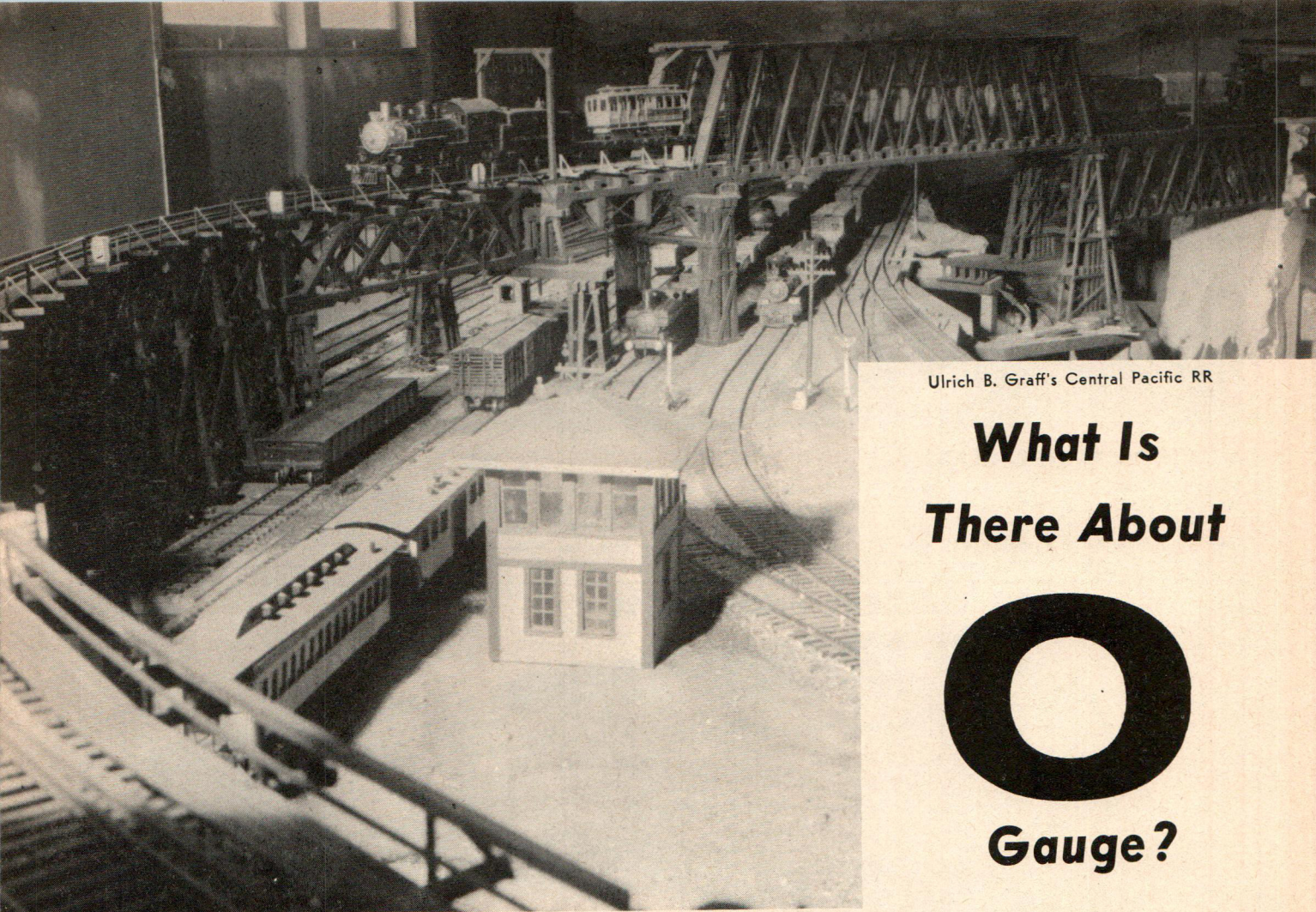




Ulrich B. Graff's Central Pacific RR

What Is There About

O Gauge?

MANUFACTURE of O gauge trains has been continuous in the U.S.A. since 1901, and considerably earlier than that in Europe. It leads all other scales for continued popularity.

Despite the great popularity of HO among both ready-to-run fans and the model builders, O scale continues to enjoy a slowly increasing following. Never has the O gauger enjoyed such a wide variety of top quality kits by domestic producers, or such a fine selection of hand-crafted, all-brass imports.

The modeler contemplating O scale has several hurdles to cross before he can really plunge in. The first big problem is that of the initial piece of motive power. Not every modeler can afford the \$100 to \$300 that a top grade import or even higher priced domestic kit might cost. Nevertheless, there are a number of excellent medium priced locomotive kits available, notably from All-Nation. These include the popular Electro-Motive 1000 hp. diesel switcher which can be lettered for virtually all U.S. and Canadian roads of any size, plus the F3 or F-7 A and B units. These locos are all offered for \$50 or less. The switcher is an especially versatile piece of power.

Modelers really struggling with a budget should also investigate the LMB saddle tank steamer, which lends itself admirably to the super detail

treatment. Traction modeling is also relatively moderate in price.

The second big hurdle is that of space. Many modelers today living in apartments or development homes, notably in the south or west don't have access to their own basements or attics. Yet we know that tremendous layouts have been built in the basements of apartment houses, hotels, and garden apartments; usually in cooperation with the building superintendent. We know one life time O gauger who is an apartment house superintendent and who is a scale O gauger and who had two O gaugers living in his apartments. Everybody had a ball!

In the east, especially; the advent of the ranch house with its 70 and 80 ft. long basements has made super pikes a reality. Other O gaugers build layouts in spare rooms, garages, winterized barns, and chicken coops, and the attic.

Many O gaugers also forego the pleasure of their own pike in favor of the giant club layout. O gauge clubs, as we've usually seen them, have a somewhat more mature membership than is often the case with HO clubs but we happily note that many clubs are actively seeking junior members for the simple reason that they are eager to do good work.

O gauge layouts easily fill a basement but they don't have to. Excellent

pikes have been built in areas measuring 10x10 feet and less. While giant articulateds might require curves of 60-inch or more radii, many of the more popular loco kits will take as little as 36-inch radius. O gauge trolley lines can go down to 9-inch radii for double truck cars and less for single truckers! One O gauge trolley line now under construction will measure 20 feet by 36 inches!

What is there about O gauge that has made it last all these years, despite the advent of other sizes of trains that were technically impossible to produce when O gauge had already achieved much of its greatness? Why consider it at all when locomotives are offered in other sizes at a fraction of the cost? Without getting into one of the eternal Battle Of The Gauges, we can only guess that there is something almost magical about the way a husky O scale Niagara will latch onto a cut of cars and pull them away at a crawl, picking up speed, clanking across switches and out onto the main. Sure, the entire scene can be duplicated in HO and other scales as well, with as much detail and with just as good operation. But try and match the nearness, like standing next to the tracks rather than up on a hill. Or match the sound, or the massiveness. This is King Gauge railroading and the O gauger doesn't want it any other way. 🚂