



# The Local

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

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## MTH HO Subway Series Trains

By Brian W. Sheron, MMR

Back in about 2016, MTH Trains came out with a DCC powered set of subway cars, available with and without sound and in both HO and O scale. Shortly after these MTH subway train sets came out, I saw a video of one of these train sets with sound, and I was hooked! I model an elevated New York City (NYC) subway on my layout, and was currently running two DC-powered Life-Like Proto1000 R-17 trains without sound. I immediately bought one set to see how I liked it. These sets come with a number of unique features that will add amazing realism to any subway operation.

MTH refers to their subway car sets as their “Subway Series.” The cars are all prototypical of the NYC subway system, and are available in models of the R17, R21, and R22 cars. It is my understanding that the model designation, e.g., R17, refers to the number of the contract under which the cars were purchased.

They come in four-car sets and are available in either DCC with Proto-Sound or DCC-ready. There are

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multiple paint schemes available, including a dark green (**Photo 1**), a “Redbird” bright red, a dark burgundy (**Photo 2**), and a silver with blue stripe (the paint scheme introduced by the NYC MTA in 1970). Not all car types come with a variety of paint schemes. The R-17 sets have the most paint scheme variations available, followed by the (con’t page 3)

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**Photo 1**

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### MER Board Meeting Schedule

1. MER Board Meeting 10 am, April 25, 2020, MER Convention Hotel, Crown Plaza Charlotte, NC
2. MER Board Meeting 7 pm, Oct. 15, 2020, MER Convention Hotel, Crown Plaza Charlotte, NC
3. MER Annual Meeting 8 pm, Oct. 17, 2020, MER Convention Hotel, Crown Plaza Charlotte, NC

Mid-Eastern Region Division Superintendents					
	<b>New Jersey Division 1</b> Bill Grosse (609) 585-4616 <a href="mailto:wgrossejr@gmail.com">wgrossejr@gmail.com</a> Division web page: <a href="http://njdivnmra.org">njdivnmra.org</a>		<b>James River Division 5</b> Phillip R. Taylor (434) 589-6006 <a href="mailto:drphilster@gmail.com">drphilster@gmail.com</a> Division web page: <a href="http://jrdnmra.blogspot.com/">jrdnmra.blogspot.com/</a>		<b>Carolina Southern Division 12</b> Alan Hardee (704) 868-6976 <a href="mailto:superintendent@carolinasouthern.org">superintendent@carolinasouthern.org</a> Division web page: <a href="http://www.carolinasouthern.org">www.carolinasouthern.org</a>
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	<b>Tidewater Division 4</b> Fred Humphrey 757-482-9498 <a href="mailto:tidewater.mer.nmra@gmail.com">tidewater.mer.nmra@gmail.com</a> Division web page: <a href="http://nmra-mer-tidewater.org">nmra-mer-tidewater.org</a>				

(con't from page 3) R21 sets. The R22 set only comes in one color scheme. In addition, MTH offers two-car, unpowered add-on sets if you want a train longer than four cars.

In a four-car set, there is one powered car and three unpowered cars. The unpowered cars have detailed interiors (seats) as well as interior lighting and number board lights. The powered car has lighted number boards and both marker lights and headlights. All are controllable from a DCC throttle. They also have a horn and buzzer, and many other features. However, the best part is the sound. The model simulates a traction motor starting up, slowing down, and just running. There are brake squeal sounds as well. And when the train pulls into a station (i.e., comes to a full stop, a conductor with a “very typical” New York accent (read that as “Brooklyn”) announces the stop, and makes other announcements as well, such as “there will be a slight delay.” There are background sounds as well of doors opening and closing and people talking (e.g., “Excuse me buddy”). When you turn the throttle up to depart the station, the conductor will first announce the train is departing (e.g., “stand clear of the closing doors”), and after a delay, the train will start up and automatically accelerate to the desired speed. The conductor will then announce, “The next station will be ...”



Photo 2

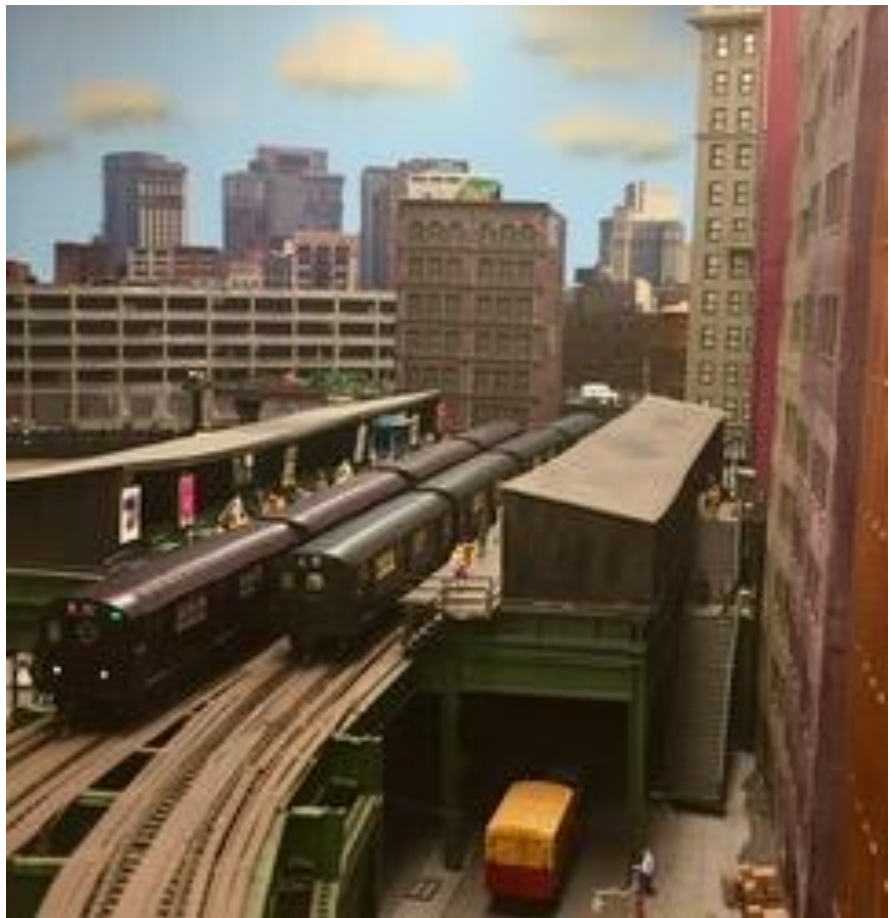
In addition to running in the manual mode as described above, the train sets equipped with DCC and sound can also be run in the “auto” mode. In the “auto” mode, you actually program the train to start and stop at stations along your layout. The trains come pre-programmed with nine station names, and the set of station names will vary depending on the train set.

The instructions are clear and explain how to program the trains. Using the “F” function buttons on your DCC throttle, you first place the engine in the “learn” mode. You then follow the instructions to save the name of the first station you want the train to stop at. Then you run your train from the first station to the next station. It is important that you stop it at exactly the right place. Once it is stopped at the next station, you again tell it to learn the name of the next station, and repeat the process. Once you have programmed the train to stop at all of the stations along the route, you save the completed sequence.

There are two options when programming the train; either running in a continuous loop with stops, or running from point-to-point with stops and then returning.

It is important when you are programming your train to stop at various stations that you stop the train exactly where you want it to always stop. It appears that the decoder has a built-in speed/time algorithm that tells the train where to stop. When you are programming it to stop at a certain location, you can approach the location as slow as necessary to make sure you do not go past the desired spot.

As an example, on my layout, I have a simple loop with one station (**Photo 3**) and I want the train to automatically stop at that station every time it makes a complete loop. If I program the train such that the first time I stop it is, say, one inch beyond the desired stopping point, then on each successive trip around the loop, the train will stop an additional one inch. In other words, after the first loop, it would stop one inch beyond the station. Then on the second loop, it would stop two inches beyond the station, and so on.



**Photo 3**

One way to correct for this is to not program it for continuous loop operation, but for out-and-back operation, even if you run on a loop. Thus, if you program the train to run around the loop say nine times, then reverse and run in the opposite direction around the loop nine times, any slight positioning error will start to cancel once the train reverses direction.

Most subway routes are two-track with trains running in both directions simultaneously. For each paint scheme, MTH offers a northbound and a southbound train set. There is some duplicity in the station stops, but they are not identical for both the north and southbound sets.

There are two final issues I need to mention. One is the “conductor.” As I pointed out previously, the first set I bought (80-2348-1) had a sound track of a conductor with a very distinct (and obviously prototypic) New York/Brooklyn accent. I recently decided to buy a second MTH subway train to run on the other loop of my elevated line. However, I did not want the same voice of the conductor on this train that was on my other train. I planned to buy my second subway set from Trainworld in New York. When I called, I told them I already had set 80-2348-1, which was called the southbound local. I said I preferred to get set 80-2349-1, which was the companion northbound local. However, I wanted to know if the conductor’s voice was different on the northbound set from the southbound set. The person I spoke with said they had no idea, and suggested I call MTH Trains. I then called MTH Trains and asked the same question. Surprisingly, the person I spoke with in the service department also had no idea which of their subway train sets had the same conductor’s voice and which had a different voice. I was informed that their manufacturer used actual NYC subway conductors to record the announcements. After doing a bit more checking, the representative I spoke with said he would try and contact the company that manufactured the cars for them and see if they could identify which subway sets used the same conductor’s voice and which ones use a different conductor’s voice and get back to me. I left them my phone and e-mail address. Unfortunately, no one has ever gotten back with me.

I then recalled that there were several videos about the MTH HO subway car sets on YouTube. I found one which showed a subway car coming to a stop and a conductor’s voice could be heard. On this car, I could tell the voice was distinctly different from the voice on my MTH subway set. I noted that the car was painted dark green and was number 7581. With that information, I could look up the number of the train set and order it. While the new subway train set has different stations, I will just assume that one of the trains is arriving from a different branch.

The second issue is programming the address (i.e., number) you wish to assign to the powered car. MTH uses a system called DCS (Digital Command System). I am not an expert on the MTH DCS, but from what I can tell, it allows a MTH engine to run on either DC or DCC power without having to flip switches in the engine. However, there is at least one other difference, and that is assigning the address. The subway car sets allow the user to assign a “short” address (1-127) or a “long” address (128-9999) to the powered car. If you give your powered car a short address, according to the instructions you program it exactly as you would a conventional DCC engine. However, if you wish to give your engine a long address (128-9999), the procedure is a bit more complicated, as I found out!

I typically give my engines the same DCC address as the engine number. That way, it is easy to know what address to use to acquire the engine. In this case, the powered car in my subway train set was numbered 7581. This was the address I wished to give it, which means it was a “long” address. To program your powered car for a “long” address, you must set two CVs (CV17 & CV18) to values that are specific to the address you want to assign to your powered car. So how do you get the values of the two CVs that will allow you to program your powered car to the desired address? The instructions state you must go to a website that has a URL that is too long and complicated to list here! You then enter the desired address number, and click on the spreadsheet that is on the page, and it will provide you with the needed values for CV17 & CV18. However, when you type in this long URL, all that pops up is a notice that says the URL cannot be found!

So, for “plan B”, I called MTH and started to explain that the URL for assigning a long address to the powered subway car could not be found. Before I finished the sentence, the person with whom I was speaking said, “What address do you want? I’ll get you the CV values.” I gave him the 4-digit address and he immediately gave me the corresponding values for CV17 and CV18. I programmed CV17 and CV18 to these values, and the powered car was now programmed to number 7581! I suspect MTH is aware of the broken URL link.

So, now I have two MTH subway trains running and stopping automatically at the station on my elevated loop, with two different conductors making announcements every time one of the trains stops at the station. It adds a lot of realism to the City Terminal Zone portion of my layout and, best of all, the trains can be programmed to stop and start at the station without the need for an operator to manipulate the throttle.



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### I'm an MMR, Now What?

President Kurt Thompson,  
MMR

As long as I have known about the Achievement Program and the Master Model Railroader (MMR) designation, I thought that earning my MMR was going to be the pinnacle of my time in model railroading. As the old adage goes, earning my MMR was not a destination as much as a journey.

Now a year and a half after receiving my MMR, I am seeing that there is still more to explore and do as a model railroader. I have earned my eighth AP certificate (Association Official) serving as MER Vice-President and President. Since I am now working on another layout, I am wondering if it will be time to complete the Master Builder - Scenery certificate. I am building a boxcab for my O scale layout, so I am also looking at how much more effort will it take to earn my Master Builder - Motive Power certificate.

As much as those may be personal goals, what I am seeing is the leadership and support that comes from those MMRs who have come before me and those that have come after me. Several of them have gone on to complete more AP certificates. You can see their names in the AP report in each issue of The Local. Jerry Lauchle, MMR, just completed his AP Civil certificate.

Most of all, I have seen many of them giving back to the hobby and the NMRA by performing service. This includes active leadership at the Division, Region, and National levels. I can give you a list of names, but you know who they are.

I want to thank them for heartily answering my question with "I'm here and helping."

Maybe we can each ask ourselves the same question, whether you have earned your MMR yet or not, "Now what?"



## EDITOR'S COLUMN

Jack Dziadul

With this editorial, we are sharing some thoughts about what goes into the creation of each issue of The Local and eLocal, and their subsequent distribution.

- Solicitations - Without content, there is no newsletter. The Editor solicits articles and photographs of interest to our members and prospective members.
- Copyright – all content must be the original work of the author or photographer. Where third party content or photographs are used, we must have written consent from the copyright holder.
- Business items / house content – these are regular features from Officers, Directors, and other volunteers. These include regular columns from the President, Business Manager, AP Manager, Editor, and, depending on the calendar, election and convention related material. As much as possible, these items are placed within the first twelve pages.
- AP / MMR – President Thompson, MMR has challenged those of us participating in the Achievement Program to reach for Master Model Railroader status in time to celebrate the upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the MER in 2021. AP Manager Dave Chance recognizes and encourages Achievement Program progress with the bi-monthly listing of achievement certificates awarded. Accordingly, we encourage and prioritize AP related content.
- Building / Modeling – We are all about building models, and building and operating model railroads. Here again, we prioritize content that demonstrates and instructs the membership in these pursuits.
- Organization – The first twelve pages (subject to change) of The Local are comprised of the content that is distributed to those members who receive the hard copy of the newsletter, especially the house content as noted above.

We continue to evolve into an electronic newsletter. We were down to 53 paper subscribers with the last issue. We encourage all of the remaining paper subscribers to convert to the electronic version of The Local, which we refer to as the eLocal. The eLocal has full color content and has approximately twenty addition pages of quality content.

- Proofreading – When articles are received by the Editor the submitters receive an acknowledgement. The article then is sent to the proofreaders for their review and comment. The Editor finalizes the articles for publication. Spelling, grammar, readability are criteria among the considerations. The Editor retains the authority to make such changes as deemed necessary.
- Secretary Martin Brechbiel, MMR is laying out the content as provided by the Editor, essentially acting as an interim Publisher.
- Distribution is accomplished in several ways. The Editor submits the eLocal to the Webmaster and Director-at-Large overseeing the Webmaster. The Webmaster posts to the website. The Business Manager provides the website link in an email to the membership. The paper version of The Local is mailed to paper subscribers. The Business Manager provides mailing labels to the Publisher; however, Vice President Montero is performing the mailing duty on an interim basis.

So, there you have it; a brief look behind the curtain to see how the sausage is made in the MER.



For advertising in The Local, please contact the Editor ([Local-editor@mer-nmra.com](mailto:Local-editor@mer-nmra.com)). The current advertising rates (one year) as follows:

- Callboard ads (Division and Clubs Only)..Free
- Business Card size .....\$60
- Quarter Page ad.....\$125
- Half Page ad .....\$225
- Half Page ad per issue (Div. only) .....\$25

and must include camera-ready art (text, doc/docx, jpeg, pdf, bmp, tiff formats).

The Local welcomes articles, photographs, and model railroad related material as contributions to members' education and enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. The Editor will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send paper/photo originals without retaining back-up copies. Editors, by definition, reserve the right and have the responsibility to make corrections, deletions, and changes to accommodate space. If your item is time-sensitive in any way, please advise the Editor. Otherwise, stories and photos that are accepted for publication are used in approximately the order they are received.

Publication Schedule Submission Deadline

Jan/Feb	Dec 1st of previous year
Mar/Apr	Feb 1st
May/Jun	Apr 1st
Jul/Aug	Jun 1 <sup>st</sup>
Sept/Oct	Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>
Nov/Dec	Oct 1 <sup>st</sup>

Please observe the following steps to submit your contribution. **1.** Compose and submit your text in one of the following formats: TXT, DOC, or DOCX. **2.** Consider what photos, illustrations, or other graphics can go with the text. These are essential. But, **DO NOT** include/insert them into your text. **Do** put notations in the text such as “Insert Photo #1 here.” Send the illustrations separately and numbered as you would want them in the text. JPG, GIF, TIFF, or PNG formats are best for photos. **3.** If you have captions for your photos, etc., create a separate text file for the captions, each of which will be numbered to match a numbered photo or figure. A special note on photos or other exhibits; please only send us your creative work or that for which you have written permission to use so we can give that source proper credit. We need to avoid any copyright infringement situations.

**Proofreaders:**

Alex Belida , Martin Brechbiel, Ken Montero

## HELP WANTED: Editor and Publisher

The Mid-Eastern Region is now inviting applications for the volunteer positions of Editor and Publisher.

Appointed by: President  
 Approved by: Board of Directors  
 Reports to: Director-at-Large assigned to oversee the publication.

Position Summary (the essential elements are from the Executive Handbook. Refer to the EHB for the complete position description):

Responsible for preparing, editing, and producing the official publication of the Mid-Eastern Region, **The Local**, in accordance with the Bylaws. The newsletter editor is required to publish a quality newsletter six times per year. Solicit articles and photographs of educational interest to model railroaders; acknowledge receipt of all information received, edit articles with the assistance of the editorial proofreading team, and format the newsletters for both print and web viewing.

The Local serves as the in-house publication and will contain all official articles of the organization and information of general interest to the membership. The Local must be presented as an image-building device for gaining membership and maintaining membership interest. The Editor must exercise sound judgment and editorial expertise for producing a uniform and pleasing tone to the publication.

Specific responsibilities:

1. Keeps the Director –at-Large overseeing **The Local** informed at all times.
2. Strives to come in at, or under budget.
3. Provides quality production.
4. Produces uniform quality and tone of the publication.
5. Acknowledges in writing to the authors confirmation of receipt of article(s) and

indicate the anticipated edition date the article may appear in **The Local**.

6. Prepares an annual budget request to cover any anticipated expenses for the coming year.
7. Prepares ballot for Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA, Inc. elections.
8. Provides electronic copy of The Local for posting on the website and for distribution by the Business Manager.
9. Serves on the Budget Committee

### Business Manager's Column

#### Howard Oakes



We are in the middle of winter heading towards spring and warmer weather. While it is cold outside this gives us more inside time for our hobby. However, during winter, most divisions hold local events, meets, and some even sponsor train shows. You can find out about these events by using the Master Calendar of Events in the MER Local, reviewing your division newsletter or the Club Car section of the NMRA magazine. Railroad Model Craftsman includes a Timetable section in their magazine; other publications have events listed online and some historical societies list their activities in their magazine or online as well. At train shows, there is generally a table with flyers advertising other events. Note that if you would like to advertise your event, check carefully for the submission date requirements in each publication, which is generally at least a few months ahead of the event. So, get out your calendar, pencil in a train event or two or more, cross your fingers for good weather and get moving.

Just a reminder that if you change your telephone number, home or email address please notify either the NMRA National or myself to keep our records up to date. A current address on file saves the MER some money and allows you to receive all the benefits of NMRA membership.



## THE MER NEEDS YOU!

By Bob Charles, MMR

Yes, you! If you are a member in good standing and want to support your region with good ideas and real involvement, we need you to volunteer to serve as one of the four Officers for the Region. The MER Board of Directors meets 3 times per year; once at the MER convention. The deadline for nomination is May 30, 2019. The term of office is two years, with a limit of two terms for President and Vice President. The Treasurer and Secretary may server five consecutive terms.

Any MER member in good standing can be nominated, either by him or herself or by another member with the candidate's permission. The process is very simple:

Prepare:

- A 200-word (max) statement outlining the nominee's interest and qualifications for the position, **and**
- A photo of the candidate.

Send the nominations package – by **May 30, 2020** – to all of the following nominations process officials:

- Robert Charles, MMR Nominations Committee Chair [rcharles@aol.com](mailto:rcharles@aol.com)
- Jack Dziadul [jackdziadul@gmail.com](mailto:jackdziadul@gmail.com)
- Kenneth Montero [vp@mer-nmra.com](mailto:vp@mer-nmra.com)
- Robert Morningstar, Director, MER [bobmorningstar@protonmail.com](mailto:bobmorningstar@protonmail.com)

Option – also by May 30, candidates may supply a 500-word statement suitable for placement on the MER Web site.

You can make a difference by giving something back to the hobby you thoroughly enjoy. This is your chance. Successful completion of three years in office fulfills most of the requirement for the Achievement Program “Association Official” certificate. Please respond in one email to all three committee members plus Director Morningstar to insure receipt of your nomination! That is all there is to it!

**Deadlines and Schedules for 2020 Nominations and Balloting**

Our Bylaws require the publication of deadlines and schedules for nominations and balloting for every year in the first issue of The Local of each year. The dates and schedule for nominations, ballot and election results are in Executive Handbook, Section 5, Policies, Article VI.

The dates for 2020 are:

**May 30, 2020** -- Deadline for receipt of self-nominations sent to the Nominations Committee. Date for Nominations Committee to notify Board of Directors of slate of nominees validated by the Business Manager.

**July 5, 2020** -- You must be a member in good standing (paid up NMRA dues) based on the membership report supplied to the MER Business Manager from NMRA National as of 07/05 (the 5th of July) of every election year to be eligible to vote. If an individual is not a member or if membership has expired as indicated by the record supplied to the MER, and MER officials have not been informed by NMRA National of a valid renewal of membership by 07/05 (the 5th of July), that individual will not receive a ballot, nor be permitted to vote in that year's election.

**August 1, 2020** -- Deadline for mailing paper ballots to members and for commencing electronic voting; could be mailed earlier depending on other deadline requirements.

**September 8, 2020** -- Deadline for electronic voting, also last day as shown by postmark for mailing paper ballots.

**September 12, 2020** -- Deadline for receipt by Balloting Committee of paper ballots sent by mail.

**September 19, 2020** -- Deadline for Ballot Committee to transmit results to President, the Director overseeing this committee, and the Business Manager.

**September 26, 2020** -- Deadline for The President to communicate the election results to candidates. The Business Manager also notifies the MER Web Master and the NMRA of the election results.

**October 10, 2020** -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER's website.



## Achievement Program Update

By Dave Chance, MER AP  
Manager

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

### Division 3 – Philadelphia

Howard Kaplan – Model Railroad Author

### Division 4 – Tidewater

Gary Brown – Association Official  
Charles R. Brown Jr – Association Official  
Jim Keiper – Association Official  
James J. Curth – Association Official

### Division 11 – Susquehanna

Jerry Lauchle – Civil Engineering

### Division 13 - Carolina Piedmont

Charles Rausch – Electrical Engineering  
Charles Rausch – Chief Dispatcher

### Division 14 – Chesapeake

Dick Schwanke – Chief Dispatcher

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** - The R&V form is for your personal use.  
Only use it with the Author Submission.

Please, **NO R&V FORMS** with other submissions.

## New Members -- Welcome!

Name	Location	Division
Betty Andersen	Fairfax VA	Potomac
Jim Armstrong	Philadelphia PA	Philadelphia
Coleen Belovich	Pottstown PA	Philadelphia
Ross Belovich	Pottstown PA	Philadelphia
Paul Benenati	Mechanicsville VA	James River
Carol Bigham	Chalfont PA	Philadelphia
James Bramhall	Carolina Shores NC	
Wayne Chang	Mount Holly Springs PA	Susquehanna
Leon Duminiak	Treose PA	Philadelphia
Robert Gouge	Middletown DE	Philadelphia
Mauro Grossi	Greenville NC	
David Harris	Williamsport PA	Susquehanna
Steve Hause	Pasadena MD	Chesapeake
Robert Jolly	Manheim PA	Susquehanna
Richard Kraus	Chapel Hill NC	Carolina Piedmont
Fred Mayer	Lynchburg VA	James River
Harvey Osborne	Mount Holly NC	Carolina Southern
Richard Shannon	Sanford NC	Carolina Piedmont
Neph Shorey	Huntersville NC	Carolina Southern
Timothy Shorey	Huntersville NC	Carolina Southern
James Sims	Hubert NC	
Joseph Travia	Waterford Works NJ	New Jersey
Jerry Vernon	Chesapeake VA	Tidewater

## UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

**2020 Convention** – “Carolina Special Look South in 2020” – Oct. 15 - 18, 2020 - Crowne Plaza  
Charlotte Executive Park, 5700 Westpark Drive, Charlotte, NC, 28217

**2021 Convention** – Chesapeake Division – Oct. 21 - 24, 2021 - Delta by Marriott Hunt Valley Inn, 245  
Shawan Road, Hunt Valley, MD

**2022 Convention** – James River Division – dates tbd - location tbd

**2023 Convention** – Susquehanna Division – dates tbd - location tbd

**2024 Convention** – TBD – dates tbd - location tbd

**2025 Convention** – New Jersey Division – dates tbd - location tbd



**LOOK SOUTH IN 2020**

## **MID-EASTERN REGION 2020 CONVENTION**

### **CAROLINA SPECIAL**

OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup> – 18<sup>TH</sup> 2020

Crowne Plaza Charlotte, Executive Park  
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Carolina Southern Division is proud to be  
hosting the MER 2020 Convention

**REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN**

Convention activities will include:

- A wide selection of model railroading clinics, including by some nationally recognized names in the hobby
- Tour of the North Carolina Transportation Museum Back Shop and other non-public areas
- Tour of the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum
- Tour of Wade's Train World in Brookford, a layout maintained by the CSD
- HO, S and N scale operating layouts in the Convention Hotel
- Home layout tours in the area, to include The Piedmont & Western and NYC Piney Fork Branch, which were both cover stories in *Model Railroader*
- Operating Sessions

**START THE REGISTRATION PROCESS AT THIS LINK:**

<http://carolinasouthern.org>



Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2020 Convention

Carolina Special



October 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

[www.carolinasouthern.org/MER2020.html](http://www.carolinasouthern.org/MER2020.html)

Use Online Registration for Secure Payment and Latest Up-To-Date Activity Availability

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 + age): \_\_\_\_\_

Registrar's Use Only!	Address: _____
	City: _____ State: _____ Zip : _____
	Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____
	NMRA #: _____ Region: _____ Division: _____
	Favorite Scale: _____ Is this your first MER Convention? _____ Putting Items In Sale/Auction? _____

Description	Act. #	Cost	#	Paying
Early Registration (through August 31)	E	\$50		
Basic Registration (September 1 thru October 8 )	B	\$55		
At Door Registration (October 15-17)	D	\$60		
Non-NMRA Member Extra Fee	N	\$20		
Significant Other & Children Under 18	O	\$0		No Fee
Banquet – Saturday Night ___ Steak ___ Chicken ___ Vegetarian	401	\$48		
Friday Breakfast, price includes tax and gratuity	402	\$18		
Saturday Breakfast, price includes tax and gratuity	403	\$18		
Sunday Breakfast, price includes tax and gratuity	404	\$18		
Supers/Editors - Breakfast, Circle One, Division Super 405 Division Editor 406	405/406	\$0		No Fee
<b>Call Boards / Ops – Expanded Call Board Info Available on Website</b>				
	801	\$5		
	802	\$5		
	803	\$5		
	804	\$5		
	805	\$5		
<b>Prototype Tours – More Info on Website When/If Available</b>				
North Carolina Transportation Museum (first 30 to sign up attend free)	201	\$10		
Unifour Special Tour – Layouts / Narrow Gauge Museum / Brookford / Box Lunch	202	\$60		
<b>Extra Fare Clinics – Registration Required, Info On Website When/If Available</b>				
Structure Make-n-Take, Fri 8am – 10:30am	601			
Crossing Shanty ___ N (\$15) ___ HO (\$20)				
Section House ___ N (\$15) ___ HO (\$25)				
Bull Chute Make-n-Take, Fri 1pm – 11pm	602	\$5		
Staining and Weathering Castings, Sat 8am - noon	603	\$13		
	604			
	605			
<b>Made in the MER Tours – More Info on Website When/If Available</b>				
	701			
<b>General Interest Activities – More Info on Website When/If Available</b>				
	501			
<b>Would You Like To Be A Contest Judge At The Convention – Circle YES or NO</b>				
<b>Have You Been A Contest Judge In The Past – Circle - Yes or NO</b>				
<b>Total Being Paid</b>				➔

**Online Registration – <http://merregistrar.coffee.cup.com/forms/2020%20Online%20Registration/>**  
 Fill in Form, Press Submit Form for Invoice, then Press PayPal Button and Make Your Payment. **A PayPal Account Is Not Required.**  
**Payment [Check Only] must accompany Print Registrations sent by USPS.**  
 Checks payable to: MER Conventions, Send to: MER Conventions, PO Box 426, Sykesville, MD 21784-0426  
 Any Questions and/or additional information, e-mail to [mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com](mailto:mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com), or call 410-442-0446  
**Hotel – Crowne Plaza Charlotte Executive Park, 5700 Westpark Dr, Charlotte, NC 28217**  
**Reference-Mid-Eastern Region-National Model Railroad Assoc., Reservations: 704-527-9650**  
**Online Reservations use - <https://www.tinyurl.com/MER2020-Hotel>**  
**Room Rate - \$114.00 night + tax, Room Rate applies 10/12/20 to 10/21/20**

Watch web sites for information: [www.carolinasouthern.org/MER2020.html](http://www.carolinasouthern.org/MER2020.html), [mer-nmra.com](http://mer-nmra.com) Updated 01/13/20

## Letter to the Editor

Re: Enhancing HO Scale Turnouts with Magnetic Point Locking

Hello Jack,

I enjoyed the article by Bob Morningstar in the latest *Local* on using the super magnets for manual point locks. A friend of mine showed me a different approach to convert garden variety Atlas turnouts into that “Peco-like” action with the use of an “Omega spring.” I have not done too many of these yet because most of my so-far-built layout is served by point-powering Tortoises, but if you have any interest I could write up a brief piece on the “Omega spring” technique once I locate my “specimen” that I will photograph. Let me know if you are interested.

By the way, I think Bob’s idea of having “dummy” switch machine and lantern assemblies 3d printed to use as finger handles glued to the throwbars is excellent. Could you pass along to him the suggestion that he make those parts available to modelers through the Shapeways Store (or whatever it’s called)? There was an article in the December 2018 RMC in which the author was 3d printing such parts. I contacted RMC (Railroad Model Craftsman - Ed.) to ask if the author would make them available through Shapeways and never heard from the magazine or the author. I searched Shapeways to see if such a part had been done by someone but came up empty handed—maybe they are there, but that is a huge catalog and its search function is dicey.

John Teichmoeller

*John, thank you so much for your letter, and yes, we think that our readers would be very interested in seeing an article on the Omega spring technique. We are glad that you like Bob’s very interesting article and we passed your recommendation along to Bob.*

*Jack Dziadul, Editor*

*John:*

*Thank you for sharing another alternative to powered turnouts and oversized Caboose Hobbies ground throws. We look forward to seeing photos or video of your solution in action. A short write up of how to build and implement it would be a very welcome article for the newsletter.*

*Happy New Year and Happy Modeling.*

*Bob Morningstar*



**Two of Chuck Hladik’s AP Award Structures (Photos by Jack Dziadul)**

## Upcoming Events

2020	Dates	Event	City	State	Contact
MAR	7-8	New Bern Train Show	New Bern	NC	<a href="mailto:billtucker@centurylink.net">billtucker@centurylink.net</a>
MAR	14	Mebane Train Show	Mebane	NC	<a href="http://www.themebanetraindisplay.com">www.themebanetraindisplay.com</a>
MAR	14	New Jersey Div meeting	Hamilton	NJ	<a href="mailto:yze5errw1@outlook.com">yze5errw1@outlook.com</a>
MAR	21	Tidewater meet	Courtland	VA	<a href="http://www.nmra-mer-tidewater.org">www.nmra-mer-tidewater.org</a>
MAR	21	Greatest Little Train Show	Greensboro	NC	<a href="http://www.carolinamodelrr.org">www.carolinamodelrr.org</a>
MAR	24	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
MAR	26-29	Valley Forge RPM	Malvern	PA	<a href="http://rpmvalleyforge.com/">http://rpmvalleyforge.com/</a>
MAR	27-28	Savannah RPM	Savannah	GA	<a href="http://www.savannahrpm.com">www.savannahrpm.com</a>
APR	4	Potomac Division Minicon	Annandale	VA	<a href="http://potomac-nmra.org">http://potomac-nmra.org</a>
APR	4	Susquehanna meet	New Holland	PA	<a href="mailto:pmulronev@susquehannanmra.org">pmulronev@susquehannanmra.org</a>
APR	11	Tichy Open House	Burlington	NC	<a href="mailto:jackdziadul@gmail.com">jackdziadul@gmail.com</a>
APR	18	South Mountain Mini-Con	Blue Ridge Summit	PA	<a href="mailto:djflowick@comcast.net">djflowick@comcast.net</a>
APR	18	2 Rail O Scale Train Show	Strasburg	PA	John Dunn 609-432-2871
APR	25	MER Board meeting	Charlotte	NC	<a href="http://www.mer-nmra.com">www.mer-nmra.com</a>
APR	28	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
MAY	2	Columbia Railroad Day	Columbia	PA	<a href="mailto:wclesjak2@comcast.net">wclesjak2@comcast.net</a>
MAY	2-3	Neuse River Valley Train Show	Raleigh	NC	<a href="http://www.nrvclub.net">www.nrvclub.net</a>
MAY	2-3	Great Scale Model Train Show	Timonium	MD	<a href="http://www.gsmts.com">www.gsmts.com</a>
MAY	13-16	PRRT&HS Annual Meeting	State College	PA	<a href="http://www.prrths.com">www.prrths.com</a>
MAY	16	New Jersey Div meeting	Middletown	NJ	<a href="mailto:yze5errw1@outlook.com">yze5errw1@outlook.com</a>
MAY	16	Tidewater meet	Newport News	VA	<a href="http://www.nmra-mer-tidewater.org">www.nmra-mer-tidewater.org</a>
MAY	16-17	Spencer Train Show	Spencer	NC	<a href="http://www.nctrans.org">www.nctrans.org</a>
MAY	26	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
MAY	29-30	New England RPM	Farmington	CT	<a href="http://www.nerpm.org">www.nerpm.org</a>
MAY	30	MER nominations due			<a href="mailto:rcharles@aol.com">rcharles@aol.com</a>
JUN	20	Susquehanna meet	New Oxford	PA	<a href="mailto:ppeters@susquehannanmra.org">ppeters@susquehannanmra.org</a>
JUN	23	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
JUN	24-28	N Scale Convention	Nashville	TN	<a href="http://www.nationalscaleconvention.com/">www.nationalscaleconvention.com/</a>
JUL	12-18	NMRA Convention	St Louis	MO	<a href="http://www.gateway2020.org">www.gateway2020.org</a>
JUL	28	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
AUG	8	2 Rail O Scale Train Show	Strasburg	PA	John Dunn 609-432-2871
AUG	22	Susquehanna meet	Denver	PA	<a href="mailto:dblank@susquehannanmra.org">dblank@susquehannanmra.org</a>
AUG	25	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
SEP	12	TCA train show	Mebane	NC	<a href="http://www.traincollectors.org">www.traincollectors.org</a>
SEP	22	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
SEP	26-27	Old 97 Rail Days	Danville	VA	<a href="http://www.dcs.smv.org">www.dcs.smv.org</a>
OCT	2-3	Selma Rail Days	Selma	NC	<a href="http://www.selma-nc.com">www.selma-nc.com</a>
OCT	2-3	Susquehanna Ops weekend		PA	<a href="http://www.susquehannanmra.org">www.susquehannanmra.org</a>
OCT	15-18	Look South in 2020	Charlotte	NC	<a href="mailto:kklrailroad@yahoo.com">kklrailroad@yahoo.com</a>
OCT	15	MER Board meeting	Charlotte	NC	<a href="http://www.mer-nmra.com">www.mer-nmra.com</a>
OCT	17	MER Business Meeting	Charlotte	NC	<a href="http://www.mer-nmra.com">www.mer-nmra.com</a>
OCT	17	2 Rail O Scale Train Show	Strasburg	PA	John Dunn 609-432-2871
OCT	24-25	Great Scale Model Train Show	Timonium	MD	<a href="http://www.gsmts.com">www.gsmts.com</a>
OCT	27	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
NOV	7-8	Neuse River Valley Train Show	Raleigh	NC	<a href="http://www.nrvclub.net">www.nrvclub.net</a>
NOV	7-8	Susquehanna open houses		PA	<a href="http://www.susquehannanmra.org">www.susquehannanmra.org</a>
NOV	10	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
NOV	14-15	Susquehanna open houses		PA	<a href="http://www.susquehannanmra.org">www.susquehannanmra.org</a>
NOV	21-22	Susquehanna open houses		PA	<a href="http://www.susquehannanmra.org">www.susquehannanmra.org</a>
DEC	5-6	TCA train show	Raleigh	NC	<a href="http://www.traincollectors.org">www.traincollectors.org</a>
DEC	8	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>

2021	Dates	Event	City	State	Contact
JAN	28	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>
FEB	25	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	<a href="http://www.cpd13.org">www.cpd13.org</a>

## Achievement Program Article Series

By Jack Dziadul

We are pleased to announce a series of eleven articles that address each of the Achievement Program categories that lead to the Master Model Railroader designation. President Kurt Thompson, MMR, in the May-June 2019 issue of The Local, announced a goal of increasing MER Master Model Railroaders by 75% in celebration of our 75th anniversary in 2021. This target number is 105 by the October 2021 convention.

Our all-star lineup is below. Eleven different MER Master Model Railroaders will write the series. There will be plenty of inspiration in a timely manner to get MMR aspirants (like your Editor) kick-started along their way to meeting President Thompson's MMR challenge for our 75th anniversary celebration.

Model Railroad equipment	<b>Category</b>	<b>Author</b>
	Master Builder - Motive Power	Joe Walters, MMR
	Master Builder - Cars	Ron Baile, MMR
Settings	<b>Category</b>	<b>Author</b>
	Master Builder - Structures	Glyn Thomas, MMR
	Master Builder - Scenery	Mary Miller, MMR
	Master Builder - Prototype Models	Andrew Dodge, MMR
Engineering and Operation	<b>Category</b>	<b>Author</b>
	Model Railroad Engineer - Civil	Ernie Little, MMR
	Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical	Rod Vance, MMR
	Chief Dispatcher	Kurt Kramke, MMR
Service to the Hobby	<b>Category</b>	<b>Author</b>
	Association Official	Kurt Thompson, MMR
	Association Volunteer	Brian Sheron, MMR
	Model Railroad Author	Martin Brechbiel, MMR

See the first two articles in this series on pages 33 and 41 by Martin Brechbiel, MMR and Kurt Thompson, MMR.

## South Mountain Division Mini-Con

By Don Florwick

On April 18, 2020, beginning at 9:00 am, South Mountain Division (SMD), along with co-sponsor Mainline Hobby Supply, will host its eighth annual Mini-Convention (Mini-con) at Blue Ridge Summit, PA. This annual outreach program starts with informal clinics and hands-on opportunities, and then culminates with a few formal presentations in the early afternoon.

For the SMD, this will be our eighth annual Mini-Convention, and this one activity has truly invigorated the Division. It takes about 42 people to make this event happen, and the majority of staff are Division members. Over the past 7 or 8 years since we started this event, we have seen a noticeable improvement in attendance at meetings, and better participation in other Division activities during the rest of the year. In addition, it has provided a great opportunity for South Mountain to give back to the hobby and to promote the hobby to the public. Our attendance in recent years has averaged about 220 attendees.

To encourage interaction and promote the exchange of ideas at the Mini-con, we will have about twenty informal clinics that will take place for the first four hours. Clinicians sitting at tables will welcome attendees to observe the projects they are working on. This allows for questions and conversation while the clinicians work, and often guests are invited to try their hand at the work. Clinic topics run the gamut from scenery techniques, to layout design, to operations, model making and painting, and electronics. This includes DCC and even Arduino.

In addition to the informal clinics, we will have two make and take clinics where we focus on the beginner, especially the younger crowd new to the hobby. Usually, we have a small structure they can build and take home with them. An entry-level craftsman kit and a plastic building kit have been the basis for this activity. This has been a great father/mother with son or daughter activity in past years. We usually have one or two modular groups rounding out the morning activities.

In the afternoon, we will present a few formal clinics to finish the day. This year, Alex Polimeni will speak on “Model Railroading as Game Design” and noted historian and author, Lee Rainey will speak on “Short Line Operating Patterns: What to Consider in Designing a Schedule.”

Our co-sponsor for this event, Mainline Hobby Supply, is just a block away from the fire hall in Blue Ridge Summit, so we encourage you to stop by and thank them for their wonderful support and do not forget to shop a little! The entire event is operated by SMD volunteers under the leadership of Division member Pete Clarke at the Blue Ridge Summit (PA) Fire Co. This year's event is again free and open to the public.

Will you join us this year?  
When: Saturday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, April 18, 2020. Where: Blue Ridge Mountain Fire & Rescue, 13063 Monterey Lane, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214



**April 16, 2016. (Don Florwick)**





**April 16, 2016. Jane Clarke informal clinician, making trees. (Don Florwick)**

**Adam Uskert with his completed DPM Modular Building 360 Learning Kit assembled with his father Rick April 16, 2016. (Rick Uskert)**



**Installing a DCC decoder - Frank Benenati April 8, 2017 (Tom Fedor)**



**DPM - 36000 - modular learning kit with Dave Sweeney. Kyle England, 12 of Westminster. April 8, 2017 (Tom Fedor)**

**DPM - 36000 - modular learning kit w/Dave Sweeney, Murali Nair and son Viraj, 8, of Waynesboro, PA work together. April 8, 2017 (Tom Fedor)**



**Dottie Caldwell discusses structure painting with Meredith Fritz of Baltimore, MD (right) April 7, 2018 (Tom Fedor)**



**Steve King lectures on "operating as the prototype does" April 7, 2018 (Tom Fedor)**



## A Visit to the Wilmington, NC Railroad Museum

By Kurt Thompson, MMR

Earlier this month, my wife and I went to a wedding down near Topsail Island, NC. Arriving on Friday night, we planned to go down and check out some tourist things in Wilmington. After parking at the Convention Center parking garage, we walked over to the Visitors' Center located in the old Atlantic Coast Line (ACL) Warehouse B on Nutt St.

The Wilmington Railroad Museum ([www.wrrm.org](http://www.wrrm.org)) is located in the same building. The Museum takes up more than two-thirds of the remaining part of Warehouse B. Adjacent to Warehouse B is Warehouse A with the three-story Freight



**Wilmington Visitor Center Office in Warehouse B**

Office building attached. Warehouse A is still its original length. Warehouse B was truncated years ago to make room for a hotel on the Cape Fear River.



**Warehouse A from the CFCC Parking structure Warehouse B from the CFCC Parking structure**

When you walk up, the first things you notice are three pieces of railroad equipment: an ACL caboose, an ACL steam engine, and a 50-foot Pullman-Standard boxcar lettered and painted for the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad (RF&P). The steam engine and the boxcar are located on a section



of track immediately beside the warehouse. The track and the equipment are isolated from any connection to the outside world.

**ACL Caboose**



### **Did someone lose an RF&P boxcar? Remnants of the warehouse tracks**

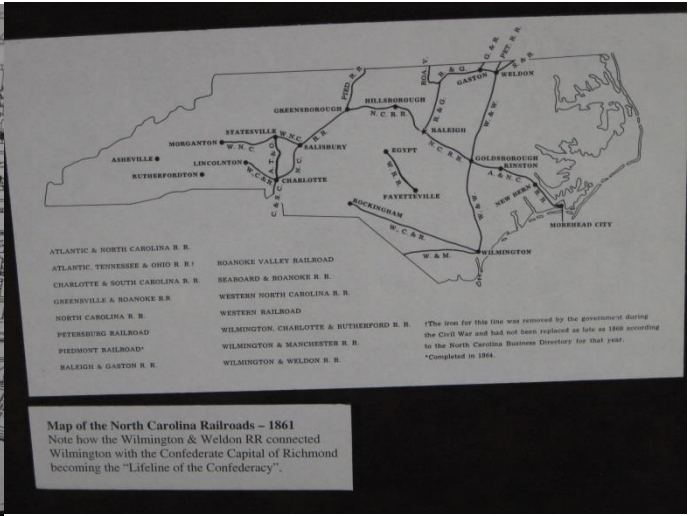
When I first saw the RF&P boxcar, I was puzzled why the Museum, which is in the hometown of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, would have, let alone display, an RF&P boxcar. The answer was revealed when I entered the boxcar, which is an open display. An RF&P retiree, who lives in Wilmington and worked as a volunteer at the museum, persuaded RF&P to donate the boxcar. Consequently, it has been maintained as when RF&P owned it.

Inside the museum, there are several galleries. One deals with some of the history of ACL and Wilmington, including exhibits about the various jobs on the railroad

and the tools necessary to keep the railroad running. One tool was a handmade tie bolt wrench that had the head and handle hammered together. It dated back to circa 1885.



1929 Map of Wilmington



Map of NC Railroads circa 1861

In the third room/bay is a children’s area containing many different train toys. In this area is an O- Scale 3-rail layout with push buttons to run various animated scenes and some of the trains.

In the last room, is an HO scale layout built and operated by volunteers. For me, the neatest part was the end of the layout depicting the Wilmington Passenger Terminal area and Warehouses A and B. Someone did a very nice job on the models of the freight and passenger trains, and the buildings. Although I did not get to measure anything, I would bet that the artisan would be very close to receiving their Master Builder - Prototype Models certificate for that diorama. It was also nice to see the area as it looked in the late 1950s / early 1960s.



I often feel lost when a museum does not have any reference to how the area looked in the past, but this museum provided that context. Wilmington is undergoing a continuing renewal and updating of the downtown area. Warehouse A is being converted into a “loft hotel” along with many small businesses in the some of the existing bays. Across the street where the passenger terminal and other buildings once stood, the Cape Fear Community College and its parking garage now stand. The railroad incline that led from the river level warehouses up to the higher level has been converted into a garden style walkway. The original retaining walls are still in place, although the tracks have all been removed.

My wife and I did not get to spend much time in Wilmington, but what time we had was well spent. Going back to Wilmington is on our list since there is so much more history, railroad and non-railroad, for us to explore and experience.

### A World Record HO Train

The Wilmington Railroad Museum holds the Guinness World Record for operating the longest HO scale train. On Saturday, April 23, 2011, the volunteers assembled a single loop of track with a grade so that it made two passes around the interior of the Wilmington Convention Center main floor. The train consist included 31 locomotives in distributive power unit (DPU) fashion throughout the train length, along with 1,563 freight cars. The world record was obtained when the train operated successfully for over 20 minutes. The train length was 925.5 feet long, equivalent to 15.27 scale miles. Four of the University of North Carolina - Wilmington Art Department students produced a video of the accomplishment. The video runs about ten minutes on a monitor in the second bay. (Ed. See Herald article by participant Don Jennings of the Carolina Piedmont Division. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B6VdKTW2bzMvR19vZlpZVkg1Q1U> )

### Bringing New Blood Into the Fold

During my visit to the Wilmington Railroad Museum, I met its marketing specialist, Kendyl Cosgrove. She is a recent college graduate of UNC Wilmington and was hired to handle marketing and internet support for the Museum. Her degree is a double major of Art and Business, specializing in Marketing. While we were talking, I asked her how she liked working around all the older volunteers. She answered that she really liked her job because she is deep down a railroad fan. She confided that she thinks she got the job, which was posted on the Indeed job website, when she told the interviewers that she has always liked trains and she felt this would be a great job for her. Obviously, the Museum staff believed her since she was hired.

Kendyl went on to tell me that the Museum also has a junior volunteer program. A teenager can work as a volunteer on any weekend day or day off from school. They are assigned a senior member or guide who helps them along the way. The junior volunteers help with layout operations, maintenance of the equipment, and the ever-popular "other duties as assigned." I saw one of the younger teen volunteers show up just after the Museum opened. He apologized for being late as he "had to wait for (his) Mom to drop him off" (there was a Veterans Day parade forming up a couple blocks from the Museum on Saturday 11/9/19).

With these paths open, the Museum is doing something right about attracting and encouraging young people to the hobby while acknowledging that the love for trains knows no age limit.

**Custom  
Layout  
Building**

**Layout Design**

**By Lance Mindheim**

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

## Potomac Division Minicon 2020\*

All model railroaders are invited to join us for a day of fun, information, and socializing.

**The place:** St. Matthews United Methodist Church 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA  
*A handicapped entrance and parking are located at the back of our church building. The back parking area is easy to enter from Virginia Avenue, the road that runs along the back of our church.*

**The time:** Saturday April 4, 2020, from 9 AM until 4 PM.

**Events:**

**10:00 – 12:00:** Open floor informal clinics presented by area modelers covering, Building MOW Cars, LED Lighting, Bushes/Ground Cover, Building/Standards etc. for Module Layouts, Scenery, Building Foreground Trees, Upgrading Coal Loads, Using Styrofoam as a Scenery Base, 3-D Printing, and maybe others.

**12:45:** Bob Geldmacher: “Products and Methods for Creating Beautiful Scenes.”

**2:00-3:45:** Formal clinics including AP Author/Flyer (Writing articles), Enhance Your Layouts Story Telling, Introduction to Resin Casting, Creating RR Book for Your Family, Building T-TRAK Modules, 3-Printing, and maybe one more.

**Module Layouts Displays:** MARRS (HO scale), NVNTRAK (N scale), and Baltimore Society of Model Engineers (O scale)

**Cost:** Potomac Division requests attendees pay a \$10 fee to cover the cost of the venue. Children under 18 years of age and significant others Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts are admitted free.

**Non-NMRA Members:** Non-members are extended an invitation to attend this event as well as several of our Outreach Programs, and we hope you will see the value of being a member of the NMRA. Because of national rules, we have to limit non-members to no more than three different events. One can join the NMRA and receive all the benefits for as little as \$50 without the magazine or \$40 for students. So, please consider joining so you can attend our future programs.

**Hope to see you for an exciting day in April and our future Outreach Programs.**

**\*A component of the Potomac Division Modeler’s Outreach Programs.**

# Columbia Railroad Days

By Rich Wurst

**Save This Date** - Saturday May 2, 2020! The Susquehanna Division of the Mid-Eastern Region will co-sponsor the second annual Columbia Railroad Day. Last year this premier event was a huge success. Over 500 attendees enjoyed all the railroading activities available to them ranging from model railroading, historical lectures, and a visit to the facilities of the Columbia and Reading Railway Company.

The 2020 event will feature a Civil War theme and will be held at three locations in Columbia, Pennsylvania. The first location will be the Columbia Historic Preservation Society at 19-21 Second Street. On the second floor, attendees can enjoy the large HO scale layout of the Columbia & Susquehanna Model Railroad Club. On the first floor, the Lower Susquehanna Model Railroad Club will be displaying their “O” scale modular layout. There will also be various displays and activities presented by the Susquehanna Division.

The second location will be the Columbia Crossings Center, located at 41 Walnut Street, where lectures will be held. Here, visitors will learn about the history of railroading during the Civil War. Currently scheduled to appear are Park Manager and Ranger Doug Bosley from the Allegheny Portage Railroad Historic Site and noted author Scott Mingus. Mr. Bosley will be discussing Civil War canals and their link to the area railroads that moved troops and supplies during the conflict. Mr. Mingus will be discussing Civil War railroads from Gettysburg to Columbia. We plan to have additional lecturers giving more information about Civil War railroad history and how the Underground Railroad used the railways around Columbia. There will be food available at this site from “Rose’s Deli and More” which serves the “Shifters” deli sandwich, a local favorite. There are also plans for a Civil War encampment by the river with re-enactors talking about the war.

The third venue will be an open house at the Columbia and Reading Railway Company (**Photo 1**) and its sister firm, Rail Mechanical Services, located at 380 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street (**Photo 2**). There will be maintenance demonstrations of the work they do, such as hot riveting. Participants will also be able to see their current restoration projects and see the equipment that they use (**Photos 3, 4**). There are many other activities being planned.



Photo 1

## Columbia & Reading Railroad ALCO S2

The local chapter of the railcar / speeder group will be back again (**Photo 5**). Food may be available here as well, and perhaps even a bluegrass band. Various vendors will be present selling everything from



model railroad items to railroad memorabilia. This is a great place to visit to see what is involved with working on real (yes 1:1 Scale) railroads.

Getting around to the three sites will be easy. You can walk or drive between the first two sites, and drive to the third. Or, take the trolley bus where you will receive more historical information as you travel throughout Columbia (Photo 6). The hours of the event are from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM and will be a can't miss event for railroaders of any age and a privilege for our Division to be involved.

Photo 2



Rail Mechanical Services Poster



Photo 3

Baltimore City PCC restoration

Photo 4



Steam into History flatcar to be Made into a Coach



Photo 5

Speeders



Photo 6

Should you have any questions or would like to help with this event contact Bill Lesjak at [wclesjak2@comcast.net](mailto:wclesjak2@comcast.net) or call (717)751-2391.

### Event Trolley



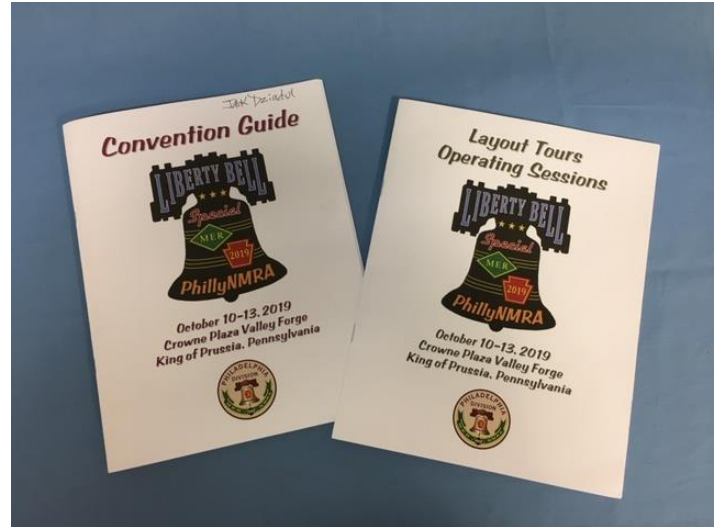
**At the Sandhills Central Railroad Club, Aberdeen, NC. The club layout has many mini-scenes including circus and baseball field. (Jack Dziadul photographer).**

## Liberty Bell Special, Another View

By Jack Dziadul

It is never too late to talk about the last convention, nor for that matter too early to speak of an upcoming convention. Here are a few observations from the October Liberty Bell Special that was hosted by the Philadelphia Division.

- Layout tours – Jim Murphy, Vic Bitleris and I were able to visit two HO scale layouts on our way to King of Prussia. In addition, we took in two more HO scale layouts on the Sunday drive home.
  - Bill Kachel's 1965 era Pennsylvania Railroad's Cosmopolitan Branch layout



### Liberty Bell Special Guidebook and Layout Tour Book

was our first stop. This completed empire filled Bill's 2,000 square foot basement. This was one of the largest and most fascinating home layouts that we have had the experience of touring. One can Google "Bill Kachel model railroad" to find numerous links to videos and photographs depicting well-done structures, city scenes, industries, and harbor scenes with more ships than we could count. We could have spent hours with Bill, but the clock was against us.



**Bill Kachel (back to camera) with left to right Jim Murphy, Vic Bitleris, Mrs. Lauchle, Jerry Lauchle, MMR**



**Bill's layout has numerous harbor scenes**

- Not far down the road was Ron Hoess’ Pennsylvania Chestnut Hill Branch. This around-the-walls 1958 era railroad had about 40% of the scenery completed and modeled 29 miles in 115 square feet. Ron meticulously researched and replicated buildings that he scratchbuilt. Google “Ron Hoess model railroad” for photos and videos.



**Ron with Jerry Lauchle, MMR**



**Ron’s scratch-built Philadelphia row houses**

- Joe Walters, MMR was a wonderful host of his completed 300 square foot, basement, free-lanced shortline called Northeast Railroad. Many details on Joe’s layout were his own resin castings. Readers will recognize Joe’s contest room entries that were featured in the January-February issue of The Local. Watch for Joe’s future articles on scratchbuilding the rotary snowplow and Jordan Spreader. Google will pull up more photos and videos of Joe’s layout.



**Joe with Jim Murphy**



**A portion of Joe’s GP units**



**Joe’s scratch-built Jordan spreader**

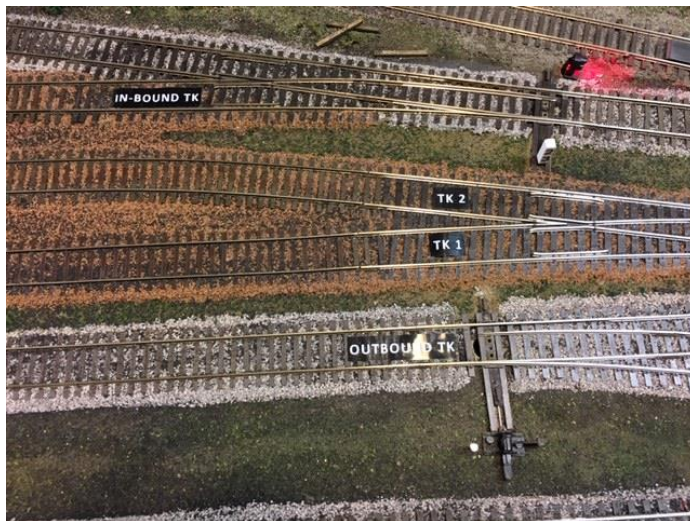
- John Trout modeled 45 miles of rural Pennsylvania in 265 square feet. His transition era layout featured logging and coal mining lines of the Pennsylvania Railroad. John has a regular operating crew and uses Easy DCC and switch lists. Every turnout was numbered, making it easy for the road crews. Additional photos and videos are the web.



**Each turnout is numbered**



**Flawless trackwork**

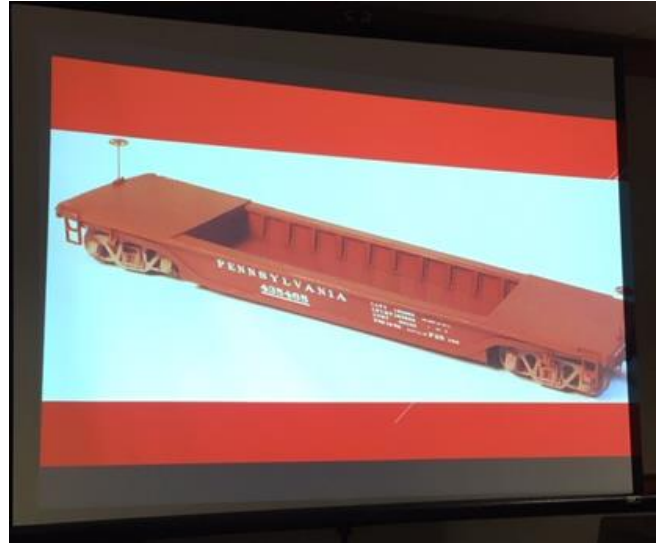


**Layout is designed for operations**



**Crossover and diamonds**

- Clinics – I was not able to attend as many clinics as I would have liked. Isn't that always the case? Thursday night, I was at the MER Board of Directors' meeting, Saturday was spent as a contest judge, and Sunday morning was the MER Annual Business meeting. Therefore, Friday was my clinic day.
  - First up was "Make 'n' Take PRR F25 Well Car Resin Kit" with Steve Funaro. Here, I got to add one more unfinished freight car kit to my stash of "someday I'll get around to finishing it" shelf in my closet. It took a faster and more skilled modeler than I to make much progress on the build. The instructions were excellent, and it is a very nice kit. However, it was difficult for this modeler to do all of the fine drilling for grab irons and stirrups under the time pressure of a clinic.



Slide showing finished model



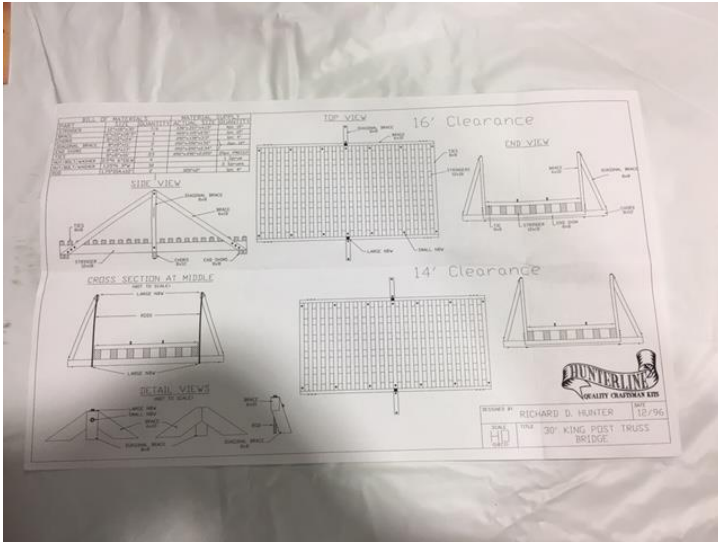
Funaro clinic kit pieces

- Next up was Rick and Maureen Hunter's "30' King Post Truss Bridge Make 'n' Take" clinic. This was a well-organized presentation with PowerPoint slides and sample built-ups. The kit was a bag of well-marked stripwood, but was a simple build so long as you measured twice and cut once. Their Hunterline Weathering Mix stains were included with the \$42 extra fare



Hunterline Weathering Mix

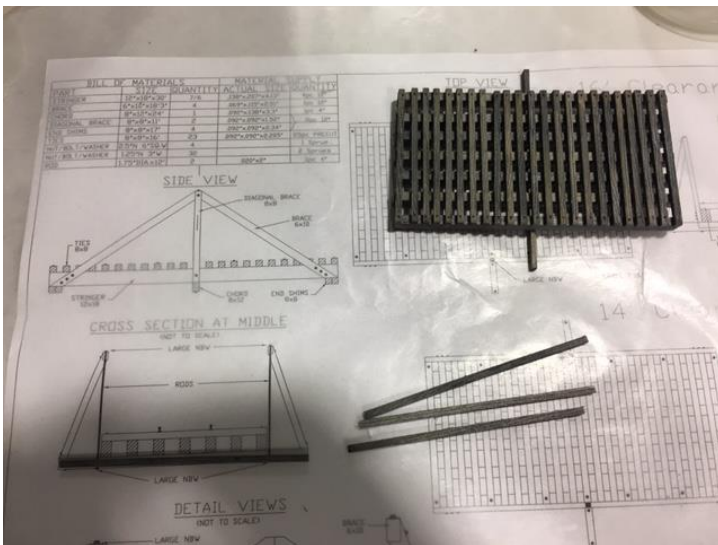
price of the clinic. Participants received two eight-ounce bottles of stain colors of your price of the clinic. Participants received two eight-ounce bottles of stain colors of your choice. I chose Creosote Black and Light Gray. Instructions were full size for your scale, which made for nice cutting templates.



Templates were to scale



Stripwood packages



Assembly in process after stain applied



Completed model

- The Friday night clinic was a very creative and informative demonstration of how to qualify for the Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical. Kurt Thompson, MMR, and Brian Kampshroer constructed and demonstrated before a standing-room packed clinic room the successful requirements for the operating sections of the certificate requirements. This was a well-planned and well-executed demonstration that was encouraging to each of us aspiring Master Model Railroaders.
- Contest room - I often volunteer in the contest room at the conventions. Although it is an all-day commitment, it is a small part of giving back to the hobby. I also get to spend time to better know modelers that I only see once each year. Evaluating models with flashlights, white gloves, and with magnification allows you to see and appreciate fine work. Each of the models represent many hours of research and construction. What skills I have are a direct result of seeing up close the work of excellent modelers. One tip that I will pass along is a structure finishing detail that stood out to me. A number of buildings had removable roofs to allow viewing interior details, construction, and finishes. In some instances, it was obvious that interior flooring and exterior docks and waiting platforms were painted and weathered at the same time, before wall assembly. This made the weathering inside of a depot look the same as the weathering on the boards of a loading dock or waiting platform. Of course, the weathering should be quite different. I will remember this observation in my own modeling.
- Editor's breakfast – as the Director-at-Large at the time overseeing The Local and interim Editor, I led the Editors' breakfast on Friday morning. Four Division Editors were able to participate: Howard Kaplan, Philadelphia; Rich Wurst, Susquehanna; Charlie Rausch, Carolina Piedmont; and a brief cameo by Kirk Bateman, Chesapeake. Representatives of MER included President Kurt Thompson, MMR, Vice President Ken Montero, and Secretary Martin Brechbiel, MMR. Ken and Martin are proofreaders and provide other assistance to The Local. Bob Morningstar, Director-at-Large Elect also participated, as he would be replacing me as Director-at-Large overseeing The Local. The topics that we covered included publishing software, editor succession (assistants), advertising, quality control and proofreading, schedule (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly), copyright protection, submission guidelines, and publishing business related items (minutes, budgets, financial statements).

#### **Footnote from Kurt Thompson, MMR:**

Folks: Just to let you know, the video (time lapsed version) from Brian's and my Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical clinic is now posted on the NMRA website in the *Member's Only* area. ([www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)) I am working with Jeff our webmaster to see if we have room on our site to post the full-length version (running time 1 hour 37 minutes). Here is the direct link to the shorter version that runs just over twenty-five minutes. Log in required.

<https://www.nmra.org/clinics/getting-ap-electrical-certificate-railroad-club-presentation>



# Getting Your Model Railroad Author Certificate

(Tips from a successful Model Railroad Author)

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR

Getting your Model Railroad Author certificate in the NMRA Achievement Program is far, far easier than you might think. I know that too many of you look at the title and just cringe in fear reliving memories of those creative writing classes that you just barely escaped by the skin of your teeth. Or, you just see writing as more work, something you use your hobby to escape from whenever possible.

I cannot help you with the first and try at all times to forget similar experiences in high school and college. But, I can unequivocally state that writing model railroad related articles is nothing like writing at work and is certainly a lot more fun.

How do I know that you ask? Here is where the disclosure phase of the article resides. I have written approximately 390 technical publications and that is still growing in number, along with being the Editor-in-Chief of *Cancer, Biotherapy, and Radiopharmaceuticals*. I have the writing for work baseline well in hand. On the flipside to professional writing, I have over 100 published model railroading articles and serve as the Editor of *O Scale Trains* magazine (White River Productions). Therefore, I can state with authority which one is work and which one is fun (Author was my second Achievement Program certificate)!

So, let us start by look at the rules and requirements for Model Railroad Author.

Here is the basic summation. You have to prepare and submit material on any of the following:

- ⊗ Model Railroading
- ⊗ Prototype Railroading, Applicable to Modeling
- ⊗ NMRA Administration (e.g. Officers or Committee Reports)

The material being claimed must be the work of the author, photographer, artist, draftsperson, etc. applying for the certificate. Might also be terribly obvious, but it has to be your creation.

As with most AP requirements, it is a point driven process. You need to earn 42 points to qualify for Model Railroad Author. So, how does this all get tallied up; what counts for how many points? But first, what are the actual written materials that can count towards points?

This seems too obvious, but printed media, such as magazines or newsletters counts. That includes text, photographs, drawings, etc. that you created and contributed to be published. Your work does not even have to actually be published, just being accepted for publication counts as long as you have documentation of that acceptance. There are no limits to the number of points you can be awarded per issue of a publication. Back to what counts for how many points.

First, it is a points per page system and a page is approximately 1,200 words. However, that definition is variable depending on the publication, font, and page size, and whether it is a drawing or photo, too. Partial pages down to a quarter page can be counted.

Points are applied to each page or portion of a page based upon the circulation of a publication as illustrated in Table 1 below. A publication with a circulation of more than 2,000 is considered a “National” publication. A publication with a circulation of 1,000 to 2,000 is considered a “Region”

publication. If you publish in a 100% NMRA Club newsletter, that is considered to be at half the points per page rate of a Division publication.

One more restriction: you can only get half of you required points (21 out of 42) with articles in Division or 100% NMRA Club publications. This means that you do not have to beyond a Division newsletter to get half of your points! However, you do have to look beyond that immediate possibility to get the other half of your points. **Table 1** breaks down the points per page earned at the various levels and publishing options.

**Table 1**

Points Earned Per Full Page

Item	National Publication	NMRA National	NMRA Region	NMRA Division & SIGs
Article or Column	3	3	2	1
Photos or Art Work	3	3	2	1
Scale Drawing of Prototype	6	6	4	2
Scale Drawing of Track Plan	3	3	2	1
NMRA Data/RP Sheet-One Subject	-	6	-	-

You can also earn points towards Author by presenting live clinics at the various levels or organization and size of event. The clinic must be prepared and presented by you; it has to be your creation. It has to be at least 30 minutes long, and it must include a handout (writing!). A copy of that handout must be included with the certificate application, so here is a very important take away lesson -- save a copy of everything that might qualify towards Author! **Table 2** breaks down the points that can be earned for live clinics.

**Table 2**

Points Earned For Live Clinics

Item	National	Region	Division
Given At NMRA Sponsored Events	6	4	2
Given at NON-NMRA Sponsored Events	3	2	1

There is one very important restriction here – each live clinic can only be claimed one time for Author points. However, every time you give that clinic again, it can count towards Association Volunteer, so keep on doing that clinic and work towards your Volunteer certificate, too!

What else counts towards Author? There are options within the non-print arena that include video tape or other multi-media. I would think that more along the lines of digital now instead of tape, but then that is something else yet. This is more along the lines of filming a movie and that might seem more anachronistic in today's digital environment. Something not interactive (for example, a video tape), then it earns credit at the rate of 1/2 point per minute. For this to earn credit as an Instructional Video Tape or

Multi-Media Presentation, you have to send it in directly to the AP Executive Vice Manager for evaluation and then you have to include that analysis and credit number with your certificate application.


Modern times makes Electronic publications even easier than before. Just think about all those instructional model railroading videos on YouTube! You can get your Author points publishing on a public location on the Internet! This earns points at the same rate as if it were in a Regional publication. One detail to pay attention to is that all photos, drawings, etc. are treated as 1/3 of a page. This counts only for the single location where it is published. The address (URL) of the material must be included with the certificate application and it must be in a publicly accessible location. Lastly, you can only get half of your needed points (21) through electronic publications.

There are some administrative details that you have to be aware of. The final assessment of what points and what publications are going to count reside with the AP Department Executive Vice Manager. Yes, your local Divisional AP and then Regional AP coordinator will review and sort through everything before forwarding up to National, but the final approval is at that level. On that basis alone, it is strongly recommended that you submit more than what you believe to be 42 points worth of materials for review as insurance. Again, the points you claim have to originate from your creative workmanship. Shared authorship means split points. In fact, each person may claim 1/2 of the applicable points, provided that they did at least 40% of the work involved. So, if one author does the writing and another does photos, both benefit. Electronically published material that has a formal Editor is awarded points at the same rate as printed material.

The final steps are, as with all aspects of the Achievement Program, to fill out the Statement of Qualifications form (SOQ) and the Record and Validation form (available from the NMRA National web site [www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)). This includes a list of all publications that you are claiming, and some description of the subject matter, name of the publication or place of presentation, the dates, and the handouts (if relevant). In addition, you need to tally up the points per item that you are submitting.

You can see the Record and Validation form that I submitted years ago to the right. 59 1/2 points were accumulated, well in excess of the forty-two points required.

That is enough about the rules and regulations. How does one get started? You need an idea, process, action, project, activity that you think would be of interest to others and you need to decide how you want to communicate this to others. If you can turn this into a clinic, your handout counts and you are on your way. Now, you make an article out of that handout using it

	<b>ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR RECORD AND VALIDATION FORM November 2001</b>
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PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM TO A COMPLETED STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS (SOQ) FORM.

NAME OF PUBLICATION	TITLE OF ARTICLE	POINTS PER PAGE	NUMBER OF PAGES	TOTAL POINTS
Scale Rails	Scratch building a Small Wooden Freight Station / Platform	3	5	15
O Scale Trains	Building a Simple Vintage Tank Car	3	3.5	10.5
The Local	Scratch building a Small Wooden Freight Station and Platform	2	4.5	9
Scale Rails	Scratch building Wooden Freight Cars: A Generic Tank and Fueler	3	6	18
O Scale Train	STATION PLANT	3	1/3	1
CLINICS				
MAR 2003	WOOD SCRATCH BUILDING (FORM CAR)	4		4
POTSMO (JULY 2003)	WOOD SCRATCH BUILDING (STATION)	2		2
WEA PAGES	PICKLE PLANT		2	
Kaplan Gallery				
TOTAL POINTS				

as a draft for your article. This was how I started when I was doing a clinic at a Regional convention. I earned points for the handout, but then the Editor of *The Local* let me know that he was interested in an article. This panned out better yet. The Editor of *Scale Rails* (remember *Scale Rails*?) saw that article and wanted it in his magazine. More points in a National publication, so a slight re-write and off that went. I sacrificed the Region level points, as you cannot get credit twice for essentially the same article. I did this exact same process through a convention, to the *The Local* to *Scale Rails* with a different clinic while also writing a few bits for my Division newsletter, and for *The Local*. Just remember you do not need to go beyond your Division's newsletter and the Region's newsletter, *The Local*, to rack up your 42 points.

But, then again some seem to believe that writing the great American model railroad article and getting it into *Model Railroader* just has to be their goal. It is completely unnecessary, but publishing in national magazines is different than your NMRA publications. They have levels of selectivity (can you say rejection notice?), a year or more of material ready to go into their publication, and requirements that you really have to meet. So if you must go down this path, find out exactly what the magazine wants, contact them regarding interest in your idea, and if they are interested, follow their rules on article preparation and for photos and figures to the letter. And, even then, can you say rejection notice? Or, maybe worse at one level, your article sits in an electronic file cabinet forever. But, if you can extract a letter of acceptance and a guestimate of page numbers from the Editorial office, at least you can apply those points to your credit.

So, I did send off an article to O Scale Trains on scratchbuilding a Heinz vinegar car. But feeling confident, I sent off another article to O Scale Trains on Building Lauthers' Perfect Pickles. This article got broken into two parts and resulted in 14 pages and the cover. That is 42 points right there! So, there is some real attraction to publishing articles at the national level as you can accrue points pretty quickly. I did another article that was published in two parts, Building Clugston's Store. Then, Railroad Model Craftsman requested my fourth national non-NMRA article, Building Johnson's Small Engine Repair & Welding. This was a very different experience than with O Scale Trains, but every publication and Editor is going to be different. You have to expect that and you have to be prepared to respond to their requests and make changes accordingly. I took over as the Traction Action columnist for O Scale Trains in 2009 and still am in that role. I took over as Editor of O Scale Trains in 2018. So, I have far exceeded any childhood dreams of seeing my name in print in a model railroading magazine and I now know it can be done. Did I mention you can even get paid for these articles you send to the magazine? Well, you might get your cost of materials covered, but you are not going to get rich doing this, so keep your day job.

So, how do I plan and write an article? I start with a project. I am a builder, so that project is usually rolling stock or a structure. Now those go hand in hand with two other AP categories so you could be working on multiple certificates at the same time. I may or may not have plans to work from, and I may or may not create plans in advance or even afterwards. Or, just on the fly. Really important - I take a lot of notes as I build anything and I take a lot of photos! You really need to record what you are doing as you do it and you cannot rely on your memory for writing an article. Examine the photos closely as the camera is the harshest critic you will ever meet; it is completely indifferent to your feelings and will show every flaw.

I transfer those notes into text on the computer periodically to make a first rough draft. Doing this helps to fill in the gaps in note taking. Creating the first draft as you progress in a project tells you what you

forgot to do and looking at the photos helps you to make corrections. Remember, it is a computer and redundancy is your friend. I save everything in multiple places and on multiple external drives. Proof reading is critical and eventually your eyes gloss over errors. That is when it is time to recruit a new pair of eyes. One thing to do in assembling your article is to integrate photos and other exhibits using call outs. This lets the Editor know where you think they should be placed. Remember that these are suggestions and that Editors retain the right to make changes. But, they like a little help along the way. Lastly, text is one file, all photos and other exhibits are separate files. Captions, if any, are another file. Photos and exhibits need to be numbered or named so that anyone can understand what they are and where they go in the text.

Do not send articles to Editors with everything assembled into one file! All that does is make work for an Editor and the layout shop, as everything has to come apart and then get re-assembled.

Here are some final thoughts to consider. Relax and be conversational when you write, as if you are talking to a friend. Just describe what you did, how you made it, what you have discovered, etc., yet be clear and concise. Recruit a friend or family member to read it over for you. That they might not care about the content or even understand it is not that big an issue. If it reads well, and the grammar and spelling are adequate, that is good to have confirmed independently. Pictures and/or drawings are necessary! Ask friends for help, learn how to use a decent camera (today's phones can be very good!), or team up with a friend and split the points. However, any exhibits and photography must be of good quality with sharp focus, good detail, and with no distracting backgrounds. Investing in a decent tripod is highly recommended. A convenient backdrop that you can use is a foam board tri-fold like Michael's sells for science fairs.

Three final serious rules to follow without fail.

1. Do not commit plagiarism. That seems obvious, but copy & paste from wherever into your article is not your work.
2. Do not submit your article to multiple publications at the same time. This is totally improper and unethical, and an act that will get you blackballed and banned forever. If you get tired of waiting for a response from an Editorial office, send them a registered letter informing that you withdrawing the article from consideration and then submit it to the next publication.
3. Do not violate copyright. Those great photos and prototypes that you see on the internet are not yours to copy and use in your articles. If you think otherwise, you run some serious risks and publications are not going to protect you. In fact, most will put this responsibility all back on you. So, if you have any doubt whether something is free to copy and use, ask and get permission, keep a copy of that permission, and send a copy of that along when you send in your article to the Editor.

Lastly, if you need help on improving your writing skills, practice! Books on this topic are in libraries in the 808 section. You should always be able to ask for help from anyone that has achieved their Model Railroad Author certificate! There is a little signature line on the paperwork that states "...I will agree to assist other members in this subject whenever possible, whether or not they are participants in the Achievement Program."

So writing may be intimidating to many folks, but it does not have to be so....and I will look for your articles right here in The Local!

# Flatcar Load – Volvo Log Loader

By Roger Bir

When the latest edition of the NMRA's magazine comes out, I quickly turn to the index page to see if this month's edition will have "Love Those Loads." I had the chance to meet Bob Frankrone a couple of years ago at an NMRA-MER convention. I sat front row to ensure I garnered all the knowledge possible from his presentation. Since that meeting, my projects have met with favorable results in recreating several of Bob's loads. With this newfound confidence in tow, I have decided to branch out to see what other loads could be made or created. Just about anything with wheels can be loaded onto a railroad flatcar. I was on eBay looking at die-cast metal construction equipment when I came across a rather unusual looking piece of equipment, Volvo's Log Loader.

To get a better idea on how the final load should look, I went to the internet and Railroad Pictures Archives website (<http://www.rrpicturearchives.net/railroadlist.aspx>). When I first discovered this site, I spent several hours going through numerous pictures looking for all of their unusual load configurations. As I looked, I took copious notes related to each picture, identifying the railroad, all pertinent identification numbers, and the load itself. I remembered in my initial research that there were a couple of pictures of a log loader, so I went through my notes and found what I was looking for. Normally, when the tires are removed, they are stacked 2-4 high (and laid on their sides). On this particular load, the tires were paired, standing on edge on each side of the centered load. I liked how the tires were secured and decided to follow suit with my load.

Tools and Materials used in the build:

- One item to consider is converting standard measurements to HO scale. Woodland Scenics makes an app called *Model Scaler* that is perfect for any scale conversion task.
- The lumber used is scaled poplar. I try to stay away from balsa because it does not give a true sense of scale when you cut it or clean the sawed edges. Another excellent choice is scaled oak. A first-rate source for these types of lumber comes from the most unlikely of sources: A.C. Moore or Michaels craft shops. When my wife looks for materials to create a new wreath for our front door, I am quick to grab my coat to accompany her there. In addition to a wide variety of scaled woods, there is an abundance of materials for landscaping your layout.
- A major problem with most HO scale loads is in the tie-down chains. I have noticed at numerous shows vendors advertising loads using the wrong scale chains. Thus, it makes the final product less than desirable in overall appearance and authenticity. I would recommend a brass chain with 40 links per inch, which is HO scale. A-Line Hobby ([www.ppw-aline.com](http://www.ppw-aline.com)) offers a 12" chain for around \$4. You can check eBay or your local hobby shop as well. When using brass chain, most modelers forget one very basic concept in scale building; railroads do not use bright, new, shiny chains on their loads. A-West makes a product called *Blacken-It*. Take your "bright" brass chain and insert it into a bottle of *Blacken It* for about twenty to thirty minutes. Remove the chain, dry it off and it now has the desired weathered look to it. (Ed.: A-West is apparently no longer in business and Blacken-It no longer available. Various modeling forums suggest alternatives.)
- Other materials used in this project include surgical scalpel, wire cutters, small clamps, adhesives such as CA (superglue), and heavy-duty, black sewing thread.

Just looking at the overall height of the loader, I knew that the tires would need to be removed to avoid any low clearance tunnels on my club's layout. Had I left the wheels on, the first thing in this process would be to secure or glue the wheels to the flatcar deck. This would be to avoid any chance of

movement once you affix the loader to the flat car. There was enough space between the wheel hub and the loader body to get a pair of pliers in there to cut the axle. Once both axles were cut, they were removed from the wheel hubs and placed aside.

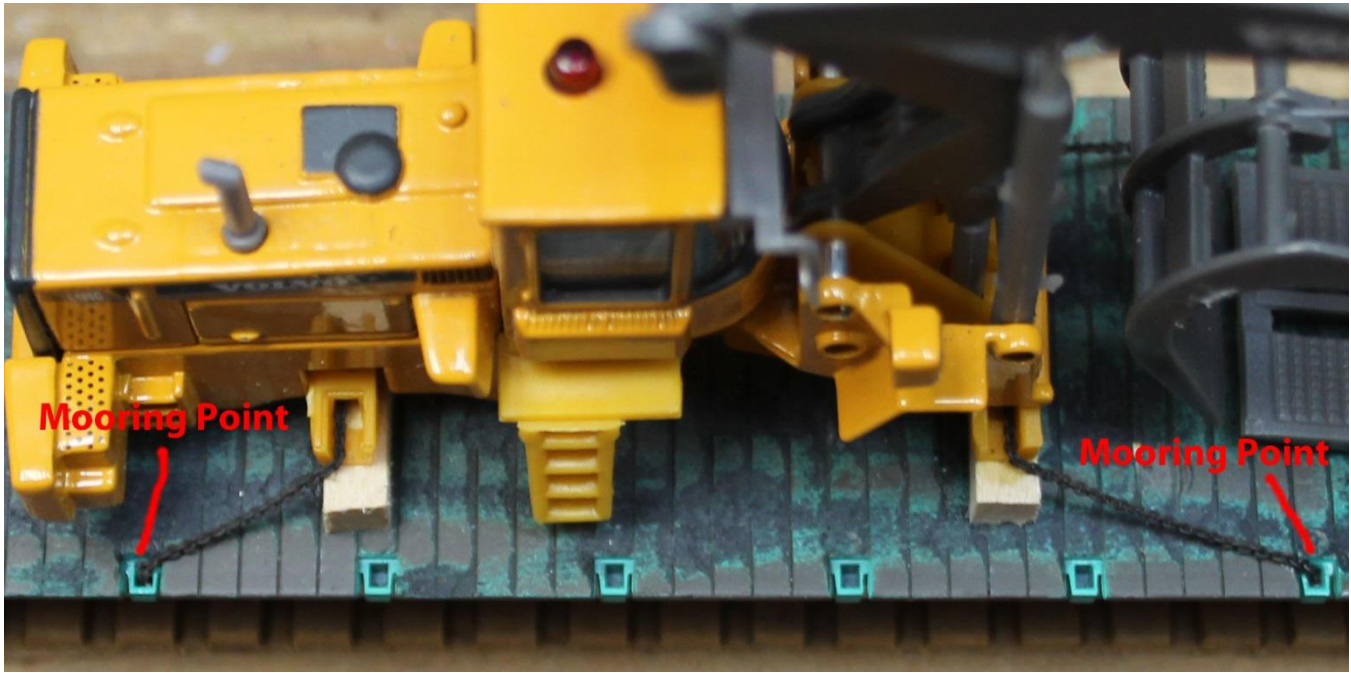
Like in aircraft, center of gravity (COG) principles apply in this procedure. After determining both the railcar center and that of the Volvo, small identifying marks were made. Considering the size of the Volvo, it was decided to use a piece of poplar to simulate an 8" x 8" piece of wood to serve as mounts to the railcar. The mounts were cut to be just longer than the vehicle's axle shafts. Using the center of the railcar / Volvo as a guide point, the two wood mounts were placed on the railcar underneath both axle shafts. Once I had have the mounts properly spaced, they were glued to the car. After the mounts had dried, I glued the Volvo body to the wood mounts, and then set the car aside to let the glue properly dry.

The same principle was used for securing the Volvo's tires, placing two over each railcar truck. To get the tires ready, once the axles were removed, the two tires were paired with the inside parts of the tire facing one another. Glue was applied and they were clamped together. By placing the inside of the tires back to back, you will only see the finished parts of the tire. With die-cast metal products, there is little effort by the manufacturer to ensure the inside of tires look authentic. After the glue dried, one set of tires was placed over one end of the railcar's trucks (tread facing outward), making sure they were centered (COG). I also made sure they were centered on the car bed. Once you have the position, mark with a pencil where the final spot will be located. Glue was applied to the tire tread and then the tires were placed on the marks on the railcar bed.

When the glued tires had properly dried, the same size piece of wood used to support the Volvo body was cut the width of the two tires. Four pieces were required to create this blocking. I lightly sanded the pieces to make sure that all rough edges were removed. Then the blocking was placed across the tread of the tires (on the flatcar). Once placed, the blocking was removed to apply a couple of dabs of glue. The four blocking pieces were then placed tightly against the tires.

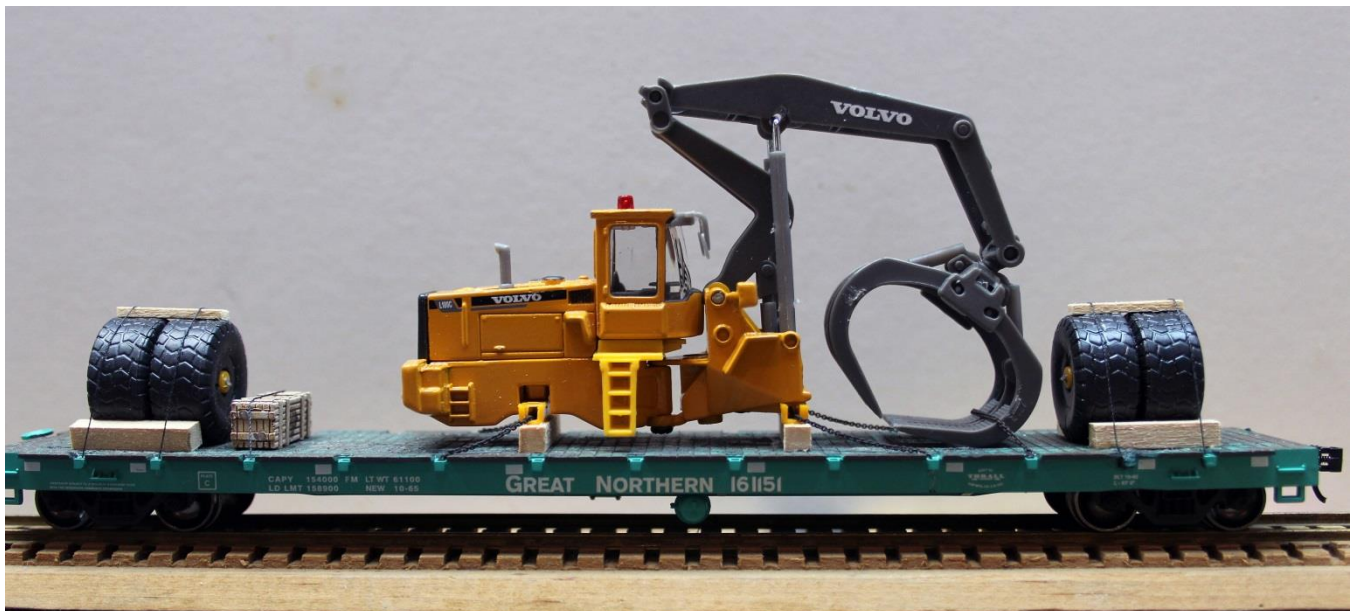
For the top of the tires, two pieces of a 2" x 6" HO scale wood (or something similar) were cut the length of the two tires. The wood pieces were trimmed and placed on top of the tires to ensure the boards were the proper length. The pieces were removed; a drop of glue was added to the top of each tire and allowed to dry. Once dry, the heavy-duty thread was tied to a mooring point as shown. Then the thread was passed across the top of the tires (over the board) to the mooring point on the opposite side. The thread was pulled tight and tied in a knot. Once knotted, a slight dab of super glue was applied. The process was repeated for the other set of tires.

Tying down the loader and its components followed a basic concept with rail loads ensuring that loads do not move in any direction. To accomplish this, mooring points both forward and behind both axles were selected (**Photo 1**). In setting the tie-downs in this manner, you ensure there is no forward or backward motion of the main load. To save on chain, I recommend setting your distances using thread. Once you have the length, add about a half inch to the overall end. This is done so a clamp can be used to pull the chain tight on the load. One end of the chain was set in the car's mooring port. Once set, a dab of super-glue was applied and let dry. Pass the chain through the axle housing as illustrated to the other side, then place the chain end through the mooring point opposite from where you started. A small clamp was used to grab the end of the chain to gently pull it tight. Once all the slack was removed, a dab of super-glue was added. Once dry, wire cutters were used to cut off the excess chain..



Note the mooring points ahead of and behind the axle housings.

This was one of my early attempts in building a load for competition. We always think or feel our product is the best and second to none. Nonetheless, reality has a way of getting us to refocus on the task at hand. While this load finished in second place, I was given a bit of advice from Chuck Davis, one of the Tidewater Division's MMRs. In his review, Chuck was impressed with the chain placement and how the tires were tied down (**Photo 2**). What was lacking became the all-important question. According to Chuck, learn to weather your cars and make sure there is complete attention to detail. Weathering was easily understood, but detail? After taking a closer look, the detail became evident. Not all the end surfaces of the mounting boards were cleanly sanded. I noticed several spots where "wood frays" were evident, thus confirming Chuck's adage of "attention to detail." If you have any questions regarding this load, please contact me at: [sorcerer54@cox.net](mailto:sorcerer54@cox.net). Enjoy!



Completed flatcar load. Note blocking of tires and blackened chain threaded through the axle housings.



## Association Official: How do I earn this one?

By Kurt Thompson, MMR

After earning the Master Model Railroader (MMR) designation, I completed the time requirements to earn my Association Official certificate. Listed below are the various methods someone can earn their certificate by serving:

- At least one year in office at the National level.
- At least two years in the office(s) at the Region level, of which one year shall be that of Region President.
- At least three years in the office(s) as a voting member of a Region Board if other than as Region President or National Trustee.
- Division Superintendents/Presidents shall be eligible for the Association Official certificate on the same basis as any other Region Board member, i.e. three (3) years of service required.

Before I earned my MMR, I thought my service as Chesapeake Division's first Superintendent would help me net this certificate. However, back in 2008 through 2013, the last qualification did not exist. Back in 2008 through 2013, when I served as Superintendent, the last qualification did not exist. At that time, the requirement was that a Division Superintendent had to be a voting member of the Region Board of Directors for such service to count towards the Association Official award, and Division Superintendents in Mid-Eastern Region did not qualify. As our former President Clint Hyde (2004-2007) explained to me, my time (then) as a Superintendent would only count towards Association Volunteer. My response in my head was, "Rats", or something like that. After I was elected MER Vice-President, the qualifications were changed so that my time as Division Superintendent could count as time towards the Association Official certificate.

When I earned my Association Official certificate, the time that I placed on my Statement of Qualification included the two years that I served as MER Vice-President and my first year as MER President. I could have claimed my service as Superintendent retroactively, but I simply used my most recent service at the Region level. Service as President counts twice as much as serving as Vice-President.

As you can see, there are several ways and methods for meeting the requirements for the Association Official certificate. The biggest part of this is to provide service to the hobby as an elected official at any of the three levels: Division, Region, or National.

MER members have not been flocking to this certificate with only twenty-seven having earned it so far, making it the second least pursued certificate. Of the twenty-seven, I signed off on or submitted (my own) five of them. Though this takes more visibility than the Association Volunteer certificate, it is still a worthwhile way to serve your fellow NMRA members. And remember, "Don't read more into the requirements than are written." Also, remember to check the requirements often as you are working towards the certificate. Please consider serving in an elected position to provide service to the hobby. As my older sister, Tam, told me many years ago, "Time going to pass away, might as well do something constructive with it".