



Making a Model Railway—the Smallest in the World; and the New Transport Era in Miniature. Globe Photo, and International.

'RAILROADS' IN HOMES

Hobbyists Lavish Infinite
Pains on Trains to Run
On Miniature Tracks

By DIANA RICE.

THE romance of railroading continues to grip the popular imagination, as evidenced recently by the hundreds of sightseers who journeyed to the West Albany freight yards in the New York Central's "wonder train." The trek was planned to give a behind-the-scenes glimpse of water scoops, automatic stokers and other devices of modern railroading.

Professors and business executives watched the marvels of electric signal systems, studied the intricacies of the hump track, and pondered the shunting of giant locomotives to a precise spot on this or that spur. And the hobbyist also was there, seeking new gadgets to make more complete his home railway system.

Today exact models of modern railroad units are the goal of an increasing number of hobby riders. These amateurs, pitting their skill against one another, are turning out miniature copies of practically every mechanical contrivance used on the twentieth century railroad.

Fully Equipped Trains.

In clubs and private workshops, fully equipped trains run along tracks built to scale that pass through tunnels, over drawbridges, past electrically controlled signals. There are roundhouses and railroad yards where locomotives are switched about to pick up trains dispatched to destinations along the line.

One model rail system, belonging to a well-known hobby club, and set up in its clubroom, encompasses a whole countryside. Murals supply the scenery. Along the two and one-half miles of railroad which wind in and out, up and down, are villages, cities, and suburban stations. In the background, on a grass-covered hill, blinks an airplane beacon. In the foreground, a lively stream descending from a make-believe mountain turns the wheel of a country flour-mill. Spanning a valley is a delicate trestle bridge copied from one in the Dakotas. Across a river-bed a rolling lift bridge patterned after a Chicago marvel opens and shuts.

Other parts of this miniature system are copied from regular designs used by the great railroads. Six hundred miles of electric wiring have gone into this model system which is complete from the illuminated diagram board showing the position of all trains on the line at all times, to the smallest gadget in the railroad yard.

Club members bring locomotives they have made at home and run them on the track.

Parts for Locomotives.

According to a member of one hobby society, the first locomotive parts came from England. They were hard to get and expensive. Only one store in New York handled them, and here the first group of locomotive model-makers used to meet and exchange notes on their hobby. This group developed into the New York Society of Model Engineers which today has its own clubrooms, system of tracks, and library of mechanical books and magazines.

"Locomotives ran under their own steam when I started to build models," said a hobbyist recently. "Now railroads are run by electricity. The third rail is part of the modern miniature system. While some persons still make all the parts that go into the model train, others buy them ready to put together. We used to design our own models. This is no longer necessary, the engineering departments of all big railroads will supply them reduced in scale to the standard model. A good locomotive model costs the builder from \$100 to \$300."

Model enthusiasts fall into four classes, according to those who know the hobby field. There is the perfectionist who would never use a round headed screw where the drawing called for a bolt and nut. There is the man who is less interested in perfect details, but wants to see the thing he builds move. There are those who concentrate on scale. Whether it is a drawing of the Rex, Normandie, a gasoline engine or an airplane, it must be reduced to a perfect scale of the original. And last but not least, there is the research group which assembles data from the first locomotive to the streamlined train.