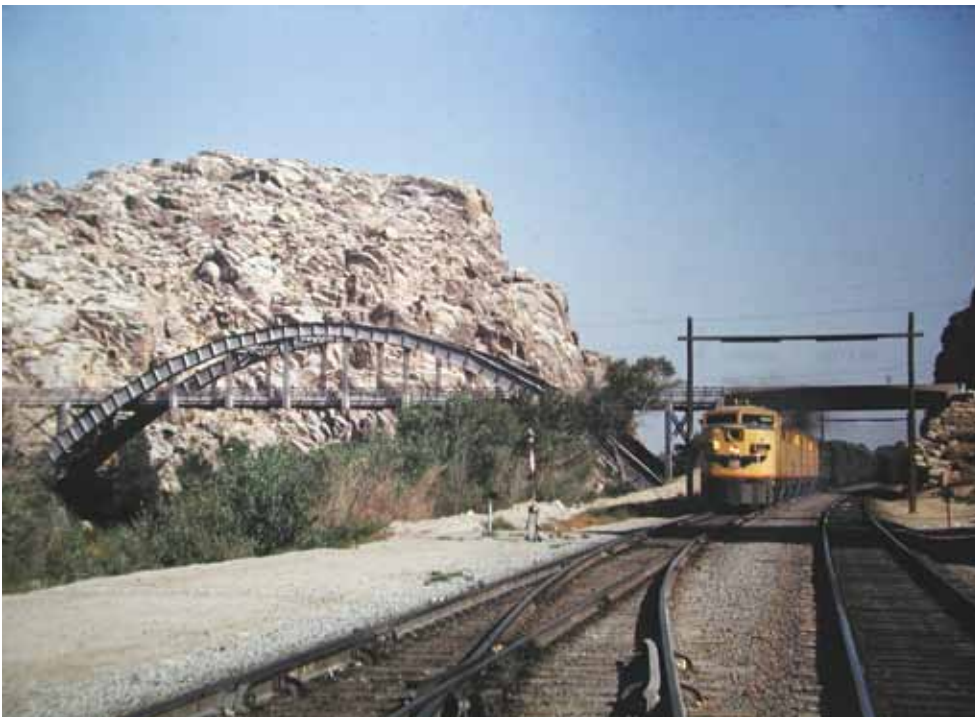
Taking a pass

For a location, John Armstrong had recommended modeling a mountain pass, so I picked Cajon Pass in Southern California because I had the Duke & Kistler book *Santa Fe ... Steel Rails Through California* (Golden West Books, 1963) which covered that area. Also, modeling Cajon Pass would allow me to run Union Pacific (UP) trains on the same shared tracks, including the yellow UP passenger trains that reminded me of the Milwaukee Road trains I had grown up with. On rare occasions the Southern Pacific could be detoured over Cajon Pass, too.

For choosing a time period, it was obvious to me that the steam-to-diesel transition years were the glory years of railroading, when the biggest and best steam locos were running alongside the beautiful new streamlined diesels. Later I specified my time period as 1946-1956, so that I could run the last of the WWII troop trains (1946) as well as the later Hi-Level *El Capitan* and the UP's *AeroTrain* (1956). But the plan is to pick a particular month and year for each operating session and to place the correct trains and autos on the layout for that month.

The last regular steam on Cajon Pass was in 1951, so I'll be running all-diesel sessions after that year. As for any buildings that changed during that decade, I will choose the versions I like best – and I will use modeler's license to keep the rail-served industries active even if some later switched to using trucks.

I visited Cajon Pass (between Barstow and San Bernardino) several times in the early 1970s and photographed all the structures that were still there (why did the earlier railfans



A Union Pacific ALCO PA ABA set brings a two-tone gray passenger train eastbound through the spectacular Upper Narrows of the Mojave River into Victorville in the late 1940s. The train passes under a highway approach to the landmark Rainbow Bridge to Apple Valley. Just out of the scene to the right is the Victorville Lime Rock plant, which casts a shadow across the tracks. Photo by Chard L. Walker, Pacific Railroad Society Collection, all rights reserved.

local freights swapped blocks in town, and a local switcher worked the industries.

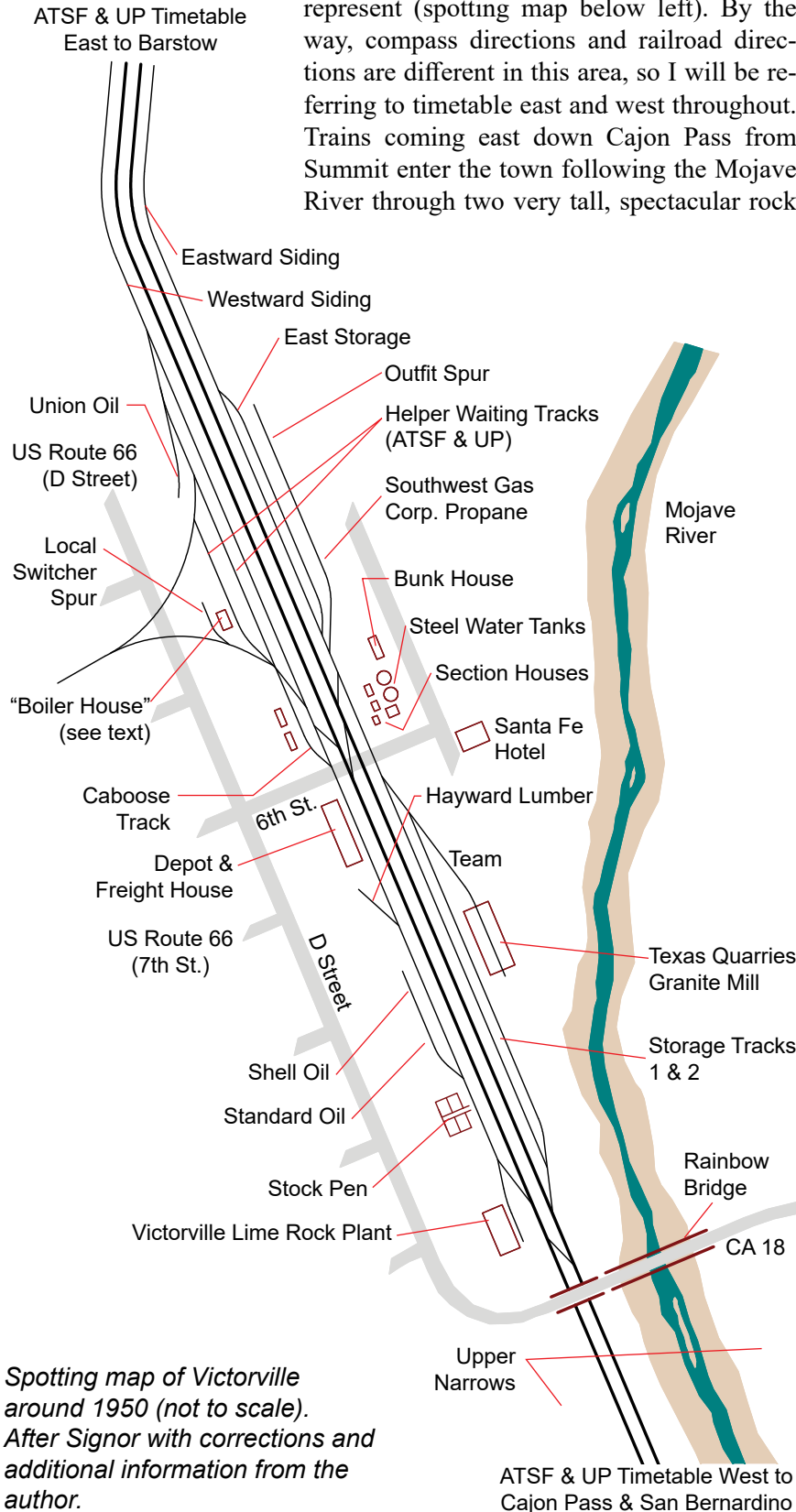
Victorville's five signature scenes

Before we consider my various attempts to draw layout plans for Victorville, let's look at the signature scenes in town that I want to represent (spotting map below left). By the way, compass directions and railroad directions are different in this area, so I will be referring to timetable east and west throughout. Trains coming east down Cajon Pass from Summit enter the town following the Mojave River through two very tall, spectacular rock

cliffs called the Upper Narrows. Just past the cliffs, there is a landmark arched highway bridge called the Rainbow Bridge (photo page 12). This scene *has* to be on my layout.

Following the double-track mainline east through town, we pass the large Victorville Lime Rock plant, then the Standard and Shell oil dealers, the Texas Quarries granite mill, and a short lumber-unloading spur. Then we come to the second signature scene, the 6th Street grade crossing, with the adjacent Santa Fe depot (photo page 15 top right) and the two tall steel water tanks, pump houses, section houses, and cantilever signal diagonally across from the depot (photo page 15 middle right). Eastward and westward passing sidings begin here and extend east out of town.

Moving farther east down the tracks, we come to the third important scene, the wye with the adjacent helper waiting tracks (one for each railroad). Inside the wye were a building for helper crews (the "boiler house"), an elevated fuel oil storage tank, a sand house, and a storage track for the local switcher (photo page 15 bottom right). Just past the wye was a Union Oil spur (our third oil dealer). Across the tracks from the wye were a storage track, an outfit spur for a work train, and a propane dealer (a recent discovery by me).



Spotting map of Victorville around 1950 (not to scale). After Signor with corrections and additional information from the author.

Beyond Victorville proper

The fourth signature scene is the large Southwestern Portland Cement (SWPC) plant, which included many sidings and spur tracks (photo page 21). This location had the station name of Leon until 1945, and so the railroaders continued to use that name later. On the far side of the plant was the home base of the Mojave Northern railroad, which brought the limestone from quarries up in the distant hills. The cars of limestone rocks were pushed up a long wooden trestle, where the rocks were dumped out. There was also a small engine house for the 0-6-0T locos and a pair of GE 70-tonners.

The final important scene is at the Lower Narrows, where the mainline tracks pass through a pair of through-truss bridges built at different times (photo page 27). The area has some spectacular rocky scenery and there is an adjacent electrical switching station for the power lines into Southern California.

Near the switching station a branch line to George Air Force Base left the mainline

While the bridge armature was being set up, Jack Sessums passed away and the gulch was named “Jack’s Gap” in his memory.

The Artistic Potential

Some effort was made to exploit the scenic splendor of the Joshua Tree site in the plan. Two-dimensional photos do not convey the three-dimensional qualities of rocky terrain – only showing the jumble of rocks on the surface and not the rise and fall of the terrain. Additional exploration could reveal more scenes that would look wonderful with a Grand Scale railway running through. The topographical map (page 29) only covers a fraction of the 300 acres owned by the Joshua Tree Railroad Museum. The unmapped area is very vertical but could be tracked like the winding lines up Mt. Lowe or Mt. Tamalpais.

Narrow right-of-way for appearance

Despite the harsh climate, desert landscapes show scars from excavations for a long



Quite a crowd has gathered to see a Grand Scale locomotive and flat car traverse the completed bridge armature over “Jack’s Gap” for the first time. The center pier has since been replaced with steel bents and a concrete footing, but the balance of the bridge structure has yet to be built.



More power! Above left, the untouched top of a ridge shows the general appearance of the Southern California High Desert land. After a good deal of pick and shovel labor, only a small test gap has been opened (above right). When a heavy excavator also couldn’t make progress, holes were drilled out (left) for expanding demolition grout to break the rock up into manageable chunks to be hauled away.

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Nearest large city / Airport: _____ Distance: _____

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Special interest or skills, such as scratch building structures, yard design, cars, operations, scenery, etc?

Yes No Special interest or skill: _____

Would you be willing to be a presenter or clinician at a national, regional or local meet? Yes No

Do you model a specific prototype? Yes No Prototype(s) modeled: _____

What specific areas or locale of railroading do you model (location) ? _____

Era modeled: _____ Scale(s): _____

Other interests (Main line, branch, yards, division, multi-scales, etc.) _____

Status of layout: _____

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