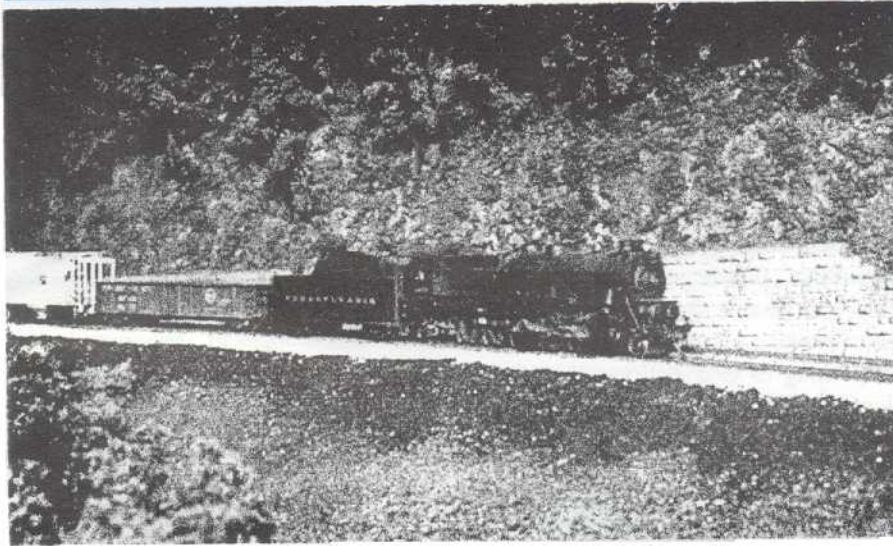


# The Local

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION OF THE NMRA



A PRR I-1 Decapod drifts downgrade with a freight past a typical PRR stone retaining wall. The I-1 is a Sunset model which had the front end modernized. The action takes place on Paul Backenstose's PRR Pittsburgh Region, 1955 layout in Downingtown, PA. The photo won second place at the fall 1997 MER Chadds Ford Junction photo contest.

## Modeling the Denver and Rio Grande Western

By John R. Short

My model railroad represents the Denver and Rio Grande Western's three-foot narrow gauge San Juan Extension, built to tap the mining riches of the San Juan Basin in southwestern Colorado. I chose to model "Colorado standard gauge" because I was fascinated by the combination of small trains battling through rugged scenery, the almost endless variety of mining structures along the right-of-way, the casual style of operation, and the human scale of the trains themselves. The distinctive work equipment used to build and maintain the railroad clinched the decision to build a narrow gauge layout. I developed my layout design based upon a mining theme, although the spring and fall "stock rushes" common on the Rio Grande and Rio Grande Southern railroads are included. Pipe trains, run from Alamosa, CO to Farmington, NM to carry crude oil and drilling supplies, are also represented on the layout.

My layout is built in HO<sub>n</sub>3, and occupies about 13x25 feet in my basement. It is an around-the-wall plan, designed for continuous running. When I designed the layout, I decided to capture the flavor of the Rio Grande, as opposed to creating a mile-by-mile reconstruction of the railroad. Therefore, I picked the locations and industries which were most appealing to me for a variety of reasons, such as impressive scenery

or intriguing mining structures, from areas along the Rio Grande and Rio Grande Southern. These areas were then included in a somewhat logical order along the right of way as the track plan was developed.

The layout is operated on a point-to-point basis, and has a branch line to Pandora which provides much of the operational challenges. Operation on my layout is casual, much like the prototype. No timetable is used - just a train order indicating which cars are to be set out and picked up at each location. Currently, the train orders are developed using a computerized switching program.

The current operating program has no capability for indicating the contents of the cars being operated on the layout, and I am looking into other techniques of developing operating sessions, including car cards, or other computer-generated programs. I just know that I want to keep the paperwork to a minimum! I began construction of the railroad in the Durango yard, which is the major focal point of the layout because it is the first area that visitors see. I used standard construction techniques to build the benchwork, with the yard itself being constructed with L-girders, covered with plywood and Homasote to form the roadbed. This provided a large flat surface upon which to build the yard. The remainder of the layout is built using the open-grid technique. The road bed in all of the layout, except the Durango yard and the two helixes, is built using the spline-and-spacer technique with Homasote roadbed. I find that it is very easy to obtain smooth easements on my curves using this type of roadbed, and vertical curves are almost guaranteed to be gentle.

I chose to hand lay the track for the entire layout. Although at first I felt that track laying would be tedious, I found that it is quite enjoyable. Certainly, watching a painted locomotive making its first trip over newly laid track is a pleasure that is hard to beat! The track is laid using Micro Engineering Code 55 rail on Kappler wood ties, with the exception of the hidden portions of the two helixes. The hidden track in the helix is constructed using Micro Engineering Code 55 FlexTrack.

(Continued on page 3)



# MER LOCAL

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DUES: \$8 per year; \$16 for 2 years

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Mid Eastern Region, NMRA  
13212 Bellevue Street  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-1703

# Presidential Pennings

By Bill Gruber, President

With this issue of the Local, I'd like to welcome back into the fold Stan Knotts as the new Local Editor. Stan has once again answered the call for help and has been working with the current Local staff to make the transition as transparent as possible. For those of you that already know Stan, I think you'll agree with the direction the Local will be heading. For those that do not, you're in for a pleasant surprise in the coming months (and hopefully years, Stan!). Stan has previously served on the MER Board of Directors and currently heads up and edits the newsletter for the Industry SIG. I am also happy to report that the current "interim" Local staff will be complimenting Stan's efforts by staying on board as well!

It's once again time to think about making plans to attend the Spring MER Convention, this time in Charlotte, NC. Carolina Junction '98 offers the unique opportunity to get to the Convention by other than driving! I've already taken advantage of the special Amtrak fares and will be taking the Carolinian from Philadelphia's 30th Street Station on Thursday the 23rd of April. Incidentally, this is the first MER-only Spring Convention in three years and judging from the slate of activities published in last months Local, it looks like another top rated MER Convention. For those interested in entering the contests in Charlotte, the Presidents Award will go to a diesel locomotive commonly seen in the Charlotte area. All you kit-bashers take note!

Speaking of Conventions, this years Fall Convention will be back up north in Allentown, PA. You'll be hearing more about this in the months ahead. Mark your calendars for the weekend of October 9-11 and plan to attend the "Lehigh Valley Limited".

One final thing before closing, the MER needs a volunteer to help in setting up the Regions home page. This project was started about a year ago but never got off the ground. Many Divisions have their own home page and its time we do some catching up. If you're interested, please contact someone on the Board of Directors or write the home office.

## MER COLLECTIBLES

- 50th ANNIVERSARY WHITE GOLF SHIRT.....\$13.00 each  
Red, gold and blue embroidered 50th Anniversay  
Sizes: XL, L, M, and S (includes postage)
- MULTI-COLOR MER 50TH ANNIVERSARY PATCH ..... \$ 2.00 each
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Gold silk screened MER Logo  
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- REGION LAPEL PIN ..... \$ 6.00 each
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MER Business Manager, 13212 Bellevue Street, Silver Spring, MD 20904-1703

All switches are hand laid in place, and were a pleasant surprise - I found that construction of turnouts was an enjoyable portion of layout building. I actually found that hand-laying the track allowed me to develop smoother curves than I achieved when using flextrack. Surprisingly, I found that hand laying track has been one of the most satisfying parts of building this layout.

The scenery on my layout is not constructed using standard hardshell techniques because I found that the name was well-deserved: it was hard! I found the process of applying Hydrocal plaster-soaked strips of paper towels to a structural base was very tedious. Hydrocal also has an extremely short working time, which is followed by an extremely long cleanup time - a combination not conducive to convincing me to work on my scenery! Fortunately for me, my friend Dick Patton had come to the same conclusion, and he developed an improvement to hard-shell scenery by substituting surface bonding cement for Hydrocal. This material is readily available at the local home center, has a long working time, and is quite easy to clean up. I then used plaster castings to represent rock work, using rubber molds I purchased, or made myself. I found that I prefer to apply the dry castings to the base scenery using molding plaster or Structolite as a mortar. The rock work was then colored using acrylic paints, and ground cover made from real sifted soil and ground foam was applied and liberally glued in place.

Buildings on the layout are mostly from kits. The Red Mountain and Silver Spur mines are Campbell kits which have been completed and installed on the layout at Red Mountain and Pandora, respectively. The Leaverite Mine and the Silverado Mine from Builders in Scale are under construction, and will be placed at Pandora in the near future. Timberland (now Campbell) produced the Omega Mine kit which is installed and awaiting completion of the Tortoise switch machine to bring it on line as an active producer of revenue traffic.

The main focal point of the layout is the Durango yard, especially the large ten-stall red brick roundhouse. This model represents the prototype roundhouse as it existed in the

late 1940's when all ten stalls were intact, and with its original roof. I scratch built the roundhouse using plans from John Maxwell and cast brick walls obtained several years ago from Al Boos of Cibolo Crossing. I understand that these castings are available again (contact Cibolo Crossing, P.O. Box 2640, Universal City, TX 78148). The wooden stall extensions were built up board-by-board using strip wood I cut myself from poplar, and the roundhouse is lit with 47 1.5 volt micro-lites controlled by a GRS Micro-Lighting Litepac. I started construction of the roundhouse in January, 1995, and completed it in time (barely!) to take it to the Fifteenth National Narrow Gauge Convention in Valley Forge, PA, where it won second place in structures. For more information on this model, please see the Nov./Dec. 1996 *Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette*. Other structures in the Durango yard include the Campbell coal tower and sand house. A scratch built ash pit is located on the lead track along with the sand house and the coal tower. The Model Masterpieces Durango Depot occupies a prominent location along the main line in the front of the yard. I built this model for my friend Larry Nyce several years ago, and he presented it to me when he switched to Sn3.

The most recent addition to the yard is a powered turntable controller by New York Railway Supply. This controller replaces the hand crank, and it is a delight to see the turntable line up perfectly with the approach track each time, even with large K-class locomotives overhanging the ends of the turntable! No engines in the pit with this product! Durango is currently filled out with a pair of Simpson D&RGW bunkhouses, and Durango Press water tank, and an SS Ltd. Pipe rack. The car repair shop is the next structure scheduled to be completed.

Another focal point on the layout is Windy Point, located across the aisle from Durango. At Windy Point, the trains are climbing a 2.7% grade up the three-turn helix, and exit from Rock Tunnel on the top level. The hillside covering the helix is covered by aspen and pine forest similar to that of the real Windy Point on the D&RGW just west of Cumbres. These trees are a mixture of scratch built and commercial trees.

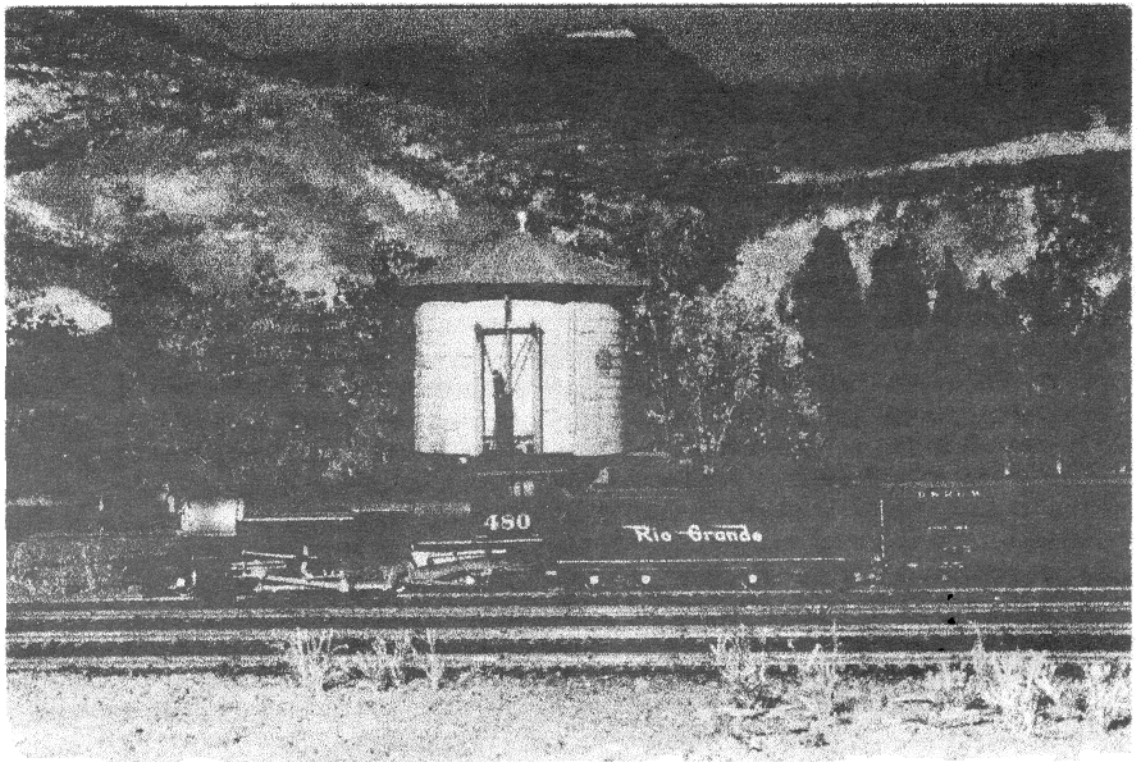
Another interesting switching location is at Coke Ovens, just East of Durango on the lower level of the layout. This location features two sets of Coke Ovens manufactured by Trains of Texas. Although most beehive coke ovens were buried underground to facilitate loading, the coke ovens along the Rio Grande Southern were left as individual beehives. I chose to model the coke ovens as they existed on the Rio Grande Southern. I modified one of the units to include a Seuthe smoke unit. An electronic timer turns on the smoke unit for about one minute when a push button on the control panel is pushed. This timer circuit was also designed and built for me by Gordon North.

I have attempted to keep the wiring on the layout as simple as possible, because I have to understand and maintain it. Therefore, I wired the layout using conventional cab control with rotary switches to select which cab is connected to each block. The trains are controlled using four sound systems: one PFM Sound System II; one Soundtraxx Wireless Steam Sound System, and two sound systems made for me by my friend Gordon North. When I heard a sound system in operation on a scale model railroad, I was convinced that I would have to include sound on my layout. The immense increase in realism afforded by appropriate sounds emanating from scale locomotives has greatly increased the pleasure I derive from operating my layout. When I started this layout, I had to choose between sound and command control. Now, that choice would be more difficult because DCC has been developed. Manufacturers such as Throttle Up! have developed DCC-compatible sound, and the advances in electronics have brought command control with sound within reach of HOn3 modelers.

I have enjoyed the research necessary to create a satisfactory model railroad based upon a well-known narrow gauge prototype. The challenges, such as figuring out how to install sound in an Hon3 C-16, have occasionally been frustrating, but having a group of modelers to share experiences with can increase the enjoyment many times.

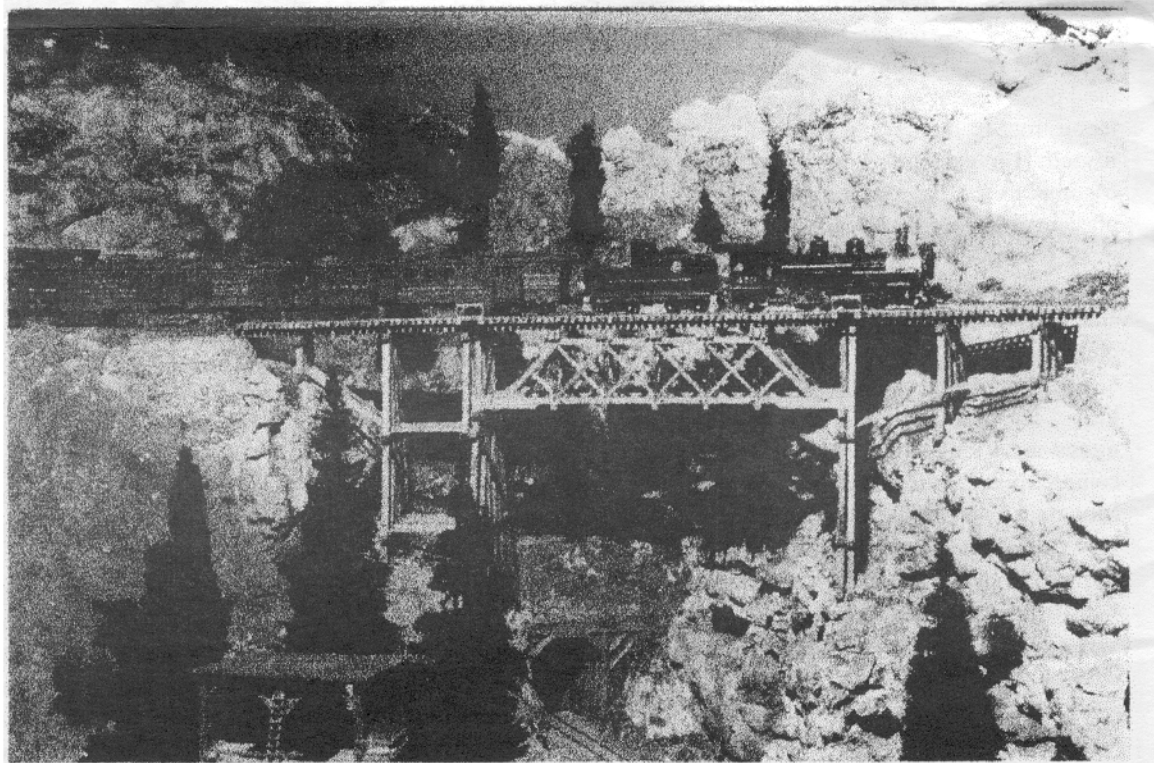
**Photo 1** →

Road engine 480 prepares to leave Durango with a train of empty stock cars to prepare for the fall stock rush. After taking on water, the K-36 will travel upgrade to bring a load of stock to lower pastures for the winter. The locomotive is a Pacific Fast Mail import painted, weathered, and sound-equipped by the author. The stock cars are from Model Railroad General Store and E&B Valley, and the water tank is a Durango Press kit.



**Photo 2**

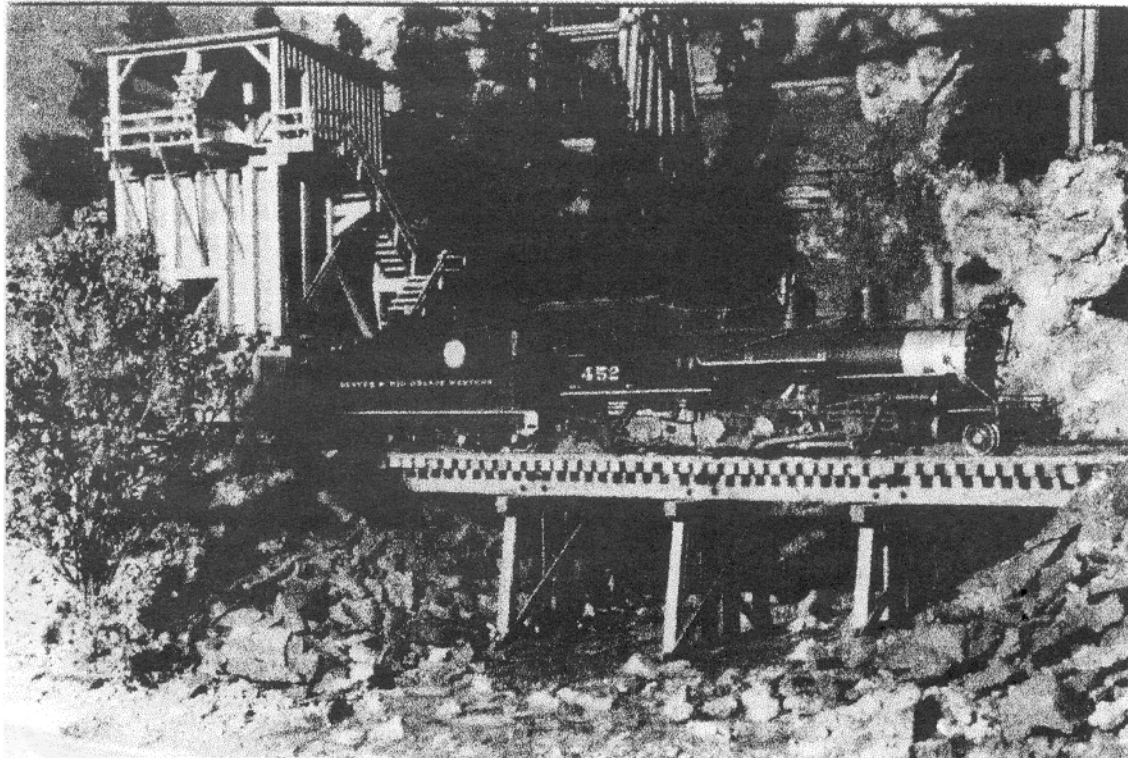
The Eastbound *San Juan* crossing a scratch built trestle near Red Mountain. The trestle was constructed from walnut, cut to size by the author using a Precac Precision table saw.





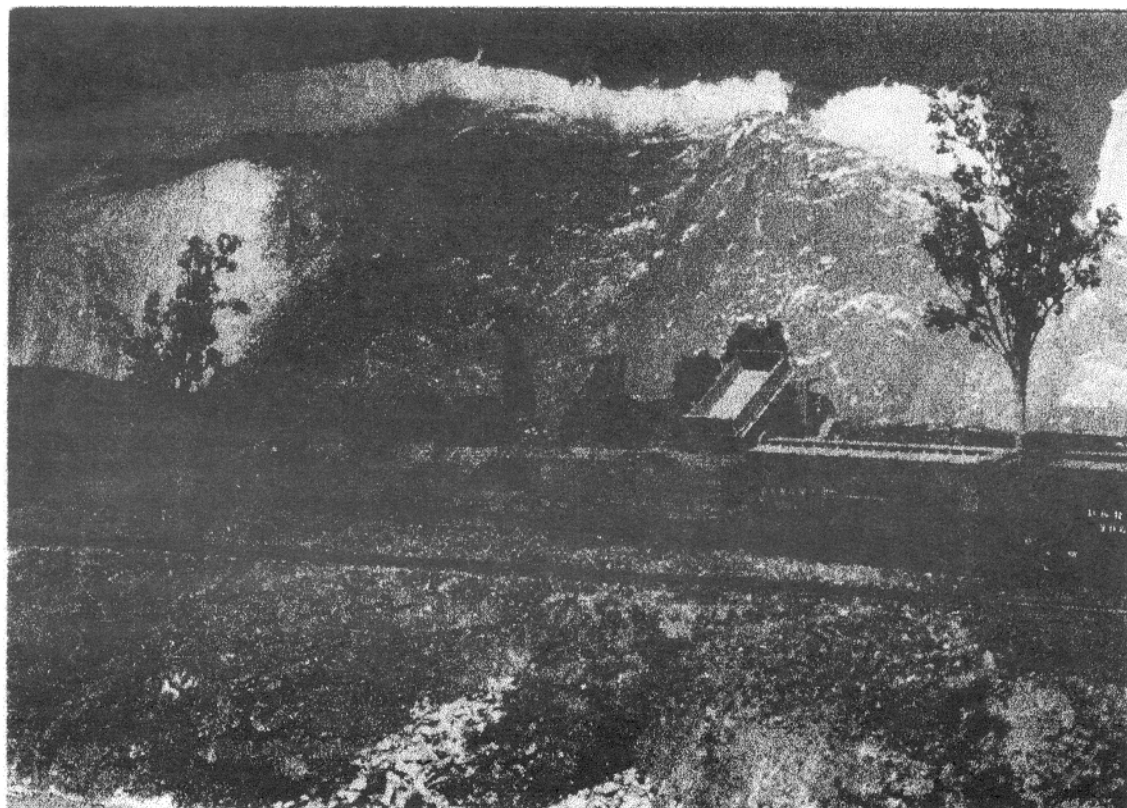
**Photo 3**

Mudhen 452 switches the Omega Mine on the author's HOn3 layout. The trestle was scratch built from walnut cut to scale size by the author. The water is Envirotex. The locomotive is a Westside Model Company K-27 which was painted, weathered, and sound-equipped by the author.



**Photo 4**

A load of coke has just been dumped into a high-side gondole at Coke Ovens on the author's HOn3 D&RGW layout. The coke ovens are Trains of Texas plaster castings, and one has been drilled out to receive a Seuthe smoke generator to simulate an operating oven. The smoke generator is controlled by an electronic timer circuit designed and built by Gordon North.



# MER Spring Convention Update

## Carolina Junction '98 CLINIC Schedule

Thursday, April 23, 1998

6:00 pm Michele Chance  
Flames, Flickers, & Flashes  
Jack Parker TBD  
Paul Rivers TBD ...

7:30 pm Jeanette Hardee  
Perspective with Scenery, etc.  
W. Monroe Stewart  
Scratch Building in "N" Scale  
Phil Bostian TBD

9:00 pm Jim Thomas  
Model RR Operations  
Robert Hubbard  
Bridges: History, Design &  
Application  
Bob Charles & Connie Rudder  
What NMRA HQ Can do For  
You

10:30 pm Fred Voelcker, Jr.  
Private Road Name Modeling is  
"Phun"  
Allen Phillips TBD  
Joe St. John TBD

Friday, April 24, 1998

8:00 am Jim Thomas  
Model RR Operations  
Chuck Yungkurth  
Bridge Engineering for Model  
Railroaders  
Bill Gruber  
The Reading Lines: How We  
Operate

9:30 am Johnny Asbury  
Circus Trains  
Bill Ataras  
Signal Practices on Prototype and  
Model Railroads  
Terry Nesbit  
Railway Lighting Equipment

11:00 am John Johnson  
Model Contest Scoring  
Procedures  
Tim Rumph  
Wiring for Command Control  
Paul Rivers TBD ...

1:00 pm Hal Carstens  
Wooden Passenger Cars  
Zana & A.J. Ireland  
Digitrax DCC  
Doug Ridell

2:30 pm Robert Hubbard  
Bridges: History, Design &  
Application  
Jim Teese TBD  
Steve Canfield  
Making Castings

4:00 pm Bob Charles & Connie Rudder  
What NMRA HQ Can do For  
You  
Marty McGuirk TBD

5:30 pm Chuck Yungkurth  
Bridge Engineering for Model  
Railroaders  
Rick Allen  
Modular Concepts  
Mike Gellner  
South Carolina Railroad Museum

7:00 pm Bill Gruber  
The Reading Lines: How We  
Operate  
Hal Carstens  
Wooden Passenger Cars  
Bill Ataras  
Signal Practices on Prototype and  
model

Saturday, April 25, 1998

8:00 am W. Monroe Stewart  
Scratch Building in "N" Scale  
John Johnson  
Model Contest Scoring  
Procedures

Terry Nesbit  
Railway Lighting Equipment

9:30 am Fred Voelcker, Jr.  
Private Road Name Modeling is  
"Phun"  
Jack Parker TBD  
Joe St. John TBD ...

11:00 am Johnny Asbury  
Circus Trains  
Rick Allen  
Modular Concepts  
Phil Bostian TBD

1:00 pm Zana & A.J. Ireland  
Digitrax DCC  
Marty McGuirk TBD  
Allen Phillips TBD

2:30 pm Jim Teese TBD  
Ed Sharp  
South Carolina Railroad History  
Doug Ridell TBD

4:00 pm Steve Canfield  
Video Techniques

Sunday, April 26, 1998

1:00 pm Gerry Adelman  
Micro Crystal Clear Magic  
Jeanette Hardee  
Perspective with Scenery, etc.  
Michele Chance  
Flames, Flickers, & Flashes

2:30 pm Tim Rumph  
Wiring for Command Control  
Mike Gellner  
South Carolina Railroad Museum  
Ed Sharp  
South Carolina Railroad History

4:00 pm Gerry Adelman  
Building Acceptable Passenger Cars

# LAYOUT TOURS

Note: Layout tours/times are tentative, changes may be unavoidable.

## Friday April 24, 1998

#205: 8:00 - Noon

#206A: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Bill Kirkes, Jack Parker, Roger Stoffler, Belmont Museum, Wes Brown, Alan Hardee, Dick Bronson

#206B: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#207A: 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Michael Schaeffer, Rodney Peck, Kent Morris, Ed Brasefield, Jim Teese, Steve Canfield, Rock Hill Model RR, Jerry Shepardson, Ed Locklin

#207B: 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm

#207C: 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Bob Kelly, John Asbury, Dick Bronson, Wes Brown, Lancaster & Chester RR/Museum, Gordon Miller, Rock Hill Model RR, Richard Shulby

## Saturday, April 25, 1998

#304A: 8:00 am - Noon

#304B: 8:00 - Noon

Bill Kirkes, Dick Bronson, Roger Stoffler, Lancaster & Chester RR Museum, Tom Peterson, Rock Hill Model RR, Kent Morris, Bill Kirkes, Jim Teese, Michael Schaeffer

#304C: 8:00 pm - Noon

#305A: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Richard Shulby, Belmont Museum, John Ashbury, Bob Carter, Gordon Miller, Alan Hardee, Bob Kelly, Steve Laws

#305B: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#305C: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Rodney Peck, Steve Canfield, Marcus Neubacher, Ed Locklin, Larry Neal, Jerry Shepardson, Bob Weaver, Ed Brasefield

## Sunday, April 26, 1998

March - April 1998

#401A: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#401B: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Malchum Schaffer, Rock Hill Model RR, Kent Morris, Jim Teese, Belmont Museum, Bill Kirkes, Jack Parker, Wes Brown

#401C: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#401D: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Jerry Shepardson, Ed Brasefield, Steve Canfield, Rodney Peck, Ed Locklin, More To Be Announced

## Layout Description

Note: Wheel Chair access (or no access) is noted where known.

Bill Kirkes HO Scale "KIRKES ROUTE" Completely Scenicized with 225 ft. mainline (600 ft. total trackage). Analog control system, Steam and Diesels, 40 car Freight Trains. Tours 205, 304A & 401B

Roger Stoffler "G" Gauge Garden Layout set in Switzerland. The RHBCLT Railroad runs through typical beautiful Swiss countryside. Tours 205 & 304A

Wes Brown 'HO' scale Boston & Northern Ry is an around-the-walls folded dog bone with over 600' of single track mainline track. The BNRR is on a constant 2% grade, 300' up, and 300' down. Seven levels of track allows a great opportunity to view trains from many perspectives. Operation is the reason for the BNRR and normally a crew of six is ideal. The BNRR layout is on our operation raffle. Tours 205, 207C, 313, 314, & 401B

Dick Bronson 'HO' scale "Little Mountain & Possum Hollow RR" is well under way. Mainline trackage with 30" minimum radius curves is complete. Mountain Branch Line has 24" Min. radius. Switchbacks are featured on the line up to Possum Hollow. Digitrax DCC. Some scenery in place. (WC Access with some help) Tours 205, 207B & 304B

Jack Parker HO Scale Piedmont & Western RR - "Bridge Route To The Blue Ridge". Piedmont to the mountains, emulates the "Clinchfield". Two buildings

connected, 20' x 20' & 10' x 40' with 550 ft. mainline and lots of 'on line' industry. Digitrax DCC, mostly scenicized with some new construction. Jack's P & W RR is one of the layouts featured in our operation raffle. Tours 206A, 311, 312 & 401A.

Belmont Museum HO Layout. Museum is adjacent to the NS mainline in downtown Belmont, NC. Lots of Piedmont & Northern RR items and other RR memorabilia. Prototype equipment on display. (WC access to museum) Tours 206A, 305A & 401A

Alan Hardee Ho Scale around the wall shelf layout, 15' x 13'. Modern Norfolk Southern freights with Amtrak passenger trains. Lots of interesting scenes on this layout. Tours 206A & 305A

Rodney Peck 'O' gauge. No other data at press time. Tours 207A & 305B

Ed Brasefield 'O' gauge Lionel layout with "Three Ring Circus". This layout plus an HO layout is on display to the public every Sunday during December. Tours 207A, 305C & 401D

Steve Canfield 'HO' scale "West Virginia & Lake Erie RR" is a layout with modern CSX freights and Amtrak passenger trains. Set in the Appalachian Mountains, it has an average grade of 1.5% but reaching 2.5% in places. The WV&LE is a multi-level layout with walk around throttles and conventional cab control. The open grid layout is 35' x 12' peninsula with wall mounted shelves going to a hidden helix & staging. The layout is about 50% and scenery 50% complete as I write this and work is continuing. (WC Access possible with help) Tours 207A, 305C & 401C

Jerry Shepardson No data at press time. Tours 207A, 305C & 401C

Ed Locklin 'HO' Scale Norfolk Southern (Southern) mainline between Charlotte, NC & Salisbury, NC, set in the late 80's. PSI Dynatrol control changeable to DC when desired. Tours 207A, 305C & 401C

Malcolm Schaeffer 'GN3' Piedmont Central RY is a 20' x 25' Garden Railroad featuring Live Steam. Scratch built 1/2" scale rolling stock with some similar to ET & WNC. "A real treat!" (WC access)  
Tours 206B, 304A & 401A

Kent Morris 'GN3' indoor layout in three areas; 15' x 20' which connects to a 10' x 20' layout room, plus a separate 20' x 20' area. (Sorry, No WC Access)  
Tours 206B, 304A & 401A

Jim Teese 'HO' Tyger Mountain RR featuring TMR, N&W, and SRR. A shelf layout around all four walls with the HO TMR, an HO Trolley, and an HON3 all on the upper level. A nice 'O' scale layout is on the lower level. All completely scened and located in a 12' x 22' layout room. (WC Access)  
Tours 206B, 304A & 401B

Rock Hill Model Railroaders No data at press time.  
Tours 206B, 207B, 304B & 401B

Bob Kelly 'GN3' Garden railroad that is virtually complete. Former layouts featured in Model Railroader and Garden Railways magazines. Mainline is over 200', approximately 50' x 45', with a 20' redwood trestle and beautiful natural scenery. (WC Access)  
Tours 207B & 304C

Lancaster and Chester RR 'HO' scale layout of the L&C's mainline is complete, nice! A very interesting Museum is the location for the layout and will offer additional enjoyment.  
Tours 207B & 304B

Richard Shulby 'HO' scale Pinehurst Southern Lines and Piedmont & Northwestern Ry. Co. The 'Old' Southern Pacific is Richard's first love. He does it very well in this basement layout.  
Tours 207C & 304C

John Ashbury No data at press time.  
Tours 207C & 304C

Gordon Miller 'HO' scale Pittsburg Northern RR's main revenue comes from hauling coal. This mid 1960's railroad interchanges steel and chemical traffic typical  
March - April 1998

in the Pittsburg area. You will see first and second generation diesels, mostly PRR. Gordon says "Come and enjoy a little bit of 'Yankee Home' in the South." Tours 207C & 304C

Tom Peterson "HO" scale. Tom recently began expanding his once completed and fully scened layout. Nice detail including very fine structures. Although the new expansion is under construction, this layout anxiously awaits our chance to view it.  
Tour 304A

Bob Carter 'HO' scale Seaboard Air Line - Raleigh Division is still going strong! The merger with ACL never took place! Mainline from staging to staging runs from Pinoca Yard (Charlotte, NC) 71.1 miles to Bostic Yard where it interchanges with the Clinchfield. Modern motive power abounds. Intermodal service, cotton mills, feed mills, lumber, and pulpwood keeps that power busy. Tour 305A

Steve Laws 'HO' Plum Creek and Southern is under construction. Has long run on the mainline and Lenz DCC controls. Steve's layout is in a 22' x 24' building. It has well built benchwork and mainline but no scenery as yet. Still well worth seeing!  
Tour 305A

Marcus Neubacher 'N' scale Charleston, Roanoke & Eastern Division is a freelance division of the Norfolk Southern with CSX trackage rights. Bridge route and coal hauler runs between Charleston, WV and Danville, VA via Roanoke, VA. This 16' x 17' layout is a double deck around-the-walls design, with an "L"-shaped peninsula. Has Digitrax DCC control. The track work is complete and the scenery and structures construction is underway. A very nice layout, designed for operation. (No WC Access) Tour 305B

Larry Neal No data at press time.  
Tour 305B

Bob Weaver No data at press time.  
Tour 305B

## Carolina Junction '98

## Mid-Eastern Region Spring Convention Charlotte, North Carolina April 23rd-26th, 1998

You can ride the train to the convention. A special rate is available to and from Charlotte from April 22nd to April 27th on Amtrak's Carolinian. Enjoy a 15% discount off Amtrak's everyday low price only on the Carolinian and only for your convention. Use special fares order x44p/948 and identify yourself as headed for Carolina Junction '98. Sheraton busses will take you from the train station or airport to the hotel with no charge, notification is needed. No matter how you arrive, no need for a car to enjoy your convention!

You can ride the Pine Tree State from any stop from New York, Penn Station to Charlotte, N.C. Return arrangements must be made by you. For tour 100, the Pine Tree State excursion register with the convention registrar. \*\* Must have reservations by March 15, 1998! \*\*

The Sheraton Airport Plaza Hotel is the convention hotel. Please mention the Carolina Junction '98 convention when making your reservation. For convention hotel reservations contact the hotel directly.

Sheraton Airport Plaza Hotel 3315 South I-85 at Billy Graham Parkway Charlotte, North Carolina 28208  
phone: 704-392-1200  
fax: 704-393-2207

For convention and tour registrations contact registrar as below: Dave Chance-Registrar  
PO Box 3193 Concord, North Carolina 28025, e-mail: mchance@ctc.net  
phone/voice mail/fax: 704-795-6410 (24 hr voice mail/fax) phone: 704-782-2878 (after 6 pm EST)

## Carolina Junction '98 Schedule

### THURSDAY

1:00pm - 9:00pm registration, hospitality, SIG, contest, auction  
6:15am - 8:30pm 100 Pine Tree State Private Car  
6:00pm - 11:30pm clinics (6, 7:30, 9, 10:30)



## FRIDAY

8:00am - 8:00pm registration  
6:00am - 10:00am continental breakfast  
8:00am - 6:00pm hospitality, SIG  
8:00am - 11:00pm contests, auctions, company store  
8:00am - 11:00pm clinics (8, 9:30, 11, 1, 2:30, 5:30, 10)  
8:00pm - 10:00pm social  
3:00pm - 5:00pm board meeting  
12:00 - 8:00pm train show  
7:00am - 6:00pm 200 Salisbury Spencer Tour (Our premier tour)  
8:00am - 6:00pm 201 Reeds Gold Mine, Cannon Village, McCabes  
8:00am - 12:00 202 Reeds Gold Mine  
11:00am - 3:00pm 203 McCabes  
1:00pm - 6:00pm 204 Cannon Village Coupon Shopping  
8:00am - 12:00 205 layout tour  
1:00pm - 5:00pm 206 layout tour  
7:00pm - 11:00pm 207 layout tour

## SATURDAY

6:00am - 10:00am continental breakfast  
8:00am - 1:00pm registration  
8:00am - 6:00pm hospitality, SIG  
8:00am - 11:00am contest, auction, company store  
8:00am - 6:30pm clinics (8, 9:30, 11, 1, 2:30, 4, 5:30)  
7:00pm - 9:00pm banquet  
10:00am - 5:00pm train show  
7:00am - 12:00 300 Duke Power Rotary Dumper  
1:00pm - 5:00pm 301 Charlotte City  
8:00am - 12:00 302 Charlotte Trolley, Charlotte Electric Train  
1:00pm - 5:00pm 303 Stowe Botanical Garden  
8:00am - 12:00 304 layout tour  
1:00pm - 5:00pm 305 layout tour  
7:00pm - 6:00pm 306 Lancaster and Chester  
8:00am - 6:00pm 307 Speedway, Hickory House, Auto Museum  
8:00am - 12:00 308 Charlotte Motor Speedway  
11:00am - 3:00pm 309 Old Hickory House  
1:00pm - 6:00pm 310 Auto Museum, Ready to Run Hobby  
8:00am - 12:00 311 layout operation from drawing  
8:00am - 12:00 312 layout operation from drawing  
1:00pm - 5:00pm 313 layout operation from drawing

1:00pm - 5:00pm 314 layout operation from drawing

## SUNDAY

8:00am - 11:00am breakfast  
11:00am - 5:00pm model and door prize pick up, hospitality, SIG  
8:00am - 6:00pm luggage room  
1:00pm - 5:00pm clinics (1, 2:30, 4)  
10:00am - 4:00pm train show  
1:00pm - 5:00pm 400 Charlotte Trolley  
1:00pm - 5:00pm 401 layout tour

I hope you will find this schedule helpful in planning your fun at the Carolina Junction '98. We may need to make minor changes as the final days approach. I apologize for inconvenience this may cause you. Hope to see you there, Michele Chance.

## **Carolina Junction '98**

Come meet your fellow modelers. Don't forget the company store, at which you may purchase a convention car, pack of three cars, patches, and more. Ask about bringing your division's merchandise. A Train Show with 120 tables will run also. Clinics will be presented Thursday evening, all day Friday and Saturday, and Sunday afternoon. We thank all who are giving clinics and the list is long but a few favorites are Chuck Yungkurth, Monroe Stewart, Bob Charles, Connie Rudder, Harold Carstens, Jim Cope, Bill Gruber, Johnny Johnston, Rick Allen, Terry Nesbit, Jim Teese, and Fred Voelcker. Model contests and Photo contests will be open for NMRA members. Judging will take place on Saturday afternoon.

A banquet will be held Saturday evening followed by awards. Doug Riddell is guest speaker for the banquet. He is an Amtrak engineer, published author, and lecturer. He writes "From the Cab", a feature article in former Passenger Train Journal and now in Rail News. He will share stories about early Southern diesels and the ACL diesel at Spencer Shops.

The Live Auction will take place after the guest speaker and all are invited to bring goods for the live auction and silent auction, for instructions ask to be put in touch with the Auction chairman.

A buffet Breakfast will include a seminar on Sunday morning. Clinics and layout tours will be held Sunday afternoon. One last chance to go to the Charlotte Trolley will be Sunday afternoon.

**Attention! Last minute addition.** A special drawing will be held at the social Friday night. Thirty six names will be drawn, 28 people for operating Jack Parker's HO Piedmont and Western layout and 8 people for Wes Brown's HO Boston & Norther. To enter register for tours 311 and 312 at Jack Parkers and tours 313 and 314 at Wes Browns, 3 hours on Saturday morning or Saturday afternoon.

Tour 100, the Pine Tree rail excursion will run from New York, Penn Station to Charlotte, N.C. You can board anywhere the Amtrack Carolinian usually stops. Tickets need to be purchased now from the registrar to ensure our lease of the car. Amtrack will pull the Pine Tree. Transportation from the depot to the Sheraton plus 3 meals and snacks are included in this tour.

Tour 200, Spencer Shops, now the North Carolina Transportation Museum, site of the original Southern shops was one of the largest in the east. It is the halfway point from Atlanta to Washington, D.C. Many restored passenger cars and engines are on display and rides are available with steam and diesel power. The round house is filled with trains, you can ride the turn table, an operating shay is on display, and the N gauge display was done by NMRA members. This is our premier tour.

Lunch will be at Salisbury depot with catered BBQ while watching moving freight on the rail. The Little Choo Choo Hobby Shop is across the street from Spencer Shops. Travel to Salisbury and Spencer will be by Amtrak and bus. A guided tour of historic Salisbury station will be given upon arrival. Note this tour is Handicap assessable.

Tour 306, Lancaster & Chester, a currently running short line for Spring Mill, has a fine museum with an operating HO layout depicting the 29 miles of operation and sidings of the L & C. The museum has pictures of short lines, historical documents, and models on display. You can visit and view two private cars, engine house, and equipment on the sidings. This tour will also take you to the South Carolina RR

Museum which has 60 pieces of equipment being restored and a working diner, were you will eat. You will enjoy a ride on C&N commuter cars a behind diesel. Note this new museum has grass or gravel walkways.

Tour 300. Duke Power's Marshal Steam Plant, a coal fired electric generator plant will have a rotary dumper, dumping if a train is in. There is a reversing loop with a yard on the grounds. Much walking with many stairs.

Tour 302 and tour 400, the Charlotte Trolley is restoring original day only. Handicap assessable.

Tour 301, will tour by bus the city of Charlotte North Carolina.

Tour 202. Reeds Gold Mine is a North Carolina historic site with a working stamp mill. You will see the mill, pan for gold, and tour the mine. This is one of the largest working stamp mills still in existence. This tour requires much walking.

Tour 203, fine dining at McCabes.

Tour 204, Cannon Village is a collection of discount shops with a visitors center and museum of textile. Discount coupons will be provided at visitor center. Open street walking will move you on tree lined streets with handicap curbs. Each of these leave the Sheraton and return to Sheraton or you can go tour 201, and attend all three. This allows meeting with companions on long tour and short tours.

Tour 307, the Charlotte Motor Speedway and Backing Up Classics Auto Museum have historic cars, souvenirs, and a view of the world 600 stock car race track. A lap around the track in the speedway's van will be given. Lunch will be at Old Hickory House. A trip by Ready to Run Hobby store is included. The short tours leaving from Sheraton and returning to Sheraton are tour 308, Charlotte Motor Speedway.

Tour 309, going to Old Hickory House.

Tour 310, going to auto museum and Ready to Run Hobby store.

Tour 303, the Stowe Botanical Garden will be in its spring colors. The gardens will have a spring plant sale and guided tours. Layout tours will be offered three days with morning, afternoon, or evening choices with each visiting 4 or 5 sites. Gauges represented are N, HO<sub>n3</sub>, HO, O, and G. Layout tours are 205, 206, 207, 304, 305, 401. Just to name a few, Gordon Miller's Pittsburgh Northern, Tom Peterson's Southern Pacific, Jim Teese's Tyger Mountain, Bob Kelley's Stump Town Branch, Jack Parker's Piedmont & Western, Roger Stoffler's garden RhBCLT Branch, and Wes Brown's Boston & Northern.

## Editors Comments

By Stan Knotts

I have volunteered to be editor of the Local and hope to bring you an interesting and informative newsletter every two months. I am happy to say that Dick Foley and his wife Judy (who has been doing a great job doing the layout for the Local) as well as Ron Baile have agreed to continue to help in some role with the Local. Roger Casson who has been providing the "Made in the MER" will continue, and I have recruited John Teichmoeller who will assist in providing more detailed reports on the conventions. Some of the things I am planning include:

- A featured model railroad within the region each issue, with photos and discussion by the owner of his concept for the railroad. Our region has hundreds of interesting model railroads and we want to know about them.
- Cover photos of winning entries from the MER region convention photo contests. Unfortunately many very good photos get entered in these contests and never are seen again.
- Articles on some of the clinics given at the conventions. This will give members who were not fortunate enough to attend the convention a chance to sample some of the great clinics presented at these conventions.
- More complete coverage of the model contests at the conventions. I would really like some of the modelers who put models in the contest to write up articles on their entry with such things as construction tips, prototype background, and other points of interest.
- Feedback from the membership on the region, the newsletter, or the hobby in general.
- I am open to offers to author columns on a regular basis on model railroad oriented topics of a general interest nature.

For those who do not know me I will provide a little background. I have been a model railroader for 46 years and a member of the NMRA since 1957 and the MER for most of that time. I am a previous secretary of the MER and officer of the Dixie Division (now Potomac Division). I have operated a Special Interest Group (SIG) on Railroad Industries for the last 8 years. My modeling has been principally in HO/HO<sub>n3</sub> with dabbling in On2 and a G scale garden railroad. My latest HO layout is under construction with most of the track laid and wiring underway. I model a prototypical railroad vintage 1939 located in the western Pennsylvania area.

One of the thoughts that the region officers have had is to accept advertising for the Local to help offset some of the cost of an expanded Local. This could be commercial advertising, either from within the region or anywhere, or could be small ads promoting member's layouts. What do you think about that?

This issue of the Local has been done without the expert assistance of Judy Foley due to a serious illness in the family. We should be back to the more professional look next issue. I look forward to serving the MER as editor and encourage all of you to contribute and let me know how I am doing

### Gateway Model RR Club Cars

There are still a limited number of New Jersey Zinc cars left. These are Athearn chemical tank cars custom decorated in two numbers. Price: \$14.00 each or two for \$26.00 including shipping. Send checks to:  
Gateway Model RR Club  
P.O. Box 253  
Gloucester, NJ 08030.

### New MER Model Contest Award

A new contest award will be presented at every MER Spring convention starting with the "Carolina Junction '98" convention in Charlotte, NC. This award is to be called the "Clyde L. Gerald" award and will be presented to the person that has the best kit-bashed model in the model contest. This award will be sponsored by the MER and the Private Road name SIG. The instructions for the kit should be submitted with the paperwork when the model is entered in the contest. Models that have previously won first place or special awards at regional or national NMRA contests are not eligible. If you have any questions, call 757-562-5917.

J.M. Johnson, Contest Chairman

# MER Lukens Steel Tour

## At the Brandywine Junction Convention

By Stan Knotts

Photos by John Teichmoeller

As Ron Baile mentioned in the last issue, Lukens Steel is a small, once family owned mill located in Coatesville, PA. A small number of attendees at the Brandywine Convention were lucky enough to get a tour of Lukens. The tour started with a briefing on the history and current operations of Lukens by Lukens management. Lukens was founded in 1810 and specializes in making heavy plate steel. In 1818 they produced the first iron boiler plate manufactured in the U.S. They currently have the ability to roll up to 140" steel plate.

They currently operate with 1600 employees of which 1100 are union. They produce steel ingots (large steel blocks which are later reheated and rolled into plate or used for other purposes) from 6 to 80 tons in weight. The ingots are formed by pouring the hot liquid steel into large ingot molds that sit on small 4 wheel rail cars called ingot buggies. Lukens produces one inch and above plate. This plate will later be rolled into lighter gage plate as needed. The Lukens plant occupies a 3300 acre site.

As with most modern steel mills, Lukens has abandoned the old blast furnaces and now uses an electric arc furnace with a 6000 degree F arc. All of the steel melted in the furnace comes from scrap, the major inbound load for Lukens.

They maintain strict quality control on the scrap they receive and discontinue scrap suppliers who cannot provide high quality scrap. Incoming scrap is sampled to determine the extent of any contaminants, such as copper, which could ruin the melt by producing inferior steel.

Contamination in the scrap could cause the entire heat to be rejected. Lukens produces about 900,000 tons of liquid metal per year.

The scrap vendors run the raw steel scrap through huge shredders which grind it into small pieces and remove most of the contaminants such as copper, plastic and aluminum. The scrap yards pre-separate the scrap by quality and it is shipped into Lukens in gondola cars. In Lukens case, they are primarily served by a scrap company located adjacent to the mill. Turnings from steel fabricators form 35% of the scrap Lukens uses and is one of the most desirable scrap types.

The railroad that now serves the Lukens mill is the Brandywine Valley Railroad which also serves 7 other industries besides Lukens. The Brandywine Valley was formed in 1982 and is a class 3 switched common carrier. It transports about 100,000 cars per year over 35 miles of track - including Lukens. They have 170 switches. The BVRR is non-union and uses two man engine crews with two men on the ground and they all rotate jobs. Prior to the BVRR, Lukens was served by a narrow gauge plant railroad which moved the scrap in and the ingots out

The Lukens melt shop has 4 tracks which hold up to 11 cars of scrap per track. The melt shop is switched by Luken's engines. The scrap cranes that unload the scrap gons select from the variety of scrap in the gons to optimize the mix for specific melts.

The melt shop has one 165 ton electric arc furnace, a ladle refining furnace, a vacuum tank degasser, a slab caster, and ingot production facilities. The electric arc furnace was built by Ambridge in 1974 and refurbished in 1985. The average heat is 165 tons and the time from tap to tap is about 90 minutes. They produce carbon, alloy and stainless steel. The continuous caster was built by Concast in 1989 and produces one strand with slabs 9" thick and 85" wide. A continuous caster takes molten steel poured into the top and produces a strand of steel which comes out on rollers at the base, where the steel slab is cut into lengths and loaded on heavy mill flats to be transported to the rolling mill. The plate mill was built by Mesta in 1958 and revamped in 1988 and can roll plate up to 140" wide. Plate thickness ranges from 3/16" to 25". The annual capacity of the plate mill is 700,000 tons.

All of our tour group was outfitted by Lukens with heavy smocks to protect our clothes from the pervasive dirt and dust in the mill. We were also given protective eye cover to shield our eyes from the bright light from the furnace and earplugs to protect our hearing from the very loud noises of the electric arc furnace.

The general impressions one gets in visiting a steel mill is that everything is huge, from the cavernous buildings to the massive overhead cranes, the giant ladles (buckets that transport the molten steel from the furnace to the caster), and the many other large pieces of equipment that make up a steel mill operation. The giant blast furnaces that once dominated steel mills are now mostly gone, replaced by smaller, more efficient electric arc furnaces with their large carbon electrodes. The Walthers steel mill kit has gone a long way toward making it easy for modelers to build a reasonable representation of a steel mill for their railroad. A visit to a mill such as Lukens helps to get the "feel" of the real thing so that the model can be detailed to capture that feel.

### [John Teichmoeller comments]

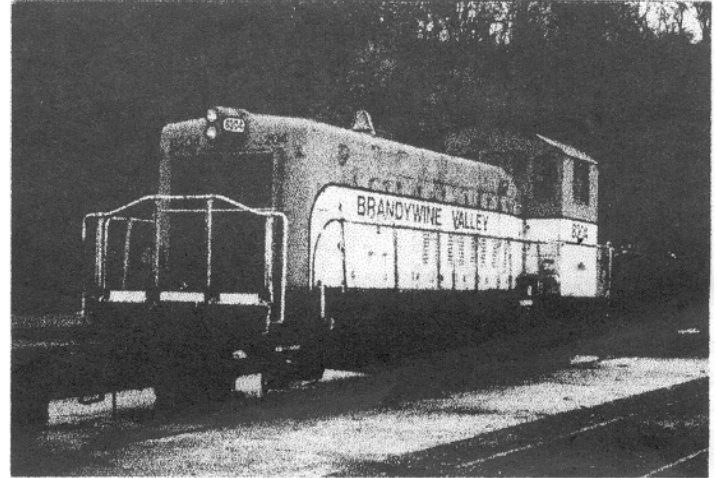
One of the many reasons I belong to the NMRA and the Mid Eastern Region is the industry and rail tours offered at the conventions. When the tour organizer goes to the extra trouble to research the site and spends time with the site hosts choreographing the tour and customizing it to the special interests of modelers, as Mike Rabbitt did with the Lukens tour at the Chadds Ford convention, the tour becomes an extra special treat. I had been to Lukens once before, as part of the Valley Forge Convention in 1993, but Mike's efforts at clearing photography in all places except inside of the buildings (for safety reasons) were much appreciated, as were his slow bus run-bys of other areas of interest where we did not have time to get off but where we were able to get some shots from the bus. Here are some of the shots I took - with commentary.



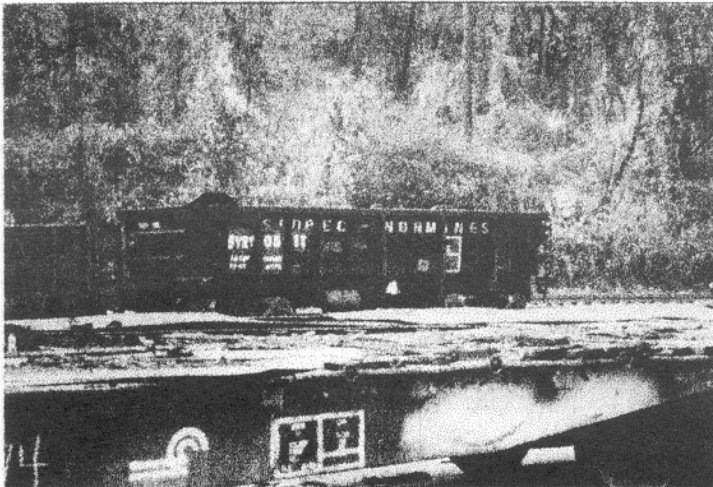
**Photo 1.** (Below) Interesting rolling stock - At the Brandywine Valley Railroad's open air shop were parts from ingot buggies. These were purchased by the BV from Caparo Steel (ex Sharon Steel in Sharon/Ferrona, PA) for what were probably scrap prices. These are extremely heavy duty trucks with small wheels (estimate less than 20") and huge axles and bearings to support the heavy loads. I have seen drawings of these and also have photos of them in service at a distance, but have never seen them up close like this. No models of these trucks are available yet.



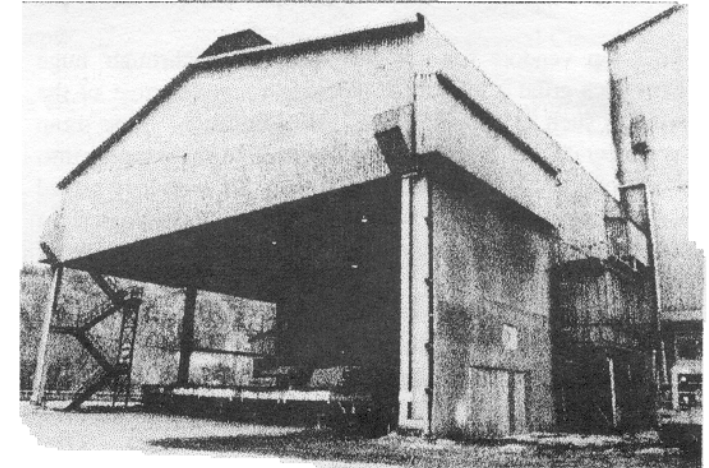
**Photo 3.** (Below) SW1200 No. 8204. We were told that this unit, in the "old" BV colors of orange, white and creme, is being scrapped. According to Lewis' American Shortline Railway Guide, it was built in 3/64 as builders number 28760. The Brandywine Valley is the common carrier operated as part of the Lukens plant. It also serves other industries in the area. The trackage has a fascinating history. If I remember my railroad history and geography properly, it was formerly a Reading branch that went all the way to the Delaware River and a floatbridge connection across to some DuPont plants in New Jersey. (The new Walthers floatbridge is "inspired" by the style of floatbridge used here and over in Deepwater.) What a combination for a model railroad - Walthers "Works" and Walthers "Waterfront!"



**Photo 2.** (Below) Ore car - Again the BV bought these for a very good price from an ore mining operation, I believe in Quebec, SIDBEC-NORMINES. Notice the BV lettering simply stenciled over black paint patches slapped on the side. The BV has modified these to carry steel slabs. We were told this required a change in the slab length produced which, in turn, was very satisfactory to the production people.



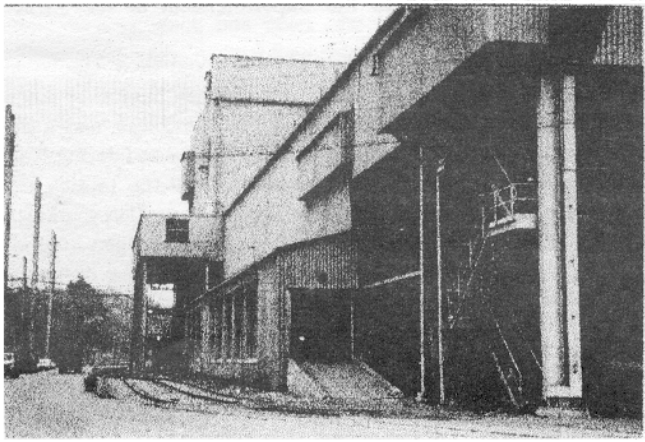
**Photo 4.** (Below) Runout bay - slab caster. This building is where the slabs exit the caster. They are lifted via an overhead crane onto the light colored pallets for transportation to the rolling mills.



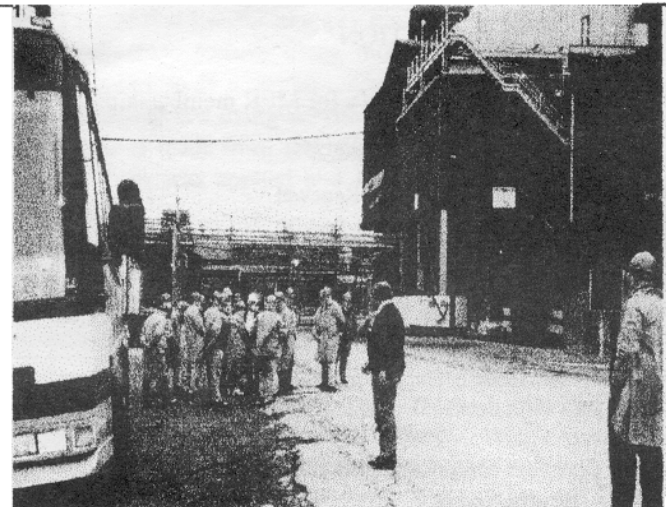
## Staining Wooden Ties To Match Molded Plastic Ties

By Terry Nesbit, Superintendent, Division #11, MER, NMRA

**Photo 5.** (Below) Side of caster building - I thought the arrangement of trackage, stairways and various components of the building were interesting. This would make a more-than-average backdrop structure. Notice the wide corrugations on the building. This is the prototype for the "O-scale" siding Mike Rabbit showed us how to make with a ribbed dowel in his clinic.



**Photo 6** (Below) The MER group outside the 140" mill. Here is part of our group, huddled in the wind and rain with our spiffy "gown length" furnace coats. Our ringleader, Mike Rabbitt, is the person to the left of the driver in the dark sweater. Notice the guard rails on the posts supporting the building bay in the right background.



One of the more frustrating aspects of track laying is when it is necessary to blend in wooden ties with molded plastic ties. I have found over the years a solution to this problem - Kiwi liquid shoe polish.

Why should I use a shoe polish which creates a bright shiny appearance on your shoes to stain wooden ties? Well, it turns out that when you apply the Kiwi liquid shoe polish to a sealed surface it dries to a high gloss shine. However, when the same liquid shoe polish is applied to an unsealed surface, it dries to a flat finish.

I have found the Kiwi Silver label polish made for scuffed shoes works best for staining ties. The Kiwi brown #10-6074-03, or the black #10-6073-03 is sold in most grocery stores nation wide in 2.5 oz containers. The numbers referenced are those found on the bar code label. Be careful - Kiwi also makes a black label liquid shoe polish in the same size plastic bottles. The black labeled bottles will not work as well as the silver labeled liquid shoe polish.

These containers have a built in applicator which is ideal for staining ties. Depending on the color of the plastic ties, it may be necessary to use a combination of the brown and black shoe polish to match the various plastic colors. This is accomplished by first putting a generous coating of the brown color to the wooden ties. While the brown is still wet, go over the same area with the black. A little experimentation may be necessary to find the proper color for the plastic ties you are trying to match. Don't worry about getting the shoe polish on the plastic ties. The shoe polish will not affect the plastic.

These colors may also be used to color your rails. When dry, it will not be affected by any water based gues used during ballast or scenery applications.

**Division Annual Report**  
**MER Vice President John Johnson**

The New Jersey Division (1) has met all it's financial requirements for the year. Meets were held in Oaklyn, Delran, Camp Haluwasa, and Trenton. In June six garden layouts were on tour. Average attendance at meets has been about 110. Plans are underway to have a 30th year anniversary banquet next March.

The Potomac Division (2) had another busy year, hosting a swap meet in September at the Northern Virginia Community College. Home layout tours continue to be popular with activities at these members homes; Brian Brendel, Dale Latham, Ed Maldonado, Ken Nesper, Monroe Stewart, and Rick Wright. Other activities supported by the division are the Rockville Lions Club train show, the Fairfax Station train show, and the National Capitol Children's Museum holiday show.

The Philadelphia Division (3) has continued to grow, with over 410 members on the roster. In order to promote National and Regional membership, the division offered a membership discount program for a \$35.00 combination fee. Last October, the division hosted the train show at the fall MER convention. Meetings were held in Fairview Village and Newton Square. In May, a joint meet was held with the New Jersey division at Camp Haluwasa. Many division members have been busy working the fall convention - Brandywine Junction '97.

The Tidewater Division (4) has had another busy year with modular groups setting up at the Chesapeake Public Library and the Chrysler Museum. In April, the division had it's 25th year anniversary banquet at the Airport Hilton. Guests included NMRA President Bob Charles and MER President Bill Gruber. The 7th annual Model Train Show was held in October.

The James River Division (5) currently has 82 members. Meets were held in Danville in March with 37 attending, in Stafford in June, and in Lynchburg in September. Elections were held in June to fill four director positions.

The South Mountain Division (10) has about 86 members. Monthly meetings were held at member's homes September through May. Clinics given include "Coal Mining in West Virginia", "Light rail Vehicles" and a program on the NMRA Achievement Program.

The Susquehanna Southern Division (11) currently has 104 members. In November, a Fall mini-meet was held at the Miniature Railroad Club of New York. Meets were also held in Mechanicsburg, Ephrata, York, Harrisburg, Elizabethtown, and New Oxford. Many of these meets featured clinics on modules and included actual construction of modular frames. The Spring mini-meet was held in Shamokin and featured a clinic on using chalks for weathering buildings and rolling stock. A copy of the original division charter was found and presented to the Superintendent at the MER Fall Convention.

The Carolina Southern Division (12) received their charter at the MER Fall convention last October and have been busy ever since. In November, a meet was held at the home of Jim Teese, and a display was set up at the cannon Memorial Library in Concord during National Model Railroad Month. A mini-meet was held at the Trolley Barn in Charlotte, which included clinics, trolley rides, a flea market and a silent auction. In June, a meet was held at Spencer where four clinics were presented. A first anniversary meet was held at the home of Jack Parker and included clinics and a barbecue supper. The division has been very busy with their plans for "Carolina Junction '98" at the next Spring MER convention.

Through the efforts of Rick Allen and his crew, the MER has another division in North Carolina. On October 7, 1997 the Carolina Piedmont Division (13) was organized and officers elected. The division serves the eleven counties in the Raleigh, NC area.

The Mid Eastern Region Inc., NMRA  
 Business Manager  
 13212 Belevue Street  
 Silver Spring, MD 20904-1703

Nmae \_\_\_\_\_

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**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

ONLY NMRA Members qualify for MER membership

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**NMRA Dues:**  New  Renewal  
 1 year: \$32.00  2 years: \$64.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 For NMRA Life Member quote, send your request to the NMRA

**Region Dues:**  New  Renwel  
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ONLY NMRA Life Members qualify for MER Life Memebrship  
 Send your birth date to the MER business manager for a quote.

**Products:**

MER Blue Golf Shirt (XL, L, M) @ \$17.00 ea \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Buy the 2nd blue shirt for \$14.00)  
 MER Cloth Patch @ \$3.00 ea \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 50th Anniversary Cloth Patch @ 42.00 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 MER Lapel Pin @ \$6.00 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 (The prices above include postage and handling)



# Made in the MER

## Lifelike Products, Inc.

By Roger Cason

Life-Like products, Inc. was born just after World war II. The Kramer Brothers, owners of a Baltimore wholesale business decided to start producing their own grass mats, trees, and Styrofoam tunnels for model railroads. Success here led to expansion of the product line into other model railroad products and complete train sets. Initial expansion was aided by acquisition of selected product molds from firms such as Varney in the early 1960's. By the early 1970's, the firm dropped all non-manufacturing businesses.

Still privately owned, Life-Like now has over 500 employees in eight plants coast to coast. Headquarters is in a renovated, century old stone warehouse in Baltimore. The majority of the manufacturing and essentially all of the product development is done in-house, and no trace remains of the railroad products that began life with another manufacturer. Roughly half of Life-Like's business is now related to model railroads. Non-railroad products include wind-up cars, electrically powered model race cars, foam coolers, "pool noodles" (long, thin cylinders of Styrofoam), and blue refreezable ice packs.

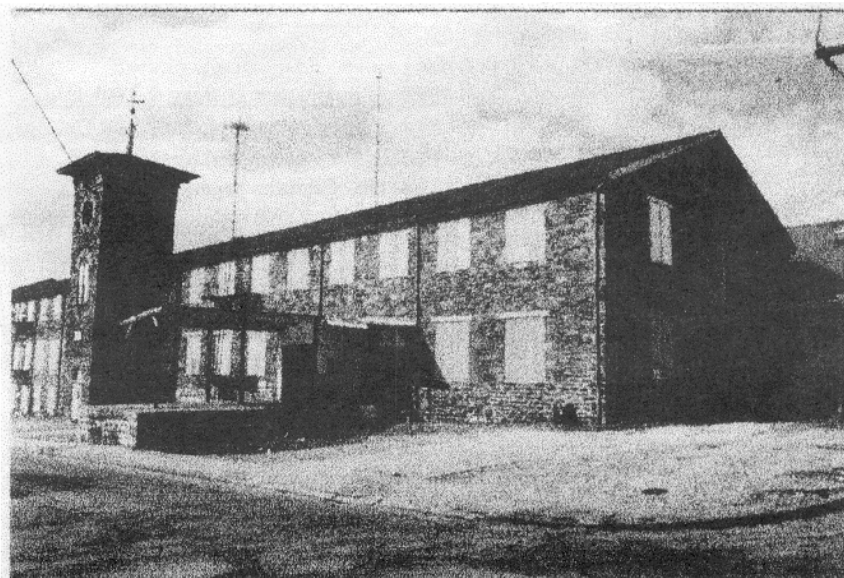
Life-Like's railroad "standard" product line includes fourteen different HO train sets, three Nscale train sets, and a variety of freight cars, operating accessories, landscaping materials, figures and structures. The newer sets include Power-Loc sectional track and plug-in wiring. Strong business and marketing emphasis is placed on making the sets easy to set up and operate, putting "...beginners on the path to becoming life-long hobbyists..." Every set sold includes a copy of *Basics for Beginners*, a compilation of more than a hundred tips from customers. These tips show "...ways to turn a train set into a realistic model railroad..." [Roger Cason - the tips are excellent and even the most experienced modeler can learn from this publication. To obtain a free copy, send a 9"x12' SASE with 75 cents postage to Life-Like Products, Inc., 1600 Union Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21211-1998, Attn: Consumer Services.]

In 1989, Life-Like made a leap upward with the introduction of it's Proto 2000 HO scale diesel locomotives and freight cars. Each

model is quite detailed showing the result of careful research, field measurements and the use of manufacturers drawings. In some cases, historical societies have provided valuable input. Proto 2000 locomotive offerings have included the BL-2, FA, E-8, E-9, GP-9 Phase II, GP-18, SD-7 and PA. Car offerings have included 50 foot auto boxes, 8000 gallon tank cars, 52 foot drop end mill gons, cabooses and Mather stock cars. All Proto 2000 offerings are limited run and most have been immediate sell-outs. As a result, no Proto-2000 catalog has been offered. Sales Manager George Riley and Product Manager Beth Korolevich stress that the company strives to make improvements in each new issue rather than repeating what was done before. Looking ahead to the future, "everything is under consideration." Many of the best new product ideas have resulted from customer inquiries and suggestions. In parallel with the HO scale offerings, Life-Like has come out with higher a quality N scale SW-9/1200 switcher, filling a gap in the N scale offerings.

Life-Like hosts exhibits at the NMRA train show, the MRIA show in Chicago, and the Ft. Washington East Coast Hobby Show. Some train sets are sold directly to mass marketers, but the majority of their model railroad business is through distributors and hobby shops. If you can't get the information you need from your local hobby shop, call Life-Like at 1-800-638-1470. Your call will be directed to a *real person* (remember them?). Life-Like strongly prides itself on being a responsive company.

Photo of Life-Like home office in Baltimore by Stan Knotts. This old stone warehouse could make an interesting model itself.



# MidEastern Region, NMRA, INC.

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## CALLBOARD

### Coming Events

Brief notices must be typed and have complete addresses. Be sure to include a contact telephone number. Send items for this column to Stan Knotts, 19808 Falling Spring Ct., Laytonsville, MD 20882. E-mail to srknotts@aol.com

#### March/April

Third Annual Train Show, New Bern, NC, March 21-22. Carolina Coastal railroaders, 10 am to 5 pm both days. Contact Tommie L. Phelps, 509 River Road, New Bern, NC 28562, (919) 637-4026.

Northern Virginia Model Railroaders, Inc.  
Open House, April 18, May 24, July 18, September 12. Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Station, 231 Dominion Road (at Ayr Hill Road), Vienna, VA 22180, 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Club meets on Tuesday evenings, (703) 938-5157.  
<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/6120>

MER Carolina Junction convention, April 23 to 26. Charlotte, NC

Great Scale Train Show - April 4-5, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, Maryland. For information call Howard Zane 410-730-1036.

17th Annual Canal History & Technology Symposium: March 14, Lafayette College, Easton, PA. Sponsored by the Canal Museum. Features papers on topics of transportation and industrial history. Info: NCM, 30 Centre Sq., Easton, PA 18042; (610) 559-6613.

New Jersey, Wenonah-Woodbury, New Jersey Division #1 30th Anniversary Celebration, March 21, 1998. Valley Caterers, 523 Princeton Blvd., 7-11 p.m., Registration \$20.00 per person in advance. Info: Carl Haslett, Division Clerk, 425 First Ave., Haddon Heights, NJ 08035. (609) 546-9230.

#### Club Information

Carolina Piedmont Division 13 - NMRA  
Invitation for new members in the Cary, NC area. HO modular layout

Meetings 7:00 PM first Tuesday of each month, community room, South Hills Mall, 1201 Buck Jones Road, Cary, NC. Contact Rick Allen, P.O. Box 5183 Cary, NC 27512  
Phone: 919-467-8105.

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