



1. At this historic spot, in the summer of 2013, the final spike was driven to complete the Palmore Pacific Railroad. A golden-spike monument was erected at the site and landscaped with stonecrop (*Sedum* sp.).

A garden railroad for my golden years

A raised line solves many problems

by Jerry Paladino | Omaha, Nebraska | PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



2. A siding cuts through the town of Chalco. The line ends at the town's main employer, Angel's Pasta Products, Inc., which can be seen in the distance on the right. Boxwood and dwarf Alberta spruce create the skyline.



3. The north side of Chalco blends a combination of downtown stores, a factory, and a scenic tourist train station. Concrete platforms keep the landscape as well as the tiny scale weeds in place.

After living in the same home for more than 34 years, my wife and I made one last move shortly before we retired. Unfortunately, with the move came the demolition of my indoor and outdoor large-scale railways. It had taken years to finish off both lines but only a matter of a few days to tear them out. Depression set in immediately after their removal, so it wasn't long before I started drawing plans for a new outdoor railroad.

My first garden railway was built in 1992; the second in 2002. Both were at ground level, which made it hard for me to do maintenance work and to run my trains in general. Getting down was a

breeze; getting back up was challenging, due to an accident that led to knee surgery in 2004. I wanted this new railroad to have easy access, not only for myself, but also for my fellow club members and four grandchildren. I wanted a line I could enjoy well into my golden years.

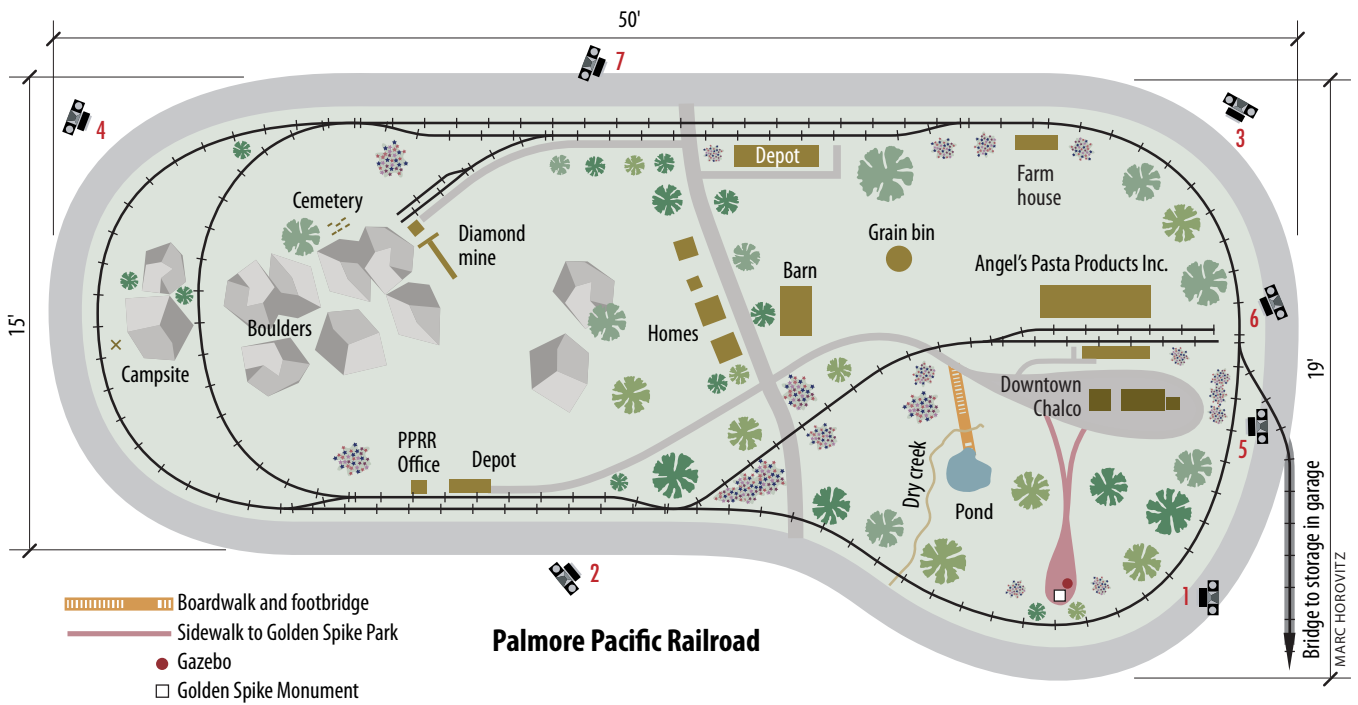
After visiting one of the nicest garden railways I've ever seen in Blair, Nebraska, I knew I wanted to do a raised line. One of my railroad-club members, Dr. Charles Bagby, a retired physician, spearheaded a beautiful, poured concrete, raised railroad built in the Blair Hospital's open-air atrium courtyard. It's called the Healing Garden and is really is something to see.

About two months after we moved, to

my surprise, my wonderful wife Karen told me she wanted me to hire a landscaping company to install a raised garden railroad in our new backyard.

We were fortunate that the first few weeks of December 2012, were warm and dry, with temperatures in the upper 40s and lower 50s, a rarity in Nebraska that time of year. The perfect-weather window closed 24 hours after the project was completed. First came a rain storm, followed by a terrible blizzard that dumped 10" of snow. The railroad sat untouched for nearly five months throughout the winter and spring, allowing the new fill dirt time to settle.

The first order of business in the late



The railway at a glance

Name: Palmore Pacific Railroad

Size of railroad: 19' x 50'

Scale: 1:29

Gauge: N° 1 (45 mm)

Era: Modern day (but a steam/diesel excursion train will run from time to time)

Theme: Rural small-town USA

Age: Construction began December, 2012; Golden Spike driven August, 2013; 95% complete

Motive power: USA Trains, Aristo-Craft, LGB, and MTH locomotives

Length of mainline: 135'

Maximum gradient: 0%

Type of track: LGB

Minimum radius: 7'6" (LGB #18000 curves)

Structures: Scratchbuilt, Piko, Colorado Model Structures, and Aristo-Craft

Control system: Battery/radio control (Cordless Renovations/ Aristo-Craft Revolution); Track: G Power (MRC)



4. An overview of the Palmore Pacific Railroad. The small rural town of Chalco can be seen in the distance. The bridge to the garage is visible at the upper right. An assortment of perennials blooming in succession ensures that color will follow the seasons. Tickseed coreopsis is finishing in the foreground, chrysanthemum is budding up for fall in the middle, and Sunburst coreopsis (far end) blooms at the height of summer.

spring of 2013 was to pour concrete for the roadbed. I also poured concrete to provide city streets, parking lots, and foundations for my buildings. I was instructed by one of our more knowledgeable club members to pour all of the concrete 3" deep, as I was building the railway on fill dirt. Rebar, $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick, was used to reinforce the concrete. I had a company install PVC pipes, through which I could run electricity to the railway for a future water feature and also so I could have a low-wattage transformer nearby to power my buildings' interior lights.

I retired in June 2013 and would have loved to have done all the work myself regarding putting in the new railway. However, since I'm 60 years old with two bad knees and a back that has gone out on multiple occasions, it was necessary to hire a landscaping crew to do the super-heavy work.

I decided to build a raised "planter box"-style line, approximately three-feet tall, so I could have easy access to the mainline that runs near the outer edge of the "box." I also included a set of steps on one side, so I could do maintenance work in the center areas.

In addition to the outer wall hugging the mainline, I added a few sidings that lead into a business district and to a mining area. Two passing sidings ease the flow of mainline traffic. Roughly half of the area is a city/farm scene, while the other side is a rocky wilderness area.

The railway under construction



A. Track was laid on the ground so the landscape crew could get overall dimensions of the railroad and curve radius correct. They did a beautiful job; the track fits against the lip of the wall perfectly.



B. The big dig is under way for the foundation gravel.



C. Installation of the wall blocks is nearly finished.



D. Concrete forms for the roadbed, parking lots, and streets are in place. White PVC pipe provides an electrical access point from the house to the railroad.



E. Some of the concrete roadbed has been poured. Rebar is used as reinforcement.

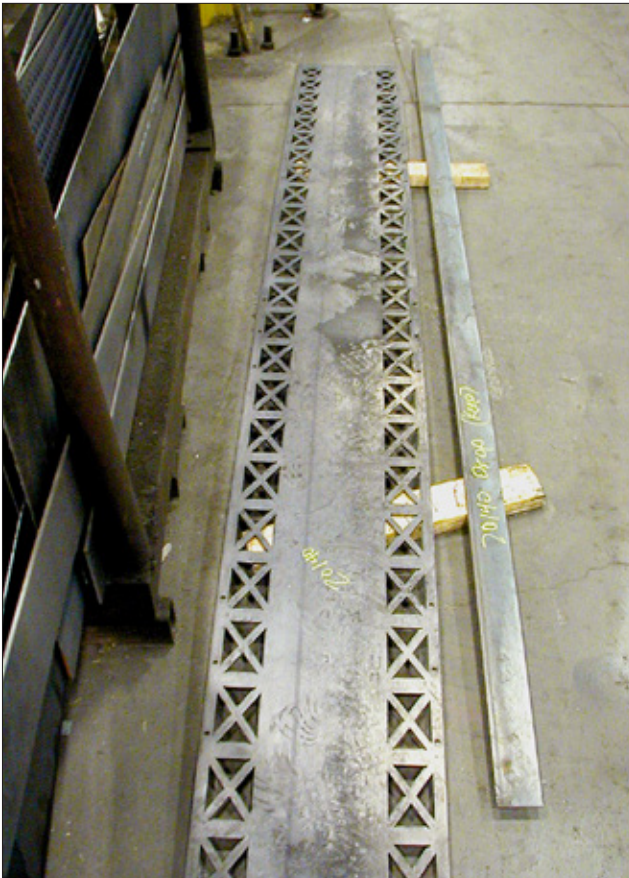


F. The nearly finished railroad. Trackwork has yet to be completed.

The Chalco Valley Bridge



This custom-made bridge provides a path in and out of the garage for the trains.



A. One of the main bridge spans prior to bending. The openings were cut by a computer-controlled plasma cutter.



B. The flat span is being fed into a large bending brake.



C. The span after folding. The bridge is made of 10-gauge steel.



5. Just another quiet afternoon in downtown Chalco. Streets and building foundations are made of concrete. In the upper left, a chrysanthemum has been shaped to from a multi-trunked tree.

Sometime in the future I'd like to add a waterfall with a small pond or a bubbler. I'm hoping to justify the cost of the project by spending many hours enjoying it.

One side of the railway sank several inches over the winter months due to the dirt settling, so about 40 additional wheelbarrow loads of dirt were hauled in by me and my family members.

I put in all the concrete forms and installed all of the track myself. I did recruit some additional help from my family, club members, and a friend who poured concrete as a side job. I had no idea how much hard work would be involved in taking on this project. I worked on my own anywhere from two to 12 hours a day over a five-month period.

My wife and I had the pleasure of planting the flowers, trees, and miniature plants. Superdetailing my railway is something I love doing. I scratchbuilt a few of the buildings using PVC and vinyl materials so they can stay outside year round. The rest of the buildings are Pola or Aristo-Craft. I ran 12V wiring up through the concrete pads to provide nighttime lighting for my buildings.

I installed a 40'-long metal bridge, which I had custom built, across a small valley (see the sidebar). The bridge links the railroad to the backside of my garage, where all my trains are stored. A tunnel opening into the garage allows access to a two-track storage siding on the north side of the building.

With my new railroad up and running, I'll be running trains as long as I can—until my kids take away my wireless transmitter and send me off to the old-folks home. 🐶



(ABOVE) 6. Passengers wait for an afternoon train to arrive as a J1e Hudson speeds by with a mixed freight consist.



(LEFT) 7. NYC N° 5344 passes Papa's Diner, a lunch hot-spot visited daily by the nearby diamond-mine workers. Chalco's depot, Main Street, farm, and downtown can be seen in the picture. It's easier to keep it all tidy when much of the railroad is within arm's reach.

Plants on the Palmore Pacific Railroad

Omaha, Nebraska | USDA Hardiness Zones 5-6

GROUNDCOVER

Irish moss
Sagina subulata

Crooked yellow stonecrop
Sedum rupestre
'Angelina'

Woolly thyme
Thymus lanuginosus

Verbena
Verbena 'Empress'

English violet
Viola odorata

PERENNIALS

Thrift
Armeria maritima

Mums
Chrysanthemum sp.

Citrine tickseed
Coreopsis 'Citrine'

Tickseed Sunburst
Coreopsis grandiflora
'Sunburst'

Meadow sage
Salvia sp.

CONIFERS

Dwarf Alberta spruce
Picea glauca 'Conica'

Rheingold arborvitae
Thuja occidentalis
'Rheingold'

TREES AND SHRUBS

Boxwood
Buxus sp.

About the author



Jerry Paladino had a 32-year career working in the commercial print industry, retiring in 2013. His final position with the company was as the Art Director. He was also a computer supply sales rep for the last nine years that he worked. He has four grandchildren—Serena, Natalie, Tyler, and Kyla. Other interests include photography and playing golf. Jerry

is an active member of the Rivercity Railroaders Club. He lives in Omaha, Nebraska, with his wife Karen of 42 years and his Beagle pup.