

The Local

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Scratchbuilding Wooden Freight Cars —Convert Your Flatcar into a Gondola—

By Martin Brechbiel
Photographs by Barbara Keller

SO, BY NOW I'm hoping that you've scratchbuilt a flatcar, something along the lines as described in the March-April, 2004 issue of **The Local** and dressed it up with grab irons, trucks, and some sort of creative load. But flatcars are just that—flat—and have limited appeal and utility. Fortunately, flatcars are also a good, simple starting point to build other cars and provide a base for a host of other cars to scratch-build. I know I said a boxcar was next, but that skips over the intermediate car in the development chain, a gondola, which is just an open box on your flatcar put there so your load doesn't fall off. This is probably the quickest and easiest extension from the basic flatcar, so let's get building!

Construction begins, of course, with another flatcar, but interrupt that process before adding the brake wheel, stirrup steps, and any other details; add them later so they don't get damaged. I'm working with a 38-foot car in O-scale, but you can modify dimensions to suit both choice of scale and length and width of your car. The part numbers mentioned are also the O-scale numbers. Let's build the box sides and ends first. I used eight Kappler HO-scale 4x22s cut to 32 feet for the sides. Lay these side-by-side, square, and marked

every four feet. Then glue a scale 4x4 across all eight boards every four feet and at the ends (Figure 1). You want these 4x4s to overhang by at least the width of the side sill of your flatcar. Do the same exercise with eight more boards that are as long as the width of your flatcar minus twice the thickness of your side boards. Glue a scale 4x4 across all eight boards two feet in from each end and at the ends (Figure 1). These 4x4s should be flush with the ends. Now, with your razor saw, cut the 4x4s on each assembly right in the middle so you have the two sides and the



Figure 1

two ends for your gondola's box (Figure 2). Rather than place stake pockets on the flatcar and hope to get everything aligns so you can thread the stakes in, just mount the stake pockets directly to the stakes. Square off those overhanging 4x4 stakes to the side sill width and glue on stake pockets (Grandt Line No. 53). Cut the mounting sprues off the stake pocket castings and after gluing them onto the stakes (try to put them on oriented the same way), make sure that the reverse is a nice smooth surface. By putting a drop of glue on the back of each stake, you can mount the gondola sides to the side sill centered to the car. The two ends

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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*

It has been almost four years since I started the Business Manager's position. In that time I have met so many members. During this time I have corresponded by email, phone, or in person with officers and volunteers in the divisions. We have worked together for model railroading, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to be of help to the region.

In January 2005, I will be turning over the Business Manager's position to Fred Miller. Fred Miller is a member from the Carolina Southern Division, and we first met Fred at the 1998 convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. I know he will do a great job for the membership.

One of the reasons I have decided to resign my appointed position is the upcoming national convention in Philadelphia. My role as the local treasurer for Independence Junction 2006 is starting to pick up, and I wanted to be able to do the job well for the Philadelphia Division and the MER. The next two years will go very quickly and with working a full-time job and being handicapped, I didn't want to take on too much and not be able to do a good job.

Until January 2005, be sure to send me your address changes, membership renewals, and boxcar orders to the address on this page.

Recently Deceased Members

John Armstrong, born November 1920 died July 2004. Joined NMRA January 1947, NMRA #L04579, MER #L-304. Member of the Potomac Division.

DON'T FORGET to let me know if your address changes. We want you to receive your **LOCAL**. 

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

President's Column

By Norman W. Garner

THE LONG RANGE PLAN of the NMRA was approved in its entirety. The regulations will be incorporated in the NMRA by-laws. Therefore, by the charter given to the MER, our by-laws must reflect the same changes as well as the divisions within our region. The MER is in the process of changing our by-laws to reflect those of the NMRA. The MER will assist all the divisions as needed to reflect these changes. The MER/BOD hopes to have this completed as soon as possible.

In my last article I mentioned the new program the NMRA has approved, Rail Pass Membership. This program was adopted to help increase recruiting new members. I hope all the division superintendents are taking advantage of this to increase their membership. This program will allow a new member to come on board the NMRA for six months for only \$9.95. This is a once-in-a-lifetime offer. The only restrictions are that the new member cannot vote or hold an office. The benefits include a copy of the **Scale Rails** each month, an electronic copy of **The Local**, plus the benefits of the local division.

The AP Program in the region is outstanding. Roger Cason, our AP Chairman, informed me recently the MER in the past year has achieved 12% of the Golden Spikes, 16% of the AP certifi-

cates, and 15% of the MMRs in the NMRA. I think this is the reason the MER is known as the Most Enthusiastic Region.

I have nominated two new chairmen to assist the MER, Joseph Rugarber as Clinic Coordinator and Brian Rowland as advertising manager. The MER/BOD has approved their nominations. Welcome aboard, Joseph and Brian.

On a sad note, an icon of railroad modeling has passed away – John Armstrong. John was a guest speaker at the Potomac Junction MER convention in Reston, Virginia. His outstanding layout was open for the convention. I had the pleasure of having dinner with him as well as a number of MER members. John passed away on July 28th at the age of 83. He will be missed and remembered as someone special in our hobby.

The August issue of the **Scale Rails** reports that the Kalmbach Memorial Library in Chattanooga has been named the Official Railroad Library of the state of Tennessee. This is an outstanding honor for the NMRA! The library is one of the benefits we all share as members of the NMRA. This is one of the best resources in the country for our hobby; I hope you will use it in the future.

Remember, model railroading is fun.

Norm

NMRA Members Approve New Regulations

(Editor's note: Unless you've been on an extended vacation, you probably have caught wind of this. But it bears repeating. I've have copied this announcement verbatim from the NMRA Web site.)

July 10, 2004

From: John Roberts, President

NMRA Members Approve New Regulations Seattle, WA.

By an overwhelming margin, members of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) have approved the organization's new regulations. The vote was 2,221 for and 536 against.

The regulations, which replace the amended 1935 constitution and by-laws, will be implemented over the next 18 months. They are part of the NMRA's Long-Range Plan, which is intended to make the organization more responsive and relevant in the new century.

"This is an exciting advance for the NMRA. The members have told us they want an organization that is dynamic and responsive to their hobby. These regulations will help us to accomplish that goal," NMRA President John Roberts said. "The NMRA is dedicated to growing and improving the hobby. The new regulations affirm the association's unity as one body representing all aspects of our great hobby."

The largest organization in the world representing model rail-

roaders, the NMRA was founded in 1935. For more information about the NMRA visit its Web site at www.nmra.org.

(Further editor's note: I have received this through the Yahoo Groups train editors list on July 15th, 2004. It came from Mike Brestel, the NMRA's new Vice-President.)

Here are some new appointments:

Membership Promotion – Clark Kooning

MAP – Dave Berman

Scale Rails, Publisher – Larry DeYoung

Development – Allen Pollock

Industry Liaison – Allen Pollock

RAC Organizing Committee – Bob Gangwish (chair), Bob Beaty, Jim Packer

Nominating Committee – Eric Dervinis

Nominating process for the new Board of Directors will start now, with elections to be held in winter, 2005. The new BOD will be seated in Cincinnati on or about July 1, 2005.

Also, the Database Steering Committee has begun work and intends to have the new database up and running by July 1, 2005.

Mike Brestel

should now drop in between the two sides. A little sanding may be necessary. A little glue on those two end stakes and your gondola box is both assembled and mounted. The completed assembly is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 2

Next, you can run a truss-rod or two through both ends (.022 or .018 diameter wire) with turnbuckles (Grandt Line No. 54 or equivalent). Place nut-bolt-washer castings (Grandt Line No. 23) at every intersection all around the box as well. Lastly, you can add your brake wheel, ratchet and pawl, stirrup steps, grab

irons, uncoupling levers, trucks and couplers, and what other details you'd like to finish your gondola. Now put together that load of pipe, sugar beets or turnips, or whatever you'd like to carry from point A to point B. One variation is to leave the ends off and use your car with idler flatcars on each side to carry really long items. A more sophisticated variation of our gondola



Figure 3

would be to add drop-bottom doors or side doors. Add some paint, stains, weathering (don't be afraid to carve up the tops of those side boards to simulate damage), and lettering, if desired, and you'll have a pretty good truss rod gondola. So, maybe next time a boxcar... 

Achievement 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 1 – New Jersey

Bill Howard – Golden Spike
John Rahenkamp – Golden Spike

Division 2 – Potomac

Kenneth J. Larson – Author
John Griffith – Structures

Division 4 – Tidewater

Donald S. Taber, Jr. – Volunteer
John Johnson – Civil Engineer
Steven J. Prescott – Golden Spike

Division 12 – Carolina Southern

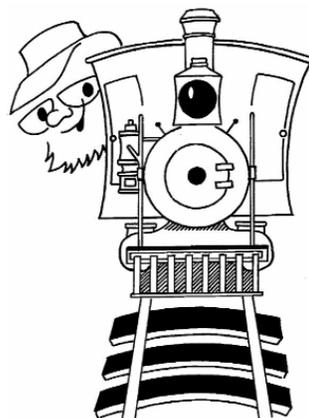
Fred Miller – Motive Power
Fred Miller – MMR
Rick Knight – Golden Spike

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

MER Annual Meeting

The MER Annual Meeting will take place Sunday, November 14, 2004 in the main convention room during the fall 2004 MER Convention at the Clarion Hotel and Convention Center, Hagerstown, MD. The meeting time will be announced at the convention.

Bill Roman, Secretary MER



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Trustee's Report

By Eric Dervinis

AFTER A 32-YEAR PAUSE, the NMRA returned to Seattle for its annual convention and train show. The local committee exceeded expectations and delivered a wonderful experience. They provided a variety of prototype tours, industry tours, clinics, non-rail tours and inside activities that exhausted everyone by week's end (but did we have fun). Final registration came in around 2300 members.

Seattle is famous for coffee, and every corner seems to have a Starbucks, Tully's or independent. These are supplemented with mini drive thru coffee "sheds" serving espresso at all hours. The city is also famous for its rain, yet we saw very little – the days were dry and the temperature cool to pleasant.

Veteran conventioners can skip this paragraph. Every summer the NMRA conducts its annual nine-day convention in a major city, rotating the venue around the country. The first seven days are packed with clinics (usually eight or more at a time), tours (layouts, non-rail, prototype, industry), SIG activities, contests, auctions and lots of socializing. The convention wraps up with the National Train Show, a three-day event and one of the largest train shows in the country. Next year the convention will be in Cincinnati and the following year in Philadelphia (plan ahead and reserve the first week in July).

Starting on Thursday the week before the convention, the Board of Trustees (BOT) conducts their three-day meeting. The BOT's prime focus is setting policy for the organization and planning for the future. Over those three days, board committees meet and many side discussions facilitate our progress.

A very relaxed NMRA President Allen Pollack called the meeting to order. After four years as President and many years as Vice-President, he is finally retiring to allow more time for model railroading. Many have praised his leadership and this trustee knows that Allen delivered on his promises. He was a great mediator, promoter of the hobby, industry liaison, and constant communicator to all. Good luck, Allen, and thanks for your service to the NMRA.

Allen started out by announcing the election results. With three times as many members voting (15% vs. the normal 5%), the Regulations passed 4 to 1 and became effective at the meeting. They replace the current Bylaws and Constitution, and you can download a PDF copy from the NMRA web site. If you want a paper copy, please send me a SASE and I will place one in return mail (see my address on the masthead). All of the new standards passed (details on the web site). John Roberts was elected President and Mike Brestel Vice-President. They were inducted into office Friday at the annual business meeting.

Prior to every meeting, the BOT receives a thick package of reports from the officers, trustees, department directors and others. Updates and corrections are accepted at the meeting. The Trustees ask pointed questions when they note something out of the norm and where progress seems less than predicted.

At this meeting, we received many good reports. Our expenses are under control in the current year, and we are likely to end in the black. Our auditor (this writer chairs the Audit Committee) gave us a clean bill of health for fiscal 2003. The Education Department

reported filling many open slots and making progress in all areas. We still are in need of experienced people. We are seeking a CPA volunteer so that the current treasurer can concentrate his efforts on the train show.

The Technical Department Chair Rutger Friberg presented a status report and challenged the board to take some action. Conformance and inspection (C&I) is current on all requests, more standards are underway and meetings with manufacturers continue to increase. The DCC standard set by the NMRA has been a phenomenal success for the hobby. While many products are submitted for C&I, many are not and some would not pass. The untested products may not be compatible with other DCC components. Some products with conformance warrants (the NMRA football) may have passed C&I for wheels but not for an incompatible decoder. The BOT passed a motion directing the Technical Department to work with manufacturers to resolve these issues. Our ultimate goal – every product would be submitted to C&I for every applicable standard.

One of our largest benefactors is Howell Day, and he has given the lion's share of the funding for the museum. While the collection grows in our basement, the museum is not open to the public. We still need more money and a location popular with tourists. A professional firm is assisting us, and they are in negotiations with California Railroad Museum and one other site. Wherever we go, it will be a significant milestone for the NMRA when the Howell Day Museum opens to the public. Note to new members: not one dollar of dues goes to the Museum – all expenses are paid from funds given by Mr. Day and others.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to motions. The Audit Committee presented three motions bringing the NMRA in line with current practice. Two passed and one was sent back to committee for further study. A motion passed designating one Trustee (Bob Gangwish of SSR) as contact with the regions on Bylaws changes. The regions have until 9/1/05 to bring their bylaws in line with the new regulations. Another motion passed setting 9/1/05 as the day Single Membership becomes effective. A new database will be installed at headquarters making that possible. A motion setting region subscription fees did not pass.

The British and Australasian Regions along with NMRA Canada presented an interesting proposal. They are hard hit by currency fluctuations and international mailing delays. They want to provide services to members locally (like membership cards) and pay for those in their own currency. Yet they will remain full members in the NMRA and continue to fund all other national programs. In addition they agreed to pay the full postage and printing costs for publications. The board accepted this proposal and asked for more details at the next meeting.

Incoming President, John Roberts, named all of his officers and department directors. He highlighted the goals for his administration, and they will be detailed in his first column for **Scale Rails**. Allen closed the meeting by making many presentations and awards. We adjourned at 3:30 PM on Saturday, much earlier than past years.

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Long-time board members told me that this was the most productive meeting they ever attended.

The new regulations create a professional nine-member board that will be seated in Cincinnati. Elections for that board will occur

over the winter. Their success will be measured in their ability to prepare the NMRA for the future. If we can build better bridges to the industry, expand C&I, integrate with the SIGs, and create standards for the new technology, then we will grow and prosper. I predict a very bright future for model railroading. 

The MER's Photography Contests

By Roger Ossman,
MER Photography Contest Chairperson

Grab your camera (digital or conventional) and start shooting! Search your photo files and start preparing your best efforts! The fun (and awards) of the MER convention's photography contest can be yours.

HELLO, I AM ROGER OSSMAN, the new Photo Contest Chairperson; I will be taking over for Pete Shatswell at the Hagerstown convention. I would like to thank Pete for a great job as well as getting in place some new contest rules that I think only help the contest to be an outstanding part of the convention.

There will be four categories as follows:

a) Prototype Photos, Steam Related – Images of prototype steam engines.

b) Prototype Photos, Non-Steam – Images of any prototype engines, rolling stock, structures, etc. except for steam related.

c) Model Photos – Images of model railroads and related model items.

d) Artistic Photos – Pictures that have been substantially changed in terms of composition or content through computer modifications and similar processes. Pictures or images that manipulate details or the overall image beyond the capabilities of usual modeling techniques or beyond truthful prototypical reference possibilities would go into this category. It also includes images that have had substantial changes such as cloning, layered images, collages, etc. performed. (This does not include minor modifications such as contrast, brightness, gamma, cropping, and similar minor corrections. Digital or film pictures with these minor corrections may be entered in any of the first three categories, above.)

Judging will be by popular vote. Instead of just one vote, you will be voting for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in each of the four categories. When the votes are counted, 1st place votes will count as 5 points, 2nd place as 3 votes, and 3rd place as 2 points. This system will aid in evening up possible differences created by varying convention localities and possible tilting of scores away from recognizing the quality images our members produce.

In addition to the regular awards, a Best of Show award will also be chosen from all of the entries. A three-person panel, chosen by the General Contest Chairperson and the Photo Contest Chairperson at the convention from people who have experience in photography and/or publications, will select the winner of this award. If the Best of Show is one of the category winners, the rest of the images in that category will be upped one slot to fill all awarded slots.

Here's what you need to know to show up at the convention with your best images:

a) All current NMRA members are eligible to enter.

b) Participants may enter up to five prints in each of the four categories. (We are not equipped to deal with slides.)

c) The maximum size for each photograph is 96 square inches (i.e. the equivalent of an 8 x 12 photograph). The minimum size is 35 square inches (i.e. the equivalent of a 5 x 7 print). All prints must be mounted on a stiff mounting board. Maximum size for the mounting board is 154 square inches (equivalent to 11 x 14). Entries may also include an appropriate mask surrounding the image, not to exceed the mounting board dimensions. Entries may not be framed.

d) Each participant must fill out the proper entry forms upon bringing the photos to the contest room. Participants should try to bring their photos in as early as possible within the convention's announced hours to facilitate the popular vote process. No entries can be accepted after the contest room closes for the standard model contest judging.

e) Do not enter the same image(s) in more than one category. This includes changing a color image to gray scale or vice versa.

f) Any image that won a first place or a Best of Show award in a previous MER photography contest may not be entered again. If you change a previous first place-winning image from color to grey scale, or vice versa, it is still the same image and may not be entered again.

g) The participants of the photography contests will be totally responsible for their images and will not hold the MER or people connected with the contests liable for damages or losses.

h) The Photography Contest Chairperson or an appointed representative shall make the final judgment on questions or questionable entries dealing with the Photography Contests.

i) If your entry has won first place or best of show at the national convention you may not enter it (but you can display it to show off your winning entry).

Make sure while at the convention to stop in and vote. Even if you have not entered the contest, it can only help the camaraderie of model railroaders. The ballots will be available in the contest room after all entries have been accepted.

The photography contest rules have been reviewed this past month, and will be reviewed on a continuing basis by your new Photography Contest Chairperson to see if the activity can be improved even more as time progresses. If you have any suggestions, comments, etc., please contact Roger Ossman at rwo1361@aol.com or 3307 Englewood Road, Wilmington, DE 19810. 

The Veep's Corner

Story and photograph by Clint Hyde,
MER VP

WELL, THE NEW bylaws/regulations passed, apparently by a wide margin...so we have a little work to deal with: The MER bylaws now have to change. I hope we'll have a draft out for comments in a few months—with luck, before the convention. The key feature to address pertains to the single-tier membership (which I am personally glad is here; that has really caused trouble for a long time). The key thing that is going to change on your end is that when you join NMRA, you're automatically an MER member if you live in MER territory and a Division member if you live in a Division's territory (new maps of this will be on the Web site one day later this year, I hope). I think it will be the case that you are not an MER member if you live outside our territory, but you can still subscribe to **The Local** (electronic copy is free, paper copy is \$6/year). Your NMRA dues may go up a little bit, most likely, but you'll no longer be paying additional amounts to either the Region or Division (unless you subscribe to a newsletter). You won't automatically get the Region or Division magazine/newsletters—they are going to be optional. So as I've been advocating for a while now, email me (ch Hyde@cox.net) and sign up for the electronic version of **The Local**. You'll continue to receive the paper copy through the end of your current MER membership period. But after that, you'll have the option to ONLY receive it electronically, get it sooner, with color, and not have to pay for a paper copy.

I just got my MER ballot today, and sent it back immediately. I know you won't read this until after the due date, but thanks to everyone who voted, whomever you voted for. Yesterday I heard that over 110 ballots had already been received.

The MER 2005 convention will be in Raleigh, North Carolina, and they're already charging hard on the planning. This will be the first official CAT Team-driven convention; the 2003 convention was mostly done this new way, and the team members haven't changed. So you can figure it should be at least that good.

Do come to the Fall 2004 Convention in Hagerstown. I promise you'll enjoy it. You can register online easily. Keep an eye on the web site for updated details; new info will show up periodically. There are going to be a mountain of open houses all over the area.

I just finished attending and working at the enormous N-scale convention this past weekend. It took place a mile and a half from my house—talk about convenient! In theory, I could sleep

at home; in reality, I hardly slept at all, so proximity didn't help much. It was amazing though; we had folks from around the globe show up, which was really nifty. I met a bunch of new folks and saw some fabulous modules. The narrow gauge ones were superb, (yes, N-scale narrow gauge—as good as you see anywhere else, and you may see them in Hagerstown). You've got to get involved in these things further than just attending clinics and sitting quietly in the back...go introduce yourself to folks and ask questions. Offer to help out in some way; you'll meet

more folks. Do a good job, and you'll get invited to do more. I ended up organizing all the clinics at the N-scale show, and that was an opportunity to meet a lot of great presenters, talk to a bunch on the phone about what they can do (not all will be able to help out, but either way, you have a new contact), maybe get some free goodies, and at the very least, increase your circle of friends. I also organized all the home layout tours, since I now know everyone in my area it seems, and that means meeting all those folks, seeing their layouts privately if I hadn't

already. Then I got asked to help with the auction software, which was the database developed for MER by Larry Lau of Carolina Southern Division. Since I was the supplier, I was the only person who understood it well enough. Then I got asked to do the model photos (as I've done a few times for MER conventions, although NOT at 2 AM); I'll qualify for AP Author just on photos pretty soon, but that was never my intention.

Every convention can use some help; I guarantee that. Be an open-house greeter (most hosts need someone to do that). Do a little gofer work, help at registration or the company store for an hour (PJ does NOT want to sit at the registration table the entire weekend, even though that means he meets everyone).

The laser-cut structure kit is progressing nicely. I have one partially built from the second test cut (check out the photo above). It all looks pretty good. My plan is to have 25-30 first production-run kits available at the Hagerstown convention on a first-come, first-served basis. Unless of course enough of you email me ahead of time saying you want one, in which case we can increase the production quantity. At the convention and after, we will be able to take orders and send kits in the mail. It has been a real learning experience in a lot of ways.

Be sure to see another article about this kit on page 10. 



Nn3 at the Capitol Limited 2004 N-Scale East Convention

Story and photographs by Marc Sisk

WHERE WERE YOU over the period of August 4-8? If you were not at Chantilly, Virginia, you missed quite an N-scale event. Not only was the largest ever operating NTRAK layout constructed, but also there was a small contingent from Northern Virginia NTRAK (NVNTRAK) who made it a point to show that N-scale Narrow Gauge, or Nn3, is alive and prospering on the east coast.

The NVNTRAK Nn3 team consisted of six members, Noll Horan, Jim LaBaugh, Steve Zutter, Bill Redfearn, John Drye and myself. Together, we contributed 12 modules to create an eight-foot wide by sixteen-foot long Nn3 one-track layout. Another team member, Bill Rutherford, is building two more modules that will be incorporated into our next setup. Planning for participation in this event began over a year ago when I constructed the bench work for many of the straight modules and gave them to the team as an incentive to produce a completed module in time for the convention. Of the 12 modules in the layout, only two were complete prior to this. This meant that ten modules had to be completed in about a year. Not a problem you would think, but as you know, life keeps us busy and things always do not go as planned. Such was the case here.

Any endeavor like this one takes a lot of planning and perseverance. The goal for the team was to have all modules completed and set up in my basement for a dry run on June 1st. That would give us time to check out the modules, make sure they all work well, and shake out the bugs prior to the convention. I did not start on my two modules until the March timeframe, but was confident that I would be done by the June 1st deadline. As time passed, I asked how folks were coming along. Some were making better progress than others. June 1st came and went and the date for checking the modules out became July 6th. We were able to bring all the modules together and have the layout operational and certified for the convention by the 6th. Most modules were returned to their owners for the work required prior to the convention.

On August 4th, Noll, Steve and I transported most of the layout and supporting equipment to the Holiday Inn for staging. This helped to avoid trips back and forth to my house on Thursday during layout setup. The layout went together really well without any problems. That bit of coordination and setup on the 6th of July paid off.

I had purchased 35 watt, 110 volt halogen lights that clip on to blocks on the back of each sky board. The lighting really makes the layout look good. My wife, Carol, made all the skirts for the layout. The individual module signs are Microsoft PowerPoint charts mounted to foam board held on to the skirt with Velcro. The stanchions were made from Glad bowls and PVC pipe. I painted the inside of the bowls so that the paint would not rub off, then used mortar mix and filled them to add weight. I inserted threaded PVC connectors into the bowl and cement mixture so that the stanchions would screw onto the connector. It worked great!



This shot shows the entire layout. We had an 8' wide by 16' long one-track loop made up of 12 individual modules. All the modules were built by Northern Virginia NTRAK members. Noll Horan built Fahie's Pointe and Pepprock; Jim LaBaugh built two of the corners, Elk Mountain I and II. Steve Zutter built a three-module set – Providence Farm, with two corners and a 4' straight between them. Marc Sisk built three straight modules, Thompson Valley and Silver Springs. John Drye built Rocky Flats, and Bill Redfearn built R&R Stockyards. Most of the modules are 18" wide. The layout stanchions were built using Glad storage bowls, painted on the inside and filled with mortar mix. They have threaded PVC fixtures so that the stanchions screw into the bases. All modules had uniform skirting and signage. Lighting was provided by twenty 35 watt halogen lights. The Nn3 sign was mounted on a frame and displayed over the layout.

Let's take a ride around the layout. We will start on Rocky Flats, a four-foot straight module built by John Drye. Rocky Flats has three houses, a fairly deep dry wash running through it with a bridge and a nice cut. Work is still being done on this module, but it is off to a great start. Traveling clockwise, we move to Elk Mountain II, one of two corner modules built by Jim LaBaugh. Jim, Noll, and Steve are the founders of Nn3 in NVNTRAK. Elk Mountain has a peak in the center and cuts for the train to pass through. Continuing on, we head over Pepprock (named for Randy Pepprock of Downtown Deco), the first of Noll Horan's two modules. Pepprock is also still under construction, has an area designated for some urban development, a nice natural tunnel and many mountains and rocks. Noll is an NMRA Master Model Railroader and you can certainly tell that from his work. Leaving Pepprock we enter Fahie's Pointe (yes, it is named after Art Fahie from Bar Mills). Fahie's Pointe was a main attraction during the show with an inspiring S-curved trestle that is about two and a half feet long and at least 12 inches high. A lot of sticks in that trestle! The

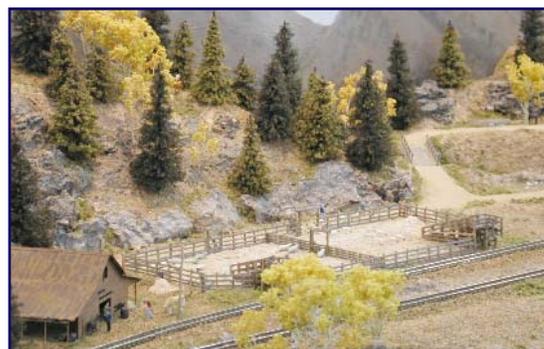
module also has more wonderful mountains and an operating lighthouse. Our trip heads us onto R&R Stockyards, built by Bill Redfearn. Many of us helped Bill get started with this, his first module, but he really went to town finishing it up by scratchbuilding a very nice set of stock pens with a sound module neatly concealed underneath activated by the passing train. Can you hear the sheep now? Entering the far bend we arrive at Provi-

vention, and a very special thanks to my fellow NVNTRAK Nn3 team members. Without them, this little gem of a layout would never have been. Thanks guys! 🚂



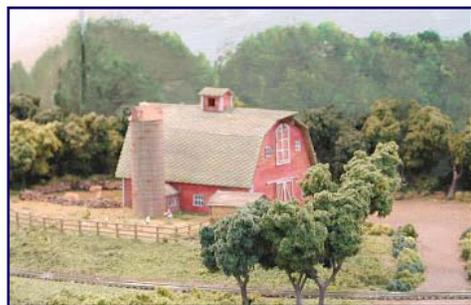
Fahie's Pointe (above) – Named after Bar Mill's Art Fahie, Noll Horan built this magnificent S-curved trestle over some spectacular scenery. It's not yet complete but well on the way to becoming another signature module from Noll.

This photo shows the end that had John Drye's Rocky Flats and Jim LaBaugh's Elk Mountain I and II corners.



R&R Stockyards (above) – This module, built by Bill Redfearn, has a siding that services a scratchbuilt sheep pen. There is a sound module hidden under the pens that was activated by a photo sensor when the train passed. Bill's very nice work was a real crowd pleaser.

dence Farm, Steve and Teresa Zutter's really nice rendering of a farm scene spread over two corners and a straight module in between. A farmhouse, barn with silo, horses, cows, fencing, and the like are all included and everything looks like it belongs. Leaving farm country we head onto Silver Springs and Thompson Valley, my three, four-foot modules. These modules are intended to



Providence Farm (above) – This is a 3-module set, built by Steve and Teresa Zutter, consisting of two corners and a straight between them. It depicts a farm scene with a farm house, a barn and silo, nice fencing, and animals.

represent a couple of towns in the west, maybe Colorado. There is a small business district in Silver Springs, a mine, a hardware/feed store, a hotel, and other structures typical of the area. A river runs through it all for about nine of the twelve feet of module. Coming to the end of our trip, we round the

bend on Jim's Elk Mountain I corner. This module is very similar to Elk Mountain II; Jim captures the flavor of high country narrow gauge railroading very well.



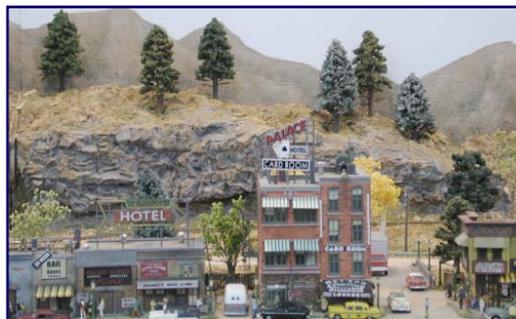
Thompson Valley (above) – Built by Marc Sisk, this is his first of a three-module set that depicts a western setting in the mid 50s. The track winds through a small town and over a bridge onto the new module set, Silver Springs.

We had many folks from out of town come by and operate on the layout. They included Jim Santella, Denny Romain, Tim Treadway, Russ Straw, and Milt Perkins. They're great folks who really helped us out since most of us were up to our eyeballs in convention work. Thanks to all who came to visit during the con-

continued on page 10



Silver Springs 2 – This two-module set, built by Marc Sisk, represents a western mountain town in the mid 50s complete with a hotel, riverside restaurant, feed and seed store, a mine, and the small downtown street of Silver Springs.



Silver Springs 3 – A close up shot of the Silver Springs street scene. Buildings are Downtown Deco and Bar Mills structure kits. The Bar Mills Saulenaus' Tavern has a detailed and lit interior.

Bunn's Feed — The First (of many, we hope) MER Structure Kits

By Dave Emery and Clint Hyde

IN JANUARY Clint said, “Everyone does region freight cars. Let’s do a laser-cut building, using as many suppliers as we can from within the region! Truly ‘Made in the MER!’” With that challenge in hand, we started to learn just how much work it takes to go from good idea to a box on the shelf.

David’s idea was if it’s an MER building kit, how about highlighting one of the classic E.L. Moore designs? E.L. Moore was from North Carolina, and many of his buildings represented typical structures of our region. He looked through back issues of model magazines, and settled on “Bunn’s Feed” (August 1973 **Model Railroader**). An email to MR confirmed our rights to use the plans.

How do you design for a laser cutter? Laser cutters require a different approach to designing a building. We both have experience with the same computer graphics program (Canvas), so it was easy to draw pictures and share them. But something that looks good on your inkjet printer may not work on the laser. Laser cutters are good at drawing lines, so most of the building consists of connected line segments. We wanted to use the tab-and-slot style that makes very strong buildings, and we learned how easy it is to misalign the tabs. Chris Jessee of KingMill Enterprises in Virginia is doing the laser cutting and helped us understand how to design a kit for his cutter.

What about windows and doors? We took an informal poll and discovered a general preference for high quality plastic injection molded castings such as those made by Grandt Line and Tichy Train Group. We found good matches for all of the windows and most of the doors. However, no one made a suitable casting for one of the doors, so we contacted Tichy about doing custom work. We also worked with Paper Creek Model Works to get a run of their wonderful corrugated siding and tarpaper roofing, with Sodders Enterprises for a run of their raised seam roofing, and Greenway Products for the chimney casting. With these parts, the basic structure was complete.

The cyclone and its piping really make the roofline of this kit interesting. Our current design problem is finding the right parts for the cyclone and dust piping. We have talked to several people

about producing a custom casting of the right size cyclone. We are also looking at alternatives for piping, including soda straws, brass rod, and Plastruct hollow rods and elbows.

We built the first prototype out of cardboard from our original production drawings. We realized we had some issues with the size of the buildings and the relative height of the loading platforms. These were fixed. Prototype number two (Clint’s photo, left) was the first one done on the laser cutter. Most pieces fit OK, but a few needed much more work.

David said, “Now we need instructions. I’ll write them and hand them to Noll along with the next prototype sample from the laser cutter.” Noll Horan, one of the MER’s Master Model Railroaders, will build our sample kit which we’ll use for the box art.

Box art? Hey, we’ll need boxes. Boy, there are a lot of choices here! A little advice from Doc Thatcher of Granddad’s Hobby Shop in Virginia helped us select packaging for the kit.

How much will the kit cost? This will depend on the costs of all the parts, once we get them together. We are aiming for the \$60-\$80 range. Tentatively, the release date is the Fall MER convention. We are planning at least two production runs with the first one for the MER convention. If there is additional demand, we’ll do a second run and distribute them to hobby shops as well as sell them directly. With a bit of luck, we may have a “build the kit” clinic with the designers at Hagerstown. 📦

MEMBERS WANTED:

The Gateway Model RR Club of Brooklawn, NJ, now in its 45th year, is looking for a few good members. We operate a good-sized HO model railroad in a rented building right across from the CONRAIL tracks. Meetings and work nights are Tuesdays and Thursdays. For information contact: Ron Baile, 24 Hampton Road, Westmont, NJ 08108-2202. rbaile@aol.com. (856)-858-6644. 📦

South Mountain Express Mid-East Region 2004 Fall Convention Hagerstown, Maryland November 11-14, 2004

Sponsored by South Mountain Division - MER



It is almost time for the South Mountain Express

SCHEDULE: *South Mountain Express* activities will start on Thursday evening, November 11th (registration opens at 4:30 PM). Thursday evening activities will include both a limited number of clinics and local layout tours. Friday and Saturday activities will start at 8:00 AM and run till 10:00 PM both nights. Sunday's official activities will start at 8:00 AM and run through Noon. A number of area layouts will be available for going home tours Sunday afternoon.

CLINICS: The *South Mountain Express* will feature in excess of 30 different clinics covering a diverse range of topics to include prototype information, scenery techniques, operations, detailing of models and more. Many of the clinics will be repeated on different days to help you resolve your individual scheduling problems. A sample of the clinics that will be presented includes:

Paul Bakenstose:

What Ever Happened to the PRR Delmarva
Capturing the Flavor of the PRR on Your Model Railroad

Roger Cason, MMR: Small Layout Operations

Bob Charles: Russia by Rail

Eric Dervinis: Meet Your NMRA Trustee

Paul Dolkos: Selecting and Building Structures

Richard Flock: Improving Model Vehicles

Alan Frame: Ma & Pa Postcards

John Glaab: Modeling Steel Mills

Mike Hohn, MMR: Modeling an 1880's Railroad—Prototype
& Models

Ben Hom:

Balancing Your Model Freight Car Fleet
Economical Prototype Freight Cars

Noll Horan, MMR: Weathering Wood—Getting that Weather
Beaten Look

Bob Johnson: Rocks Made Easy—Working with Rock Molds &
Coloring with Dyes

Stan Knotts: The Chemical Industry

Bob Markle: Railfanning the Hagerstown Area

Bob Prehoda: Coal Hauling Operations on the
Huntingdon Northern

Michael Rabbitt: Steel Mill Shortline

Kathleen Renninger: Weathering Buildings

Marc Sisk: Modeling Water

John Teichmoeller: Railroad Along the Waterfront
with Walthers – Some Prototype Ideas & Future Directions

Brian Wolfe: A Painting Clinic

EXTRA FARE CLINIC: – Martin Brechbiel will be presenting a clinic on scratchbuilding with wood. The cost for this clinic is \$10.00 and is limited to 10 participants.

For more information and updates on scheduled clinics see the MER Convention web site: <http://members.cox.net/chyde/MER/SMJ2004/SM-Junction.html>

CONTESTS: The MER will conduct the usual series of model, craft and photo contests in conjunction the *South Mountain Express* convention. See the May-June issue of **The Local** and NMRA/MER web sites for additional information concerning the model contests. In addition, there will be a popular vote contest for your choice of the best contest model. Entries for the model, photography and craft contests will be received all day on Friday 9 AM to 9 PM and Saturday from 8 AM to 9 AM. Entries should be picked up after the awards banquet Saturday night.

MODULE DISPLAYS: The convention hotel features a large area that is available to us to set up a modular layout during the convention. Plans are not finalized at this time but we hope to have a very nice group of **Nn3** modules included in the displays.

AUCTION: We will be conducting a live auction on Friday evening, so be sure to bring your surplus items to sell (items for sale will be received starting at 9:00 AM Friday morning). The auctioneer for this event will be the ever-popular Mr. Bob Charles of derby hat fame. Items having a value of \$10.00 or less will be sold at the Pale Pachyderm (white elephant) table rather than being auctioned. The auction will start around 8:30 Friday evening so that the participants can go to bed at a decent time.

THE MID-EASTERN REGION, N.M.R.A., INC.

AUCTION RULES

1. Lot Registration Forms will be available only at the Auction Registration Room.
2. All buyers and sellers **MUST** be registered at the convention.
3. No minimum bid is required. However, all items (lots) registered in auction must have a value of at least \$10.00. Items of lesser value must be combined or batched together with other items to equate a minimum \$10.00 bid.
4. Sellers will be given tags for each lot. Your convention registration number is your auction identification number to be used both as an auction seller and buyer. Label each item with a tag describing the item briefly and accurately. Be sure to include the manufacturer, age, wear, and condition of each lot.
5. A fee of 10% will be charged on all sales. The minimum commission charged will be \$1.00.
6. The seller does not have to buy back his item if it is not sold.

It will be returned at no charge. However, in the event the seller bids on and wins his own item while attempting to stimulate the bidding process, he will be responsible for the 10% commission.

7. Seller may lower their minimum bid at any time, but not below a minimum of \$10.00.

8. Terms of payment are cash or check. Checks are to be made payable to the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA.

9. Buyers must pick up and pay for their items at the end of the auction on Friday evening. Buyers may not pay for their items prior to the end of the auction as bids must be received and entered into the computer. We appreciate your patience in this regard.

10. Sellers will be paid on Saturday morning beginning at 8:00 a.m. If you are both a buyer and a seller, you may choose to handle both transactions on Saturday morning or pay for your purchases on Friday evening and receive your payment on Saturday morning. You may pick up unsold items at the end of the auction on Friday evening or on Saturday morning when you receive payment.

11. The auction room will open on Saturday morning at 8:00 AM and will remain open until 9:00 AM or until everyone waiting has been served. Please plan to be present by 9:00 AM so that we can conclude the auction process, and our volunteers can enjoy the rest of the convention.

12. No private sales are permitted in the auction room. Unclaimed goods become the property of the MER.

LAYOUT TOURS: All *South Mountain Express* layout tours will be self-guided (no bus crowds and fixed schedules to contend with). We will have over of 30 layouts on tour including many that have never been open before and a number of well known layouts that have been featured in the commercial press. At least four layouts in the Hagerstown area will be open for tours on Thursday night. Additional tours will be conducted on Friday afternoon, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday afternoon (going home tours). Maps, written directions and schedules will be provided when you register.

Some of the featured layouts include:

Bob Johnson – West Virginia Midland (HO)

The Midland is a central West Virginia short line which bridges between the B&O and the Western Maryland. The layout is forever set in the early summer of 1954 and features a mix of steam and first generation diesels.

Dick McEvoy – Barneytown & Scupperville (HO)

A class one railroad set in the mid 1950's featuring long freight and passenger trains with a distinctly northeastern flavor.

Bill & Mary Miller – Colorado & Southern Ohio Creek Division (On3)

One of the best-detailed model railroad layouts in the country, the Ohio Creek Division features narrow gauge steam, full sound effects and spectacular Colorado scenery as it appeared in 1942.

Art Selby – Blue Ridge Midland (O)

A multi-level layout designed by John Armstrong which features both main and branch line operations. It is based on the B&O and Pennsylvania Railroads in the Cumberland Valley.

Steve Sherrill – Shady Grove & Sherrill (On30)

One of the largest On30 layouts in the United States, the

SG&S is set in the Allegheny Mountains of eastern West Virginia sometime in the 1940s and features scenery which goes all the way to the ceiling of the layout room.

Howard Zane – Piermont Division (HO)

A rare chance to see Howard's well-known railroad, which is set in the corner of northern West Virginia, western Maryland and southern Pennsylvania.

PROTOTYPE TOURS: On Friday morning (November 12th) we will conduct a tour of the **St. Lawrence Cement plant and quarry**. This is a very large facility, with a huge rotating kiln, producing a quarter of all the cement made in Maryland. It is served by CSX (formerly Western Maryland). There is "new stuff to see" since the Region's last visit in 1999. This visit is timely, given the recent release of the Walthers cement plant series kits. Closed-toe shoes are required. Hard hats and safety glasses will be provided. This will be an extra-fare bus tour. Allow approximately 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

In addition, if there is enough interest, we will run a charter bus from Hagerstown to the **Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Museum** on Saturday. The B&O museum in Baltimore, severely damaged by a roof collapse in the 2003 President's Day snowstorm, will officially reopen on Saturday, November 13th during our convention. The restored roundhouse will be open, and the museum will provide the opportunity for train rides on historic equipment. The restoration is a massive undertaking—some \$30 million has been budgeted—and not all the exhibits will be fully restored as of the reopening. Because of the distances involved and to provide time for a train ride as well as viewing the exhibits, this will be an all-day tour (approximately 8:30 am to 4:30 p.m.) Please note: The museum will not be able to provide special arrangements for groups at this event. Therefore our fare covers only bus transportation. In addition, participants should be prepared to pay \$12 admission to the museum (\$10 for seniors over 60).

BANQUET, AWARDS & GUEST SPEAKER: The traditional Saturday night banquet will be a buffet event with your choice of Chicken Teriyaki, Baked Lasagna or Beef Burgundy. The rest of the menu includes a tossed garden salad with assorted dressings, parsley potatoes, green beans almondine, assorted fruit pies for desert and your choice of coffee or tea. The buffet will be informal and will be held in the hotel atrium (same as 1999 convention). It will be preceded by a social hour with a cash bar.

After the banquet, we will reconvene in the main convention area for the presentation of awards. **Howard Zane**, our guest speaker, will address the group following the conclusion of the awards presentation.

DOOR PRIZES: A drawing will be held Sunday morning to award the many door prizes that have been donated by various vendors (must be present to win). Door prize tickets will be sold in the company store area on Friday and Saturday (an arm span for \$2.00).

ANNUAL MEETING: Immediately following the door prize drawings the convention will finish up with the annual MER business meeting which will be held in the main convention room. 



South Mountain Express

Mid-Eastern Region, Fall 2004 Convention

November 11-14, 2004

**Clarion Hotel & Conference Center
Hagerstown, Maryland**

CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

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

Please enter all names as you wish them to appear on your registration badges—one primary registrant per form:

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):	\$10.00	_____
(Includes 6 month NMRA trial membership)		
Significant Other:	\$15.00	_____
Children:	\$10.00 x _____ =	_____
Saturday Evening Buffet Banquet (choice of 3 entrees)	\$25.00 x _____ =	_____
Car building Clinic	\$10.00 x _____ =	_____
Cement Plant Tour	\$15.00 x _____ =	_____
B&O Museum Tour (transportation only)	\$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

Or you can register online on the convention's web site, <http://members.cox.net/chyde/MER/SMJ2004/SM-Express.html>.

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

ADDITIONAL TOURS AND EXTRA FARE CLINICS: If additional extra fare tours and clinics are added, registrants will be notified by e-mail (where available) or snail mail.

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.

Scratchbuilding Vise and Sanding Sticks

By Fred Willis

DURING MY LONG TIME of scratchbuilding, I have accumulated the usual ton of tools. All are useful, fun to use, and each one permits some aspect of building. However, I notice most of my work is done with a few tools and a few cheap and easy-to-make jigs.

In a previous article I described a simple jig for orienting and measuring parts on your workbench. That jig allows cutting in a horizontal plane. In this article I will describe a jig similar to a jeweler's vise that allows cutting and sanding in a vertical direction. I will also describe a simple tool—a sanding stick—that permits accurate sanding.

A major issue in scratchbuilding is how to support and conveniently orient small pieces and components to sand or cut them. Vises are useful but can easily crush pieces, and odd shaped pieces may not fit in a vise. Also, orienting a part in a vise can be difficult. Rotating vises are available, but even they may not be convenient or comfortable to use. An uncomfortable or incorrectly oriented work piece results in a poorly made part and will quickly send you to TV watching as your hobby.

My simple version of a jeweler's vise supplements my vises and permits comfortable and convenient access to model pieces. The vise is cheap and quick and easy to make. Cut two pieces of half-inch thick plywood into 3"x5" or 3"x6" pieces. The thickness is critical, not the size. The plywood must be rigid enough to prevent bending, but thin enough to allow clamping work pieces in place, if necessary. Cover the plywood with an appropriate size piece of cardboard from the back of a notepad, writing tablet, etc. This creates a soft working surface that prevents part damage and is easily replaced when damaged or stained. Clamp the cardboard in place; do not glue it.

One or both pieces of the vise may be used at the same time. It depends on the work piece size and which surfaces are being cut or sanded. Using C-clamps, clamp one or both plywood boards

and cardboard covers to your workbench in any direction or angle. Orient them in any convenient or comfortable direction. The plywood provides a rigid surface for mounting or holding the work pieces when being cut or sanded. Hold the work pieces in place either by hand or clamping.

This vise is extremely useful when sanding window openings in structure walls. Lay the structure wall on both pieces of plywood. Leave a small gap between the wood pieces and orient the window over the gap. The window opening can be sanded while the walls are well supported to prevent breakage. With a little practice, work pieces can be supported right up to the edge of a cut or a sanding surface.

Cutting and sanding work pieces in a vertical direction is easy. Orient the plywood properly to ensure a comfortable position. The cardboard protects the work piece and when cardboard is cut, stained or sanded away just throw it out. Replacement is cheap and easy.

Scratchbuilding is precise, and proper sanding is critical. I have numerous sanding blocks and a power sander. However, for precise and accurate sanding, I use my homemade sanding sticks.

Take quarter-inch thick wood and cut it into 6- or 8-inch lengths. The length is for your convenience and hand size. The quarter-inch thickness is for strength. Cut the wood sheet into whatever width your model work requires. The width can be a quarter- to one-inch wide. Cut sandpaper the width of the stick and staple it to the stick. You now have multiple sanding sticks of whatever width required for sanding small parts and surfaces. When the sandpaper is used up, tear out the staples and replace the sandpaper.

The plywood block version of a jeweler's vise and sanding sticks are cheap and fast to make. I have found them invaluable in scratchbuilding. 

MER N-Scale Special Car Order Form

Car	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE *	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#29290	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$ _____
#29299	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

SHIPPING: _____ CARS @ \$2.50 FOR FIRST CAR, \$1.50 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL \$ _____

* MY MER # IS _____ TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Ship to: NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____



These 40' Western Maryland box cars are Micro-Train bodies custom painted by The Freight Yard. They are box car red with prominent white "speed lettering".

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
MID EASTERN REGION.

MAIL TO:
THE MID-EASTERN REGION INC.
Business Manager
9 Roosevelt Ave.
Wilmington, DE 19804-3044

CALLBOARD

Coming Events

October 2, 2004, 10 AM. James River Division meet. National Radio Observatory Auditorium on the University of Virginia campus, Charlottesville, VA. There will be clinics, a laser cutter demonstration, contests, layout visits, door prizes, a 50/50 raffle, and a white elephant table. Admission: Division members and first time visitors – free. Others – \$5.00. For information and directions, contact Bill McMullan, (804)-379-7904.

November 20, 2004, 10 AM to 4 PM. Southbound Model Railroaders Holiday Train Show. Located at the Dixie Classic Fair Grounds, West 27th Street, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Admission: \$5.00, those under 12 free. For more information, call (336)-767-6104.

November 27-28, 2004. Noon to 4 PM. Cheltenham Model Railroad Club Open House. 8000 Old York Road (at railroad bridge) adjacent to Elkins Park Square, Elkins Park, PA 19027. No admission cost; donations gratefully accepted. For information, call (215)-635-9747 or go to <http://www.cheltenhammrr.org/pages/595161/index.htm>.

December 4-5, 2004, Saturday 10 AM to 4 PM, Sunday Noon to 4 PM. Southbound Model Railroaders Open House. Located at Southfork Park, Country Club Road and Park Circle, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. No admission charge, but donations will be accepted. For more information, call (336)-767-6104.

January 8-9 and 22-23, 2005 (snow dates January 29-30, 2005). Noon to 4 PM. Cheltenham Model Railroad Club Open House. 8000 Old York Road (at railroad bridge) adjacent to Elkins Park Square, Elkins Park, PA 19027. No admission cost; donations gratefully accepted. For information, call (215)-635-9747 or go to <http://www.cheltenhammrr.org/pages/595161/index.htm>.

Calling All MER Members!

Don't forget about Independence Junction (<http://www.ij2006.org/>), the NMRA's 2006 National Convention. The Mid-Eastern Region will host it July 2 to July 9, 2006 in Philadelphia, PA. There is a great need for volunteers to help at the convention. If you would like to help out, go to <http://www.ij2006.org/volunteer.html> and fill out the volunteer survey form. Be a part of this amazing event! It could get better with your help! Not only will you get great satisfaction from participating, you'll also qualify for AP Volunteer points.

The Seattle Contests

*By Ray Bilodeau,
MER General Contest Chairman*

WITH OVER 100 MODEL and more than one hundred and thirty photo entries, the Seattle National Convention provided the attendees with contests that showed really outstanding craftsmanship. Several MER members brought models and photos to our contests—Bob Malberti and Bud Kaiser from the New Jersey Division, Rich Newmiller from the Philadelphia Division, and Lynn Miller from the Potomac Division...thanks for your hard work! Bob Malberti placed second in the Diesel category and also won an AP Merit Award for his PRR SD-45 #6192. Rich Newmiller placed third in the Freight Car category with his Lancaster and Chester #57 boxcar. He, too, won an AP Merit Award. Lynn Miller from Washington, DC, won a Merit Award for his On-Line Structure, Continental Moving and Storage. Roger Cason, thanks for your fine photos. Your entries helped make this one of the best photo contests we have seen in quite a while. Many of the contest models have been photographed and will appear in the next two issues of **Scale Rails**. We could, however, use someone with a digital camera to take photos of entries from MER members...anyone interested? Please let me know.

John Johnson from the Tidewater Division and Dave Messer from the Philadelphia Division helped judge the model contest. John Johnson also led the team that went to the National Train Show to judge modules. The National contest staff is grateful for everything you did for us in Seattle.

Remember that over the next two years the National convention will be in Cincinnati in 2005 and in Philadelphia in 2006. I urge all of you to try and attend at least one of these conventions. You will have a good time, see exceptional model layouts, take in interesting clinics and see contest models, photos, and arts and crafts that you will not believe. If you find yourself with some extra hours you need to fill, consider getting involved as a volunteer at the National.

See you in Hagerstown in November! Any questions? Comments? Please call or write: 302-636-0888, raybilodeau@comcast.net. 

Fred Miller – MMR #336

Roger L. Cason, MMR

Congratulations are in order for Fred Miller. With the completion of his Motive Power AP certificate, Fred became MMR #336. Fred is a Traction Fan (capital "T", capital "F"), and his traction models and modules are truly outstanding. Many of you will remember seeing Fred's award winning traction modules at MER conventions.

Fred has been serving as AP Coordinator for the Carolina Southern Division, and will soon become the MER Business Manager.

Congratulations, Fred, and thanks for your ongoing service to the MER and the hobby! 

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These 40' RF&P PS-1 box cars are Accurail bodies, custom painted by Accurail. They are blue with aluminum-colored doors, and feature prominent white lettering.

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