

# Harry Potter comes to the B&EC Botanical Gardens...

For the last ten years, The Western New York Garden Railway Society ([www.WNYGRS.com](http://www.WNYGRS.com)) has set up and maintained a Holiday Display at the Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens (<http://www.buffalogardens.com>), over the Thanksgiving to New Year's Day holiday timeframe.

This year was no exception. However, the untimely entry of 60 - 72 inches (yes, that's 5 - 6 feet) of Lake Effect Snow over 4 days immediately preceding our setup days definitely served to temporarily "derail" our efforts. Besides driving and travel bans, as well as states of emergency declared by multiple towns, the city and the county, the Botanical Gardens itself sustained some damage due to the weight of the snow on the roof of our display greenhouse. In fact, an estimated 150 glass panels that shattered or fell in had to be replaced before we could even enter the structure. True dedicated Garden Railroaders have no fear of "a little snow", so undeterred we began setting up the layout as soon as we were allowed in, even with outdoor temperatures in the single digits.

Nevertheless, two weeks after the originally scheduled date, our annual display opened to the public, and just in time! Parents were phoning the Gardens daily asking if the trains were running yet, because their children were continually asking to visit.

This year, in concurrence with their annual Poinsettia Show, the Garden's Theme was "Expect the Unexpected". In accordance with this theme, the WNYGRS was asked in June if we could do anything of a "Harry Potter" nature to expand on this concept. After some careful thought, since very little Harry Potter-related items are commercially available, not to mention in G-Scale, we accepted the challenge. The only problem with this was that while our membership enjoyed the summer with their own and other layouts, almost nothing was done for the Garden's models!

Come September, with the onset of fall weather so did our "controlled panic", and work quickly commenced. Our Gardens Display Chair Charles Bartel called together a committee of volunteers, who had their first meeting watching excerpts of the 1st Harry Potter movie, in order to learn the major characters and identify the principal models for fabrication. After some vigorous discussion (and seven bags of popcorn), assignments were made and everyone went to work on their tasks.

What you see in the accompanying photos was the end result. There were three distinct layout areas: (1) Christmas, (2) Harry Potter, and (3) a small loop of track for Thomas.



## Eventually! By Rich Dulski

In the Christmas section, the trolley line was set to stop at each of two stations, with subsequent automated station announcements of landmarks in the Buffalo area. This was prerecorded by one of our “blokes” with a distinctive British accent, embedded on a memory chip wired in association with the station stops. Many visitors were conditioned to hearing standard announcements at model train displays, but smiled when they recognized the local names of the stations being called out.

Thomas just had to be in the holiday display... somewhere. So we put a simple loop of track together, but placed half of it inside a mountain (i.e. platform). This worked well as the “disappearance factor” more than made up for the “loop size factor”, as the smaller visitors kept looking into the tunnel entrance to see where Thomas was going or would emerge.

Focusing on the Harry Potter section, we featured models of Harry Potter’s Muggel’s House at 4 Privet Dr. (with all of the letters and owls that delivered these letters), King’s Cross Station (with the pillar that Harry had to go through to get to the 9 ¾ station), the Hogsmeade Station, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (i.e. the Castle), Rubeus Hagrid’s Hut, the Quidditch Field (complete with flying figures on brooms), and of course, the Hogwart’s Express itself.

Credit for model design and fabrication goes to members Gary Tebo, John & Sam Krakowski, Tom Schobert, Rob Bond, Bob Rodgers, Stewart Harris, Charles Bartel & Gary Schneider (electronics), with “Trackmeister” Gary Ludwig trying to successfully fit it all into the space provided and still have some room for track.

Given that I helped promote the idea back in June, I was “awarded” the job of fabricating the Hogwart’s Express. This began in July due to the fact that if one is intending to model a train display with a Harry Potter theme, one MUST have a train!

The engine, tender, combine and coach were originally from a Lionel G-Scale battery powered set. All of the battery components, motor and plastic wheels were removed and replaced with more robust components capable of continual and reliable operation for many hours on public display.

Briefly, the headlight and firebox light were replaced with soft white and red LEDs, respectively, to provide a brighter glow in the sometimes sunny greenhouse environment. The motive power in the engine consists of a Piko 0-6-0T BB Motor Block with associated side rods and crank pin screws.



*(continue on next page)*

The front two axle pilot truck came from a Bachmann 4-6-0 engine, which was then shortened and attached to a custom “swinging tab design with a spring” that allows it to stay on the track while the nose of the engine may slightly extend out along curves. All are metal wheels, including the three (3) axles in the tender.

The combine and coach both had their own battery lighting circuits removed and replaced with two (2) soft white LEDs per car, incorporating track power and capacitor circuits to maintain constant lighting and eliminate flicker. The original trucks and wheels were replaced with LGB trucks and wheels with power pickups, to independently power each cars’ lighting.

It was somewhat anticlimactic to dismantle the layout on January 5th, with gale force winds and again in single digit temperatures, so the Gardens could begin preparation for another event. However, it was very consoling to the members who were there every day to maintain it during its run and in general, to hear both the “OOOs” and “ahs” of the visitors as they saw each segment of the display, and the “Thank You” from parents who were being continually reminded by their children (or spouses, or grand children), to “Go see the trains!”

Harry Potter will return next year in a much enhanced version, as we now begin to think about this summer’s display (June - July), which we hope to assemble under more pleasant weather conditions.



# Big Train Operator



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- A special display for senior citizens
- North Conway, NH, convention schedule
- Harry Potter layout by the WNYGRS
- Recruit-a-Buddy Program

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October 1 .....	#158/Winter 2015
January 1 .....	#159/Spring 2016

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Any information sent after the deadline will be in the next issue. Articles can be sent by mail or e-mail. Whenever possible, the editor requests that you send a text file via e-mail or disc. This saves time and will reduce the possibility of typographic errors. All advertising must be on disc or by e-mail. Other arrangements can be made. All advertising must meet the same deadlines.

**On the Cover** Crossing the Pawcatuck River on Marshall Adams' Misquamicut Shore Line in Rhode Island.