

RAILROADING ACROSS THE POND

Part 2: European Modeling Eras

If you've ever perused a European model train catalog, you probably noticed that the name of each engine is followed by an "Era" designation, such as "Era II." In this issue of *CrossingGate*, we continue our series of articles on European modeling with a discussion of what those eras mean and how they differ from American terminology.

When American model railroaders choose a time period to model, they think in terms of motive power. Hobbyists will say they model the "late steam era" or the "steam-to-diesel transition era," for example. European modelers, on the other hand, think more in terms of ownership: who owned the railways during the period they're modeling. This is because many European countries went through a similar cycle of ownership: small, pioneering, privately owned and state-sponsored railroads that were later consolidated into a small group of railways — often at the urging of the government — and still later nationalized into a single state-owned system.

Bear in mind also that — in contrast with the United States — many European nations have had significant changes in their form of government and national borders since the dawn of the railroad age, and many have had to drastically rebuild their railroads following two World Wars. Today nearly all European railways are state-owned enterprises, outside of Great Britain, which has recently re-privatized its railways. Other than Amtrak and a brief period of nationalization under the USRA during World War I, however, the idea of a national rail system has never gained traction in the United States.

Here are the five Eras used by continental European modelers (British hobbyists refer to nine eras, but that's a topic for another issue of *CrossingGate*):

Era I, approx. 1870-1920, Country and Private Railways

As in the United States, early railway development in Europe was characterized by a hodgepodge of competing companies, as various groups of investors attempted to use the new technology to create profitable enterprises. In some European countries, the line between



Era I: Bavarian State Railways Class S 3/6

business and government was more blurred than in the United States; as a result many early European railways were government-sponsored. Germany, for example, was served by 11 provincial railroads including the Royal Bavarian State Railways. That road's Class S 3/6 express locomotive, cataloged in its original 1908 livery in 2010 volume 1, is an Era I locomotive.

Era II, approx. 1920-1945, Formation of Large State Railways

As with most new technologies, the early period of railroad development was followed by a period of consolidation, as stronger companies swallowed up weaker ones and other small, unprofitable firms simply disappeared. In Europe, railroads came to be viewed as national infrastructure and, as a result, consolidation was often mandated by the government or accomplished by government takeover. Germany's railroads were nationalized in 1920, just a half-century after Germany itself became the last major European

country to unify. French railroads had coalesced into five major carriers before they were nationalized into the SNCF, or Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français, in 1938. In Great Britain, the Railways Act of 1921 mandated the merger of Britain's myriad railways into four private companies in 1923: the London, Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS), the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER), the Great Western Railway (GWR), and the Southern Railway (SR). Shortly after World War II, these four companies were nationalized to form British Railways. Era II locomotives cataloged by M.T.H. include the French Chapelon Pacific and Class 241A steamers, as well as the Bavarian Class S 3/6 express locomotive in its post-nationalization red and black livery.

During this period, mainline electrification also gained a strong foothold in Europe. In the US, only the Pennsylvania and New Haven railroads made major commitments to long-distance electrification, leaving it to the diesel to vanquish steam power. But some European state railways, most



Era II: German federal railways BR18



Era II: French EST railway Class 241A



Era III/III: French SNCF Class 241A

notably in France and Switzerland, were early converts to electric power — to the point where electric engines, not diesels, were eventually responsible for the end of steam. The Swiss "Crocodile" electric in 2010 volume 1 is an Era II locomotive.

Era III, approx. 1945-1970, Reconstruction, Reorganization and Modernization

The initial task during this period was to rebuild from the ravages of World War II. In Germany, the national railroad system was split between East and West Germany. Steam power disappeared about a decade later than it did in the United States. With governments shouldering the financial bur-

den, electric catenary was erected over thousands of miles of European trackage — something that privately owned US railroads could only look at in envy. The groundwork was laid for fast, comfortable, energy-efficient rail travel

throughout Europe.

For modelers, most Era II equipment is still appropriate for the first decade or two of Era III. Prewar British steamers, for example, continued to operate under British Rail after its formation in 1948, but in new British Rail paint schemes.

Era IV, approx. 1970-1985, Standardized Computer Lettering appears on locos and rolling stock

To facilitate



Era V: TRAXX Electric

interchange throughout Europe, standardized computer lettering appeared on engines and rolling stock during this period. Steam disappeared, replaced largely by electric engines in continental Europe.

Era V, approx. 1985-present, the modern era of railroading

Following Japan's lead, Europeans built a network of high-speed electric lines across much of the continent. Although a bit late to the party, Great Britain eventually followed suit. On the continent, the separate state railways began to look more like a unified system. The TRAXX electric engine cataloged in 2008 volume 2, developed to provide electric service across Europe, is an Era V locomotive.

NEW HARLEY-DAVIDSON® PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENTS

M.T.H. Electric Trains will be releasing exciting new Harley-Davidson branded products in 2010, two of which were featured in the 2010 Volume 1 catalog. Additional items will be featured in the 2010 Ready-to-Run Train Set and Accessory catalog due for release in early February.

Heading up the list is the Premier Line ES44AC Diesel Freight Set featuring a super-detailed General Electric ES44AC diesel locomotive, four flat cars with Harley-Davidson trailers, and an extended vision H-D caboose. The unique Proto-Sound® 2.0 sound file in the locomotive even includes the trademarked sounds of a Harley motorcycle. As with the Harley-Davidson SD60M Diesel Set produced in 2005, production quantities of the ES44AC set will be extremely limited, and this item is expected to sell out quickly.

Harley fans will want to fill up their hogs at the Harley Country Gas Station, also featured in the 2010 Volume 1 catalog. This all-new gas station accessory has sold extremely well in traditional oil company liveries, and the Harley deco really brings out the many details of this O scale accessory.



Harley-Davidson Country Gas Station
30-90327 \$54.95

In addition, this year's Harley-Davidson Dealer Box Car is now in stock and, like both of the items above, can be ordered from any M.T.H. Authorized Retailer.



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Harley-Davidson ES44AC Diesel Freight Set
20-20007-1 \$649.95



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