



# TRAIN COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION WESTERN DIVISION NEWSLETTER



VOL 64, NO.3

AUGUST 2018

2018

## MEET SCHEDULE

MARK YOUR  
CALENDERS

Aug-25 Hand made & custom

Sep-22 Union Pacific

Oct-27 Orange and Black

Dec-15 Holliday trains and toys

2018 GRAND PRIZE RAFFLE

TCA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Golden Express  
Freight Set



No. 5404W Southern  
Pacific Diesel Locomotive  
and Caboose from the set

## NEXT MEET AUGUST 25, 10AM ARCADIA SENIOR CENTER

### SHOW AND TELL THEME IS "HAND MADE & CUSTOM TRAINS"

TCA Western Division's train meets take place at the Arcadia Senior Center, located at 405 S. Santa Anita Avenue in Arcadia, California.

To get to the meet, exit the 210 Freeway at Santa Anita Avenue. Drive south about half a mile and turn right into the Arcadia Park Parking lot. The hall is located next to the lawn bowling area. Look for the sign. The doors open at 10AM for setup and trading. Show and Tell starts at noon.

Please visit the Western Division website, at <http://www.tcawestern.org> for more information and a map.

**FREE DONUTS AND COFFEE GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY BOB CAPLAN**

## 2018 TCA WESTERN ELECTION RESULTS

**PRESIDENT: STEVE WALLER**  
**VICE PRESIDENT: ROBERT CAPLAN**  
**SECRETARY: BOB NORD**  
**TREASURER: WAYNE SHERIFF**

**BOARD MEMBERS AT-LARGE:**  
**HARVEY TAFEL**  
**JON LANG**  
**JIM KENNEY**  
**RUDY FELIX**  
**KEN CHAN**



Aristo-Craft 'G' gauge PGN #GXT21309C ATSF 0-4-0 #310 Switcher With Bobber Caboose

## **From the President's Desk, August 2018**

Thanks to everyone who attended our 2nd Annual Hot Dog Social last month! We had a fine turnout and ate some delicious vittles...

The election results were announced in July and we can now boast of a new set of Club Officers and Directors hoping to continue the storied Western Division legacy.

We must thank Immediate Past President Steve Eastman for all his effort over the past two years. He did an incredible job. Steve tells us he isn't going anywhere, and we anticipate his continued involvement in our favorite hobby.

Bob Nord must be our longest-serving VP ever, and he's not going away either. Look for Bob to take over as Recording Secretary and to continue producing this Newsletter.

A word must be mentioned about the amazing layouts that Jeff & Denise Meyer have put together month after month. It's great to see "O" and Standard gauge trains running side-by-side. Don't forget to bring your own trains to run on the 7.5' X 12' pike. Plus, our policy of FREE tables for sellers is still in effect!

If you'll come early, say around 10:00 AM, there will be free coffee and doughnuts available, courtesy of Western Division volunteers. And stay for lunch; we have delicious deli sandwiches & soft drinks available for purchase.

Our display table is never less than fascinating. The theme this month is "Custom Trains." Bring something for show-and-tell and become eligible to win a fabulous door prize. While you're at it, enter to win in our outstanding raffles!

Have you noticed that when Larry Pearson is on-site with his FREE train repair clinic, the line at Western Division is shorter than anywhere else? Just another TCA benefit!

We're looking for more ideas to make our club even better. If everyone brought a guest or two in the coming months and encouraged them to join, we could see a real bump in our attendance! We plan to work ever-harder on publicity, using both normal channels and social media on the Internet.

What suggestions have you to improve our organization? Bring your ideas to this month's gathering. Let's all work together to make TCA-Western Div. Southern California's FUN train club!

**Steve Waller**  
**President, TCA-Western Division**

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### **WEAR YOUR TCA WESTERN DIVISION BADGE TO EVERY MEET!**

Honestly, isn't there someone you see and greet at almost every meet and you don't know what their name is? It's gracious to introduce yourself to people you haven't seen before, but it's kinda embarrassing after a couple of years have passed. **That's what your badge is for.**

To encourage members to wear their badges, starting in the near future **you will only be eligible for the free door prize raffle if you are wearing your badge.** Temporary badges will be available at the sign in desk (and don't forget to sign in).

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**2018 GRAND PRIZE RAFFLE**  
**THE TCA 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY GOLDEN EXPRESS FREIGHT SET**



**THE WINNER OF THE SET WILL BE DRAWN AT THE DECEMBER HOLIDAY PARTY.**

**THERE IS A \$50 CONSOLATION PRIZE DRAWING AT EVERY MEET!**

**A limited number of tickets are available at \$20 each. See Treasurer Wayne Sherriff at our monthly meet for tickets.**

**Email Addresses Available**

If you would like your very own TCA Western Division email address, something like:

[ogaugegeek@TCAWestern.org](mailto:ogaugegeek@TCAWestern.org), then contact Harold Shapiro at [hshapi@hotmail.com](mailto:hshapi@hotmail.com). 25 addresses are available free from our web site provider.

**TCAWestern.org is online 24/7**

If you haven't gone to our website lately it will be worth your while to check it out. We have a first-class web site with tons of toy train information and fascinating club history.



John Parker received the TCA Presidents Award in May from TCA National President Joe Fanara for over 60 years support of the TCA.

**FRIENDS**



We lost a good friend a few weeks ago. Les Cochran passed away a few days after our July meet. Les and Nancy rarely missed a Western Division or TTOS SP meet. Les was a regular contributor to our monthly Show and Tell and he ran the SP Kid's Corner for many years. Our prayers and condolences go out to Nancy and the family.

## TCA WESTERN DIVISION HONOR ROLL

### **50+ Years**

John Parker, Jr. CM6-143	62 years	Herbert Mayer 64-1119	53 years
Robert Poley 63-876	54 years	Donald Ladenberger 65-1246	52 years

### **40+ Years**

Nathan Forman 70-3050	47 years	Jim Kenney 75-8393	42 years
Jerry Butler HR-71-3542	46 years	Bob Spellmire HR75-8039	42 years
Shoji Yamamota 71-3635	46 years	Roy Bell 76-9611	41 years
William Corsello 72-4854	45 years	Kenneth Chan 76-9615	41 years
Robert Ponek, Sr. 74-6347	43 years	Chuck Stone 76-9620	41 years
David Otth 74-7028	43 years	John Abbe 77-11074	40 years
James Atkins 75-8040	42 years		

### **30+ Years**

William Otto, Jr. 78-13071	39 years	Robert Jahncke 80-15809	37 years
Melvyn Stein 79-13755	38 years	Dennis Bagby 80-16135	37 years
John French HR79-13891	38 years	James Seels 81-16483	36 years
Bruce Lazarus 79-13896	38 years	James Kreider 81-17015	36 years
William Brown 79-14283	38 years	James Burke 82-18281	35 years
Leslie Cochran 79-14285	38 years RIP	Robert Caplan 82-18679	35 years
Herbert Balkind 79-14459	38 years	Gregory Pulis 84-20928	33 years
Rudy Felix 79-14582	38 years	Alvin Costa 84-21636	33 years
James Hawley 79-14584	38 years	David Kalmbaugh 84-21662	33 years
Mark Pagonis 79-14699	38 years	Michael Kaye 87-26511	30 years

### **20+ Years**

Norman Lee 88-27173	29 years	Alan Huegli 93-37994	24 years
Martin VanDyke Jr. 89-28448	28 years	Richard Keppel, Jr. 94-38800	23 years
John Alcala 89-29066	28 years	Kenneth Carter 94-39192	23 years
Lynn Lehman 90-32083	27 years	Thomas Stoikowitz 94-39541	23 years
Jim Dykier 91-32539	26 years	David Smith 95-40846	22 years
John Dick, MD 91-33974	26 years	Tony Castillo 95-40930	22 years
James Swenson 91-34300	26 years	Kenneth Miller, Jr. 95-41217	22 years
Fred Kramer 92-34619	25 years	Martin Jorjorian, III 95-42105	22 years
George Reppucci 92-35401	25 years	John Richards 96-42923	21 years
Dave Burkhart 93-36628	24 years	Hubert Gulak 96-43453	21 years
Harold Shapiro 93-37120	24 years	Paul Cronin 96-43691	21 years
Robert Lihani 93-37760	24 years	Michael Melkonian 96-42862	21 years
Richard Bloom 93-37761	24 years		

### HOME LAYOUT PHOTOS WANTED

Your editor would like to publish photos of TCA member's home layouts and special holiday layouts in upcoming issues. If you have some nice digital photos from previous years, email them to: [TheReverendBob@Verizon.net](mailto:TheReverendBob@Verizon.net)

Photos from the July Meet



# Aristo-Craft Trains



## History

Aristo-Craft Trains, initially called Aristo-Craft Distinctive Miniatures, was founded in



Aristo-Craft 'G' scale #21503 Union Pacific 2-8-2 Mikado Steam locomotive and 8 Wheel Oil Tender #2312

1935 by Nathan and Irwin Polk. Initial offerings included models in HO and 'O' gauges. Some Aristo-Craft HO products were made by Pocher of Italy. Aristo-Craft eventually became famous for producing the largest selection of G gauge products in that market. The G gauge evolved from the 1 gauge which was first used in Europe and England by toy train manufacturers in the early 20th century. G gauge trains were typically in the scale of 1:32 ( $\frac{3}{8}$ " to the foot), with the consistent aspect being 45 mm (1.772 in). The Aristo-Craft trains were highly detailed, well built and sturdy performers.

In June of 1985 Aristo-Craft started making G gauge buildings by licensing some Delton wood structure designs and converting them to plastic kits. These were successful and later converted to fully built-up and painted items.

In 1988 Aristo-Craft teamed with Railway Express Agency, Inc. (REA) and created a new scale of 1:29 for trains running on 45mm 'G' gauge track. This G45 development filled a need for mass-produced American prototype trains in a market that had been dominated by European outline trains. The choice of 1:29 was an attempt to create cars and engines that would compare favorably in size with existing [LGB](#) rolling stock which at the time dominated the hobby with 1:32 scale trains. These trains were originally created for branding and sale by [Lionel](#). Aristo-Craft's products, at 1:29 were 30% larger by volume than the 1:32 products made by other manufacturers. In addition 1:29 was exactly three times the size of HO scale making it easier to enlarge existing scale model drawings for consumer construction of accessories and scratch-built engines and rolling stock. After this original venture was undertaken by Aristo-Craft, two other major companies, USA Trains and AML/American Mainline, joined in the 1:29th market along with some other smaller companies creating a wide range of rolling stock and locomotives. The early releases in this scale

were more toy like, complete with brass railings and other decorations. Since that time there was a steady move toward more and more realism with subsequent releases in live steam radio controlled engines. 1:29 is predominantly American mainline although some locomotives and rolling stock are also made for the European market.



**Aristo-Craft G ga. #31305 Southern Crescent Heavyweight Passenger Car**



**Aristo-Craft G gauge #31505 Southern Crescent Heavyweight Dining Car**



**Aristo-Craft G gauge The Blue Comet #31504 Brorsen Heavyweight Coach**



**Aristo-Craft G gauge The Blue Comet #31504 Giacobini Heavyweight Diner**

Aristo-Craft had designed and started selling a G gauge track line which they merged into their partnership with REA. The track had the highest percentage of copper in the market and featured a patented screw-together rail joiner capability. The REA trade name was used during the partnership. When it was dissolved in 1990 the line was continued under the Aristo-Craft name.

Aristo-Craft's primary focus was on making G45 scale/gauge trains easier to use without increasing the technology threshold for the average user. They also believed in mass production of quality products at fair prices. Aristo-Craft introduced radio control and battery operation for its G45 trains. This allowed reduction in reliance on fixed connections through the train tracks to power packs. This greatly facilitated the operation of trains in an outdoor garden setting. Aristo-Craft introduced a trailing stock car equipped with the R/C and antenna system pre-installed so that hobbyists could run any and all of their locomotives without the need for modification or installation of separate R/C units in each power unit. This system was completely plug-and-play, so there was no need for tools or to open up the locomotive to add the R/C capability since all Aristo-Craft locomotives were equipped with battery M.U. plugs. On-board battery power and R/C control meant that there was no need for metal wheels or clean track with better conductivity. Aristo-Craft battery packs



**Aristo-Craft 'G' gauge Great Northern #2014A EP-5 Electric Locomotive**

utilized Lithium Ion batteries and were fitted with their own printed circuit boards, so changing these batteries only took a few seconds. The PCB charged and monitored each cell independently. These packs could also be utilized in parallel to extend running time. Typical running time on a single pack was 2-3 hours, but short consists could run for up to 12 hours on a single charge. The R/C unit utilized a 27 MHz frequency in the Citizen's Band that could support up to 100 separate trains running at a time.

Aristo-Craft's remote control system was called the Train Engineer. This was a device that was intended to be electrically inserted between the power pack and the track. The power pack was set to full throttle and left alone and the TE controlled the power delivered to the track providing the advantage of walk around wireless control. The receiver was called an ART-5471 and the transmitter was the ART-5473. The ART-5490 on board receiver was also developed and was intended to be installed inside a loco and powered from an onboard battery or constant track power. Aristo-Craft sold their R/C products under the Crest brand. These products were also available for trains in other gauges.



Aristo-Craft G gauge ART-22032 Napa Valley Alco FA-1

With battery operation there was no current in the track to operate switches remotely, so Aristo-Craft created a pre-wired 6 AA cell battery box to allow enough current to operate remote switch machines for several switches on a layout. The Train Engineer R/C system allowed for remote operation of multiple switches and the battery box provided

the power to operate the CRE55465 receiver easily without access to track power. To accompany the easier to use R/C and battery system Aristo-Craft offered low cost track that provided the required strength to operate heavier trains while still looking good enough. They also offered higher cost/higher conductive rails knowing that the battery concept would only get a portion of the market. Aristo-Craft designed their track primarily for outdoor railroads. Their brass rail had a high content of copper to make it more durable. The plastic ties had an ultra-violet inhibitor to keep the sun's rays from deteriorating the plastic. Starting in 1997, at no additional cost, all Aristo-Craft American style track was sold with 400 series type stainless steel rails. To accompany their track, Aristo-Craft sold 2 types of roadbed. One was made of thick dark gray foam, and the other was vacu-form roadbed. The thick gray foam roadbed was designed to work well outdoors. These were available in 2' lengths and came in a variety of curves and straights. The roadbed allowed the drilling of small holes for water drainage and to peg and secure it to the ground.

Aristo-Craft eventually produced a 900 MHz Train Engineer with all the functional capability of DCC for easier use by the outdoor train enthusiast. This was called an ISM - DSS system. It was license free and could be used anywhere in the world. The signal would automatically hop to an open frequency in a millisecond un-noticeable to the user if there was interference encountered. Clean track was a necessity for DCC as the signal traveled through the tracks. The range was roughly 1000 feet. Polk's had previously offered similar radios with a range of up to a mile for use with R/C airplanes. These systems also featured EMF feedback and two way communication with the loco for obtaining actual speed information and other remote data.



Aristo-Craft 'G' gauge Pennsylvania Switcher #22601C





**Aristo-Craft G gauge #21409 Rio Grande 4-6-2 Pacific Loco & Tender**

Prior to establishing the model train business, the Polk's were pioneers in the hobby shop business, starting in New York City in 1935. The famous five-story Polk's Hobby Shop

on 5th Avenue in Manhattan operated from 1946 before it was closed down in 1991 so that the family could concentrate their efforts on the Aristo-Craft product line. Polk's manufactured and imported a wide line of innovative hobby products such as Scalextric slot racing, Aristo-Craft HO trains, Stadden miniatures, Shuco models, Jetex motors, Heller plastic kits, Constructo ship models, the Atom gas engine, and Mabuchi motors. Lewis M. Polk, President and son of Nat Polk, made the decision to pursue manufacturing of the Aristo-Craft G gauge trains and radio control equipment rather than continue in retailing or wholesaling hobbies. Operations were established in Irvington, NJ. Early manufacturing was done in Korea by REA and then later moved to China under Sanda Kan. The 1992 catalog featured the 4-6-2 Pacific streamlined steam loco. The engine and tender were sold separately with the engine listing at \$299.95 and the tender at \$99.95. They were available in undecorated, PRR, B&O, Milwaukee, CNJ Blue Comet, and Southern Crescent liveries.

The 1996 Aristo-Craft catalog was 66 pages long. By 1997 it had grown to 82 pages. These catalogs were of heavy card stock and glossy pages with color photographs. Credit for the catalog design goes to Jonathan Polk. One stand out item in this catalog was the newly released set of extruded aluminum streamlined passenger cars that were in development for 2 years. Each Car was polished to a stainless steel mirror finish. A coach, diner, Vista dome, and observation car were offered. All were available undecorated or in ten different road names. In 1998 Aristo-Craft obtained a licensing agreement with Sesame Street, the famous PBS show featuring the Muppets. Two limited edition G gauge Sesame Street 30th Anniversary sets were issued shortly thereafter. One set was the Old-Timer Freight Set featuring a Rogers 2-4-2 steam locomotive, a slope back sound tender, gondola and bobber caboose, all decorated with official Sesame Street colors and graphics and accompanied by Big Bird, Bert & Ernie and Cookie Monster figures. The second set was the Camp Sesame Express which included a Lil' Critter Diesel Switcher #22529, Gondola #40007, and Caboose #42229. This colorful train came with four Sesame Street characters dressed in their camping outfits ready to hop aboard the Camp Sesame Express.

A whimsical and fun item that Aristo-Craft was famous for was their Eggliner powered unit. These were Tongue-In-Cheek shorty units with a single power truck, interior lighting and operating knuckle couplers that came decorated in several themes

including a Jeweled Russian Egg, Lady Bug and the Presidential 1 Oval Office Egg. The Eggliner looked like two end units from an observation car locked together. In 1993 Aristo-Craft acquired Delton Locomotive Works, makers of G scale trains. The acquisition was made primarily to acquire Delton's popular C-16 Classic locomotive representing the 19th Century era. Aristo-Craft updated the loco with die-cast wheels to replace the plastic wheels with metal covers that were hard to produce as round wheels. They also added their patented Prime Mover gear boxes, so that every axle was powered, and fitted the engine with their patented smoke system and a well-style port for DCC or QSI sound. The locomotive was offered as either a wood or coal burner with a matching classic style wood caboose of the same era and a host of former Delton freight cars in the same scale and classic style were also available.



**Aristo-Craft 'G' gauge C16 Denver & Rio Grande Pacific Slope 2-8-0 Steam Loco & Tender**



**Aristo-Craft REA G ga. 40' Steel Box Cars Includes #46003 Santa Fe Shock Control, #46008 B&O Sentinel, #46009 Pennsylvania**

Aristo-Craft issued many G gauge models of famous American diesel locomotives including NW-2 switchers, EMD SD-45's, EMD E-8's, EMD GP-40's, ALCO RS-3's, GE U-25B's, ALCO FA-1's & FB's, Budd Rail Diesel Cars (RDC's), and GE Dash 9-44CW's. Steam Locomotive models included a 2-8-0 Consolidation, a Rogers 2-4-2, an 0-4-0 Switcher, a Pacific 4-6-2, a 2-8-2 Mikado, and the 2-8-8-2 Mallet. They also made a Doodlebug Gas Electric, a PCC Trolley and an EP5 Electric. They entered the European market with a Pan European locomotive called the 'Class 66'. It had features similar to the U.S. style locos. Its prototype was made by EMD in Canada, but not sold or used in the U.S. The Aristo-Craft model was only marketed and sold in Europe. In 2003 Aristo-Craft became the US Distributor of Kiss, a Swiss firm that made G gauge equipment. The Kiss line consisted of brass locomotives and detailed scale-length narrow-gauge Swiss freight cars in plastic with metal wheels. It was these cars that Aristo-Craft began stocking.



**Aristo-Craft G gauge B&O PCC Trolley ART23309**

The Aristo-Craft G gauge 2-8-8-2 fully articulated Mallet steam loco and tender introduced in 2005 was a top of the line model and collector's edition that retailed for \$890. It featured the patented smoke unit with burnout protection (SD-45 type), dual can motors with built-in cooling fans, gear drive on all 8 drive axles, patented 16 ball-bearing race equipped prime mover gearboxes(2), 6

flywheels for better locomotive performance, operating front headlight with direction controlled tender light, operating marker/classification lights, moveable cab side windows, black metal drive wheels with electrical pick-up, blackened solid brass grab railings, boiler and cab details including bell, whistle, headlight, and domes, MU plugs for battery hookup, modular PC board with plug & play capabilities, sound, battery, DCC & RCC ready, front AAR knuckle coupler, rear drawbar for long, Vanderbilt or USRA Tenders, extra weight for extra pulling power, and prototypical painting and lettering. This loco could navigate eight foot diameter curves.



**Aristo-Craft G gauge #21607 Norfolk & Western 2-8-8-2 Mallet Steam Locomotive & Tender**



**Aristo-Craft Union Pacific #1026 NW-2 Diesel Switcher**

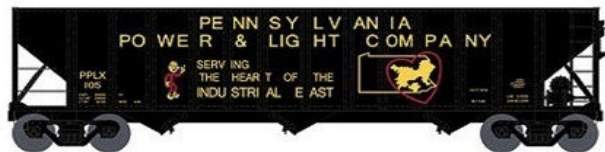
Starting in the 1930's Nat Polk became very active in the Hobby Industry Association of America (HIAA), eventually becoming its Vice-President. He promoted the philosophy that every community should have a hobby shop. And he won the first hobby wholesalers award for promoting this philosophy. In 1990 Polk was inducted into the Society of Antique Modelers Hall of

Fame. And in 1996 he was declared a pioneer in Model Railroading by the National Model Railroad Industry. He was a member of the Model Aviation Hall of Fame and a life member of the National Model Railroad Association, a former vice-president of the Hobby Industry Association of America and was active in the Train Collectors' Association, International Plastic Miniature Society, and the Military Figured Collectors' Association. Nathan J. Polk retired to Florida in 1993, and passed away in August of 1996. Mr. Polk had traveled the world over promoting the hobby industry and was one of the best-known personalities within the field. Nat's son Lewis M. Polk and Lewis' wife Maryann took over full responsibility of the company after Nat's retirement. Lewis Polk's nephew Scott Polk joined the company in 2003.

Aristo-Craft offered a multitude of G gauge freight cars. These included a 20' Gondola, 20' Tank Car, 20' Flat Car, 20' Box Car, 40' Drop-end Gondola, 40' Covered Gondola, Covered Hopper, Single Dome Tank Car, 100 Ton Coal Hopper, Triple Dome Tank Car, 2-Bay Coal Hopper, Long Caboose, Bobber Caboose, 40' Double Door Boxcar, 40' Plug Door Boxcar, 40' Steel Box Car, Stock Car, Reefer Car, Stake Flat Car, Searchlight Car, Bulkhead Flat Car, Piggyback Flat Car, Wood Truss Reefer, Wedge Snow Plow, RoadRailer, a Track Cleaning Car, and 53' Evans Double Door Box Car. Aristo-Craft large scale indoor/outdoor trains were featured at the Christmas display of the New York Botanical Gardens and at the National Christmas Tree in Washington, D.C. in December, 1994. One of Aristo-Craft's crowning achievements was producing a reliable strong live-steam 2-8-2 Mikado locomotive in G gauge around 2006 that had many great features and was affordable for the masses. This loco had a piezo switch self-starting flame, a 45 minute runtime, built in remote control, insulated wheels to run on electrified track as well, a water watch glass and a pressure valve all included in a metal, wheeled carrying case. In 2009 Aristo-Craft released its second G gauge live steam offering in the form of an 0-4-0 switcher with a slope-back tender.



Aristo-Craft G ga. #161505 Baltimore & Ohio 100 Ton Hopper    Aristo-Craft G Rio Grande 2-Bay Covered Hopper



Aristo-Craft Pennsy P&L Reddy Kilowatt 100T Hopper

The passenger car line consisted of the Sierra Coach, Sierra Combine, Sierra Observation, Heavyweight Coach, Heavyweight Observation, Heavyweight Diner, Heavyweight RPO, Heavyweight Baggage, Heavyweight Combine, Heavyweight Pullman, Streamline Baggage, Streamline Coach, Streamline Observation, Streamline Diner, Streamline Dome, smooth side Coach and smooth side Observation. In 2007 Aristo-Craft updated their streamline passenger cars to include full interiors, led lighting, ball bearings in the trucks, lowered height, shorter couplers, rubber diaphragms and seated figures. In 2008, Sanda Kan, the O.E.M. contractor for Aristo-Craft, declared bankruptcy under J.P. Morgan's ownership. A year later, Kader purchased Sanda-Kan and began to rebuild the company. 2010 was the 75th anniversary of Aristo-Craft and Lewis M. Polk, president of Aristo-Craft Trains and Walter M. Matuch, president of Ready Made Trains/RMT, a manufacturer of 3-rail 0-27/0 gauge electric toy trains announced a joint marketing effort called 'RMT by Aristo-Craft', whereby RMT products would also be offered to model railroad and toy train enthusiasts through Aristo-Craft's worldwide distribution channels.

In January of 2012 Scott Polk was appointed President of Polk's Hobby, Aristo-Craft Trains, and RMT. On Dec. 31, 2013, after 78 years in business, Aristo-Craft Trains/Polk's Model Craft Hobbies ceased operations. The long time toy train railroad manufacturer, most recently based in Irvington, N.J., was forced to close its doors when like many other hobby manufacturers, they fell on hard times due to the recession. The company had managed to stay afloat but fell into unsustainable debt. The Crest Electronics business, which provided the digital train control and maintenance, was to be spun off and would continue operations.



**Aristo-Craft Union Pacific SD45 Diesel #3625**

“Since 1935, we have provided service and innovation to the hobby industry,” said the Polk family, owners of Aristo-Craft, in a press release announcing the closure. “In this latest downturn, we cut back staff to the minimum required to survive. Then the government battle over the debt ceiling drove the consumer market down even further.” The company will



**Aristo-Craft 'G' gauge #22202 Union Pacific Alco RS-3 Diesel Locomotive**

be running a closeout sale to move any remaining supplies before Dec. 31, Lewis Polk said. Aristo-Craft had been growing steadily, according to the release, until 2008. Like many hobby manufacturers, Aristo-Craft fell on hard times when the recession hit. The company managed to stay afloat but fell into “debt that was unsustainable.” “We have put several million dollars into product development over recent years, but the need for customers to cut back on non-essentials has caused this investment to be lacking in returns,” the family said in the release. The higher cost and space requirements of large-scale trains had also depressed Aristo-Craft’s market share, according to the release. This problem was exacerbated by the company’s losses in the radio-controlled airplane industry. “Our airplane R/C portion of our business was lost when our patented frequency changer was lost to the 2.4-GHz portion of the marketplace, with no frequency compounds needed any longer,” the Polk family said. Model Retailer’s sister publication, Model Railroader, reported that Lewis Polk said the Aristo-Craft Trains forum will be “in service as long as possible.” The family thanked its loyal customers as well as the numerous employees that kept Aristo-Craft relevant since 1935. “Our apologies for not being able to keep this almost 80-year-old business going,” the Polk family said. “It’s a heartbreaker for us all.”



**Aristo-Craft 'G' gauge PGN #GXT21309C ATSF 0-4-0 #310 Switcher With Bobber Caboose**

Scott Polk attempted to revive the company in 2014 with focus on a new line of G scale trains under the name of Polk's Generation Next. Unfortunately this effort did not succeed. In 2016 Lewis Polk retired at the age of 77 and moved to Port. St. Lucie, Florida after selling the business property in New Jersey.