

The Local

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Adventures In Model Railroading

By David Derway

IT'S MY WIFE'S FAULT!" I exclaimed after someone asked how I got back into N-scale. My first foray into N-scale began with the purchase of an Aurora Postage Stamp Train Set back in the early 70's. My brother and I paid for it on time out of our combined allowance, and it took months before we could bring it home. After playing with it for quite some time, it was dutifully put back up and carted around North Carolina for the next 17 years, seeing only occasional use. Within a few years of being married, my wife had had enough of my restlessness. You see, I liked to keep busy fixing things, building things, doing stuff with my hands. One winter, I had managed to fix the cars, fix the appliances in the unit we were renting, had built all of the stuff my wife had asked me to, and now I was driving her nuts by constantly getting in her way.

Finally she said, "Don't you have a train or something packed away that you can mess with and stay out of my hair?" The little light bulb went off over my head and I immediately went into the storage room and dug out the little Postage Stamp Train Set and original power pack. The dining room table was commandeered for a simple oval of track (the first hint for my wife that she may be in trouble), and within minutes, the 17-year-old train was running around it. "Cool!" I said as I watched the engine and cars go around and around.

Later that evening, I wondered how much more there was to this train thing. Off to the local newsstand where I obtained my first issue of **Model Railroader**. "Holy Smokes!" I thought as I read every article several times and marveled at the photographs. My wife made me show her that I hadn't hidden a **Playboy** magazine in it after several hours of not hearing from me on the couch. Now all that little oval needed was some switches, some new cars, and maybe even a new locomotive or two. A quick look in the back of **Model Railroader** showed me the closest hobby shop. The Antique Barn & Train Shop (AB&TS), in Wilson. My wife and I planned a trip that weekend to go train shopping and Barbeque eating in one journey.

When we arrived at the AB&TS, I took two steps into the door and stopped dead. "Ohmighod" was all that came out of my mouth. You see, the AB&TS had the most incredible selection of train equipment I had ever witnessed in my life up to that point. My wife shoved me in the back, and I stumbled toward the N-scale equipment. After looking for quite some time, I meandered over to the HO scale equipment and noticed how much more of it there was, both in selection and quantity. Uh-oh. A dilemma of monumental proportions was taking hold. Now what do I do? Do I stay with N-scale or go to HO? Realizing that a potential life changing decision would have to be made (at least that's how it seemed at the time), I decided to make the first purchase a small one. I picked up a couple of Atlas switches, some flextrack, and a couple of freight cars.

Upon getting home, I put the switches and flextrack into the oval (still on the table) and noticed how quickly the overall size increased, and how much more interest was added to the train operation. The more I read about the different scales, the more I realized that N-scale would allow me to get MORE railroad into a given area, and have MORE scenery than track. Hmmm. My eyesight was still pretty good so putting the cars and locomotive on the track wasn't a problem. Hmmm. My previous dealings with HO-scale had not shown it to be better, just bigger. Hmmm. I figured that I could build a small N-scale layout that could be easily put up out of the way, while a small HO-scale layout would be much more difficult to maneuver. OK, decision made. Stick with N-scale. After all, if it turns out to be too small to work with, I can always switch over to HO.

It's a decision that I have not regretted, even if my eyesight isn't what it used to be. After all, isn't that why they have all those different magnifying products?

The mini-layout on the dining room table was my escape from long, hard day at work. I had been at my job for only a few

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Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager

I TRUST YOU ALL had a wonderful holiday and perhaps even found train goodies under the tree. It was a good time to share the season with fellow model railroaders. This old timer always associates this time of year with memories of trains around the Christmas trees and big train displays in stores a half century ago. How time flies when you are having fun.

As of last September, the ranks of the MER almost tripled to a total of nearly 2300. Unfortunately not all of these new members even realize they have automatically qualified for MER membership by simply keeping up their NMRA National membership status and living in the territory served by MER. If you know or meet some of these folk, do let them know about their "new" membership.

Happily many renewing NMRA members are also signing up for **The Local** subscriptions. (Region subscriptions are included right on the NMRA renewal form.) At last count we have just over 800 members subscribing to either the mailed paper edition, or the electronic version, or both. Remember, the printed and mailed copies of **The Local** at \$6 per year, or the electronic version at no charge, are some of the best ways to keep in touch with your region's activities.

However, don't forget—subscribers need to get change of address information and/or changed email addresses to me to keep those issues coming.

Questions about NMRA/MER membership, subscriptions to **The Local** or **eLocal**, contacts with your local Division, or any related question, can be directed to me at the address and email listed to the right of this column. 

The Local

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The 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 back-up 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.

The MER website is www.mer-nmra.org

President's Column

By Clint Hyde

I HAD A GOOD TIME at the MER Fall convention, *Rails to Raleigh*. Hope you did, too. The hotel, an Embassy Suites, was excellent. Unlike last year, the hotel in Hagerstown, was in sad shape and received a lot of negative comments. This is certainly the best MER convention hotel I have been to. I thought I would explain a few details for those people who are curious.

The banquet price was \$40, it may sound high for a dinner, but it was all-you-can-eat. I had two pieces of chocolate cake. The actual price from the hotel was \$29.95, but the taxes on that meal were 36 percent, making the actual cost \$39.08. So it's not that the convention was making any real profit, other charges at the hotel had a comparable amount of taxes (true everywhere).

There were some excellent open houses and I would like us to start getting some of these things on videotape or DVD. If anyone is interested in taking on this activity, I'd like to hear from you.

David Arday had some photographs in the contest/judging room at the convention, and they seem to have been lost. If you know anything about what happened to the display photographs in that room, please let him know.

Lots of surveys were returned this year, I guess handing them out at the banquet worked. If you didn't get one and would like to fill it out, let me know and I'll mail one to you. I'm always happy to hear from you. One person particularly disliked the survey, (you know who you are) feel free to make me a better one, I'll be happy to look it over.

In 2006, MER will not be having a traditional convention. If you haven't registered for the National NMRA convention in Philadelphia, there's still plenty of time to do so! There will be a Fall Business meeting, held during the weekend of the Tidewater Train Show; that will be either October 21 or 28 (Tidewater Div. doesn't know which weekend yet). We'll see about having something additional interesting going on, maybe an open house or two, and include a group dinner or something. Read about it here soon.

Steve Kindig is taking over as the Editor of **The Local** begin-

ning this issue. Big Thanks to Alan Mende for doing the job for the past four years—excellent work!

Interested in doing some excellent work for the MER? I need someone to do some computer work in the Wilmington, Delaware area. Also the photographer position is open. The primary task is to take pictures of the models at the conventions (although not in '06), I have a couple of secondary tasks in mind.

In 2006, elections will be held for the MER Office positions: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Our Treasurer, Ron Schmidt, is term-limited out of office this year. If you are interested in holding one of those offices, you **MUST** send your position statement; no more than 200 words (per the bylaws), and a photo to John Johnson (JJ) by April 15. Late info goes in the trash. There is a pre-requisite per the the bylaws, to run for President, you must have already held one 2-year position on the board.

Roger Cason, MMR and former Trustee, will be working on the "Made in the MER" articles again. Some may remember that he was doing them several years ago. If you are a model railroad manufacturer of any sort, you can get a one-page article about your business written and published while investing in a year's worth of advertising which includes a large (but not more than 1/4 page) ad to go with the article, and then a business-card-size ad for the next 5 issues—a total of a year's worth of advertising. The price is something like \$50 or so, (rate not officially set). Roger lives in Delaware, and would like to have some assistance on this from someone south of the Potomac River, to maybe interview folks farther away than he would like to travel. Roger and I have discussed possible candidate manufacturers, and they may be hearing from him. However, if you are in this line of business and would like to be profiled, don't wait for a call. Feel free to contact Roger at 302-478-2550 or rogercason@juno.com.

Remember, Model Railroading is fun! Especially if you're organized. 

Upcoming Elections

To submit your name, photo and position statement for election, Contact:

John Johnson
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Franklin, VA 23851-2819

months when my wife and I were married. This new job experience, combined with the new responsibility of being a husband, created an extremely stressful situation. But all of these worries disappeared when I sat at the table and operated my train through the imaginary hills and fancied industries. My wife recognized my plight, and tried many times to gently let me know that the table was for eating, and not train layouts. Finally, out of desperation, she laid down the law, “Get that train set off the table, NOW!”.

I knew even my “hurt-puppy-dog-look” wasn’t going to change her mind, so it was time for action. I had been purchasing magazines for awhile now, and decided it was time to build that first layout. **The N-Scale Primer** book had several good track plans, so I modified one slightly and began to purchase the track for it. Now I am sure that most of you remember your first years out of school and first years of marriage, and how LITTLE extra money there is for such stuff. But my wife made sure the budget allowed some train-type purchase, no matter how small, each paycheck.

Soon, work was underway on my 3’ x 5’ DG&N Railway. The name came from my roommates I had in High School. We had a strong friendship, and everybody knew if you picked a fight with one of us, you had to deal with all three of us. I used simple 1” x 4” framework construction with cookie-cutter style subroadbed, with a relatively simple up and over track plan and a single mainline. Switches were installed to allow servicing of the industries located near the mainline. At this time, I only had the most basic of hand tools (and too much enthusiasm), so getting square cuts and even joints were not always accomplished. Within a couple of months, the framework was complete, the track was down, and I was ready to send a train down the track. I placed my 17-year-old locomotive on the track and sent it on its way. It wobbled, sped up, slowed down (without me touching the throttle), lurched, derailed several times, and finally stopped. Of course I figured it had to be the “old” locomotive, so I purchased a budget-busting Con-Cor SW1200 (or was that a SW1500?). As I watched it go down the track and encounter the same obstacles, in the same places, I knew that something OTHER than the loco was at fault. In my eagerness, I had neglected to follow the most basic of rules: Purchase and constantly use a NMRA gauge when laying track, and make your subroadbed as close to perfect as you can get it. I did manage to correct the mainline, but the up and over section never did work right. My enthusiasm waned as my workload both at home and at work picked up dramatically. No scenery or buildings ever graced my original DG&N. It was reduced to it’s constituent parts several years later as I took a new job and realized that starting over would be easier than trying to fix what was wrong.

Several years later, we were in our own home, a 1-1/2 story log

house. The upstairs was unfinished and I began to have dreams of a layout filling the entire 600 sq ft., if we could ever afford to finish the space off. Remember your first house and the mortgage payments? Did you think that you would ever be able to afford to do ANYTHING again? I disliked real-life infringing on my railroad empire dreams, and to add to my displeasure, the wife was mumbling something about the upstairs being split up into several rooms. I knew this was a battle for another day. About this time *Model Railroader* came out with several articles on a small HO layout built on foamboard that caught my eye. If I shrunk it to N-scale, it would only be about 2’ x 4’. THAT I could afford! I

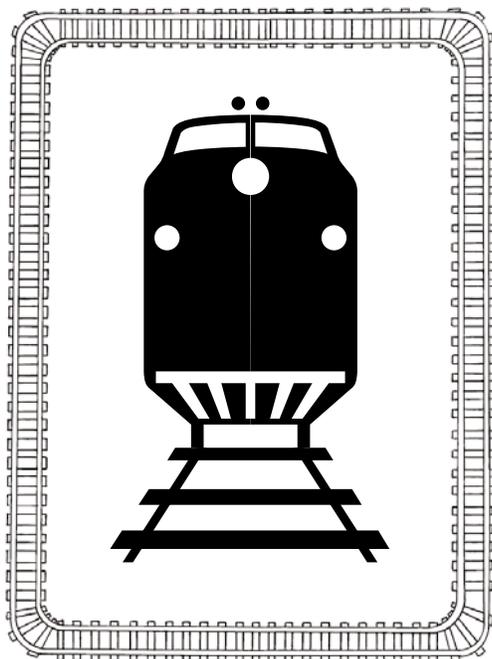
knew I could salvage most of my old switches (the expensive stuff) and with a little patience, the necessary cork roadbed and flextrack could be purchased. Finally, a way to get back into model railroading.

The foamboard was purchased, cut, and mounted to fir 1” x 2”s. A ruler and trusty string and pencil was used to put the track plan onto the foamboard. Cork roadbed was put down with white glue and held in place with Atlas track nails. The flextrack and switches were installed (this time with the assistance of a NMRA track gage), and I built a neat new transistor throttle from a *Model Railroader* article. After cleaning the track, the little switcher was put on the track and sent on it’s way. ALRIGHT! It sailed smoothly down the track, negotiating the switches without hesitation. It works! Time for a little scenery to spice it up. Scenery? Oh no, it looks sooooo complicated, messy and expensive.

“Maybe if I just operate the trains for awhile first,” I thought. Well, awhile turned into a long, long time. Although I did manage to ballast part of the track, that was it. The limited operating ability of the little layout, along with my inability to overcome my fear of scenery building doomed the foamboard layout to the unfinished upstairs. Every once in awhile I would rescue the layout, set it up and run trains, but I just couldn’t get past the scenery block.

What to do? How do I break this impasse? I realized what I needed was to formulate a plan. It was time to take all those years of armchair modeling and put that knowledge to work. The next several months were filled with emotionally charged discussions with the Budget Foreman on if and how the upstairs would be divided. Eventually this led to our unfinished upstairs being structured into 3 separate rooms: a computer/guest room, a full bathroom and a family room with a 6’ x 17’ area set aside for the latest DG&N reincarnation. Although I didn’t get the entire upstairs for my imagined railroad empire, the layout area has kept me sufficiently busy and interested. Looking at it now, if I had tried to take on the entire upstairs, I think the “empire” would probably have ended up as dead-end DG&N #3.

This was it. The countless issues of **Model Railroader**, N Scale, and other publications too numerous to mention had been followed by hours and hours of perusing videos on how to build a



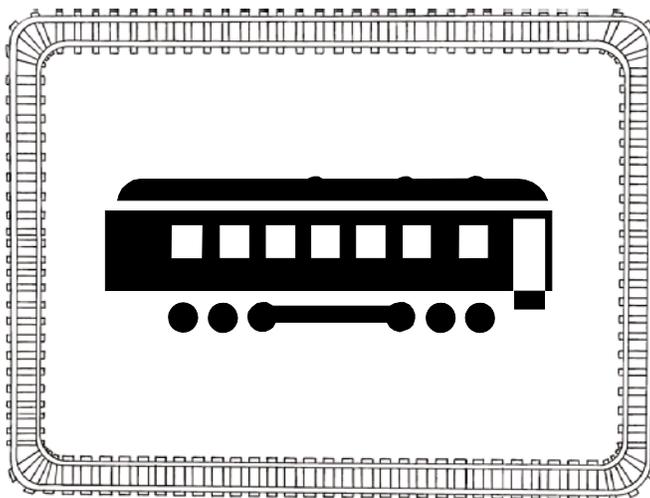
model railroad. No doubt that I was ready, or so I thought.

STEP 1: TRACK PLAN

As an Engineer by trade, this part comes naturally. Engineers love to plan things to death before doing anything, so it only took around 7 years from my first scratchings to a real track plan. With a Christmas present from a sibling of RailCad several years ago, **John Armstrong's Track Planning For Realistic Operation**, and Lord knows how many published track plans and planning guides at my disposal, I'm surprised that I actually made up my mind at all. The final track plan was developed (at least the final one for now) and printed out on trusty 8" x 11" sheets. Unfortunately the layout is 6' x 17', so it took a LOT of paper and tape. Need I say that the latest track plan barely resembles my original scratchings?

STEP 2: BENCHWORK

Now for something to put my hands on! Real wood, screws, glue, table saws, cut fingers, splinters, oops, I digress. It's surprising how heavy a 1" thick, 4' x 8' - 11 ply sheet of plywood weighs. Mental note, get help on second trip to lumber store, I'm not as young (or as strong) as I used to be. Thank goodness the 2" foam board was easy to maneuver (at least until it got sideways in 20 MPH winds). But the payoff, Yea!, I'm actually building something! Thankfully RailCad had allowed me to draw up the benchwork while the track plan was underway, so again, I had a good drawing to go by (there's that Engineer thing again). To make a long story short, the benchwork was built in 3 sections as this was the only way to get it upstairs into the family room. After completion, I realized that it might be slightly overbuilt for N scale, as I could probably drive my car onto it without damage. I had learned one lesson though. A neighbor helped me move the sections upstairs, and I gladly gave him the six-pack of beer I promised.



STEP 3: TRACKLAYING

For track, I am using Peco Finescale code 55 track on 3/8" plywood splines on top of 2" foam. Don't ask me how in the world I came up with this combination. I must have seen it SOMEWHERE. Cork subroadbed was glued to the splines and the track was tacked to the cork with superglue. I keep a bottle of superglue debonder handy just in case. For me, not the track. This part was uneventful, except for the last minute change in the track plan (so carefully thought out years earlier) while the track was being put down. Lets see...take this out...add this...move this over. Since the layout has 2 areas (one town and one industrial) for switching interests that would interfere with building scenery in a couple of places, I decided to complete most of the track laying, wiring and start the scenery before laying track in those 2 areas.

STEP 4: WIRING

My plans are to go DCC, but I wanted to start simple, so after an exhaustive and unproductive search to find my old DC power pack, a new Tech II power pack was purchased. 20 AWG solid wires are used as feeders every 18" or so and are tied into a 14 AWG buss wire. Luckily for me I still had a spool of this wiring left over from wiring my garage. A total of 3 buss wires were run to different areas for overcurrent protection, but temporarily tied together. After reading Allen Gartner's web page on Wiring For DCC, I modified a tester I had to troubleshoot the wiring. This proved invaluable as wrapping the 20 AWG feeders onto the 14 AWG busses was a little difficult since I ran out of one wire color close to the end of the wiring job, and my enthusiasm for seeing a train actually running on the track was clouding my judgment. Lets see...did I run out of red, and then use green? Or did I run out of black and then use green? Drats.

STEP 5: RUN TRAINS (INTERMEDIARY)

Once all of the wiring was debugged, it was time to hook up the power pack and watch those trains run! Well, at least that's what I thought as I watched the first loco lurch and wobble it's way down the track. Mental note 2...clean locomotives if it has been over 8 years since they have been run. Fortunately, once cleaned and properly lubricated, the little SW1200 glided down the track smooth as silk. Success! Although it was running on unballasted track on a sea of blue foam, it was running and running well. It had taken almost 8 months from the time I printed out the "final" track plan to make it this far, and I was pleased with the result. Time to take a break and enjoy running different trains before the next step, scenery.

How long could I run trains before getting to the scenery? Quite a while, in fact, 3 months of digging out engines and cleaning them up, finding cars that run well, then building trains and watching them run seemed to fly by. OK, I must confess, this was the stage at which two previous attempts to build a layout on a smaller scale had succumbed to being another pile of lumber and partially laid track. But I was determined that THIS time, scenery was going to happen. The advice from many publications was to start scenery in one area, instead of trying to do the whole thing at one time. This turned out to be the best piece of advice I had read. First things first, I had to find any scenery materials that had been purchased over the years, determine if they were still usable, and then get to work. Two weeks of digging through the storage areas under the eaves of my home brought forth quite a number of Woodland Scenics Tree Kits, turf and the most curious collection of now worthless odds and ends. Off to the not-so-local hobby shop to

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pick up additional supplies to begin my layouts' transformation!

STEP 6. BASIC LANDFORMS AND PLASTER CLOTH

Since the model magazines always showed this part in only a couple of pictures, it had to go fast, right? Not a chance. I ended up using a combination of carved foam scraps and malleable screen wire for the mountainous area, and 1/2" thick pink foamboard as the backdrop. On to putting the plaster cloth over the combination and creating real mountains. Of course, usually making a mess is fun, and this was no different. Mental Note...change into OLD clothes BEFORE slinging plaster! Thankfully I had covered the track with tape and the floor with plastic sheeting. The plaster cloths' packaging says "Covers 10 Square Feet". I have news for them, it doesn't. Another mental note...determine how much plaster cloth you need and DOUBLE IT! But at the end of 2 more weeks, I now had mountains...sort of, actually more like big bulges of white plaster. Lets see, how do I add the wonderful detail I've been reading about for years...of course, rock castings!

STEP 7: ROCK CASTING AND LIGHTWEIGHT HYDROCAL.

Back to the hobby shop for some boxes of lightweight Hydrocal, a rock mold and more odds and ends. Since I don't plan on getting into trouble with my wife by using her measuring cups, and the instructions show a roughly one to one and a little bit ratio, I determine that mixing by eye and maybe being a little off wouldn't hurt. Wrong again. Most of the castings go real well, but with others, the mix sets up before I can pour it, and yet some take 2 days to solidify. Lesson learned. On my next trip to the hobby shop to get more Hydrocal (now on third box), I stop by a Family Dollar store and pick up two 4 cup plastic measuring cups. I also made some castings using an alternate plaster from Wal-Mart and some Sculptamold that I had on hand.

Now armed with many castings, I start the task of trial fitting them in place. Immediately I realize "How in the world can I keep them in order?" Simple solution, put a number or letter on the back of each casting and on the part of the mountain it goes on. Doing only 5 or 6 castings at a time, this goes very well for the first couple of days. Each casting is blended into the one next to it with additional Hydrocal. On day 3, I notice that the previous castings are taking on a pinkish hue. "What in the world?" Then I remember, I used a red marker for the letters, and since plaster is porous...DOH!

After letting my first now-complete and getting-redder rock face dry for several days, I decide its time to start the staining stage. Careful review of The Clinic Video from Woodland Scenics leads me to gain much needed confidence. The stains are mixed up and applied randomly to the rock face, immediately fol-

lowed by a thin black wash. My hopes leap upward as the reddish hue disappears and is replaced by a good looking greyish tint. Earth colored stain is used on the top of the mountain area where grass will eventually be, and then matte medium is sprayed over the entire mountain to fix the stains. I let this sit for a week to see if the red would reappear, and luckily for me it did not. On to the next rock face.

This one went much better until I put the stain on. One BIG casting just wouldn't take the stain like the others and stood out like a sore thumb. Some of you have probably already guessed it...yep, it was a casting made out of the alternate plaster. This was my lesson that all plasters are not created equal. Add one day to separate all of the Wal-Mart plaster and Sculptamold castings to the schedule, one day to dig out and replace the carefully applied casting and yet another to stain the new casting to match the rest of the rock face.

By now I was noticing that those little 2LB boxes of Hydrocal were disappearing at a rapid rate. After much discussion with the Budget Foreman, it was decided to make a bulk purchase of Hydrocal. Woodland Scenics promises 20 LBS in their bulk package, and they didn't disappoint. Soon 27LBS of it appeared on my doorstep, along with quite a collection of grass, turf and clump foliage. It turns out that the Budget Foreman has a good eye for what looks right and what doesn't, and she in turn chose the colors and textures for the weeds and bushes. I am also wondering at this point if Woodland Scenics is on the stock market as I believe I am single-handedly keeping them in business!

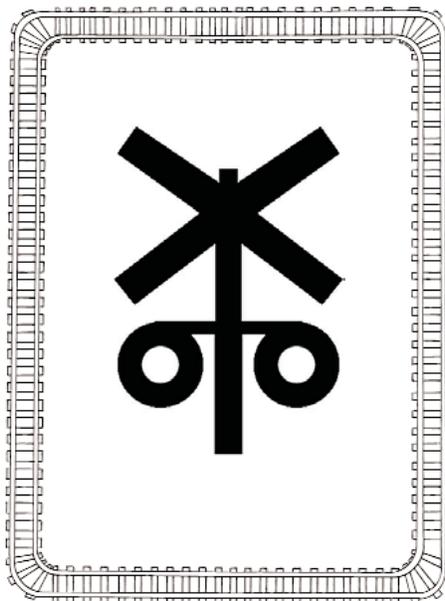
The weeks pass by as I make even more castings (with additional molds won in a now-you-have-it, now-you-don't gift exchange), set them around tunnel portals

and make even more rock faces. I stand back and review my work so far. I'm again pleased with the results. It may not be Reid-Brothers quality or John Allen's awe-inspiring scope, but for a beginner, it isn't bad. Time to pull up the tape, clean the tracks and run some more trains before putting down some foliage and trees.

My plan was to take up the non-stick masking tape, clean the track and run some trains, but I decided that while the track was protected, I might as well go ahead and try my hand at putting down dirt and some foliage. At least this is the reasoning I used to finish off the Woodland Scenics Landscaping Learning Kit I had purchased before. Then I'll do the track and find out if the locomotives will clear the tunnel portals and if I've missed any spots of track-covering plaster.

STEP 8. EARTH AND FOLIAGE

Following the instructions of the kit (to the amazement of the Budget Foreman), I mixed up the earth stain and covered the remaining white plaster areas. Fine soil turf was flyspecked onto the rock faces, and fine green blend turf was used to cover the



area that had just been stained earth color. The turf was applied at different thickness' to vary the color and grass effect. Then other color fine turf was applied in random areas. Next weeds (heavy turf) and finally bushes (clump foliage) were applied, paying attention to where they would normally be found in the land-forms. The clump foliage was glued to the layout with Hob-e-Tac, a rubber type cement. A side note on this adhesive...whoever came up with this stuff is evil. The bottle says "Bonds on Contact" and they aren't kidding. Get some on your fingers, and EVERY piece of clump foliage you try to place on the layout will find it's way to your fingers...and it WON'T let go! A layer of Scenic Cement was applied over the entire area, which was now about 2' x 3'. The cement was allowed to dry and minor touch ups were completed. The Budget Foreman played an important part here by letting me know what looked "right" and what didn't. Now it's time to clean track and run some trains!

STEP 9: TRACK CLEANING

As I carefully pull up the NON-STICK tape, I notice little black lines arranged neatly on the underside of the tape. Uh-oh. It seems that the paint I used to carefully weather the track has an affinity for the NON-STICK tape. Well, it appears that I will have a chance to hone my airbrushing skills once more. This is also the time that I notice some of the tape is buried under 1/8" of plaster in some areas (of course only visible from certain angles that

weren't used when applying the plaster). Another mental note...find out where all that plaster is going before adding more! A brightboy cleaning block and emery paper was used to clean off the rail tops and to clean up the switch points. Dental tools were used to clean plaster from between the ties and to reform the ditches that were accidentally filled with plaster during mountain making. Careful vacuuming removed the errant plaster chips and other debris. Oopppps! Was that some weeds and shrubs that just disappeared into the vacuum cleaner?

STEP 10. RUN TRAINS

The good old DC power pack was hooked up and several days of running trains took place. Although the portals located on curves are a tight squeeze, everything clears. I can see how this could be a problem for folks running BIG diesels or articulated steam locomotives, however.

After running trains, I repeated the above steps 2 more times (with lessons learned) to expand the scenic areas and rock faces to approximately 18 square feet total, about 1/3 of the layout. It is hard to explain the feeling of accomplishment I felt as I watched the trains go through the new scenic areas. Although I was originally worried about how it would turn out, I finally took the plunge to try scenery, and it has really paid off. Hey, if I can do it, ANYBODY can!! 

Achievement Program Update

*By Charlie Flichman
MER AP Manager*

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

Division 2 - Potomac

Clinton Hyde - Official

Division 3 - Philadelphia

Richard Landt - Volunteer

Division 11 - Susquehanna

Robert O. Beecher - Structures

Division 13 - Carolina Piedmont

Jerome B. Mersch - Scenery

Jerome B. Mersch - Engineer - Electrical

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**

In the year since I took over this position, MER members have earned 8 Gold Spikes Awards, 34 AP Certificates and 2 MMR Awards. The breakdown by division is as follows:

Division 2 - 3 GS, 10 AP

Division 10 - 4 GS

Division 12 - 3 AP

MER At Large - 1 AP.

Division 3 - 10 AP

Division 11 - 4 AP, 1 MMR

Division 13 - 1 GS, 6 AP, 1 MMR

Let's keep up the good work! 

Rails to Raleigh Convention Contest Report



By Ray Bilodeau
MER General Contest Chairman

OUR HOSTS for the 2005 MER convention, Carolina Piedmont Division 13, out did themselves—thanks John Wallis, Dave Lynam, Dick Genthner and the entire convention staff for a great convention weekend. Your thorough preparations made our contest experience painless and less stressful. It was also nice to work in a spacious and more than adequately lighted room.

The contest program in the MER would not work without the long hours spent in the contest room and the accuracy of all the paperwork produced by Dick Landt our Model Contest chairman and Roger Ossman our Photo Chairman. These volunteers provide the data, which allows us to report to you, our members. Thanks Dick and Roger.

Our judges for the model contest included Dave Messer, Bob Charles and Noll Horan our resident MMR's, and Al Phillips, MMR, longtime MER modeler who now lives in the Rocky Mountain Region; Charlie Flichman, Marc Sisk, Chuck Hladik, Vic Bitleris, Ron Fry, and Rich Newmiller. Thank you. We also appreciate John Johnson's ordering and delivering the plaques, and Dave Arday photographing the contest models.

We had a decent turnout for the Model Contest. There were 37 models in the judged contest. There was at least one model in every category except passenger cars. Twelve models earned Achievement Merit Awards, which were presented to the modelers by MER AP Chairman, Charlie Flichman.

SPECIAL AWARDS

Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash Award: recognized the best kit bashed model in the model contest. This MER award was presented to Richard Newmiller for his HO freight car *PRR F53 Well Hole Flat Car with United Load*. See Figure 1.

The Blue Lantern Award: was sponsored by the Narrow Gauge Car Shop and given to the model that best represents branch line



Figure 1: Winner of the Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash Award.

or private line equipment or facility with no more than 40 percent commercial parts.

Douglas Kirkpatrick was awarded the blue lantern for his HO scale *Virginia & Western RR MOW Car No. 508*.

The Philadelphia New Modeler Award: was given to the first-time entrant in the model contest with the highest point score. This year's winner was Gene Sing for his HO scale structure *Maine Potato House under Construction*. See Figure 2.

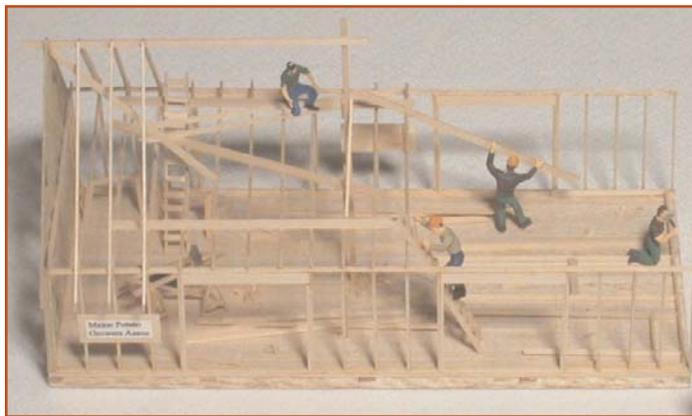


Figure 2: Winner of the Philadelphia New Modeler Award.

The President's Award: was given to the best example of a non-revenue or maintenance of way car model, Joe Nichols earned the award with his gasoline powered HO scale *Rio Grande Southern Work Goose #6*.

MER Narrow Gauge Award: was given to the narrow gauge model achieving the highest score in the judged model contest. This award is privately sponsored by several narrow-minded MER modelers: Charlie Flichman, Norm Garner, Noll Horan and Ray Bilodeau.

The second annual narrow gauge award winner was David Lynam for his HO scale *Square Water Tank*. See Figure 3.

The Pride of Dixie Award: was for the barn model earning the highest score in the model contest. This award, sponsored by the James River Division, was won by Chuck Hladik and his model of the *Shenandoah, Ozarks & Berkshire Barn*. See Figure 4.

Best-in-Show: was given to the entry with the highest point's score in the model contest.

Al Phillips and his O scale *Combination Freight—Passenger Station* took the honors here.

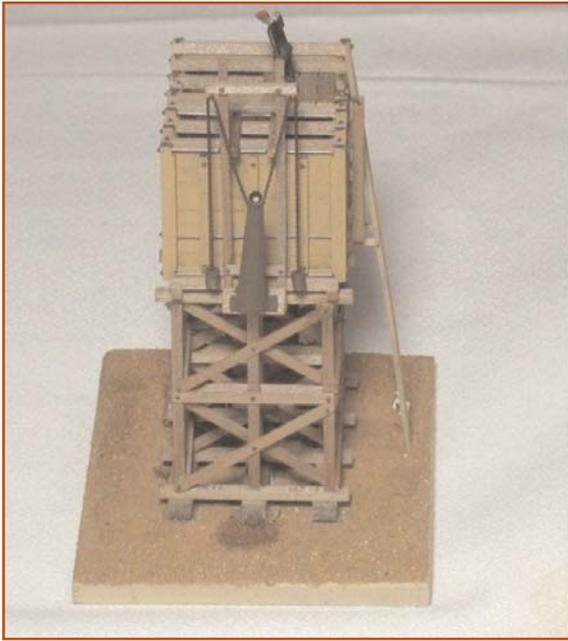


Figure 3: Winner of the MER Narrow Gauge Award.

STEAM

1st place – Bob Malberti – HO *PRR K4s No. 5418*

DIESEL

1st place – Bob Malberti – HO *PRR SD35 No. 6018**

2nd place – Joe Nichols, Jr. – HOn3 *RGS Work Goose No.6**

FREIGHT CARS

1st place – John Griffith – HOn3 *East Broad Top—2 Bay Hopper**

2nd place – Roger Cason – HO *ATW Evans Gondola**

3rd place – Richard Newmiller – HO *PRR F33 Well Hole Flat Car w/United Load**

NON-REVENUE CARS

1st place – Douglas Kirkpatrick – HO *Virginia & Western RR MOW Car No.508**

2nd place – Douglas Kirkpatrick – HO *Virginia & Western RR MOW Car No.506**



Figure 5: Winner of “Best In Show”.

POPULAR VOTE

Favorite Train: chosen by popular vote.

1st place – James Murphy – *Berkshire Short Line Passenger Local*

2nd place – David Lynam – *HO Logging Train*

Anything But A Station: sponsored by the host division Carolina Piedmont.

David Lynam – *Whistle Stop Quilts*

Best in Show—Popular Vote: See Figure 5.

Bill Day – *Bascule Bridge*

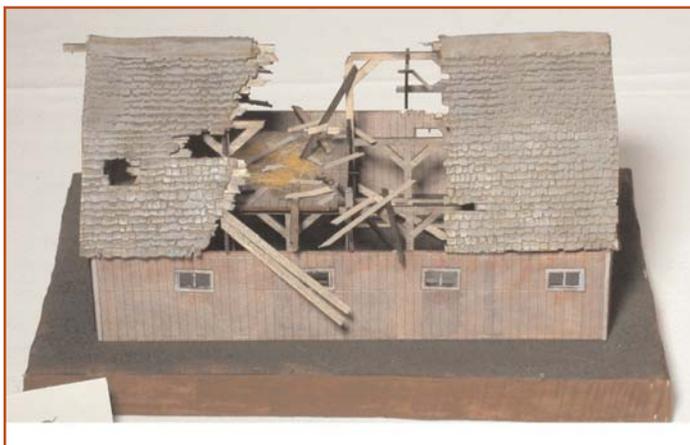


Figure 4: Winner of the Pride of Dixie Award.

CABOOSE OR CABIN CAR

1st place – James Murphy – HO *Boston & Maine Caboose No.104414*

2nd place – James Murphy – HO *Boston & Maine Caboose No. 104141*

3rd place – James Murphy – HO *Boston & Maine Caboose No. 104117*

TRACTION

1st place – Martin Brechbiel – O *CG&W No. 15 Trolley Car**

STRUCTURES ON-LINE

1st place – Allan Phillips – O *Combination Freight— Passenger Station**

2nd place – David Lynam – HO/HOn3 *Square Water Tank***

3rd place – Martin Brechbiel – O *Markes Station**

THE CONTEST WINNERS:

MODEL CONTEST: Model Contest Chair, Dick Landt, Thanks and Congratulates all those modelers who entered the judged model contest.

continued on page 10

STRUCTURES OFF-LINE

- 1st place** – Noll Horan – O *Yorke Truck Produce**
- 2nd place** – David Lynam – HO *Marshall's Office***
- 3rd place** – James Murphy – HO *Schermerhorn's Fish Market*

DISPLAYS (DIORAMAS) ON-LINE

- 1st place** – Martin Brechbiel – O *Lauther's Perfect Pickle Plant**
- 2nd place** – Bill Day – HO *Warehouse w/Roll up Door*

DISPLAYS (DIORAMAS) OFF-LINE

- 1st place** – James Murphy – HO *Holyoke City Block*
- 2nd place** – David Lynam – HO *Station Renovation*
- 3rd place** – David Derway – N *Freelance Farm Scene*

MODULES

- 1st place** – Wayne & Margaret Gibson – *Neuse River*
- 2nd place** – Gil Brauch – *NOVA Industrial Park*
- 3rd place** – Gil Brauch – *NOVA*

* Denotes AP Merit Award—scoring a minimum of 87.5 points.

** Denotes item received AP certificate previously.

The following models were entered in the model contest and won AP merit awards:

- Roger Cason – HO *Norfolk & Western Stock Car*
- Bob Minnis – HO *Airy Hall Halt*

PHOTO CONTEST:

Roger Ossman, our Photo Contest Chairman, is pleased with the quality of entries in this year's contest. The photo contest now includes a Best-in-Show award. This award is given to the photo that receives the highest number of votes in this popular vote contest.

BEST-IN-SHOW

- Roger Cason – *Two-Train Race*

MODEL

- 1st place** – John Johnson *PRR FA s Heading East*
- 2nd place** – Roger Cason *Out of the Tunnel and Under the Bridge*
- 3rd place** – Roger Cason *Business Meeting at the Yardmaster's Office*

PROTOTYPE: STEAM

- 1st place** – Roger Cason *Two-Train Race*
- 2nd place** – Roger Cason *Hot Wheels*
- 3rd place, tie** – Roger Cason *Rounding the Usual Curve*
- 3rd place, tie** – Roger Cason *A Little Sunlight on a Winter Day*

PROTOTYPE: ALL OTHER

- 1st place** – Roger Cason *Back East for Another Load*
- 2nd place** – Roger Cason *Cruise Train Meets Cruise Ship*
- 3rd place** – Roger Cason *Green and Yellow Locomotive on White Pass and Yukon RR*

ARTS & CRAFTS CONTEST:

Roger Ossman, our Arts & Craft chair, was delighted to see the well-crafted entries for the Arts & Crafts contest.

RAIL

- 1st place** – Carol Sisk *Play Time*
- 2nd place** – Peggy Doerflein *Baldwin Locomotive Works*
- 3rd place** – Roger Cason *Model Railroader Christmas Ornament*

NON-RAIL

- 1st place** – Carol Sisk *Ride 'em Cowboy*

Finally, the contest staff wants to congratulate **Bob Charles and Dave Lynam** who received their MMR certificates at the **Rails to Raleigh** convention

If you have any question about NMRA or MER contest rules and regulations, NMRA judging of models, apprentice judging, contest questions of any kind, suggestions, or whatever you might want to talk about, please contact me at: 302-636-0888, or RaymondBilodeau@aol.com. 

2006 NMRA National Convention
July 2-9, 2006

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Clinics, model contests, auctions, tours, non-rail activities, train & trade show, many local activities

www.ij2006.org for info

A Letter from the Editor

By Steve Kindig

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! Welcome to 2006, the Year of the Dog. This time of year we make our resolutions, and while some may quickly fade, there are the ones that when executed wisely, allow the “top of the world” feeling.

Of course, there are the healthy resolutions to stop smoking, lose weight, eat healthy, or even begin or simply follow up on an exercise regime. But, there are also the quality of life resolutions; to manage our time, reduce our stress, spend time with family and friends and even involve ourselves in cultural events. But how can you use some of these resolutions and still balance your time, interest and energy for model railroading?

Well, I can't help you with the smoking, healthy eating or weight loss because I am not your babysitter. But anybody that has been involved in a model railroad show can relate to the amount of exercise it takes to setup and tear down, plus the added bonus of moving the layout. So you have a starting place, if you haven't gotten involved at the local level; GET INVOLVED.

But say you don't need all the exercise, and still want to follow the spirit of keeping resolutions? I hope all of you realize the reduced stress level (at least when everything goes right) of building a kit or doing some layout and track work. Can't do all the work yourself, because of limited time? Good! Involve your family and friends. Everyone has a talent that you can use (I mean, exploit) in model railroading, and if it gets messed up the first time, at least there is a great story and a memory.

Finally, I save the best and I hope easiest resolution for you to follow, and the main focus of this column, culture. There are so many opportunities to travel to the different regions for conventions, layout tours, train shows and just to visit the local railroad club, museums or the “hot-spot” for train watching.

Mainly, I want you to share your own version of culture, by writing an article for **The Local**. If you took a trip, how you got started in model railroading, experiences (the good, the bad and the funny) in model railroading, photography, the tale of your search for that item you always wanted but never found, making scenery, weathering an item, or even a how to article; there are people out there who will chuckle, that can relate and are interested in knowing.

If you still need a hand, there are plenty of people in the MER region to help you. Trust me. Since becoming the editor, I've learned this firsthand and I will be glad to lend you my skills with writing and grammar. Find all the important local and regional contact information on Page 2.

So while you gear up for the National Convention in Philly (*another reminder to register!), take the time to visit the other region's conventions and layout tours, the train shows and railroad clubs and even the “hot-spots”, please SHARE. Share with other members, and most importantly share with your family and friends, the wonderful world of model railroading.

MAKE 2006, THE YEAR OF THE TRAINS. 

Visit Our Website

Visit the MER's website for all the latest information, contacts and archives: www.mer-nmra.org.



100 Often Overlooked Details

By: Scott G. Perry

WHEN YOU ARE BUILDING a model it is sometimes handy to have a list of forgotten details that you might have missed. A quick review of the list is an easy way to catch oversight and increase Achievement Program points. With the help of the Internet, several train enthusiasts helped me create a list of 100 often-overlooked details. If an item says (period) then it is time-period sensitive and you will need to check the era that you are modeling. Enjoy!

Up on the roof...

1. If you have a building with a flat gravel or tar roof, put some used tires on it, (if you are modeling snow country). The tires prevent ice from freezing solid and pushing the parapet wall out and thus allowing the roof collapse.
2. Model a flat gravel roof with bumps and ridges where air pockets have formed under the roofing material.
3. On the roof add an air-conditioning service man climbing from the parapet onto his ladder.
4. On the roof add an AC company rigging a multi-ton rooftop unit into place.
5. Add rust stains around smoke stacks that exit a roof, or rust running down the wall from metal hardware.
6. Place a TV antenna on every roof prior to cable (period).
7. Water tanks on many buildings in urban type environments are common.
8. Roof details like chimneys, exhaust stacks, sanitary vents, etc.
9. Roof access, hatch, and penthouse doors.
10. On roofs add leftover roof material, tar paper, little piles of gravel, pieces of lumber.
11. Satellite dishes.

Riding along in my automobile...

12. Have a guy underneath a car jacked up with a bumper jack and it has just collapsed on him, maybe use one of the Preiser male cheerleading figures, on his back, with arms and legs outstretched.
13. Use plenty of properly detailed and painted vehicles.
14. On car or truck, add "Bondo" or primer on vehicle.
15. Dents on cars and trucks
16. Fuel oil trucks.
17. Red or yellow fire trucks.
18. On autos, sand a little off the bottom of the tires so

the vehicles don't look like they're tiptoeing through the foliage.

19. Colors on cars were also rarely bright until the early 50's; with white, a greenish white, maroon, dark blue, dark green and black colors predominating.

No place like home...

20. In earlier eras, illuminated signs were not backlit plastic; they were either neon or lighted by floodlights.
21. Window and roof mounted air conditioners.
22. Houses and businesses have numbers and mail-boxes.
23. Street corner signs are everywhere.
24. Garbage pails on the curb.
25. Overflowed dumpsters behind businesses.
26. Puddles of water painted with semi-gloss black paint.
27. Leaves piled up on lawns and around curbs, drains, etc.
28. Every parking lot has a soda/ beer can somebody left behind.
29. Trailers, mobile homes, campers, motor homes, tents, etc.
30. Clothes lines with clothes drying.
31. Fire escape ladders.
32. General junk and debris.

Dancing in the street...

33. Electrical & telephone wires
34. Streetlights.
35. Public trash containers or dumpsters.
36. Traffic lights.
37. Storm drains.
38. Man holes and covers,
39. Parking meters in every downtown area.
40. Painted crosswalks and/or signs.
41. Public phones and phone booths.
42. Newspaper machines.
43. Sand on the roads, or loose gravel.
44. Litter that gets blown against old buildings.
45. Fences of all kinds.
46. Brown glass bottles, beer bottles, soda cans.
47. Oil drips in driveways and parking spaces
48. Half moon scrapes in the pavement or dirt from swing gates that have sagged.

49. Convincing ruts and/or mud puddles in rural dirt or gravel roads.

50. Drivers/passengers in cars and in HO passenger trains.

51. Weeds in sidewalk cracks and along the edge of asphalt or cement roads.

52. Markers and boxes for underground utilities.

53. One of the most commonly overlooked details is the color of the commonly included details, so check the color of the prototype.

54. Stop signs (earlier era) were yellow, not red.

55. Old, olive drab phone booths.

56. Those telephone boxes that are placed in neighborhoods, on sides of buildings, etc with the truck parked nearby.

57. Billboards.

58. A manhole cover that has a street line painted on it, rotated.

All the lonely people...

59. Someone washing the car in the driveway

60. Someone raking leaves.

61. Someone mowing the lawn.

62. People sitting on wood crates.

63. Someone working outside in the garden

64. A bicyclist with his front tire stuck in a grate.... and he's up in the air about eight feet, suspended from above on a wire.

65. People having a garage sale with lots of junk on the driveway.

66. Kids playing in the yard.

67. Paperboys selling newspapers.

68. People sitting at the bus stop.

69. People reading the newspaper.

70. Winos taking a nap or a drink.

Down by the railroad...

71. Oil stains on the ballast and ties on uphill grades and at stations, etc., where locomotives would normally sit.

72. Cinders around the tracks.

73. Rail joiners and tie (fish) plates on track and rails.

74. On rails, modern welded joints.

75. Flange greasers.

76. Cans of rail spikes.

77. Loose or used crossties.

78. Switch stands.

79. Relay stations.

80. Signals and marker boards.

81. Whistle posts.

82. When we add crews to our locomotives all too often they are looking out the cab windows as though they are staring at us! I prefer to have my crewmen looking into the cab at one another or out the front and back windows vs. out the side windows.

I see leaves of green...

83. Foliage everywhere – no “pool table” lawn areas, or golf club type greenery.

84. Model regional plants like Osage Orange in Illinois, Kudzu in North Carolina, Tree of Heaven and Blue Bonnets in Texas.

85. Lawns, fields, wetlands, gardens, flowerpots.

86. Patches of weeds.

87. Stumps of trees.

88. Plowed fields.

89. Puddles of water in low-lying areas with some grass or other foliage growing around it.

This and that...

90. Pigeons, dogs, cats, and other wildlife.

91. Don't forget pigeon “exhaust.”

92. Goat farms.

93. Bicycles in bike racks at schools and theaters.

94. Boxcar ends and doors used to make fences around storage yards, especially near railroad yards.

95. Manure and manure piles at stock pens, stables, barns, etc.

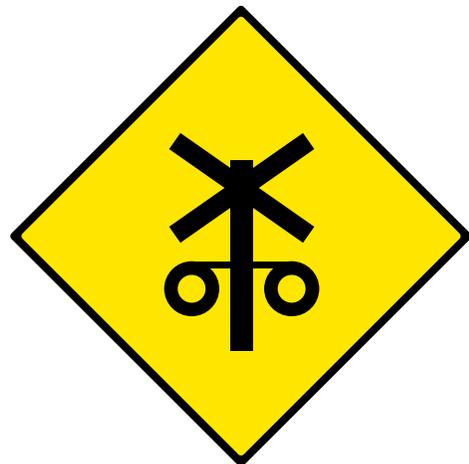
96. Horse, horse drawn rigs, hitching posts, road apples.

97. Quantity of details, either too many people, or not enough people.

98. Smells, like the aroma of a stockyard.

99. Bears in the woods, and around trash cans.

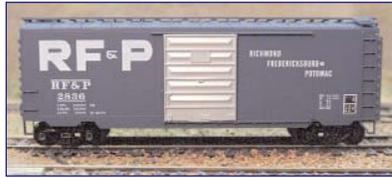
100. A model railroad club moving modules from the clubroom to the vans for a show. 🚚



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



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



P. MATISON (2)

This HO-scale building kit is designed around E.L. Moore's "Bunn's Seed & Feed" building which appeared in the 8/73 issue of **Model Railroader**. The kit features laser cut wood components as well as other parts and castings.



CLINT HYDE

Small Freight Station, Tichy windows and detail parts, laser-cut walls, roof, tar paper, and stripwood for the platform.



CLINT HYDE

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Independence Junction Update

THE PHILADELPHIA DIVISION'S planning for the 2006 National Convention in Philadelphia (July 2 through July 9) is proceeding. Currently the Committee is hard at work planning and coordinating the prototype tours, layout tours, and fan trips. The Prototype Tour team is targeting several tour sites. These are scheduled to include ISG (former Bethlehem – Lukens Steel Mill), Carpenter Steel, PATCO river line & shops, Amtrak (CETEC Northeast Control Center, Bear & Wilmington shops), SEPTA (Frazier, Overbrook & Wayne Junctions Shops, Reading Tech. Society (including the Reading & Northern RR), and the Lehigh Cement Plant.

Our fan trips will include the Strasburg Railroad and the Pennsylvania State Railroad Museum in nearby Lancaster County. Lancaster County is home to the world famous Amish country. There will be more than 30 local layouts open along with Operations Callboard, which allows modelers to sign up to operate a variety of layouts.

Philadelphia, an Exciting Place to Visit

The convention will highlight the prototype railroading around the Philadelphia area. Philadelphia was most recently home to Conrail and is still central to the Conrail Shared Assets Operation. Both Norfolk Southern (East – West routes) and CSX (North – South routes) serve the city. Both railroads also operate major classification yards in the region.

Passenger rail service is alive and well in the Philadelphia Region. The nation's fourth

largest city is home to SEPTA, the nation's third largest passenger rail system. SEPTA operates a variety of light rail and heavy rail lines, including eight commuter lines all radiating out of Center City. Five traditional trolley routes and two suburban trolley routes along with the subway and elevated system highlight the variety of the area. Amtrak also calls the region

home to the Northeast Corridor operations. The CETC Northeast Corridor Control Center is one of the prototype tours included during the week of Independence Junction.

The convention also takes place at the same time as Philadelphia's Welcome America festivities for the Fourth of July holiday. There will be hundreds of free events including fireworks and an old fashioned parade that will pass right in front of the convention

hotel. Other local attractions include the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Franklin Institute Science Museum, the Philadelphia Zoo, the Camden Aquarium, and the Battleship New Jersey.

With all the rail and non-rail related activities Independence Junction will be fun for the whole family! Make your plans now to attend! You won't want to miss it!

Registration information should be sent to:

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St. Louis, MO 63111-2338
www.ij2006.org 



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**CALLBOARD
 Coming Events**

January 7-8 and 14-15, 2006, 12 Noon to 4 PM all days. (Snow dates: January 21-22, 2006). Cheltenham Model Railroad Club Open House. 8000 Old York Road (at railroad bridge), adjacent to Elkins Park Square, Elkins Park, PA 19027. Admission free, but donations gratefully accepted. For more information, call (215)-635-9747, go to our web site: <http://www.cheltenhammrr.org>. Or contact Bruce Binder at (215)-722-4542.

January 14-15, 2006, 10 AM til 4 PM Gateway Model Railroad Club Annual Open House. 100 E. Browning Road, Brooklawn, NJ 08030. \$3 donation. Contact: Nicky Caccavo, 8 Forrest Drive Turnersville, NJ 08012 or call (215) 514-6591.

Tell us about your upcoming event, and we will publish it here. Due to our publication schedules, please give us a couple of months notice before the event. Thank you.

Send them to the editor and make sure to include all the specifics for the event, including the date, time, place, cost (if any), a contact person, and a means of getting in touch with him or her (address, phone, e-mail, etc.) for more information.