

Santa Clarita Valley Garden Railroad Club



NEWSLETTER

Santa Clarita, California

July, 2011

July Meeting

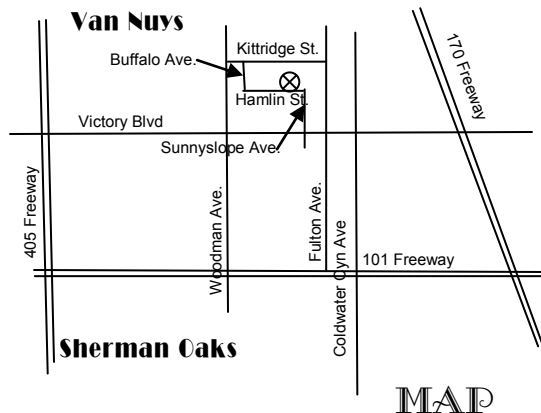
Monday, July 25, 2011 7:00 pm

At Home of Joe & Delia Caracappa

13541 Hamlin Street

Van Nuys, CA 91401

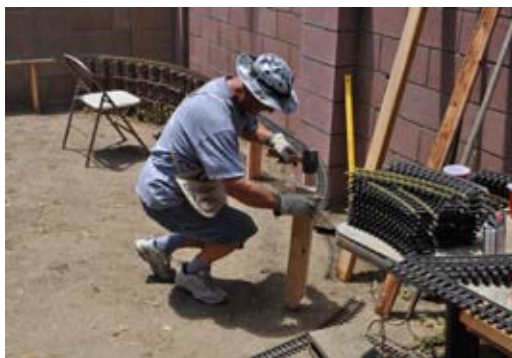
818/781-4089



DIRECTIONS

From the 170 Freeway (Hollywood Fwy) take the Victory Blvd Off Ramp and turn west. Proceed to Sunnyslope Ave (about 4 blocks past Fulton) and turn right. Go 2 blocks and turn left on Hamlin and look for the house at 13541.

Coming from the west you can take the 405 Fwy north and turn off at Victory, proceeding to Sunnyslope, a left turn—or— stay on the 101 and get off at Woodman and proceed north, crossing Victory and turning right on Kittridge St., a right on Buffalo Ave. which turns into Hamlin.



We will be visiting Joe & Delia Caracappa at the next meeting. Almost a month ago, Joe asked if any club member was available to help him get his roadbed installed and I think he definitely felt the pressure of the upcoming meeting. Here is what he reported.

"In the photos I sent you last night, the guy with the hat is Jim Owens and the other fellow is William, a co-worker friend of mine. They were working on the north loop at the time. (Tuesday, July 5). From there we continued south pounding the redwood supports spaced about 4 feet apart. At this time I have track propped up on the supports as a guide. Once the supports are in place, I will begin to string them together using redwood fence slats. Then the track goes on, counting tonight I have 11 available evenings left to work on this....stay tuned.

Thank God Jim showed up! William and I would have painted ourselves in a corner for sure. Most of the grades (2%) was done under his supervision and I had the opportunity to pick his brain as to "what to do next" and "what if I did this".

"It's no Tehachapi Loop, but nobody died trying to build it"

2011 CALENDAR

JULY

10-14 **West Coast Regional Meet**, over 50 garden railroads open in the San Francisco Bay area, info & registration go to: www.bagrs.org

25, Mon. 7:00 pm **Meeting at home of Joe & Delia Caracappa**, Van Nuys, CA

AUGUST

29, Mon. 7:00 pm **Meeting at homes of Don & Dodie Pilling and Ray & Martie Smith**, Newhall, CA

SEPTEMBER

26, Mon. 7:00 pm **Meeting at home of Jim & Sandi Owens**, Canyon Country, CA

OCTOBER

TBD Train event, details to be announced later

NOVEMBER

5-6 **Southwest Garden Railroad Show**, Fairplex in Pomona, CA. This is a G scale gauge only show.

28 **Meeting at restaurant**. Time and location to be announced later.

DECEMBER

No meeting in December.

ON TRACK by Alan Wright

From time to time we have held our meetings at a layout very much in the beginning phase or work and this month we will visit Joe and Delia Caracappa. This affords an opportunity for most of us to try to remember how it was when we started. This will be a chance to find out what Joe is planning to do and, maybe, provide some suggestions we might have from our experience. A big "high five" to Jim Owens for answering Joe's request for help on a day that turned out to be really hot.

At the last meeting, which was at our home, we welcomed back Mark Spector to the club. In the last three years Mark has gone through a very difficult divorce which resulted in his having to abandon his great layout with all the wonderful water features. His railroad equipment disappeared so he is really starting all over. He currently lives in the West Los Angeles area, so it is a bit of a drive to come up here.

In the past two years we haven't really seen much of founding members Curt and Cheryle Ehrlich. We had the good fortune to run into Cheryle at the market and she thinks many of their health and family

issues are behind them. Those familiar with their patio layout will remember the high retaining wall at the back. Cheryle said that Curt has taken it down part way so it will be easier for him to work on it. He has also started to work on extending the layout out beyond the patio and part of the side yard. We hope to see more of them as the summer comes to a close.

I am appealing to all members to consider doing an article for the newsletter. Subjects can be anything you choose or do **MY FAVORITE BUILDING, My Workshop, TECHNICAL STUFF, Things I wish I had done differently, or what have you**. Include photos to illustrate.

SANTA CLARITA VALLEY GARDEN RAILROAD CLUB

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BUILDING BLOCKS

by Alan Wright

At the August meeting in 2004 Cheryle Ehrlich and Debbie Goetz presented a workshop on how to build what they called “blocks”, an assemblage of various items and people to create a scene. Some of the gals got together at Cheryle’s home a few days later and created their own “blocks”. Cheryle’s own creation is shown at the right. She furnished a grab bag of items the girls could use to make their own projects.

The key to putting the items together is that they are built up on a clear piece of light plastic sheet. The best source of this is from containers that you get at the market with food such as bakery items. After you finish putting one together you trim the excess plastic around the block. The advantage to doing this is to create interesting scenes using people and a variety of boxes, crates, tools, luggage, barrels or what you can find to employ. These are easy to store and set up on your layout in a very short time.

As can be seen in the photos, it is easy to incorporate items which, by themselves have little meaning. You should always be on alert to collect all kinds of items and put them into a “junk box” until you find a use. At the train shows you can buy all sorts of scale boxes, barrels, cans, sacks and tools which comprise most of what you see in these “blocks”. Some vitamin bottles have little plastic desiccant containers that make great scale plastic buckets. (see photo 3). It did not work out to include the two characters in the “block”, so they have been individually placed.

I try to incorporate as many “people” in the scenes as possible to tell a story. In the house under construction in photo 4, I have created 3 “blocks” and added the guy on the ladder, not in a “block”. 4a shows owner arguing with contractor who has the drawings tucked under his arm. A worker picks up some pipe from a pile that includes some lumber. In 4b, the cement mixer came as a set with the operator holding a shovel and working from a pile of sand & cement added to complete the “block”. He is making the mortar for the bricklayer in 4c, all part of another “block”.



1
Cheryle Ehrlich's block, 2004



2
Donna Wright's block, 2004



3



4

4a

4b

4c

If you have been going to the railroad shows for some time, you have probably acquired a lot of “little people”, some already grouped or components of a scene. (The two guys playing checkers, for instance). In the next page I will give some more examples and show you how I handle individual characters that are best as stand alone.

BUILDING BLOCKS



Clarkson layout, Riverside, CA.



Smith layout, North San Diego Co, photo taken during 2004 Western Regional



Broz layout, San Diego CA. Photo taken during the 2004 Western Regional.



Abate Bros. layout, Los Gatos, CA photo taken during the 2006 National Garden Railway Convention.

Some of the most enjoyable railroad layouts I have visited have been those where scenes have been created that give the railroad interest and a sense of place. The photos to the left have done this in many ways including the incorporation of plants. Each of them tells a story.

While I doubt that these examples necessarily employ the use of “blocks”, it has to be a time-consuming task to unpack and place all of these figures and associated material each time the railroad is operated for viewing unless it is possible to leave them in place as I suspect may be the case on the Clarkson layout.

Although these scenes include many figures there is extensive use of various items necessary to complete the arrangement. These can include junk, ladders, picnic tables, shacks, chairs, etc. that give a reason for the figures you use.

Here is what I like about using “blocks”. Allow you to set up a scene just once and quickly place it when you are having an open house. Figures can be freed from their clumsy bases (if they have that) and secured in the position you want along with a bench, boxes, equipment, etc. These can also be attached to the buildings where you use them.

Member Walter Robles created a scene when he set up a simple building as a blacksmith's shop. All of the equipment and the figure were attached to the building or the deck.



Many figures are best used as stand alone subjects but will not stand upright when a base is removed.

To correct this carefully drill a small hole up inside one of the legs and insert a rod. (I use a 5d finish nail cut down to about 1” length.) Drill a hole in the material where you want it to be placed to receive the rod.



After you have mounted the figures & stuff to the plastic sheet you may want to add a texture on top of the plastic to match the background. To the guy with the cement mixer I added a layer of sand and spilled some “cement” around. To attach items to the plastic I use E6000 cement which is available at Michael's and probably in other craft stores.

JUNE MEETING

By Gary Woolard photos by Carla Breitner



The Club's June meeting was held at President Alan & Donna Wright's home of their romantically named Valentine & Heartland Railroad.

One topic of the evening was "What's in your junk drawer, and how can you use it?" We've all heard the expression "One man's junk is another man's treasure." From the group discussion, it became apparent that an imaginative garden railroader can find the 'treasure' in just about anything!

Another topic that arose was the effective use of figures to create complete scenes. There were plenty of good examples of this on the Valentine & Heartland, and Alan showed us how he kept his character groups together by gluing them onto unobtrusive pieces of clear plastic sheets.



As dusk fell across the Valentine & Heartland, that particular magic of a lighted layout became apparent, and we all settled back with another serving of Donna's delicious trifle and basked in the warm glow of dozens of tiny grain-of-wheat bulbs.