

Calendar

Mar 19 Gary & Marilyn Siegel
Apr 2 Lamont & Barbara Stolley
May 7 Don & Linda Morgan
May 21 Gary & Cathy Raymond
1/32 only.
Jun 4 Mark & Sheila Goodman
Jun 25 Richard & JoAnn Abraham
Jul 16 Gary & Marilyn Siegel
Jul 23 Ventura Fair display build.
Jul 30 Ventura Fair display build.
Aug 3 -14 Ventura County Fair.
Aug 27 Sal & Deborah Mele
Sep 17 Gary & Marilyn Siegel
Oct 22 Georges & Marie
Arseneault
Nov 5 Gary and Jane Olmstead
Nov 19 Gary & Marilyn Siegel
Dec Open



MARCH 2022

In This Month's Issue

Lots of cool stuff

Larry & Bonnie Lowenberg Meet **Page 2**

A beautiful, established railroad and a large swap meet with lots of things for sale

So You Want To Build a Garden Railroad? **Page 8**

Michael Newlon

A very comprehensive article about many of the issues Mike faced when he built his railroad.

Abandonments **Page 21**

Bruce Kuebler, Mary Heumphreus

Keeping It Running **Page 22**

Photos by John Ryan and Nick Conti

An eye opening look at the damage and repair work on Gary Siegal's railroad

Grifty's Helena 0-4-2T Porter **Page 25**

Walt Thompson

Murder of the Orient Express **Page 27**

Contributed by Marie Reilly

Newsletter: John Lyans
lyans@pacbell.net

Treasurer/Dues/Badges:
Bruce Kuebler
pbkuebler@sbcglobal.net

Web Page: Gary Olmstead
<https://www.gcgrs.com/>

Meet Scheduling/Facebook: John & Kim
Whitaker
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/145996342219253/>

March Meet

On Saturday, March 19, 2022 at 11:00 am, we will be meeting at a club favorite, the Santa Cruz – San Jose garden railway at the home of Gary and Marilyn Siegal. John Ryan and Nick Conti have done a lot of work to repair the track, (see page 22), and it should be in good shape. Bring your own lunch and an appetizer or dessert to share. Main line battery, the loop has track power. See you there!

Larry & Bonnie Lowenberg Meet and Swap Meet

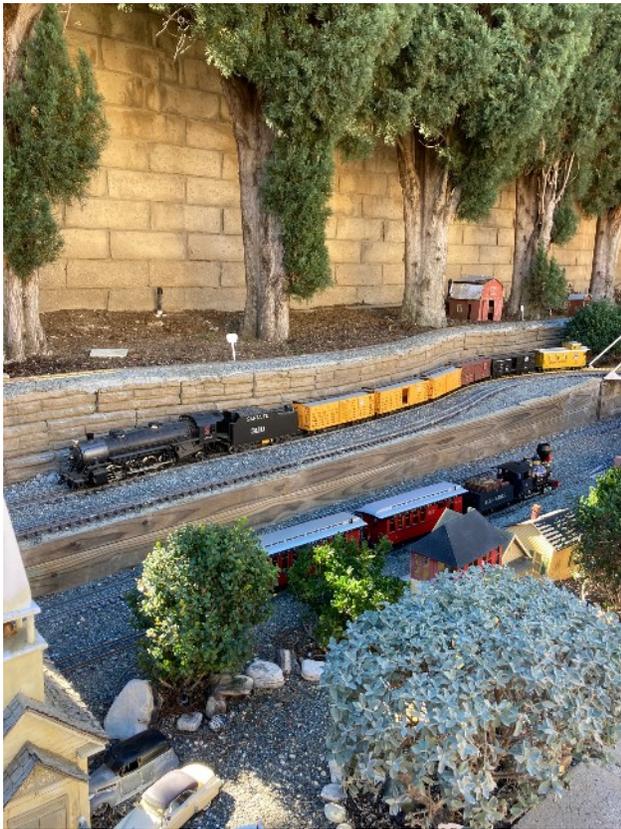
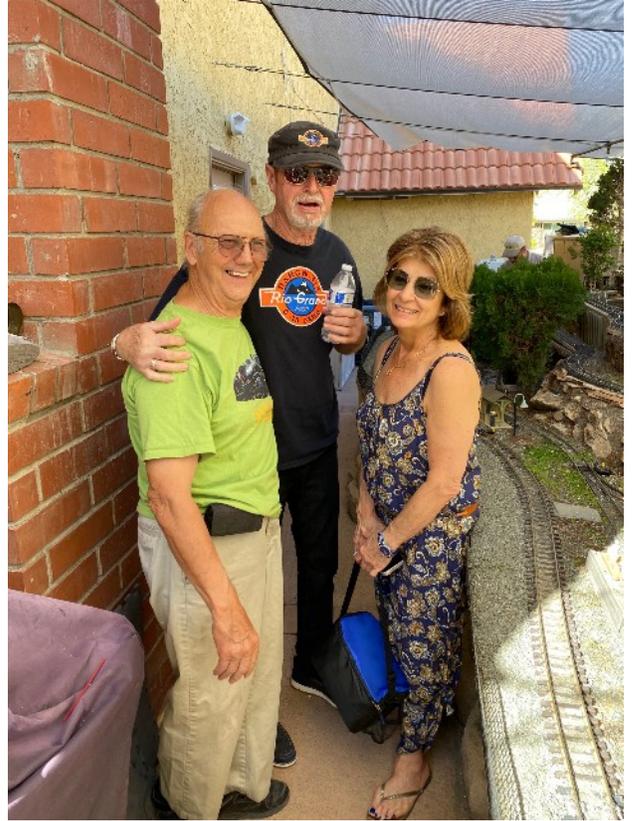
We had a nice weather, a great swap meet, and fun running trains at Larry and Bonnie's home. The railroad looked great, I especially enjoyed talking to Larry about the different types of plantings on the railroad.

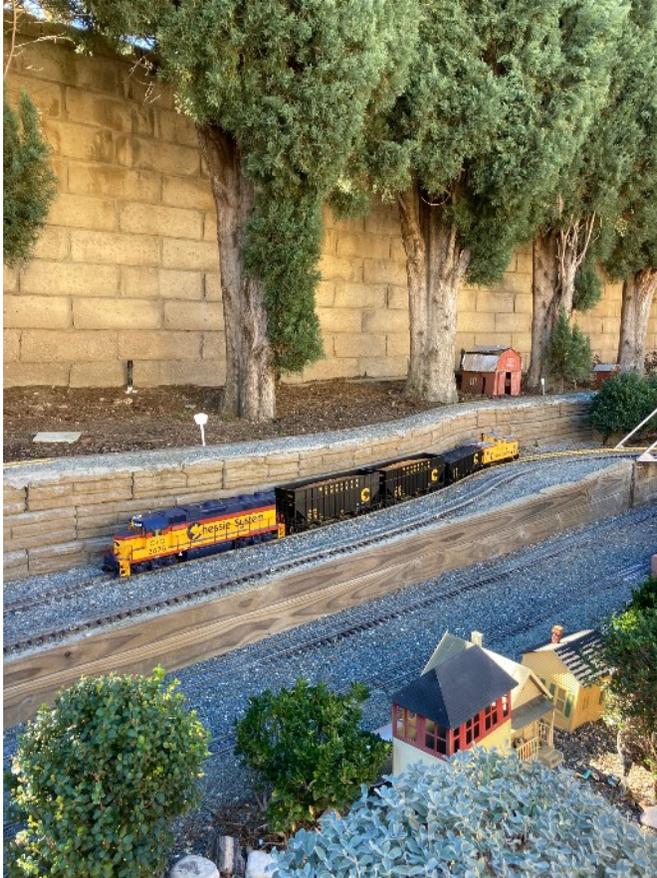
There were lots of engines, cars, track and buildings for sale at the swap meet. Georges bought a large, 1:20.3 scale boarding house that was scratch built by my cousin. It has it's own electrical system to light some of the interior rooms! I hated to see it go but it was just too big for my layout and Georges has a lot of space to fill in his yard. I ended up buying some code 332 track from Larry that I can use to store and display my equipment in my train shed. Everyone seemed to be enjoying the railroad, the company, Bonnie's dessert and the sale. Thank you Lowenbergs.

Photos by John Whitaker, John Lyans



REALLY NICE
LAYOUT LARRY!





SCENES FROM AROUND THE RAILROAD





George snagged this 1:20.3 model that was built by my older cousin, Roy Weber. Roy built this model when he was living in the San Fernando Valley, just a few miles from George's home. Roy was instrumental in cultivating my interest in model railroading when I was young. He and his wife moved from Southern California to Wahington state about ten years ago where he finally had the space to build a garden railroad. His railroad was just few days from completion when he developed a MRSA infection and passed away in 2014. Some of his friends finished the layout in his memory and made this video. YouTube link: [The Complete Circle - In Memory of Roy Weber](#)

DENVER welcomes you in 2022

37th National Garden Railway Convention

JUNE 20-25, 2022



DENVER GARDEN RAILWAY SOCIETY



- ◆ 50+ Layouts with Encore Saturday Tours
- ◆ 40+ Clinics featuring Marc Horovitz, Kevin Strong, Nancy Norris & Steve Berneberg
- ◆ Model Contests with Prizes for Youth & Adult Categories

REGISTER ONLINE OR PRINT FOR REGISTRATION BY MAIL

SAVE \$25 WITH EARLY REGISTRATION!

◆ Individual Registration

\$75 by March 31, 2022 - \$100 thereafter

◆ Family Registration

\$125 by March 31, 2022 - \$150 thereafter

REGISTRATION INCLUDES ▶

- ◆ Visit 50 + Layouts Scheduled for the Convention
- ◆ Access to Vendor Hall, Welcome Reception, Clinics and Convention Store
- ◆ Participation in the Convention Model Contest and Youth Model Contest
- ◆ Convention Bag, Program Book, and Commemorative Convention Pin

◆ Limited Edition Logo-branded Rio Grande Caboose Only \$98 with Registration

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS ▶

- ◆ Four Pre-Convention Bus Tours – Transportation, Admission, and Lunch
- ◆ Post-Convention Bus Tour – Includes Transportation and Admission
- ◆ Banquet, Ice cream Social and BBQ at the Colorado Railroad Museum
- ◆ Bus Transportation to Layout Tours and BBQ

REGISTER NOW!

VISIT NGRC2022.ORG

NGRC 2022 - DENVER

A Railroading Adventure Awaits in
Colorado where Narrow Gauge meets G Gauge



Register today at ngrc2022.org to begin your Rocky Mountain adventure

Over 50 layouts on tour

40 plus clinics

Banquet, BBQ and Welcome Reception

Vendor Hall with many of your old favorites plus new and unique items for your garden railway

Visit the NGRC 2022 Store

<http://ngrc2022.org/>

So, you want to build a Garden Railroad?

Michael Newlon, February 2022

Last year I decided to construct a garden RR in my backyard. I have always loved trains and have collected G-scale trains for many years. I have a nice layout inside the house in the attic. The crown jewel of our place is a rideable steam train outside. I was given an opportunity to purchase a garden RR layout with lots of bridges and trestles. I did it and spent a little over a year (my Covid19 project) completing my garden layout. It was a wonderful project. I learned a lot and had a lot fun doing it. Many people have asked my advice on how they can have a garden RR in their yard. I thought I would share my insights. There is no really correct and perfect garden RR. You must decide what you are trying to achieve and for how long. Someone may decide they want to lay some temporary track down for a party or Christmas time. A simple oval 10-foot track on the lawn may work. Others may want a more permanent layout. What do you want to achieve? Perhaps a complicated layout housing many trains with lots of switches and bridges and computerized technology. Others may want a miniature scaled town, or replication of a famous landmark (Disneyland). Another popular choice is replicating nature with canyons, mountains, forests, etc. Maybe it's truly a "garden RR" and you simply wish to make your garden more beautiful, fun, and interactive.

Everything you do in your construction will be a compromise with scale, performance, quality, and visual impact. You need to have a clear direction of what you are trying to achieve. Hopefully, this article will save you time and money so you will make an informed decisions about the dos and don'ts about building your own garden RR correct the first time.

First, most of us are familiar, and probably grew up with an inside model RR. For many, this was an O-scale Lionel/Mark/American Flier DC train set that ran around a Christmas Tree. This may have given you many wonderful memories leading you to your decision to build an outside garden RR. This experience may have been your inspiration, but it probably didn't really prepare you for a garden RR. Just think, bigger, better, more complicated and way more high-tech. Outside nature is beautiful, but not the friend of electronic devices and construction materials. Inside your house, you may have gotten away with poor connections, cardboard structures and mediocre wiring. Your trains; structures; and landscaping often just had to deal with dust. Outside they deal with wind, water, sunlight, insects, oxidation and critters (human and non-human) walking through your layout. So basically, what you build in June, could be a debris field by December.

All man made projects basically have two considerations. Technical (how well did you engineer it?) and Aesthetic (how does it look? Does it add or subtract to the beauty surrounding it?). Most train layouts are built by men (yes it may be sexist, but a fact). Men by nature are "technical" creatures. Men also tend to minimize or in some causes totally ignore the equally important aesthetics (or if they do, they literally don't see the forest for the trees). Consider the current Tesla car as an example. This car is absolutely the state of the art, high tech electric car of the future. I would argue performance and reliability is matched by few. They get a 10 out 10 technically. Aesthetically it's another story. To me the exterior looks like a 1980 Toyota. The cockpit should look like the contoured control panel of the spaceship Enterprise to be consistent with the technology. However, what they supplied is what looks like someone screwed a home square laptop onto the dashboard. Did they not have a designer in their budget? Aesthetically they get a 1 out 10. The cockpit looks more like I should be answering emails instead of the Spaceship Enterprise.

I will cover both the technical and aesthetics. However, I believe we should start where most modelers need the most help, the aesthetics. Perhaps a good place to envision your project is to consider your layout as a living breathing entity. Let's name your layout "Fantasy" (as basically this is what it is. Your layout is a fantasy world that you are trying to bring alive). To you, you are the cool handsome guy building your dream layout. However, let's look at it from Fantasy's point of view. What does Fantasy see? The first thing it sees is you. To Fantasy you probably look like and perform like a 100-foot King Kong. You are 20 times larger than any of its inhabitants. Basically, you are out of scale. If you get too close, or God forbid try to walk through the layout, you can easily crush all the structures, decimate the vegetation and break everything you get close to. You see a beautiful layout.

Fantasy sees the 50-foot block wall and a 200-foot house (the habitat where King Kong lives). You are who you are and Fantasy is what it is. The trick: can the two of you co-exist? It's probably too difficult to run a full-sized RR and impossible for you to shrink. So, you must consciously work with what you have to give the illusion of compatibility.

The size and scope of your garden RR should be your first thought. What do you want to achieve? How much are you willing to spend to achieve this? Property size and how much of it are you (and your partner) willing to dedicate to this train layout? A well thought out design works and possibly adds value to your property. A poor design could actually devalue your home value.

Reality check: I've been collecting and involved with trains my entire life. For a while, back in the 1970's antique trains were the hot item. There were more buyers than sellers of those collectible hard to find trains. Now with the internet and high-tech toys, trains have lost their appeal. What I am trying to say is, today economically a wise train investment is one that you could break even with if you wish to sell. This hobby is for you and your family's enjoyment. Be realistic, this project is seldom a money-maker or wise monetary investment.

Enjoyment: My reality check here is good. My RR hobby has helped me find and keep many of my closest friendships. The people that tend to gravitate to this hobby are typically very friendly, helpful, interesting people. Most are more than willing to share knowledge, expertise, time, and maybe even physically help you build your layout. It's always fun to share your RR accomplishments with like-minded people. I am a member of several train clubs and groups (many live-steam groups). My local garden railroad club (Gold Coast Garden Railway Society) is fantastic. Joining a RR club is a good place to start. Another side benefit of this hobby is sharing the fun with your other family members and friends. I have honestly found that although participating in the hobby may not be for all people, almost everyone loves trains (from the very young to the very old). Most people love to see a well-designed train layout.

Budget? I think the first thing you need to consider is how hard are you willing to work? Are you capable of doing the necessary building, digging, earth moving? Do you realistically have the talent to construct things? Don't get me wrong, there are many people who could run circles around me both with their talent and physical strength. My point. Know your limitations. Are you lacking in the strength, time, talent, knowledge, craftsmanship, or money? Your deficit in certain areas doesn't mean it can't be done. You just may have to hire or obtain help from others. Is this in your budget? Your limitations should be a factor in the scope of your layout.

Be absolutely sure about what you are trying to accomplish. I think this is the biggest single problem with the amateur garden RR project. Many have the goal of beautifying their backyard. This is often, not the case. You may see a really cool expensive train running in your backyard. Your non-RR guests may see something completely different. They may wonder why in the world you removed that beautiful flower garden to put in a pile of dirt and a train. Your goal should be to have a working-fun RR that actually works with and beautifies your backyard. Think, what would a non-garden RR person see? Maybe you don't care what it looks like. You just want to have fun running your trains in a big dirt flat field. That's okay, just know what you want. To me, a "Garden RR" is a railroad that meanders through a beautiful garden. It's so planned out that the trains work with it and you almost have to look for the RR or you will miss it. When you finally do see it, you are amazed.



Others may prefer a **“Miniature Fantasy Train World”**. They want their Fantasy World to pop and the landscape is there to add to (not hide) their layout. There is nothing wrong with this, it’s your RR. All I suggest is that it still works and beautifies your total non-RR portion of your backyard. Craftsmanship and neatness are key here. Plants should not be ignored here. This is crucial. It may not be the focus of your miniature world, but it needs to blend in with its surroundings. If you stare at your village, it may be perfect in every way. When you stand back, what do you see? Is there a 6-foot block fence behind it and 2 X 4’s supporting your layout in front. Do your best to make these invisible.

In a perfect layout world, you have no neighbors in an open field. There is no house to dwarf your layout and no out of scale fences and plantings. Your elevated layout is a natural hillside. This usually is not the case, so you need to be creative. The background should look as organic as possible. You could hide the fence with organic bamboo (fencing or bamboo plants), vines, plants. The plants you pick should keep scale in mind. Sometimes this may be impractical. However, do your best. I suggest bonsai plantings. This can be high maintenance and expensive. At least consider the scale of the flowers and leaves. Try to choose the very smallest petaled flowers and plants with the very smallest leaves. The entire plant may be over-sized, but tiny leaves and tiny flowers will make it look more to scale.

Can you bring mountains to the top of your fence? This could be just piling up dirt, or cement sculptured mountains (Most expensive and requires skill, but probably the best solution-think Disneyland). There is always the painted mural option. This could be a scene of fields, forest, mountains, open sky with clouds (let your imagination run wild). Whatever the background, it should blend in and its job is to not be noticed. The background's job is to not take your focus away from "Fantasy World" layout. The foreground should be the same idea. Plants are always a good option here. Seeing layout support beams is the least desirable. Try to have as much of your area work with and not against your RR. Even a swimming pool could work with your layout. Instead of the pool having straight sides, how about curves as part of your layout? Instead of white cement around the pool, how about natural rock?



This guy has really nailed it in a number of ways. The photo above photo (and several others) were taken at David Sheegog's CPTRR (Castle Peak and Thunder Railroad) www.cptrr.com in Anaheim, CA. He worked with his fence to work with his layout. His layout is around the backyard perimeter (easy access and viewing). His mountains and murals work with the fence. His plantings are to scale. The front of his layout is neat and brings ties into his non-RR portion of the backyard. Nothing distracts. He is a licensed architect. His hobby is building scale models. His Disneyland themed layout and buildings are amazing. He 3-D prints many custom parts and the detail is unrivaled. Most of us don't have this big of a pocket book, time, or talent. He devoted months to years constructing each replica Disneyland building to perfection. An interesting note, he has replicated most of the major Disneyland Buildings. However, there is no attempt to replicate the Disneyland Park layout. The buildings are scattered in a more model train friendly, easy to view and maintain, layout design. Remember, there always are compromises in your layout design. You must decide what is and is not really important. Worth a visit if you are lucky enough to get a reservation.

Neatness: Okay, we now know you are King Kong to your Fantasy layout. You can't change, so you have to figure out how you can work with it. If you believe that once you complete your layout, you're finished, then you are just naive. You will be constantly changing bulbs; adding and repairing: structures, rails, wires, switches, landscaping, housekeeping, re-railing trains, etc. To most that is part of the fun, but also a necessity. Design your layout with easy access. One way is to have your railroad only 4-5 feet deep around the perimeter of your property. Everything is only one or two steps away. A second possibility is to have a walkway meandering through the layout. There should be a lot of thought put into this walkway. It's best if it's not dirt (mud on shoes and then muddy footsteps of King Kong through Miniature World). Ideally the walkway works with your layout. Stepping stones, a miniature roadway of decomposed granite or cemented to look like stones that you can walk on. Perhaps a stream with small boulders that you can step on. Maybe small boulders spaced throughout the layout for walking. Try to have your walkway blend in to your layout, not look like a path for King Kong.

I utilized a preexisting full-sized brick bridge for my Garden RR. I took advantage of this and have my garden railroad on both sides of the bridge. This allows total viewing and control without disturbing the RR. There are other features in my RR that may help you. Below is a photo of my basic layout before completion. There is a YouTube video of the completed project to see the trains in action. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmmQe4TkT-g>



Structures and buildings: This is where I have seen the greatest variations with different Garden RR's. Choose your materials wisely. Cement, UV plastic, galvanized metal, stainless steel, treated or cedar wood, brass are all good. Cardboard, paper signs, plaster of Paris, unpainted iron, interior grade plywood, pine, Douglas fir, non-UV plastics and many glues will not stand up to the elements. You should have pride in your layout. Nothing detracts more than poorly constructed and poorly maintained structures. For the most part, it's better to put in landscaping, than a poorly constructed unsightly structure. Some hobbyists have over-the-top talent. They have the knowledge and time to scratch build buildings that are remarkable. David Sheegog's Disneyland Station below.



If you can't do this, then seriously consider some of the many outside rated plastic kits. Most are of fairly high quality, durable, and can be built within a reasonable time frame. They are also easy to modify to your taste. My choice is to have the pristine like new buildings. Others prefer the Wild West more rustic look of an aged-distressed structure. Rolling stock and buildings can also be very acceptable when given the weathered look. However, it is not the same when your buildings are obviously looking distressed and falling apart from your quick poor construction.

Lighting: Adding lights to buildings, structures, bridges, trestles, rolling stock, and plants can add a whole new dimension to your layout. This can make your layout pop at night. I 100% suggest using 12-volt LED lighting whenever possible (it lasts long, is brighter, and uses 90% less power). Understand that lighting your layout will almost double your build time.

Try to stick with a theme in your entire layout, or at least in entire sections. A Ferris wheel, next to a barn, next to a Victorian Farm House, next to a Saloon just reeks of poor planning. If you like all those things, consider dividing your layout into sections (residential, theme park, downtown, countryside, etc.). Even consider your rolling stock. Amtrak should not be running through your Western Old West Town.

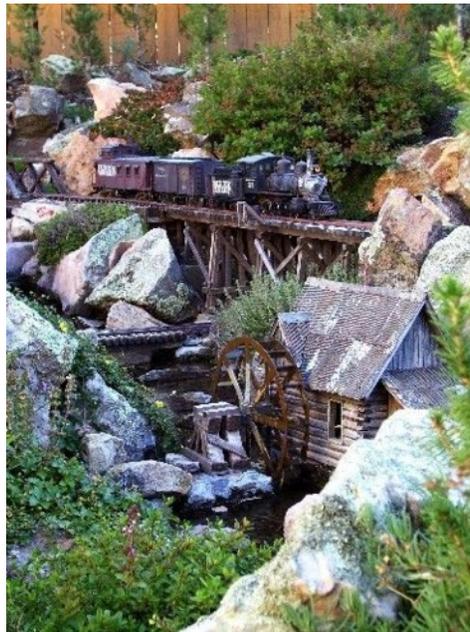
Keep your layout interesting. Think of the most beautiful painting or sculpture in the world. In today's world the average person has an attention span of about 15 seconds. Yes, the Mona Lisa is beautiful, but how long can you keep staring at it? After a while you have seen what you need to see. The same goes for your layout. You may have done the world's most fantastic layout, but if it's static, people lose interest. How to keep the interest should be your goal. Using kinetic energy is a great solution. One train going by is great, two better, three even better. Now if the trains travel along side each other, very interesting. If they pass each other, more interesting. Different speeds interesting, climbing grades good, passing over a bridge, setting off signal lights and passing gates, fantastic.

Buildings emitting smoke and factories with cargo moving. The more interesting, the more to grab your attention the better. The sky is the limit here. Cars, people, and animals moving, wow. A real good trick is trains disappearing and reappearing. This could be through a tunnel, behind a mountain, canyon or even a structure. The human mind is designed to anticipate and watch for it reemerging. In short, the more action the better. It holds people's interest.

Tunnels should be carefully thought out. Let's face it, tunnels are big spaces that you can't easily have access to. Difficult to clean the tracks, keep critters out of, and depending on the size could be next to impossible to work on and retrieve a derailed train. My suggestion, don't have a tunnel. If your goal is to have the train disappear, then think deep canyon. A canyon lets the train disappear, but you have total access to it. If you like the tunnel look. Have a side track (that you don't really use) disappear into your faux tunnel or mind shaft that isn't really used. My solution is to have mine shaft tunnels that aren't used.

Sidings: Sidings are often useful and add interest to your RR. The negative with sidings is they require switches. Switches are typically expensive (especially if they are electronic) and can be problematic to maintain. But they are so handy. It's nice to have several side tracks to set up trains on, while the rest of your RR is already running. Also, sidings scattered around your layout at stations, etc. A lighted car parked at the station really adds to the ambiance of your layout.

Water can add a lot of interest, especially if it's moving. Even better if there's a waterfall cascading down a mountain. This could easily hold the viewer's attention for extended periods. Perhaps a bridge or trestle where a train can pass over a river in front of a waterfall. If your train goes over water, make sure there are guard rails. An electric train falling in water could have a very bad outcome. Also keep the tracks a safe distance so no water splashes on your prized train. You should not expect to just dig a hole and a trench and the water will stay in it. The water will just soak into the soil. Therefore, you must make your water feature impermeable to water. Your choices are usually plastic/rubber liners or cement. Neither of which is beautiful, so placing stones and rocks on top of your water barrier is usually the best solution. Boulders that project out of cascading rivers or falls will give a beautiful splashing dramatic effect. Allow for a bottom drain and pump to recycle your water. The size of the pump is determined by the rise of the water and the speed that you want the water to flow.



Rail Materials: Rails are one of the most important parts of your garden RR. First you need outdoor track. So, forget steel track. There are basically four materials manufactured for outdoor rails.

- **Brass:** by far the most popular and available, sturdy. However, brass requires maintenance and needs to be cleaned quite often.

- **Stainless Steel and Nickel Silver:** Hard to find and more expensive. Requires less maintenance than brass
- **Aluminum Alloy:** is best for battery powered or live steam as it lower cost. Also require maintenance if you use power.

Rail Scale: Code scale is the thickness in thousandths of an inch (Code 332 = .332/1000 inch)

- **Code 332:** Most popular, available, thickest and most durable. However, if you want to be exact, it is a little oversized and out of scale. It is hardly noticeable and I prefer strength to scale (your choice)
- **Code 215 and 250:** More prototypical; more expensive; best looking; more ties/inch. I suggest these only if you are really going for perfection. The average viewer would never notice.

Things to consider when laying any garden RR track. Trains seldom have problems or derail on straightaways. Most problems happen on a curve. A large diameter curve (20 feet or bigger) seldom has any problems. Every foot shorter than 20-foot diameter increases the odds of problems. Most problems occur under a 10-foot diameter. Only go under 10 foot if that is all that will work with your layout. A 4-foot diameter curve requires constant care and eliminates most larger engines. Try to make your diameter consistent. A dual track bender is pretty much a necessity when building your layout. Don't try to just bend track freehand (it never bends smooth enough). You can buy flexible track, or turn regular track into bendable track. Basically, bendable track has every other tie separated from the other ties so that the rails can be bent. It is almost impossible to bend track when all the ties are locked together. A curve with many back and forth "S" turns does look interesting, but usually causes problems.

The next thing to consider is grade. A grade adds interest to your layout and is recommended for a good look. However, try to limit your grade to no more than 3% (3-inch rise over 100-inch distance). This is not very steep, but necessary for traction and engine power depending on how much rolling stock you are pulling. More than 6% grade will pretty much lead you to many problems.

Track Dips and Rises: Try to keep variations and left to right out of level in your track to a minimum. This is the major cause of derailments, loss of electrical contact, and uncoupling. To keep the track side to side level it needs to be on a level surface. Your dirt may be level when you build it, but after rains, erosion, and roots, it may soon get out of level and get dips and rises. It is best to have a very solid base. I used 6 X 16 cinder blocks. They were sunk in the ground and checked for level. Cement was poured into and around the blocks. The ballast then hid the solid block base for my layout.

Consider staggering your rails: Most factory rails are not staggered. However, staggering is recommended to make a much smoother running train. Most people try to stagger an inch or so. The best is about a 1-foot stagger! No stagger opens you up to sharp bends in curves that can cause big problems. As a side note, full sized trains stagger their tracks. That gives the clickety clack sound. No stagger gives a rough / bouncy clunk sound. FYI when Disneyland added their new track (to accommodate the Star Wars land) they installed the state-of -the-art single piece seamless track. You probably can't do that, but keep in mind that one 6-foot rail is way more preferable than six 1-foot rails. Every joint is a potential problem.

To power or not power your track? There are advantages and disadvantages to both. The easiest by far is a non-powered track. It's almost as easy as just properly putting it together considering all the above information on laying track. You don't have to worry about good electrical connections (The source of most garden RR problems). You use battery powered engines that carry their own individual battery packs. You run these trains with a wireless remote to control all functions. The other advantage is you can run this train anywhere. Many garden RR fans choose battery power because they can easily bring their engine to other layouts. You don't need to know if their track is powered or not. The disadvantages are it is difficult for one person to run more than one train at a time as each train has its own controller. Also, not too many trains come set-up from the factory battery powered. You must convert it yourself or have someone do it for you. I am a collector. That kind of modification to a collectable train usually destroys its collector value. Another disadvantage is battery life (2-4 hours before recharging?) and rolling stock (does it also need power for lights?). What if you want to play all day?

Powered track: There are basically two types DC and DCC. DC has been around for 100+-years. The farther you turn up the transformer, the faster the train goes. The problem here is you can only control the speed with your controller. Also, since you have less power to the track at slow speeds, your lights are very low at slow speeds.

DCC has been around for about 10 years and is a huge improvement. The track has constant 12-18 volt DC power. The lights are on full brightness before the train even moves. There is a state-of-the-art handheld wireless controller (mini-computer) that can control dozens of train functions including speed, lights, smoke, all the sounds (bells, several whistles, some even have station announcements and people/cab talking). The same controller can even control electric switches throughout your layout.

Another big DCC advantage is you can run up to 30 trains with just one controller that has an emergency stop button turning off all power if things turn ugly. Keep in mind that most central stations are only about 5 amps. This is enough power to run only about two trains and their rolling stock. To add more trains, you will probably need to add boosters to provide more power. Technically you divide your layout into separate electrically insulated sections. All the sections can still operate with just one controller and trains can seamlessly travel from one section to the next.

DCC can run forever and not worry about a battery losing its charge.

Yes, there are DCC disadvantages. One disadvantage is if you have other DC engines, they won't run on a DCC layout. You may need to buy all new engines or convert old ones to DCC. DCC engines are usually more expensive (but they can do a lot more). Also, DCC may limit your traveling to other layouts as DCC can only run on a DCC layout and your controller usually has to be the same brand name or it probably won't "talk" to the "central station". The biggest disadvantage of DC and DCC powered track is you need constant good track contact. Some rail joiner and rail clamps are pretty good. The problem is that most of them oxidize and break down over distance (if each joint loses 5 % contact, after 10 joints you have lost half your power). The best solution is to solder every rail joint together (typically there may be as many as 200 solders for a 300-foot layout. Remember if you have 50 track pieces then that's 100 connections as you have to solder both sides of the track. Also, you have two solders for each connection. So, connecting two pieces of track together is four solders! This can be extremely time consuming. It usually requires drilling a hole in each rail inserting a copper wire (I use 16-gauge solid wire) and then soldering all the wires to the rail. It is best not to solder the rail joiners to the track as it's nice to allow the rails to expand and contract as the temperature changes.

The proper soldering iron is key here. Too weak of an iron will take 15+ minutes to get hot enough to get a good connection. Too powerful will heat so hot that you will melt the plastic ties. Many like the induction soldering iron. It is almost like arc welding with solder. It makes a very focused hot spot that instantly heats a very small area. These induction soldering irons can be very expensive (+/- \$500). However, I have tried them and for me they really didn't work (maybe I just didn't have the right technique?). What did work was an American Beauty 300-Watt diamond tipped soldering iron (around \$250). I love it! It's a lot of power, but unless you want to spend forever making solders, it is well worth it.

Warning!!!!!!! This soldering iron is a serious tool and you cannot visibly tell if it's on or off. It is large and heavy. It doesn't look hot at all. Plan your work area. Clear away anything flammable. Don't put it somewhere where you could sit, step, or accidentally touch it. Know where the hot tip is at all times. Never let a child or someone unfamiliar with tools use this tool or even be around when it's on. One second of skin contact will put you in the hospital.

Good electrical connections: Remember to also use an acid paste first to help make a good solder. Odds are you will have one or two weak solders. Make it a practice to run powered wire all around you track. I run powered wires every 20-40 feet. Make sure to not cross wires and keep positive and negative rails consistent or you will

short out the entire system! This sounds easy enough, but people can get confused. Consider a large oval. You put the positive on the right side of the track. You go to the other side of the oval and connect the positive again to the right side. You have just crossed the wires! I like to think outside track and inside track. If a train is traveling the same direction which rail will be outside and which inside? Use your own methods, but make sure you're right before you solder!

Wire: I recommend 16 gauge stranded low voltage burial landscaping cable for most of your outside electrical connections.

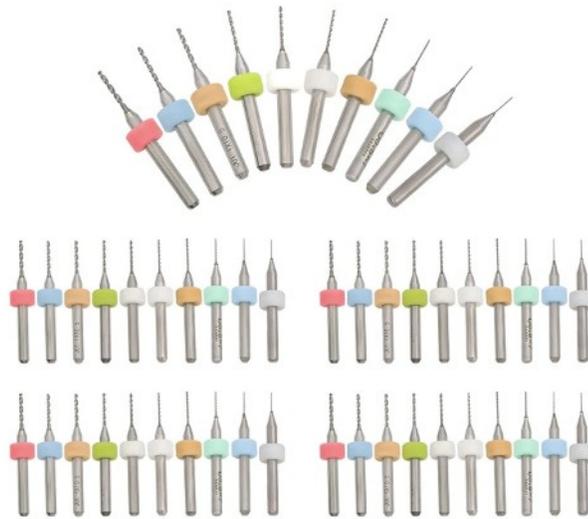
Track Ballast: Everyone has their favorite here. There is even a difference of opinion about whether it should be "frozen" glued in place or free. Glued ballast will stay in place and stay neater. However, your track should be able to expand and contract with the weather so I recommend leaving it free floating. The smallest ballast rocks I could find was "pea gravel". I found this to still be too large for proper scale. My solution was to scratch build a sifter with a fine screen. I then could sift out all the large gravel, Leaving me with the smaller more preferable gravel. See next page photo.



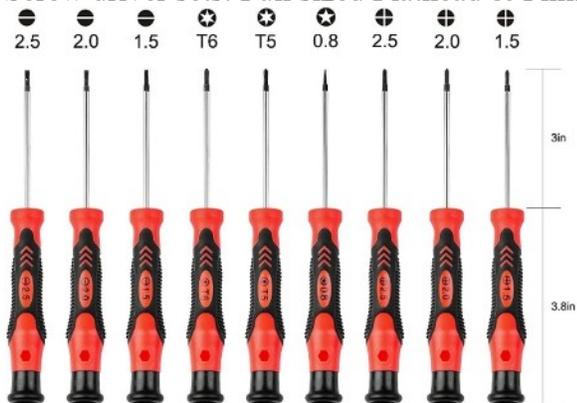
Train Storage: Let's face it. It does take a lot of time to couple all your rolling stock to make sure all the wheels are properly on the rails. Wouldn't it be nice to just play? It is not advisable to store you trains full time exposed to the elements. You need to store them (on shelves?) inside. Consider a train barn/shed or "Round House" set up. So many good ideas. All of them require a lot of thought, time, and money. You must decide how important this is to your enjoyment of garden railroading.

Tools of the Train: I have found these tools very helpful

1. Full set of garden tools: Wheel barrow; several different shovels (trowels to large); picks; rakes; etc.
2. Cordless drill with regular drill bits & a micro drill bit set.



3. Screw driver sets: Full sized Flathead & Phillips and a complete Miniature Set



4. Cordless Angle Grinder: Many uses including cutting rails



5. American Beauty 300-Watt soldering iron diamond tip



6. Pole Sander to clean track with 100 grit sandpaper



7. Waterfall foam sealant to seal rubber and “glue” rocks in waterfalls & streams



8. DUAL TRACK RAILBENDER made by Andy Speidel



I sincerely hope that you found this article helpful and perhaps saved you from making regrettable, costly mistakes. I wish you the best of luck with your garden RR. It's a lot of fun and much of the fun is the construction and the visualization of your Fantasy RR. Again, there is no "perfect" or "correct" garden RR. There will always be compromises, so do what's best for your vision. You'll never be completely done, but can expect years of good times with lots of new friends.

Mike Newlon

Editors note: Thanks Mike! Great article with lots of information and things to consider when you are starting, or redoing a layout. JL

Abandonments

Bruce Kuebler - Uintah Line Won't Happen

Hi John, I remember you saying at my meet in 2009 that my Uintah railway up the hill was the craziest idea you had ever heard. Well, you were correct. My problem was I hadn't factored in physical limitations with old age, IE., knee problems. If I had pursued the railway more diligently, instead of spending so much time on local water issues, I might have had a better go at it.

Bottom line, I had purchased enough Llagas Creek track to finish entire route so I have 720' of code 215 aluminum flex-track on narrow gauge ties. Sections are 6' long and come ten per box. I have 12 boxes and am willing to sell only full boxes, 60' per box.

Llagas Creek stopped selling that track last October when it listed for \$51.50 per 6' length but is no longer making it because of low sales. Code 250 goes for \$32.50 per 6' section.

I am willing to sell by track for \$18 per 6' length.

Please put something in next newsletter about this and let me know if it would be possible to put this in the on-line G scale clubs 'magazine'. I forgot is there is an ad section and lost link to latest issue.

Thanks, Bruce Kuebler

(Editor's note: Crazy idea maybe but it sure would have been cool to switchback back and forth up that hill. So sorry to hear that this won't happen)!

Joe Heumphreus Line Removed

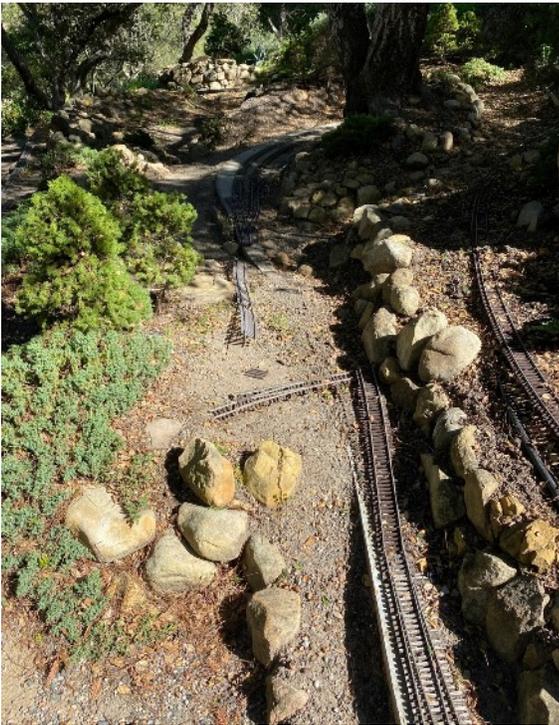
It appears that some of you that worked on the track removal at Mary's house a couple weeks ago, left your hard hats behind. Please contact Mary if you indeed left your protective head gear behind. OSHA will impose fines to personnel that show up at a job site without their required head gear. Phone or text: 805-453-2529



Siegal Meet – Keeping It Running

Just to give you an idea what it takes to maintain and repair the large Siegal layout, take a look at these pictures. From washouts, landscape maintenance damage to critters eating the turnout throws, all of the above happens to this large layout. When you bring your trains to run on Gary's layout on March 17, make sure you thank John Ryan and Nick Conti for the constant repairs.

Also thanks to Lamont Stolley for his continued bridge work on the Boulder Creek branch. He has now completed all the bents for the large, curved trestle. I'm not sure if they are installed yet. We will see!





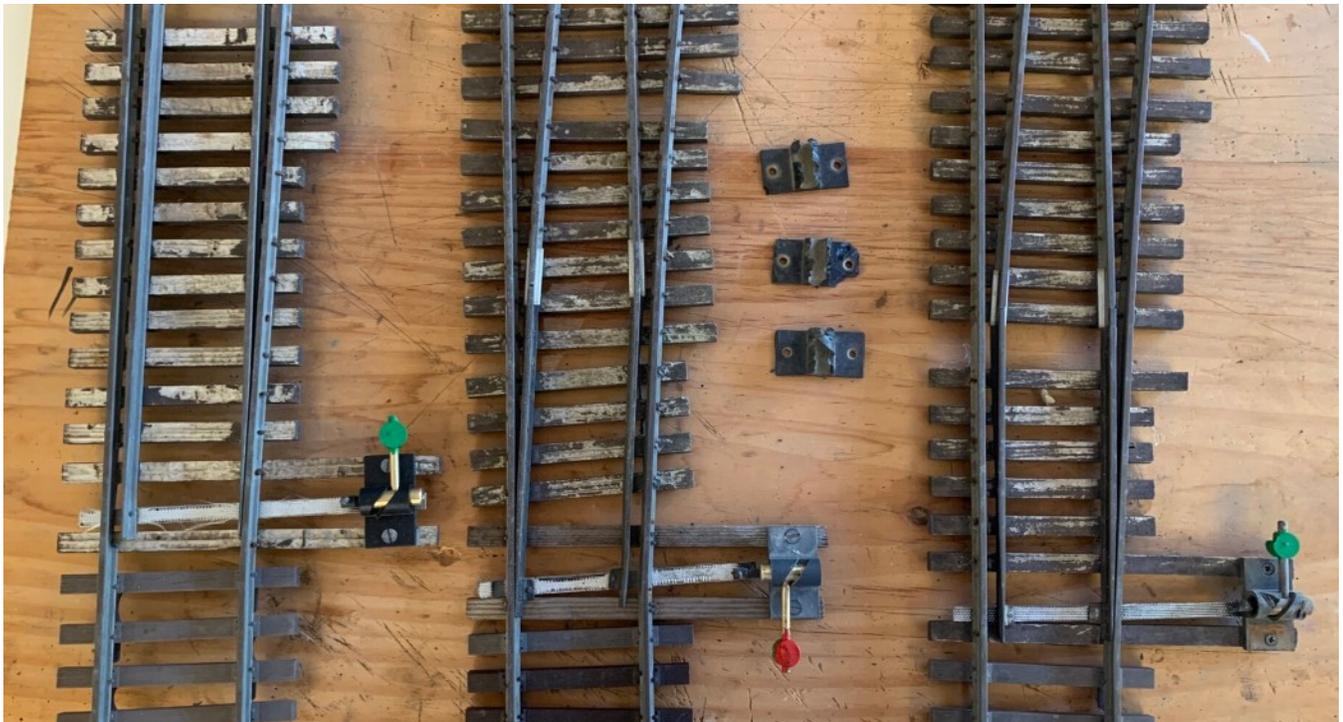
**Hi Everyone,
By now you are aware that I've uploaded some photos to the groups page from the series of emails you've received. Saturday Nick and I went out to the Siegel's to do some cleanup and repairs. Neither of us had been out there since the last meet in November. We could only imagine what kind of horrors we would find.**

Nick recon'd the layout a couple days prior to see what the condition was. He ended up sending me 4 photos of track damage. Thanks to those photos I had a decent idea of what to expect.

Check out the photos, read the descriptions below the photos. A few of the photos got a little extra explanation of what was done.

**See you all in March,
John (Ryan)**

John,
WOW, you guys really did a terrific job out there. It's amazing what Mother Nature will do when we disturb the original landscape for our own pleasure. Repairs made really look good. My biggest problem is a Gardner and his mighty blower. The longer i live, the more i see the advantage to a raised layout. Good work. Hope to see you there?
Walt (Thompson)



GRITFY's HELENA 0-4-2T PORTER



FROM THE
SHOP OF
WALT
THOMPSON

This project started with a very early LGB 0-4-0 PORTER I had. First thing I did was add the wood bin portion from an AristoCraft 0-4-0 Switcher locomotive to hold the wood load. I extended the chassis to support the wood bin and also to attach a floating rear axle assembly that was formally a pilot truck that is equipped with metal wheels and track power pickups. Both the front pilot and rear bumper were scratch built using basswood with brass strips to hold the step boards. On the front there's push pockets and a coupler socket from Ozark Miniature's that houses a modified KaDee coupler. For the rear there's a Hartford link/pin coupler plus some add-on things from the shop.

The tank car is a cut down Bachmann tank car, mounted on a LGB 4043 frame with a Track Side Details water hatch. The added platforms were created with basswood and the ladder was in the shop. It's equipped with Hartford link/pin couplers and Gary Raymond's metal wheels plus extraneous scratch built items added. Since Helena's train was put together years ago, this car houses an early, very early sound board and speaker for some steam Chuff sounds.

The box car was created starting with a New Bright box car, significantly shortened, and mounted on an LGB 4043 frame. It sports Gary Raymond's metal wheels, Hartford's link/pin couplers and seems to be the current home for Homer the hobo and his dog Shadow.

The 3 Gondolas are altered LGB 4045 "Wagons" with custom sides and paint. They also have Gary Raymond's metal wheels and Hartford's link/pin couplers.

The caboose was scratch built from styrene sheeting to complement the design of our PORTER locomotive. It is also mounted on a LGB 4043 frame assembly with metal wheels

from Gary Raymond. It has added track pickups for the lantern on the rear that's from Ozark Miniatures. The rear bumper originally came from the Porter and this car also uses Hartford's link/pin couplers. The steps and platform were from a Bachmann caboose chassis, the smoke chimney is ABS tube and the switchman on the front platform I believe is from AristoCraft.

Side note: Special graphics were created many years ago by Larry Larsen Graphics.

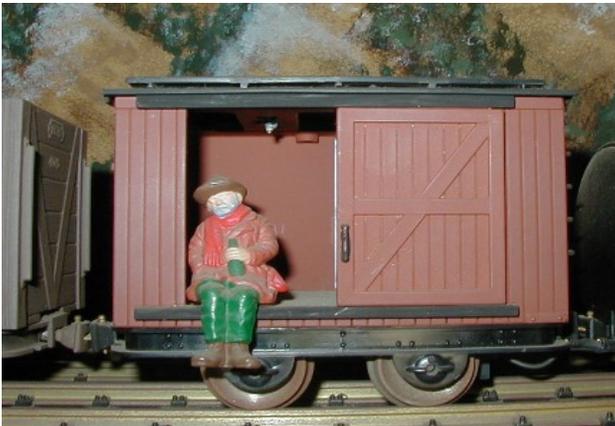
HELENA and her cars



HELENA



TANK CAR WITH SOUND



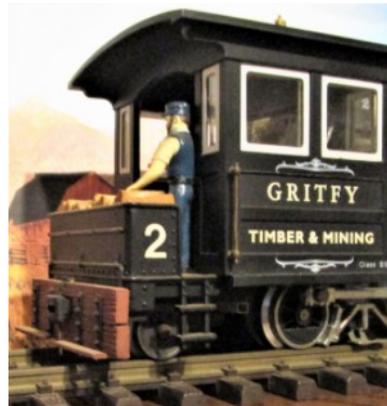
HOMER's BOX CAR



GONDOLA



HELENA's CABOOSE



FRONT & REAR BUMPER DETAIL



**MURDER MYSTERY THEATER PARTY
INVITATION FOR:**

Murder on the Orient Express

SUNDAY Matinee, March 13, 2:30 pm

WHERE: 7507 Topanga Canyon Blvd.,
Canoga Park

WHEN: Sunday, March 13, 2022, at 2:30 pm.

RSVP: Marie Reilly (818) 704-8441 or e-mail:
mariereilly16317@yahoo.com

*Help the struggling West Valley Playhouse by
attending this mystery Theater Party.*

The group of ten senior rate tickets are \$30 each.

*Meet in the lobby at 7507 Topanga Canyon Blvd at
1:45 pm to get prepaid tickets. The theater has been
Covid cleaned with air filters. Masks are required
per Covid rules, unless changed as situation improves.*

*Murder on the Orient Express is
undoubtedly one of Agatha Christie's
greatest mystery novels. Just after
midnight, a snowdrift stops the
Orient Express in its tracks. The
luxurious train is surprisingly full for
the time of year, but by the morning,
it is one passenger fewer. An
American tycoon lies dead in his
compartment, stabbed a dozen times.
His door locked from the inside.
Isolated and with a killer in their
midst, detective Hercule Poirot must
identify the murderer – in case he
might kill again.*

*The underlying plot of the story was
one Agatha Christie pulled from the
headlines at the time, the abduction
of Charles Lindbergh's son, a
traumatic real-life mystery involving
murder. To reserve your ticket, please
contact Marie and send the form
below to her*

*as soon as possible. There will be a
get-together at Georges and Marie's
home after the play to see his trains!*

When: Sunday Matinee, March 13, 2022: 2:30 pm

Where: 7507 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Canoga Park

RSVP: Marie Reilly (818) 704-8441 or mariereilly16317@yahoo.com

Name(s) _____

Number of tickets: _____ **@ \$30 each = \$** _____

Please make your check out to: Marie Reilly/W.V.Playhouse and send to:

**Marie Reilly, 20361 Valerio Street, Winnetka, CA 91306 for each ticket desired
by February 28, 2022.**