

The Local

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION OF THE NMRA



Volume 63

MARCH – APRIL 2008

Number 2

On The Road - Part 1 A series article

Article and photographs by Mike White

MOST OF US have a tendency to filter out the familiar when traveling on the road. This may be the reason that highway signs seem to be under represented on most of our model railroads. We do a pretty good job at grade crossings, if the photos in the model railroad press can be used as a sample, but what about the rest of the highway?

Highway signs are far more varied and numerous than most pikes would lead you to think. As an example, Figure 1 shows the Maryland State Roads Commission (now the State Highway Administration) example of the correct highway signage and placement for the intersection of MD Rt. 2 and MD Rt. 416 (now northbound MD Rt. 4) in Calvert County, Maryland. At the time this was published (1955), this area was entirely rural. Since this is an era that the majority of layouts depict (steam to diesel transition), it has application to a large number of pikes out there.

Model railroaders tend to view layout scenery from a, well ..., "railroad" perspective. That might be why RR crossings seem to get the detailed attention they do. This article is an attempt to get you to look at your road scenery from a "road" perspective and to add prototypical details to your roads with the same skills you've developed in building your "railroad" scenery.

Highway signage in the U.S. is defined by the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) first published in 1935. The various states used this as a general standard, but many local differences were still maintained until the publication of the 1954

complete revision which established, in addition to the red stop sign (anyone remember when they were yellow? - see Figure 2) uniform nationwide standards which are still in use today. Short Quiz: Can you name the one highway sign that has remained basically unchanged since its introduction in the 1930s? The answer is at the end of this article.

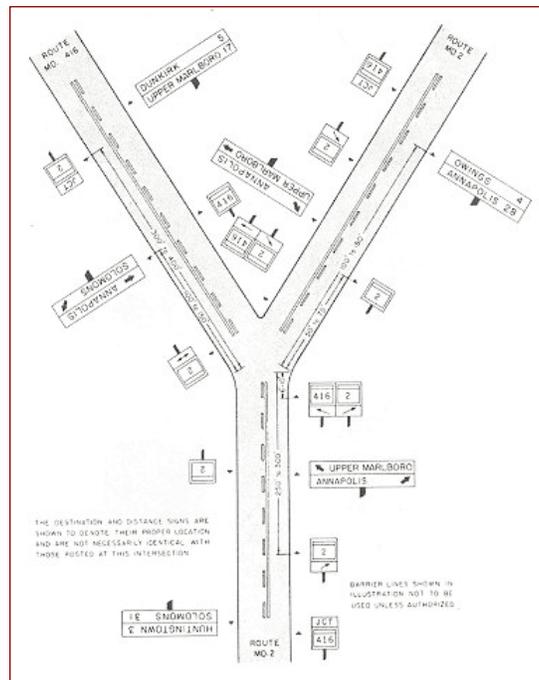


Figure 1: Maryland sign placement standard for rural intersection in 1955.

There are many resources available to the model railroader for creating model highway signage. The first, of course, is the MUTCD itself available at http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno_2003r1r2.htm. In the first sentence of the screen that comes up are choices of either the PDF or HTML version. Click on PDF. This is a PDF file in sections that can be opened or downloaded as needed. In most sections you will need to scroll down into the file to find the graphics.

As an aid to putting your modeling era in historical perspective, the following sites provide brief histories and/or timelines tracing the development of highways in each of our states:

continued on page 4

Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager

We have a revised CD available with all of **The Locals** from 1996 through 2007. That's 12 years of fun reading available for \$5 including postage. (See the MER products listing elsewhere in this newsletter for ordering instructions.) **The Local** issues are stored on the CD in standard .pdf format. The same issues are available on the MER website in the Archives web page, but the CD circumvents a lot of downloading if you want the whole collection.

Good news! The MER Board has elected to continue to subsidize NMRA Rail Pass membership for another year. Our experience with Rail Pass members who subsequently joined the NMRA at regular membership rates is pretty good, about one third, better than the overall NMRA experience with the plan. So, if you have fellow model rail fans at your club or in your neighborhood that are not NMRA members, let them be aware of this great opportunity to "sample" our offerings. See the description, instructions and application form elsewhere in this newsletter.

And speaking of membership benefits, some members have experienced missed NMRA **Scale Rails**, calendars and renewal reminder notices. If you or your fellow members believe they have similar problems, please be in touch with me at the snail mail or e-mail addresses shown for me at the right of this column. I will work with NMRA National Headquarters to resolve the problems.

The MER Board is concerned with the possible mailing problems from NMRA National Headquarters. Those of you who receive **The Local** as a paper mailed edition, will see NMRA membership and **The Local** subscription lapse reminders on the mailing labels. However, not all MER members receive a mailed copy of **The Local**. As such the MER Board has commissioned me to send out NMRA membership reminder notices to all MER members. I will try to do that using e-mail as much as possible to save on mailing expenses. So please keep me posted on any changed or new e-mail addresses. Those MER and other model railroad friends subscribing to the mailed paper edition of **The Local** should continue to check their subscription dates on the mailing label.

As always *Keep in Touch* with any questions or changes in your subscriptions or addresses. A current address on file saves the MER some money.

The Local

Official Publication of the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
A Tax-Exempt Organization

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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, MER President.

IS THE NMRA/MER JUST A SOCIAL CLUB? One of our members complained of this in a letter to me a few months ago. But is it a fair and accurate assertion? And if it's true, is it a problem? Model railroading can be a solo or group hobby, and plenty of folks choose to work solo (for that matter a lot of hobbies work that way). There is a different kind of enjoyment from the group participation and certainly the NMRA encourages that with the activities of the Regions and Divisions. Of course if you don't live anywhere near a Division, the group aspect is going to be hard to get involved in. With the rise of the Internet, it is possible to do more group interaction without leaving home, but it is still a bit thin.

In my time within the NMRA/MER/Potomac Division, I have certainly enjoyed it as a social club but also as a source for information, model judging, a group where I have made new friends and gone on outings with others.....all the good things. I have helped organize and run things. I have helped others meet folks and find a new information source. I think those are pretty much the same things you would get in any organization.

One-way to think of most hobby organizations is that they all have at least three components: artistic, competitive and social. The artistic component is structured for the model builder, while the competitive part focuses on the awards and AP program, and the social interaction works in our gatherings (like the local Division meets and conventions). The NMRA also has a standards body, which not many other organizations have.

At the Division level, how often you get together and why, depends on how socially oriented the group is. I can imagine that if you aren't active in a Division, or even an official member of

one, going to a meeting might be socially daunting. I recall one of my first episodes and how very awkward it felt going to a meeting of a group where most of them already knew each other. This is a classic and age-old problem. If I knew how to make that easier, I could write a book and give lessons. And of course, as you've heard other times and places: you get out about as much as you put in. If you want to participate, but live a ways away from a Division population center, and can't make the Division meetings, there are always alternatives.

Martin Brechbiel (coincidentally a friend I met only because of the NMRA) is going to take over Ray Bilodeau's job as MER Contest Coordinator, which means he'll run the Contest/AP room at the fall convention. He would like a permanent assistant, so if you're interested, let him know.

Elections are also coming. President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are all offices up for voting this year. Remember that April 15th (tax day), is the deadline for getting your photo and candidate statement in to John Johnson. See address below. Remember, to be eligible for President, you must have served a full term (2 years) in another Region elected office. 

To submit your name, photo and position statement for election contact by April 15:

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

Mid-Eastern Region National Model Railroad Association Advertising Policy

THE MID-EASTERN REGION (MER) publishes a newsletter entitled **The Local**, which is distributed to about 1000 people in the Mid-Atlantic area, and others via an electronic (e-mail) version.

The MER wishes to advertise those Manufacturers that reside within the Region. This would give both the Manufacturer and the NMRA member a "home" relationship.

The MER would like to publish articles on the Regions Manufacturers about their products and processes. This could include a history of the Company.

The current advertising rates for **The Local** are as follows and must include camera ready art:

1/8th page, roughly a business card — \$60.00 for 6 issues

1/4 page for MER Divisions (one time) — \$50.00

If you are interested in having an article about your firm distributed to your target audience, model railroaders, or just to place an ad, please contact the following,

MER Advertising Manager
Charles G. Hladik
198 Fireoak Lane
Rustburg, VA. 24588
Phone: (434) 821-4941
E-mail: rutlandrs@aol.com 

Maryland: www.sha.state.md.us. In the center, click on the shield “SHA * A Century of Progress”. Then in the right sidebar, click on “History” for historical information on the development of Maryland highways.

Virginia: www.virginiadot.org/about/vdot_hgwy_sys.asp. At the bottom of the page, click on “VDOT History Highlights” for historical information on the development of Virginia highways

Delaware: www.dartfirststate.com/information/history/deldot/. History of the development of the Delaware highway system.

Pennsylvania: www.pahighways.com. Near the bottom right of the page click on “Exit 20, PA Highways History” for a brief history of Pennsylvania highway construction.



Figure 2: A modern and an old stop sign

North Carolina: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Carolina_Highway_System. This is the best article I was able to find providing historical information on the North Carolina highway system.

Below we will explore various signs and standards as well as details on how to use the resources available to make signs for your own states. I used the resources of Internet for most of my research and sourcing of material for sign modeling. In addition, I spent time at the MD SHA sign shop, obtaining additional material. I was fortunate enough to obtain a copy of the SHA's 1944 Manual of Traffic Control Devices. Since the era I model is the mid-30s, this will be invaluable to me as a reference. On the assumption that most of you model the steam to diesel transition era, however, the Internet sources will be sufficient for most.

Hardware/Software Needed for this part of the project:

- A PC running Microsoft XP or higher.
- Microsoft Word 2003 or higher.
- Adobe Reader (available free on the internet)
- Paint NET v3.20 (available free on the internet, a link is included).



Figure 3: State Route signs from the five MER states. From the left: Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, North Carolina

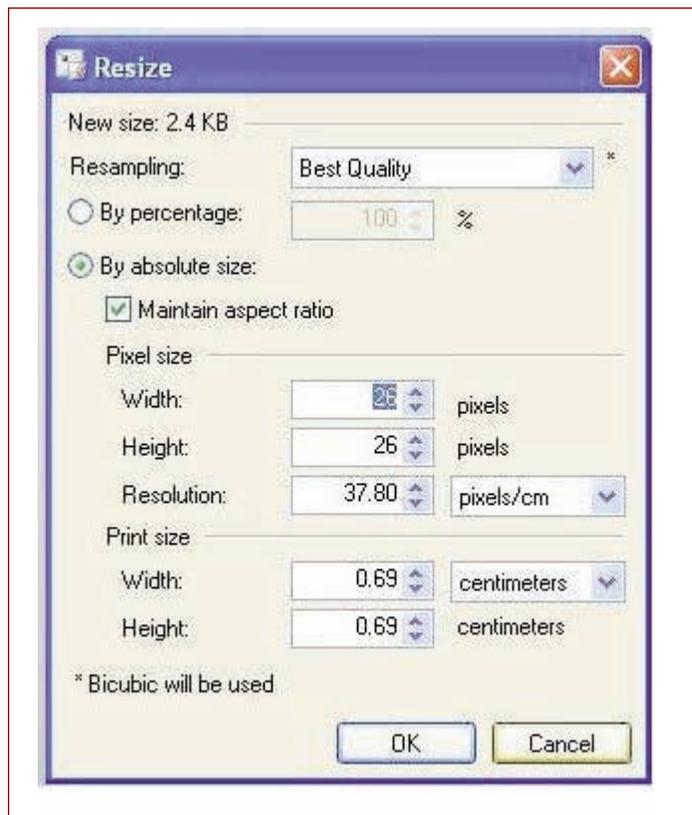


Figure 4: The resize dialog box from Paint NET.

It is essential for you to have software capable of photo editing. For our purposes, and to get everyone on the same page, download and install Paint NET v3.22 from www.download.com/3000-2192_4-10782678.html. It is very similar to Paint Shop Pro and best of all it's FREE.

Let's get started. Figure 3 shows State Route signs for each of the 5 MER states. These were all obtained from www.trafficsign.us/m1.html. Scroll down until you see the link for “Shields Up!



Bonus figure: The photo above is of a WW II period yellow stop sign preserved at the MD SHA sign shop.

Do-It-Yourself Highway Route Marker Generator”, (the actual link is www.kendrick.org/shields-up/). Click on it, and you will see the Shields Up program entry screen. Choose your State, Type, and Number (Rt. #). Leave the Banner, Shape, Font, and Scale at their default settings for now. For State Rt. # signs, the Type is “Primary”. When you're satisfied with your choices, click the “Shield Up” button. You should now see a very large Route # sign. Right-click on the sign, and select “Save Picture As” from the list of

options. I had previously created a directory named “MD Highway Signs” and that’s where I put mine.

This is where the photo editing software comes into the picture. Start Paint NET and open the just saved Rt. # sign file. As saved, the image is much too large to use as is. In Paint NET, click the menu choice “Image”, then “Resize” to resize the image. You will see a dia-

**Figure 5: The finished product!
A Delaware Route #1 sign in
HO scale using Paint NET.**



log box that looks like Figure 4. This is what we want to do – but to what dimensions? For this information go to: http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/ser-shs_millennium_eng.htm which is the Federal Highway Administration Standard Highway Signs – 2004 Edition, English version. In the “Guide Signs” section we find that the standard for State Route marker signs is 24” x 24”. For HO scale this is 7 mm x 7 mm, or about 26 pixels x 26 pixels. In the dialog box, if not already set, change the “resolution” units to “pixels/cm” as shown in Figure 4, and either of the values in “Print size” to 0.7 cm. (The values shown in Figure 4 are those adjusted by Paint NET after I did the resize using the values above).

From the “File” menu, “Save As” the resulting graphic to a different name than the original image you started with. Accept the default values in the “Save Configuration” dialog that comes up by clicking “OK”. Congratulations, You have just made the graphic for an HO Scale Route # sign. See Figure 5.

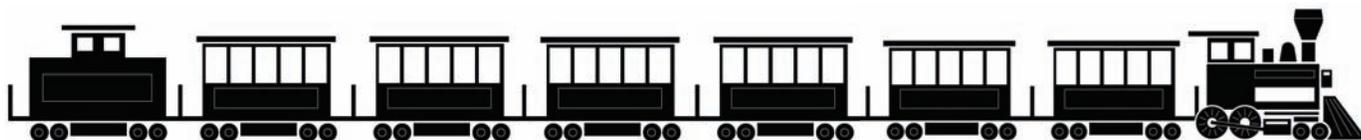
In Part 2, we will actually make some signs that you can use on your model railroad and explore some other types of highway signs that you can model.

For the answer to the earlier question, see Figure 6.



**Figure 6: TRIVIA ANSWER: The
sign that has remained virtually
unchanged since its original design.**

MIKE WHITE lives in the Potomac Division where he models HO scale. 



***NEEDED: Someone to run the MER Convention Auction Team beginning in 2008**

RESPONSIBILITIES include making sure that auction items get recorded properly in the auction software, making sure the auction-team volunteers are available, that there is an auctioneer available (normally the inimitable Bob Charles), and that sales info is recorded properly during the auction and that checkout is handled completely and correctly.

NEEDED: Someone to be in charge of MER Convention door-prize/raffle items, beginning in 2008. Responsibilities include contacting potential donors (existing list available) and requesting donation items, making sure that there are raffle tickets present at the convention, and little boxes to put the tickets in, bringing the items to the convention, setup, and final distribution of the items near the end of the convention.

NEEDED: Someone to be in charge of the *Made in the MER* Trade Show, beginning in 2008. Responsibilities include finding potential participants, talking to them, convincing them to participate, getting them to give a clinic at the convention, organizing their space at the convention, making sure that part goes ok. If you are interested in doing this, you can assist this year, as we smooth out the process.

CONTACT MER President, Clint Hyde (all contact information is listed on page 2) if interested! 

Using Spreadsheet Software For a Model Train Inventory

By Bill Mosteller

AS NEIL HUMPHREY'S SUGGESTED in "Constructing an Inventory for a Model Train Collection" (see the Nov-Dec 2007 issue of **The Local**), you can use paper and pencil, a word processing program, or custom software to manage your inventory. I choose to use a spreadsheet program for two important concerns, car weight and locomotive current draw.

Car Weight – The spreadsheet should have two columns, actual car length (in inches) and scale length (in feet). The spreadsheet can be set up so that one of these values is calculated automatically from the other, using an appropriate formula. A third column can use the actual car length and the NMRA's car weight recommended practice (RP-20.1) to calculate the desired car weight. Finally, a difference column can be used to calculate actual car weight and used to identify the cars most at variance from the recommended practice and thus in need of tuning.

Current Draw – For locomotives, a current draw column can provide value. The program can sort the locomotive list by descending current draw and identify those locomotives whose motors may be failing or in need of replacement. If anyone is of a statistical bent, one could calculate means and standard deviations and identify extremes in that way.

Additionally, spreadsheet programs can provide capabilities that help you manage your inventory. Here are two examples:

Filtering – Microsoft Excel (and probably other programs) provides the ability to filter the display by column contents. Thus, you can display and print a list of all the hoppers in your fleet without being distracted by the boxcars.

Date Columns – You may be tempted to overload fields in a spreadsheet. For example, suppose you belong to a club that inspects its cars regularly. You might be tempted to implement an inspection column and have the inspectors enter their initials and the date in this column. Such overloaded fields can defeat the capabilities of the spreadsheet. Instead, have two columns, an inspection date column and an inspector column. Thus, the date column can be sorted and you have an option to filter either or both of the columns.

BILL MOSTELLER lives in the Potomac Division where he models HO scale. 

Visit Our Website

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

Update on the Potomac Junction Convention '08

By Bob Minnis, Chairman

IN SEVEN SHORT MONTHS (October 26-28th), the Potomac Division will host the annual MER convention in Reston, VA. The location will be the same as the previous one the Division hosted, the Reston Sheraton on Sunrise Valley Drive. The Division Board is hard at work as they begin to fill in the details that make a great convention. In future issues of **The Local**, information will be highlighted and the website (http://home.comcast.net/~Potomac_NMRA/MER2008/) will be updated whenever changes or new information is finalized.

In an attempt to increase the number of entries in the model contests, three new categories have been added. The category for the Chairman's award will be that of any passenger car that is built with truss rods. President Hyde will reimburse the convention registration cost to the modeler who earns the highest combined total of AP points for an entry in each category of stock car, poultry car and watermelon car. The "Pride of Dixie" award will go to the best entry that depicts a retail fruit/vegetable sales venue. You still have plenty of time to build your entry for these awards and the other contest categories.

The committee will need a lot of volunteers to assist them. Some of the areas where you can help are: hosting a layout tour, working at the door prize or white elephant tables. Or if you are a subject matter expert (SME) conduct a clinic. Contact any of the Board members if you want to help, don't forget it earns AP points. 

HEY MEMBERS, are you too busy modeling, operating, scratch building and even kit bashing railroads to print and then whittle away precious minutes filling out the Achievement Program forms??? Simplify your life by downloading the AP forms from the NMRA website (<http://www.nmra.org/achievement/apforms.html>). The forms are available in several different formats including MS Word documents. You can add your own information by editing the forms on your PC. 



Letter From The Editor

By Steve Kindig

LAST ISSUE I didn't have enough time or even enough news to share with you, but I can definitely make up for that! This year is already turning into a big celebration and plenty of good memories for my family, friends and me. Recently, my older brother has gotten remarried and has announced the upcoming pitter-patter of another little engineer for me to mold.

As the next issue reaches you, I will be getting hitched. So don't panic if I don't reply to you right away. I will get back to you. Although none of my train related ideas (which were quickly shot down with a "no" and referred to as "silly") for a ceremony will occur, my wedding reception will have some significance. The reception will take place in a renovated carousel building that stands on a few acres of wooded picnic/park grounds and was serviced by a trolley line until the late 1930's. I know there are already some of you out there just drooling at the thought of trolleys, but sadly there are none left. Although if you walk further in the woods you can still tell where parts of the road bed was used. Following quickly on the heels on my big event, another best friend is getting married where I will also be a groomsman. Finally, I have earned more vacation time to make it to some extra Divisional events, train shows and already have my vacation set for the convention in October. So I hope to see (and meet) you there!

So now that all the good news is out of the way I will get back to business. I NEED MORE WRITTEN STUFF! I need more articles from Division activities, from conventions (Regional or National) you have attended. I can use more modeling projects, more modeling hints and tips and any shortcuts that you may employ. Anyone with a little modeling experience can share their how-tos, scratching building plans, general use, maintaining and updating of any model related items. The more artistic modelers can share their weathering and painting techniques, landscaping projects and inventive use of everyday household items in their layouts and modeling projects. Don't forget about a frequently missed opportunity to produce a written summarization of clinic that you have presented and reach the people that weren't able to attend a convention. Finally, I want you to share your trials-and-errors and your general modeling stories and accomplishments. All of these have the opportunity to earn AP points.

I know there are more ideas out there, so please contact me if you are unsure or wish to run one past me. If you aren't the best writer or just plain nervous about grammar, but your project is outstanding, I will be willing to help you, just ask! 📧



**YOUR PAINTING
OR PHOTOGRAPH
CAN GO HERE**

Artist of the Month

*If you would like to showcase
an original drawing,
photograph or painting,
please submit them to the editor.*

Review of #672 HO Scale Shoreham Vermont Covered Bridge

Article and photographs by: Chuck Hladik.

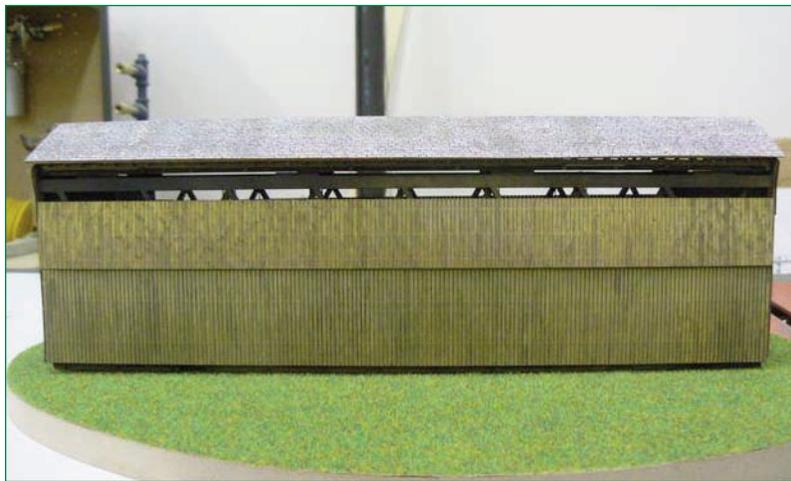
FROM THE PHILIP R. JORDON book *Rutland In Color* (Morning Sun Books) we learn that if you ask anyone what the essence of Vermont is you will get the answer: cows, maple syrup and covered bridges. At Shoreham, on the Rutland's 15.6 mile Addison Sub, stands the 108 foot 8 inch long Howe truss bridge that was built by the Rutland in 1897 and last used as a railroad bridge on May 21, 1951. It remains today still spanning the Lemon Fair river part of a 'Rails to Trails' program. Just a short distance away, near Salisbury stands another bridge that appears to be the same design and color, even though this one was built in 1865.

The covered bridge was a Yankee concept and yet I have seen many in the south. The roof covered the wooden beams to protect them from rot and the only iron or steel was used for bolts, stringers and nails. On this bridge, the stringers are wood and the tension rods are iron.

This bridge plan was submitted to Branchline by fellow Rutland modeler, Bill Badger, who measured the actual bridge. Bill tells me that the kit was produced at least one 'bay' short, therefore it scales out to 85 feet on my general scale rule, not the actual 108 feet. The kits also provides one template for the option of putting in three windows that were placed after the railroad was abandoned and became part of the 'Rails to Trails' program. Although the instructions state that the bridge appeared to be a brownish gray, I asked Bill what he thought would be right for colors and he stated that the bridge is sided in spruce and shows no signs of color. In the photographs that I have seen, some of the knots definitely appear. Due to the delicate nature of the wood in the kit, I was unable to 'carve' any knotholes; I did however paint some in with the point of a round toothpick.

The kit is made up of Laser-cut wood components (Basswood and Plywood) and some peel and stick backing. The kit also has some 'tab and slot' construction. The package includes a clear bag in which there is a supply of brass wire and a zip lock type bag containing nut, bolt and washer castings.

After reading the instructions, I made two stains, one about a 25 percent solution of Floquil Depot Buff and 75 percent Laquer Thinner and another 50 percent Railroad Tie Brown and 50 percent Laquer Thinner. These are the basic colors and left over paint will be used as weathering. I misted the included nut, bolt and washer castings black, and included the brass wire in a west "Blacken-it" solution. During some of the assembly steps I sprayed a mist of black for soot. The pictures on the box show the bridge in some shade of red.



This is a side view of the completed Shoreham Vermont covered bridge and is ready to place on the layout. The scale bridge measure 12 inches long, is 3 inches wide and 4 inches high.

In step 1-C, you are advised to glue nut, bolt and washer castings into holes in the truss. Go ahead and do it but do not put them in the top and bottom course at the end of one of the diagonal trusses, as you will have to remove them later to get a flush fit with the inner wall panel in step 4-B. When putting the nut, bolt and washers into the holes you can

cut them long enough to protrude through to the other side, then use a sprue cutter after they are dry to cut them flush with the truss or sand them flush.

In step 11, I would suggest putting the nut, bolt and washers in all the holes before gluing the frame pieces together. By doing this you do not have to worry about the piece being too long and not being able to fit the opposing one. Once again, use a sprue cutter or sand flush.

This kit is designed so that the roof is removable and when it is off you can see all of the rafters, trusses and tension rods inside. Somehow, I messed up the included paper laser cut shingles so I had to remove them and go the stockpile. I found part #33005 Shake Ultra Shingle (self adhesive) at www.newrailmodels.com, and used these instead.

The siding is cut on both sides and you can remove boards very easily for a less maintained appearance. For some reason, after attaching the sides and ends, the side walls bowed in enough at

the top, that the roof would not be able to attached, so I installed a brace of 1/8th square stripwood cut to fit.

While looking at some photographs for my colors and a weathering guide, I noticed on page 111 of the Jordan book and also on



This is a detailed view (without the roof) of the front of the Shoreham Vermont covered bridge.

page 29 in the Robert Willoughby Jones book, *Green Mountain Rails* (Pine Tree Press) that there were no 'guard' or bridge rails on the track running through the bridge.

The kit is well-designed and quite enjoyable to build. Overall, it took about ten hours of total construction and will be in a prominent location on my layout.

You can order the #672 HO Scale Shoreham Vermont Covered Bridge for \$145.98 from Branchline Trains.

Branchline Trains
323 Park Ave.
East Hartford, CT. 06108
Phone: 1-877-240-4484
Website: www.branchline-trains.com.

CHUCK HLADIK lives in the James River Division where he models HO scale. He is a current Director for the MER. 🏠

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The 2013 NMRA National Convention

By John Drye

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Hope that all enjoyed the Winter Solstice and the Holiday Season and you all got coal in your tender.

As most of you now know, the Potomac Division has informed the NMRA that we do not intend to bid to host the 2013 NMRA National Convention. Reliable sources inform us that the NMRA organizations in both Pittsburgh and Atlanta are planning to submit bids.

The Potomac Division Board of Directors spent the better part of 2007 examining the possibility of hosting the Convention in the Washington Area. The board talked to NMRA National convention staff, the leadership of both the Philadelphia and Detroit

NMRA national conventions, the leadership of other local area model railroad organizations and many division members.

The board came to the conclusion that the requirements for a successful convention were not in place at this time. Hosting a National Convention is a major undertaking. It requires a dedicated staff that is willing to spend considerable time over the course of several years organizing and coordinating with local and national representatives. It also requires dozens of volunteers to help out during the convention.

The NMRA National Convention has developed a thorough set of convention rules and procedures. Since National has no way of knowing beforehand how a specific site's convention staff will perform, it makes sense to apply these rules firmly and uniformly.

The benefits of hosting such an event are largely intangible. It is enjoyable for the attendees and exposes the hobby to the public. Such events are a key part of maintaining and growing interest in our great hobby. While large conventions are usually profitable, most of the profit from the NMRA National Convention does not go to the hosts. Neither does the host organization assume any significant financial risk. The Potomac Division includes a number of members who have helped organize small to large conventions in the past. These folks have developed an approach that has proven successful and the result has been a series of popular events. After our careful review of options, risks, benefits and requirements, we have decided to pass on the option of hosting the National NMRA Convention in 2013. This does not mean that the area will never host a NMRA National Convention or that the area will never host another large, successful event as it has in the past.

In fact, the Potomac Division will host the Mid-Eastern Region convention in the Fall of 2008. Stay tuned for more details.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is reprinted with the author's permission and was first published in the Superintendent's "From the Business Car" column of the Feb-April 2008 issue of **The Flyer**. **The Flyer** is the official publication of the Potomac Division. 🏠

Another Approach To Inventory

By Dick Bradley, MMR 37

OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO when database programs were the rage, I began to use one to keep my model railroad equipment inventory. Over the years I've customized the database program to suit my desires for my car (and locomotive) model railroad inventory. Perhaps my ideas might suggest ways to adapt modern database and spreadsheet programs for your use.

My database program produces a file of records with one record for each car. Each record has fifteen line items to describe the car. The program allows me to display the records sorted by any two of the first thirteen lines (no sorting by comment). It also allows me to specify selection of the record for the initial display.

Figure 1 shows a record display. The top and bottom lines show the key prompts for moving among the record file. In the center is the actual display of a record. At the top are reminders of the sorting order and the record number.

The interesting part of my inventory is the fifteen lines for the characteristics of the car. Words to the left remind me of each of the car characteristic to be described. Entries to the right are for the specific car, and the car description entries are able to extend to the end of the line. The car characteristics reflect my notions of both how to identify a car and what I want to know about it. I choose to use the AAR Car Type – rather than words or codes. The AAR car types are widely published and cover a wide variety of cars. Railroad Car Class helps me better define the particular design of a car. Unfortunately, they don't cover locomotives; there I use words.

I spell out the manufacturer and use the manufacturer's part number since these are on the car's box. They can be directly read without reference to a numerical translation index. UPC and Walthers numbers are less widely known and do not cover all manufacturers or old cars.

Box number comes from my habit of storing the cars in individual boxes. The program can print a box label to be attached to the car's box. And, yes, I call my program "BoxLabel". The "Print

Label" key at the top automatically formats and prints a standard label. The box number provides the unique and necessary link between the car in its individual box and the record in the file.

I also choose to show two values: the purchase cost of the car and my opinion of the current value. The example of figure 1 reflects a frequently used car that I assembled and modified. Who else recognized and still uses KaDee 711 couplers from the 1960's?

A most useful aspect of the database program is the ability to generate reports. My program can produce a file dump (very long), a roster, an inventory (with values), a manufacturer listing and a box list. Each of these lists may be presented sorted by any two lines of the record. The report also may be restricted to specified values for any of the lines of the record. Figure 2 shows a portion of the roster report for my B&O cars, dated 2007 July 19, the last update of any record.

As I updated the program over the years I tried to keep in mind both its uses and its users. It must substitute for my poor memory

by reminding me of how to use it and must be able to be used by other people. These considerations have led to my use of full words or widely used abbreviations. The key prompts at top and bottom provide ways to move among the records and to use the display without complicated directions. Headers within the displays remind of sorting order and of other information related to the particular display. A person not involved in modeling railroads has a fair chance of using the file and understanding the entries without my assistance.

But, and its an important but – this old program is obsolete, dating from the days of DOS and FoxBase. The software must be kept current, just as the inventory must be regularly updated.

DICK BRADLEY, MMR 37 lives in Warren Pennsylvania and is a life member of the NMRA and MER. He models HO Scale. 

Delete Box	Save Box	New Box	Box Num Fetch	Key Item Fetch	Print Label
Sorted By Railroad Initials		And Railroad Number		Record Number 146	
AAR Car Type	-	XM			
Railroad Initials	-	B&O			
Railroad Number	-	267019			
Railroad Car Class	-	M-26			
Model Manufacturer	-	SUNSHINE			
Model Part Number	-	26.8			
Box Number	-	148			
Modifications	-	BUILT, 711			
Model Status	-	OPERATING			
Acquisition Date	-	1996			
Cost New	-	25.00			
Value Now	-	10.00			
Entry Date	-	1998 April 8			
Comments	-	X-29 CLONE			
Comments	-				
ESC: Quit PgUp: Next Box PgDn: Prev Box CTRL PgUp: Last CTRL PgDn: First					

Figure 1: A record display.

Box Labeling Program					
Box Label Roster	Sorted By	Railroad Initials	2007 July 29		
	And	Railroad Number	RR Car Type	AAR Car Type	Box No.
B&O		175829	M15E	XM	279
B&O		187499	M-24	XM	76
B&O		241849	O-27	GM	278
B&O		250793	O-27	GB	105
B&O		267019	M-26	XM	148
B&O		267118	M-26B	XM	113
B&O		269033	M26A	XM	159
B&O		298457	M-39	XAF	59
B&O		324677	N-75	HM	9
B&O		324896	N-17	HM	75
B&O		376271	M-15	XM	80
B&O		381127	M-53	XM	147
B&O		385786	M-53	XM	146
B&O		428470	N-35	HM	18
B&O		435057	W-7	HT	149
B&O		465002	M55C	XM	281
Pausing					
Pause		Halt		Resume	

Figure 2: A roster report of B & O cars

Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet – Valley Forge

Friday, March 28th – Sunday, March 3rd
Sponsored by the Philadelphia Division

SOME AVAILABLE CLINICS (subject to change):

- Freight Car Stenciling in the Diesel Era
- Modeling PRR Catenary
- An overview of Modeling B & O Hoppers 1919-1963
- Weathering Covered Hoppers
- Freight Haulers of the Northeast in the '40s and '50s
- Modeling New England Railroads
- Equipment of the Erie-Lackwanna
- Detailing Diesels
- Modeling Santa Fe 40 foot Steel Reefers
- Prototype Weathering
- Rail Interaction on the West Side of Manhattan
- Freight Car Trucks
- Modeling Equipment of the Anthracite Roads
- Trash Trains
- Federal Railway Administration and Model Railroading
- Military Vehicles

REGISTRATION INFORMATION:

Registration cost is \$35. The last day to mail registrations is March 20th. Walk ins available.

Visit www.phillynmra.org/RPMmeet to download a registration packet and timetable!

Or contact Paul Backenstose
103 W. Uwchlan Ave.
Downingtown, PA 19335
Phone: (610) 269-2763
E-mail: prrpaul@aol.com

HOTEL INFORMATION:

The Desmond Great Valley Hotel & Conference Center
One Liberty Boulevard
Malvern, PA 19355

The room rate is \$105 per night plus tax. You must mention Railroad Prototype Modelers to receive this rate.

Hotel phone: (610) 296-9800
Reservations: 1-800-575-1776 between
8:30 AM and 6 PM, Monday thru Friday
or by e-mail reservations@desmondgv.com.

NOTE: *You must e-mail or call in your reservation on or before March 7, 2008 in order to receive the reduced rate for RPM. Please be advised that a reservation is not confirmed until a confirmation number is received from the Desmond reservations department. Reservations received after March 7 is based on availability. You may cancel your reservation up until noon on the day of arrival without penalty.* 

How I Supported 'Bring a Train to Work' Day

Article by Bob Minnis
Photographs by Danielle Muench

SUPERVISE A BUILDING MAINTENANCE team at one of the universities located in northern Virginia. By some coincidence, four of the five of us own model trains. For the second year, we decided to have an open house in our office area on November 16th to display our hobby and run a few trains. About two weeks prior to the 'magic' day, the campus marketing manager heard about our plans and enlarged this activity into a formal set-up and display. She reserved the executive dining room and scheduled



The author discusses the modular scene with an interested viewer.

our open house there. The university's community service office was solicited to furnish cookies and cider for the attendees. At the last minute, the open house was moved to the following Monday so as not to conflict with the inauguration of a university's new president.



Visitors enjoy the cookies and cider while they view the trains and displays.

Our display consisted of the following:

- Two HO modules with full scenery.
- A collection of 'how-to' books on modeling subjects (scenery, wiring, track planning, freight cars and structures).
- A copy of each of the current hobby magazines.
- A sample of scenery building materials.
- A structure in both kit and assembled form.
- A comparative sample of the various scales from Z to G.
- Sample of scratch building materials in wood, plastic and styrene.

- Samples of kit and assembled freight cars in plastic, wood and resin.
- Three small operating train sets, one each in O (Lionel and Marks tinplate) and Z. The Marks set was 50 years old, and in the original box.



A scene captures track workers on one of the train modules.

A steady stream of visitors asked questions and commented on their memories of the trains that they or a relative had once owned. The youngest of the 75 plus visitors was a three year old whose mother had just picked him up from day care. Many of the attendees expressed their appreciation to the maintenance staff for their knowledge and craftsmanship in promoting model railroading. Plans are already being made for a bigger and better 'Bring a Train to Work Day' next year.

BOB MINNIS lives in the Potomac Division where he models HO scale. 



A variety of models featured includes: a Z scale train rounding the curve in the center of the photo while a O scale tin plate model fills in the background. A glimpse of a G scale trolley can be seen in the right rear of the picture.

New Membership Recruitment Program

As an aid to membership recruitment, NMRA recently instituted a six month "Railpass" trial membership program which costs the applicant \$9.95. Building on this idea, the MER is instituting a program whereby it will pay the \$9.95 Railpass fee for interested applicants in the MER. In other words, we are making available FREE six month Railpass trial memberships to encourage recruitment of regular members.

What's covered?

Same as Railpass—receive six issues of **Scale Rails**, three issues of **The Local**, eligibility to attend conventions and meets, eligibility to participate in contests.

What's not covered?

Same as Railpass—applicants cannot vote or hold office, and will not receive the New Member Pak from national (it's rather expensive).

Who can be recruited?

Anyone living within the MER who has not been a member of NMRA during the past thirty months.

How will the recruitment process work?

(1) The prospective member fills out the MER trial membership application form which was sent to all division superintendents (not the standard NMRA Railpass form) (2) The "recruiter"

should also sign the form, and then forward it to: Fred Miller, MER Business Manager, 8960 Challis Hill Lane, Charlotte, NC 28226-2686. (3) Fred will record the information he needs in his data base, and will forward the application to the MER Treasurer. (4) The Treasurer will add the necessary check and forward the application and check to the national headquarters in Chattanooga.

What happens after the member's six month trial period?

The Railpass trial member will receive a standard dues notice from national headquarters. We hope a substantial number of Railpass trial members will sign up to become regular members.

Are there limits on the program?

The MER has allocated \$2,000 for this program. The program will stop at the end of year 2008, or when we have spent \$2,000—whichever comes first. When and if we approach either limit, Division Superintendents and members of the MER Board of Directors will be notified. At that time, the program will be evaluated by the MER Board of Directors. If successful, we will try to continue it.

For questions?

Contact Fred Miller, MER Business Manager (mailing address is above, 704-752-5138, tractionfan@aol.com), or Roger L. Cason, MER Secretary (1125 Grinnell Road, Wilmington, DE, 19803-5125, 302-478-2550, rogercason@juno.com). 

National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Mid-Eastern Region Application for Free "Railpass" Trial Membership

YES, please sign me up for a free six month Railpass trial membership in the NMRA—which includes membership in the Mid-Eastern Region, and in my local Division. During this six month period, I understand that I may attend conventions and meets, and participate in contests. I will receive **Scale Rails**, the monthly national magazine, and **The Local**, the bi-monthly regional newsletter. I will not be eligible to vote, hold office, or receive a New Member Pak.

I also understand that the \$9.95 cost of this six month Railpass trial membership is being paid by the Mid-Eastern Region. (Regardless of who pays, six month \$9.95 memberships are available only once to each person.)

At the end of the six months, I may join NMRA, paying the regular active member dues.

During the past thirty months, I have **not** been a member of NMRA.

=====

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Scale(s): _____ Date of Birth: _____

Signature of Applicant: _____

Signature of "Recruiter": _____
(A Regional or Divisional officer or board member)

=====

When this form is completed,
mail it to:

Fred Miller MMR
MER Business Manager
8960 Challis Hill Lane
Charlotte, NC 28226-2686

Do **not** mail it directly to MMRA
headquarters in Chattanooga, TN.

Date of form: 1/31/07

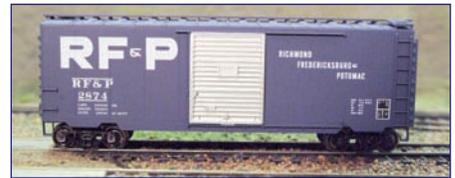
SUPPORT YOUR NMRA REGION AND PURCHASE THESE GREAT PRODUCTS FROM MER



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.



Milk station.
Simplified
structure.



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



WESTERN MD. N-SCALE CARS	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE*	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#29290	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$_____
#29299	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$_____
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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CALLBOARD Coming Events

March 8th. Wade's Train Town Open House, operated by Carolina Southern Division members, at the Brookford Town Center in Brookford, NC. **Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM.**

March 9th. Two Potomac Division layout tours in Bel Air, MD. Both open from **1 PM till 5 PM.** For more information contact layout coordinator Tom Brodrick at (301) 253-0558 or e-mail t.brodbrod@comcast.net.

March 15th. New Jersey Divisional meet at the Switlik Park Recreational Building located at 5 Fisher Place in Hamilton Township, NJ. **Clinics from 9 AM till Noon. Layouts from 1 PM till 4 PM.** Contact Mike McNamara for more information at (856) 824-0871 or e-mail mikemcnh@comcast.net.

March 15th and 16th. Greenburg's Train and Toy Show at the New Jersey Expo Center located at 97 Sunfield Avenue in Edison, NJ. **10 AM till 4 PM** both days. Cost is \$7 for Adults; kids 12 and under are free (admission is good for both days). Visit www.greenbergshows.com for more information and directions.

March 15th and 16th. 6th Annual Model Train show with the Potomac Module Crew for Boy Scout Troop #964 Fund Raiser. Saunders Middle School located at 13557 Spriggs Road in Dale City, VA. **Saturday: 10 AM till 5 PM; Sunday: 1 PM till 5 PM.** Cost is \$5 for Adults; \$2 for students; and kids 5 and under are free. Visit www.troop964.org for more information and directions.

March 28th – 30th. Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet held at the Desmond Great Valley Hotel in Malvern, PA. Clinics, Model Displays, Vendors' Room and layout tours. For additional information and updates visit www.phillynmra.org/RPMmeet, or contact Paul Backenstose at (610) 269-2763 or e-mail prrpaul@aol.com.

April 12th. Wade's Train Town Open House, operated by Carolina Southern Division members, at the Brookford Town Center in Brookford, NC. **Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM.**

April 12th and 13th. The Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium at the Maryland State Fairgrounds located at 2200 York Rd in Timonium, MD. **Saturday: 9 AM till 4 PM; Sunday: 10 AM till 4 PM** on . Cost is \$7 for adults; kids 12 and under are free (admission is good for both days). Visit: www.gsmts.com for more information and directions.

April 25th – 27th. Day out with Thomas at the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum. **Hours: 8 AM till 6 PM** everyday. Visit www.borail.org for more information, costs and directions.

SEND YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS TO THE EDITOR. (Contact information listed on page 2). Be sure to include all the specifics for the event, including the date, time, place, cost (if any) and a contact person and a means of getting in touch with him/her (address, phone, e-mail, etc.) for more information. 

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

Murray Michael White – *Chief Dispatcher*

Division 5 – James River

Eugene Thommen – *Gold Spike*

Division 12 – Carolina Southern

Dick Bronson – *Gold Spike*

Division 13 – Carolina Piedmont

Gary Holly – *Gold Spike*

MER At Large

Jack Ward – *Gold Spike*

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

Here is the running total of how many Gold Spikes and AP Merit awards have been earned in the last year. Since February 1, 2007, MER members have earned 20 Gold Spikes and 18 AP Merit Awards. 

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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 opportunity to help out and earn AP points at the same time!! 

***NEEDED:**

**Assistant Model Contest
 Manager for the MER**

Convention attendance,
 computer wizardry, keen eye and
 modeling skills a must.

Humor, scale blindness, patience,
 fairness and impartiality will
 take you to the top!

Please contact Clint Hyde,
chide@cox.net
 and

Martin Brechbiel,
martinwb@verizon.net 