

# The Local



A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION OF THE NMRA  
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Number 5

## Developing an Operating Layout History, Management, and Imagination in One Package Andrew Dodge, MMR

One of the most rewarding steps in model railroading and increasing the life of a layout is creating an operating model in miniature, which includes the development of one's interest in history, improves management skills, and enhances the joy of imagination. I was introduced to model railroading through my father's layout in 1949-1950. It was a lot of fun, but my first real experience was getting a Snap-Track package for Christmas in 1956. It was endless fun setting-up my own little world of imagination and running a train to any make-believe place. You may ask what does that have to do with history and operations? The enthusiasm everyone enjoys when they first start to design and build a model railroad can be lost over time. So the question that needs to be answered is how can one keep a layout fresh and interesting during a long construction phase and beyond?

*continued on page 4*

### Action at Sellar



The eastbound Kansas City and Chicago Limited #6 has just arrived at Sellar with Baldwin helper #52 that it picked up at Basalt. The westbound Aspen Fast Freight #41 has been waiting for the required 10 minute stop to cool the train's brakes and flanges. (Information from book of Rules and Regulations.)

# The Local

*Official publication of the Mid-Eastern region, NMRA – A tax-exempt organization*

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## Publication Staff:



**Editor:**  
Clint Hyde  
801 Twymans Mill Road  
Radiant, VA 22732  
clinthyde58@gmail.com  
(703) 862-4056



**Photographer:**  
Bob Bridges  
95 Chatham Mill Rd  
Pittsboro, NC 27312-8538  
rkbridgesCPD13@gmail.com  
(919) 602-4557



**Webmaster:**  
David Colison  
  
webmaster@mer-nmra.com  
<http://mer-nmra.com>

## Board of Directors and Administrative Staff



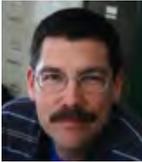
**President:**  
P. J. Mattson, MMR  
129 East Avenue  
Swedesboro, NJ 08085-1209  
(856) 467-0421  
prez14@comcast.com



**Secretary:**  
Ken Nesper  
1218 Kearney Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20017-4021  
(202) 269-3890  
oscaledc@yahoo.com



**Director and Contest Chair:**  
Martin Brechbiel  
3404 Monarch Lane  
Annandale, VA 22003  
(703) 309-3082  
director3@mer-nmra.com



**Vice President:**  
Kurt Thompson  
350 Ternwing Drive  
Arnold, MD 21012  
410-507-3671  
VP16@mer-nmra.com



**Treasurer:**  
Brian Kampschroer  
521 Stony Run Road  
Dillsburg, PA 17019-9505  
717-991-7560  
treasurer16@mer-nmra.com



**Director:**  
Michele Chance  
5884 Circlewood Dr  
Kannapolis, NC 28081-8736  
(704) 933-4200  
michelejc@carolina.rr.com



**Achievement Program Mgr:**  
Charles Flichman, MMR  
6909 Crandall Court  
Clemmons, NC 27012-9056  
(336) 766-8353,  
cwflich@aol.com



**Business Manager:**  
Bob Price  
801 S. Newton Lake Drive  
Collingswood, NJ 08108-3165  
(856) 854-8585  
business@mer-nmra.com



**Director:**  
Ken Montero  
524 Lancey Drive  
Midlothian, VA 23114-3353  
(804) 794-5704  
Va661midlo@comcast.net

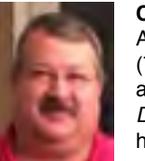
## MER Division Superintendents



**New Jersey Division 1**  
Robert Clegg  
(856) 696-0463  
bobcatcs@comcast.net  
*Division web page:*  
[www.njdivnmra.org](http://www.njdivnmra.org)



**James River Division 5**  
Phillip R. Taylor  
(434) 589-6006  
drphilster@gmail.com  
*Division web page:*  
<http://www.trainweb.org/jrd/>



**Carolina Southern Division 12**  
Alan Hardee  
(704) 868-6976  
alanhardee@att.net  
*Division web page:*  
<http://www.carolinasouthern.org>



**Potomac Division 2**  
Brian Sheron, MMR  
(301) 349-5754  
superintendent@potomac-nmra.org  
*Division web page:*  
<http://potomac-nmra.org/>



**South Mountain Division 10**  
Alex Polimeni  
(540) 532-6244  
Email: arpolimeni@gmail.com  
*Division web page:*  
<http://www.smdnmra.org/>



**Carolina Piedmont Division 13**  
John Sokash  
(919) 467-2096  
jasokash@bellsouth.net  
*Division web page:*  
<http://www.cpd13.org/>



**Philadelphia Division 3**  
Charles Butsch  
cabutsch@gmail.com  
(610) 446-2375  
*Division web page:*  
[www.phillynmra.com](http://www.phillynmra.com)



**Susquehanna Division 11**  
Tim Himmelberger  
(717) 695-7958  
timh@susquehannanmra.org  
*Division web page:*  
[www.susquehannanmra.org](http://www.susquehannanmra.org)



**Chesapeake Division 14**  
Bill Ataras  
(812) 533-1345  
super.chesdivmernmra@gmail.com  
*Division web page:*  
[www.chesapeake-nmra.org](http://www.chesapeake-nmra.org)



**Tidewater Division 4**  
Conrad Haas, Jr.  
(757) 256-5989  
conradh4@verizon.net  
*Division web page:*  
[www.nmra-mer-tidewater.com](http://www.nmra-mer-tidewater.com)



# President's Column

*P.J. Mattson, MMR*

The elections for new Directors and the new revised By-Laws have come and gone. I want to thank all who voted; as I write, I have not seen the results, and won't until mid-September. I hope many of you tried the new electronic voting. I did and it was very easy and quick. I am looking forward to working with the new and any returning Directors.

Well July was very hot here but now in August it is very nice. Could be cooler I guess but 80's are much better

than 90's. Soon the fall will be here and hopefully better weather will be coming. I have been spending a lot of time working on improving the Railroad because of the heat. A lot has been accomplished.

I hope everyone had a great summer and I am looking forward to seeing you at the convention.

This year's convention, the 2017 SUSQUEHANNOCK, will be in Harrisburg, PA from Oct 12 to Oct 15. Register early and mark the dates on your calendar. We want to see you there. It promises to be full of activities and a lot of fun.

Till next time stay on the right track.

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### Additional MER Volunteers:

**Registrar:**

Bill Grosse  
24 Bethel Avenue  
Hamilton, NJ 08620-2306  
(609) 585-4616  
MER-Registrar@verizon.net

**Nominations & Ballot Chair:**

Bob Minnis, MMR  
11 Marwood Drive  
Palmyra, VA 22963  
(434) 589-3011,  
kahlualab@aol.com

**Archivist:**

Chris Conaway  
407 Kings Highway  
Moorestown, NJ 08057-2726  
(856) 439-1742  
chrisbconaway@aol.com

On page 1, at the top, is a "country barn". It was in the model contest at 2016's convention. Fred Willis, modeler.

I have come to the realization after building a number of different types of layouts and in several scales that things can become static and fixed. As a result, all too often there is a declining interest in one's layout. Repetition of almost anything does not foster enjoyment. When I actually built my first layout on a sheet of 4x8 plywood using my Snap-Track, I realized all too quickly that everything had become fixed in time and place with a limited sense of vitality. Building was fun, but now what?

Thirty years later I became involved with a group in operating a model railroad. When I began building my On3 layout, based on the Denver, South Park & Pacific operations in the fall of 1882, I realized the opportunities that existed in designing a layout that could be operated following a prototype. It was a stunning revelation when I held my first operating session to see the South Park come "alive" and doing the work the prototype railroad performed. One of the best aspects that added greatly to the realism and fun of operations was my conversion to DCC from the old block system, which allowed me to use helpers. However, one of the issues that I was never able to overcome was the lack of suitable documentation and paperwork on how the South Park operated their system and the proprietary nature of a railroad's operations. Virtually no other railroad's equipment ever appeared on the South Park.

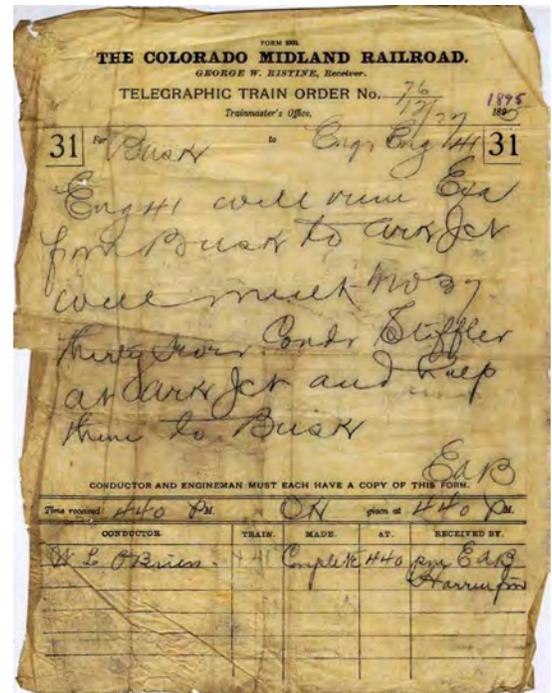
In 2012, to the mortification of many friends, I decided that after a 50 plus year love affair with the South Park, the layout and its operations had become stale. It was time to move on. I had already decided two years earlier that I would model the Colorado Midland's fall of 1897, in O Scale Proto48. Even though it was forced to close under the orders of the United States Railroad Administration and a court order in 1918, the available operating forms, rules, and timetable still existed in sufficient quantities to make an operating layout a reality. One does have to realize that full prototype operations cannot be duplicated due to all the limitations one has with a layout, but it has been fun and a challenge to push the envelope as far as possible.

### History

Being a historian by training, profession, and avocation has helped me in finding the necessary paperwork, but anyone can find records of their own favorite railroad with persistence, research, and networking. In 2012 my wife and I took a research trip to Colorado, and as part of that excursion, I visited the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden where I acquired a timetable for July 1898, which was only eight months later than my mod-



The author, Andrew Dodge



Form 31

This piece of paperwork would be issued to the crew of every train or light engine movement not listed on the timetable. This form is a little more restrictive than the more popular Form 19 used by 20th century lines. There have been books written about the difference, but I selected it because it is a little older and the only Midland Form 19 I have seen was from 1920 during the dismantling operations.

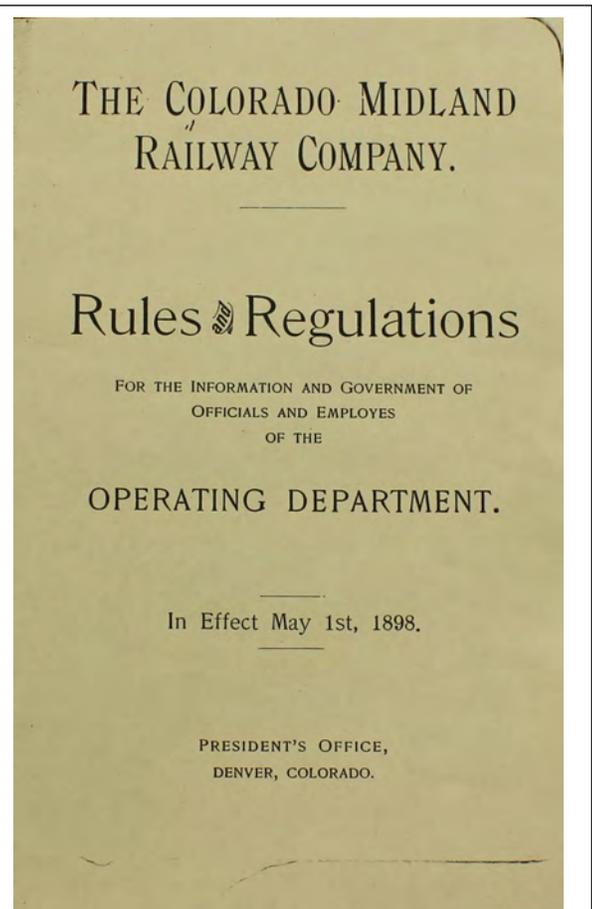
eling date. Through Internet searches, I was able to find copies of Form 31 and Form 19, which I later replicated for layout train orders so I could have the paperwork needed to move an extra trains or light locomotives over the system. I also found a copy of a waybill where a merchant shipped a box of bolts 20 or so miles for 55 cents. This proved to be a "goldmine" because I had a guide as to what the Midland listed on the bills and the format for the information. Other sources provided the valuable telegraph call signals used both for American Morse Code, or Railroad Morse, and the signal designators for each station. Since I have used and wanted to continue using a simplified telegraph system in my operating sessions, this was a great piece of information.

Information found on one's own time is fine, but the assistance of others and networking with railroad historical groups can be a great help to truncate one's research time. Through the great work of others striving to better understand the Midland, the records of car builders and the Pullman Company have been made available. The Pullman records were especially important to know what names and types of cars operated on any given railroad and the dates. Probably the most important piece of research was shared with me concerning the line's book of Rules and Regulations from 1898. I was able to get a copy from the St. Louis Mercantile Library, University of Missouri, St. Louis. The rule book covers most everything from maintaining accurate time on everyone's watches, to how to deal with a drunk, or keeping control of your train going downhill. While most of such information is not applicable to a train layout, it did provide guidance on moving stock and naphtha products to doubleheading, and provided a glimpse into history.

### Management

The management of train movements on a layout while attempting to replicate a prototype can be complex and challenges one to make an operating session a success. The key is to simulate the same order of trains but schedule them in such a way so you keep your crew busy for several hours at a time. Steve King, who is considered to be the best authority when it comes to Timetable and Train Order operations, told me, "Andrew, you cannot operate your layout as the Midland did." That was a harsh truth to accept for a prototype modeler, but I knew it subconsciously before he spoke.

The reality of space will thwart any such effort to reproduce the prototype. It became readily apparent that replicating the Midland's timetable was also impractical if I wanted to keep my crew "entertained." At certain times and places trains didn't operate during an eight hour period while at other times there would be three trains scheduled for almost the same place. In my case, one of the defining issues was the shortage of locomotives. I scratch built 11 engines thinking that would be enough, but I soon discovered that it was only sufficient if all the trains ran on time. This is solvable by slowing down the fast



### Rules and Regulations

A rule book is almost invaluable in understanding a particular railroad's operations and of equal importance as a glimpse into the past. The book lists rules on watches, train speeds on certain bridges, passenger car heaters, drunks, and when and how to use torpedoes. (I will let you look that one up.) These types of books take some work to find but can be discovered in libraries, the National Archives, and railroad historical groups.



The same can hold true for freight cars. Moving open top cars from the mine to the mill has been discussed many times by John Armstrong and practiced by many others. The same does not seem to hold true for boxcars, refrigerator cars, stock cars, etc. During an operating session, one can consider themselves lucky to know if the car is loaded or empty. This issue troubled me during my South Park days because no real information seemed to exist from 1882.

However, when I began to consider this issue with the Colorado Midland, I struck "pay dirt" so to speak with the Colorado Midland Quarterly. Mel McFarland, the author of several books on Colorado railroading, publishes the Quarterly, which contains numerous articles written by local newspapers at the time. Several of the articles listed the Midland's customers by name and town.

I found close to 200 shippers that included a wide and interesting range of individuals and companies. They included: Knight-McClure Music Co of Denver – Pianos; American and Manville Smelters of Leadville – Metals; Mrs. M.M. Richardson of Leadville – Confectionary; James Pritchard of Sellar – Saloon; Sam'l Cramer of Basalt - Vegetable Farmer; White River Hunters of Grand Junction - Deer Hides; and the list goes on from there.

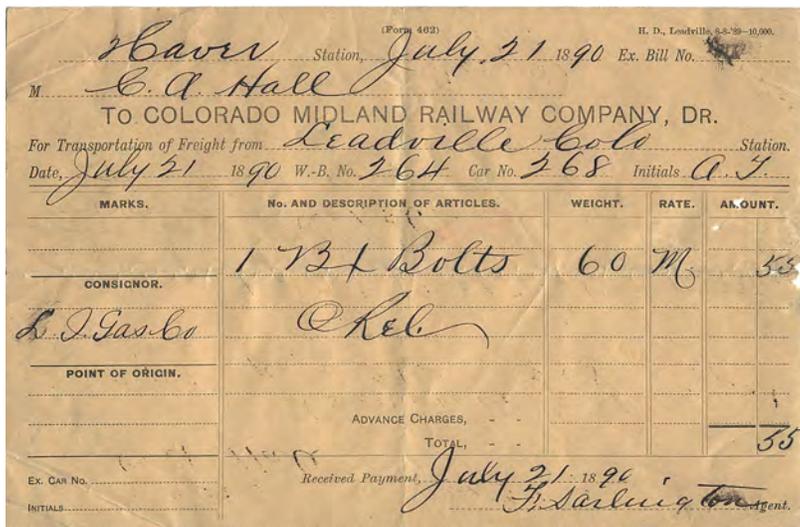
Besides local shippers, the Midland, being part of the newly integrated rail network established throughout the nation in 1886, enjoyed the movement of all types of cars to and from a wide range of Colorado towns and cities, as well as other states. With a little imagination, customers can receive fruit that comes from Colton, California, Jim Bean Whiskey from Kentucky, Occident Flour from Valley City, North Dakota, fruit and seafood from Argentine, Kansas, and the Midland can ship zinc from Leadville to Galveston, Texas, receive grain from Cincinnati, Ohio, and ship livestock to and from the XIT Ranch in Texline, Texas.

To Aspen, Colo. Station October 1... 1897 Ex. Bill No. 2  
 TO COLORADO MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY, Dr.  
 For Transportation of Freight from Denver, Colo. Station  
 Date, October 1, 1897... W.-B. No. 226 Car No. 5009

CONSIGNOR.	No. AND DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLES.	Weight.
Aspen Mining and Smelting Co.	Kennedy, Pierce & Co. (Machinery)	20000 lbs
Full Car. / LCL / Empty		
Full		

**To Aspen**

This is a re-creation of the 1890 waybill that is used during operating sessions. It is reduced in size so it will fit into a Micro Mark sleeve and contains all the necessary information plus listing what is being carried and who is the receiver. The card also includes the weight, and if it is a Less Than-Car-Load shipment, the card will indicate how long unloading should take based on weight. I use a four-card rotating system so the car will always get back to its starting point.



**CM Freight bill, 1890**

One of the most important pieces of paperwork I was able to discover was an 1890 waybill. A 60 lb. box of bolts shipped from Leadville to Haver, Colorado for 55 cents. This would provide me with the necessary shipping information to re-create operations and movement of freight on the layout.

## Let's Operate

With the knowledge of shippers, products, receivers, and a prototypical waybill and other paperwork, I achieved a level of authenticity on my Midland layout that I only dreamed of, years earlier. Looking into the historical records that are readily available these days can prove to be a great resource in achieving a basic knowledge of railroading. Management and setting realistic goals in one's modeling is crucial, otherwise an operating session could take on all the thrills of herding cats. And finally, on the use of imagination and historical records, one can create a stimulating list of freight to move on and off your layout as well as serving your local customers. After all, railroads are in the business of moving things that people want and need, and isn't that what an operating session is designed to replicate?

### Clearance Card

While looking for an authentic Clearance Card and using a Santa Fe version as a stand-in, the historically correct card was in front of me all the time on the last page of the Rules and Regulations book. These were issued to every scheduled train before being allowed to move.

Form 2016

**CLEARANCE CARD.**

**THE COLORADO MIDLAND RAILWAY.**

.....189...

Conductor and Engineman No.....

*I have no orders for your train except "31" orders.....*

*And "19" orders.....*

Signal is out for .....

.....Operator.

This does not interfere with or countermand any orders you may have received.  
Conductor and Engineman MUST SEE that the number of THEIR TRAIN is entered in the above form correctly and that they each have a copy of every order enumerated above.  
Conductors and Engineman must each have a copy.  
Engineers MUST write their names across face of the Conductor's Card, which will be their receipt for the card and orders.  
Conductors will send all their Clearance Cards to Trainmaster at Leadville at the end of each trip.

Fellow modelers are welcome to come and see Andrew Dodge's and other O Scale layouts featured during the 50th Anniversary O Scale Convention in Rockville, Maryland, on August 22-26, 2018. Learn more at:

<http://2018oscalenational.com/>

so you can plan your visit.

## Deadlines and Schedules for 2017 Nominations and Balloting

By-laws changes adopted in 2016 require the publication of deadlines and schedules for nominations and balloting for 2017 to be published in the first issue of The Local for 2017. These dates are determined by Policies, Art. VI, except for the first one that is set by the Nominations Committee. Here they are:

September 9, 2017 -- Deadline for receipt of paper ballots sent by mail.

September 20, 2017 -- Deadline to transmit results to President and Business Manager.

September 30, 2017 -- Deadline for election results to candidates. An email will be sent to all MER members.

October 10, 2017 -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER-NMRA website.

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# 2017 MER CONVENTION THE SUSQUEHANNOCK PLANNING YOUR TRIP

## Tim Himmelberger

When planning your trip to the Susquehannock Convention, or on your way home, there are many great prototype or model railroad attractions worth visiting. All of the attractions listed below are within 100 miles of the hotel and offer great opportunities to maximize your convention experience.

East on I-78 or I-76 is the Reading and Northern Railroad at Port Clinton, and the Wanamaker, Kempton, and Southern Railroad located in Kempton. Both of these railroads operate weekend excursions which in October will be enhanced with Pennsylvania's picturesque fall foliage. Another stop along I-78 in Hamburg is the Reading Technical Heritage Museum.

Travelling from the southeast via I-83 are Steam Into History at New Freedom, and the Ma and Pa Railroad and Village at Airville. Both of these railroads also offer excursions. The excursion at Steam In to History is powered by a Civil War era steam locomotive and traces the route Abraham Lincoln followed to Gettysburg to deliver the Gettysburg Address.

For attendees arriving from the east via Route 30 there are numerous railroad attractions including the Pennsylvania State Railroad Museum and Strasburg Railroad. Strasburg is also home to Choo Choo Barn with its operating model railroad and adjoining model train shop, and the Train Collectors Association and their attached museum.

Coming from the north on I-81 to Scranton there is the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton. Adjacent to Steamtown is the Electric City Trolley Museum. They also have an excellent Museum and they offer a nice trolley ride.

There are two excellent rail fanning locations in the area: Rockville Bridge just north of Harrisburg, and Horseshoe Curve, to the west of Altoona.



We've arranged for some of the layouts to be open for tours on Thursday afternoon so you can stop by for a visit on your way to the convention. Once you have registered for the convention you will be notified by email with the procedure for downloading the layouts and address that will be open on Thursday. Over a dozen layouts will be open on Sunday afternoon for you to visit on your trip home, including



Howard Zane's layout in Columbia, MD, open both Thursday and Sunday. Ken McCorry's layout near Downingtown, PA will be open on Sunday afternoon. More information on the Thursday open houses will be provided just prior to the convention to those who have pre-registered for the convention. The Sunday afternoon open houses will be covered in the layout guide you receive at the convention.

The Harrisburg area, and in a broader sense south central Pennsylvania, is an area rich in not only railroad history but history and culture. One of the better known locations is the Gettysburg Battlefield. That is one you should consider at least a full day to fully appreciate. Just off I-81 in Carlisle is the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. Other Civil War sites just to the south of the Pennsylvania border are Harpers Ferry, WV and in Maryland the Sharpsburg /Antietam battlefield. The I-81 corridor has many other historical sites.

The following is a partial list of attractions and links to their web sites:

B&O Museum, Baltimore	<a href="http://www.borail.org/">www.borail.org/</a>
Altoona Railroaders Museum	<a href="http://visitpa.com/pa-museums/altoona-railroaders-memorial-museum">visitpa.com/pa-museums/altoona-railroaders-memorial-museum</a>
Roadside America, Shartlesville	<a href="http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/2208">www.roadsideamerica.com/story/2208</a>
Lewistown PRR Station, PRRT&HS Archives	<a href="http://www.greatamericanstations.com/stations/lewistown-pa-lew/">www.greatamericanstations.com/stations/lewistown-pa-lew/</a>
Lancaster PRR Station	<a href="http://www.greatamericanstations.com/stations/lancaster-pa-lnc/">www.greatamericanstations.com/stations/lancaster-pa-lnc/</a>
Horseshoe Curve, Altoona	<a href="http://uncoveringpa.com/altoona-horseshoe-curve">uncoveringpa.com/altoona-horseshoe-curve</a>
Reading RR Museum, Hamburg	<a href="http://www.readingrailroadmuseum.org/visit.shtml">www.readingrailroadmuseum.org/visit.shtml</a>

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# Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2017 Convention

## The Susquehannock

October 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017

[www.mer2017.org](http://www.mer2017.org)



### Use Online Registration for Secure Payment and Better Up To Date Activity Availability. See Info below.

Please enter (print legibly) all names **as you wish them to appear on your registration badges**. They will not be changed at the convention.

Primary Registrant: \_\_\_\_\_ MMR? Y / N, Any Title for Badge? \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Other Attending (living at same address): \_\_\_\_\_

Children Attending (18 & under – list all): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip + 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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Favorite Scale: \_\_\_\_\_ Is this your first MER Convention?: \_\_\_\_\_

Description	Act. #	Cost	#	Paying
Early Registration (through August 31)	E	\$49		
Basic Registration (September 1 thru October 7 )	B	\$59		
At Door Registration (October 12-14)	D	\$59		
Non-NMRA Member Extra Fee	N	\$10		
Significant Other & Children Under 18	O	\$5		
Banquet – Saturday Night – Sit Down, PA Dutch Theme	401	\$45		
Vegetarian and Special Diet Requests Accepted, Contact Registrar				
Breakfast Prepay, \$14 Day Includes Tax / Tip, normal price \$14.99 Plus tax/tip	-----	-----	----	-----
Thursday Breakfast, starts 6am	406	\$14		
Friday Breakfast, starts 6am	402	\$14		
Saturday Breakfast, starts 6am	403	\$14		
Sunday Breakfast, starts 6am	404	\$14		
Convention Pocket-Polo Shirt, Black – S, M, L, XL. Quan- Size- // Quan- Size-	901-904	\$34		
Heavy Duty w/ Embroidered Logo – 2XL, 3XL. Quan- Size- // Quan- Size-	905-906	\$39		
<b>NEW ITEM !! Susquehanna/MER Convention Tank Car (HO) By Tichy</b>	907	\$16.95		
<b>Call Boards / Ops – Expanded Call Board Info Available on Website</b>	-----	-----	----	-----
<b>Call Boards - All Sold Out, Check Online Registration For Possible Openings</b>	-----	-----	----	-----
<b>Prototype Tours – More Info on Website</b>	---	----	---	-----
Fri. 8a – EBT/Shade Gap Trolley <b>CANCELLED DUE TO LOW INTEREST</b>	201	----	----	Canceled
Fri. AM – Harrisburg Station and Harris Tower	202	\$37		
Fri. PM – Harrisburg Station, Harris Tower, & Civil War Museum	203	\$53		
Sat. 9a-3p Strasburg RR, RR Museum <b>CANCELLED DUE TO LOW INTEREST</b>	204	----	----	Canceled
<b>Made in the MER Tours – More Info on Website</b>	---	----	---	-----
Thurs. 8a–5:30p ACF Tank Car Mfg.+ Bowser Tours, Incl. Lunch, & Sightseeing	701	\$67		
<b>General Interest Activities – More Info on Website</b>	---	----	---	-----
Fri. All Day – Harrisburg Capitol & Civil War Museum, Reserved On Your Own Lunch	501	\$53		
Sat. AM – Hershey Gardens & Guided Museum Tour	502	\$52		
Friday Eve.– Wine & Paint Backdrop Clinic <b>CANCELLED DUE TO LOW INTEREST</b>	503	----	----	Canceled
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Completed PDF Form can be emailed to Registrar with a note requesting an Invoice for Payment to be sent via PayPal.

PayPal Account NOT Required, can use Guest Checkout. Payments by Visa, MC, Discover, AmEx, and PayPal

Any Questions and/or additional information, e-mail to **Registrar@mer-nmra.com**, or 609-585-4616 (leave a message)

**Hotel – Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel**, 4650 Lindle Rd., Harrisburg, PA 17111, Hotel Reservations: 717-564-5511 or 800-325-3535 <http://www.sheratonharrisburghershey.com/> **Room Rate** - \$99 night + tax single, \$105 night + tax double, thru Sept. 15, 2017, Use: <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/ModelRailroadConv2017>

Or by phone use **Model Railroad Convention 2017**, Room Rate applies 10/9 thru 10/18

Watch the following sites to keep up to date on new information; [www.mer2017.org](http://www.mer2017.org), [mer-nmra.com](http://mer-nmra.com) Updated 9/12/17



This prototype tank car has been turned into an HO model for us by Don Tichy.

You will be able to buy the injection-molded styrene kid from MER at the 2017 Convention, for \$17. You can order it separately using the form on page 12.

The picture is of the prototype as originally built in 1913. The model represents the car as rebuilt several times and will have Bettendorf trucks for interchange. It ran through the 1940s and into the '50s, and that is the car we want to represent with the model. Unfortunately, we could find no pictures from that era.

## The MER Grants Policy

The MER has a matching funds grant mechanism whereby any of the Divisions can file a request for funding for an item, or project. The rules for this are very straightforward and can be found in Section 5, Part X. Grant Policy, page 5-6 (page 52 of the current website version, available from the MER web site, [http://mer-nmra.com/pdfs/ExecutiveHandbook 2014mwb610.pdf](http://mer-nmra.com/pdfs/ExecutiveHandbook%202014mwb610.pdf), or the MER Secretary). In short, any active Division within the Region can apply for a matching grant of up to \$1000.00 by first submitting a proposal for that funding that describes the use and an estimate as to how it will be spent prior to spending any monies.

All proposals should be a single page. This does not need to be a long, drawn out document. A few clear sentences should suffice in almost every case. What is needed is also a clear cost estimate to be attached and it should all be sent to either the President or to the Secretary of the MER. Thereafter the MER Board will review and either approve or disapprove funding. All requested funds must be used for activities directly related to promoting model railroading and must relate to events, activities, and operations that occur within the MER. There is one limitation beyond that dollar amount - each Division can only present 1 proposal per year. But, each Division can also come back with a new proposal every year.

Editor and Publisher's note: You see this space? See the other little empty spaces? We hate that. Those are spaces where YOU could have written something and gotten published, picked up an AP point. Not hard to do, not even time-consuming—maybe five minutes. Help us out!



## Keeping In Touch...

*By Bob Price  
MER Business Manager*

As I write this article, the 2017 MER election is in progress. Paper ballots were mailed out to 1,831 eligible members. Of those, 1,454 were eligible to vote electronically. To date, 312 members have voted electronically – 21% of those eligible. I have received some good feedback from those members who voted online and thank you for that. The most common themes are that some members wished they had received the paper ballot before the eVote email while others wished they had received the eVote email before the paper ballot. When you dig deeper into the feedback, I believe the real issue is that some members did not know if they would be eligible to eVote or not. It would have been beneficial to the member to be told if they were or were not eligible to vote electronically. As with any new process, there are always lessons to be learned and this will be one of them.

In my last column, I mentioned that National will soon cease accepting payments for a paper subscription to the MER's newsletter *The Local*. When a member renews their membership with National, there was a place on the renewal form to pay the \$9 annual paper subscription fee. National's web renewal page also had a Region selection list to select making this payment. National sends renewal notices out 3 months before your membership expires. If you receive a renewal notice and it lists the \$9 subscription fee on the form – National will accept the payment from you. If your renewal form does not list a \$9 subscription fee for the MER Local – and you want to receive a paper subscription – you will need to send a payment to the MER's Business Manager (address on page 2).

So how do you, the member, know when your paper subscription ends? All you need to do is look at the mailing address label information on your latest issue.

The first line will have your MER member ID followed by your paper subscription termination date. Note that the listed date is the 1st issue that you will NOT receive. If your label shows "exp: 11/2017", your last issue is the Sep-Oct 2017 issue. You would not receive the Nov-Dec 2017 issue. If the current issue is your last issue, it will state so on the label "LAST ISSUE (exp: 07/2017)". If you are lucky enough to be a Life Member of the MER, it will state such in the mailing address label and no payment is necessary.

What to do if your paper subscription is ending soon? Your options:

1. Consider switching to the electronic version of *The Local* and download it from the web. It has more content than the paper copy and if you have a printer – you can print your own copy. To get the automatic notification of new issues, send an email to the MER Business Manager.
2. Mail your \$9 paper subscription payment check (made payable to the "MER") to the MER Business Manager. Be sure to include your contact information (name, address, phone/email) in case there are any issues so that I know whose subscription to update.

If you have ANY questions, feel free to email or phone the Business Manager.

Finally, another plug for the upcoming MER convention. I know I will be there since I want to attend the annual Business Manager's Reunion Party being held at the same location and time. I hope to see you there.

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.

Please sign up to receive the notification email about when a new PDF LOCAL is available, instead of just downloading it at some random time. That helps us keep track of how many folks are getting it, which we need to do.

# Coupler Comments



**Clint Hyde, Editor**

In between last issue and this one, I sold my house in Fairfax County, finished moving the rest of what I own, and am now permanently installed at the new location, “Hyde Ranch.” The sale of my house was another crazy story you can ask about in person. (I ended up having to leave about 50% of the old layout benchwork in place.)

Although my involvement was minimal, just the publishing part, I hope everyone’s ballots n stuff arrived in plenty of time for voting. That whole process, including the electronic voting, was more complex than you’d think.

Last issue of The LOCAL went pretty well, as I continue to template the layout. The PDF LOCAL was nearly twice as long as the print LOCAL, with a slightly less crowded look to it, which was great. Of course the pictures being in color is more enjoyable.

MER very graciously bought me (and my successor at this) a special laser printer; an HP 9050, it’s huge, has wheels, and prints 11x17, which means I can proof the entire issue exactly as the printer will produce it. This is quite useful, I immediately saw a couple of things that needed to change last issue, but it still had one glaring flaw on page one where I hadn’t correctly aligned the blue LO with the white CAL for the banner--I printed them, but I didn’t hold the two pages up to a light to verify that alignment. Permanently fixed for this time, so no handheld alignment needed again, but still...no one called me out on that error, which was nice of you. Those colors are printed separately onto the same sheet, but it’s far too late to fix at that point.

As always, please let me know if you see anything weird about the fonts as you see them on-screen, they don’t

always look right in the PDF where they did during document production; I haven’t figured out why that is happening, and I need to eventually find a good set of fonts that I can get consistent results out of. This font problem doesn’t happen in print, because that’s a whole different output process (and not casually readable, which is why the E-LOCAL is an entirely separate document and layout). I’m sure my flagging eyesight is a contributor. Zooming in to enlarge the size seems to fix this. Craigslist shows plenty of monitors for sale in the \$60-70 range that are decent 1920x1080 widescreen for larger viewing (don’t get under 21-inch). I have two each on my various machines, 24-30 inches.

Because the PDF LOCAL is longer, I have room for more, longer articles, and more photos. I still need some layout tour pictures from any open house your Division holds this year, and I’ll need help on that during the convention (I plan to visit a couple, but without either a time machine or Calvin’s duplicator, I can’t possibly see them all).

Just let Bob Price, MER’s Business Manager, know when you are ready to just be receiving the PDF only (instructions on page 13!).

As always, it is important for you, the MER members, to be doing some article-writing and photo-taking for this publication. Remuneration involves AP points towards Author, but not money (if I could pay you, it’d be taxable, and that wouldn’t be any fun). Expect me to twist your arm if I see/hear something interesting from you.

With that, I will need help at the MER Fall Convention this year, with stories about the prototype trips, including photos, and likewise from the various open houses. I will be able to go to a few of the open houses, but not many--need your assistance on the others. If you go, and take pictures, please let me know afterwards and send the photos. I’ll use pictures from one open house each issue of The LOCAL, probably four pages worth, meaning you will get 8 Author points.

## IMPORTANT NOTE!

**We have mentioned this before, but it bears repeating.**

**The LOCAL will drop to four issues per year. This was a MER Board decision last year, and is taking some time to implement effectively. Probably starts in 2018. Print may be different from online.**

**Details like the submission deadlines will get corrected when that begins, or sooner once we are sure of them. That said, I accept articles any time at all.**

## NEW MEMBERS

# NMRA NATIONAL AWARDS -- 2017

BY KEN MONTERO, MER DIRECTOR

**M**ER LEARNED AS DEADLINE TIME FOR THE LOCAL APPROACHED THAT, AMONG THE AWARDS ANNOUNCED FOR NMRA MEMBERS AT THE 2017 ANNUAL CONVENTION IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA,, THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD WAS GIVEN TO MARTIN OAKES, AND THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD WAS GIVEN TO JACK DZIADUL. THE MID-EASTERN REGION EXTENDS ITS CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE MER MEMBERS FOR RECOGNITION FOR THEIR MANY CONTRIBUTIONS. IF YOU SEE THEM, PLEASE EXTEND YOUR OWN CONGRATULATIONS FOR JOBS WELL DONE.

James	Beuchel	Chesapeake
Todd	Blose	James River
Michael	Boyle	
Seth	Connell	Tidewater
Michael	Estergren	New Jersey
Geoffrey	Holman	Tidewater
Bernie	Lyman	Philadelphia
Larry	Mallett	
Richard	Owens	Potomac
Peter	Palma	Susquehanna
Cary	Poole	Carolina S
Christopher	Richter	Philadelphia
Ray	Schoomaker	Philadelphia
William	Sydow	Potomac
Family	Teague	Tidewater
Brad	Trenkamp	Potomac
Alice	Vasquez	Tidewater
Andrew	Vasquez	Tidewater
Tom	Wimmers	
James	Yeager	Carolina S

*Welcome all new members!*

*Apologies if you joined recently and I missed your name here. The way join dates are handled in our database makes for slight imprecision on this. Example: Teague Family's actual join date was July sometime, I got the data on Aug 7, but the membership begins Sept 1 since that matches the issue of The LOCAL they will receive first. I have someone else new whose start date is December 2017.*

Another very nice model from the 2016 Contest Room.

This flat car was built by Charles Rausch.



# Achievement Program



## Achievement Program Update By Charlie Flichman, MMR

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

### Division 2 - Potomac

Mathew A. Thompson - Master Builder Cars

### Division 3 - Philadelphia

Joseph Walters - Master Builder Structures  
Joseph Walters - Master Builder Scenery  
Joseph Walters - Model Railroad Engineer Civil  
Joseph Walters - Model Railroad Engineer Electrical  
Joseph Walters - Chief Dispatcher

### Division 5 - James River

Kenneth Montero - Model Railroad Author

### Division 13 - Carolina Piedmont

William Davis - Model Railroad Author  
John A. Janosko - Master Builder Scenery

MER Newest MMR - Congratulate Mathew Thompson of the Potomac Division as MER's newest MMR #595.

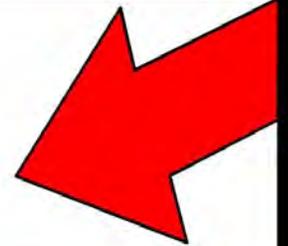
In a perfect world, this information will appear soon in the NMRA magazine. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in the NMRA magazine.

*PROBLEM - PLEASE HELP ME. National does NOT accept R&V forms. I am getting too many of them, only to have to return to the sender and get the proper form. NO R&V FORMS!*

## The AP consists of four areas with eleven sub-categories:

- A. **Model Railroad Equipment**
  - 1. **Master Builder - Motive Power**
  - 2. **Master Builder - Cars**
- B. **Model Railroad Settings**
  - 3. **Master Builder - Structures**
  - 4. **Master Builder - Scenery**
  - 5. **Master Builder - Prototype Models**
- C. **Model Railroad Engineering & Operation**
  - 6. **Model Railroad Engineer - Civil**
  - 7. **Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical**
  - 8. **Chief Dispatcher**
- D. **Model Railroad Service**
  - 9. **Association Volunteer**
  - 10. **Association Official**
  - 11. **Model Railroad Author**

**Custom  
Layout  
Building**



**Layout Design**

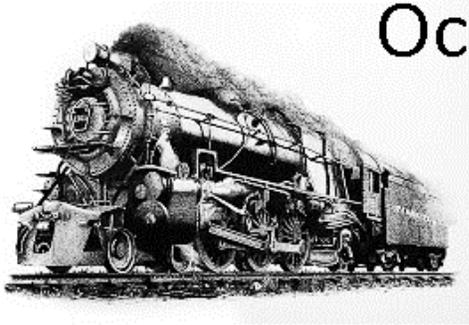
**By Lance Mindheim**

**www.shelflayouts.com  
301-404-8164**

# ***The Tidewater Division of the NMRA***

Proudly Presents the

## ***28th Annual Train Show & Sale***



**October 21 & 22, 2017**

**10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

**Virginia Beach Convention Center**

**1000 19th St.**

**Virginia Beach, VA 23451**

### **FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

#### **MODEL TRAINS RUNNING IN A VARIETY OF SIZES**

**(LEGO, N, HO, S, O, G SCALES)**

- TOOLS • BOOKS • VIDEOS • TRAIN SETS • ROLLING STOCK • PARTS • TRACK
- ACCESSORIES • CLOTHING • TOYS • MEMORABILIA • PHOTOS
- CONCESSIONS • WHITE ELEPHANT TABLES
- HOURLY DOOR PRIZE (1 free door prize ticket with paid admission)
- TIDEWATER TRAIN DOCTORS (bring your model train for repair)
- SCOUT MERIT BADGE PROGRAM • U.S. MARINE CORPS "TOYS FOR TOTS"
- OPERATION LIFE SAVER • HANDS ON SWITCHING PUZZLE
- NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION INFORMATION BOOTH

**ADMISSION: \$8.00 FOR ADULTS**

**\$1.00 from every paid admission goes to "Toys for Tots"**

**FREE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 (WITH A PAID ADULT)**

**FREE PARKING ON-SITE**

**FREE FOR SCOUTS IN UNIFORM (WITH THEIR SCOUTMASTER OR TROOP LEADERS)**

Show Coordinator: Bill Miller

Phone: 757-409-3623

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THE COLORADO MIDLAND RAILWAY CO.

WESTWARD

EASTWARD

SECOND DISTRICT

THE COLORADO MIDLAND RAI

THIRD CLASS		SECOND CLASS		FIRST CLASS		FIRST CLASS		SECOND CLASS		THIRD CLASS										
ARRIVE DAILY	LEAVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	LEAVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	LEAVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	LEAVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	LEAVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	LEAVE DAILY									
57 FREIGHT (5:00 #12)	58 FREIGHT (5:00 #28)	53 FREIGHT (5:00 #48)	51 FREIGHT (5:00 #10)	21 PULLMAN SERVICE (5:00 #20)	17 EXPRESS (5:00 #4)	15 EXPRESS (5:00 #12)	7 UTE EXPRESS (5:00 #28 / #4)	5 KANSAS CITY AND LIMITED (5:00 #12 / #4)	CHARGE FROM COLORADO BR.	TIME TABLE	TELEGRAPH	6 CITY AND LIMITED (5:00 #4 / #10)	8 COYOTE (5:00 #28 / #28)	12 PULLMAN SERVICE (5:00 #20)	16 EXPRESS (5:00 #10)	18 EXPRESS (5:00 #4)	20 PULLMAN SERVICE (5:00 #4)	24 FREIGHT SERVICE (5:00 #4)	38 LOCAL FREIGHT (5:00 #8 / #10)	42 PUEBLO AND PAST FREIGHT (5:00 #8 / #28)
9:05 AM	7:40 AM	1:30 PM	6:15 AM	11:45 PM	3:00 AM	9:15 AM	3:15 AM	12:15 PM	0	COLORADO SP'GS	N	10:50 AM	8:45 PM	4:15 AM	1:15 AM	11:05 PM	8:35 PM	5:40 PM	9:10 AM	
9:00 AM	7:45 AM	1:35 PM	6:20 AM	11:50 PM	3:05 AM	9:20 AM	4:10	1:20	136	LEADVILLE (STUB)	N	10:20	8:30	4:10 AM	1:10 AM	11:00 PM	8:30 PM	5:10	8:40	
							4:25	1:35	147	BLISK	D	9:45	7:40					4:15	7:45	
							4:40	2:05	156	IVANHOE	D	9:30	7:25					3:40	7:10	
							5:00	2:45	166	SELLAR	N	9:00	6:55					3:00	6:40	
							5:20	3:05	177	THOMASVILLE	N	8:30	6:25					2:05	5:50	
							5:45	3:30	188	BASALT	N	8:10	6:00					1:25	5:15	
							6:10	4:20	197		N	7:15	5:15					12:15	3:55	
							6:25 AM	4:35 PM	310	GRAND JCT.	N	7:10 AM	5:00 PM					12:00 PM	3:40 AM	
ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY			ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY	ARRIVE DAILY				
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Colorado Midland Timetable

One of the most complicated yet rewarding aspects of replicating a railroad's operation is creating a timetable. Although it is only a guide so to speak, it is critical to schedule all your trains and give some form to the operating session. The dispatcher and crews need to know what is next. Of equal importance is to ensure an "entertainment" value to the session by keeping everyone engaged.

*(yes, this is a repeat. We don't have a page-limit, and it wants to be larger. Let me know what you think. The whole picture is larger than the page.)*



## Made In James River Division -- Model Memories

By Ken Montero



**M**any members of the James River Division enjoyed a presentation by Don Silberbauer about his urban railroad at the March 11 meet in Midlothian, reflecting his interest in railroads serving the New York City area (he grew up in The Bronx), including electrified lines and unique modeling techniques employed to create urban details not available in kit form. Don is not only a fine modeler, but also owns Model Memories, a long-standing model railroad supply company.

Model Memories started when Don designed etched brass catenary bridges for himself while living in Connecticut. He then was persuaded to make some for others. Don's background in computer sciences gave him the skills for using computer-aided design software to create the artwork, which Don then sub-contracted to a high-quality brass etcher (all Model Memories products are made in the U.S.A.).

One thing led to another, and soon Don was designing catenary and other electrified railway MU cars, parts and accessories – not only for Northeastern railroads such as Erie Lackawanna, New Haven, New York Central, and Pennsylvania, but also for other railroads such as Virginian, CSS&SB (Chicago, South Shore and South Bend), Erie Lackawanna, Great Northern, and Milwaukee Road. Then he expanded further into pantographs, power distribution poles and 3rd rail hangers.

Not just electric railroad items were in Model Memories' inventory of railroad items. Model Memories also provided etched brass signal bridges and cantilever signal masts, telltales for low bridge warnings for brakemen on tops of cars, and etched brass roofwalks.

Model Memories also produces etched brass scenery items, such as fences and gates, manhole covers and grates, venetian blinds (also works for passenger cars), fire escapes, roof vents for commercial buildings and 1950's TV antennas for houses.

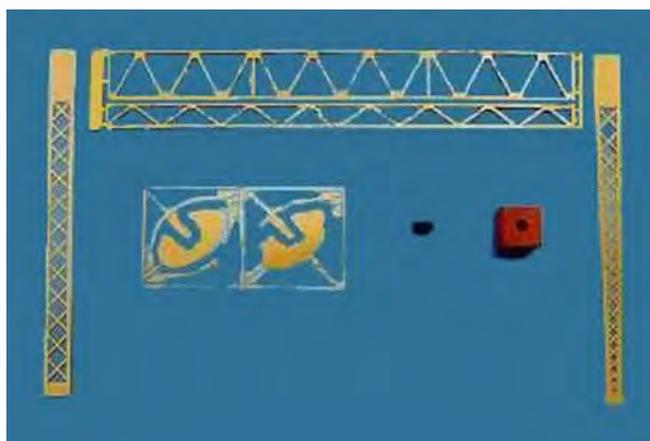
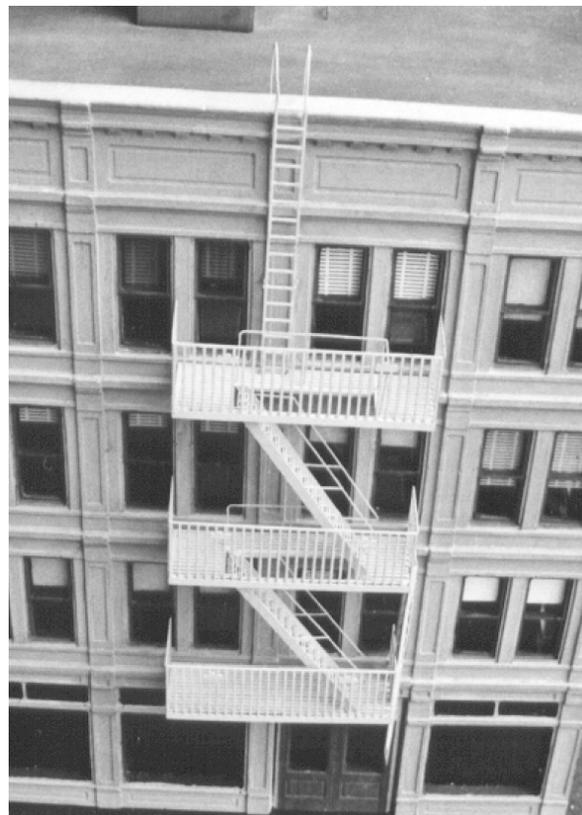
Why brass? Brass is more durable than plastic, especially for such vulnerable things as telltales, signal masts, etc. Brass can be bent into different shapes more easily than almost any other material. Brass can be soldered for durability and electrical conductivity. Etched brass is cheaper for a manufacturer to create than typical styrene injection-molded items.

How did Model Memories wind up in rural Powhatan County, Virginia? Don lost his high-tech job in 2000 along with half a million other high tech workers in an economic downturn. Nearing retirement age, he and his wife decided that the Northeast was not viable for retirement and decided to relocate to Virginia.

They wound-up in Powhatan County by sheer luck and couldn't be happier. Don and his wife were lucky to find a home with a basement where his lifelong dream layout would be built. With the railroad in progress, Model Memories has been scaled-back a bit but is still alive and well. These days mostly all business comes from the internet which offers a worldwide storefront.

For more information about Model Memories products, go to:  
<http://www.modelmemories.com/>

Clint sez: It seems like forever since we last did an "Made in the MER" story, so I was super glad to bump into Don earlier this year. Since I don't throw computer files out, I still had the old red logo image for this. Hooray!



Several of Model Memories items: signal bridge, fire escape, and the raw brass for another signal bridge.

Moving? Changing email addresses? Promptly notify the NMRA at

<http://nmra.org/members/update>

or by mail at:

NMRA  
P.O. Box 1328  
Soddy Daisy, TN  
37384-1328

to insure continued timely delivery of The Local to you, and so we can contact you as necessary. (NMRA notifies the MER of such changes, saving you one more step).

Upcoming MER  
Conventions

2017 — Susquehanna  
Div, Oct 12-15

2018 — Potomac Division,  
Oct 3-7

# A brief remembrance of Bud Sima

by Stan Knotts

Bud Sima was a good model railroader and an active supporter of the NMRA. I got to know Bud many years ago as he was a very good friend of my father, Dick Knotts. Bud's model railroad was the Prospect and Upper Ridge Railroad which he referred to as the PURR. It was named for the streets around his home in the Baltimore area. As further meaning to his layout name, Bud had a cat, so in writing about his layout he often used cat like terms such as "kitty corner". Bud passed away in 1985 from cancer. The photo of Bud was taken in my father's living room presumably by my father.



His favorite prototype railroad was the Maryland & Pennsylvania railroad, also known as the MA & PA. Bud's layout was located in his basement, and while not large, it was highly detailed with prototypical scenes from the MA & PA and some humorous scenes dedicated to some of his many friends. One of those humorous scenes was dedicated to my father and depicted a graveyard below a trestle with a sign designating it as the Knotts Bury Farm - a combination pun relating to the Knotts Berry Farm (no relation) and my father's no nonsense reaction to people who crossed him. In the photo of the bury farm you can see the funeral car on the trestle with the crane used to lower caskets to the cemetery.

Bud was a prolific contributor to the NMRA Bulletin, the publication that eventually became the NMRA magazine. He contributed articles and, as he was a graphic artist, he designed car sides which were published as card stock sides in the bulletin. Some car sides were prototypical and some were humorous. One NMRA member wrote a letter to the Bulletin commenting on something Bud Sima wrote for the Bulletin and made a typo on his name causing it to be printed in the letter as "Bug Sima"! Bud was a little irritated and in response created a freight car labeled "Bug Sima's VASTx-2" with a cartoon picture of a well-known grasshopper bug head, and on the right side of the car it said "Varmint Asphyxiation & Swift Termination Co". With that wording there was a cartoon image of perhaps what looked like a chipmunk, also fairly well-known. Under that depiction was the label "VAST enterprises - no HALF-VAST results". A very humorous car. I have one in my collection. I have no idea how many he made. I still have a collection of NMRA car sides that I have never used, though I did build a few.

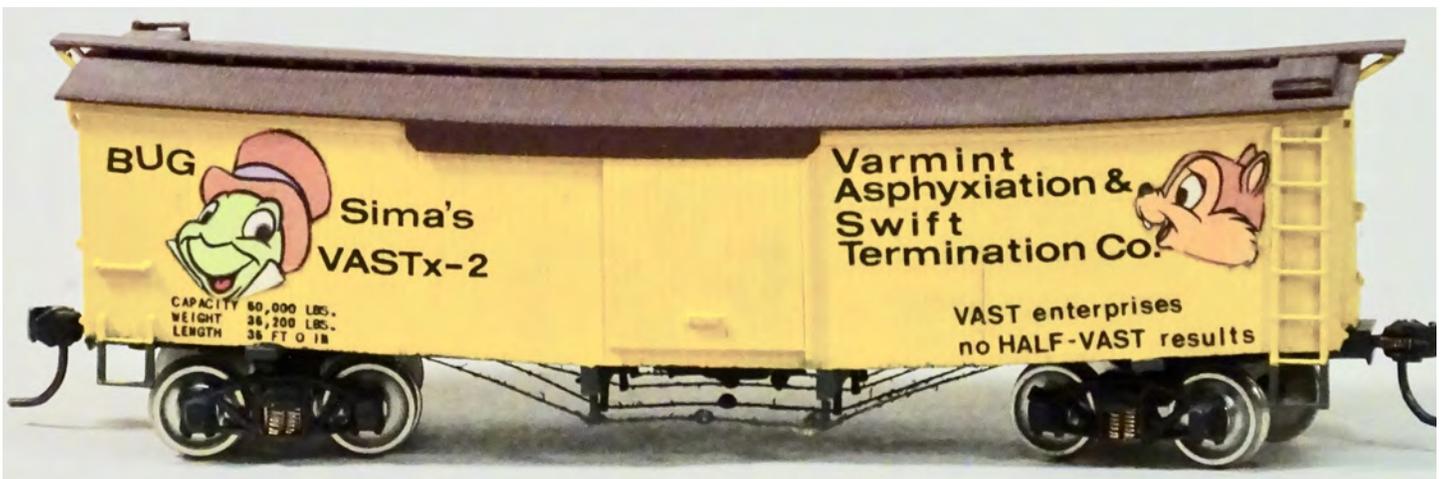
Another humorous thing Bud made was a pin labeled "OPHPHISHUL Prospect and UPPER Ridge PURR PURRSONNEL. He gave one to my father and that also is now in my collection.

Articles on Bud's layout appeared years ago in both the NMRA Bulletin and Railroad Model Craftsman magazine, and probably other publications. I visited his layout several times. I was impressed with the amount of detail he achieved in a relatively small space.

After Bud passed away, his wife allowed the local division one last visit to the layout. I have no idea what happened to the layout. I believe his wife moved away and left the house to their son.



Bud Sima's RR Box Car



Bug Sima's RR Box Car. Clearly Jiminy Cricket on the left, Chip or Dale on the right.



Sima RR merchandise



A serious bridge, not so serious anything else. At the bottom is Stan's cemetery. Zoom in--looks like it's in California.

# Making Custom Photo Backdrops

by

**Brian W. Sheron, MMR**



**M**any model railroaders simulate depth in their model railroading scenes by using backdrops. These are put against walls when our layout benchwork runs against a wall, or against a view block that is erected in the center of an island layout.

There are a number of companies that offer ready-made backdrops in all scales for model railroaders. These are usually panoramic photos of various scenes that are enlarged and printed on a heavy paper. The scenes will vary from urban city scenes to industrial scenes, to rolling hills to mountains or desert. Many come in long lengths upwards of 10 to 12 feet in length. Depending on what you are modeling, it is possible you may find what you are looking for in a ready-made backdrop.

However, if you are modeling a specific location or area, you might like to have a backdrop that depicts the specific location or area you are modeling. This was the problem I ran into when I expanded my Long Island Railroad to model Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn and the car float bridges and yard in Long Island City.

For my car float yard, it posed a unique challenge. The car float yard and the car floats were located in a corner. The problem I had was that if a viewer was standing in the aisle and looking at the car floats, they would be looking north up the East River, and they would see the 59th St. Bridge in the distance. However, if they were looking at the car floats as if they were standing in the car float yard, they would be looking due

west and would see the Manhattan skyline about 1/4 mile away. I had put a curved panel in the corner, so there was no sharp corner to deal with. Nevertheless, I needed a backdrop that would sweep around the corner, showing the Manhattan skyline and the 59th Street/Queensboro Bridge.



The Internet is of course a treasure trove of photos. I Googled “59th Street Bridge images” and a number of photos of the bridge appeared (make sure you say “images” or you’ll be feeling groovy).

I also Googled “Manhattan Skyline”, and a wealth of photos appeared. I scanned through the photos and found one of the 59th St. Bridge (above) and one of the Manhattan skyline (below) that appeared to be compatible.



*Two ground-level panoramic views of New York City. Note the very obvious color/lighting differences.*



I dragged both photos to my editing program (“Pages” on an Apple computer) and began adjusting their sizes and butting them against each other. I soon had what appeared to be a backdrop that would wrap around the wall so that observers standing in the aisle would see the 59th St Bridge, but as they moved around to simulate standing in the car float yard looking west, the scene would change to the Manhattan Skyline (above). Although the sky in both photos were different colors, this is solved by carefully cutting the sky away from the skyline structures, painting my backdrop wall a sky blue color, and gluing the backdrop (with the sky cut away) to the wall.

Many of the companies that offer model railroading backdrops will make custom backdrops from a customer’s photos. I sent the combined photos to Dave Burgess at Backdrop Junction and asked if he could print a custom backdrop from them that was 93 inches long. Dave informed me that the resolution of the photos was acceptable, and that he could produce the desired backdrop. I noted to him that the photos needed to be purchased, and Dave took care of the purchase and just added it to the price.

When the backdrop arrived, the only problem was that the water in the 59th St. Bridge photo was very different in color from the water in the Manhattan skyline photo. To remedy this, I asked Dave to print a mirror image of the 59th St. Bridge backdrop. When I received it, I simply cut the water portion off of it and glued it on top of where the water was on the Manhattan skyline photo. The photos of the water would now match perfectly where they butted together.



The completed backdrop mounted in place (note that simulated water has not yet been added to the scene).

For my scene of Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, I needed several backdrops of Brooklyn and New York City. Again, I went to the Internet, and this time looked on a site called Pixabay (pixabay.com), which has photos that can be used for free. I found several that I liked, and again asked Dave Burgess if they were suitable for backdrops. It turned out a couple were not suitable because the resolution was not high enough, and when they were enlarged to backdrop size, they became too grainy. Resolution is an important factor, and my rule of thumb is that photos should be at least about 500 x 500 pixels or higher. Web sites with photos usually specify the photo resolution.

Another important parameter to consider is the aspect ratio.

This is the ratio of the height of typical structures in the backdrop photo to the overall length of the backdrop. As an example, let's say you need a backdrop that is 100" long, and suppose you have some buildings that will be against the wall where the backdrop will be mounted and they are, say, 8" high. Now let's assume that you find a panoramic photo for the backdrop. If you measure it on your computer screen with a ruler, it is 10" long, and the buildings in the photo measure 3" tall. You would like the buildings on the backdrop to be taller than the layout buildings by perhaps a couple of inches, say 10 -12". However, if this panoramic photo is enlarged from 10" to 100" in length, the buildings on the backdrop will now be 30" high! In order for the buildings in the backdrop photo to be the correct height, they would need to be only 1" - 1.2" on the computer screen photo. One way to correct for this is to cut off the lower portion of the panoramic photo that may not be needed so the building heights are correct.

Custom backdrops are not cheap, but they are not much more than stock backdrops. A



Brooklyn Panorama



Brooklyn panorama, mounted on the layout with the lower portion (the river) cut off.



Another New York City skyline photo made into a backdrop.

*Three photos of Brooklyn combined to make one sweeping backdrop*



10' x 3' backdrop can run a couple of hundred dollars. Backdrop companies, such as Backdrop Junction, have a price calculator on their web site, so you enter the size you need and get an estimate of the cost. Remember that purchasing rights to use a photo will add to the cost.

If you want to create custom backdrops from photos on the Internet, here are some helpful tips:

1. When you are searching for a scene, add the words "sky-line" or "panorama" to the subject you are searching. This is more likely to find scenes that have the right aspect ratio.
2. Check to see if you need to pay a royalty in order to use the photo. Most Companies that make custom backdrops do not want to violate copyright laws. Conversely, look for photos on websites that offer photos for free, like Pixabay.
3. Make sure the photos you are considering have a high

enough resolution so they won't become grainy when they are enlarged. At least 500 x 500 pixels is needed, and usually the company that would make it into a backdrop can tell you that in advance. If they don't, ask them.

4. When trying to combine two or more photos into a continuous backdrop, try and match them up on the computer first. Make sure the tint and shadows are compatible. You don't want one photo with shadows falling on the left side of a building and the other photo with shadows falling on the right side.
5. Make sure the length of your backdrop is such that the objects in the backdrop photo have the right aspect ratio for your layout. You may have to

put several photos together to get the right aspect ratio. Note that if you put several photos together, it is likely that the color of the sky in each photo will not match. This can be remedied by painting the wall the backdrop will be mounted on a sky blue color, carefully cutting the sky portion of the backdrop photos away from the objects on the backdrop, and gluing the remaining backdrop to the wall.

Costs: Brian says that you should expect about \$10 per square foot as the printing cost. That is about the price that FedEx/Kinkos locations will charge as well; they will want you to give them a PDF of your image, and they will size it to whatever you want.

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***Clint sez: Re image editing software:***

***Apple's "Pages" isn't really an image tool, although it is possible. For serious photo editing, you want Photoshop, GIMP, Graphic Converter—that sort of thing. Windows Paint can do some very simple work for you, and I have done ok work with it, but it's not my favorite tool. Here at The LOCAL, we use Graphic Converter and have for years; it's not Photoshop, but that's really overkill for what we need. I do have Photoshop, and I have used GIMP years ago, they're about equally powerful.***

