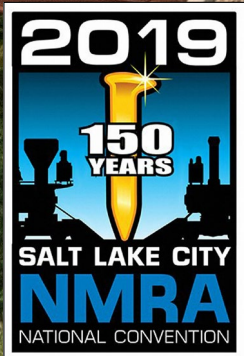


Pelle Søbørg's Daneburg Subdivision



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Visit this layout at the Salt Lake City NMRA convention this coming July.

THE MRH STAFF tours Pelle's Nebraska-based layout while Chris Brimley tells how it came to the US from Denmark ...

1. In the summer of 2017, Pelle Søbørg had some life-changing events that meant he needed to dispose of his current layout. ExactRail got wind of this and made Pelle an offer. The story of what happened next is rather amazing ...



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MRH: HELLO, CHRIS! WHAT IS IT YOU DO FOR ExactRail?

Chris Brimley: I'm the Vice President of Product for ExactRail, and I also have a dual role with TrainLife. I oversee what product we bring in for our company, and then also I'm the overseer and the caretaker of Pelle's layout.

MRH: So take us back to the beginning – how did ExactRail get the idea of acquiring this layout?

Chris: As ExactRail and TrainLife, we've always wanted to build or have a layout in our store for displaying product, or just something that we could have in here for fun. During the summer of 2017, Pelle Søeborg announced a pretty major life change and unfortunately he would be moving and his layout would no longer have a home.

So Pelle announced the sale of the layout. Initially I think there were a few offers that fell through on it. It was known going in that he would have to part the layout out if it didn't sell. Some modules were going to go to some people, some to other people – but his preference was to sell the layout as a whole.

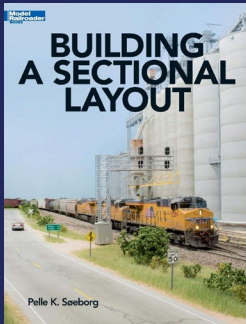
MRH: What did you guys do then?

Chris: So we just kind of threw an offer out there, not really thinking that it would go anywhere. It became more and more serious as we communicated and ended up he chose us as the new home for his layout!



2, 3. Pelle has done such a nice job with the scenery on this layout – no matter where you place the camera, you can't find a bad angle!

THE ULTIMATE SECTIONAL LAYOUT TEST



Pelle documented building his Daneburg Subdivision layout in his Model Railroader book "Building a Sectional Layout" (available from the TrainLife Store via this link: mrhmag.com/magazine/url/pelle-daneburg-sub-book).

By selling his layout to ExactRail's TrainLife store in Provo, Utah, Pelle's sectional layout got its ultimate test by sailing a third of the way around the world on the high seas in a shipping container!



4. Pelle took the layout sections and carefully packaged them up for the 8000-mile trip through two oceans in a shipping container!

It just moved forward from there. Pelle began to disassemble the layout – fortunately he had designed it in a modular way and he was able to easily take it apart [4], to package it up in a container, and then ship it off to us.



5, 6. Unlike the western desert and mountain scenery of Pelle's previous layouts, on this layout he chose to model the fertile US heartland.

MRH: How did it get packed, and how was it shipped?

Chris: Pelle had a 20-foot container delivered to his home. He disassembled the layout module by module. For some of the modules, he built a basic frame so he could stack the modules on top of each other. Some of the sections, such as the staging yard were a single large piece on his layout, so he cut it in half so it would fit into the container. He had the staging tracks leaning up against one of the container side walls.

The rest of the layout was pretty much just on the floor with some foam dunnage so it wouldn't shift around within the container, and it pretty much just stayed put on the bottom floor. It was a light load and it didn't take up much room: it only took up the bottom three-four feet of the container. The rest of the container was just air space.



7. Pelle mastered the look of contemporary railroading in rural Nebraska on the layout, such as country road crossing. It just looks so natural!



8. Pelle convincingly captured the look of rolling Nebraska hills near a watercourse with this bridge scene.

Once Pelle had it all loaded, they picked up the container at his home and hauled it to port and onto a container ship in Denmark. From Denmark it stopped at a few other ports in Europe, then it went to Savannah, Georgia in the US. From there the ship went to the Panama Canal, and then it came up the west coast and offloaded in Oakland, California.

There they loaded the container onto a train and brought it to Salt Lake City. At Salt Lake it got offloaded onto a chassis, and then we unpacked into our facility here.

MRH: What was it like when you received it?

Chris: Upon receiving it, we took maybe an hour to unload it out of the container.



9, 10. Pelle built this grain elevator complex using one at Lexington, Nebraska as his inspiration. Even though it is selectively compressed quite a bit, it still dominates the scene.

But in the meanwhile, when the layout was still in transit, we had to build supporting benchwork for it since that was one of the items that was *not coming* with the layout. All we were getting was each modular section and the skyboard of the layout.

We prebuilt the benchwork so that once it came in, we just offloaded each section and placed it at its proper location on our new benchwork.

Everything went together rather quickly – most of the time spent was mating up each module, getting the alignment of the track correct, and then placing the skyboards that Pelle had sent.

Everything ended up being surprisingly plug-and-play, with us having the layout running within a few short hours of unloading the container.

MRH: Why *this* layout? Why not something else?

Chris: It's a well-known layout and Pelle has a pretty large following. If we weren't going to build it ourselves then we wanted something first class. This is a relatively new layout. Pelle had only finished it – or mostly finished it – the year that he sold it off to us.

We wanted something that we'd be proud of, and something that would bring people into the store. So, it's not just something for us to play trains on, it's a great marketing tool for us as well.

MRH: What kind of response are you seeing with the layout in your store?

Chris: The response has been very positive with us saving the layout. A lot of people were concerned that the layout was just headed to a dumpster. It's not a historically known layout

because it's so new. But nobody wants to see a layout go to the trash if it *doesn't have to!* I suppose pieces of it would have been saved, but to keep it as a whole – people were excited. And then also there's the fact that even though Pelle is Danish, he's modeling a section of the US, specifically Nebraska.

A lot of people wanted to see the layout and so to bring it to the States excited quite a few people. It made it so much more accessible. People have been thrilled about that.

What has been surprising for us is that not only has the layout brought in a lot of people from the states, we've had multiple people from around the world who have visited. It's been exciting to have people come from Australia, Europe, and Asia stop by to see it.

MRH: Tell us more about the layout – what exactly has Pelle built here?

Chris: Pelle has modeled a fictional portion of Nebraska. He has a town on it that he calls Daneburg, which is not a real town. Pelle based this town on areas in Nebraska that he drove around to photograph and document prior to doing the layout.

Pelle took aspects that he liked from the US heartland and made it work for the space he had, which is 11 x 22 feet. The basic design of the layout is a loop that's folded onto itself.

It's a double-track layout, so it's not really an operators' layout – but you could turn it into an operators' layout. It has only a few industries that can be switched on it, so it's mostly a layout to railfan. It's a layout to enjoy watching the trains go through the gorgeous scenery that Pelle built.

MRH: How does TrainLife fit into the picture with this layout?



11. The UP train blasts for the main street crossing in Daneburg, the namesake town for Pelle's layout. Putting the track halfway into the scene provides some room for scenery between the track and the fascia. The side street implies approaching civilization and gives a sense of locale.

Chris: TrainLife is a sister company to ExactRail. We wanted our own hobby store. It's something that we had wanted to do for a very long time and so we were building it out and bringing in new product.

Having this layout seemed to pair nicely with our store. TrainLife as a store is only about three years old. Having this layout would bring attention to TrainLife and help with getting TrainLife better known.

As we continue to grow TrainLife, we're running out of space. We will be expanding into a neighboring space because we want to keep growing this. It's been very successful and we are thrilled with what we've done so far.

ExactRail manufactures HO and N scale rolling stock. It was founded by John Pestana and Chris Clune in 2007 and the first products were released early 2008.

ExactRail strives to produce some of the best rolling stock on the market. We produce products that are scattered over three different product lines. First there's your more basic rolling stock, and then there's middle range cars, and then we have our Platinum Level – our highest detail, highest-fidelity-to-the-prototype cars. We've stayed with freight cars, largely, in what we offer today.

We're excited about the future, and there's a lot of new things coming right now. And with the move of putting TrainLife into the neighboring space, it's also giving ExactRail the needed space for the growth that we're planning over the next several years.

MRH: Can you summarize for us again how TrainLine and ExactRail are connected?

Chris: ExactRail and TrainLife are owned by the same person, John Pestana. TrainLife was originally eight years ago an online archive of magazines. We had a few of our own articles that we had produced, and we also had an online forum. But new directions at ExactRail took a lot of the attention we had been putting into TrainLife and focused them on ExactRail instead.

Unfortunately TrainLife became bit of a stepchild and it wasn't getting the attention it deserved. We've since rebuilt the magazine archives so they're easier to navigate, easier to view, and



12, 13. The Daneburg main street crossing scene has a strong rural middle America feel to it that Pelle captured well. There's only one structure on each side of the street against the backdrop – the photo backdrop provides the rest of the town!

then turned TrainLife into a hobby store. It's not just online only, but it's a brick and mortar store too. You can stop by and visit the TrainLife store anytime, and see the layout as well. The layout is always open to come see during business hours.

ExactRail and TrainLife are two separate companies and they just share the space, running side by side with each other. Pretty much everybody that works for ExactRail also has a role within TrainLife as well.



14. After passing through Daneburg, the town quickly gives way to rural farmland, this time with a cornfield between the track and the fascia. The track runs a few inches in front of the backdrop and there's just enough room for some bushes or small trees to disguise the joint with the photo backdrop. That leaves a lot of room for scenery in front of the track.



15. Here's another view of the first rural farm scene after leaving Daneburg, behind a nicely weathered red barn. Hidden behind the trees on the far left is the entrance to staging at the other end of the line.



16. Here is the entire Green River bridge scene. The design of this scene allows the tracks underneath to realistically and conveniently disappear into staging.

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MRH: People who come to the convention here in Salt Lake this summer, what can they do regarding this layout?

Chris: During the 2019 convention in July, our store will be open and we're planning on some giveaways if people come down to the store. We plan to stay open late, for as long of hours as we can, to make it possible for people can come by to shop the store and see the layout.

The layout will be up and running. We'll be kind of split between the show, the convention, and the store. It's going to be a busy week but we're very excited – we expect it to be a fun week! ☑

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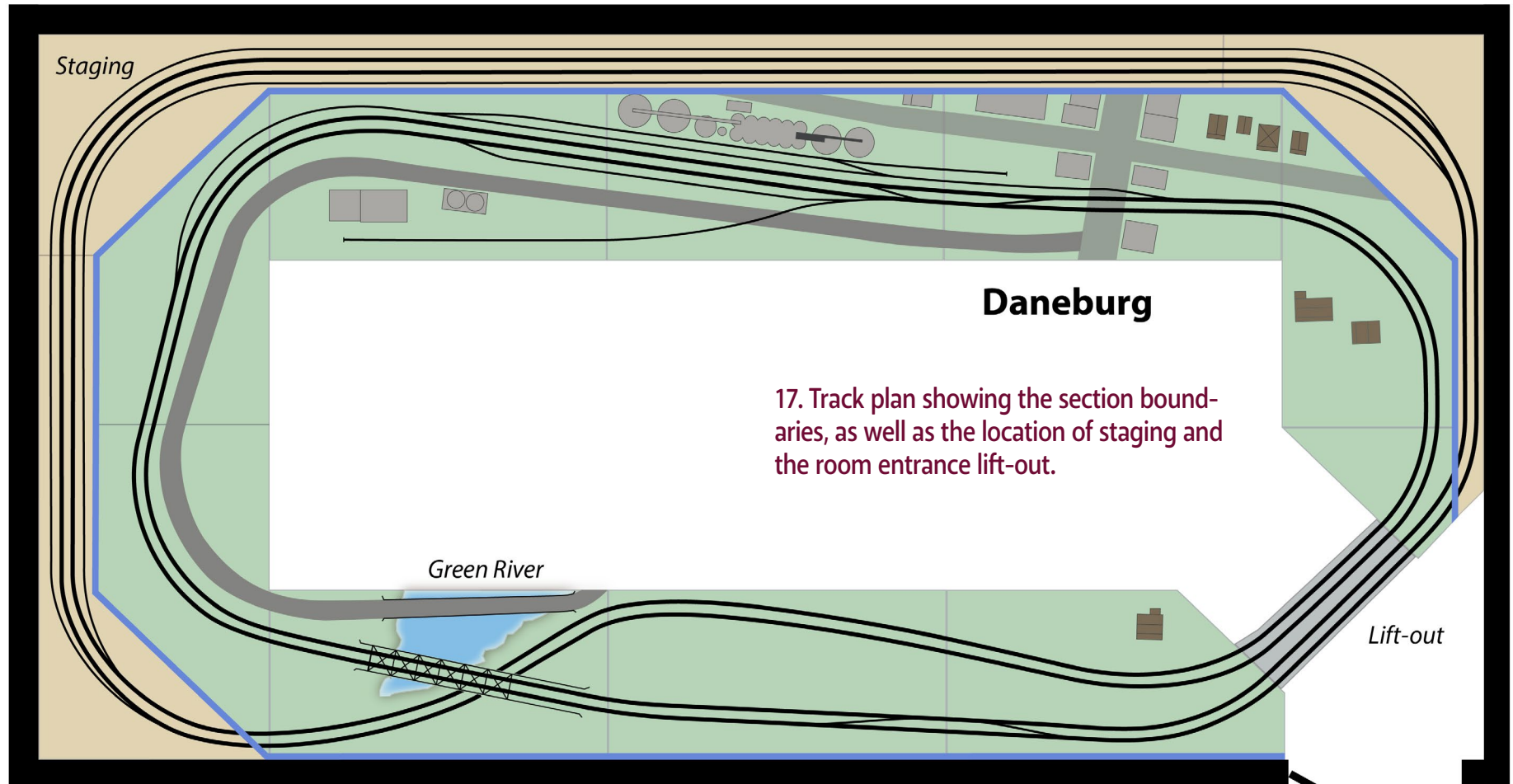
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17. Track plan showing the section boundaries, as well as the location of staging and the room entrance lift-out.



Pelle Søborg's
**Union Pacific
 Daneburg Subdivision**

HO Scale - Size: 11' x 22'

18. The Green River bridge scene [16] has enough elevation for the tracks to pass over each other. On his field trips, Pelle observed that watercourses in Nebraska often run in a gully lower than the surrounding terrain. That makes this clever "flatland" layout design trick quite believable. Nice job, Pelle!

