

NCGR Time Table

No. 250

Northern Colorado Garden Railroaders

August 2020



Conductor's Corner

Fred Mann
President

Well, it goes without saying that this summer is very much unlike any other that I have witnessed. As I mentioned during our last meeting, my cancer is back. I will be taking pills as a sort of chemotherapy this time. We will see what side effects occur. I am hoping that they will be sufficiently manageable so that I can continue to serve as president for the rest of my term.

I have found a little time to work on lighting my hotel. I have 5 separate rooms that light up at random times. I plan to use the same Arduino to also light a couple of shops nearby, but I have not yet begun to install those lights. My thanks to Del Tapparo for his assistance in designing two different circuit options in order to "translate" the 5 volt output of the Arduino to the 12 volts needed to energize the LED strips that I am using.

Given what I have been reading, it seems clear that we will be unable to hold our annual Open House this year. Even if the situation resolves quickly, we likely won't have time to plan and advertise to the community. I still hold out a glimmer of hope for holding a club visit in September.

I'd like to invite you all to attend our Zoom meetings held every other Wednesday beginning at 7:00. I will send out a meeting invitation to you before each meeting. Just click on the link to download Zoom and then join the meeting. And, it doesn't matter if you live in Fort Collins or way out East in Pennsylvania, you can join in to our meeting. Our next meeting is this Wednesday, August 12 at 7:00 pm MDT. Why not give it a try?



Next Meeting

Zoom Meetings

Every Two Weeks

Wednesdays

7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**Zoom invitations will
be sent via e-mail.**

Welcome New Member

Chris Greenwald
Denver, CO



Club Car

Chris Reid
Secretary/Treasurer

Current Membership

Paid members	37
Honorary Members	1

Financials for Jul 2020

Income	\$10.00
Expenses	\$16.12
Bank	\$3412.06
Petty Cash	\$10.00

*The town of Mountain Pride now has a new north wall and the church has been moved to more secure ground. This is in part thanks for the help from Scott Kretschmer. Note the abandoned rail spur in the foreground. Someone seems to be harvesting ties and rail with an old pickup truck.
(Kenneth Jessen)*

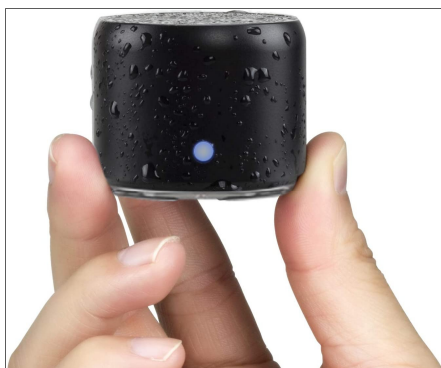


Add Interactive Sound to your Rolling Stock and Buildings

By Del Tapparo

Note: Since last month's article, "The Talking Caboose", I have found a much better and lower cost solution.

Always looking for ways to have more fun at an open house or train show, I thought it would be neat to have a train that "speaks" to the kids as it goes by; "Hi kids! Do you like trains?" Or maybe have a haunted house with a pre-recorded playlist of spooky sounds or maybe voices that know the names of the visitors; "Do not go to sleep tonight Jimmy. I will be in your room.", and then play a spooky sound effect.

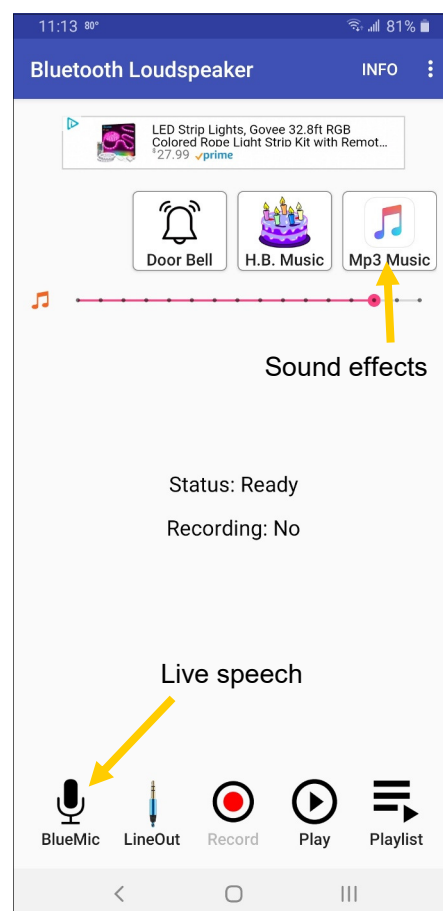


IP67 Waterproof Bluetooth speaker
available from Amazon for \$16.
1.89" Dia. X 1.57"H

This can be accomplished using a free app on your phone and a Bluetooth speaker. (I have an Android phone, but I am sure the same thing can be done with Apple products.) I found an app called *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* that lets you either talk directly into the microphone on your phone, or play one or more .mp3 files from a playlist. Low cost Bluetooth speakers are completely self contained. They have an internal USB rechargeable battery, speaker, and Bluetooth receiver. The mini versions are only 2-3" in diameter, cost around \$20, some are even waterproof, and will easily fit in most rolling stock or buildings. You just need to be able to access the speaker for recharging.

The *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app lets you easily just talk into your phone and hear it on the Bluetooth speaker. Playing pre-recorded sound effects of voice tracks is a bit more complicated, but not bad.

The *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app has a feature to play *MP3 Music*, which is a playlist of .mp3 files. This can be used to play all of our .mp3 sound effects; haunted house, cattle mooing, thunder, pigs, whatever. The app also lets you record speech via the microphone and create a *Playlist* within the app. However, this is of little value because I was unable to find anyway to rename the files to something meaningful; i.e. "Hey Kids", instead of some long number combination.raw filename. So we need to create our speech files as .mp3 files to use along with the other sound effects via the *MP3 Music* icon. An-



other app, named *MP3 Recorder*, will do that for us. Then we just need to transfer all of our .mp3 files from our PC to the phone, which can be done easily. (See Bluetooth MP3 Sidebar for the procedures).

Free .mp3 sound effects can be found on-line at FreeSound.org and SoundBible.com, among others. So, get creative, and have some fun at your next open house.



Bluetooth MP3

Note: These procedures are for use with Windows computers and Android phones. You may be able to use similar procedures with Apple products.

Transferring existing .mp3 files from your PC to your Phone using Windows File Explorer

- Connect your phone to a PC USB port. Using Windows File Explorer you should be able to see your phone under *This PC*. Mine shows up as *Galaxy S9+*. The *Galaxy S9+/Phone* directory will reveal all the folders in your phone. You can save your .mp3 files anywhere you like, but mine already has a folder called *Sounds*, which seems appropriate.
- Copy the .mp3 files of your choice to your phone's *Sounds* folder.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Creating a .mp3 file from a speech recording using the MP3 Recorder phone app

- Open the *MP3 Recorder* app on your phone. Tap the microphone icon to start recording.
- Tap the square record button to stop and save the recording.
- Share the recording to *Dropbox* or some other cloud file space that you can access via your PC.
- Now, on your PC access the .mp3 file and rename it with something meaningful. Then copy it to your phone's *Sound* folder per the procedure above.

Playing a .mp3 file using the Bluetooth Loudspeaker app on your phone

- Turn on Bluetooth in your phone and make sure the speaker is on and paired with your phone.
- Open the *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app on your phone.
- Tap the *MP3 Music* icon. A list of all the .mp3 files on your phone will appear.
- Select one or more files to play. Tap *Play Music*.

Using the Bluetooth Loudspeaker app on your phone as a loudspeaker

- Turn on Bluetooth in your phone and make sure the speaker is on and paired with your phone.
- Open the *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app on your phone.
- Tap the *BlueMic* icon and start speaking. Stay away from the speaker to avoid feedback.
- Tap the icon again to mute.

Chris Reid, Fort Collins, CO

For those of us who are going to miss *Garden Railways* magazine please note there is a magazine called *Garden Rail*. It is based in the UK but a digital edition is available which Google will help you find. Of course nothing is the same and lots of live steam which is very popular in the UK.

As an aside I regularly order stuff for my indoor 4mm railway from the UK. Mailing takes about 7 to 10 days. Note that all prices quoted include taxes so the tax is taken off for "foreign" buyers. (The tax is 20% so it is a big deal). I usually consider the price quoted will cover for mailing and insurance. I have a couple of suggestions for reliable manufacturers and train stores. If you are into live steam you will find many more options than are available in the USA.

Of course Del will have to adjust his radio control system from batteries to servo motors but so be it!

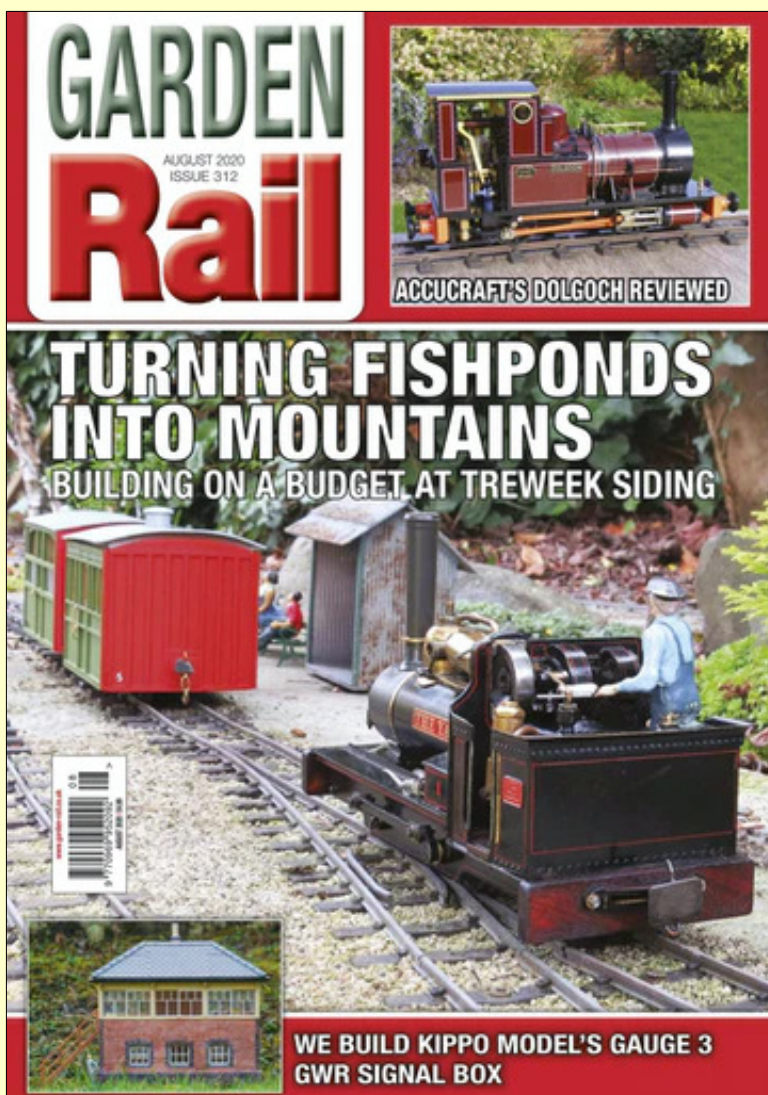
(Del T.) You can get a free copy of the latest digital edition here ...

<https://pocketmags.com/us/garden-rail-magazine>

The magazine is top notch! And you can learn all kinds of new railroad terms, and even new words of British origin:

I found "mollycoddled" in my free issue:

To treat (someone) in an indulgent or overprotective way. "I found school very difficult, and realized I'd been mollycoddled at home."





Bull Session

Bring us up-to-date on your latest projects. Include a photo, if you have one.



Robert Linton (Jun)

Track \$4/ft. LGB and Aristocraft

Uintah/Flatbed Loads. \$25 ea., 3 for \$60.



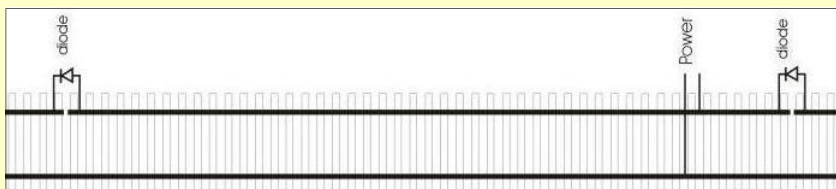
Chris Reid (Jun)

Wanted: LGB Mogul to swap or sell.

For Swap or Giveaway: LGB 125 anniversary hardback book (386 pages). 1994 LGB catalog (250 pages).

Del Tapparo, Windsor, CO

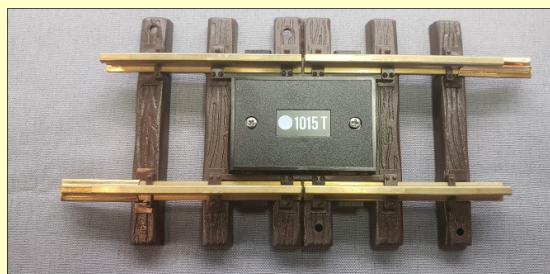
I have been working on a design for a simple automatic trolley reverser circuit. I've never bothered with this, since there are many others on the market, but I do get occasional requests. Many of these units operate using isolated sections of track at each end of the point to point track which include diodes to stop the trolley. The circuit then detects the loss of track current, does a time delay, then reverses the track polarity, allowing the diode to conduct, and the loco takes off in the other direction. My unit will have smooth starts/stops.



It is relatively easy to install your own diodes across the track gaps using either terminal lugs or solder. But while looking for some track to use, I found some brand new LGB accessories in my track box that I had picked up on sale somewhere years ago (probably Mizell Trains); LGB1015T and LGB1015K. This set is used to simplify running your train through a reverse loop. The LGB1015K has built-in diodes designed for that purpose. You guys with track powered reverse loops (Bob) should look into this.

But what I found of interest, was the LGB1015T, which just functions as an isolated track joint, but hidden inside the little box is a terminal block connected to each section of the track (2 rails in, and 2 rails out). This allowed me to easily install my diode for the trolley line on one side and a jumper on the other, without soldering track.

Google these part numbers to see how they work. They may solve a problem for you.



More Bull

Ken Jessen, Loveland, CO

We had a great operating session on Sunday, July 19 mild temperatures in the mid-80s. Kevin Strong from Denver joined us. He works for Denver Channel 4 and has been a long time contributor to Garden Railways. There last issue will be at the end of the year. He brought with him his exquisitely detailed outside frame consolidation and his Shay. Steve Andersen brought his goose pulling a short train and Scott Kretschmer brought his Shay.



This is an actual ballast train putting my garden railroad to work. This was not staged (well maybe a little). (Kenneth Jessen)



Steve Andersen making his way through the brush. (Kenneth Jessen)



Kevin Strong's Shay passing through Mountain Pride. (Kenneth Jessen)



Steve Andersen's Doodlebug train headed northbound. (Kenneth Jessen)



Kevin Strong's outside frame Consolidation. (Kenneth Jessen)

& Some More

Ken Kafka, Pierce, CO

A personal update from the Kafka household. Not a lot to do with trains, but we are enjoying hikes in the mountains.

This weekend we went to a big tractor, threshing show in Bird City, Kansas. A great event that more than doubled the population of their county. There were plenty of steam engines, both full size and scale in operation. In addition plenty of antique cars, trucks and tractors and unique historical machinery. Excellent food and good entertainment. We stayed very busy for the two days we were there. It was good to get out.



Steve Andersen Estes Park, CO

The Empire Builder, Terl Robinson, is showing Scot Wilseck how to potentially start a mountain railroad in Estes Park. (Scot may be joining the Northern Colorado Garden Railroaders) The other photos show a simple layout next to my desk. If there's a need, I have plenty of space for sorting papers inside the tracks. The two tracks consist of an AC inner loop for the Marklin trains and a meandering outer loop for DC equipment. Most of it 50-70 years old.

The Marklin is a semi-permanent triple header with 18 cars, both freight and passenger (my entire collection).



The "Dockside" switcher is an ancient Varney with lots of added details.

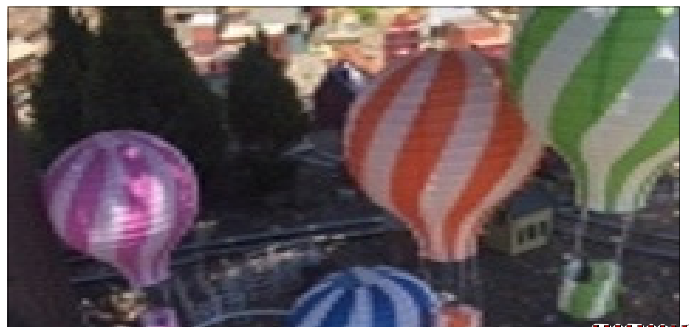
I'm finding this setup to be a nice adjunct to my outdoors trains. You can never have too many!



& Even More

Mike Perry, Loveland, CO

Sometimes it's not just the trains. When making a layout like the one at the Milner/Schwarz House the little details make a difference. We tried to replicate Loveland as it looked in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Add a garden, railroad, people, animals and appropriate buildings and the most important thing; guests. We are now back to having our Open Houses; August 9, 23, September 6, 20. Times are 11:00 to 2:00. Face masks are required. The Historic farmhouse and gardens will also be open. www.LovelandHistorical.org



& Yet More

Chris Reid, Fort Collins, CO

Train Storage

I have probably mentioned before that my previous layout was short of storage. I mean by that somewhere to stage locos and/or trains ready to take their turn on the main line. I had started to build a complete man sized shed but moved house before completion. Anyway it's nice to have somewhere on the layout to show off your collection even if you don't intend to run everything.

On my present layout I have a couple of areas on the main line where I could hold trains awaiting their turn but nowhere away from the main line to hold trains. The attached photographs hopefully show what I have done. It's intended to be a combined freight yard and loco depot and somewhere to hold locos out of any inclement weather (hail).

I had originally intended to build something along the lines of Bob's majestic depot but decided that a smaller structure just to hold the locos was good enough as I don't have the space to replicate a complete man cave/train shed like Mark's. I tend to leave the cars out throughout the summer and so far they seem none the worse for an occasional wash down.

What is missing from the photographs is the actual 3 road loco shed. This was donated by Robert (thank you Robert) but needs my usual weathering treatment so it's on the workbench.

Some detailing yet to be completed but you get the idea.



Bill Brayden, Fort Collins, CO

I'm busy with the concrete road bed repair and re-alignment project. Once this is done it's back to changing out ties only about 30 to 40 feet left! So far the results have been extremely favorable with no derailments and track not floating up on breeze.



Newsletters from Other Clubs

[Click Here](#)

Denver Garden Railway Society

**Christchurch Garden Railway Group
New Zealand**

**Gold Coast Garden Railway Society
Ventura, California**

**The North Star Chronicles
South Africa**

Brian Moon, Fort Collins, CO

Here's a few photos showing some progress on the never-ending story, all from approximately the same vantage point. The first shows the outlines of the pond built upon the remains of a long gone pond. Basically a hole in the ground. Here I'm doing a rough layout of the pond-to-be that is based on the Mississippi River at New Orleans. The far side will be precisely the "Crescent" of that city.

The second photo shows the pond pretty well developed and focused on the waterfall/reservoir added to the plan, pretty much because I had gotten a small plastic insert from somewhere, I don't even remember. But the idea took hold, and then it was off to the races. This feature added countless hours to the whole project, and led to the addition of an Arkansas logging operation to the Master Plan. The spillway alone required a hours of survey work and fabrication. A bridge was also added, and then the area became a junction for a short line to go further west.

Third photo shows the spillway during final testing. It works exactly as designed, and water levels are perfect.

The last shot is very recent and shows the rock backdrop where the waterfall will descend, as well as the bridge in place. There will be much more rock added and a logging line will eventually ascend up and over the waterfall and go behind the north dam which will become a two-way backdrop.

Getting this area developed allows me to easily finish the grading for the mainline. I will probably have trains running over the mainline just in time for the first snow. I hope it's this year's first snow.

I should note that all of this has been done to 1. Fill in the big hole left from the former pond, and 2. give me someplace to run my Southern Crescent Limited.

I'm sure you all know how one thing leads to another. By now I've thought of enough additional track and town that this thing will likely never get done. Not at my rate of progress thus far, and all my wild ideas that get approved by the main of-fice.



NCGR Contact Info

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NCGR Calendar

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month.

Bring something to share for "Show & Tell". **Please wear your name badges.** Guests are always welcome.

Date	Event	Details
	Physical Meetings are on hold !	Virtual Meetings every Two Weeks, Wednesday Nights, for now. You will be notified via e-mail.

www.NCGR.net