



The Local

Newsletter of the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
The Local, 75, Number 6, Nov-Dec, 2020

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

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Let There Be Light

By Joe Skorck

When I started operating model railroads on a regular basis, I found that I was having a hard time seeing between the cars to uncouple them. I tried various sizes of bamboo skewers and plastic picks, supposedly made for uncoupling, along with the five-fingers-from-the-sky method. All of these provided a means of uncoupling, but, no matter what, I had a hard time seeing what I was doing. So, I decided to make a pick that could light up the couplers without having to carry a flashlight in my pocket. I remembered seeing a pair of tweezers that had a tip that lit up, so I thought that maybe I could make something out of those. I found the best buy on these tweezers was on eBay for around \$2.00 each with free shipping. How could I go wrong?

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Photo 1: Basic light-up tweezers found on eBay

I ordered a bunch of them and proceeded to find a way to make them work. My first attempt started by cutting one of the tweezer tines off, but that did not work out well. Disassembly of the tweezers proved to be very easy, so the next attempt was to file a flat spot on the end of the light, and then super-glue a small bamboo skewer on the end. This was effective, but not very strong.


(Con't on page 3)

Mid-Eastern Region Board of Directors & Administrative Staff

	President: Kurt Thompson, MMR 350 Ternwing Drive Arnold, MD 21012 410-507-3671 president@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large Randy Foulke 919-649-8253 randy.railfan@gmail.com		Achievement Program Manager: Dave Chance 704-933-4200 loconut@carolina.rr.com
	Vice President: Scott Unger 610-462-0756 sunger@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large and MER Photographer: Jerry Lauchle, MMR 814-404-6955 jlauchle@mer-nmra.com photographer@mer-nmra.com		Nominating Committee Chair: Bob Charles, MMR 717-763-1848 rcharles@aol.com
	Secretary: Martin Brechbiel, MMR (703) 309-3082 secretary@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large: Bob Morningstar 301-471-0132 bobmorningstar@protonmail.com		Editor: Greg Warth 757-816-8399 Local-editor@mer-nmra.com
	Treasurer: Brian Kampschroer 717-991-7560 treasurer16@mer-nmra.com		Business Manager: Howard Oakes 717-632-5990 301 Moulstown Rd Abbottstown PA 17301 business@mer-nmra.com		Assistant Business Manager: John Hoyt 410-340-1776 jhoym@mer-nmra.com
	Assistant Treasurer: William "Bill" Wurtzell 201-819-8701 wwurtzell@msn.com		Executive Convention Chair: Sam Rogers 443-610-8452 ecc@mer-nmra.com		Contest Chair: Alan Mende 717-469-1047 alanmende@yahoo.com
	Ballot Committee Chair: Bob Minnis, MMR (434) 589-3011 kahlualab@aol.com				Archivist: Kevin O'Connor 919-593-2537 kjoconnor2@yahoo.com
	Registrar: Kirk Bateman 410-442-0446 MER-Registrar@verizon.net		Assist Registrar: Jim Fisher 443-504-3919 jfisher@mer-nmra.com		Web Master: Jeff Burch 443-574-6859 webmaster@mer-nmra.com

MER Board Meeting Schedule

1. Budget Meeting, January 23, 2021 (Zoom) (Details tba)
2. MER Board of Directors Meeting – April 24, 2021 (Zoom) (Details tba)
3. MER Board of Directors Meeting – October 21, 2021 (Delta Hotels Baltimore, 245 Shawan Rd, Hunt Valley, MD 21031)

Mid-Eastern Region Division Superintendents					
	New Jersey Division 1 Bill Grosse (609) 585-4616 wgrossejr@gmail.com Division web page: njdivnmra.org		Potomac Division 2 Martin Brechbiel, MMR superintendent@potomac-nmra.org Division web page: potomac-nmra.org/		Philadelphia Division 3 Rob Hinkel (610) 279-2394 robhink@gmail.com Division web page: www.phillynmra.org
	Tidewater Division 4 Fred Humphrey 757-482-9498 tidewater.mer.nmra@gmail.com Division web page: nmra-mer-tidewater.org		James River Division 5 Phillip R. Taylor (434) 589-6006 drphilster@gmail.com Division web page: jrdnmra.blogspot.com/		South Mountain Division 10 Jerry Skeim (240) 455-8677 jerryskeim@gmail.com Division web page: http://www.smdnmra.org/
	Susquehanna Division 11 Tim Himmelberger (717) 695-7958 timh@susquehannanmra.org Division web page: www.susquehannanmra.org		Carolina Southern Division 12 Alan Hardee (704) 868-6976 superintendent@carolinasouthhern.org Division web page: www.carolinasouthern.org		Carolina Piedmont Division 13 John Sokash N/A jasokash@bellsouth.net Division web page: www.cpd13.org/
	Chesapeake Division 14 Mike Zitmann N/A super@chesdiv-nmra.org Division web page: www.chesdiv-nmra.org				

(Con't from page 1) .



Photo 2: Disassembly is easy. The end cap unscrews for access to the supplied batteries

After that, I decided to find some type of skewer-like rod that would bond with the lens of the LED.



I was able to locate some 1/8" acrylic rods that could be cut to whatever length was needed. For my purposes, since I model in HO, I settled on 3 inches.

Photo 3: The acrylic rod has been cut to a length of three inches.

To make a taper that resembles a bamboo skewer, I put the rod in a lathe and *slowly* shaped the taper using a lathe bit and a file. This has to be done carefully in order to keep the rod from overheating and melting. I put a thick plastic safety guard over the lathe to prevent any bits from flying in my direction. Safety glasses should be worn during this process as well for extra protection. The taper had to be made small enough to fit in a Kadee coupler, which was a delicate operation.

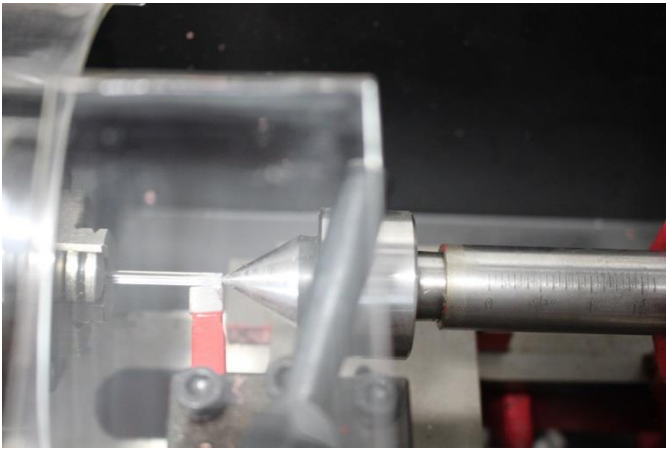


Photo 4A: Lathing process with cover guard for safety.

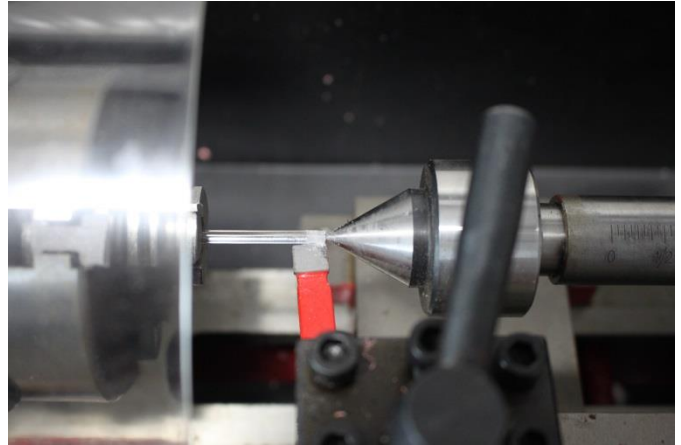


Photo 4B: Cover guard pulled back for clarity.

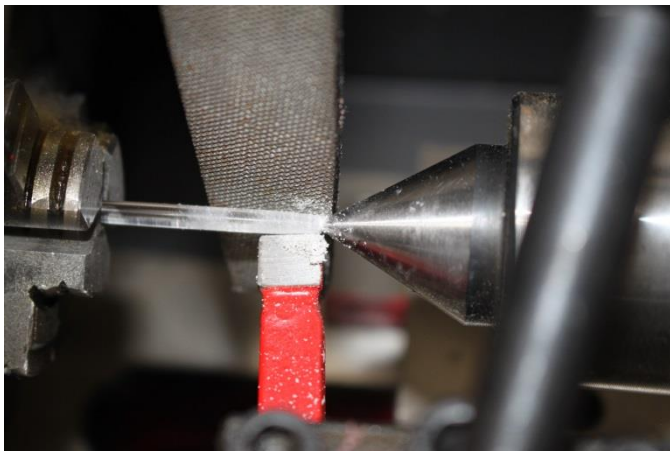


Photo 4C: Turning the lathe slowly to avoid overheating and using a file to taper the end of the rod.

The next problem that I faced was getting the rod to firmly attach to the flashlight lens. I used a 1/8" end mill because it would give a true flat surface to which the rod could be glued, and I could recess the rod into the lens enough to get a more stable surface.

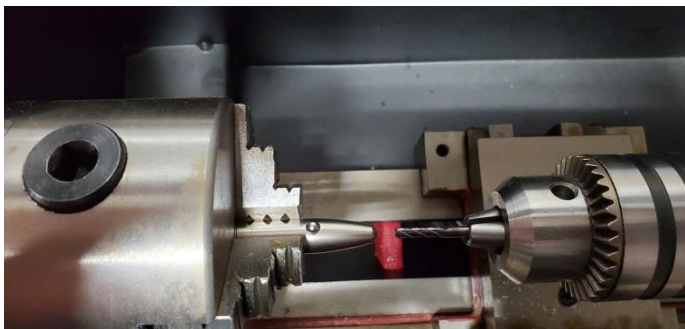


Photo 5A: Setting up. Safety glasses on.



Photot 5B: Flattening and indenting the surface of the lens.

After trying various methods of attaching the acrylic rod to the lens, I decided to try a product that I had seen advertised on the Internet many times, called Bondic. This was shown in a trial size, so I figured why not give it a shot. This is the kind of product used by dentists for applying fillings, but I am sure there are some differences.



Photo 6: Bondic comes in a nice little container

Bondic is not a glue-type product so it does not dry like a glue, it uses UV light to cure it.

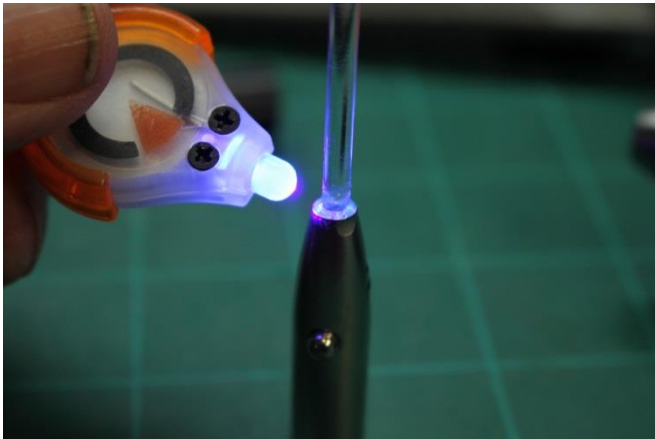
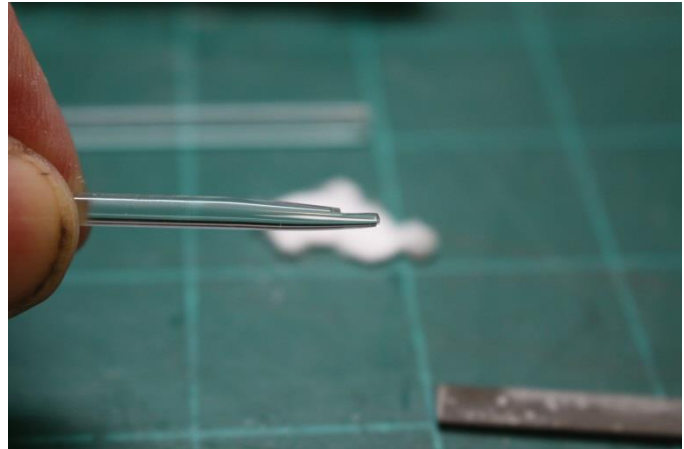


Photo 7: Using the supplied UV light to cure the Bondic.

I decided to use two applications of the Bondic,



although I'm not certain if that was necessary. So far, this has proved to be the best product for joining these materials together. I have found, through this experience, that filing a flat spot on the side, at the end of the taper, really makes these picks work well, at least in HO scale. Further reduction may be needed for smaller scales.

Photo 8: Photo shows where the flat area was filed on the side at the end of the tool.



Photo 10: With the light on.



Photo 9: The finished product

Photo 11: Uncoupler tool in use.



NOTE: As is true with some other things that are used by model railroaders such as cyanoacrylate adhesives, or "Super Glue", the UV light source for curing this resin carries some risk of injury to eyes and skin unless proper safety practices are followed. You are strongly encouraged to read "Safety Tips for Using UV Curing Systems" from <https://www2.lbl.gov/ehs/safety/nir/assets/docs/uv/UV%20curing%20system%20safety%20tips.pdf> . Please consider wearing safety glasses with adequate UV protection, long sleeves and gloves if you use this method of bonding.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Hobby Time, Elections, and Year's End

President Kurt Thompson, MMR

Once again, we've made it around to the happiest time of any year: National Model Railroad Month. We try to celebrate this each year to show others the joy we find in the hobby of Model Railroading. This year will be a bit different due to COVID-19. We'll see how that plays out with the holiday train garden and layout visitation schedule.

By now, I hope you have seen the election results. Since the candidates for President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer ran unopposed, the results were not unexpected. There were a few write-in votes, and contact was made with those "candidates" to let them know the results of the election. The four winners of this year's election are: Martin Brechbiel, MMR, Secretary; Brian Kampschroer, Treasurer; Scott Unger, Vice President; and myself continuing on as President of the MER.

Also, the Bylaws amendments were passed.

I want to thank all those who took the time to vote in the election. Of the 1524 members eligible to vote, 455 cast ballots in one or more of the races.

I am glad that a fair majority of the MER chose to attend our first, and hopefully last, virtual Annual Group Members meeting on Oct. 10th. The meeting went well enough considering we are all learning how to deal with new technology and not all of our members are young enough to smoothly grasp the technology.

I look forward to the upcoming year and hope you and yours have a great early winter and fine New Year.



From the Editor's Desk...

Greg Warth, Editor

Having a Blast!

So, here we are – at the end of the year already. What a year it has been! One crisis after another with no end in sight. Our lives and routines have certainly been changed in many ways.

Socializing, meetings, conventions have gone out the window for now and maybe even for the next year. Thank goodness, we still have some virtual clinics going on. (Check out the [MER-NMRA Facebook Page](#) to find out when they are happening!)

Believe it or not, one of the things that helps to keep my life stable is my continuing activity in model railroading – rejuvenating and computerizing my layout, building structures, learning about new wiring projects, replacing turnouts, writing for *The Local* and talking with others in the hobby about trains and railroads.

Now, more than ever, I am happy that I have this diversion. It helps to keep me focused on something besides the "News". It helps me to put things in perspective and to realize that there are still many things that are right with this world. I have found many new friends in the Mid-Eastern Region (MER) and also in the Tidewater Division over the past year, which helps to confirm that belief.

So that's what this hobby is all about. It's more than a hobby – it's a lifestyle. It's much more than watching trains run around on an oval track. It's about art and science - learning many new things about woodworking, electronics, scenery, creativity, expression and building layouts and learning from others who know about these things. We build more than just layouts though.

We build comradery and friendships that last lifetimes. That's the real value. The rest of it is just...well...Fun!

Thanksgiving:

My sincere thanks go out to all of those authors who have written such interesting and detailed articles for *The Local* over the past year. With the inspiring article by Mary Miller that appears in this issue ("Add Scenery to Your Model Railroad"), we have almost completed our series of guidance articles on acquiring Achievement Program (AP) Certificates. If you are in pursuit of your Master Model Railroader (MMR) designation, I hope you have found these articles to be helpful. The common theme throughout all of them is that the AP certificates are really not that difficult to achieve, despite the fact that the tasks seem so daunting when first looking at them.

If the MMR were easy to achieve, it wouldn't mean that much. In order for it to be as honorable and respectful as it is, there has to be a little work and a little sacrifice of time and effort to get there. Nevertheless, it is doable. Over 600 members have already done it so far. You just have to approach it from the standpoint of doing a little at a time. Break all the bigger tasks into little ones. Don't try to rush. Try to enjoy the journey, as they say, without worrying so much about the end goal. You will get there. Of course, the MMR is not really the end goal. It's just a steppingstone into a new life of professorship and teaching others what you have done and how you did it.

I also want to thank all of those who volunteer for this organization and especially, personally, I want to thank all who provide their expertise in the production of this publication, which continues to grow in its effort to inform and inspire our members to improve their skills, foster their relationships and to enjoy life.

Preparing Your Article for Publication:

Incidentally, if you are an author, or hope to become one, for your division or for *The Local*, please read (and save for future reference!) the new article in this issue by our Publisher, Martin Brechbiel, MMR, called "Preparing Your

Manuscript for Publication in *The Local*", or, alternately, "Keeping It Simple". This article, as indicated by the title, contains all the things you need to do, or not do (mostly the latter), in preparing a manuscript for publication – including what formats to use for text and photos and how to send them all in separate files. Martin's article will be posted on the Mid-Eastern Region website, and there will also be a link to it provided in each issue of *The Local* for ready referencing.

Advertising:

This issue sports a new page, called "Advertisement Central Station". We are accumulating more advertisements now - enough to justify developing a central stage for them. These ads will help keep *The Local* and the Mid-Eastern Region solvent and in good financial order despite these uncertain economic times. Please take a moment to view these ads. You might find something interesting!

If you have a business and find yourself wishing to place an ad on this page, please contact the Editor at 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

Your ad may appear as text, photo, art or any combination thereof. Art must be of high quality and camera-ready. Formats must be in txt, doc/docx, pdf, jpeg, bmp or tiff only. The content must be related to model trains or railroads or provide a benefit specifically to model railroaders. If you need help with your ad, please don't hesitate to ask the Editor.

Featured Layouts:

Another new section of *The Local* to debut in this issue is dedicated to showcasing layouts primarily, but may also include structures, specific scenes, dioramas, or anything else that our members are doing related to model railroading. Choose your best pictures to put into a short 1-2-page span with captions or brief notes

accompanying the photos to tell us what they're about.

I hope you are enjoying this issue of *The Local*. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to make it better. My "door" (aka, email) is always open! Take care and be safe!

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 st
Sept/Oct	Aug 1 st
Nov/Dec	Oct 1 st

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

Sale of AP Clinic Donated Materials - Support The Clyde Gerald Legacy Fund

By Kurt Thompson

Have you earned your AP (Achievement Program) Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical certificate yet? Perhaps you saw Elf and Hobgoblin's clinic at the Liberty Bell Special in 2019 on how simple it can be. You missed their clinic, but saw the video? Now you know that you, too, can complete the requirements for Section A of the Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical certificate without great difficulty. The video can be seen at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/wOG3TCiHmI4>

Well...Does the MER have a deal for you! For a donation of \$225.00 to the Clyde Gerald Legacy Fund, you will receive all the following items, which were used in the clinic, shipped to you in the neat, all-inclusive box shown in the photo below.

All of these items were donated by Atlas, or others, for use in the clinic. The track is all Atlas Code 100 Nickel Silver. The components from this clinic include: one turntable; one turntable motor; 28 pieces of 9" straight track; 32 full 15" radius curved sections; one 60 degree crossing; two 45 degree crossings; five 3" straight track sections; three 1/2 sections of 15" radius curved track; three 1/3 sections of 18" radius curved track; four straight track terminal sections; four bumpers; one 18" radius curved track terminal; five right hand manual control snap-switches; seven left hand manual control snap-switches; one left hand remote control switch; one Atlas Twin control box; two Atlas Selector Control boxes; and one MRC Tech II power pack. The package also includes some bonus stuff: one Tyco single truck Birney trolley and one Gould Company kit for two wood ore cars!

As a reminder, the Clyde L. Gerald Legacy Fund is where all unrestricted donations go toward investments that provide long-term growth and income to support the continuing operation of the Mid-Eastern Region.

If you want to purchase this one-of-a-kind, once-in-a-lifetime offer, please contact the MER President, Kurt

Thompson, by e-mail so the deal can be closed. Also,



remember to check with your tax advisor about what part of this purchase may constitute a tax-deductible charitable donation since the MER is a 501(c)3 corporation. (Hint: You can only deduct the part of your donation that is above the fair market value of the purchase.)



Achievement Program Update

By Dave Chance, MER AP Manager

October 01, 2020

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

Division 2 – Potomac

Alex Belida – Master Builder Cars

Division 11 – Susquehanna

Jerry Britton – Civil Engineer

Division 13 - Carolina Piedmont

James P. Murphy – Electrical Engineer

Robert Gamble – Electrical Engineer

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 Superintendent for the South Mountain Division

Congratulations to Jerry Skeim, the new superintendent of the South Mountain Division. He lives in Thurmont, Maryland and has been a member of the NMRA for almost 50 years. Read more about him here on the [SMD website](#).

75th Anniversary Logo Contest

By Kurt Thompson, MMR

Reminder to submit your Logo Contest entry to me by the extended deadline of November 30, 2020. We have several very nice entries so far. **The winner will receive paid registration to the 2021 MER convention.** Full details are in the September-October 2019 issue of The Local.

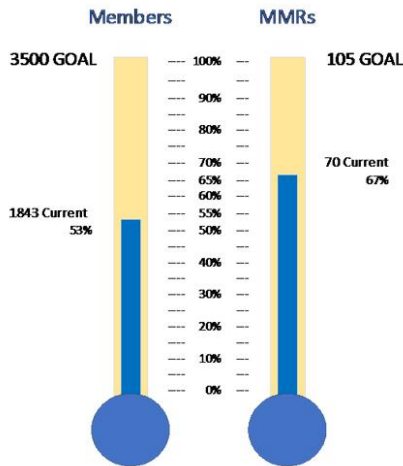
UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

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

2022 Convention – “Carolina Special Look South in 2020”

MER 75th Anniversary Goals

By Kurt Thompson, MMR



The Mid-Eastern Region will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2021. You will recall that we have established goals for membership to reach 3,500 and 105 Master Model Railroaders by the October 2021 convention. Our most recent membership data compiled by the Business Manager, Howard Oakes, show that as of October 3, 2020, and since the last issue of *The Local*, we have lost 70 members and gained 25. This brings the total Mid-Eastern Region membership down from 1888 to 1843.

There are no new Master Model Railroaders since the last report, leaving the total at 70 for now.

The thermometers below will reflect our progress toward achieving these targets.



MOUNT CLARE JUNCTION
MER 2021 - BALTIMORE, MD

MER Convention News – 2021

Get out your calendars!

The 2021 Mid-Eastern Region NMRA Convention, hosted by the [Chesapeake Division](#), has been scheduled for October 21-24, 2021 and will be held at the [Delta Hunt Valley Marriott](#) in Baltimore, Maryland.

The new MER (Mid-Eastern Region) Convention, named “[Mount Clare Junction](#)”, will be open to all railroad enthusiasts, regardless of NMRA membership. This regional convention, like others before it, intends to bring all of us together to share our ideas, information, accomplishments and good will. You can expect to see awesome clinics, layout and prototype tours, operating sessions and all the usual, but always exciting, attributes of the regional conventions.

The convention name was entered by MER member Travers Stavac and chosen from 20 different candidates. The new logo for the Mount Clare Junction, appearing at the top of this page, was created by Alan DelGaudio and then formalized by [Moonlit Media](#).

Below, please find your personal invitation letter from the Chesapeake Division to the Mount Clare Junction Convention. Watch for more information in the next issue of *The Local* and sign up on the [Mount Clare Junction website](#) to receive monthly updates and notices of special events.

[Ed.: Greg Warth]

Election Results for 2020 MER Election of Directors

Started at: August 1, 2020 at 12:00am
Finished at: August 31, 2020 at 11:45pm
Time zone: Eastern Time (US & Canada)

455 of 1524 ballots cast (29.8%).

Candidate for MER President

Kurt Thompson, MMR: 435 votes (99.3%)
Bob Charles: 1 vote (0.2%)
Bob Clegg: 1 vote (0.2%)
Rich Nemchik: 1 vote (0.2%)

Kurt Thompson, MMR wins with 99.3% of the vote.

Votes tallied: 438
Abstentions: 17

Candidate for MER Vice President

Scott Unger: 436 votes (99.5%)
Eric Dervinis: 1 vote (0.2%)
Rich Nemchik: 1 vote (0.2%)

Scott Unger wins with 99.5% of the vote.

Votes tallied: 438
Abstentions: 17

Candidate for MER Treasurer

Brian Kampschroer: 425 votes (99.1%)
Neal Anderson: 1 vote (0.2%)
Rich Nemchik: 1 vote (0.2%)
Bob Charles: 1 vote (0.2%)

Brian Kampschroer wins with 99.1% of the vote.

Votes tallied: 429
Abstentions: 27

Candidate for MER Secretary

Martin Brechbiel, MMR: 434 votes (99.3%)

Greg Meeks: 1 vote (0.2%)

Rich Nemchik: 1 vote (0.2%)

Martin Brechbiel, MMR wins with 99.3% of the vote.

Votes tallied: 437

Abstentions: 19

Bylaw Amendment Approval of Section 4 Budget Committee

Yes - I approve the amendments: 406 votes (95.3%)

No - I reject the amendments: 20 votes (4.7%)

Yes - I approve the amendments wins with 95.3% of the vote.

Votes tallied: 426

Abstentions: 29

Bylaw Amendment Approval of Article V, Section 3 (A)

Yes - I approve the amendments: 418 votes (97.0%)

No - I reject the amendments: 13 votes (3.0%)

Yes - I approve the amendments wins with 97.0% of the vote.

Votes tallied: 431

Abstentions: 24



MOUNT CLARE JUNCTION
MER 2021 - BALTIMORE, MD

To:

NMRA Membership

Subject: 2021 Mid-Eastern Region Convention

Dear Fellow Modeler,

We are planning to organize a convention this October 2021, and we would request the pleasure of your company because this event would not be complete without your presence. The event would be lively with the crispness of fall, the thunder of locomotives and the smell of creosote.

The event would be organized on the 21st through 24th days and the venue would be the Delta Hunt Valley, Hunt Valley, MD. We are also planning for a dinner banquet along with desserts.

You must be present at the event to enjoy the party and give yourself a break from the daily schedule.

Thank you,
Yours Truly

THE MOUNT CLARE JUNCTION 2021 CONVENTION COMMITTEE
www.mtclarejct.com



From the collection of Rick Uskert

Preparing Your Manuscript for Publication in The Local

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR, Publisher

We have a great Regional publication that really provides a venue for all of our members to present their model railroading ideas, models, layouts, projects, etc. This is also critical to many in pursuit of their Achievement Program Author certificate. Publishing in *The Local* can very easily provide all of the points needed.

You might note that there are actually instructions in *The Local* on how to assemble your files for submission. Compose and submit your text in one of the following formats: .txt, .doc, or .docx. Few are writing in .txt format, but the other two are common in Word and work well. What is not noted here is the actual formatting with the Word document. You should do this as simply as possible. What is preferred is single spaced, with a space between paragraphs, with 1" margins all around. What is not needed is any other formatting! Why? Because it is all going to be taken out anyway. Do not insert text boxes, photos, footnotes, etc. Simple works best!

Next, we have to consider illustrations. The power and importance of photos, figures and what other graphics you might be using for your article manuscript cannot be overstated. Consider what photos, illustrations, or other graphics can go with the text very carefully. These are essential. The quality and size of your photos is critical. The higher the resolution, the better. They should be at least 2 megabytes in size with a minimum resolution of 300dpi. The problem with smaller, low resolution photos is that they cannot be made better or larger in *The Local*. Take lots of good, high resolution photos, when preparing your article. Then choose the best ones to send to us in a zip file. In this time of digital photography, taking 10 photos to get one good photo costs only a few electrons that are well spent in this effort.

DO NOT include or insert your photos into your text! Remember, simple works best. If you insert your photos into the text they are just going to be taken back out to process the text. Save yourself from the work and save that extraction work from everyone else involved with *The Local*. Submit the photos, figures, etc. separately with each one numbered to correspond with the captions. Formats that work for photos include .jpg, .gif, .tif, or .png. Others are possible but check with the Editor before assuming that some odd format that requires Adobe Illustrator to open is acceptable. DO put notations between paragraphs, such as "Insert Photo #1 here". Also, in the text, refer to the photo relating to that specific text by inserting a notation at the end of the sentence, like (Photo 1) or (Figure 1). DO NOT put the captions in the text! Those are just coming right back out to process the text. Put them in a separate Word file, numbered to correspond with the numbered photos or figures and save everyone unnecessary work. Incidentally, photos and figures are not the same thing, so if you have both, then there should be two sets of captions files – one set for the photo captions and one set for the figure captions.

Lastly, all of this should be your own work. Using photos or figures that do not belong to you or that you have no permission to use is copyright infringement. Just because you found it on the Internet does not give you permission to use it in your article. If it is not yours, you MUST get written permission to use it, and, if you cannot, you will not be able to use it. There are lawyers out there with nothing better to do than to search through model train forums and blogs looking for photos that have been re-used without permission and they are pursuing the owners of those forums and blogs with legal action. It may be that *The Local* could start using a formal copyright release form to protect *The Local* and the MER in the future.

NOTE: Due to many cancellations related to the current pandemic, please confirm the event before attending.

Upcoming Events*

2020	Dates	Event	City	State	Contact
NOV	7-8	Neuse River Valley Train Show	Raleigh	NC	www.nrvclub.net
NOV	7-8	Susquehanna open houses		PA	www.susquehannanmra.org
NOV	10	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	www.cpd13.org
NOV	14-15	Susquehanna open houses		PA	www.susquehannanmra.org
NOV	21-22	Susquehanna open houses		PA	www.susquehannanmra.org
DEC	5-6	TCA train show	Raleigh	NC	www.traincollectors.org
DEC	8	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	www.cpd13.org
2021	Dates	Event	City	State	Contact
JAN	28	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	www.cpd13.org
JAN	30-31	Railroad Hobby Show	West Springfield	MA	www.railroadhobbyshow.com
FEB	25	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	www.cpd13.org
MAR	23	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	www.cpd13.org
APR	23-24	TCA train show	York	PA	www.easterntca.com
APR	27	Carolina Piedmont meeting	Apex	NC	www.cpd13.org

*This calendar is updated and current as of **October, 7, 2020.**

In Memoriam

Marshall D. Abrams

11/7/40 - 9/12/20

On Saturday, September 12, 2020, Marshall Abrams, a long-time NMRA member, former Superintendent of the Potomac Division, and currently the publisher of “The Potomac Flyer” passed away. Marshall had suffered a serious heart attack several days earlier.

Marshall is survived by his wife Rochelle, his daughter Eve and her husband Greg Schatz, and his daughter Fern and her husband David Talmage.

Marshall was born and raised in New Jersey and received his BS from Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and his MS, and PhD degrees in engineering from the University of Pittsburgh. He was a tenured professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Maryland and then in the mid-1970s moved to the National Bureau of Standards (now National Institute of Standards and Technology) in Gaithersburg, MD. About 10 years later he moved to the Mitre Corporation in McLean, VA where he worked in the area of computer security until his retirement about two years ago.

Marshall and Rochelle loved to travel, and he would always return from a trip with photos and historical information related to the places they visited. Marshall also loved learning about new and exciting things, not only in the field of model railroading, but also in a variety of other areas that interested him.

In the late 1960s he joined a model railroad group of other computer professionals, called the Central Potomac Union (i.e., the CPU), but when the owner of that layout moved, he said he would shortly have his own layout, and the “Abrams Railroad Empire,” or ARE, soon filled part of his basement. The current ARE is the second version. When his two daughters grew up and moved out of the home some 20 years ago, Marshall claimed the rest of the basement and a larger ARE soon filled the space used by the two girls.

He joined the NMRA in 2003, and soon became a Division Board member, and then Superintendent. In 2013 and in 2018, the Division hosted successful MER conventions, thanks to Marshall’s leadership. Marshall stepped down as Superintendent at the end of 2013 and took on the position of Senior Assistant Superintendent until 2019. Marshall then volunteered to become the publisher of “The Potomac Flyer.”

Over the years, Marshall regularly contributed to “The Local” and “The Potomac Flyer” with articles ranging from installing operating crossing gates to discussing the need for insurance for your model railroad. He was also an outstanding clinician, and you could always count on Marshall providing top-notch clinics at the regional conventions. Patient and supportive of his fellow modelers, Marshall would gladly offer help to anyone who asked for it.

Marshall also helped establish (what he liked to call) “The Anachronistic Era Operating Group.” He coined the name from the fact that several of the layouts in the group were not set in any one time period. This group started operating back in the early 1970’s, and is still going strong today, thanks to Marshall. It was Marshall who coordinated the groups’ activities and developed the schedules for hosting operations each week. The number of members has fluctuated at about a dozen, with 3 surviving current members dating back to the early 1970’s. Although Marshall had strong opinions on politics, he established (and enforced!) the rule that politics would not be discussed by the group!

Marshall will be greatly missed, and the division, region, and NMRA in general, owe a great debt of gratitude to him for all he has done to promote the hobby and make it the enjoyable pastime that it is for all of us.

Marshall’s friends in the Anachronistic Era Operations Group:

Tom Brodrick	Tony Jenkins	Brian Sheron, MMR
Bill Demas	Ken Nesper	Jerry Skeim
Gil Fuchs	Dean Ripple	Marv Zelkowitz

Achievement Program Article Series

By Greg Warth

As we continue with our series of educational articles promoting the Achievement Program (AP) and providing guidance to those members who are actively seeking the Master Model Railroader (MMR) designation, we remain grateful to all the MMRs who have volunteered their personal time and effort to write these inspiring and detailed articles.

Speaking of inspiring articles, the one that appears in this issue of *The Local*, written by Mary Miller, made me want to go right to my layout and start adding more scenery. It falls under the category of Master Builder – Scenery and is appropriately titled, “Add Scenery to Your Model Railroad”.

Mary’s nice scenery presentation almost completes our formal series that we set out to accomplish early this year. Here again are the categories and the volunteers who are participating in our AP series.

This issue of *The Local* contains the one new AP article and the final installment of “Prototype Models”:


- “Prototype Models” Part 3 - by Andrew Dodge, MMR, p. 19
- “Add Scenery to Your Model Railroad” - by Mary Miller, MMR, p. 24

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

However, the series does not have to stop with this list. There are many more topics to be considered that would be helpful for members aspiring for AP Certificates. If you are an MMR and would like to volunteer to continue the series with your own article(s) about these or any of the other categories in the Achievement Program, please contact the [Editor](#). All submissions are welcome!

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Obtaining Your Master Builder - Prototype Models Certificate – Part 3

By Andrew Dodge, MMR

Terrain: (Value 35 pts)

When recreating a historic scene with all types of physical features, you must render the setting in a highly accurate manner, and while obviously compressing the selected terrain area, the modeler must convey the essence of the prototype. All the imperfections of man and nature should be included, as well as the appropriate alterations man has made in the natural scene. The historic and modeled images of the Deer Creek tank area in the South Platte Canyon illustrate the level of conformity that you should strive to reach in recreating a realistic scene. The two images convey the essence of the valley area with the short trestle over Deer Creek, the rock cliffs by the tank, the pine trees, and, while out of the photo on the right, a fork of the South Platte River.



Photo 1

In this modeled scene in Breckenridge, Colo., a number of the human activities, animals, and terrain types are on display that would be typical for an 1880s Rocky Mountain mining town. Urban scenes constitute their own issues because they are in a constant state of flux, which will require careful attention to vehicles, signs, and people's dress, etc.

Realism / Conformity: (Value 35 pts)

While there is a seeming overlap in the NMRA categories in prototype modeling, the modeler should strive to meet the specific requirements in each area. Comparative photographs of the prototype and the model are essential under realism and conformity. I have included two such photographs to illustrate the point. The historic photo shows a Como-bound mixed train at the Baker Tank. In modeling this scene to replicate



Photo 2



Photo 3



the prototype and fulfill the desire to enhance the realism of the model, I used this image as a guide for the size and style of the tank, its relationship to the track, and all the surrounding scenic elements.

Photo 4

In a written description of the Baker Tank area, I would point out the types of vegetation, landforms, and nature of the physical area near the tracks, location and



style of the water tank, all the railway equipment, and a short statement concerning the history of the location. In this case, I would make note of the fact that the historical photo was taken in post-winter of 1882-1883, while I was portraying the scene in the fall of 1882 when the water tank was still under construction, which justifies the workman's tent.

Photo 5

The inclusion of maps of the area are a requirement. I have included a U.S. Topographical Map showing the Boreas Pass area with the Baker Tank location just off to the left side of the map, and a second map that had been prepared for a published book. Topographical maps are easy to acquire, as well as a wide range of maps or plans done by the railroads, historical groups, tax evaluation records, etc.

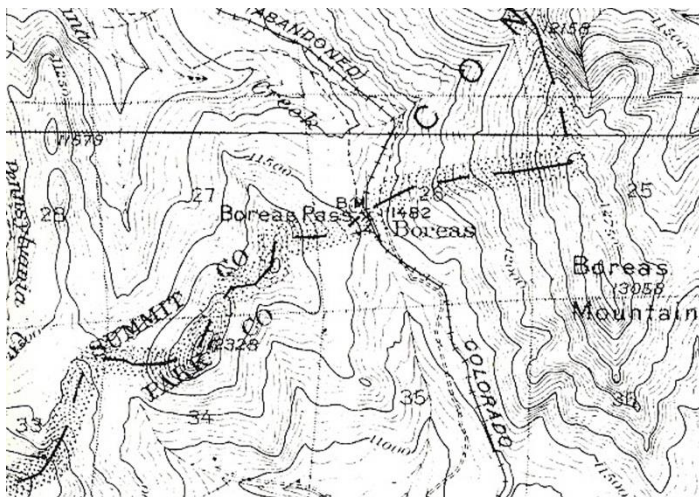


Photo 6

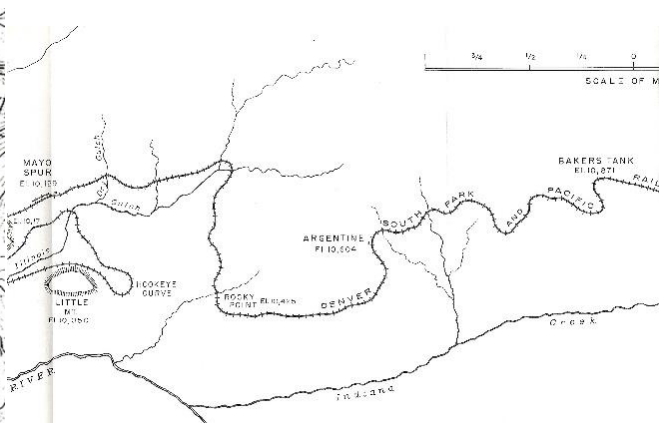


Photo 7

Background: (Value 15 pts)

Photographic backdrops are quite popular these days. They can be done relatively simply and cheaply by cutting and pasting printed sheets from suppliers, such as Faller, serving as the backdrop, or you can have a photograph printed on extended sheets, which can get rather pricey. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Although these backdrops are being widely used, one can also create a very nice background setting for your layout with paint. While not many of us are artists, if you are anywhere near being inclined to pick up a paintbrush, I would suggest watching some of the old Bob Ross PBS programs on painting. You can learn some simple and effective methods in creating a nice background for your layout.

The historical photo below was taken overlooking Como, Colo., in 1883. To replicate the vastness and illusion of the prototype, the layout scene required the laying of landforms to appear to go off into the distance many miles away. To accomplish the needed visual distance, I recreated the area near the tracks with the appropriate vegetation and in fine detail. To give the feeling of distance, I painted the low-rise hills to appear to be just a mile or two away on the backdrop by using intermediate detail and more vibrant colors than the ones seen in the more distant mountains. To portray the most distant mountains, lighter and less distinctive accenting is needed. The clouds added to the feeling of depth, and the merging of the sky and mountains also added to the illusion of great distance, as seen in the historic photograph.



Photo 8

Another method of dealing with the transition from the layout to the backdrop could include masking the transition with rock formations in a natural setting or using buildings in an urban area. Another useful technique would be to end your scenery a few inches away from the wall and allow your plaster landform to “roll” over and down toward the wall, giving the illusion of greater distance. This would provide an excellent transition from the three-dimensional world of your modeled area to the two-dimensional illusion of the backdrop.



Photo 9

One of the best solutions to room corner issues is to place a curved piece of material in the corner to give the transition from one plan to another a nice radius, which eliminates the harsh transition where two walls meet. Remember that there are few corners in nature, nor should there be any in your prototype reproduction.



Photo 10

Lighting: (5 pts)

Lighting seemed at first to be an odd issue in the prototype modeling field and is only worth five points, but it does fit well when one realizes its impact on the presentation of the prototype layout. One of the important lessons I learned the hard way concerning general layout lighting was that the modeler must ensure that the layout is not too close to a traditional lighting system of overhead lights. These types of lights must be far enough away from the layout so the light is more diffused. This photograph (**Photo 11**) illustrates the problem of lights being too close to the subject.

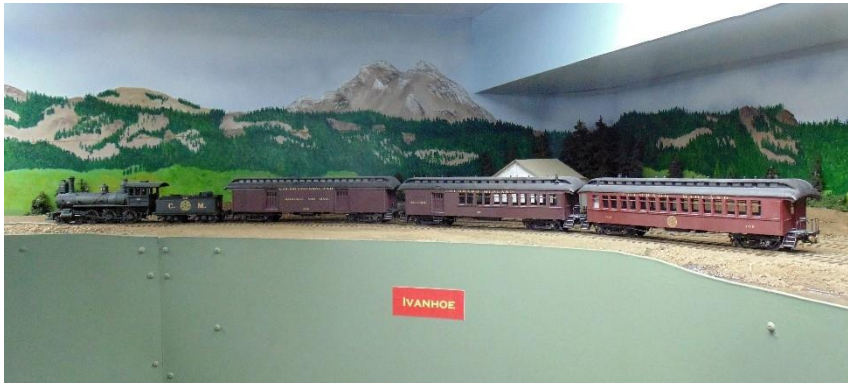


Photo 11

This photo (**Photo 12**) taken by Paul Dolkos in almost the same location shows a marked difference after installing a new set of lights to deal

with nasty variations in illumination. Since there are no such lighting abnormalities in nature, there should not be on our prototype layouts. While new types of lighting systems are here or are in the works, the same issues apply.

Photo 12

For those portraying railroads operating under CTC control, as well as those using other types light control systems, lighting is paramount. Street scenes portraying the post-Edison world would likewise be enhanced with special lighting.



In Conclusion:

For those of you who are still with me, completing this category in the AP program is not that difficult. You most likely already have the certificates for cars, structures, and scenery before tackling the prototype award. If you have been a follower of a prototype in the first place in your modeling work and on your layout, then all you really need to do is a little more checking, possibly a little additional photographic research, upgrades where needed, and not much more than a cut and paste job on the forms. Going back so far into history as I did was a challenge that I enjoyed, but for those doing a big name 20th century railroad, it should not be a problem. Prototype modeling offers an interesting set of experiences and also provides the reward of gaining a better understanding of the real world of railroading. So, do not be put off by the length of this article, because the program is fun, challenging, rewarding, and not that difficult.

Add Scenery to Your Model Railroad

By Mary Miller, MMR

This is not a "How To" article. Instead, I will attempt to encourage you to add scenery to your model railroad so that when you are operating, you will experience the realism of the area that you have selected to build your railroad, like Colorado, Pennsylvania, or Utah.

Scenery is usually the last element that you model before operating. Many model railroaders prefer to lay down track and run the trains and then the heck with the scenery. We refer to these railroads as "plywood central" layouts. And, if you dare ask them why there is no scenery, their response will probably be that they just want to operate. What they really don't tell you is that they haven't a clue as to how to begin or where to start when it comes to doing scenery.

Well, luckily for me, my deceased husband, Bill, taught me all that I needed to know about how to add scenery to our Ohio Creek Subdivision of the Colorado and Southern railroad. He had one heck of a creative mind and envisioned the scenery before we even started to lay track. Funny thing though, I received my Scenery Achievement Certificate for my scenery work on Rick Shoup's railroad back in 1982. He wanted to present his railroad on the Washington, D.C. convention tour that year, and I offered to help get the scenery done for him. It wasn't his entire railroad, but enough for a nice presentation to the conventioners. If you are not creative, maybe you have a friend who is and can help you come up with a scene to create the realism of the area that you are modeling. Your friend does not have to be a model railroader. Also, there are a lot of articles that explain different techniques to "get 'er done". The important thing to remember is not to be afraid to get your hands dirty and just do it! Once you put down that first bit of plaster and complete a small section, you are on your way. You envision a structure but notice that it isn't complete without some bushes or trees or grass around it. Now you need people to make it come to life. And then the backdrop... Got to have blue sky and clouds... Oops! Not necessarily. If you decide to select winter as your time of year for setting the scene, then a grey sky might work and trees without leaves will be okay.

Realism is the key. Guiding your trains on tracks through towns without structures or grass, or dirt, or trees is boring. You take those cars to a siding to dump the coal, but there is nothing to indicate that the siding is a coal dock. Sure, you can imagine it; we all can. But seeing that dock and the coal is so much more enticing and fun. You want that town to look like a bustling city, or rural America, so it draws you into the time and place as you follow along with your timetable.

All the information that you need to complete your scenery on your railroad for the Scenery Achievement Certificate can be found on the National Model Railroad Association's web site: www.nmra.org/scenery. The various elements of the Scenery Achievement Certificate are defined for you: Terrain, Structures, Background, Lighting, Realism and Conformity. The scale you are building determines the area in square feet that is required for this certificate. If you are not computer savvy, get a friend to print off the NMRA rules as a guide.

Don't let the requirements scare you. You're not in a rush. Do a bit at a time. Plan out what you want. List each of the elements and what you have to do to complete each one and just start. But remember, a railroad that has scenery is much more enjoyable, as it gives you the feeling of reality. So, don't give up and say it's too much work. It's just as the cliché goes: "No pain, no gain". What you are gaining in this



instance is the satisfaction of accomplishing a beautiful scene, and you feel like shrinking yourself down to ride the rails on your own railroad.

Adding scenery to your railroad says it all. **Photo 1** shows the town of Cherry Falls on Bob Johnson's West Virginia Midland Railroad with complete scenery. **Photo 2** shows a coal train headed up by C&S No. 60 passing through the town of Cooper on my Colorado & Southern Railroad, also with complete scenery. Without the scenery, you might guess you are in West Virginia or Colorado. There is no doubt where you are when the scenery is added. Now get busy, get your hands dirty and go for that Scenery Achievement Certificate!



References:

[How to Build Realistic Model Railroad Scenery](#), Third Edition (Model Railroader Books) by Dave Frary

[Planning Scenery for Your Model Railroad](#): How to Use Nature for Modeling Realism (Model Railroader) by Tony Koester

[Easy Model Railroad Scenery](#) Projects (Model Railroad Scenery Series) by Jeff Wilson

You Tube Videos:

<https://youtu.be/MdUCLDqDvv0> - Gerry Leone

<https://youtu.be/antGqzrmwn0> - Cody Grivno

Add Variety with Interchangeable Scenic Modules

By George Gaige

There are not many ways to change your railroad without ripping up a finished area and replacing track, structures and scenery with something different. This certainly gives you something new, but it destroys the original area. But there is one way to add variety to your layout that does not destroy your original work. This is especially relevant if you already have a lift out section in the middle of a big space that allows you to climb under the railroad and pop up to reach background or hard to reach areas.



This is the case on the HO Scale Gilpin Gulch RR. I have several of these lift out areas. The largest is a sort of kidney shaped section of scenery that I designed to be removable so I could perform maintenance on a lower level loop of track that would be otherwise unreachable. The section holds a small circus complete with its own N scale circus train ride, a big top, Ferris wheel, ice skating rink, roller coaster and circus-related details (**Photo 1**). The area is roughly 2' wide by 3' long.

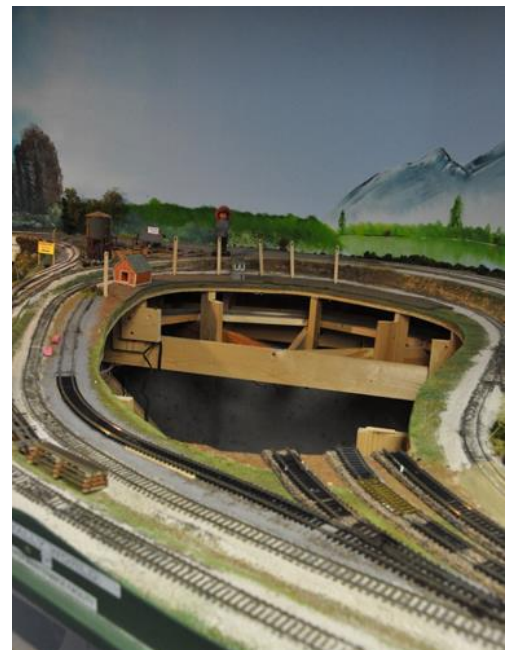
Photo 1: Original Circus Module in position (photo by Wayland Moore)

This area was created as a lift out during initial benchwork construction on the railroad (**Photo 2**). The section is mounted on 2"

builder's foam to reduce its weight for easy handling. The benchwork risers were specially shaped to hold it at a level to align with the rest of the sub roadbed.

Photo 2: Access opening in layout (photo by Wayland Moore)

The underside of this section was reinforced with a 1" x 2" x 30" oak beam to help it stay flat and provide support when the section was off the layout and on the workbench. The beam provides clearance for the wiring connections from the circus pieces. All of the circus pieces have their own power transformers which plug into a single power strip attached to the bottom of the module. The circus train is powered by a power pack under the layout, set at a realistic setting to allow the train to circle the circus slowly and not toss off the little plastic people. Train power and direction is controlled by a double pole, double throw toggle switch on the fascia. This switch is connected to the module with a quick-disconnect type wire connector. Before lifting the module out, you just unplug the connector for the train and the power strip for the rest of the animations, freeing the module from its electrical ties to



the layout. With a helper beside the layout, you climb under and push the module up to a point where the helper can grab it and move it to a safe storage place. This circus module shares no track connection to the rest of the HO Scale layout.

After a few years of using the circus module, I realized that it would be easy enough to change the scenery here by just building another module, the same shape as the first. Looking for more switching opportunities, I decided to create a yard for railroad maintenance rolling stock, which I find very interesting. Did I say easy? What evolved was a little more complicated, but ultimately worth it!

Photo 3: Original Circus Module removed (photo by Wayland Moore)



I removed the circus module (**Photo 3**), cut a piece of foam slightly larger than the hole and placed it over the hole in the layout. Then I got underneath with a Sharpie and traced the hole on the bottom of the new foam piece. With a little trial and error, some sanding and sawing, I shaped the new foam piece to fit the hole exactly. I drew up a track plan and decided where I could add tracks connecting the new section to the existing layout. The old module had no rail connection to the layout, so this was a bit of a challenge. There was a siding alongside the old module, so I was able to branch off that siding for one track and I was able to add another from the mainline just off the lower right side of **Photo 2**.

Photo 4: New maintenance yard module.

This maintenance yard module (**Photo 4**) would be much more of a challenge than the Circus module:

1. Track work would have to line up exactly with the rest of the layout.
2. DCC power would have to be routed to the module tracks.
3. Wiring for structure and vehicle lighting would have to be supplied.

4. There would have to be a way of easily disconnecting power to track, structures and vehicles.
5. There had to be an easier way of removing and reinstalling it.

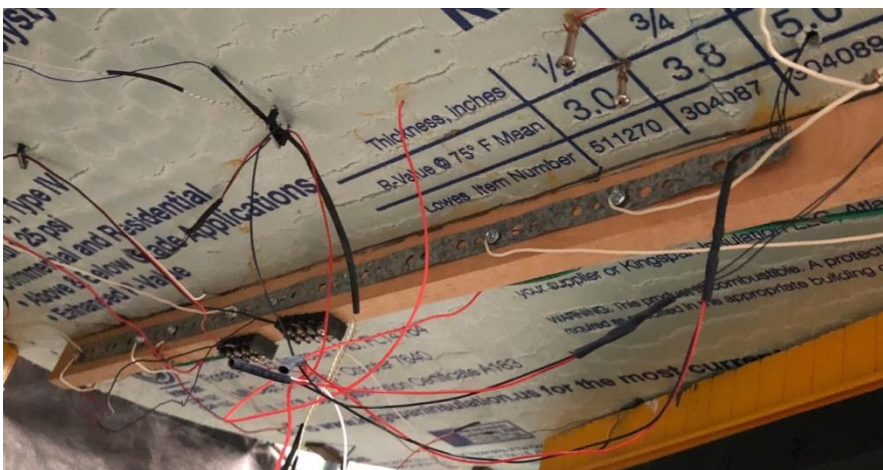


I pondered these problems for a few weeks and realized the construction of the first module held a big answer to some of these questions. I reinforced the bottom of the new section with another 1" x 2" x 30" oak support beam, using epoxy to secure it to the underside of the foam. It has been my experience that epoxy is the safest way to secure foam board to lumber. I then drilled straight down through the foam and through the oak in two places, one at each end of the module with a 5/16" long drill bit. I bought two 8" long threaded 1/4 x 24 bolts with matching nuts and installed them as moving handles. The nuts were countersunk slightly in the bottom of the oak beam and epoxied in place. When I want to move the module, I insert the bolts through the top of the module, engage the nuts about ten turns and lift the module free (**Photo 5**). When I replace the module on the layout, I remove the bolts and cover the holes with portable scenery, like a small vehicle or bush.

Photo 5: 8" bolt "handle" in position (photo by Wayland Moore)

The oak beam also provided a handy locale for wiring "buses". I screwed a metal strap to each vertical face of the plank and connected a wire from one rail of each track to one of these straps and a second wire from the other rail of each track to the other strap with small sheet metal screws (**Photo 6**). You pretty much can't screw anything to the

foam. Now I only had to run a wire from each strap to the layout track power bus. I used an R/C type quick disconnect for this to allow easy disconnection of the track power whenever I wanted to remove the module.



I also wanted to add lighting to the structures and headlights to the vehicles that would populate this module. I attached one pair of screw terminal connectors to the oak plank to collect the structure light wires and another pair of screw terminal connectors to collect the vehicle light wires. I needed separate lighting arrangements because the structures need 12V and the

Photo 6: Module support beam with track power busses and screw terminal blocks for lighting

vehicles' headlights only use 1.5V. This required two more sets of quick-disconnect type connectors. I also needed a fifth quick-disconnect connector for a gravel unloader operated by a fascia switch and a sixth quick-disconnect connector for power to two welding animations. These are identified by six different color tapes on the male and female ends of the six connectors (red tape for track power, yellow for structure lights, etc.) (**Photo 7**). Connecting the wrong wires would be disastrous for the 1.5V vehicle lamps!



Photo 7: Three of the quick disconnects for lighting

All done, right? Nope! Now I had to figure out how to set up the tracks to align between the module and the rest of the layout. I set the module into the hole in the railroad, did a little sanding and shimming to align the top surface of the foam with the rest of the layout sub roadbed and laid out

my track. My original plan was a little off and would have produced less than 18" radius curves, so I had to simplify things somewhat. Finally, I settled on a scheme that would provide reasonable curves, proper easement into my existing track work and no turnouts sitting on the gap between the module and the rest of the layout. I tacked the track and all the turnouts in place and ran my most finicky locos and rolling stock into and out of the new section, forward and backwards. After a few more adjustments, I was ready to glue down my track. Since this is a yard area, I skipped the cork roadbed, crossed my fingers and glued the track directly to the foam using silicon glue. Another round of operational testing was done and to my surprise, no derailments! At this point the module tracks were directly connected to the rest of the layout, so the module was not moveable yet. Crossing my fingers again, I cut gaps with a Dremel in the connecting tracks and lifted the module free. Holding the Dremel vertically, so that the cutting wheel was horizontal, I then cut out the ties under the rails on the layout side just enough to slide rail joiners completely onto each rail. I cut the

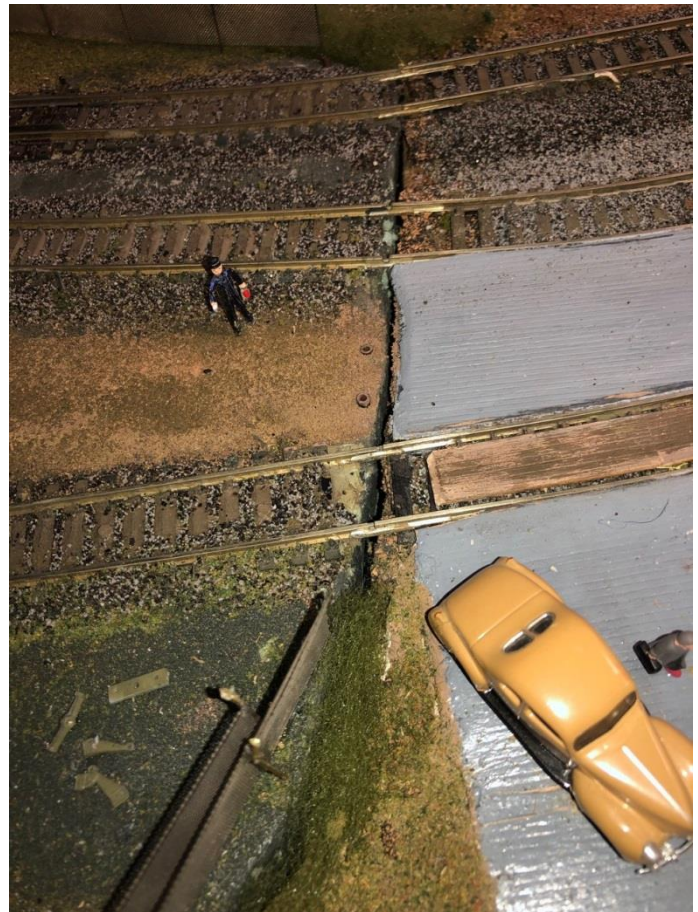


Photo 8: Detail of the tracks bridging the layout and the removable module

ties under the rails on the module side about half the length of a rail joiner (**Photo 8**). The rail joiners thus stay with the layout and don't get lost when you move the module around.

With the module in place and all the rail joiners connected, I tested everything again and found there was a short somewhere in my track wiring. Disconnecting one track at a time, I quickly found that one of my spurs was wrong-rail-wired. Reversing those two wires fixed the problem. I ran trains in and out of the yard for a few weeks to make sure all the wiring was holding up. At this point, I had only wired the track. I removed the module and put it on sawhorses to ballast the track, add and wire the structures and vehicles and add scenic material. This was a pleasure since I could reach around all sides of the module while it was off the layout.

Whenever I switch modules, I take the opportunity to clean and service the track under this area, which is normally unreachable, as well as the higher track in back of the module which is difficult to reach when the module is in place. When I replace one of the modules, I fill in the small gap between the module and the rest of the layout with stranded scenic material - you know, that netted green stuff that you can stretch and twist any which way, spray glue on, sprinkle with ground foam, and glue and stick anywhere (**Photo 9**)? I have recently tried building a chain link fence kit with barbed wire and have successfully used it to fence in the yard. It looks very good, but you have to be very careful handling the module with that fence installed so close to the edge, to prevent damaging it, so I am not sure how long that fence will remain, but we will see!

Photo 9: Finished Maintenance year module in place

The new module has been in use for about two years as of this writing and is giving good service. I switch it with the circus module when the grandkids come to visit because they are not interested in switching operations, like my adult operators are, and seem to like the circus better. My wife and I can easily lift it out without damage and store it under another area of the layout.



My thanks to fellow modeler, Wayland Moore, for providing some of the photographs and for encouraging me to write this article!

Those “Old Time” Depot and Station Kits

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR

It seems that a lot of kit makers sell at least one kit for an “Old Time” Depot and Station of some sort. These can be very attractive and colorful structures, and even fun to build. However, for modelers focused on a more modern era, such structures may have limited appeal in the format that these kits project. Well, maybe if you have a tourist line running on your layout, you can plop that late 19th or early 20th century station down and have it look perfect. Elsewhere in time, these structures have either disappeared, been heavily modified for current use, or are just in the process of final deterioration. Nevertheless, you really like the look of the kit and want to find some way to make it fit into your late 20th or early 21st century scenery.

So, here’s where I wander off a bit into the rest of the story. I actually do model an early 20th century line, the Cumberland Valley RR (CVRR) and specifically an emulation of the South Mountain line that ran up through the towns of Lemasters, Mercersburg, Fort Loudon, and terminated in Richmond Furnace. When I was a wee lad, tracks up to Lemasters were still in use to the elevator, but all that’s left now is the elevator. However, I do travel in that area of the county and also through Mercersburg. I



I know that 100 years ago, there was a nice station and depot in Mercersburg. This was chronicled by the photography of Clyde Laughlin through his real picture postcards (RPPCs). There are about 3000 of them, and these serve as an excellent repository of information of the period and area. More than a few are related to the CVRR, and a few even to the competing Philadelphia & Reading. **Photo 1** from such a post card provides a look at the Mercersburg station in 1908.

There are lots of great details to be extracted from this photo, and there are other RPPCs featuring this station from other angles; however, apparently none that cumulatively provides a 360° view of it in this time period. I had heard from a relative that the station was still standing in Mercersburg, but has been repurposed. I went looking for it and found it. The station now houses Romeo’s which appears to be a restaurant specializing in pizza (**Photo 2**).

Much of the end façade of the station remains intact. However, after a 100+ years, there have been changes. One of the end doors is gone, but both windows remain with their stained-glass upper sections preserved in place as is the glass in the transom of the replacement door. The windows in the hip roof are still in place, along with one of the chimneys, so the basic roofline from this end remains. The loading dock area is now a ramp entrance and set of steps. While some of the windows along that



side have been altered, the majority and the pattern still reflect the original (Photo 3). Most of the original was board & batten with some clapboard interspersed. Now, it's modern siding that emulates something akin to its historical board & batten. Roofing is also more modern sheet steel. The roof bracket details, gutters and downspouts are close to looking like the original. Of course, the railroad is long gone from here. As I was standing in a neighboring business's parking lot, and with the help of the RPPC, I could envision where the train once ran by this building.

Going back to the original premise here, you can see that you actually CAN have that “Old Time” Depot and Station on your modern times layout. All you have to do is update the appearance a bit to today's exterior minimal requirements. Updating the roofing, maybe filling in a few windows, adding that ramp entrance and adding some signage for a suitable business after building that laser kit depot or station, and you can embrace a bit of heritage scenery on your modern day model railroad layout. Who knows? You could even turn it into a restaurant!



Modeling an Elevated Subway

Part 2: Signals, Walkways, Walkway Railings, Stations, and Subway Trains

By Brian W. Sheron, MMR

In Part 1 of this two part article, I focused primarily on the structures used to support elevated subways, and how they can be modeled on our layouts. However, we are modeling an elevated *subway system*, and in addition to the structures that support the elevated subways, an elevated subway system needs signals and stations, just like our ground-level trains do, and it also needs walkways next to the tracks, so that in the event of an emergency, passengers can evacuate the train and walk to safety, even though they are well above the ground. Finally, we need subway trains to run on our subway system.

Subway System Signals

Depending on the line, subway signals can be either three-light or six-light. A three-light signal is used when there are no diverging routes ahead. Green is for proceed, yellow is proceed with caution, a red means stop, the block ahead is occupied. When there are diverging routes ahead, the six-light signal is used. A good description of the signaling system used in New York City can be found at

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signaling_of_the_New_York_City_Subway.

On my elevated subway, I only have a point-to-point line, with no switches or diverging routes, so I only need a three-light signal. Subway signals (both elevated and underground) are different from our conventional railroad signals. They are smaller and narrower, presumably because there is not a lot of room to mount them either on elevated tracks or in subway tunnels. **Figure 1** is a typical elevated subway signal.

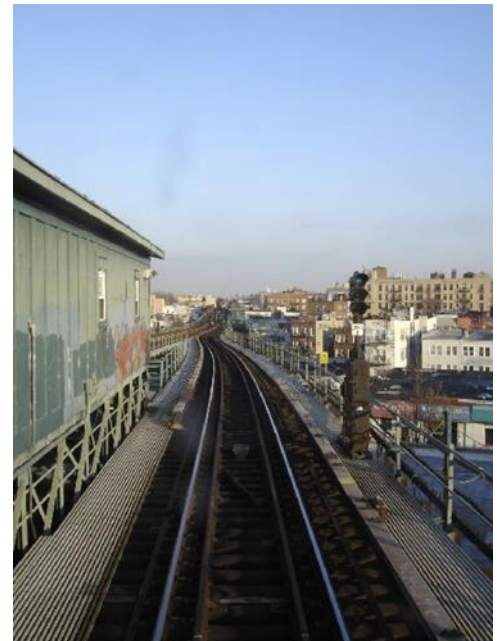
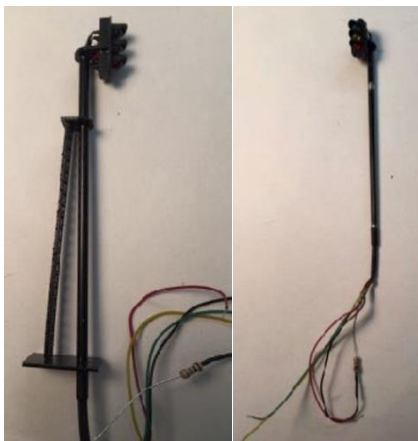


Figure 1. Walkways and Signals on an Elevated Subway



I am not aware of any manufacturers that make scale model subway signals. Obviously, with some care, a subway signal could be scratch-built. However, I chose to scour the Internet looking for something that might pass for an elevated subway signal. I found several vendors selling some inexpensive signals that looked like they could be modified to pass for elevated subway signals. **Figure 2** shows a signal I found on eBay and what it looks like with the ladder and ladder supports removed.

Figure 2. Three-light signal found on eBay (left) and same signal with the ladder and ladder supports removed (right)

How the signal is mounted on your elevated subway structure is going to depend on the construction of your signal and the design chosen for the track support structure. In my situation, the shaft connected to the signal head that carried the wires from the three lights was made of brass, and with some care I was able to bend it so it followed the contours of, and could be mounted on, the support structure. I ran the signal wires along a structural upright girder and drilled a hole in the surface of the layout next to where the base of the structural upright box girder contacted the layout surface. I then ran the wires from the signal under the layout. Since I was only going to have a single elevated subway train running on the point-to-point line, I did not see any need for a complicated signaling system, and decided to just connect the signal's green light.

Figure 3 shows the signals mounted by the station on one end of my elevated subway line.



Figure 3. Signals Installed at the Station

Walkways

As previously mentioned, trains need to be able to be evacuated in the event of an emergency, as well as reachable by maintenance crews. Therefore, on elevated subways there need to be walkways next to the tracks, so passengers can disembark and walk to safety. Walkways can be on either side of the trains.

Figure 1 shows walkways next to the tracks on elevated subways.



Walkways need to be supported. Walkways could be supported by being placed on top of longer ties installed at every 3rd or 4th tie location. Walkways could also be located on the outside of the tracks, and supported by mounting brackets welded to the wide-web I-beams used to support the tracks. I decided to run the walkways on my elevated subway between the two tracks, rather than on the outside of each track. To support the walkway, I glued Kappler wooden turnout ties, cut to length, between the two tracks, and located at every fourth tie. The walkways were made from Evergreen No. 4125 V-Groove sheets (0.125" spacing, 0.040" thick). I cut the sheets lengthwise, four planks wide, and then scribed transverse grooves in the simulated planks to represent individual boards. The turnout ties and the walkways were painted a dark brown, and then weathered. **Figure 4** shows the support ties and walkway planking in place during construction.

Figure 4. Wooden Walkways and Railings Installed

Walkway Railings

Elevated subway walkways obviously needed railings. Just like the track support structures, railings varied in design, with tubular or angle iron uprights and rails. I decided to model my railings using Evergreen No. 221 3/64" styrene rods for the uprights, and Plastruct No. 90852 0.025" styrene rods for the rails. I constructed them in segments using Evergreen No. 175 0.100" square styrene strips for the railing base. I drilled 3/64" holes in the 0.100" square base every 7/8" and inserted a 9/16" long 3/64"

styrene rod in the hole. A dab of liquid styrene cement bonded the uprights permanently. Because of the number of railing uprights needed, a Northwest Short Line Chopper is almost a must. Once the uprights were cemented into the 0.100"



square base, I glued the 0.025" styrene rods along the top edge and halfway between the top of the upright and the square base. **Figure 5** shows a railing segment completed and painted. **Figures 4** and **6** show the railings in place on the layout.

Elevated Subway Stations

Stations along elevated subways were located at track level. On dual track lines, stations could be located either on the outside of the tracks, with both tracks passing between station platforms on each side, or in the middle of the two tracks, with one platform serving both tracks. Stations could be relatively simple platforms, or be more substantial structures. **Figure 7** shows a more elaborate, double level elevated subway station.



the train. I planned using the MTH subway trains which come with four cars, so the platforms needed to be long enough to receive a four car subway train.

It may have been serendipity, but I found that the Walthers Cornerstone 933-4099 HO scale Suburban Station Platforms were perfect. Each kit comes with four separate platforms (1-5/8" x 16") and when butted end-to-end, the length of the resulting platform (64") was exactly the length of the four MTH subway cars!

The station platform obviously has to be at the same level as the doorways on the subway cars when it is in the station. Depending upon how you decide to model your station platform (e.g., from a kit or scratch built) you will need to decide how and where you want to support your station platform, and construct a support that will put the platform surface at the same level as the subway doors.

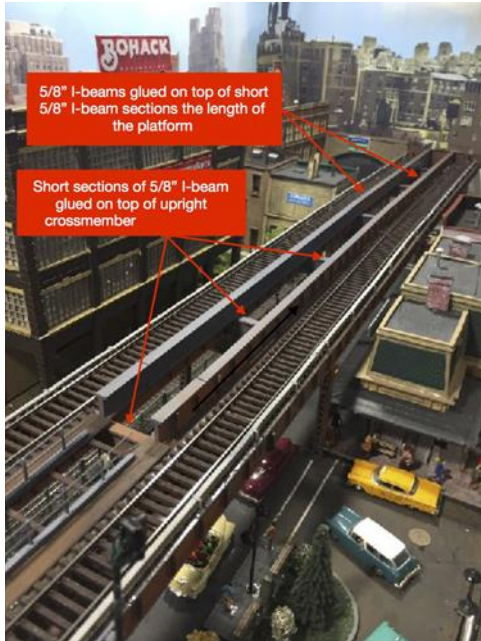
Figure 5. Railing Section Constructed and Painted



Figure 6. Railings in Place on the Layout

Figure 7. Subway Station on an Elevated Subway Line

I determined I did not have enough room to locate stations on the outside of the tracks, and I would have to locate my station platform between the two tracks. It was important to determine the platform width in advance, which then determined the required spacing between the tracks. In addition, the station platform needed to be long enough for passengers to be able to exit from all of the cars on



For my subway platforms, I used the 5/8" I-beams that I used for the horizontal track supports for my station platform supports. I first cut short sections of the 5/8" I-beam and glued them on top of the upright support cross member. I then glued 5/8" I-beams on top of these short sections of I-beams down both sides of the center portion between the tracks where the platform would be located (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Station Platform Supports in Place

The only modification I made to the Walthers station platforms was to scratch build an entrance structure at the far end of the platform and add lights under the canopy (I like nighttime scenes!).

The last thing I needed to do was to have a way for passengers to access the elevated stations. One end of my elevated subway line stops at the open end of the layout island, and the other end stops against the wall, which has a city scene backdrop on it.

For the part that stops on the open end of my layout, one can imagine a stairway (beyond the end of the layout) would be leading up to the platform, so a stairway didn't need to be modeled on that end. On the other end however, because it ends against a wall with a backdrop, a stairway to the elevated platform would (and should) be visible. Again, a search of the Internet yielded a photo of an elevated subway stairway that would work perfectly. Figure 9 shows the photo of the elevated subway stairway found on the internet cropped and glued onto the existing backdrop.

Figure 9. Elevated Subway Stairway Photo Cropped and Glued Against Existing Backdrop



Figure 10 shows the finished elevated subway with the Walthers station platforms in place at both ends and Figure 11 shows what Flatbush Avenue now looks like under the elevated subway.

Subway Trains

Our elevated subway would of course not be complete without subway trains. In the March-April 2020 (Volume 75, Number 2) issue of "The Local," I discussed the MTH Subway series train sets. In addition to the MTH subway series train sets, there are several other sources of subway cars in HO scale. Some time back, four car subway trains were manufactured by Lifelike Proto 1000. These are no longer in



Figure 11. Flatbush Avenue from Under the Elevated Subway

production, but are still available on eBay. They are DC and do not have sound, but run well and are nicely detailed. Funaro and Camerlengo also sell an unpowered R-19 subway car kit (No. 104) for about \$50. Finally, some brass subway car sets were imported by Model Traction Supply, are occasionally advertised on eBay, and are usually expensive (over \$1,000).

While elevated subway operation is interesting, the conventional trains on my layout are the primary source of operational activity. In addition, running a subway train back and forth from one end of the line to the other could get boring rather quickly. For this reason, I strongly recommend the MTH subway trains with DCC and sound. In addition to the realistic sounds that the MTH subway trains have (traction motors, brake squeal, horn, buzzer, train station announcements by a conductor), these trains can be programmed to automatically start and stop at desired locations. Programming the subway trains is simple and can be done from a throttle that has function buttons, such as a Digitrax DT-400 or DT-500. The programming instructions provided with the subway trains are clear and easy to follow. Once programmed, the subway trains can run in either the automatic or manual mode.

On my elevated subway, the station at one end is called Flatbush Avenue and the station on the other end is 242nd street. MTH has two subway sets with these stops on them, 80-2378-1 and 80-2379-1. I have two four car sets, with one running on each of the two tracks. In the automatic mode, each train will start at a station (e.g., Flatbush Ave.), accelerate to a specified speed you set on the throttle, then automatically slow down as it approaches the next station (i.e., 242nd Street) and come to a stop in the station. The “conductor” will announce the station as the train approaches it, make announcements while the train is in the station, and then announce that the train is departing and what the next station stop will be (i.e., Flatbush Ave.). This will continue indefinitely.

Conclusion

Building the elevated subway line over an existing road on my layout was not as difficult as I had first imagined. For anyone who decides to build an elevated subway above an existing road on their layout, or even build one during the initial construction of their layout, I think that the key is planning ahead. For example, knowing what station platforms you intend to use, their dimensions, and where they will be located will help you plan upright support locations and dimensions, dual track spacing, etc. I think the result will be worthwhile and will greatly enhance the atmosphere of an urban area on your layout.

Figure 10. The completed elevated subway above Flatbush Avenue with Walthers station platforms in place at both ends



You Don't Want to Know . . .

By Dr. John Pursell

Many times, things happen in ways we never intended. We plan and plan and then a sudden quirk of some kind results in something happening that is entirely different. The outcome is not what we expected but is often far better than we could have imagined. Of course, sometimes it's worse, but that's just life.

I think this applies to our hobby as well. A structure moved to a new location, or an accidental change in a track plan suddenly reveals possibilities we never thought about. This story, however odd as it might seem, is one of those "it came out better than I could ever have imagined" stories.



As primarily an eastern coal hauler, my Lehigh Valley Railroad musters a large number of hopper cars of the Lehigh Valley, the Central New Jersey, Reading and Pennsylvania railroads. All the cars are weathered, usually with the standard alcohol/ink wash and black powdered chalk. One Reading hopper, however, stands out and is almost always noticed by visitors who comment about the extensive weathering job. It's significantly different from the others and, quite frankly, looks a whole lot better. They always want to know not only how I did it, but why I haven't done the others as well. My usual answer is "You don't want to know." I guess it's time to 'fess up and let people in on the secret.

Some years ago, lacking a place for a layout, I carefully packed away my equipment in cardboard boxes and shredded newspaper and stored them in what I thought was a secure shed. The shed was about fifty feet from my house and rather secluded and quiet, which is probably why things happened as they did. I had no idea that a family of mice had moved into the boxes and apparently loved the shredded newspaper I used for packing material. I also didn't know that they had apparently designated one of the boxes as, shall we say, their bathroom?

If you're squeamish, you may want to stop reading now.

When I opened one of the boxes about two years later, I was met with an overpowering stench of urine. I went through the box and found most of the structures, primarily wood and cardstock, had been soaked in mouse urine and feces and were ruined. But they were old structures anyway and not up to my present standards, so to be honest I wasn't terribly upset about throwing them away. But as I got

ready to chuck the box, I spied a single Athearn hopper car in the bottom, the paint severely damaged by the urine. Using latex gloves (naturally!), I picked it up to look at it and a small light went on in my head. I thought it just might be salvageable.

The trucks and couplers were just balls of rust. I managed to crack the screws loose on the trucks to remove them. The couplers were held on with the Athearn metal clips, so they pried off easily. I removed them and tossed them. I then scrubbed the hopper in hot soapy water and let it dry. After it dried, I put on new couplers and a pair of weathered trucks and stepped back to admire my work. There stood a hopper car that appeared far better weathered than any of my other cars! I quickly added a shiny load of coal and a little rust colored paint on the handrails to finish the project. I put it on the track, and it took its place in my coal hopper fleet, where it still serves today.

If there was one area that seemed odd, it was the lettering, which didn't seem to be bothered by the urine. Some extra alcohol/ink solution darkened the lettering enough to allow it to blend in. Since no one has ever mentioned the lettering, I assume no one has really noticed.

To be sure, I'm not a chemist, so I can only assume it was the uric acid in the mouse urine that discolored the paint. Others with more knowledge of science might be able to shed more light on the chemical process. But to be perfectly frank, I don't much care because whatever it was, I'm not about to try to duplicate the results.

Now, I don't advocate growing mice and using their urine for weathering purposes, if for no other reason than the collection difficulties. I do think, however, that this is a perfect example of the proverbial silver lining, and something working out in a way I would never have believed. What might have been lost was ultimately saved by an open mind, a good cleaning and a few new parts!

About the author: Dr. John Pursell is retired from his position as the Senior Ceremonial Trumpeter with the United States Air Force Band in Washington, DC. He models the Lehigh Valley Railroad in HO. He and his wife, Bette, live near Gettysburg, PA.

Weathering References:

Spruce Crafts: <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/weathering-techniques-for-model-trains-2381636>

Model Railroad Academy: <https://youtu.be/3JS1sRIns8Q>

Stephen Bennett: <https://youtu.be/eiOtvetaBuw>

Everard Junction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5THcI8qSo18>

The Achievement Program In The Coronavirus Era

By Bob Charles, MMR

With the advent of this nasty virus -- the stay-at-home orders, mask wearing, risk to seniors and all the rest, questions have arisen about lots of things. As we all know, division meets, region conventions and national conventions have been cancelled 'til further notice, and likely until there is a vaccine. This raises the specific, "How do I manage to qualify for achievement awards, particularly for those that need quality judging?" This is even more pertinent, since it is likely we will have more time to spend on our railroads.

The answer is easier than you may think. NMRA has made getting awards accessible for all of us. First, all required forms for the various awards can be found on the NMRA web site. Go to nmra.org and click on *education/achievement program/forms*. There you will find all the necessary materials for submission. Under the Requirements you will find all the information necessary for submission for each award, as well as much more in terms of descriptive information on qualification.

Let's review the categories. The entry level award is Golden Spike. Checking the requirements here we find that there is no qualitative judging requirement, only "display." The objective here is getting started with both you layout and the AP. Qualification can be done completely on line! Simply fill out the application form and attach the appropriate photos of your work demonstrating compliance with each of the requirements. Then, e-mail or snail mail to me for processing. It is that easy!

Service to the Hobby, the first awards section we will discuss includes:

- Association Volunteer
- Author
- Association Official

Many of us already have accumulated some points toward Volunteer in our work on division events, open houses, the Susquehanna Convention and other involvement. All three categories involve simple documentation of the work done and completion of the SOQ to qualify. This can be accomplished easily online and submitted for processing.

The second area of achievement is Construction and Operation of a model railroad. The awards available in this category are:

- Chief Dispatcher
- Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
- Model Railroad Engineer – Civil.

For Dispatcher, the requirement is for submission of the appropriate forms which can be done entirely on line. Civil has a number of requirements, one of which requires merit judging. Happily, this can be done on line as well with a video presentation of the required track work. Around 2017, the criteria for a Merit Award in Civil was changed so that there are only three (3) pass-fail criteria:

1. Scratchbuild three elements of track work out of a number of options
2. The track meets standards as measured by the appropriate gauge
3. A self-propelled locomotive will successfully traverse all routes.

Meet these three criteria and your track work earns a Merit Award.

The Electrical category can be totally online as well. Note that each area requires you to “wire and demonstrate satisfactory electrical operation.” This means that a video presentation of each of the required features in operation will meet the requirement. The remainder involves paperwork submission which is easily done on-line.

The third area is Model Railroad Equipment, namely:

- Master Builder Motive Power
- Master Builder – Cars

Here we deal with a bit more complication, as a qualitative assessment is required. A score of 87.5 out of 125 must be attained in order to receive a merit award on a given model. Under Motive Power three self-propelled models must be built, one of which is scratchbuilt. All must be super-detailed and qualify to win a merit award. For Master Builder – Cars, eight models are required, four of which must be scratchbuilt. Four of the eight must win merit awards. While judging in these categories *is* permissible under the rules via photo and/or video, I will tell you having attempted to do so that it can be a challenging undertaking and may result in a lack of final conclusion until a direct assessment can be made. Successfully judging remotely will require extremely detailed photo/video and explanations of the work done. The quality of the craftsmanship, including details, will have to be obvious in the visuals. Not an easy task, but it can be done.

Finally, we come to railroad setting, consisting of:

- Master Builder – Scenery
- Master Builder – Structures
- Master Builder - Prototype Models

Once again as with Rolling Stock, the same caveats apply, as each requires qualitative judging with the accompanying challenges. In my opinion judging is best and fairest in these categories if done in person. Due to the difficulties in photos, the structures area virtually demands on-site judging. For the others, I will repeat, it is not an easy task, but can be accomplished.

Finally, you can find detailed information on all categories, including MMR, on the NMRA web site. If you want to discuss any part of the AP including Golden Spike, please feel free to contact your Division AP chair or Dave Chance, MER AP Chair. We will find a way to manage the program successfully.

Easy Skirts for Model Railroad Layouts

By George Gaige

Most model railroads are built on benchwork at a height that makes it easy for adults to view the railroad, comfortable to work on the track and the details, and (relatively) easy to get at the wiring underneath. This is usually a minimum height of about 40-50" off the floor. Of course, multi-deck layouts can have track as low as 30" and as high as 72" off the floor. Whatever the lowest benchwork level is, I think it is fair to say that we are all tempted to use the space under the layout to store stuff. My layout is no exception.



[Photo 1: Average benchwork height on the GRRR is about 50".](#)

Since I have claimed the entire basement for my layout (I have a VERY understanding and supportive wife), there is a lot of stuff stored under the layout. Power tools, carpet scraps, lumber, pool supplies, paint cans and rarely used appliances are under there. Of course, all the extra railroad supplies are there: boxes and bins of scenic material, unbuilt kits, spare loco and kit parts, lighting material, and scratch building supplies. You know what I'm talking about! I try to put almost everything on wheeled platforms or shelves attached to the benchwork to prevent damage in case there is ever a flood down there, so nothing sits directly on the floor.

While this makes access convenient, it's not very attractive when visitors come. So, most of us try to create some sort of hiding scheme to cover the mess, organized or not. I have seen more ambitious modelers build cabinet structures from the fascia to the floor with sliding panels or hinged doors that rival a fine kitchen. I have also seen less ambitious fellows staple cardboard to the fascia, a scheme that reminds me of my childhood days building "forts" out of refrigerator boxes. Still others tack or staple yards of cloth to the benchwork to hide the mess and draw the visitors' attention to the fabulous model railroad on top.

Being thrifty, I sought the least expensive way to hide the storage and highlight the railroad. I used pushpins to tack black landscape cloth to the horizontal underside edge of the benchwork - all over the railroad. My benchwork is edged with 1" x 4" x 3/4" lumber. One eighth inch fascia is attached to the vertical edge of the benchwork. The landscape cloth is usually used to prevent weeds in flower beds. It is very inexpensive and readily available at Lowe's, my favorite shopping destination. I actually tried to find suitable material at a fabric store, but that stuff is way too fancy for me and way too expensive. I think the roll of landscape cloth was about \$20 for 50'! This worked great for about two months. You could remove a pushpin to temporarily reach your stored items and replace it when you wanted to hide stuff again. But pretty soon, the pushpins would loosen up and scatter to the far corners of the basement, never to be found again until you were down there in the summer working on the layout barefoot.

Next, I tried gluing wood clothespins to the inside of the benchwork to hold the skirts. This is impractical because it is very difficult to clamp the clothespins while the glue dries, you can't see them to slide the skirts into them and about half the clothespins spring apart after you have glued them inside the benchwork when you try to slide the skirts into or out of them.

Which brings me to the subject of this article: "EASY SKIRTS..." This system uses 12 gauge wire to suspend the skirts from the fascia via large eyehooks and screws with large flat washers. To access the storage, you simply unhook a section of wire from a few eye hooks and slide the skirt out of your way. Once you find your hidden treasures, you just slide the skirt back in place and re-hook the wire onto the eyehooks.



Photo 2: The skirts are 3' in height, because that's the width of the cloth roll. It works out fine because the skirts don't get stepped on by operators and you can always find the shop vac!

Photo 3: Basic hardware: drywall screws, large flat washers, 1" diameter eyebolts.



Photo 4

I used 12 gauge solid wire, which I had left over from stringing my layout power buses. I cut six 8' long sections of the wire and looped one end around a drywall screw and large flat washer. Then I screwed in 1" diameter eye bolts about every 18" along the bottom of the fascia, making sure there was always an eye bolt at points where the layout benchwork turned corners. Another drywall screw and large flat washer secured the other end of the wire. These eye bolts were closed up too tight to slip the wire in easily, and they had to be pried open a little with a large flat blade screwdriver to work properly after installation. I considered using large cup hooks, but they didn't

seem likely to keep the wire held securely since they have such large openings. The eye bolts only had to be opened up about an 1/8" to capture the wire completely, yet still allow easy release of the wire.



Photo 5



Photo 6

The wire installation process went very smoothly, unlike many first-time projects that I have tried! The tricky part, I thought, would be to create the skirts. For the skirts to stay on the wire, you must create something called a “HEM”. This is a “SEWING” term. It was completely foreign to me, as I do not “SEW”. But it is pretty simple. A “HEM” is a fold in the material that is used to neaten up the edge of the fabric. Hems are used at the bottoms of dresses and trousers legs to keep the fabric from unravelling. In the case of the layout skirts, the hem is used to contain the wire holding it in place under the layout and allow the skirt to slide aside when desired. Hems are usually created by “SEWING” the folded fabric together. “SEWING” can be done by hand using a needle and thread for small jobs. It can also be done by a machine for large jobs. I did not own a “SEWING” machine. I checked upstairs and found that my wife did not own a “SEWING” machine either. I could hand sew the skirts, but I needed 100 linear feet of skirts. I went upstairs and inquired if my wife would like to contribute her efforts to the project by sewing the skirts. Remember page 1 of this article when I stated, “I have a VERY understanding and supportive wife”? Well, she’s not THAT supportive. Honestly, 100’ of hand sewing is really too much to ask of anyone.

I pondered this dilemma for several days. Then, while working on the bills, I came across a small manual device that might solve my problem - a stapler! Sure enough, my little Swingline was up to the task and with fresh box of 5000 staples, I was able to create “HEMS” in my first 4 or five layout skirts. This took care of the first 20’ of skirts, took only about 4 hours, leaving me only 80’ more to go. The only problem was I had developed a bad case of hand cramps. I needed to find another way.

Reluctantly, I searched Amazon for “SEWING MACHINES”. These range in price from \$24.99 to \$1400.00. Two days later, I was the proud owner of a neat little machine that had all the features I needed, but didn’t know I needed, such as a “BOBBIN”, a “THREADER” and a “WINDER”. It also had a foot pedal switch to turn it on, which turned out to be pretty handy as you need both hands to guide the six 8’ long skirts through the machine. The cost was \$24.99! With my wife’s help (See “VERY Understanding and supportive...” on page 1 again), we got the little gem going and I managed to sew the remaining 80’ of skirts in one morning!



Photo 7: My bargain sewing machine at work. It did over 100' of skirts and is still going strong.

Photo 8: Cut notches in the hem to allow clearance over the eyebolt “hooks”. This can be done after the skirts are hung, but it is easier to do before installing them.



Photo 9



Photo 10

I installed the skirts all around the layout pretty quickly, cutting notches in the “HEMS” wherever needed for clearance around the eyebolts. I wound up machine sewing all the skirt hems including the ones I initially stapled because I just liked the way the sewn hems looked compared to the stapled ones.

It has been about 4 years since the skirts were installed and they are holding up very well. My only additional advice after using them for a few years would be to limit each skirt to about 6' in length and to plan the installation so a single skirt does not service an entire curve. You don't want long lengths of skirt dragging on the floor when unhooked from the eye bolts.

Featured Layout

The Chesapeake Bay & Western Model Railroad

Chesapeake Bay & Western Railroad is a fantastic, 30+ year-old, freelanced HO model railroad located in Grafton, Virginia. It occupies a large 2-story building which serves as a haven for over 70 serious, but very friendly, model railroaders, who have put their hearts and souls into its construction, maintenance and operation. The Chesapeake Bay Railroaders Club members host frequent shows which are free and open to the public, although donations are welcome.

Don't let the "freelanced" adjective fool you. This a very detailed railroad with wonderful scenery and realistic operations. The dispatcher's office is about as prototypical as you can get. The layout is so large, the crew has to use wireless headphones to communicate with each other.

The railroad started, as the story goes, as a small logging company which accidentally discovered a vein of coal, became very profitable, merged with 2 other railroads in the area to become what it is today – expanding from the East Coast to St. Louis providing mostly intermodal and freight service to the many industries in the region. You can get a much more interesting and embellished history from the [CB&W website](#). If you haven't seen this railroad, you owe it to yourself to make the trip!

Here are just a few photos of the CB&W Railroad, courtesy of Roger Bir, CEO.



The Combined Military Facility at Arsenal



The Single Line Entry into Columbia Furnace



Downtown Croaker

The Last Stop...

Holidays and Trains



What is it about Holidays and trains? Why is an old steam train billowing through a snowy landscape as much of a symbol of the Holidays as a beautiful red cardinal sitting on a snowy pine branch. I suspect it goes back to the days when trains were the best means of travel over long distances that brought families together. Holidays have always been about families getting together. So, the two go together like Santa and reindeer.

The history of model railroading and how model train sets came to be associated with Christmas is outlined in a very nice article entitled, [“The Electric Trains of Christmas” by Lee Krystek](#). His thought is that the competition between Lionel, American Flyer and Ives with heavy advertising around the Holidays, had as much to do with it as anything.

Whatever the reason, the relationship between trains and Christmas appears to be thriving well. Holiday cards and movies like *The Polar Express* have further solidified the association for the foreseeable future.

While you are waiting for the pandemic to lift, whenever that might be, and to help to get you and your family in the Holiday Spirit, it might be fun to create your own snowy Christmas diorama, as in the photo above or as in this video... <https://youtu.be/GEnHZ8z6kkU>

However you choose to enjoy the Holidays, we hope you will remain safe; and we wish for you and your loved ones the absolute Best of the Holiday Season along with a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year!