

The Local

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Using Styrene For Backdrops

Story and photographs by Mike McNamara

ONE OF THE GREAT THINGS about the hobby of model railroading is the many different types of projects that are involved in building a layout and the many different ways of getting them accomplished. There is not always a right way or wrong way, but sometimes a different way that may work better for a given task. Here is how I constructed the backdrop for my layout. Perhaps you will find something in my approach that may work in your situation.

When I started the benchwork for my new layout, I knew I would have to address creating the backdrop pretty soon. I didn't want to get too far along only to have to start constructing and painting a backdrop over top of an existing layout. There are plenty of tried and true methods of building a backdrop. My layout is along multiple walls and also has a center peninsula. I was careful in preparing the room to make sure I could use the drywall as a backdrop for the sections along the wall. However, that still left me contemplating what to do about the corners and the peninsula.

On other layouts I have built or worked on, the backdrop has been as simple as blue paint on the wall to a more complex construction of Masonite® hardboard flowing completely

around the perimeter. Certainly I could use hardboard, but it seemed like a lot of work and expense, especially given that my drywall was already smooth and primed. It would help solve the issue with the corners and the peninsula but I was concerned about getting it to

curve sharply in corners and then concealing the seams.

One day I was looking at the web site for Mike Dodd's HO Virginian layout. It has lots of neat stuff, but what really caught my eye were his photos of his backdrop. He was using styrene. Now this seemed like a good idea. Styrene is smooth, stable, flexible and it is something I am already familiar working with. Mike's website also had some neat ideas about how to construct the backdrop from styrene. I had found a different approach that would work for my layout.

The first order of business was getting styrene to use. I have read before about model railroaders getting large sheets of styrene for projects as a way to save money. So I put the question out to the New Jersey Division e-mail list to see if anyone had experience purchasing big sheets of the stuff. After getting a few "Why use that, hardboard is better!" replies, I did get some useful info about loca-



Curving the styrene into place

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MER LOCAL

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The **MER LOCAL** welcomes articles, photographs and model railroad related material as contributions to members' mutual enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. Editors will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send originals without having backup copies of both articles and photographs. Editors, by definition, reserve the right—and have the responsibility—to make corrections, deletions and changes to accommodate space.

Keeping In Touch...

*By Rita Lynam
MER Business Manager*

Just heard a steam whistle!!!! WOW!! The back door is open and no motors are running inside so I can hear the Wilmington and Western Railroad. This makes me want to go railfanning! Can't wait! Yesterday on my way to work, we took a side road instead of I-95. We were stopped by a CSX Tropicana Unit Train that was empty and heading south to Baltimore from Philadelphia. Many of the people waiting impatiently at the grade crossing were turning around. Ray and I just sat there smiling, watching the train go by at a fast clip. A great way to start the day! Hope you all can get out and enjoy the spring watching trains.

My husband, Ray Bilodeau, and I will not be attending the joint convention in Pittsburgh in May. The Mid-Atlantic Narrow Gauge Guild will be meeting the weekend of May 21st for our annual module get together. Ray is working feverishly on his modules for this meet near Chester Springs, Pennsylvania. The MER will have a table where I will be renewing memberships or signing up new members. Stop by and see me! I look forward to seeing both our "narrow-minded" and all other "modulers" at this meet.

New Life Members

Edwin Kuser, Boyertown, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Division, #L-340

Recently Deceased Member

John Aucker, Mount Joy, Pennsylvania. Born December 1932. NMRA #099705.

Joined the MER in 1960—
#1799. Susquehanna Division.

Any questions or comments, please contact me at one of my addresses on the masthead.

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MER web-page URL is <http://members.cox.net/chyde/MER/MER.html>

President's Column

By Norman W. Garner

MODULE GROUPS and open house—what do they do? Everything, because they're the first people the public and prospective new members meet. Without their efforts, model railroading would be unknown to the average citizen. They not only represent their division and region, but everything the NMRA stands for by promoting model railroading. Just about any weekend somewhere in the MER, a division is setting up modules in a mall, church, or some public building. Some division members are even having open houses to show their layouts. The time and energy many times is at their expense. They do this because they love the hobby, and all of us in the region need to let them know how much we appreciate their efforts. So the next time you see a module group setting up or someone invites you to an open house to view their layout, thank them for being on the front line of promoting model railroading.

Recently I noticed an increase in interest in the Achievement

Program throughout the region. I hope this becomes an epidemic. I can't think of a better way to enjoy our hobby. The Achievement Program is what brought me to the NMRA. It has taught me many things and challenged me to learn new skills that I previously thought I could not achieve. It has made me appreciate the patience and perseverance it takes to become a good modeler. The MER has an abundance of talent and some of the best modelers in the NMRA. They freely share their skills and knowledge, and to learn from them, all you have to do is attend one of their clinics at a convention or just ask. As MER President one of the happiest things that I get to do is to judge a layout, module, or someone's model. There is nothing more rewarding than being able to give someone a Merit Award that I have just signed and see the pride on his or her face.

I hope many of you are planning to go to the MCR/MER 2004 convention in Pittsburgh on May 13-16. Remember model railroading is fun.

Achievement Program Submissions

By Frank J. Koch, NMRA AP Assistant Manager

FROM TIME TO TIME, it's good to remind members of a few basic pointers that will help expedite processing Achievement Program (AP) submissions.

1. Obtain and use the most recent up-to-date forms, getting them either from your local AP Manager or the NMRA web site. Believe it or not, I still occasionally see forms from the 1980s.
2. Be sure to fill out all the requested data (name, address, NMRA number and expiration date) in a legible manner.
3. Please read the requirements before contacting one of the managers. A majority of the questions that come my way are answered clearly in the requirements, and it sometimes takes another person reading it to us for us to understand—I know

that feeling myself! Another hint is to read the material that accompanies each set of requirements on the website.

4. For those occasions when you do have questions, start at your local level and work your way up as needed. Your local AP managers are very knowledgeable and skilled.
5. If you have an interest in the AP, talk to others who already participate and ask them for advice. I believe you will find that the requirements are most often things you have already completed or are about to tackle.
6. Be patient, but persistent if things seem to be moving slowly. Many of the AP volunteers have full-time jobs that might require them to travel at times or make the AP a secondary priority—we all try to do our best.

Letters – We Get Letters

A REQUEST

Hello, my name is Paul Hutchins and I was wondering if you could help me find a roommate by putting an ad in the next issue of **The Local**. I am looking for someone to share a room with at the NMRA Convention this year in Seattle. They may e-mail me at **FF3HUTCH@aol.com**. Any questions please contact. Thank you for your help.

Paul Hutchins

tions and prices. Another good source is to check in the yellow pages under plastics.

I called a nearby supplier and found out that they currently



Applying the Velcro strips

had .060" white styrene in stock in white. What is available in thickness and color varies, so you may need to try more than one supplier. The next problem I ran into was that they normally did not do small retail orders and could only take a credit card. At first they suggested finding more people to make a larger order, but finally I did manage to talk them into selling me just two 4' x 8' sheets. These were a little under \$20 each. These can easily be rolled up to fit in your car.

My first use of the styrene was to curve the two corners of my layout area along the drywall. After a little experimentation, I found that a piece of styrene 22" wide worked well pressed into the corner and ending up flush with the drywall on each side. I cut the piece large enough to reach from the drop ceiling to below the anticipated scenery. Now I needed to determine a method for securing each piece to the walls. I didn't want to ruin the surface with screws but I did want something strong enough but slightly flexible. Mike Dodd's web site said that he used self-stick Velcro® strips to secure styrene to vertical supports (more on these later). I decided to try this for attaching to the drywall. The strips stuck well to the wall and the styrene and helped transition the curve into the flat wall.

To hold the styrene in place while I worked, I screwed pieces of wood strip on either side of the corner, making sure they were plumb and parallel. I used 3/4" spline from my sub-roadbed supply. I curved the styrene and let the wood strips hold it in place. I marked on the wall below the point where the gap between the wall and the styrene was about the thick-



Velcro strips in place with bead of Liquid Nails

ness of the Velcro strips. I removed the styrene and then made a perpendicular line off of each mark. Removing the backing on one side of the Velcro and applying it along each line, I pressed it firmly in place. Because I didn't want to rely just on the Velcro, I also ran a bead of Liquid Nails about halfway between the Velcro and the wood. It could be overkill and either of these alone might be sufficient to hold the styrene in place, but I didn't want to risk it.

Next I removed the backing from the exposed side of Velcro. Working carefully, I placed one edge of the styrene along the wood piece and curved the styrene into the corner slowly, making contact with the Velcro in the right locations. Be careful because the Velcro will stick pretty well to the styrene and there is not too much maneuvering that can be done afterwards. One last step was to put a drywall screw with washer in each lower corner below the scenery level. I let each corner set up overnight before removing the wood pieces.

Although the corner immediately looks better, there is still a .060" step at each edge of the styrene. I used joint compound to transition this smoothly. The idea is to have no compound on the surface of the styrene, but about four to five inches of it feathered out onto the drywall. Let it dry overnight and lightly sand. Also sand off any compound that is on the styrene. If there are any dips or voids in the compound, fill these in and let that dry before sanding again.

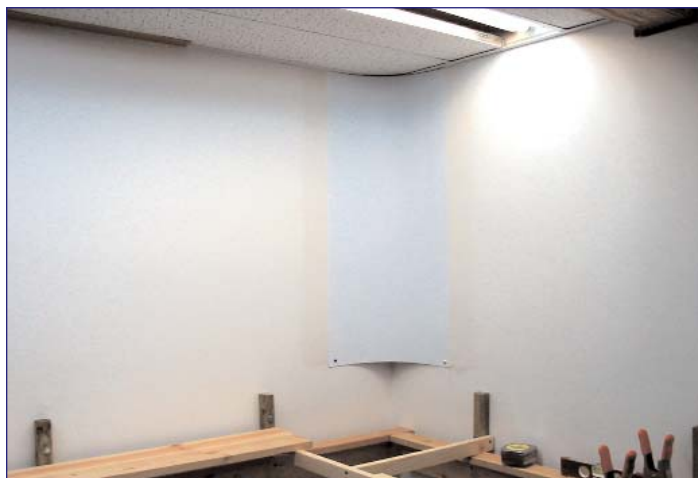
This took care of the two corners, now I turned my attention to the backdrop on the peninsula. This requires a two sided, self-supporting backdrop that starts at the end of the peninsula and gently curves away from the opposite side. Each side will curve and tie into drywall.

To support the backdrop, I used Mike Dodd's idea of bolting PVC pipe to the layout to create vertical supports. It is cheaper than wood, stable, and works well supporting curved styrene. I decided to make the backdrop rise two feet above the layout, leaving about one foot to the ceiling. I used 2" white pipe cut



Applying drywall joint compound

to be just below the top of the backdrop, I drilled holes for 3/8" bolts and then a 1" clearance hole in one side. Two bolts and washers attach from the inside of the pipe and through the



Corner completed and ready for painting

benchwork joists. These are spaced about 2-3 feet apart down the center of the peninsula.

My backdrop was two feet tall, but 12 feet long, longer than the 2x8-foot section. I cut a 2x4-foot section and extended the eight-foot section. To do this, cut a 4" wide splice plate and apply to the back of one section with glue. I used Plastruct Weld glue, smelly but effective! Then I added glue to the other side of the splice plate and laid on the other piece of backdrop,



PVC pipes bolted to benchwork

making sure the seam was as tight as possible. I used two 1x4s and clamps to hold the pieces and splice plate together while drying.

As mentioned, Mike uses self-stick Velcro strips to attach the styrene to the PVC pipe. First he uses alcohol and a paper towel to clean each PVC pipe, allowing the Velcro to stick better. Then he attaches the Velcro but leaves the outer backing

in place for the time being. I got the long backdrop piece in place where I wanted it. It helps if the backdrop is resting on something, in my case the plywood of the yard. Once I got the backdrop where I wanted it, I removed one backing strip at a time, pressing the backdrop to the Velcro, working from one end to the other.

My center backdrop curved and tied into a drywall wall. I used the same method as the corner, curving it, marking the

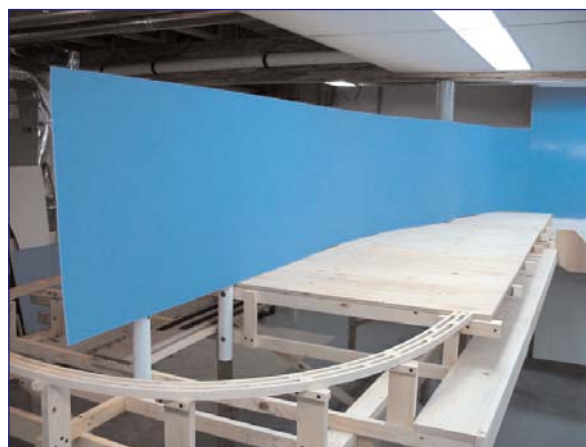


Center backdrop supported by PVC pipes

location for the Velcro, and then attaching it and transitioning with joint compound. I have only put up one side of the backdrop so far as I am only working on that section at this time. But the other side is ready to go at any time using the same method.

I found that the styrene takes latex paint well from a roller, but it takes longer to dry than drywall, so be careful to wait long enough before applying additional coats.

Hopefully you can find some of the ideas here useful for your layout. Look over the pictures and if you have any questions or want to see more detailed photos, feel free to e-mail me at mikemcnh@comcast.net.



Center backdrop completed

Achievement Program Part 9

By Charlie Flichman

WE NOW MOVE to the Service to the Hobby section of the Achievement Program and cover Association Official. Some of you may say, “What happened to the Chief Dispatcher Certificate?” Well, Roger Cason covered that category with his article in the January/February 2004 issue of **The Local**. Thank you, Roger. The complete set of requirements for the Association Official certificate can be found at www.nmra.org/achievement/apc8.html. You may ask, “Why even discuss this certificate, as only a small group of people can apply for it?” That is true, but for people who are thinking of running for an association office, it gives them the criteria they need to obtain this certificate. Plus it is one of the certificates that a person can use to obtain the MMR level. The requirements for the Association Official certificate follow.

1. Have served in an office of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, or Director and have completed satisfactory service in one of the following:
 - A. At least one year in office at the national level.
 - B. At least two years in the office of President or Trustee at the regional level.
 - C. At least three years in the office of any of the other regional offices.
 - D. Division Superintendents or Directors who serve as voting members of the Regional BOD may be eligible under Part C.

2. Must submit a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) listing the offices held with dates, signed by a qualified witness.

The main comment to this certificate in the official requirements is the meaning of “satisfactory service.” That means that you actually performed the duties of the office, not just get elected, hold the title, and do nothing! This certificate probably has the shortest list of requirements, but is one of the hardest to earn in my opinion. Time spent in this kind of service cuts into your modeling time. It takes a dedicated person to earn this certificate. So the next time you see someone earning their Association Official certificate, give them a vote of thanks for giving up some of their all-too-scarce modeling time to help the NMRA and its members.

Program Update

By Roger L. Cason, MMR
MER AP Manager

Since the last report in **The Local**, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded:

Division 2 – Potomac

Douglas Kirkpatrick – Master Builder – Scenery
Douglas Kirkpatrick – Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Douglas Kirkpatrick – Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
Noll Horan, MMR – Association Official
Julia Hardin – Master Builder – Scenery

Division 3 – Philadelphia

Joe Lofland – Model Railroad Author
Joe Lofland – Chief Dispatcher

Division 11 – Susquehanna

Scott Turner – Association Volunteer

Division 12 – Carolina Southern

Martin Oakes – Association Volunteer

In a perfect world, this information will appear soon in the **NMRA Bulletin**. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in the **Bulletin**.

The Veep's Corner

By Clint Hyde,
MER VP

I visited both the Tidewater (Norfolk, VA) and Carolina Piedmont (Raleigh, NC) Divisions since last issue. Had a great time both places and saw some excellent modeling. I do recommend getting out and visiting your other nearby divisions when they have a meeting!

I'm organizing a new idea (well, perhaps not completely new) regarding the planning of our future conventions, covered elsewhere in this issue (I hope).

Work is proceeding on the laser-cut structure kit. In the next issue I hope to have a story about it with a drawing of the design. This is nearly an all-MER effort so far. Dave Emery of Falls Church, VA, is doing the CAD work. Chris Jessee of Charlottesville, VA (<http://www.kingmill.com/>), will be doing the laser cutting for us. Dave Lynam of Carolina Piedmont will make the one custom casting. Tichy Trains (ok, NOT from MER, but very nice) will be supplying the windows and doors. A couple of minor details may end up coming from outside the MER. We intend to have it available in time for the Fall 2004 convention in Hagerstown. Pre-orders should be available before then—help us out and let me know early so I can get a handle on how many to make (and how many other parts to order). Noll Horan will construct one as a diorama for us to show at the convention, so you can see how it turns out. N-Scalers: let me know your interest as well; I'm already thinking about a conversion to N, S and O likewise.

Fall 2004 Hagerstown convention planning is proceeding. Expect to be able to register, both online and by U.S. mail by the time you are reading this. New Extra-Fare items may appear occasionally between now and November, so keep an eye on the web page. You'll be able to sign up for them individually online, I hope.

By the first of next year, **The Local** should become an optional item in your MER membership, you'll be able to receive an electronic copy for free (hey—you can do that now, and I encourage it, e-mail me at chyde@cox.net), or a paper copy for \$6/year. This will enable MER to pick up new members because the membership price will drop to \$3 (I'm told there's a \$5 pain threshold on membership)—if the new NMRA bylaws pass, same essential deal, but your \$3 (or whatever it is) will pass through NMRA first.

I'll be at the Joint MCR/MER convention in Pittsburgh in May. I'm sure I'll see some of you there—say hello if we haven't met. I also expect to meet some other folks there, like Mike Brestel, who is the candidate for NMRA Executive Vice-President, John Roberts, the candidate for NMRA President, and Allan Pollock, the current NMRA President. AP model judging will be available (although I won't be taking advantage of that—when do I have time for model building?).

The MER needs a volunteer to take the position of Clinic/Clinician Coordinator. The job consists of maintaining

the list of who can teach what, find new clinicians for unfilled topics, and help arrange clinics for conventions or where/when-ever asked.

The MER also needs a volunteer to take over Rita's job as Business Manager late this year. The tasks consist of sending and depositing renewals, maintaining the membership database and probably many other things Rita does that I am not aware of. If the new bylaws pass, the renewals will probably go away, as well as much member database work, thus making the job simpler.

Pittsburgh & West Virginia USRA 50-ton Two Bay Hopper Kit

This kit duplicates the original paint scheme on 1,000 steel 50-ton 2 bay hopper cars owned by the Pittsburgh & West Virginia (P&WV) Railway. Numbered in the 3000-3999 range, the original P&WV order was placed in the early 1920s with the Cambria Steel Car Company. Other cars were built by the Pressed Steel Car Company. Many of these hoppers were rebuilt beginning in 1951. Some of these had channel ribs applied. These cars saw service through 1964 on the P&WV.



Produced for NMRA MCR Division 2 by Accurail, Inc. Accurail lettered these kits from a builder's photo. There are four numbers available at this time. These cars will only be rerun if sales and orders warrant. Individual kits are \$12.00 + \$2.00 S&H. A four pack is \$45.00 + \$4 S&H. Please make checks payable to Division 2, NMRA-MCR. Mail orders to: Division 2, NMRA-MCR, P.O.Box 152, Greensburg, PA 15601.

Meet the



Clint Hyde

Candidate for MER President

The MER is facing a transition point highlighted by the proposed new NMRA bylaws. If they pass, there will be much to do that is new and different. If they pass, the MER will suddenly have 1300 “new members.” We must welcome them, invite them to join in our activities (at the Division level too), and market ourselves to them. If the bylaws fail, NMRA Trustees will be addressing these same items again shortly (better, we can hope). Either way, we need to prepare.

We need to organize our conventions more smoothly. I have proposed a plan to do this and a team to lead it. This should produce better-run conventions with fewer headaches and less work for the committee on a more regular schedule.

We need to create some additional fund-raisers. I have made several proposals towards creating new model railroad-related items we can sell; the laser-cut structure kit is my favorite of them.

I have proposed that we move **The Local** to be an a la carte option of membership, in essence reducing the required cost of membership.

As President, I will continue to visit the Divisions as I have as VP. I will continue to be in contact with the Divisions, and with National. I will continue to seek out good ideas from all our members and spread them around.



Noll Horan

Candidate for MER Vice-President

I am currently serving my second term as a Director on the Mid-Eastern Region Board of Directors. I have served on the Richmond and Reston Region Convention Committees, along with various other factions of the Potomac Division in my five years as a member of the NMRA.

I strongly support the Achievement Program and the experiences it offers us. There seems to be an increased interest throughout the MER in the AP Program. I want to keep that interest alive and growing.

The MER is only as strong as its Divisions. I firmly believe the Region’s strength lies within them. I will support each Division, meet its members, listen to complaints, requests for help, etc., and do what I can for them. I will make myself available and make sure there are no gaps in communication between the Divisions and the Region.

As I compose this, we do not yet know the results of the NMRA Long Range Plan voting. Regardless of the outcome, Regions and Divisions must be recognized. The LRP wasn’t clear to me in that regard. I support the NMRA. I also support the MER and its Divisions. I will direct my efforts to making sure we are represented and heard from in their big scheme of things, i.e., the LRP. Divisions make the Region and the Regions make the NMRA.

I feel the MER can become one of the premiere Regions of the NMRA through better involvement, communication, and recruitment with the community in and outside of model railroad groups. I look forward to being a part of that development of the Mid-Eastern Region.

Thank you for your support.

Candidates



Bob Liberman

Candidate for MER Vice-President

I'm pleased to submit my nomination for MER Vice-President. I have been a model railroader for 45 years. My grand father worked for the New Haven as a switchman. That gave my father the will to get me a Lionel train for Christmas 1950 (Santa-Fe F-3s). My older brother is also a great model railroader, he is now 72.

I joined the NMRA in 1965 as a life member and I have been active ever since. I'm also a life member of the MER. I have been a Director of the NJ Division for 6 years, and I think that with my input the division has been a better organization. I have raised some extra funds by getting some advertisers for the Clinkers paper. This has helped to keep the dues level for 6 years, and the Division is in better financial condition than it has been in the past.

I have had my railroad open for visitors for 26 years and have entertained 27,000 visitors.

I feel that growth of this hobby has to come from us. We need to hold out our hands to any one who wants to be part of our group. We must teach them how to make their railroading more fun. I hope as vice-president, my input will continue to make this an organization that is great for all of us!



Ron Schmidt

Candidate for Re-election as Treasurer

I have been involved with model railroading since 1952, having been a member and President of the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders. I am currently a member of the Chesapeake Trainmasters Club, an operations oriented group that has had weekly operating sessions for the last 41 years. I have earned Achievement Certificates for Chief Dispatcher, Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical, Association Volunteer, and Association Official.

I served as Chairman of the MER Budget Committee for 16 years and worked very closely with three different Treasurers during that period. I presented the annual operating budget to the Board of Directors every year and have attended most of the Board meetings where I contributed to the discussion of fiscal matters. Since becoming Treasurer, I have set up an accounting system, which is used to record all income and expenses with the ability to provide frequent financial reports to the Board of Directors. I have a thorough knowledge of the MER's financial operations as well as an understanding of the policy actions taken by the Board of Directors in past years.

I believe that my extensive experience dealing with the financial matters of the MER indicate that I am uniquely qualified to continue as the Treasurer of the Mid-Eastern Region.

Meet the Candidates



Ray Bilodeau
Candidate for MER Secretary

My name is Ray Bilodeau. I am asking the members of the MER to support my candidacy for Secretary in the upcoming regional elections.

A life member of both the NMRA and the MER, I am a retired college teacher of history, modeler, and volunteer. I have served the MER as Model Contest Chairman from 1997 to 2000, and am currently your General Contest Chairman. I also work for the NMRA as Assistant Contest Manager and Assistant Director of the Education Department.

Wilmington, DE is home; the Philadelphia Division my local contact with the NMRA, where I presently sit as a Director. My modeling interests are specific—narrow gauge in Sn3, the prototype—Rio Grande Southern in the Depression years—the 1930s.

The position of Secretary for the MER requires a working knowledge of the MER Constitution and by-laws, demands organizational skills, computer literacy, and the prioritization of tasks...I can do this. Ten plus years of volunteer experience within the NMRA makes me confident in my ability to work for you, the MER member, and to offer intelligent counsel to the Officers and Board of Directors of our Region.

Oh, no! I have just been accused of sounding like a politician; say it ain't so! Well, maybe. However, I do promise not to stump for votes at the train station, hand out leaflets, kiss babies, or shake too many hands.



Richard L. Foley
Candidate for MER Secretary

I'm pleased to submit my nomination for MER Secretary. Like lots of you, I got into the hobby early. My father, a fireman for the Pennsy, used to tell me about firing an L-1 up to and around Horseshoe Curve. But when I built my first layout in 1986, I was disappointed. It wasn't satisfying.

When I joined the NMRA and the MER, I attended "Markers 89" in Cherry Hill. Through the New Jersey Division, I met friendly, helpful folks and got invited to Friday night sessions of South Jersey Operators. My eyes were opened! Operations were an aspect of the hobby I missed in my first layout. Since I learned so much from these friendships, I've returned the favor by working as Publicity Chair for the Valley Forge Express and at several MER conventions.

I've served with Ron Baile as co-editor of **The Local**, and am presently on the Board of Directors of the Philadelphia Division and doing publicity for the RPS to be held in March at Valley Forge (See Callboard). I believe the strength of the NMRA is in the Divisions.

To stay strong and grow, we have to make it easy to join and go out of our way to help newcomers. I hope as Secretary I can help make that happen.



South Mountain Express Fall 2004 MER Convention November 11-14, 2004

Clarion Hotel & Conference Center
Hagerstown, Maryland

<http://members.cox.net/chyde/MER/SMJ2004/SM-Junction.html>

Please enter all names as you wish them to appear on your registration badges:

Primary Registrant's Name: _____

Significant Other (living at same address): _____

Children (Under age 16 – List all): _____

Address: Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

E-Mail: _____ NMRA # _____

Full Registration (\$50 after September 30th) -	\$45.00	_____
Non-NMRA Member Fee (primary registrant only) -	\$15.00	_____
Significant Other -	\$15.00	_____
Children:	\$10.00 x _____	= _____
Saturday Evening Buffet Banquet (choice of 3 entrees)	\$25.00 x _____	= _____

Total Advance Registration Charges: \$ _____

Payment must accompany registration. Make checks payable to: **South Mountain Express**

Send all registrations to: **South Mountain Express**
3052 Oak Hill Road
Waynesboro, Pa. 17268

For questions and / or additional information e-mail: **PDRAUSCH@innernet.net**

Prototype Tours: The South Mountain Express is planning on conducting a number of extra fare prototype tours on Friday, November 12th. At this time, the final arrangements have not been completed but it anticipated that the cost per tour will be in the \$15 to \$25 range. If you are interested in participating indicate below and you will be notified when the final arrangements are completed. Tours slots will be allocated based on your order of registration.

I am interested in participating in the prototype tours (does not obligate participation): _____

HOTEL REGISTRATION INFORMATION: The convention will be held at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center (former Ramada Inn), 901 Dual Highway, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740. The convention rate is \$65.00 (plus taxes) per night. All hotel registrations must be made directly with the hotel at (301) 733-5566 (do not use the Clarion 800# or on-line registration system). When registering be sure to specify the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA to be sure you get this special rate.

Contests for Hagerstown

Ray Bilodeau, General Contest Chairman

THE HAGERSTOWN CONVENTION in November 2004 is only a few months away. Here is information that might give you a hint, idea, or incentive to build a model, take some photos, or plan a craft project for South Mountain Epress!

We will have a judged model contest in Hagerstown. There will also be AP judging of models for those who want to bring models but not enter them in our contest. For this convention, we will have a popular vote award for the best contest model.

The Photo and Arts & Crafts contests will be decided by popular vote.

Current NMRA members may enter any or all of our contests. You can download Entry Form #901 from the NMRA website. Also available is the Judges Scoring Sheet Form #902 for use in the model contest.

1st place plaques, 1st, 2nd and 3rd place certificates, and ribbons will be awarded to the winners of each contest—model, photo and arts and crafts.

This MER convention will present nine model contest special awards:

The President's Award – Norm Garner would like our modelers to build an open load and place it on any kind of railroad rolling stock. This is our President's last official topic for this MER contest.

The Clyde Gerald Kit-bashing Award honors the late Clyde Gerald, Tidewater Division modeler and longtime MER Business Manager. This MER award will go to the best kit-bashed model in the judged model contest.

The Philadelphia New Modeler Award will be given to the first time entrant in the judged model contest who earns the highest point score. The award includes a cash prize and plaque from the sponsoring Philadelphia Division and a certificate from the MER.

The Blue Lantern Award – a privately sponsored award from The Narrow Gauge Car Shop, is given to the judged contest model, containing not more than forty percent commercial parts, which best represents branch line, short line, or a private line operating equipment and/or facilities.

The Marv Kershner Award is presented by our host, the South Mountain Division. The award is a memorial to the late Marv Kershner, a South Mountain Division modeler and volunteer. Marv believed that the model builder should always try to be as

creative as possible in approaching his or her work. This contest and award, then, rewards modeling creativity.

The MER Narrow Gauge Award is a privately sponsored award and will be presented for the first time at this convention. Any topic, prototype or freelanded, that deals with some aspect of narrow gauge railroading can be modeled. The narrow gauge model earning the highest score over 87-1/2 points in the judged model contest, or AP judging only, will be the winner. The sponsors of this award will present the winner a unique plaque engraved with the modeler's name. A special certificate from the MER also goes to the winner of this award.

The Ma and Pa Award is also a privately sponsored special award. This award is awaiting approval of the MER Board of Directors at their May meeting in Pittsburgh. We hope to have it in place for the Hagerstown convention.

The Favorite Train Award – This is a popular vote contest and award sponsored by the Tidewater Division. Trains should be, but need not be, displayed on sections of track. This contest does not discriminate as to scale!

The Best in Show Award will be presented to the model earning the highest score in the judged model contest...the "big prize."

Pete Shatswell, MER Photo and Arts & Crafts Chairman will supply more information about these contests and awards in the next issue of **The Local**.

Ok...sound like there is something for everyone here? Well, don't let thoughts of summer beach going and vacation travel force you to be too laid back. Instead, plan a bit of sabotage on the lawn mower. Put aside ideas of cleaning out the basement or garage. And whatever else you might plan, make sure it doesn't include major home remodeling projects.

The next step is obvious. Think about and then focus on constructing models. Take photos. Begin crafts projects. Bring us something for our fall convention...work, work, but enjoy, and keep smiling. I am sure that many of you, sometime during the past four years, have heard President Garner utter the mantra – usually, but not always with a smile – "model railroading is fun?!"

Any questions? Comments? Gripes? I am here... raybilodeau@comcast.net. Please note the change of e-mail address. Also: (302) 636-0888.

Made From Scratch

By Alan Mende, Editor

I RECENTLY read an article in the February 9, 2004 issue of **Newsweek** titled, "Takeout Nation." The author, Jerry Adler, reported on the growth in the takeout food industry. With an estimated 433 million dollars worth of cookbooks sold in 2002, Mr. Adler wondered who was actually using them with so many people opting to eat meals that were made by others. My wife and I are probably as busy as a lot of people who live on takeout food, but most of our meals we make ourselves. The other night for dinner I made a pot of Italian beef and bean soup and a loaf of quick beer batter bread—total prep

time about a half-hour. Mmm, mmm, good to borrow a soup company's slogan, but what does this have to do with model railroading?

The **Newsweek** article reminded me a lot of the average model railroader's swerve away from scratchbuilding. To be sure, the sheer volume of model railroading kits and supplies available today makes scratchbuilding anything but a necessity. For those of you who haven't been in the hobby as long as I have, there was a time when if you wanted a model of a particular station or other structure, you couldn't just leaf through the pages of the current Walthers catalog and find it;

Future MER Convention Planning

By Clint Hyde, MER VP

IN THE INTEREST of easing convention planning and making them more consistent where they need to be, there are two new approaches being implemented. The first is the convention “swat team.” This is a group of MER members who will have annual responsibility for certain aspects of the convention operations. The purpose will be to execute the standard MER convention activities the same way with the same team members every time, so that a consistent performance level is achieved, and so that Division groups don’t have to “reinvent the wheel,” thus avoiding the repetition of errors. This will include the following functions: Hotel Liaison, Registration/Treasurer, the Auction Team, Model Judging, Modular RR, and Clinic Arranging/Scheduling. What remains the responsibility of the local committee is the truly local flavor—the nearby prototype tours, the open houses, the and special items that exist only in that vicinity. It isn’t likely that the swat team will know this aspect.

This will make for an easier effort for each local committee, and result in smoother operations. In 2003, this is essentially how the Reston VA convention was run, and it went well. In 2004, the local committee is handling some of these functions.

As of this writing, the swat team members are:

- **Registrar/Treasurer:** P.J. Mattson, backup Bob Price
- **Hotel Contract/Liaison:** Brian Kampschroer
- **AP/Model Judging/Contests:** Ray Bilodeau, et al
- **Auction Team:** Tom Buckingham, Bob Charles, et al (includes Bob Minnis on brass-dropping)
- **Raffle Items:** Bob Minnis
- **Clinicians:** Mr. X (Mr. X’s job is to know about who all our clinicians are, and to help line up an excellent group of them with the local committee)
- **White Elephant:** Tom Buckingham on assist, and Mr. Y (Mr. Y’s job is watching the money box, and finding onsite volunteers to take the

money during the convention, make sure we have the 3-part cards for it.)

Mr. X and Mr. Y need volunteers to take on these roles. They are good for the standard Region-level AP committee points. Each subcommittee needs a backup person, and additional helpers. Volunteers needed!

The second change is that we need to get the convention on a rotation cycle like South Mountain Division has been with their Hagerstown convention every five years. We are going to try to start this with 2005, acknowledging that 2006 won’t have an MER convention since the NMRA national is in Philadelphia. The rotation will resume in 2007.

The idea here is that we will have the conventions more consistently in one area or another, so you can figure that every 5 years it will be near you, and reasonably nearby other times, and farther away sometimes (i.e., not a rash of them at the far end of the Region when you don’t live anywhere nearby, and eventually we need one in Roanoke).

The rotation I am proposing begins in 2005 in North Carolina (Carolina Piedmont’s area, Raleigh), 2007 would be southern Virginia, either Tidewater or James River Division (I have already suggested to the Tidewater Division (Norfolk) that they consider it for their area). 2008 would be Potomac Division again, 2009 would be South Mountain (keeping on their five-year cycle), 2010 would be Susquehanna or Philly or NJ. I realize that lumps 3 Divisions together, but I’m thinking of this as a geographical sequence from south to north. Maybe the northernmost one should be a joint division convention. Or perhaps we need a six-year cycle. 2011 returns to N.C., etc. (The 2006 prohibition on convention only applies to the Region, not the Divisions, so you all are fine to continue your standard local activities, although I do recommend avoiding that particular summer month when the national convention will be in Philadelphia.)

Any thoughts you have on this topic I’d like to hear. I have a PowerPoint presentation I can send as a PDF if you want to see it. This is not particularly in much of a hurry, so there’s plenty of time to refine it.

“Made from Scratch” continued from page 12

you had to scratchbuild it or do without. In many cases, you had to do the same thing if you wanted a piece of rolling stock or motive power that wasn’t of a Pennsy, Union Pacific, or Santa Fe prototype. The model magazines were loaded with scratchbuilding articles every month. I still marvel at the steam locomotive models that Mel Thornburgh and Bud Sima built from wood and cardstock. And their magazine articles showed us how we could build them, too. We also had a whole series of “Dollar Model” freight car articles by the likes of Eric Stevens and Gordon Odegard that showed us how to scratchbuild rolling stock like wooden tank cars, drop center flatcars, carbon black hoppers, chlorine cars, pickle cars, and a bunch of others. And not one of these articles that I read ever intimated that scratchbuilding was difficult. It was just part of model railroading.

So why should you scratchbuild anything nowadays? I can only speak for myself when I say that it’s fun. It’s fun to start with a pile of raw materials like strip wood, styrene, and such—stuff that doesn’t look like anything other than what it is—and turn it into a scale model of something that’s recognizable to anyone, a house or a station, a factory or a passenger car. Likewise, there is something very satisfying in looking at the product of your scratchbuilding labors and saying, “I did

that, and nobody else has one just like it. It’s one of a kind.”

I don’t know why anybody would think that scratchbuilding is difficult. Sure, I’ve scratchbuilt some pretty big structures—currently I’m working on a selectively compressed printing plant that will still be almost five feet long when I’m done but I’ve also scratchbuilt structures that are only a couple inches square. It’s all a matter of scale, but scratchbuilding is scratchbuilding, and anyone can do it. Even you! Not only can you scratchbuild, I’ll bet you your next paycheck that you already have. Think about that last craftsman-type kit that you built where all you got in the box was strip and sheet wood or styrene and some plans. When you cut that strip wood and glued the pieces to the underside of the roof eaves as rafter ends, you were scratchbuilding. If you had to lay a template on a sheet of basswood to cut building walls out, you were scratchbuilding. If you had to cut scribed siding to length for boxcar sides, you were scratchbuilding. “No, no; I was building a kit,” you say. But you’re wrong. The only difference between scratchbuilding and building the kind of kit I’ve described is that with the kit, somebody else supplied you with the raw materials all in a neat little package they called a kit—and you probably paid a lot of money for it. With scratchbuilding, you collect all the

continued on page 14

BOOK REVIEW

A Railroad Atlas of the United States in 1946: Vol. 1, The Mid-Atlantic States

By Richard Carpenter

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press

IF YOU have ever been driving down a road, have noticed either existing or abandoned railroad roadbed along your route, and have wondered what railroad it once belonged to, then Richard Carpenter's new railroad atlas may answer your question. A similar experience by the author is what prompted him to create this book, which is the first in a planned series that will cover the entire United States.

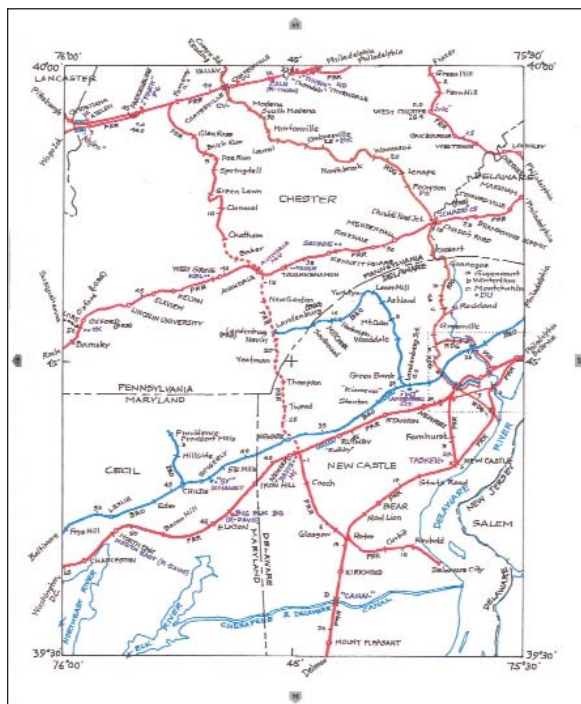
Volume 1 of this atlas includes most of the area within the Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA, an area with some of the oldest railroad lines in America. The six states covered in this volume are DE, MD, NJ, PA, VA, and WV, along with D.C. According to the author, more than 10% of the railroad miles operated in the U.S. in 1946 were within these six states, under the ownership of 35 different Class I railroads (out of a total of 137 in the entire U.S.) But this atlas is not limited to Class I railroads, as there are over 100 different railroads that appear on its pages. I encountered the names of dozens of smaller lines that I had never heard of, though many were wholly owned or leased subsidiaries of the Class I lines in 1946.

The author chose 1946 for several reasons. First, it was near the peak of the U.S. railroad system in terms of total mileage, that peak being over 254,000 route miles. Second, it was during a period of relative stability in the number of U.S. railroad companies; between 1920 and 1950, only five major railroad mergers and consolidations took place. Third, the author wanted to document the railroad network that provided the neces-

sary means of transportation to support President Roosevelt's "arsenal of democracy."

Each standard map in this atlas corresponds to a U.S. Geological Survey 1:100,000 (30-minute quadrangle) topographic map. Carpenter used topographic evidence of both existing and long abandoned railroad rights-of-way, along with considerable other

historical data. He then drew simple colored line maps of those rights-of-way, leaving off most of the terrain features and all roads. But the maps do show all major political boundaries (state, county, and larger city). Large rivers are included, along with the direction of flow. And along the rail lines, all tunnels, stations, major bridges and viaducts, coaling stations, interlocking towers, and other railroad facilities are indicated, including their names. Interchanges, however, are not clearly noted, nor are numbers of tracks, sidings, or spurs. Rail lines that were recently abandoned, as of 1946, are shown as dotted lines. Where trackage is more concentrated, such as in major metropolitan areas, supplemental larger scale (greater magnification) maps are provided, though they are not always located on contiguous pages and therefore may be hard to find quickly.



This reproduced page from the Atlas shows railroads and railroad facilities in the vicinity of Newark and Wilmington, DE. The lines in the area included the PRR (red), B&O (blue) and RDG (brown). Part of the recently (in 1946) abandoned Lancaster, Oxford & Southern appears as a dotted black line near the left margin. The PRR had also recently abandoned its trackage between Newark and Chatham.

This book lists for \$65, but was recently available on Amazon.com for \$46. The book is well indexed, and is a valuable resource for both railfans and model railroaders. Frankly, I can't wait for volume two to come out.

—David Arday

"Made from Scratch" continued from page 13

raw materials yourself...and probably at a much lower cost. (Think about it this way: Was I not cooking the other night because my wife happened to do the grocery shopping that brought all the ingredients into our house? Of course not. It doesn't matter who bought the ingredients; I still put them together to make the meal. Yup! Cooking is scratchbuilding. So is the sewing my wife likes to do and the crocheting our daughter does.)

I've heard it all before; someone looks at one of my scratchbuilt models and says, "Oh, I could never do that." Of course, you can. But you may not want to start with that five-foot-long printing plant or a steam locomotive fabricated from brass. Maybe you'd be more comfortable starting with an outhouse, a chicken coop, or a line side shack. Start out small to convince yourself that you really can do it. I already know that you can; everybody can.

Hmm, my stomach is growling; think I'll head to the kitchen and scratchbuild a ham and cheese sandwich.

Revolutions

ALL OF THE HOO-HAW about the changes in the NMRA has set me to thinking about the other “revolutions” that have hit model railroading recently.

DCC is the most obvious but clearly not the only one. It has made a difference not only in how we wire our layouts but what we expect of them. Now we can concentrate on the trains rather than the electrical blocks. We can change lights, ring bells, blow whistles and animate any number of features both on the locomotives and the layout on the fly from our throttle.

Operations didn't come in with DCC, but it sure has helped people operate their layouts in a prototypical manner. Now all you have to focus on is how the railroad operated. The growth of “Operations” as a driving force in layout building is another revolution that has changed the hobby for the average modeler.

Prototypical operations have fueled a revolution in research and research-driven modeling. There seem to be fewer and fewer generic transition era hodgepodes around any more. Almost every one I know who is building has a prototype in mind. They may be freelancing but underlying it is a concept of the SP&S or Chama or Conrail (God forbid).

Research has spawned a whole generation of prototype specific rolling stock. Sure there are “shake the box” kits around, but there are mass-market plastic kits that put the “super-detailed” cars of a generation ago to shame. Tony Thompson, Richard Hendrickson and other “Friends of the Freight Car” have done all of us a great favor. “Friends of the Freight Car” is typical of another revolution, the growth of active interest groups in the hobby. The vitality of the Layout Design SIG, the Operations SIG, the Narrow Gauge Conventions, the “Op ‘til you drop” weekends, FREEMO, Ntrak, all say there is a need for people to get together in focused groups.

Better rolling stock seems to have also driven much better structures. Clearly the offerings from Walthers and the like are wildly better researched and designed than similar mass market oriented materials of twenty years ago, and laser cutting has made true wooden structures much more available to the masses and not so much the province of the “craftsman.”

DCC, Prototypical Operations, Research, Prototypical Rolling Stock, Interest Groups and Better Buildings for the Masses, those are the revolutions I have seen while I have been in the hobby.

What have you seen?

Bill Kaufman
Editor, PCR Branchline

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Bill is, by his own admission, “an old, beat up and retired teacher, sometime contributor to RMC and member of Schaumburg’s ‘Dead Railroad Society,’ moderator of both the Train Editor and Pacific Coast Region Yahoo Groups, devotee of short, old and funky railroads, and the website for my San Francisco & Colorado is at <http://www.sfandc.org/>”.* This posting of his on the Yahoo Train Editor group site prompted this response:

The growth of “Garden”/Large Scale railroading has brought a

large number of “casual” modelers into the hobby. Working off of this, many of these folks have gotten bit by the accuracy bug, which has started the growth of fine scale modeling in the outdoor environment.

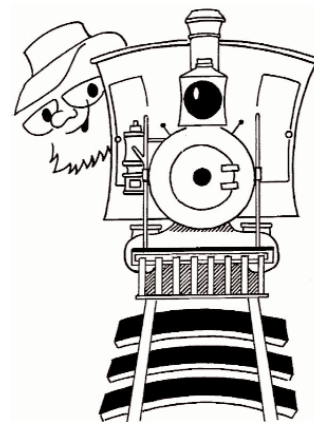
The growth of “Odd” narrow gauges (i.e. HOn30, On30 & Nn3). I know that most of these scales were being worked in the past, but over the last two or three years they seem to have just taken off.

The growth of HOn30 and On30 seem to have initiated another upsurge in modular modeling. Again, modular groups have been around for ages, but these two scales in particular have somehow brought about a renewed interest in this area of the hobby.

While you mentioned the increased interest in accuracy, you may have (unintentionally) understated the growth of the RPM groups. Unfortunately, in some respects this has also brought a growth of the “mine is more accurate/better” type of ego-driven negativity in some areas.

Another aspect, which seems to be overlooked, is the growth of multi-scale modeling. In the past most people worked in a given scale, HO, O, N, HOn3, etc. Over the past few years there seem to be many more modelers working in more than one scale at the same time. This may also be an influence on the growth of modular modeling. While someone may have a model railroad in their primary scale, by using modules they can now model in another scale (especially a larger scale) without having to build a second house for space.

Pat LaTorres



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TOTAL				\$ _____



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