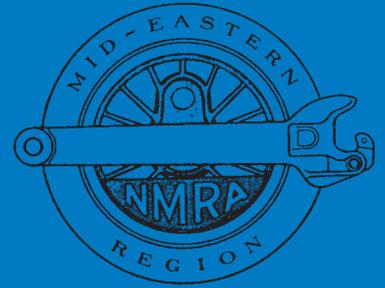


The Local

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION OF THE NMRA



Volume 61

MARCH — APRIL 2006

Number 2

Weathering Tank Cars (In the steam and transition eras)

By: Bruce Smith

WITH THE ADVENT of the Life Like Proto 2000 and Intermountain AC&F tank cars, (See Figure 1.) the addition of insulated tank cars by Atlas and several other fine tank car offerings recently, more modelers of the steam and transition eras are including accurate tank cars on their layouts. However, we all know that tank cars were never washed, rarely repainted and soon became quite weathered and often grubby looking. Thus, for a realistic tank car model, it is often necessary to weather the car. In this article, I will describe my system for weathering tank cars. This system is designed to allow a large number of cars to be weathered fairly quickly, while allowing enough variation in the weathering so that the appearance is not too uniform (and therefore more realistic).

Tank cars were not subjected to periodic reweighing like most other cars, so the initial decision must be to

determine if a car has been reweighed or repainted recently. If it has, you may wish to cover over the reweigh stencil and the last 3 or 4 digits of the Load Limit and Light Weight data. When the tape is removed after weathering, this will create the impression of a new patch of paint with new data stenciled on. Of course, if the stencil is “NEW” or the date is more than a couple of years old, you may want to change those with decals to something more in keeping with your period. Remember that you need only do this on a few cars out of the entire fleet.

Before weathering the car, I remove the wheel sets from the trucks, leaving the trucks on the car to protect the underbody. The wheels are placed between two cardboard cards with scale 33” holes which perfectly mask the treads (\$3.50 per package with \$1.00 shipping and



Figure 1: The as-built Proto 2000 10,000 gallon AC&F type 21 tank car.

underbody. The wheels are placed between two cardboard cards with scale 33” holes which perfectly mask the treads (\$3.50 per package with \$1.00 shipping and

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Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager

I HOPE YOU all have had the opportunity to visit the MER website maintained by our new “webmaster,” Martin Oakes. Martin has contributed a great deal of his time to the NMRA National website and has now agreed to maintain the MER site. He has included access to **The Local** editions all the way back to 1997. You can see his developing coverage at <http://www.mer-nmra.org>. As time permits, Martin will expand the website to provide useful information about the Region. Let him know what you would like to see. The website and **The Local** are great opportunities for all of us to “keep in touch...”

I have to ask a favor of **The Local** subscribers. Please let me know if you have a change of address. Returned newsletters and the resulting postage to resend the issue to a new address costs the MER some unnecessary postage costs, and now with the increased postal rates, even more. A thoughtful note to me about your new address will save your Region \$1.26.

Those of you who are on the mailing list to receive notice of the latest issue of the **eLocal** should also keep me in mind when you change your email address. If the emails announcing the new version of the **eLocal** bounce, we have no way of getting the issue to you unless you let me know about your new address.

I have heard a concern about membership numbers from a few of our new members who joined us because of their NMRA membership and residence in the MER territory. Unless those new members subscribe to **The Local**, they will not receive a MER Membership number. *That does not mean they are not members.* Their active NMRA membership number and residence will suffice to demonstrate the MER membership at meetings and conventions.

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

THIS YEAR MARKS the 60th anniversary of the Mid-Eastern Region's founding. I hope to have a retrospective published in **The Local** later this year. As an added bonus to the MER, John Roberts, President of NMRA, will be moving to Williamsburg, VA. Let's show him some MER railroading spirit!

The MER Board just went through the latest budgeting process in December and January. Despite the changes last year in the definition of membership and the associated expenses of including all NMRA members into our territory, everything looks good. We anticipate receiving a small rebate from the NMRA headquarters twice a year. While the first one hasn't happened yet, it will hopefully happen by the time you are reading this. Our intention is to split that amount with the divisions on a per-member basis. A portion will also be spent on the annual ballot, and because that ballot is now the only official contact with every member each year, the ballot will be more than just the two-page item. It will include the candidate info, some convention info, and the return part of the ballot.

Speaking of conventions, a reminder that the National convention in Philadelphia is approaching soon; the week of July 4th, to be exact. Hopefully you haven't forgot to register and can still get a room. I was still able to get one in December for the entire week. If you still haven't registered or even if you have; **we still need volunteers**. As a volunteer you will get a reduced registration rate. Please see the form included this issue to sign up.

A few days before the Board meeting, Treasurer Ron Schmidt submitted his resignation, which the Board accepted. During the past 10 years, Ron has served the MER well, and became the source of institutional and historical knowledge for the Board. I know I speak for the current and previous Board members, when I say, "Thanks very much, Ron".

Ron and I had talked about this possible changeover a while ago, since he was going to be ineligible to run for the office again (the bylaws have term-limits for all the elected positions; the Treasurer's term-limit is for

10 years, much longer than the others). So over the past couple of years, Ron has been training a successor, Tom Buckingham. Tom has participated in the budget process for a few years and also setup the MER with a new accounting system including improved software. Being so familiar with all the details of being the MER Treasurer, he was immediately approved by the Board.

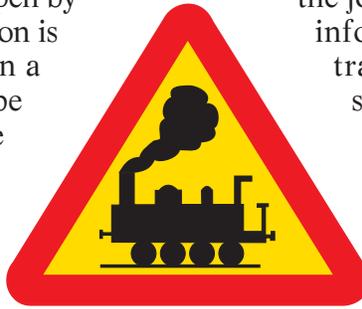
This is very much the kind of transition that I prefer; clean, orderly and overlapping with a transfer of knowledge. It makes for smoother operations overall. My admonition to elected officers and all committee appointments alike is to "train your successor"—because none of us are going to have the job forever, and the next folks need all the information possible. Ron did a good job training Tom and he will be a fine Treasurer.

As I mentioned in my previous column, elections for officers take place this year, if you're interested in running, you need to get your information to John Johnson by April 15. I would like to have more than one person running for each office.

Further planning for the Fall 2006 Annual Business meeting and the 2007 MER Convention are both moving forward. As you know, the 2006 MER Convention substitute and Annual Fall Business meeting will be October 28th in Norfolk, VA. In conjunction with the annual Tidewater Train Show, we are planning for a few open houses during the afternoon and evening. As an added enticement, morning open houses are in the works. The official business meeting will coincide with a pizza dinner, following the train show Saturday.

The tentative location for the 2007 MER Convention is Lynchburg, VA over the November 1st-4th weekend. The November date was chosen because November is National Model Railroad Month. More details to follow.....and keep an eye on the MER website.

Model Railroading is Fun—just don't drop anything! 



handling for the first four packages. Michael Seitz, 938 South Fifth Street West, Missoula, MT 59801).

When weathering cars of any type, it is useful to follow the adage “If it is light, make it darker. If it is dark, make it lighter”. Since the vast majority of tank cars in



Figure 2: This photo shows the effect of a coat of Poly Scale Tarnished Black.

the steam and transition eras were black, I’ll focus on those. Black paint oxidizes to a grey color. At the same time, the lettering on the car will degrade and fade. I start the weathering process by airbrushing the entire car with a coat of dilute Poly Scale Tarnished Black, mixed about 1 part paint to 5 parts water. See Figure 2.

A drop of wetting agent like soap or Photoflo may help the paint flow. Several light coats may be needed to get a really grungy look, while a newer car may need only one coat. By varying the thickness of this coat, you can significantly change the apparent age of the paint on the car. Notice that I did not say “age of the car”, since older cars may well have newer paint on them.

After the oxidization coat has dried, it is time to



Figure 3: This photo shows the addition of Poly Scale Oily Black to the area of the dome.

focus on the individual weathering traits of cars. Since the vast majority of these cars were top loaded with liquid products, product spills over the dome and down the side of the tank were common. The spilled material then caught road dirt and grime, effectively creating a band around the tank. This can be replicated using either Poly Scale Grimy Black or Oily Black diluted 1 part paint to 5 parts water. See Figure 3.

This is airbrushed over the dome and the sides of the tank under the dome. By varying the intensity of this paint, and the colors used, a wide variety of effects can be created. Once this paint is dry, the effect of road dust being kicked up by the cars can be added. I use either Poly Scale Mud or UP Harbor Mist Grey, again diluted 1 to 5 with water. This paint is applied from below the car and will often coat the brakes and sills. Focus a couple of shots on the tank in the area above the wheels (which are not in the trucks yet) and on the ends of the tanks, to duplicate the splash from the wheels.

Final detailing includes adding a few fresh “spills” with a brush and clear gloss, which will make a wet



Figure 4: This photo shows the finished car with the addition of Poly Scale Mud to the bottom, rust to the tank bands and truck springs, and some gloss to the right of the dome duplicating a fresh spill.

looking stake on the side of the tank. See Figure 4. Add rust to the tank on either side of the tank bands with a dilute wash (1 to 10) of Poly Scale Rust. This duplicates the area of paint scraped off as the tank expands and contracts. While you have the rust out, hit the springs in the trucks and the couplers. The wheels should be painted with Poly Scale Grimy Black on their faces and backs, and when dried, re-installed into the trucks.

Editors note: This article appeared in The SouthErneR’s summer 2004 issue and is reprinted with the author’s permission. The SouthErneR is the newsletter of the Southeastern Region. 

Making Stumps by the Hundreds

By Scott Perry
Photographs by Paul Voelker

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, a 4 x 8 layout based on a heavily logged mountain will easily require almost 400 unique stumps. The need for this many stumps came when Paul Voelker asked me to help scenic the Little River Railroad raffle layout last winter. To purchase that many stumps would have cost approximately \$300 and you would still have to paint



A closer look at some of the stumps before painting.

them. Besides there are only a few different stumps out there to buy so they would all look the same and most were too small. So, we decided to produce our own and set up a little factory in the basement.

You'll want to decide how big your stumps will be so the best thing to do is gather pictures of stumps from the time period that you want

to model. For the Little River layout the time period is 1920 and the trees of the area were mostly very large Chestnut, Poplar and Hemlock trees. Some of these trees were 14 feet in diameter, with the average being about 10 feet in diameter. Of course, there were many smaller trees that were cut at that time as well. What we want to do is make three different types of trees and make three different sizes of each of these types. That would be a total of nine trees. Since we were pressed for time and only had a week to get these done I only made six stumps and a few small ones.

Paul and I also wanted trees that you would find on the hilly terrain that the layout would represent. There were slopes on the layout between 45 and 60 degrees along with some flat areas. So of the six stumps, we would need a few that could be mounted on the slopes, just as the real trees grow. The pictures of the trees that I found in the logging books showed deep crevasses in the bark and unusual shapes, so I made photo copies of many of them and hung them over my work bench for reference.

I made the stump master using Primo modeling clay that can be purchased from any craft store or Walmart. This particular type of clay is really a form of heat-treatable plastic and holds detail very well. Using Lazy Susan stolen from my wife's spice cabinet, I put a sheet of tin foil down on the top. Take about a 1½ ounce of the Primo clay and work it between your fingers to make it soft and pliable. Then you can put the blob in the middle of the Lazy Susan.

After selecting a picture of a

stump that I liked, I made the general shape of the tree using the clay and a flat modeling clay tool. This gives you a smooth and flat surface when you cut the clay into shapes. Stumps are not perfectly round and they have a tendency to taper sharply as they rise upwards. Be sure to study the pictures very carefully. Notice that most of the really big trees are cut very high up, sometimes ten feet high



Applying color to the cut portion of the stump.

or more. Often I use a scale "person" while I'm carving so that I can keep the size of the stump in check. A ten foot high stump is about ten feet wide as well. Put your person next to it and see if it makes sense and looks good to the eye.

After sizing up the stump, I began to shape the leaders to the roots. I do this by taking the flat clay tool and making slices down the trunk line. Once these are dug into the clay, I'll smooth them out with my fingers to make the roots "flow" out of the trunk. Depending on if I

continued on page 6

wanted a tree growing at an angle I'll push the stump over slightly and then cut the top of the stump at an angle. When you cut a tree the top



This mold holds five different stumps.

surface is usually parallel to the ground, so you want your roots at angle and the top flat.

Once you have the basic shape of the tree you can carve the bark. Using a sharp dentist's pick, I make long vertical cuts down the trunk of the tree. I did this in a haphazard way so that the bark looked rough and textured. You don't have to be an artist to do this, just keep working until it looks like a tree. Don't worry about the little round balls of clay that are scattered over the trunk; we'll take care of that later.

When you are satisfied with the trunk, take a brass bristled brush and brush the trunk up and down. This will add fine detail to the stump and make the deep furrows more rounded and natural. You can use your fingers to better smooth the surface if it looks too rough.

On the top of the stump take your dentist's pick again and make some growth ring circles gently on the top. You will only need a few to get the look of a tree ring. To represent saw marks, take a hobby knife blade and just lay it flat a few times on the surface of the clay with a small amount of pressure, making a slight indentation in the clay. Do this a few times

at slightly different angles and it looked just like a saw mark.

Now wait until your wife leaves the house and sneak up to the oven. Lock all the doors and turn out the lights while you pre-heat the oven to the setting suggested on the clay. Put your clay stump on a baking pan and cook it the recommended time. When you take it out, the clay will be rock-hard and very HOT! You will burn your hand if you don't listen to me and I'll be sure to look for people with blisters on their hands at the next convention. Take the stump when it is warm back to the workbench and brush it hard to get the little clay balls off the bark. A perfect stump!

Now you can make tons of individual stumps like this very quickly, and just paint them and glue them to



Painting the bark on stumps.

the layout if you only need a few dozen. After making six of these and a few smaller ones we prepared to make molds of them.

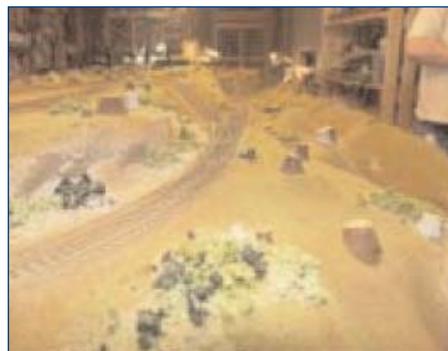
The best thing to do if you haven't made molds before is to go to the hobby or craft store and buy a resin casting starter kit from Alumilite called the Super Casting Kit. This has everything you need to get started in resin casting. You can also find a distributor online at www.alumilite.com and they have many educational references on the site, too. I'll use the mold maker material from Alumilite to make the stump mold.

Wash all the stumps in warm,

soapy water to remove the fingerprints from the surface. If you don't you will have fingerprints on the mold; trust me. After that, I arranged the stumps on a sheet of .010 styrene and built a dam using plastic strips around the stumps that was twice as high as the tallest stump, and about as much as wide. I sealed the dam with caulk and allowed it to dry. When dry, I dusted the stumps with a light coating of talc that I purchased at the drug store. Blow the remaining talc out of the dam and you are ready to cast.

Using the instructions from Alumilite carefully measure and mix the mold making compound. Try to keep as many bubbles out of the mixture as possible, but don't fail to mix it properly. Take a paint brush and paint the compound gently on to the stumps until each stump is covered. Then gently pour the mold compound over the stumps until the mold compound is completely filled. Go get some dirty clothes and put them in the washer so that the washer is vibrating. See your hobby can get chores done, too. Then place the mold damn on top of the washer and shake the bubbles out of the compound. Leave the mold to dry for 48 hours.

Once the mold is dry, carefully remove the stumps from the mold and you are ready to cast. If you want to make plastic stumps, you



Finished stumps applied to layout.

can follow the resin directions given by Alumilite. This is the fastest way to make stumps and have the most detail. I decided to make the stumps

out of Hydrocal plaster since I had 50 lbs of it on hand and it is much cheaper. The mold is capable of making hundreds of castings if you take care of it and clean it in water once in a while.

All you have to do is make a thick mixture of Hydrocal plaster and water, stir well and slowly pour the plaster into the molds. Taking a toothpick, you can stir the plaster in the mold to help remove the air bubbles. Allow them to dry for a while and then pop them out and start over on the next set. I usually do this in the morning before I go to work, come home and do another set before dinner, another one after dinner and so forth. It really goes pretty quick.

Once you have the stumps, it is time to start painting them. I used cheap acrylic paints that I also bought from Walmart, but they

weren't flat enough for the color I wanted. So I bought a few bottles of Accu-Flex at the hobby shop (16-175 Rail brown, 16-173 Mud and



More stumps applied to the flat and hilly areas of the layout.

16-11 Concrete gray) and they looked much better. Paint the tops of the stumps with a yellow wash made with paint and water. On the plaster, this will dry very quickly. Then paint the stump sides with different colors

of brown and grays. Most stumps are not true brown, so use brown sparingly. Then spray a light coat of black wash made with black ink and alcohol over the stump.

After the stump dries you will have a fine looking specimen. Finally I glued the stumps to the layout using hot glue. I also gathered up dried leaves from the front yard and I ground them up in a blender until they are a fine dust and sprinkled them over the stumps so that they looked more authentic. In about four evenings you can easily make 400 stumps and they will be unique and perfect for your layout. Have Fun!!

Editors note: This article appeared in The SouthErner's fall 2004 issue and is reprinted with the author's permission. The SouthErner is the newsletter of the Southeastern Region. 📧

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

Martin Brechbiel - Author
Ralph H. Douglas - Volunteer
Douglas Kirkpatrick - Volunteer

Division 12 - Carolina Southern

Rick Knight - Dispatcher

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** 📧

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR ALL MEMBERS

Notice is hereby given to the MER membership that the Philadelphia Division has asked the MER Board of Directors to allow the incorporation of New Castle County, Delaware within the boundaries of the Philadelphia Division. The Division believes that there are a number of modelers in the County that could benefit from this action. For the past two years, the Philadelphia Division has been holding a meet in New Castle County in a county facility, making it convenient for these modelers to attend. The Division also believes that this action can result in increasing membership in the NMRA and the MER for the modelers in the county that are not currently members.

Please send all comments or questions to:
Richard Foley, MER Secretary
2021 Wallace St.
Philadelphia, PA 19130-3221.

Independence Junction 2006 Update



THE MEMBERS of Philadelphia Division of the Mid Eastern Region welcome you to join us in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for Independence Junction 2006, the NMRA National Convention July 2-9, 2006. The Convention Committee, as well as the staff of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau and the staff of the Convention Hotel are all working tirelessly to present a memorable convention. We are proud of our city and of the quality and variety of model railroading you'll find here.

LAYOUT TOURS

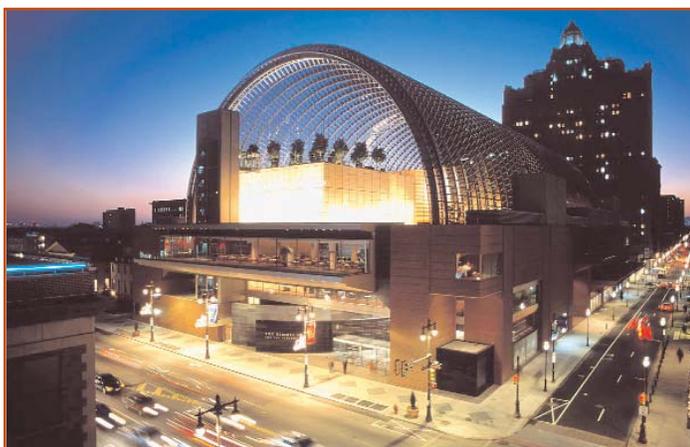
The Greater Philadelphia area is blessed with a wealth of quality model railroad layouts and extremely talented modelers. We're pleased to present a large and diverse selection of layouts that will include all popular scales, gauges and themes. Home, club layouts, live steam and garden railroads will be represented. Most of the layouts have stunning scenery, equipment and operations. Many layouts have been featured in model railroad publications. Tours are scheduled to run in the morning, afternoon and evening with some all day tours being offered.

RAIL / PROTOTYPE TOURS

The Philadelphia region is a major rail and industrial area. We have arranged an exciting mix of railroad-oriented tours, including museums, railroads, and rail-related industries. These include Steamtown National Historic Site, the Strasburg RR and Railroad Museum of PA, the Wanamaker Kempton & Southern Railroad, SEPTA Trolley Tour, the Altoona Railroaders Museum including Horseshoe Curve. Also on tour is the B&O Railroad Museum, AMTRAK Locomotive Shops, the Reading & Northern Railroad, Reading Co. Technical & Historical Society, the East Broad Top Railroad, SEPTA, PATCO Shops, CSX Intermodal, and the New Hope & Ivyland Railroad. We are sure you will find something of interest as it applies to model railroading.

NON-RAIL TOURS

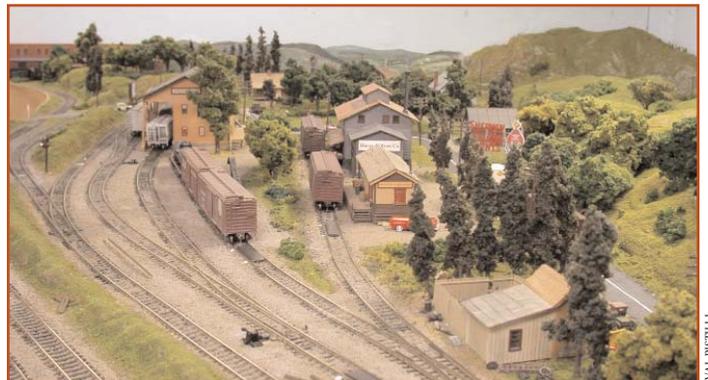
A full schedule of non-rail activities will be presented at IJ2006. Among



Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts.

them are trips to Longwood Gardens, the Adventure Aquarium, Philadelphia Italian Market, Hershey Park, and the Philadelphia Zoo. Tours will be offered to Atlantic City, New Jersey, the Hagley Museum, Winterthur, the U.S. Mint, USS New Jersey, and the Franklin Institute.

Take the Philadelphia Walking Tour or tour Valley Forge Park. The National Park Service manages two of the key attractions which are the Independence Mall Visitors Center and the National Constitution Center. In a shopping mood? Take a trip to The Gallery Mall, a short walk from the Convention Center. Or, how about taking a drive to shop at the Lancaster County outlets? Take in a Phillies game or take the kids to Sesame Place. Sample the local suds at Yards Brewery. Cruise on the



Layout by Bill Blackburn.

Spirit of Philadelphia, providing fun for everyone: dining, dancing, sight-seeing and entertainment all rolled into one nautical experience.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Independence Junction 2006 will feature a full range of judged contests for both modelers and non-rail participants. These contests draw some of the finest models, photos, and handicrafts.

A silent auction has become a tradition at the National Model Railroad Convention. The NMRA Company Store will offer for sale convention memorabilia and individual consignment items from throughout the NMRA.

NATIONAL TRAIN SHOW

The National Train Show is one of the largest train shows in the world. The National Train Show will be open Friday morning for convention registrants only. Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday the show will be open to the general public. Admission to the National Train Show for all days is included in the full convention registration package.

CLINICS

The clinic program will feature presentations by talented modelers,

authors and experts in every field of model railroading. The clinics will vary in presentation style and some will include hands-on learning. Certain clinics are educational in nature on how to do basic skills; others are “tracked” with visits to prototype sites.

Modeling with the Masters Workshops and Make and Take Work-



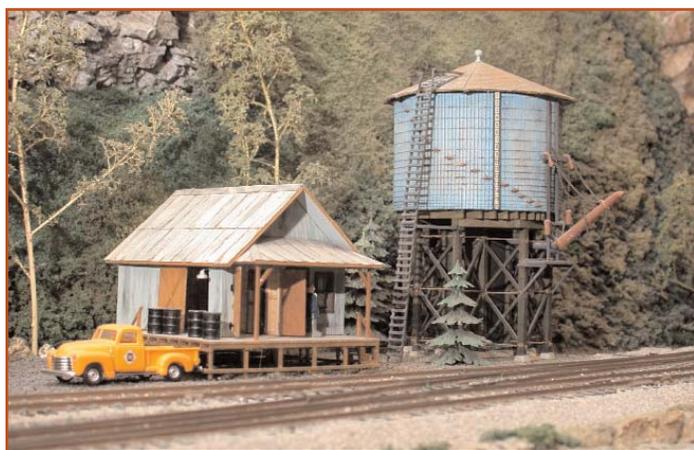
N.S. (former P.R.R.) Alto Tower

VAL PISTILLI

shops will offer a team of Master Model Railroaders to help you personally build a model to take home with you. Several different modeling subjects and projects are offered, including an electronics workshop, scratch building a small bridge, scratch building styrene structures and constructing a laser structure kit.

SIG ACTIVITIES

Several Special Interest Groups will conduct programs at the convention. The Layout Design, Operations, and other SIGs will conduct activities including exhibits, a picnic, and operating contests, and extra fare tours.



Layout by Ron Patzer

VAL PISTILLI

JUNIOR CLINIC PROGRAM

The NMRA Junior Clinic Program will be conducted during the National Train Show. The clinic program is intended for youth modelers and will show them how to do things in model railroading in a small group structured environment.



Center City (downtown)

ANTHONY SINAGOGA

NON-RAIL PROGRAM

We've placed special focus on bringing you and your families an outstanding number of exciting and unique events of general interest, including clinics and other events. These will include subjects such as minor home repairs, presentations by the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the American Rose Society and health and safety clinics. Scrapbooking and flower arranging will top the arts and crafts clinics.

MORE INFORMATION

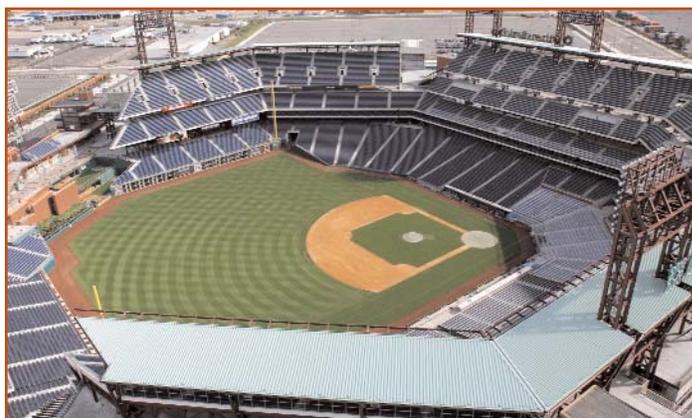
For the latest information and convention registration, visit www.ij2006.org or write to:

Independence Junction 2006

514 Dover Place

St. Louis MO 63111-2338

Hotel reservations can be made by calling 1-800-266-9432 or at www.ij2006.org. 



Lincoln Financial Field

ANTHONY SINAGOGA

Volunteers for Independence Junction 2006

The NMRA exists for each of us not only to gain, but to give. Volunteers make conventions work and you can earn AP points while performing this vital task. Everyone is encouraged to support the convention with a few hours of your time and effort. By volunteering, you not only keep costs down, but you help your fellow modelers get more from the convention. Volunteering is the ultimate step in becoming a full-fledged NMRA member.

We need volunteers to work all aspects of the convention, not only during, but prior to the convention. Pick an area where you can help, fill out the form below or download it from our web page at www.ij2006.org. Send the completed form to the following address:

IJ 2006 Volunteer Coordinator
818 George Street
Norristown, PA 19401

You can also email our Volunteer Coordinator, Bill Palmer at wjp0268@comcast.net. The only requirement is that you maintain NMRA membership and register for the convention.

Independence Junction 2006 Volunteer Survey Form

Independence Junction 2006 needs a large group of volunteers to perform a host of functions in preparation for, and during the convention. Please indicate on the form below what you can bring to this effort. Thanks for your willingness to participate to make IJ2006 the best ever.

Administrative Functions

- Registration/Information _____
- Publications _____
- Door Prizes _____
- Publicity _____

Outside Activities

- Layout Tour Guides _____
- Prototype Tour Guides _____
- Railfan Tour Guides _____
- Tour Departure Mgr. _____

Inside Activities

- Clinics Staff _____
- Non-Rail Activities _____
- Auction Staff _____

To assist us in assigning volunteers, please indicate your previous convention (National, Division, and Region) experience, as well as professional skills (computer literacy, word processing, administrative, etc).



2006 NMRA National Convention

July 2-9, 2006

Action-packed Railfan Tours!

- Steamtown National Historic Site
- Strasburg & Railroad Museum of PA
- Wanamaker Kempton & Southern Railroad
- SEPTA Trolley Tour
- Altoona Railroaders Museum & Horseshoe Curve
- B&O Railroad Museum
- AMTRAK Locomotive Shops
- Reading & Northern Railroad
- Reading Co. Technical & Historical Society
- East Broad Top Railroad
- SEPTA, PATCO Shops
- CSX Intermodal
- New Hope & Ivyland Railroad

www.ij2006.org for info

How NSP unloaded power poles back in the '50s

By Dave Vos
Photograph by Steve Kindig

I RECENTLY BUILT THREE LOADS of power poles to use as flatcar and gondola loads on my Cumberland Northern Railway. During the early part of my career at Northern States Power Company (NSP) I used to help deliver and set poles used for replacement or new construction in the west Twin Cities Metro area.

The sources for these poles were four commercial pole yards: Republic Creosoting in St. Louis Park, jointly served by the Milwaukee and M & St. L railroads, and three serviced by the Soo line; Naugle Pole Co. in Brooklyn Center, another in North Minneapolis adjacent to Humboldt Yard, and Bell Pole Company in New Brighton. The poles were delivered to Northern States Power on flat cars. During this time, it never occurred to me to pay attention to how those poles were unloaded from railroad cars on to the storage rack where we would pick them up.

At the recent union retirees meeting I attended, I ran into Clarence, who was the yard man at the NSP Edina Service Center during those years. Here's what he told me.

NSP's Edina Service Center was the Minneapolis area and pickup point for power poles in the '50s, '60s and '70s. There was a big wooden rack that held a good supply of poles about three feet off the ground. The poles were delivered to us aboard flatcars by the M.N. & S. railroad on our spur that paralleled the mainline. We also received power transformers, cross arms, and other material in boxcars.

We had a small Bantam truck crane to handle the heavy work. To unload a flat car we would wrap the crane cable around all the poles and snug up on it so it squeezed the pole load together. Then on the unloading side of the car, we'd either lift or cut the 4 x 4 or 4 x 6 wooden stakes that held the load on the car. Sometimes the poles would shift a bit, but the cable held them secure in a bunch. The load was usually held together by iron wire or Signode strap-

ping. We'd have to cut all those ties, too. You had to watch out because sometimes ties were under a lot of strain and they'd really fly when you cut them.

We'd lay some 4 x 6s between the flatcar and the pole rack and then slowly loosen the crane cable. The poles – at least the first

bunch – would sort of unload themselves as they rolled from the top of the load onto the rack. We always kept them under control with the crane cable. Later on we'd have to help them off the cars using a cant hook and sweat. The last few could sometimes be a challenge if the rack was full and it was uphill. Occasionally we'd use the crane. We'd run a loop of cable around a half-dozen or so poles, then lift them over onto the rack.

The worst time was a hot, sunny summer day. By late morning the sun would be cooking the creosote pretty well, and if you weren't careful you could get a nasty chemical burn between the creosote vapors and the sunshine.

The poles were picked up from the rack and distributed to work sites by a crew that was dedicated to this work. They used a semi-trailer rig with an open, rack-type trailer, like a log truck. They could make this trailer shorter or longer by pulling some pins and stretching the center beam. They hauled poles as long as 80 or 90 feet,

but only a couple at a time because of the weight.

That's all gone now. Nowadays, when a crew needs a pole, they just drive up to Bell Pole Company in New Brighton and pick up what they need. The modern line trucks with all their hydraulics are capable of pretty much anything.

Knowing all this, I don't think I'll ever want to unload those three pole loads I made for my layout!

Editors note: This article appeared in The Fusee's Winter 2004/2005 issue and is reprinted with the author's permission. The Fusee is the newsletter of the Thousand Lakes Region. 



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COURTESY OF THE FREIGHT YARD
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.



F.L. MATSON (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

WESTERN MD. N-SCALE CARS	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE*	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#29290	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$_____
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Shipping \$2.50 for first car, + \$1.50 for each additional car				\$_____

RF&P HO-SCALE CARS	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE*	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#2836	_____	\$11.95	\$14.95	\$_____
#2874	_____	\$11.95	\$14.95	\$_____
Shipping: \$2.00 for each car (not for each order)				\$_____

* Please list your MER or NMRA Membership # _____

MER CLOTH PATCH**	QUANTITY _____	\$3.00 including S&H	\$_____
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MER HO-SCALE STRUCTURE KIT**	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE*	TOTAL
Bunn's Seed & Feed	_____	\$75.00 postpaid	\$_____
Small Freight Station	_____	\$25.00 postpaid	\$_____

THE LOCALS** —	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE*	TOTAL
(all issues 1997-2004) on CD	_____	\$5.00 postpaid	\$_____

** Only available to MER members.

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Tips and Tools of the Trade: Coupler Maintenance

Story and photographs by John Darlington

IF YOU ARE LIKE ME, the one that frustrates me more than anything else is having problems with couplers. All couplers are subject to problems if they are not assembled and/or maintained properly. Some of us have the idea that couplers that come attached to engines and cars are “ready to roll”, but unfortunately this is not necessarily the case. Before you place a car or engine on the tracks for the first time take a good look at the couplers to see if they are the right height or have any manufacturing flaws that need to be corrected. For instance, I had some trouble with the new Atlas coupler on a couple of tank cars that I was running during our show. It seemed that they came apart rather easily if you inadvertently put upward or downward pressure on them. When I brought the pieces home I noticed that the clips that are designed to keep the coupler pocked together were weak and easily separated. I remembered an assembly instruction contained in a Micro Trains coupler kit that suggested to seal the coupler pocket halves together with the light touch of a solder gun. Sure enough that took care of the problem, so now I will do that to all Atlas couplers as part of my preventive maintenance routine.

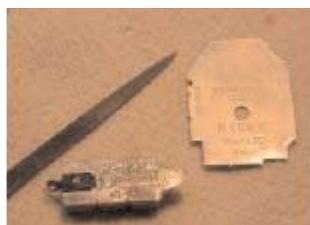


The before photo.



The after photo.

There is another difficulty that I have encountered over the years, as I am sure you will have as well. This problem has to do primarily with Rapido couplers although InterMountain has the same problem to a lesser degree. When couplers come out of the mold they are sometimes left with a seam where the two halves were joined. If left unattended, this seam will be the source of uncoupling between cars and/or engines. There is a simple way to fix the problem using a small file. Place the file on the inside of the knuckle and give it a couple of light passes, which should eliminate the seam. Again make this part of your routine before you place the engine or car in service and most of your uncoupling problems will disappear.



Some of the tools required for coupler maintenance.



A close up, highlight the seam in the coupler.

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pear. Finally, don't forget to check the height of the coupler using Micro Trains or NMRA gauges.

Editors note: This article appeared in the Bantrak Newsletter in January 2004 and is reprinted with permission from the author. The Bantrak Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-Trak club. 

Senior Centers and Boy Scouts

By Dave Lynam, MMR

THE CAROLINA PIEDMONT DIVISION 13 meets monthly at the local Cary Senior Center. In return for meeting space the CPD13 has agreed to provide some programs for the members of the Center. Recently, ten patrons of the Cary Senior Center attended a talk that covered the NMRA, MER, and the Carolina Piedmont Division 13. Topics included the Division's



This is the original Boy Scout Model Railroading Merit badge.

purpose, programs and activities. The CPD13's Holiday Trains for Kids charity and Boy Scout Model Railroading Merit Badge programs were discussed, as well as the various gauges and scales of model trains that are available to the would be hobbyist. Another topic of great interest was the new DCC technology and occasional operating sessions that are available. Each attendee received a copy of **Scale Rails**, a detailed brochure describing

NMRA programs and member benefits, and a Rail Pass membership application. On display were various models and dioramas, and a question and answer session was conducted. Several folks expressed an interest in attending a future meeting of the Division. We look forward to their visit with us and will encourage them to begin enjoying the "worlds greatest hobby". Maybe a senior center in your area would appreciate a similar program.

If you have a local Boy Scout Troop nearby, a similar program would be a great way to attract the younger folks to model railroading. Scouting already has a Merit Badge to work toward, so the organizing is half done! How about donating a train set to get them started and watch what happens! It's not much work and you may get a few new members in the process! Give it a try! 



This is the redesigned Boy Scout Model Railroading Merit badge that began being used in January 2005.

The Great Transcontinental Rail Journey

By Robert (Bob) Conley

IN 2002 MY WIFE AND I retired after long professional careers. We planned to take at least one great trip yearly to reward ourselves for all the years of working. We cruised to Europe, Bermuda, Alaska and Hawaii and enjoyed the experiences. However, in 2005 we decided to get away from the mob scene, leave the passport at home and take a less hectic trip in the U.S. Being a Model Railroader for over 40 years and a prototype train lover I was stunned when my wife suggested a transcontinental rail journey on the private luxury train, the American Orient Express (AOE). The next day we booked the trip.

We flew to Los Angeles and stayed overnight at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Marina Del Rey where we met our tour director and 81 fellow passengers. The next morning after a delightful breakfast provided by AOE we proceeded by motor coach to the famous and historic Los Angeles Union Station. We were greeted by the uniformed train staff and escorted to our Grand Suite complete with two lower beds, couch and sofa seat, pull out table and private sink, water closet and shower in the sleeper "Savannah". The train included eight sleepers, a club car, two dining cars, a vista dome car, and an observation Car. All this comfort for a total of 83 passengers. An hour later we began "The Great Transcontinental Rail Journey", the longest of the AOE scheduled yearly trips.

Our first stop was the Grand Canyon where the train went right up to the Canyon on tracks of the Grand Canyon Railway. We spent a great day including a gourmet lunch at the El Tovar Inn. The following day found us in Albuquerque, New Mexico followed by a fun day in Santa Fe, New Mexico. We were wined and dined on board that night and most of the next day en route to San Antonio, Texas. The entire day was spent touring this

beautiful city. It was then on to New Orleans, Louisiana (before Rita and Katrina) where we spent one day touring and a night of fun and feasting in outstanding restaurants courtesy of the AOE. Our next scheduled stop was Savannah, Georgia. We toured and dined in this charming southern city. We proceeded to Charleston, South Carolina as our final fabulous city tour. The next day we concluded our trip at Washington Union Station where our luggage was delivered curbside to a waiting taxi for our final destination, Alexandria, Virginia.



Bob and Dorthory Conley standing with their porter outside the American Orient Express.

The travel route covers 3883 miles over tracks of the Union Pacific and 11 fallen flag roads. It took us a little over 5 boring hours from Washington D.C. to Los Angeles and 11 days of trains, scenery, fun and absolute luxury to return. The AOE experience can only be described as

totally first class, with superb dining, a beautifully matched consist, spotless mahogany interiors, attentive staff and great entertainment. For 11 days everything was organized, paid for and scheduled by the wonderful AOE staff. The only responsibility we were burdened with was to read the daily program, decide what tour we wanted to take that day and choose what to order from the extensive menu. I spent a lot of time in the Observation Car "New York" sipping martini's and watching trains and the scenery go by with not a care in the world. It was truly a

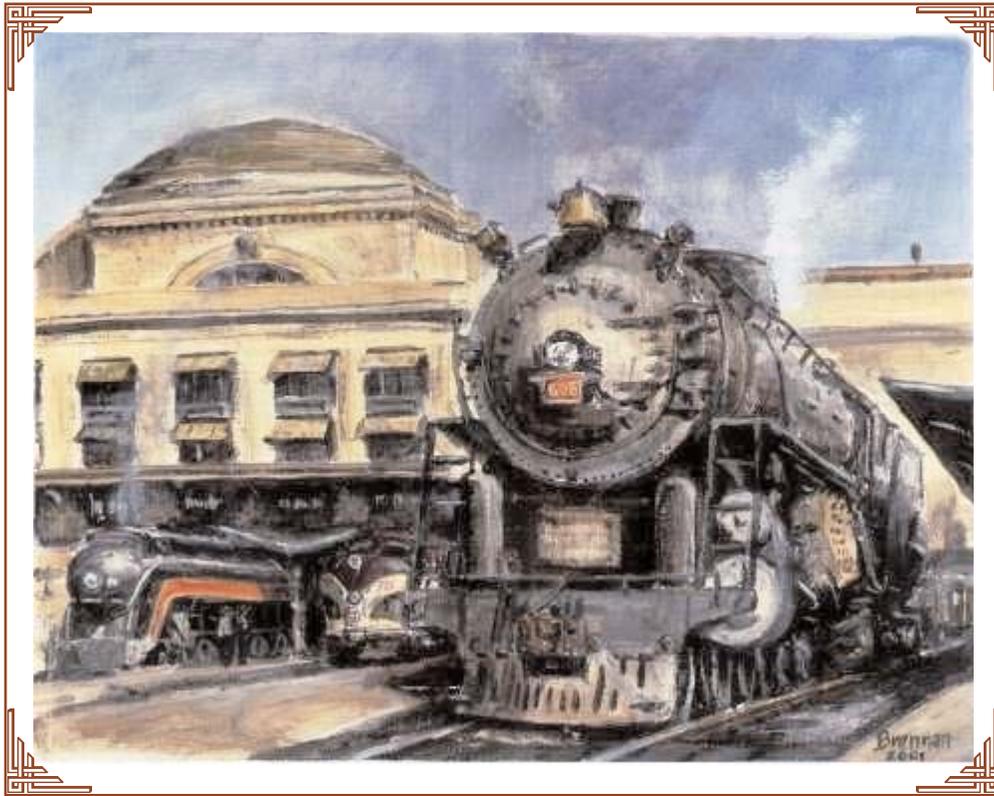
great experience and my wife wanted to know when are we taking another trip with AOE. She would like to take the "Coastal Culinary Adventure" in November 2006. This trip is seven days and travels between Seattle and Los Angeles.

The only downside was I gave in to temptations by the second day and gained six unwanted pounds. For a train lover who could ask for anything more.

For more information visit www.americanorientexpress.com or call 1-800-320-4206. 



The American Orient Express waits to depart.



Jacksonville Station

by Larry Brennan

*Editor's note: Larry is a member of the Southeastern Region and his painting originally appeared in **The SouthErneR**'s summer 2004 issue. If you would like to showcase an original drawing, photograph or painting, please submit them to the editor.*

Upcoming Elections

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

John Johnson
22398 Scojo Drive
Franklin, VA 23851-2819
757-562-5917

Positions Available

- **Official Photographer**
(primarily you shoot model contest photos)

Please contact Clint Hyde to apply, chyde@cox.net. 

Calling All Readers

We need to show our support for the NMRA and specifically the MER by producing the best and most informative newsletter possible, to do that I need your help. Our newsletter is called **The Local**, because local people benefit from reading it every time. Please write and submit any articles (with or without photos) to the editor via e-mail stevespressrr@yahoo.com or via the snail mail address listed on page 2. Don't pass up this great and easy opportunity to help out and earn AP points at the same time!!

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***CALLBOARD
 Coming Events**

**March 24-26, 2006, 4 PM to 10 PM Fri-
 day, all day Sat & Sun.** The second
 Biannual Valley Forge Rail Prototype
 Modelers Meet, Desmond Great Valley
 Hotel & Conference Center, One Lib-
 erty Blvd., Malvern, PA. Reserva-
 tions:1-800-575-1776, 8:30-6:00.
 Room rate \$99, you must mention
 RPM for a reservation!

Thirty five clinics on prototype mod-
 eling, operations, structures, industries,
 etc. You get the idea; it's about the pro-
 totype! There will be a vendor's room
 Saturday and Sunday morning, banquet
 Saturday night (sorry, no speeches or
 awards), a large room for attendees to
 show their models, and on Sunday PM,
 a home layout tour. Registration \$35.
 For details, visit www.phillynmra.org.
 Send a check for \$35 (plus \$30 for the
 banquet) made out to: Philadelphia
 Division, NMRA MER, to Paul Backen-
 stose, 103 Uwchlan Ave., Down-
 ington, PA, 19335. Last day for mail reg-
 istration is March 15th.