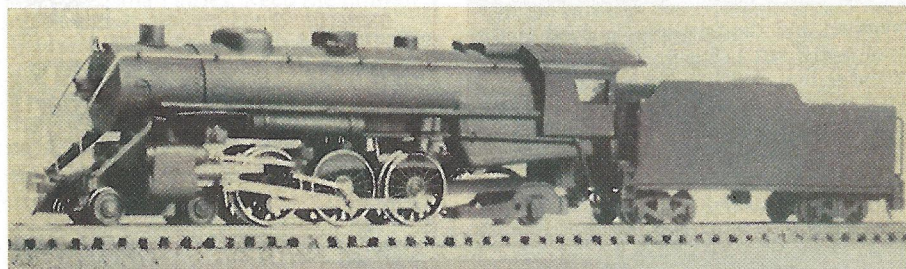


# What became of TT scale?



**Fig. 1 Plain Pacific.** This TT scale (1:120 proportion) 4-6-2 Pacific didn't compare well to the level of detail on HO equipment when it was offered in 1946 by Hal Joyce's H.P. Products Co. By the 1960s, N scale manufacturers were offering better detailed models that were smaller still.

**TT scale has disappeared** from our consciousness. We rarely see manufacturers' ads or product reviews, though some manage to continue with it. There are several reasons for its slide.

At its introduction in 1946 by Harold P. Joyce as the next size smaller to HO, TT, at 1/16" to the foot or 1:120 proportion, was promoted to permit more layout on a table top (TT) than HO. It was ahead of its time, and people weren't ready for it.

HO came into its own in 1940, with World War II preventing further development. Returning servicemen found HO more compatible to smaller postwar homes and cheaper than O, but there were operating issues to resolve. Postwar *Model Railroader* magazines had many problem-solving articles dealing with wiring, short circuits, and other issues that needed sorting out.

If HO was considered by some to be too small, too fiddly, and a watchmaker's scale, why then would anyone want anything smaller? TT scale prices weren't lower, and at times were more expensive. Large production volumes dictate how items sell and at what prices, and Joyce's company wasn't big enough to compete with the big guns on their own terms – or undercut them.

Joyce's plain cast locomotives and rolling stock didn't compare well with HO. A rationalization of TT scale in David Sutton's 1960 *Complete Book of Model Railroading* said grand vistas could be realized because models were so small, and that lack of detailing was not particularly apparent, and super detailing hardly cause for concern. Coincidentally, the same comparison of HO to O was found in a 1940s Polk catalog.

Sutton compared photos of Joyce's plain Pacific, **fig. 1**, with a far better

detailed Rokal model of a type modelers expected of HO.

Nor did Joyce, or his H.P. Products Co., have the promotional budgets of Mantua, Tyco, Varney, Penn Line, or Athearn. Catalogs had badly lit locomotive and rolling stock photos that didn't show the products to advantage, nor were they improved or upgraded when HO was moving rapidly forward.

TT manufacturers were doing well in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Britain, producing better detailed models than Joyce. Because the U.S. market hadn't readily accepted TT, fewer firms in the United States entered to help TT grow the way they had HO. Exceptions were Kemtron, Lindsey, and Sherman Dance, TT's biggest booster.

Where other companies excelled in marketing ready-to-run HO train sets, Joyce didn't, either for lack of insight or finances. A 1959, \$29.95 kit set required assembly and painting of a switch engine and three freight cars. The set included 10½ feet of rails to lay on tie strips.

By the 1960s, smaller, ready-to-run European N scale models reached our shores. The models were received with enthusiasm by the hobby press and hobbyists alike. American companies were quick to get on board with a variety of

sets with steam and diesel locomotives, sectional track, and transformers. A 1967 Sears catalog carried a \$24.48 ready-to-run Aurora N scale set with five cars, sectional track, and a power pack.

Locked into cast-metal and brass fabrication, Joyce lacked the ability to make needed expenditures to change to decorated injection-molded plastic. Later catalogs asserted steamers were "All metal. No plastics!"

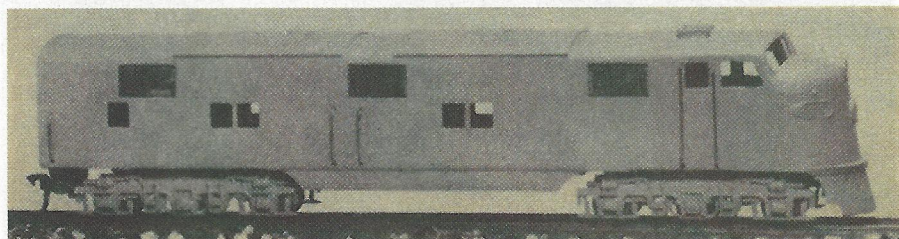
A plain Electro-Motive Division E7 A unit, **fig. 2**, reveals just how basic it was, lacking steps to the cab, grab irons, and indication of side panels, rivets, and other details found on contemporary N and HO models. The only major change had been lost-wax A1A truck sideframes replacing the stamped originals held on by two slotted screws.

TT had been a good idea, but was too early by a decade and a half. By 1960, Joyce was behind the times with outdated technology, a product line lacking diversity, and ineffective marketing.

Interesting to note is the paucity of TT references in MR's yearly indexes. By 1959, there was only H.P. Products, Sherman Dance's Gandy Dancer, and Scale-Rail Miniatures. A 1969 America's Hobby Center catalog listed many HO scale sets and models, plus 30 ready-to-run N scale sets, but not a hint of TT, an indication of its vanished status within the hobby. Joyce sold his company in 1969.

In 1995, a company called RailTech Inc. offered a TT catalog that carried defunct domestic models, re-engineered and remanufactured, plus imported European prototypes. Kemtron and H.P. Products steam engines were there, some listed as "to be announced."

Although the scale perseveres in Eastern Europe and Russia, it gets scant mention today in a hobby filled with G, O, S, HO, N, and Z scales. **MR**



**Fig. 2 Basic diesel.** This is an upgraded E7 offered by H.P. Products, the inventor of TT scale. It has cast brass sideframes in place of earlier stamped metal parts, but still lacks any surface detail on the body shell.