



The Local

Newsletter of the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
The Local, 78, Number 3, May-Jun 2023

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Western Maryland's No. 734

By Greg Warth (Photos by the author)

The [Western Maryland Scenic Railroad](#) will be one of the highlights of the [Round the Curve to Altoona 2023 Mid-Eastern Region Annual Convention](#) in October of this year. We will be treated to a ride behind the 74 year-old [Locomotive No. 1309](#) Mallet, 2-6-6-2, which will truly be a blast.

This trip will bring back some memories for me since I visited the WMSR in 2015 when No. 734 ([Photo 1](#)) ruled the rails from Frostburg to Cumberland. For 23 years, the 2-8-0 Consolidation, built in 1916 by Baldwin for Lake Superior and Ishpeming, retired in the 1960s and restored in the early 1990s, has served thousands of tourists and railfans for the WMSR. It is now undergoing a major overhaul while No. 1309 takes over.

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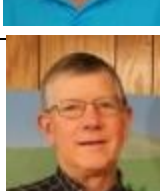
Photo 1: No. 734

The best things I remember were the huge plumes of steam going over my head as we traveled that day behind the 734 and the loud chugging of the locomotive as we moved along. Those memories were rivaled only by watching the 734 spin around on the turntable at Frostburg, something I had never seen in operation before ([Photo 2](#)).








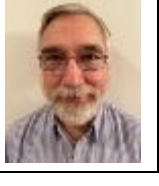




Photo 2: No. 734 ready to exit the turntable after going for spin.

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	<p>Assistant Treasurer: William Wurtzell</p> <p>wwurtzell@msn.com</p>		<p>Publisher: Rick Stoneking</p> <p>(856) 296-9291 rstoneking@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Web Master: Jeff Burch</p> <p>443-574-6859 webmaster@mer-nmra.com</p>
	<p>MER Photographer: Jerry Lauchle, MMR</p> <p>814-404-6955 photos@mer-nmra.com</p>				

Mid-Eastern Region Division Superintendents

	<p>New Jersey Division 1 John V Gallagher (856) 228-2239 njdiv.super@gmail.com Division web page: njdivnmra.org</p>		<p>Potomac Division 2 Erni Little, MMR super@potomac-nmra.org Division web page: potomac-nmra.org/</p>		<p>Philadelphia Division 3 Joe Walters, MMR (302) 521-5884 josephwalters@yahoo.com Division web page: www.phillynmra.org</p>
	<p>Tidewater Division 4 John Robey (571) 217-0599 irobey2019@gmail.com Division web page: nmra-mer-tidewater.org</p>		<p>James River Division 5 Phillip R. Taylor (434) 589-6006 drphilster@gmail.com Division web page: jrdnmra.blogspot.com/</p>		<p>South Mountain Division 10 Bob Johnson (301) 606-5797 southmountaindiv@gmail.com Division web page: http://www.smdnmra.org/</p>
	<p>Susquehanna Division 11 Alan Mende (717) 469-1047 super@susquehannanmra.org Division web page: www.susquehannanmra.org</p>		<p>Carolina Southern Division 12 Andrew Stitt (910) 572-2321 superintendent@carolinasouthern.org Division web page: www.carolinasouthern.org</p>		<p>Carolina Piedmont Division 13 Charlie Rausch, MMR crausch@mer-nmra.com Division web page: www.cpd13.org/</p>
	<p>Chesapeake Division 14 Kirk Bateman (410) 442-0446 super@chesdiv-nmra.org Division web page: www.chesdiv-nmra.org</p>				

There is definitely a certain amount of nostalgia and romance connecting us to these giant mechanical beasts that got our ancestors around on a regular basis back in “the old days.” It is difficult to explain in words, but they continue to draw us back into a time when things were a little simpler and maybe more fun. Diesels have taken over most of the work these days, but I think the old steam locomotives will still be around for a long time. Even though they are getting old, I trust that our undying love for them will continue to see them restored to the glory they once held.



Photo 3: No. 734 in all its glory.

<https://wmsr.com/our-locomotives/western-maryland-734>

<https://youtu.be/mri6leh7-zM>

Modeled Urban Scenes Should Follow the Economics of Real Estate

By Nicholas Kalis

[Designing and modeling an urban scene requires some special planning in order to be consistent with the era, locale, and even the economics of the area that you have chosen to model. Nicholas learned these concepts as he worked on his previous layout, the HO scale [Long Island Railroad Lower Montauk Branch](#), in 2007. Bill Schaumburg, Editor of the RMC (Railroad Model Craftsman) at that time, took dozens of photos of that layout and gifted them to him. This article contains just a few of them that he wanted to use to demonstrate the planning and development of urban scenes of a bygone era – Ed.]

Details

If you want your urban or industrial scenes to look realistic, there are certain pitfalls to avoid and certain rules to obey. Think about the value of the land you are modeling. Would your modeled area have sidewalks? A built-up area without sidewalks just looks wrong. Yet we often see layouts that are missing sidewalks where they would have been appropriate. What about parking meters? Congested urban areas are likely to have parking meters. And don't forget signs describing the parking rules ([Photo 1](#)).



Photo 1: Notice the sidewalks, the cracks in the cement and in the asphalt, the bent parking meter, the truck filled with work-related items, the red vending machine, the grey trash cans, and the wooden crate. These details all add to the realism of this scene (Photo by Bill Schaumburg).

Wooden Structures

Place your buildings with wooden exteriors cautiously. Over the decades and centuries many wooden buildings have disappeared due to economic progress and fires (both famous and not so famous). The era and the locale you model should guide you in incorporating wooden buildings. Check yourself when you want a wooden building just because it has character; it may not belong in the era and location you are modeling.

Vacant Lots

Valuable land is unlikely to be devoid of structures unless there is a reason. Reasons for vacant parcels that could be modeled include: (1) the lot is for sale and hence has a "For Sale" sign; (2) the lot is being used to store delivery or other such vehicles off the street; or (3) a new building is going to be constructed there. Bear in mind that empty lots in urban areas are often fenced all around with a gate to allow entrance.

Getting to Work

How did the employees of the modeled industries or warehouses get to their place of work? First, consider the era you are modeling and the era in which the structure was built. They are not the same in most cases. Executives probably can afford cars and their businesses likely have allocated some surface areas for parking their cars. What about the rest of the workforce? Consider the number of employees. Don't forget that a signal tower or other railroad right of way facility may have employees who get to work

by automobile, so one or more parked cars may be necessary on your layout. If land is relatively inexpensive or the facility was built before land values rose, then there may be parking available for employee vehicles. Given the era, the prosperity of the business (read salaries), then employees may be getting to work by streetcar, bus, subway, or walking. Consider making a bus stop near your employment center (complete with a painted curb and a signpost, and perhaps a queue of workers waiting for their bus), or streetcar tracks and even a streetcar that can be static. How about adding a beeline of workers approaching the facility at the opening of a shift or leaving the facility at the end of a shift?

Signage

There are two things about signage. First, a firm is unlikely to post an advertising sign on a wall or a roof unless there are passing vehicles or person that can see the sign. Don't post roof signs that make sense only to the visitors entering your train room. Be sure to size your signs to attract the attention of your scale people. Second, be aware that many businesses simply had no sign or a little one at best marking their facility. Signs are expensive, and businesses are always looking to save on unnecessary expenditures. Also, the firm may just feel that there is no benefit to having a sign. Their customers or clients just don't frequent this area. Or perhaps the business just may not own their building. They could simply be tenants with less commitment to the building than one would imagine.

Era, Locale, and Economics

Be conscious of the era you are modeling (**Photo 2**). Urban areas grow and decline. Communities that once boasted wooden structures may now be largely brick as a result of fires or earthquakes, etc. Calamities may induce the city planners to implement regulations that discourage if not forbid wooden structures.

Think about unbuilt areas in your industrial or city areas. Older communities with high land values probably have empty lots that are paved so that they can generate revenue for parking.

Think about the odd tree that survives in the corner of an urban lot, often accompanied by discarded tires and other such debris. Don't forget to model this albeit perhaps in an unhealthy condition.



Photo 2: Lots of details are here that help to reveal the era that this scene represents. The cars are from the 50s and 60s. The political campaign sign from 1964 has been attached to the lower part of the building so the "people" passing by can easily see it (Photo by Bill Schaumburg).

A modeler depicting an empty lot that once had a structure has been written up in more than one published modeling article. Think about whether this was the result of a random fire. Or are the empty lots there because of urban decay? Investors see little reason to rebuild in troubled communities. In a modeled area of some vitality, perhaps a sign can be posted to indicate what new structure is in the works.

Ethnic Areas

When placing signs on businesses, don't forget to include ethnic names that reflect the demographics of your area. It seems that too many model railroaders just put a "Smith" or a "Jones" on their building when that is not a realistic reflection of the population inhabiting the locale you are modeling. Business signs with ethnic names lend a sense of place and time to your layout.

Vacant Buildings

Often seen but seldom modeled is vacant industrial, warehouse, or office space (**Photo 3**). Some prototype buildings can have enormous vacancies with large signs indicating that availability. What do photos of your prototype tell you? Is the common phrase used



Photo 3: Again, the details make the scene seem more realistic. The old building with faded broken bricks and mortar had to be created that way. You can't buy that in a store (Photo by Bill Schaumburg).

on these signs, "To Let," or "For Lease," or something else? Often the broker's name and telephone number are prominent on such signs, so that should be added. A sign without a phone number and the broker's name has little utility for a rent-starved landlord. Remember that even if a building is 100 percent leased, a leasing sign could be posted just because it is too much trouble to remove it and it will still serve a purpose for future vacancies. [In summary, if you are modeling an urban area, think about the era, the locale, and the economics of the place that you are trying to depict and create your scenes with that in mind. Reference photos from old magazines or from the internet may be helpful. Add details that would be appropriate for the era. A great reference for urban modeling would be to look at videos of George Sellios' "Franklin and South Manchester" (<https://youtu.be/7DomzkCH18w>) -Ed.]



Sign up here for a hot air balloon ride on the North Raleigh Model Railroad Club Layout (Photo by Greg Warth).



President's Column

President Scott Unger

Reward from Risk

My grandfather was a tombstone carver. His shop purchased most of the granite they needed from the Rock of Ages quarry in Barry, Vermont. During my childhood, I don't remember how old I was, he took me there to see the quarry operation. While I found the drilling and blasting of the quarry process interesting, I was much more interested in the railroad that served the quarry. My grandfather was also a gifted artist and hand-cut the rubber stencils used to sand blast the lettering into the granite. Prospective customers were treated to a real-time pencil sketch of the marker as they discussed the design with him, allowing them to see how the final piece might look when completed.

From decades of holding chisels and sand blast hoses, his hands were incredibly strong. He was born before the First World War and his left hand was dominant. Left-handedness during that time was viewed as a trait that required correction in school, and while he was forced to write with his non-dominant hand, he ended up being ambidextrous with most tools. Being 6' 3" he could effortlessly bury a 16-penny framing nail to the head with three swings using either hand, which is something I can only do using my dominant hand... and when I am lucky.

He was an accomplished carpenter and assembled the base for my first substantial model railroad in an unfinished portion of my parent's basement. Using a masonry star bit and a hammer he advanced evenly spaced holes in the concrete floor and filled them with molten lead. The sole plate was then nailed to the floor into the lead pockets. No masonry anchors or hammer drill were needed. This was professional level work and serious overkill for a kid's model railroad! Since it was my railroad, I offered what little help I could by holding the non-important end of the measuring tape or running to the garage for another box of nails. Throughout my entire childhood I have fond memories of helping him with whatever project he was working on. Whenever he completed a project, he would usually step back with his hands on his hips to survey his finished work and would say, "This is where we should have started."

My youngest stepson is a machinist and while not ambidextrous, he is also a skilled craftsman. It strikes me that both he and his great grandfather found employment in conventional manufacturing industries that followed a similar methodology. The term "subtractive manufacturing" was first used in the 1940s to refer to machining metal. It is very similar to granite carving although to a "slightly" tighter tolerance. But what I find most similar in their trades is the inherent risk in building things by skillfully removing incremental bits from a larger piece of material. An errant tool mark in either trade could instantly convert an expensive die of metal or stone into a worthless

paper weight. Sometimes in these trades the only fix is to start from scratch on a new piece of material requiring hours or days of additional work.

Despite advancements in technology, there are still a few things in the world that are yet to be equipped with an undo button. I think that is a good thing, because to some degree, risk equates to meaning. If everything was free of risk our experiences would be largely superficial and might not evoke any deep emotion or connection. There can be a tremendous sense of pride and accomplishment in taking the time and dedication required to make something that includes a risk or struggle.

Although I always chuckled when my grandfather deployed his signature "this is where we should have started" line, I now realize that neither one of us would have ever been ok with starting at the end. That would have implied skipping over the risky parts that make us better builders and would have eliminated our opportunity to gain proficiency or to experience a true sense of accomplishment.

Model railroading offers limitless opportunities to take meaningful risks for both the beginner and experienced builder. So, select an interesting project that you have never tried before and see what you learn along the way to the end...without skipping over the middle.



NMRA Achievement Program Update

Kurt Thompson, MMR

MER AP Manager

Since the last report in *The Local*, the following Achievement Program certificate was earned and awarded in the Mid-

Eastern Region (MER):

Division 3 Philly Division
Steve Salottia - Cars
Bill Fagan - Scenery

Division 4 Tidewater Division
Bill Waples - Electrical

Division 12 Carolina Southern
Dave Chance - Author
Michele Chance - Author

PLEASE NOTE: National does NOT accept R&V forms any longer. Please use the proper forms. NO R&V FORMS



From the Editor's Desk

Greg Warth, Editor

Fun in Model Railroading

"Model Railroading is Fun!" That is the motto you see displayed on every issue of *Model Railroader*. How much fun are we having? Well, that depends on our enthusiasm for the hobby and how much fun we *want* to have. There certainly are plenty of opportunities to have fun. We just need to take advantage of them when they appear. Sometimes we have to create our own fun.

Many modelers are very serious, detail-oriented individuals who make sure that their models, dioramas and/or layouts are realistic, prototypical, and as perfect as they can get them. We greatly admire them and want to be like them. Others subscribe to the "good enough" category. They may have great trackwork but skimp on scenery, or vice versa, depending on where their main interests lie. Some are armchair modelers who spend their modeling time reading about model railroading and perhaps designing the railroad of their dreams.

Some like to go to operating sessions and truly enjoy operating railroads prototypically. Some like the op sessions mostly for the comradery and talking with their friends. Others go to lunch with other model railroaders and talk about trains or anything else that happens to come up in the conversation.

Some create fun layouts by adding humorous scenes that visitors will enjoy and laugh about. Some will add semi-hidden items and ask visitors to find them all.

A lot of us do some combination of these things.

The point is we are all having fun in one way or another. And that is great! It doesn't really matter which of the above categories you fall in to, as long as you're enjoying what you're doing.

If you are frustrated with your hobby or not having fun, you need to rethink it. Figure out what you like most about the hobby and do that. You don't have to have a big layout or the most detailed structure in the show. You don't have to have rivets on your bridge. If you just like to collect trains and display them, that's wonderful. You don't have to put them on a layout. The hobby is what *you* make of it. You're in charge. And you don't have to be perfect or do what everyone else does.

But whatever you do, have fun with it! And share it with the rest of us. We want to have fun, too!

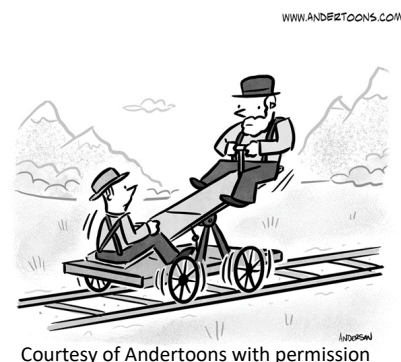
This issue of *The Local* is loaded with fun stuff. We have a short walk down memory lane with a tribute to old steam engines, more great news about the MER October Convention, "Round the Curve to Altoona", The Convention Registration Form, information about the Altoona Hotel, a schedule of op sessions

planned for the Convention, another fantastic scratchbuilding article by Martin Brechbiel, MMR, an invitation to enjoy the "New Tracks" modeling adventures every Wednesday night. The Electronics Corner continues on with another Arduino project on "Spot Detection" of your trains by Fred Miller, MMR. Nicholas Kalis tells us the finer points of "Urban Modeling." And we will have more modeling tips and techniques presented in the "Modelers' Haven" section. So, read on and enjoy the "show."

Thanks again to the editorial team who makes *The Local* possible:

- Martin Brechbiel, MMR
- Alex Belida, MMR
- Jack Dziadul
- Rick Stoneking, MER Secretary, Publisher
- Bob Charles, MMR, MER Director-at-Large

And thanks to all the members who read *The Local*. We truly appreciate the great feedback we have been receiving.



Courtesy of Andertoons with permission

Advertising in *The Local*:

If you have a model railroading business and would like to place an ad in *The Local*, please contact the Editor. The new rates *per year* are as follows:

Divisions & Clubs	Free
Clinics & Education	Free
Convention Ads	Free
Full Page - Color	\$100.00
½ Page – Color	\$60.00
¼ Page – Color	\$35.00
Business Card	\$10.00
Text Only	\$7.00

Advertising Rates per Year

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](#).

Continued on page 9

Send in Your Articles

We are always looking for new articles, tips, ideas, photos, and comments from our readers. If you have been awarded an AP (Achievement Program) Certificate or an MMR (Master Model Railroader) award, please consider writing an article about it so others can learn how you did it. We always enjoy looking at new layouts, dioramas, and models that our members have created. If you would like to contribute to *The Local*, please send an email containing your article and photos to [The Local Editor](#).

The Local welcomes and encourages 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 are published in approximately the order in which they were received.

Deadlines for Submitting Articles to *The Local*:

Issue:	Deadline:
Jan/Feb	Dec 1 st of previous year
Mar/Apr	Feb 1 st
May/June	Apr 1 st
Jul/Aug	Jun 1 st
Sept/Oct	Aug 1 st
Nov/Dec	Oct 1 st

How to Submit an Article for *The Local*

Please observe the following steps to submit your contribution:

Please read the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on ["How to Prepare a Manuscript for *The Local*."](#)

Compose and submit your text in one of the following formats: TXT, DOC, or DOCX.

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."

Your photos should be high resolution and very clear. We cannot accept photos that are fuzzy or out of focus. JPG, GIF, TIFF, and PNG formats are acceptable.

Please rename your photo files in the order you want them to appear, e.g., Photo-1.jpg, Photo-2.jpg, etc.

If you have captions for your photos, etc., create a separate text file for the captions, each of which should be numbered to match a numbered photo or figure.

Send your article or photos by email to [The Local Editor](#). There may be a limit on the number of megabytes you can send depending on your email program. If necessary, either send the photos three at a time, or compress the photos with a "Zip" program to send more at one time.

Special Notes:

Please only send us *your own* 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.

If you have previously published your article or photo in any other magazine or newsletter, including a division newsletter or your own website blog, it cannot be reproduced in *The Local* without written permission from the magazine publisher, editor, and author or photographer.

If this is your first submission to *The Local*, please fill out and return this [Media Agreement](#) form to the Editor, which gives us permission to use your material and verifies that the work is yours, or that you have obtained written permission to use it.

Once your article is approved for publication, and you have qualified for 42 or more points in the [Author Category](#) of the Achievement Program (AP), you may submit a [Statement of Qualifications Form](#) to your Division AP Manager to receive your Author AP Certificate.

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Elections 2023

THE MER NEEDS YOU!

Now accepting nominations for Directors-at-Large

Yes, you! If you are a member in good standing and want to support your region with good ideas and real involvement, we need you to volunteer to serve as one of the three Directors-at-Large for the Mid-Eastern Region (MER).

The deadline for nomination entry is May 30, 2023. The term of office is two years, with a limit of two terms. Any qualified MER member in good standing can be nominated, either by him or herself or by another member with the candidate's permission. The process is very simple:

Prepare:

A 200-word (max) statement outlining the nominee's interest and qualifications for the position, **and** a photo of the candidate. Send the nominations package – by **May 30, 2023** – to all of the following nominations process officials:

Nominations Committee:

Chair: Robert Charles, MMR	rcharles@aol.com
Jack Dziadul	jackdziadul@gmail.com
Kenneth Montero	va661midlo@comcast.net
Scott Unger	president@mer-nmra.com

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

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

Deadlines and Schedules for 2023 Nominations and Balloting:

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

May 30, 2023 -- Deadline for receipt of self-nominations sent to the Nominations Committee. Date for Nominations Committee to notify Board of Directors of slate of nominees validated by the Business Manager.

July 5, 2023 -- You must be a member in good standing (paid up NMRA dues) based on the membership report supplied to the MER Business Manager from NMRA National as of 07/05 (the 5th of July) of every election year to be eligible to vote. If an individual is not a member or if membership has expired as indicated by the record supplied to the MER, and MER officials have not been informed by NMRA National of a valid renewal of membership by 07/05 (the 5th of July), that individual will not receive a ballot, nor be permitted to vote in that year's election.

August 1, 2023 -- Deadline for mailing paper ballots to members and for commencing electronic voting.

September 5, 2023 -- Deadline for electronic voting, also last day as shown by postmark for mailing paper ballots.

September 9, 2023 -- Deadline for receipt by Balloting Committee of paper ballots sent by mail.

September 16, 2023 -- Deadline for Ballot Committee to transmit results to President, the Director overseeing this committee, and the Business Manager.

September 23, 2023 -- Deadline for The President to communicate the election results to candidates. The Business Manager also notifies the MER Web Master and the NMRA of the election results.

October 8, 2023 -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER's website.

Don't wait! This is a great opportunity to get involved in a leadership role for the MER. Your ideas are vital to the life and growth of our organization. Send in your nomination right now.



Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2023 Convention Round the Curve to Altoona



October 19th to 22nd, 2023

<https://mer2023.org/>

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

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

Primary Registrant: _____ **MMR?** Y / N, Title for Badge _____

Significant Other Attending (living at same address): _____

Children Attending (18 & under - list all + age): _____

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	Favorite Scale: _____ Is this your first MER Convention? _____

Description	ID	Cost	Qty	Paying
Registration				
NMRA Member: ___ \$70 thru Aug 31, ___ \$80 Sep 1 – Oct 5, ___ \$90 On-Site Oct 19 – 22				
Non-Member*: ___ \$90 thru Aug 31, ___ \$100 Sep 1 – Oct 5, ___ \$110 On-Site Oct 19 – 22				
One-Day (circle day) NMRA Member: \$45 Fri Sat Non-Member*: \$65 Fri Sat				
Non-Member*: \$20 for Rail Pass membership		\$20		
Spouse/Significant Other (Name)		\$5		
Children 18 and Under (Name & Age)		\$5		
Banquet – Saturday Night ___ Fillet Mignon ___ Herb Encrusted Salmon ___ Penne Pasta Primavera ___ Roasted Chicken Veloute	401	\$57		
A Grand Start Breakfast ___ Fri ___ Sat ___ Sun	402-4	\$17		
Editors' Breakfast ___ Fri (Division Editors and Webmasters)	420	\$0		
Superintendents' Breakfast ___ Sat (Division Superintendents)	421	\$0		
Call Boards / Ops – See Convention Web Site for Latest Information				
Lee Rainey's East Broad Top	801	\$5		
John Bennett's B&O-WM-PWV (Section 1)	802	\$5		
John Bennett's B&O-WM-PWV (Section 2)	803	\$5		
John Bennett's B&O-WM-PWV (Section 3)	804	\$5		
David Baker's Cumberland & Lake Erie (Section 1)	805	\$5		
David Baker's Cumberland & Lake Erie (Section 2)	806	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 1)	807	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 2)	808	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 3)	809	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 4)	810	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 5)	811	\$5		
Extra Fare Clinics – Registration Required, Further Information on Web Site				
Build a Craftsman Kit ___ N (\$15) ___ HO (\$25) ___ O (\$45)	601			
Tinkercad	602	\$0		No Fee
Getting a Freight Car Kit Ready for Your Layout	603	\$12		
Prototype Tours – Further Information on Web Site				
Western Maryland Scenic Railroad #1309	201	\$99		
East Broad Top, Rockhill Trolley, Bricktown Club	202	\$99		
Railroaders Museum K4 Roundhouse (Sat morning)	203	\$15		
Railroaders Museum K4 Roundhouse (Sat afternoon)	204	\$15		
Would You Like To Be A Contest Judge At The Convention – Circle - YES or NO	----	----	---	-----
Have You Been A Contest Judge In The Past – Circle - YES or NO	----	----	---	-----
TOTAL			➡	

* Non-members must complete a Rail Pass application for a 9-month trial membership to the NMRA. Please contact the Convention Registrar (contact info below) for details.

Print registrations must be accompanied by check payable to **MER Conventions**. Send to: MER Conventions, PO Box 426, Sykesville, MD 21784-0426
Any questions and/or additional information, contact the Convention Registrar: e-mail mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com or call (410) 442-0446.

Hotel – Altoona Grand Hotel, 1 Sheraton Drive, Altoona, PA 16601, (814) 946-1631. Room Rate - \$89.00 per night + tax. Contact the hotel at the telephone number provided and reference the National Model Railroad Association. The convention rate is not available via online booking.

Please refer to COVID-19 and cancellation policies at the convention website online.

Further information at: <https://mer2023.org/>

Updated 04/24/2023

Carolina Piedmont Division HO Car for Sale

Carolina Piedmont Division, Mid-Eastern Region



N Scale version coming in Fall 2023!

Exclusive Limited Edition Custom Decorated by Accurail
 Norfolk Southern Rwy HO Scale 70-Ton Offset Triple Hoppers
 2 Road Numbers Available

Exclusive, first time run of 86xx series HO scale Norfolk Southern 70-ton Offset Hopper. These ex-B&LE cars were leased by Norfolk Southern from U.S. Ry Equipment in 1967. They were photographed in service and all have lightweight dates that was always stenciled to the right of the car's light weight on the left side under reporting marks. WA was for Washington, Indiana on the B&O, the old B&O car shops on their route to St. Louis. The shops were closed and US Ry Equip acquired them.

Carolina Piedmont Division is offering these in two unique road numbers, 8613 & 8724 for sale as limited edition kits using Accurail's 70-Ton Offset Hopper car. Pricing is \$28 per car plus USPS shipping.

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UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

2023 – Susquehanna Division - "Round the Curve to Altoona" October 19-22, 2023, Altoona, PA

2024 – Carolina Piedmont Division—"Piedmont Junction" Sep 26 - 29, 2024, Durham, NC

2025 – New Jersey Division Dates and location TBD

MER Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors Meeting – 7 pm Oct 19, 2023 – Altoona, PA

Featured Layout

Text and Photos by Greg Warth. Layout by Marty McGuirk.

I had the opportunity to visit Marty McGuirk's Richford Branch Layout in Gainesville, VA as one of the layout tours of the James River Division and Potomac Division Mini-con a few months ago. I was impressed with his fall scenery, use of open space, and multiple scratchbuilt structures. Here are a few pictures of his layout for you to enjoy.



Welcome to the Altoona Grand Hotel

By Shaina McNally



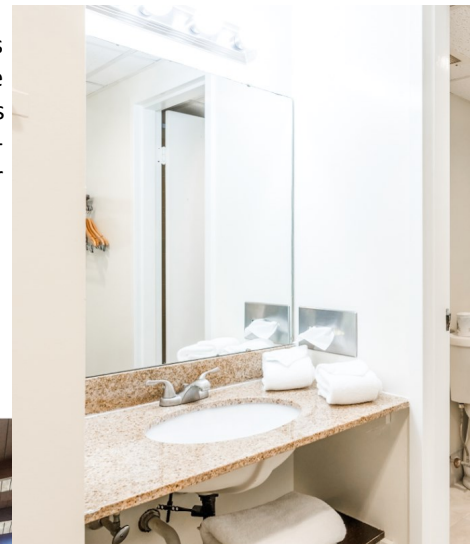
After speaking with Gary (Gary Brown, VP of MER) on the phone today – I just wanted to follow up and let you know that all our construction is complete. All rooms have brand new paint, beds, furniture, pillows, comforters, sheets, as well as brand new bathroom tile. I attached photos for you to reference.

I like to remind guests that we are a small business, family owned and operated hotel. Our remodel was based around keeping the existing charm. We maintain the building and upgrade when needed. We're proud of the product we offer & are value driven. Some folks gravitate towards large chains and others like myself and many of our employees enjoy the lesser known & unique treasures. We keep things tidy! This building has been a staple in Altoona since the 70's and has a lot of history! It may not be as modern as the large brand names, but our hospitality is just as good if not better. I'm sure your guests will enjoy themselves at our venue. It truly is a unique property and is Blair County's only full-service venue.

Let me know if you have any other concerns!

Kind regards,

Shaina McNally
Director of Sales
Altoona Grand Hotel



Round the Curve to Altoona: Call Board Railroads

By David Baker, *et al.*

The [October 2023 MER convention](#) to be held in Altoona will have four layouts open for [operating sessions](#).

Sessions will be held in the afternoon and evening on Thursday and Friday plus Saturday afternoon. Information will be sent via email or snail mail to operators who sign up for operating sessions, so they do not need to go to the convention hotel before reporting for an operating session. Unfortunately, the sign-up forms are not available yet as of this writing, so check the [MER Convention website](#) frequently so you can sign up right away as soon as they do become available.

Three of the railroads are located on the east side of Johnstown, PA. They are Frank Coat's Pennsylvania RR, John Bennett's Baltimore and Ohio, Western Maryland, Pittsburgh and West Virginia, and David Baker's Cumberland and Lake Erie. The fourth railroad is Lee Rainey's East Broad Top located in State College.

Since the three railroads near Johnstown are all within a 12-minute drive from each other it would be possible to sign up for an afternoon session at one of the layouts. Then eat dinner at one of the many restaurants in the area and attend another operating session in the evening. The afternoon sessions will start at 12:00 noon and end at 4:00 p.m. The evening sessions will start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 10:00 p.m. giving two hours to eat dinner and travel between railroads.

On all three Johnstown area railroads, after two hours, we will take a short break and switch positions. So, all operators get a chance to do more than one job.

Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of the PRR

By Frank Coat

Frank Coat's HO scale Laurel Mountain Division is a fictitious Division of the PRR which occupies most of the basement at roughly 20 X 24 feet, making a main line run of 255 feet. The layout uses NCE DCC with some sound, car cards and waybills. The main yard on the railroad is located about halfway between the two staging yards which are at either end of the main line. This yard has four arrival/departure tracks and eight classification tracks. For those who like switching industries you will want to sign up to operate on Frank's railroad. Along his mainline are eight towns that each have from two to nine industries to switch, plus some coal mines. Also, there are eight industries that the yard crew switches for a total of 54 industries on the layout. Transfer trains to staging and locals are made up in the main yard. All locals are turns as they leave the yard and go to their assigned town, switch the industries, and then return back to the main yard. During an operating session there is one yard master who runs the yard engine and three to four road crews that run the turns and the transfer trains in and out of staging.

Frank will have five operating sessions: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday afternoon and Thursday and Friday evening.



John Bennett's B&O-WM-P&WV

By John Bennett

John Bennett's HO scale B&O-WM-P&WV RR is a fictitious railroad that occupies a 52 X 26 basement. It is designed for operations with three decks which allow the mainline to reach 350 feet. The railroad can support up to 18 operators. Wireless NCE DCC controls the locomotives with most locomotives having sound. The railroad uses car cards, waybills, train orders, telephones, and has one helper district. Signals protect the two single track sections of mainline. There are four yards, three connecting railroads and two switching districts that are assigned a dedicated crew member. Johnstown Yard with its three arrival and departure tracks, one running track, and 11 classification tracks is the largest yard on the railroad. Two people are assigned to this yard: a yardmaster who runs the west yard engine, and a helper who works the east end of the yard. Johnstown Yard is perfect for someone who likes working a busy yard as trains are arriving and departing often during an operating session. Somerset has two separate yards. Each has one yardmaster one for coal cars and one for merchandise. Somerset also has two dedicated crews to work the many industries.

John's railroad has three connecting model railroads, and each gets one crew member during an operating session. The Conemaugh and Black Lick RR serves the Johnstown plant of Bethlehem steel. The Johnstown and Stoney Creek RR serves the Johnstown plant of United States Steel. The Pittsburgh and West Virginia is the newest area on the railroad. It has a yard at Avella and Pittsburgh Jct. The P&WV crews work Avella, Pittsburgh Jct and Rook. All three of these railroads will keep an operator busy for hours.

For those who like coal mines, this is the railroad for you as there are a total of 15 mines which are worked out of the Somerset Coal yard. Of, course there are plenty of main line trains to and from the three staging yards.

John will have two operating sessions: Thursday and Friday afternoon.



David Baker's Cumberland and Lake Erie Railroad

By David Baker

The HO scale point-to-point Cumberland and Lake Erie Railroad was designed to be an operations-oriented railroad with timetable and train order operations using car cards, waybills, telephones, and two helper districts. Control is by Wireless NCE DCC with sound. The main line goes around the [36' X 32'](#) basement two times in a double deck arrangement. The railroad is a bridge route between Cumberland, MD and Erie, PA. Only the Laurel Division is modeled as it might have appeared in the summer of 1957. This Division consists of the trackage between Cumberland, MD and Johnstown, PA, plus two branch lines. The railroad follows the route of the Western Maryland Railway from Cumberland to Rockwood, then the B&O's S&C Branch to Johnstown.

Overhead traffic consists of a few through trains that start in staging either at Cumberland or Conpitt (1957 spelling). These trains run over the modeled portion of the railroad, changing crews at Johnstown and Cumberland yards.



Current operations have the following trains arriving and departing the Johnstown yard: two C&LE through freights, one eastbound and one west bound (both have set-outs and pick-ups for Johnstown); two transfer trains, one from Erie and one from Cumberland; two C&LE locals, one east bound and one west bound that originate in Johnstown; east and west bound PRR freights with set-outs and pick-ups for Johnstown; a transfer run to the C&BL (Bethlehem Steel); a transfer run to the Johnstown and Stony Creek Railroad (US Steel, a large coal mine, and many small companies); and a mine run to Hooversville.

Somerset yard receives empty coal cars from Erie, Cumberland, and Johnstown. Trains are sent out of Somerset to the mine at Hooversville, several mines near Meyersdale, and the mines on the Coleman and Boswell Subdivisions. As these trains return with loads, loaded trains are made up and sent to the WM, PRR, and to Lake Erie.

David will have two operating sessions: Thursday and Friday evening.

Lee Rainey's East Broad Top Railroad

By Lee Rainey

Lee Rainey's East Broad Top Railroad highlights how much operating fun one can have in a small space and modeling in an unusual scale.

Unlike most layouts, Lee's has no main line. The entire layout represents the town of Mount Union, PA, which, for many years, was the largest shipping point on the Middle Division of the PRR, and the junction between the PRR and the East Broad Top Railroad. The layout design places heavy emphasis on recreating the industries that actually existed in Mount Union.

The S/Sn3 layout is 12' X 26' in size. Track is primarily handlaid and much of it is dual gauge, as in the prototype location. Track is 90% complete. Scenery is 25% complete and features custom photo backdrops and scratchbuilt buildings. Control is by Lenz DCC. The majority of the locomotives are sound equipped. Most of the rolling stock is from commercial kits, highlighting how much commercial equipment is available in S scale.

The layout works best with four operators – two crews of conductors and engineers – and the owner/troubleshooter/coach. Operators represent one of the two real yard jobs on the prototype: the Pennsy shifter or the standard-gauge EBT shifter.

From time to time during the 16-scale-hour operating day, the mainline eastbound and westbound trains pass through town as they run from one staging yard to the other. The yard crews, working from car cards, waybills, and supporting documents, gather and classify outbound cars in the yard, delivering them to the appropriate main line freight.

Each mainline run also drops off inbound cars. The shifter crews are responsible to see that they are spotted at the correct location among the two dozen destinations on the layout. In a typical three-real-hour session, 75 cars are handled.

The layout had successfully completed thirty monthly operating sessions until disrupted by COVID-19.

Lee will have his operating session starting at noon and ending around 4:00 p.m. on Thursday.



In summary, these operating sessions provide great opportunities for you to get those [Dispatcher AP \(Achievement Program\) certificates](#) and have fun at the same time. Mark your calendar now and make a note of which one(s) you want to sign up for. As soon as the Registration Forms come out, sign up right away. Spaces are limited.

Check back daily on the MER Convention website at https://www.mer2023.org/op_sessions.html so you don't miss the signup.

The East Palestine Ohio Train Derailment and Fire

By Jim Fisher

[This was written in response to a previous article in the last issue of The Local entitled "Train Wrecks" – Ed.]

CAUTION: Accept everything in this article as based on fragmentary evidence. At this time multiple sources often disagree on details. Some sources that I have not used seem to be clearly wrong. I have read all of my sources from the viewpoint of my many years working in design and safety in the chemical industries including tank car safety. I have then tried to assemble a decent picture of what happened. This has been complicated by new information some of which was unexpected. This article is based on what I knew on March 30, 2023.

On February 3, 2023, a Norfolk Southern train derailed at East Palestine Ohio. Along with other cars, a number of tank cars were derailed and ruptured from the impacts. A fire resulted from flammable materials in several of the tank cars. This fire also effected tank cars filled with vinyl chloride monomer, a flammable and reactive material used in making polyvinyl chloride plastic. The immediate cause of the crash was an overheated wheel bearing which eventually resulted in the failure of an axle.

At East Palestine the train had 149 cars. 38 cars derailed, these included 11 tank cars containing hazardous materials including flammable gases such as propane, flammable liquids (properties similar to gasoline), and combustible liquids (properties similar to motor oil). The tank cars were of 3 types. DOT 111 tank cars which are not built for pressure, DOT 117 tank cars which are the replacements for DOT 111 tank cars with thicker shells, added end impact protection, additional protection to avoid damage to valves, and additional thermal insulation, and DOT 105 tank cars for high pressure which in this case were designed for 300 PSI pressure and insulated. The DOT 105 cars are even thicker than the DOT 117 cars and are not allowed to have any bottom outlet valves.

Of the 16 DOT 111 tank cars in the train, 7 were ruptured by the impact discharging their contents. 3 more DOT 111 cars developed leaks. That's a 62% failure rate. There was a small leak in one of the 3 DOT 117 tank cars. There was no leakage in any of the 6 DOT-105 cars that carried the vinyl chloride monomer.

I once conducted a risk analysis for chlorine tank cars which are very similar to DOT 105 vinyl chloride monomer cars. The lowest speed crash I found that resulted in an impact that ruptured a DOT 105 chlorine tank car was 47 mph. This was an extreme case of running an entire train into a parked tank car. This happens to be the same speed at which the train in East Palestine was moving. However, none of the DOT 105 cars at East Palestine ruptured.

It was a perfect mix of liquids for starting and maintaining a fire. Flammable vapors ignited more or less immediately starting and spreading the fire with a fireball. The flammable liquids ignited from the initial fireball forming a pool fire in the vicinity of the accident. The slower burning combustible liquids then ensured that the pool fire continued for a long time.

The fire heated the vinyl chloride monomer to the point that it started to form polyvinyl chloride plastic. This reaction released more heat speeding the reaction and raising the pressure further in the vinyl chloride monomer cars threatening to cause them to rupture explosively. It was decided to deliberately release the vinyl chloride monomer and burn it in a track side ditch.

Note: Tank cars are not ruptured only by impact. In a pile up of cars with fire such as occurred at East Palestine the heating from the fire can cause cars to rupture or to release their contents. This can happen 3 ways:

The heating can increase the pressure in the car to such a level that the safety pressure release devices begin to release the contents of the car to limit the pressure and prevent the car from rupturing. This has been a concern with chlorine cars that were engulfed in fire from other cars burning. It can also happen with flammable gases and liquids.

Localized areas of the car can be exposed to intense heating from the fire that causes the steel to heat to over 800 degrees Fahrenheit weakening the steel to the point of failure resulting in the car rupturing. As far as I know none of the cars at East Palestine failed in this manner.

As happened at East Palestine the heating can cause a chemical reaction to start inside the car that increases the temperature and pressure inside the car and can also plug the emergency pressure relief devices so they cannot release the pressure. This is why vinyl chloride monomer cars were deliberately holed to release the contents before the car exploded.

Valves and pressure relief devices can be compromised by damage from impact or fire. This appears to have been a problem with the vinyl chloride monomer cars at East Palestine.

First responder training is very important. At East Palestine we do have to consider the capabilities of the local first responders. East Palestine has a population of less than 6000 people and a volunteer fire company with only a few trucks. In a situation like this we can expect the capabilities of the fire department to be limited in both training and equipment, but they should be trained in the basic principles for such an event.

Evacuation as needed.

Who to contact for advice, guidance, and support. The railroad, state authorities, other nearby first responders, Chemtrec (A chemical industry organization that provides support and knowledge), environmental protection authorities, and shippers if they can be determined.

Fight peripheral fires if it can be done safely.

Some basic knowledge of fighting large chemical fires. In a situation like East Palestine this is mostly stay back and if you have water cannon spray what you can from a distance.

Don't try to be a hero. Keep back and cool things as best you safely can until you can get expert advice and assistance.

I haven't seen any details of the fire departments response except that they seem to have notified the authorities quickly. The East Palestine Fire Department is currently working with many agencies and providing information for the residents of East Palestine.

First responders need to have access to and get the knowledge before you go in. I once saw a situation in which a fire department charged into a chemical plant for an odor complaint without consulting the plant operators. If it had been any of numerous toxic chemicals on the site everyone on the truck could have died. Fortunately, it was just a bad smell. Note: This inspired new cooperative procedures by the fire department, other governmental agencies, and the major industries in the area. The resulting "mutual aid plan" became a model for cooperation of industries with each other and governmental agencies.

Yes, there was an overheated wheel bearing at East Palestine, but that is a symptom not a cause. The root cause is why the bearing overheated and failed, and why the failure was not detected. In industry we use vibration as the primary measure of bearing condition, but this may not be practical for railcars. Temperature measurements spaced as much as 20 miles apart as used by railroads are only an indicator of the final stage of failure as happened in this case.

What are the characteristics of a good failure detection system?

1. It should detect the impending failure long in advance to provide adequate warning so that total failure can be avoided.
2. Ideally it should be detected soon enough that repair or replacement can be done on a scheduled basis rather than on an emergency basis. IE: Replace the bearing next month when the car will be empty rather than set the car out at the next siding that will have to jack the car with a 100 ton load inside to replace the bearing.
3. It should not give false negatives missing failures.
4. It should not give false positives causing extra work and reducing confidence in the system.
5. It should be possible to test without shutting down operations.
6. It should be economical.

The current hot box detection system fails criteria 1 and 2.

There are systems being tested to detect bearing failure by noise with track side detectors. The literature that I could find indicates that like temperature measurements these systems would only detect the final stages of bearing failure. The literature also indicates that some types of bearing failure might be difficult to detect by this method. I don't know how much sooner noise would have provided a warning.

There are also onboard systems in development that would use vibration or temperature. Vibration is the standard method for bearing inspection in industrial plants.

There are reports of fire on the train long before the derailment. Until these are fully analyzed we should be skeptical. One video that is claimed to have shown the fire 20 miles before the derailment is clearly not what it is said to be. All the cars in the video are covered hoppers, not tank cars. Which car the light appears to be under also changes from one car to the next. I don't believe that this is a deliberate fake, but the interpretation is not correct. Most likely it is a flashing light on some sort of vehicle behind the train.

Safety gains from adding crew members are not just from the number, but also the location. Crew members in the cab are looking forward with their backs to the cars in the train. The old caboose was much better for observing the condition of the train since the brake man or conductor in the cupola was looking towards the train. Unless a hot box is smoking heavily, visual observation will not detect it.

The railroads and leasers are dead set against electrically controlled pneumatic brakes (ECP). They say the issues are both reliability and cost. Reliability issues can be solved with sufficient work. Economic issues are another thing. Braking wasn't a factor in the East Palestine derailment. The crash came very shortly after the first warning. The engineer had only applied the dynamic braking. Emergency brakes came on due to the severing of the air hoses during the derailment.

The economic issues can be strange in the railroad industry. Most of the cars on a train are not owned by a railroad, and most of the time each car owned by a railroad is on a different railroad. In fact, today 60% of all railroad cars are not owned by a railroad. None of the cars in the Ohio crash were owned by any railroad. Most were owned by a leasing company such as UTLX, SHPX, or TTX. Some were owned by the shipper. Not one was a railroad owned car. In this situation the cost of improved safety goes primarily to the car owner, but the car owner doesn't directly benefit. The safety gains go largely to railroads who don't own the cars even if the car is owned by another railroad and especially if the car is leaser or shipper owned. Thus, car owners are hesitant to spend money on something that they benefit little from. If a reliable system is developed, this argues strongly for regulation.

Some information about tank car safety issues. There are 3 common types of tank cars in the US. DOT111, DOT117, and DOT 105. DOT 111 tank cars are designed for loads that do not need to be carried under pressure. DOT 117 tank cars are the replacement for DOT111 tank cars. DOT117 cars are thicker and have other

safety improvements to provide better crash protection. By 2029 most flammable liquids will be required to be shipped in DOT117 tank cars. Nonflammables such as corn syrup may still be shipped in DOT111 tank cars. DOT 105 tank cars are designed for liquids that must be kept under pressure. Because they are designed for pressure DOT 105 cars are stronger than DOT 111 or DOT117 tank cars. Vinyl chloride monomer is shipped in DOT105 tank cars that are rated for 300 pounds per square inch pressure.

At East Palestine the DOT 105 tank cars filled with vinyl chloride monomer survived the crash, but DOT 111 tank cars filled with flammable liquids ruptured and the liquids started to burn. The fire heated the vinyl chloride monomer in the DOT 105 cars starting a chemical reaction that generated more heat inside the cars. This raised the pressure dangerously high and may have also plugged the pressure relief system on the cars. Finally, it was necessary to dump the DOT 105 vinyl chloride monomer cars and burn the material to prevent them from exploding.

One detail of the DOT 105 tank cars carrying vinyl chloride somewhat disturbed me. Apparently, they had aluminum lids on top of the housing that protects the valves on top of the cars. These aluminum lids melted in the fire possibly fouling the pressure relief devices (PRD). An NTSB March 21, 2023 report from the investigation seems to indicate that this may have happened. The report also stated that there were some abnormalities in the operation. It also said that one of the PRDs had a spring that was made with a coating that wasn't suitable for vinyl chloride monomer service. When I worked in industry, I never saw aluminum used for this purpose on DOT 105 cars. I would think it must cost more than steel. The only advantage I can imagine is it might make the lid lighter to lift when connecting the car for filling and emptying. I've never found the steel lids to be heavy enough to be a problem though.

As trains are currently operated, notifying the state or other jurisdictions about all hazardous materials shipments probably may not be practical as the majority of trains seem to be carrying hazardous materials. I used an office in Iowa that had a UP mainline that I could see out my window. Almost all of the trains that went by included tank cars. I doubt that many of them were something as safe as lube oil or corn syrup. I know that the facility next to ours was filling some of these cars with flammable ethanol.

Notifying the state that every train has hazardous cargo could result in a boy-that-cried-wolf effect. The only way to avoid this would be to block the loads so that special high hazard trains are created. The problem with that is that those trains would be especially large disasters if something happens. This happened on the Southern Pacific in 1973 when a train with 21 cars carrying 7000 bombs exploded. It also describes the Lac Megantic disaster which was a train of flammable Bakken crude oil. This blocking is not practical for local switching of industries, but the speeds are generally so low that the risk is slight.

While we likely to compare this incident to the Lac-Megantic disaster, it more closely resembles the 1979 Mississauga Ontario derailment and fire. This involved a large crash of tank cars carrying flammables with a chlorine car involved. This crash occurred in a large city and resulted in the evacuation of 200,000 people.

I completely agree with the philosophy of "Don't cut costs when it comes to safety". Each incident like this demonstrates why.





Potomac Division Hobby Barn and Virtual Clinics

Jerry Stanley's Hobby Barn

11552 Hereford Ct. in Hume, Virginia 22639

The Potomac Division sponsors a number of clinics to which all Mid-Eastern Region (MER) members are invited when space is available. Most of the in-person clinics are held at Jerry Stanley's Hobby Barn in Hume, Virginia unless otherwise stated. The complete updated schedule can be found at <https://potomac-nmra.org/PDnewsite/Calendar/Calendar.php>.

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	NOTES
Sunday May 21, 2023 3:00 PM	Virtual Clinic 36 "Making a Motive Power Critter" Alex Belida, MMR	Zoom	
Saturday May 27, 2023 10:00 AM	Hobby Barn Clinic "To Be Announced"	Hume, VA	
Saturday June 10, 2023, 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Potomac/Chesapeake Divisions Joint Meet South Columbia Baptist Church 8813 Guilford Road, Columbia, MD	Columbia, MD	
Sunday June 18, 2023 3:00 PM	Virtual Clinic 37 "Doing the Paperwork – Earning Your Chief Dispatcher certificate" Kurt Thompson	Zoom	
Saturday July 8, 2023 10:00 AM	Hands on Clinic "Using Decoder Pro to Program Locomotives" George Myrick/Ernie Little, MMR	Manassas, VA	MAXIMUM 10 PERSONS CLINIC AT MEMBER'S HOME
Saturday July 16, 2023 3:00 PM	Virtual Clinic 38 "What's New on the Old Ma & Pa: Update on the Ma & Pa, Roland Park Division" Clinician: Bob Sprague	Zoom	
Sunday August 20, 2023 3:00 PM	Virtual Clinic 39 "Earning the NMRA Electrical AP with a Small Layout" Clinician: Bill Mosteller	Zoom	
Sunday September 17, 2023 3:00 PM	Virtual Clinic 40 "TBD" Clinician: Paul Catapano	Zoom	

Updating an Older Kit Car

(And How to Fall into a Rabbit Hole)

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR

When the estate of one of my O scale colleagues came up on the market, it was completely unrealistic buying anything through that liquidation auction. Lot sizes of 40+ kits at a time were the norm and I quickly lost interest. However, very quickly thereafter some of the individual items from those same lots were being offered on eBay. With the exception of two notable cases I was completely unsuccessful in securing anything of interest. I might have been better off buying the large lots and parceling out the bits I did not want, but then that's another story for another time. One of the cars I managed to secure was something I had a fairly good idea on its origins and thought merely needed a wee bit of work to bring to completion. That turned out to be a wee bit more than a wee bit.

What I started with came in a box labeled "A Hartley Model" which was a new name to me, but that's probably because it significantly pre-dates me ([Photo 1](#)). Yes, it was a MoW car and no doubt derived from PRR XL work cars. Some might know that I have a small interest in MoW cars. The car body was fairly solid although in need of details to finish it ([Photos 2-5](#)). Correcting the brake casting mounted on the one end would be just the beginning of that adventure. A bit of attention to the underbody was clearly required ([Photo 6](#)). That bolster and recessed area made me wonder whether this kit was tailored to a three-rail market since bolsters of that earlier era would be recessed up into that space. At this point, test fitting a pair of two-rail trucks failed to result in a functional car. That failure defined a starting point for my efforts. There was one other point of interest to note. The roof didn't fit perfectly. It was removable and on the inside of the roof was a note: "dining car" so there was some direction provided. With that bit of information, I had a target use for this car and hit my files on PRR XL MoW cars to get ideas (mainly back issues of *The Keystone Modeler*¹).

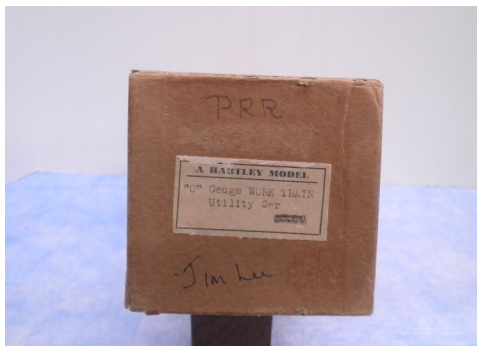


Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

But first up on the agenda was attending to that underbody. I ripped out the solid center sill and bolsters, and after getting that space clean, I filled it back in with basswood with a skin of scribed siding to give some appearance of sheathing. A pair of my own resin bolsters drilled and tapped for 4/40, and drilled for the train line were installed, and between them was added a new milled open center sill. A length of 0.032" brass wire (Detail Associates) was threaded through the one bolster, through the center sill, and then out through the other bolster to add the train line. A K brake casting (PSC) was drilled for the rod and clevis which was soldered into place. The casting unit was mounted to the underbody and tied into the brake rigging using phosphor bronze wire (Tichy) with clevises fashioned from turnbuckles (Grandt Line), with white metal brake levers (source unknown), and with brake hangers fabricated from 0.015" x 0.060" brass (Detail Associates). A final step was to tie the K brake in to the train line with a bit of scrap brass wire (Photo 7). That tidied up the underbody.



Photo 7



Photo 8

Going to work on the ends and sides was next on the agenda. The non-brake end got grabs added about and to the right of the door. Corner braces were added. A ladder on the ends was shown in many photos so that was added. And just for good measure, a doorknob (a pin) was added to the door (Photo 8).

The sides were similarly finished with grab irons and stirrup steps (Scale City Designs). A white metal casting of a smoke jack (Train Craft) was added to the roof (Photos 9, 10). Before I turned my attention to the brake end of the car, I stumbled across a rather interesting photo of an XL MoW car with a drop step at the end on to a wood stair platform. After a little head scratching, I thought, well, I can add that bit to the ends, too.



Photo 10



Photo 9

After scrabbling about in the miscellaneous sheet brass bin, I found some scrap suitable and snipped that down to make two step platforms. A small brass angle was soldered to each side of the platforms to give support and to also introduce something to run the hinge pin through to make these functional. The larger angle got soldered up to form the ends of the hinge supports and all



Photo 11

those parts got clearance drilled for 0.028" brass wire along with the smaller angle under the platforms. Getting all that drilled in a straight line took patience, steady hands, and a break from caffeine. The hinge supports were mounted to the car ends (Goo & CA) and a length of 0.028" brass wire was passed through them while capturing the step platform. An extra fine tip drop of CA at each end of the wire once trimmed to length secured the hinge pin in place. While I was working on the ends, I made the poling pockets from some brass tubing since none the castings I had on hand were small enough. I also added the air hose casting (PSC) (Photos 11, 12).



Photo 12

Next, I attended to the brake end of this car. This end received all the same details as the other end. But I found that when I removed the brake casting that the scribed siding was in fact paper. It's obscured a bit by the ladder and after paint I thought it would not be something terribly visible. This end also got a brake wheel and shaft with a ratchet and pawl casting threaded down to a brake stirrup using PSC castings. The brake platform started as a regular Athearn or All-Nation part from which I removed one support leg and then soldered in a new bit of brass for the support that ends up over the door. This arrangement seemed not uncommon in the prototype photos. Seems a simple exercise, but getting all the angles correct took a lot of trial and error (Photos 13, 14).



Photo 13



Photo 14

With all that completed, it was time for painting. When there was warm weather, the exterior and roof all got a spray of Primer Flat Light Grey while the underbody received a coat of Flat Black (Rustoleum). The iron work (grabs, steps, etc.) all were painted Engine Black (Polly Scale (Photos 15-17)). But the interior was still vacant and with all the windows still unglazed, it seemed unacceptable to leave it as it was.



Photo 15



Photo 16



Photo 17

The first step was to install the end doors (Tichy). These had to have the tops trimmed a bit since the roof insets into the body shell. Then, 1/32" thick scribed siding was added all around the interior and then painted Light Gull Gray (Polly Scale). The windows were glazed with 0.015" polycarbonate (Clover House) and exposed framing beams (pre-painted) were added along the walls, between and surrounding the windows (Photo 18). Not wanting to stop there, tables were built up from stripwood and

mounted to the sides, and then the fun really started. I needed a nice stove and I found that item and an ice box down in a rabbit hole named Etsy. While there I also located a nice set of pots and pans, cooking implements, and individual bottles with their racks.² All of these were 3D printed in resin and were of exceptionally nice quality, and probably better than the old white metal castings. All these parts needed painting and all took Polly Scale very nicely. I added other castings, a coal box and floor counter from Berkshire Valley. Other parts were either made by me or out of the miscellaneous parts bin. I had a handful of chairs that I think were old Walthers castings. Then I needed plates and coffee mugs. Once again, Etsy delivered, and I very quickly had 3D printed resin sprues of plate and coffee mugs.³ After painting and placing all these parts I needed to add just two items, the figures. These came from Arttista and were pre-painted. All I had to do was to plant them into place and add a cup of coffee into the hand of the seated crew boss (Photos 19-22).

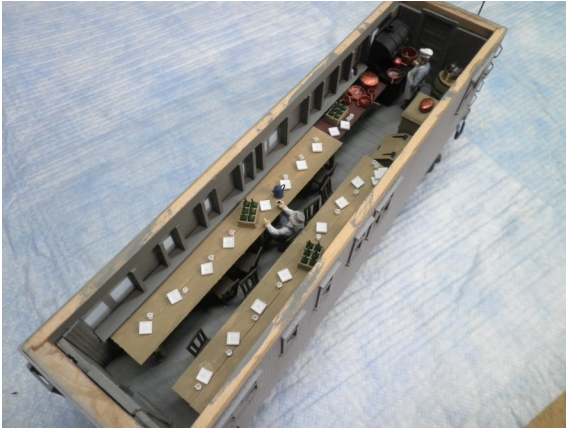


Photo 19



Photo 20

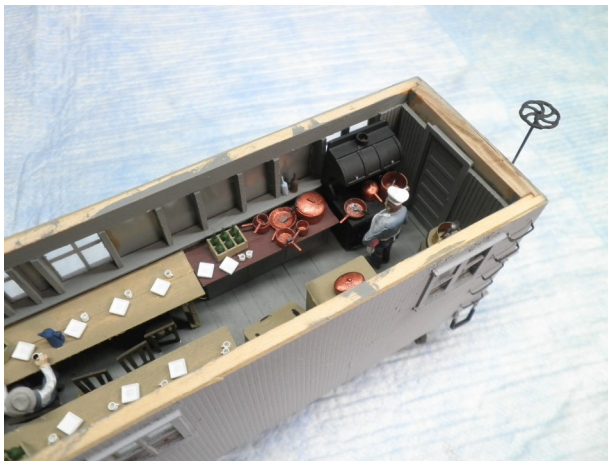


Photo 21



Photo 22

The last detail to add to the interior was cutlery. This turned out harder to locate than I expected and I managed a partial solution again through shopping about on Etsy.⁴ I found a fret of stainless steel cutlery and kitchen implements. As soon as I figure how to work with stainless steel, freeing these bits without losing them, they will get added. But I'm stopping here for now. I think that I have demonstrated that a kit that was probably WWII vintage might be amenable to being upgraded to something acceptable in appearance. I left this car unlettered as well. I'm still looking for a set of decals that can be used or adapted to combine with some dry transfers. I may yet add interior lighting just to add yet another visual dimension to this car. Lastly, I've learned the Etsy is a huge rabbit hole that you can fall into for many hours just by searching for 1/48 miniatures.

¹ http://www.prrths.com/newprr_files/newPRRKeystoneModeler.htm

² <https://www.etsy.com/shop/PNWMiniatures>

³ <https://www.etsy.com/shop/ShopMiniDecorandMore>

⁴ <https://www.etsy.com/shop/FaithMiniatures>

Branch Lines

From the Divisions...

As *The Local* Editor, I have the distinct pleasure of receiving a copy of all the Division newsletters, which are all very informative and creative to say the least. Here are links to those publications so you can stay up to date on what the other Divisions are doing:

NEWSLETTERS	DIVISIONS	MOST RECENT EDITION
<u>Wheel Report</u>	<u>South Mountain Division</u>	<u>March 2023</u>
<u>The Potomac Flyer</u>	<u>Potomac Division</u>	<u>Apr-May 2023</u>
<u>Train Orders</u>	<u>New Jersey Division</u>	<u>March 2023</u>
<u>Sidetracks</u>	<u>Susquehanna Division</u>	<u>Mar-Apr 2023</u>
<u>The Dispatcher</u>	<u>Philadelphia Division</u>	<u>March 2023</u>
<u>The Callboard</u>	<u>Tidewater Division</u>	<u>March 2023</u>
<u>Crossties - Index</u>	<u>James River Division</u>	<u>February 2023</u>
<u>The Brass Pounder</u>	<u>Carolina Southern Division</u>	<u>April 2023</u>
<u>The Herald</u>	<u>Carolina Piedmont Division</u>	<u>April 2023</u>
<u>The Relay</u>	<u>Chesapeake Division</u>	<u>April 2023</u>



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Greg Warth



And don't forget the
new digital NMRA
Magazine

Reminder: Here's how to access the
[Digital NMRA Magazine:](#)

1. <https://www.nmra.org/user/register>
2. Answer a few questions
3. Click on Create a New Account
4. You will receive an email on how to set your password.

Modeler's Haven...

Tips & Tricks for Model Railroaders

By Greg Warth

This section of The Local is for all members to share any tips, techniques, tools, books, fixes, new products, or any other information that might be of interest to others. One of the many benefits of being an NMRA member is spreading knowledge about the hobby and learning things from other modelers. Please submit your tips to the [Editor](#) for consideration on publishing them here.

Advances in Technology

If you haven't looked at augmented and virtual reality software recently, you might be pleasantly surprised to see the new advances. Improved graphics and better technology allow you to create your own highly detailed railroad design. You can immerse yourself in it and operate it either from inside or outside the engineer's cab. Here are a few of these programs that you may want to have fun with.

Augmented Reality (AR) is a technology that combines real-world images or video with digital content, allowing an interaction between digital and real content, that you can visualize on your desktop or smartphone. In the context of model railroading, AR can be used to enhance the experience of operating and building model railroads. **Virtual Reality (VR)** is completely virtual. There are no real-world components to it.

For layout planning, VR can be used to design, visualize, and even operate a model railroad layout on a computer screen before it is built. Then, by using a smartphone or tablet with AR capabilities, you can project a virtual model of your planned layout onto a real-world surface, such as a tabletop. This allows users to see how the layout will look and make adjustments before committing to building it.

One popular AR system for model railroading is [TrainPlayer](#). This software allows users to create a virtual model railroad on their computer and then overlay it onto their physical layout using a camera and projector. The virtual trains can then be controlled using the same system as the physical trains, allowing for a seamless integration of digital and physical elements.

Another option for AR in model railroading is using smartphone apps that can recognize and interact with specific markers on the layout. For example, an app could recognize a marker for a train station and display virtual passengers waiting on the platform or a digital schedule of upcoming trains.

AR can also be used to enhance the scenery on the layout. For example, an app could use image recognition to identify different terrain features, such as mountains or rivers, and then overlay digital effects like moving water or wildlife onto them.

Using AR with [Sketchup](#) (a Google program where users can create 3D structures on the computer and export to a CAD file), you can develop a virtual model of a structure and then project the image onto a digital view of your real layout to see on your screen how it fits and how it might look when the structure is actually incorporated into your layout.



One potential benefit of using AR in model railroading is that it allows for more flexibility in layout design. Instead of being limited by the physical space available, hobbyists can use AR to expand their layouts beyond the boundaries of their room. They can also experiment with different track configurations and scenery without having to make permanent changes to their physical layout.

Once you have laid real track, you can use the AR software and the video camera on your smartphone or tablet to add virtual scenery including trees, mountains, bridges, build-

Here is a photo (taken by the author) of the North Raleigh Model RR Club layout where I added two virtual trees, one behind the loco and one to the left, using the iScape app.

ings, water, and other items overlaid on your real track-plan and view it from different angles. Once you are satisfied with what you have added, then take a picture of the scene, which the software allows you to do, and use it as a reference photo to help you build your real scenery.

For example, I downloaded the app called **ARvid** to my iPhone and within a few minutes I created a tree growing out of my keyboard! You can do this on any layout surface where you have already installed real tracks. And you can do this with any structure as well.

Another similar app called **iScape**, which is more focused on landscaping, allows you to import a photo of your layout and add a variety of virtual scenery or even change the background. See the photo on page 28.

Another app called **Jig Space** can import CAD programs of any object like a locomotive and provide a 3D rotational graphic demonstration of the model, including animation showing the model being assembled or disassembled. Some examples and a tutorial are already included in the app that demonstrate what can be done.

Just attach your smartphone to an X-Box or to any modern **projector** and you can show the image on a screen for training and education, or on a layout surface depending on how you orient the projector.

AR can also be used to repair or teach how to repair locomotives by pointing your device at the model and then projecting virtual overlays of the internal components to help with diagnosis and repairs. It would be helpful to import a CAD program of the locomotive and use Jig Space to virtually take it apart and put it back together.

Blender is a software program where users can create almost any 3D image including locomotives, railcars, mountainous terrain, etc. The learning curve is not for the faint of heart, but there are multiple YouTube tutorials available to help. For example: <https://youtu.be/J21nqXtFWKw>

Satisfactory is a virtual online railway system that you can design on your computer. The created network can be simple or quite complicated depending on how many hours you want to spend on it. The scenes can be very immersive and detailed as you can see from this video.

https://youtu.be/8_y3cn99pY8

Rolling Line is another virtual reality train simulator game where you can create your own detailed railroad system on your desktop. The scenery and train operation are again immersive and perhaps more realistic in appearance than Satisfactory, which is more futuristic.

https://youtu.be/6h5iV_VRhW4

There are also some challenges to implementing AR in model railroading. The technology can be expensive, and not all hobbyists may have the resources to invest in it. Additionally, it can be difficult to integrate AR seamlessly with the physical layout, and the technology may not always work perfectly.

Overall, despite these challenges, AR and VR have the potential to greatly enhance our experience with model railroading by adding new dimensions of immersion and interactivity, ironically by using unreal virtual computerized projections to create more realistic scenery and automation. Certainly, we will find other innovations for this technology as time goes on. Here are some YouTube videos:

<https://youtu.be/bA4uvkAStPc>

<https://youtu.be/05dpENC0pjM>

What's New in Modeling?

"New Tracks Modeling"

One of the best tips I can give you is to remind you to watch the weekly "[New Tracks Modeling](#)" YouTube videos on Wednesday evenings at 7pm ET. Here is a new article by Jim Kellow, MMR, founder of New Tracks. https://www.chronicleonline.com/lifestyle/new-tracks-embrace-your-hobby-for-lifetime-of-satisfaction/article_9bbe5c5d-eb49-507b-a68c-c186db4ce7b2.html

Weathering Tips

Research the real-life version of the model. Study reference photos.

Choose what technique will work the best for your particular project (dry brushing, washes, pigments)

Start with base coat if the model has not already been painted. Add decals if you wish.

Apply a very thin layer of gray or brown paint (wash) using a brush, mostly to the bottom half of the model. If it's a tank car, you could apply a little paint around the hatch to simulate spillage of liquid.

Dry brush using a small amount of paint on a brush then wipe most of it off with a cloth. Apply to the model where you want to add highlights, shadows, rust, dirt, etc.

Use dark-colored chalk dust to create a dusty or dirty effect using a soft brush, again mostly to the bottom of the model and on the trucks. Be careful not to put too much of anything on the wheels that might interfere with their function. Consider using different sizes of soft make-up brushes to apply the chalk dust.

Seal it with a clear spray of Testors Dullcote, or a similar product to protect the weathering.

Don't overdo it. I think a little weathering is more realistic than too much.

Practice on an old broken model or piece of cardboard first.

[Learn more here...](#)

Sound Effects

Adding your own customized sound effects for your model railroad can be a fun addition to your train room. You can create the ambience of being in a train yard or at a rail crossing, on a farm, or an industrial plant, or anywhere else for that matter.

Begin by researching the specific sound effects that you want to create. Listen to recordings of real trains, automobiles, and other vehicles to get an idea of how they sound. Look for sound effects libraries online or in software to help you get started:

Model Rectifier Corporation ([MRC Sound Station 312](#))

[MRC City and Country Sound Station](#)

[ITT Products](#) (Innovative Train Technology)

[Fantasonics](#)

[Pricom Dream Player \(https://youtu.be/60FvdX2JMZ4\)](https://youtu.be/60FvdX2JMZ4)

Alternatively, consider recording your own sounds with a smartphone. Any sounds generated by your television, radio, CD, or computer can be recorded. Or you could go to a favorite railfanning location to record sounds. Ask an [Echo Dot](#) if you have one to play train sounds while you record them. Be sure to record in a quiet environment to avoid unwanted background noise.

After recording, you may need to edit the sound files using software such as [Audacity](#), [Adobe Audition](#), or [GarageBand](#) (now available for both Mac and PC) to edit and enhance the sounds. You can adjust the volume, add effects, and cut out unwanted noise.

Save the file and export it to your computer in a format that is compatible with your sound system. Common formats include MP3, WAV, and AIFF. You can then copy the file to a micro-SD card and insert it into a [Dream Player](#) device or into any audio system, like Acoustic Audio, or Kaynell, that will accept such memory cards.

Test your sound effects on your model railroad to make sure they sound realistic and fit well with the overall ambience of your layout. Adjust the volume, treble, bass, or other settings to get the perfect sound. You may wish to just have it on as a background effect in your train room. Or you could switch the sound to that of a steam engine when you roll out your "Big Boy." You can set up sensors to play farm sounds when your train passes a farm, or factory sounds when your train passes an industrial area.

Railcars are available that already have sound effects installed, for example stock cars with chicken sounds. Of course, sound decoders are frequently used in DCC locomotives these days.

MRC also makes a power pack ([Tech 6](#)) that can operate any sound equipped locomotive, without having to go to the expense of converting your DC layout to DCC. It can switch between DC and DCC operation with the push of a button.

So, with a little research and not much expense, you could really enhance your experience of running trains, and wow your visitors with authentic railroad sounds.

[Learn more about sound effects for your model railroad here...](#)

What tips and techniques do you use in your modeling? Please send us a paragraph or two about something you have modeled or a tip that would help the rest of us improve our modeling skills. It does not have to be perfect or too long. Even one or two sentences would be great. I know those tips are out there. [Send me a note.](#) -Ed.

Electronics Corner

Spot Train Detection for Model Railroads

By Fred Miller, MMR

Although train detection for signals and various automations on a model railroad is typically implemented using block occupancy, there are occasions when a single spot or point detection is useful. This might be for positioning trains in a staging yard or activating railroad crossing signals. I needed such detection on a recent project running a trolley (or loco) in an animated back-and-forth operation.

Two popular means of spot or point detection are through using either photoresistors or an infrared (IR) beam. Although the photoresistor approach is easy and very inexpensive, it has drawbacks in sensitivity to spurious light sources and, of course, is not useful in the dark for nighttime operations. There are a number of capable commercial offerings for IR detection including [Azatrax](#), and [Boulder Creek Engineering](#). Unfortunately, most of the commercial units run \$20-\$30 apiece. Some of these units only support a “next-to-track” implementation while others can be used either between the rails or near the track.

This article will describe some of my adventures into spot detection projects at a very reasonable price. One simple photoresistor circuit is shown that is useful when the surrounding lighting is well controlled. My favorite IR detection unit is described first in more detail.

IR Detection

The typical IR approach makes use of an IR beam emitted from an IR-LED and viewed by an IR-sensitive transistor. The beam is either interrupted by a passing train or bounced off the side or bottom of the train (**Photos 1-3**).



Photo 1: IR beam off side of car



Photo 2: IR beam across rails

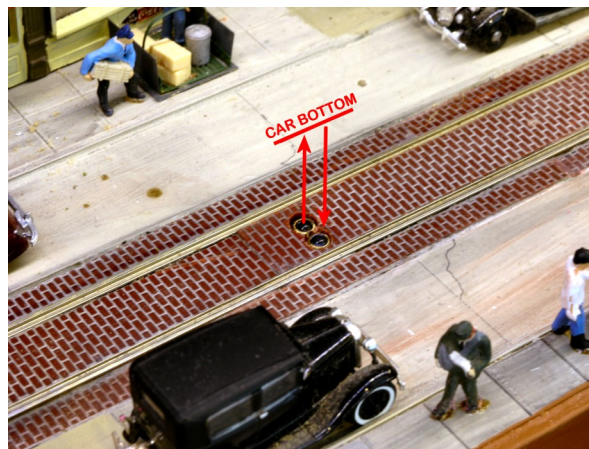
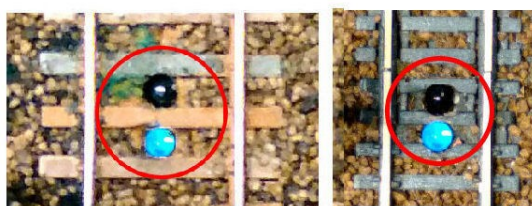


Photo 3: IR beam off bottom of car

The IR project I describe fits nicely into the “between the rails” approach which detects a bounced beam under the train. It is small enough to nicely fit between the rails in N scale, HO or larger (**Photo 4**). It makes use of small size LEDs and detectors (**Photo 5**). I should point out that very inexpensive IR modules are available on the market, but they make use of the larger format (5mm) LEDs and detectors, making it problematic for use between the rails. They are also somewhat sensitive to interference from other bright light, e.g., sun light.



HO-SCALE

N-SCALE

Photo 4: Between rails scale comparison

Photo 5: Inexpensive IR module



The custom IR detection circuit (Photo 6) used on several of my layouts is built around the TCRT5000 3mm IR LED and IR Detector pair (Photo 7). This set is sold in a plastic holder. I remove the LED and detector from the plastic mounting after marking the polarity on the leads. Longer color-coded leads are connected, and shrink-wrap protected before inserting into tubing.

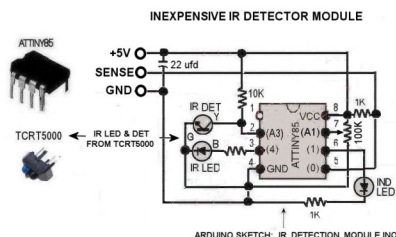


Photo 6: IR module circuit

The code running in an ATTiny85 Arduino-based micro-controller removes ambient noise from sensor data by comparing received IR with and without the IR LED on, making the circuit insensitive to high ambient light, sun, etc., and of course it works in the dark. The completed IR module is shown in Photo 8, and the parts list for the IR detection project is shown in Photo 9.

Photos 8, 9



Photo 7: Commercial IR components in holder

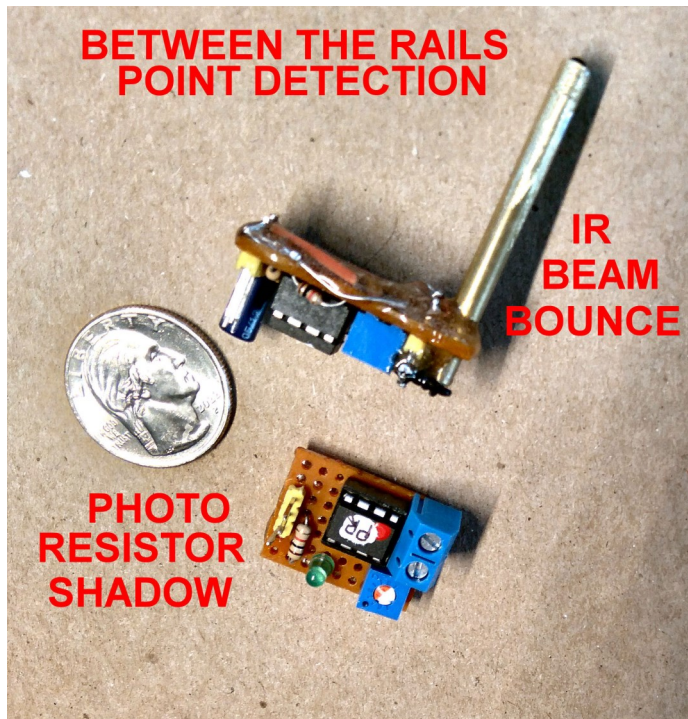


Photo 8: Assembled IR module

TYPICAL PARTS LIST - INEXPENSIVE IR DETECTOR

QTY	PART	SOURCE	PART #	PRICE
1	22 UFD ELECTROLYTIC CAPACITOR	JAMECO	207870	\$ 0.17 *
2	1K 1/4 WATT RESISTOR	JAMECO	690865	\$ 0.10 *
1	10K 1/4 WATT RESISTOR	JAMECO	691104	\$ 0.05 *
1	470 1/4 WATT RESISTOR	JAMECO	690785	\$ 0.05 *
1	100K TRIMMER POT	JAMECO	854920	\$ 0.59 *
1	RED LED (T1)	JAMECO	333851	\$ 0.12 *
1	TCRT5000 IR DETECTOR PAIR	AMAZON	-	\$ 0.34 *
1	ATTINY85 MICROCONTROLLER	DIGIKEY	-	\$ 1.78 *
1	8-PIN SOCKET	JAMECO	112206	\$ 0.16 *
2	3 PIN MALE HEADER	JAMECO	686680	\$ 0.16 *
1	12" K&S 5/32 ALUM TUBE	HOBBYLINC	#8103	\$ 1.19
PERF BOARD, MISC HARDWARE/WIRE/SOLDER				~
~TOTAL				\$ 4.71

PRICES NOT INCLUDING SHIPPING.

* PRICES ARE FOR 1 UNIT WHEN PURCHASED IN LARGER QUANTITIES

Photo 9: IR detection parts list

Photo Resistor Detection

As is my usual process, I developed the IR photoresistor detection circuit (Photo 10) and program (sketch) on an Arduino UNO with a breadboard shield. When the circuit and program work satisfactorily, I moved the code over to a smaller micro-controller, in this case an ATTINY85. I then rechecked the operation with the ATTINY85 on a breadboard instead of the ARDUINO UNO.

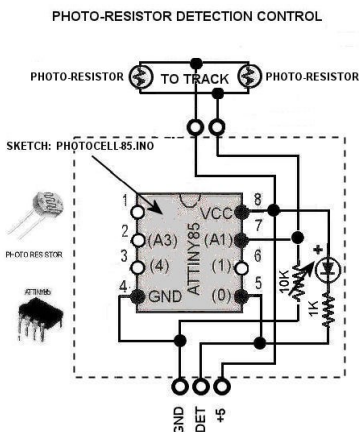


Photo 10: Photoresistor circuit

When that was operating correctly, I graphically laid out the components on a perf board template and "wired" the components graphically in a top view. The drawing is also flipped to represent the bottom of the circuit and is used to do actual wiring on the perf board (Photo 11). The components can be acquired for about \$3.73. If you add the perf board, miscellaneous hardware, wire and solder, the total for the whole unit comes out to about \$5.00.

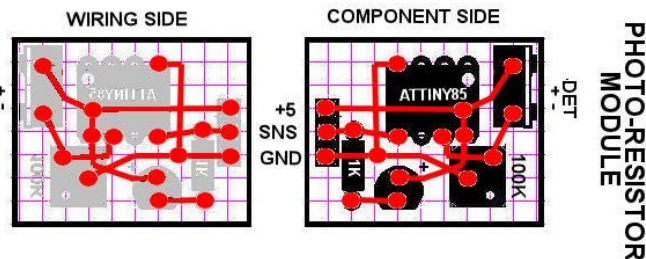


Photo 11: Assembled PR circuit

As noted above, a photoresistor circuit can be useful in situations where the lighting is well controlled. I built a small circuit to interface the between track photoresistors with other controlling electronics (for example a back-and-forth shuttle throttle) (**Photo 12**).



Photo 12: Throttle

This circuit monitors the presence of “shadows” cast by train equipment traveling over the photoresistors. It provides a pull-down “detection signal” to the connected electronics. The circuit is implemented using an ATtiny85 in a similar manner to that described for the IR circuit. Parts for this interface unit are trivial in cost (**Photo 13**).

TYPICAL PARTS LIST - PHOTO-RESISTOR MODULE

QTY	PART	SOURCE	PART #	PRICE
1	1K 1/4 WATT RESISTOR	JAMECO	690865	\$ 0.05 *
1	100K TRIMMER POT	JAMECO	854920	\$ 0.59 *
1	RED LED (T1)	JAMECO	333851	\$ 0.12 *
1	ATTINY85 MICROCONTROLLER	DIGIKEY	-	\$ 1.78 *
2	5mm PHOTO-RESISTORS	AMAZON	-	\$ 0.40 *
1	8-PIN SOCKET	JAMECO	112206	\$ 0.16 *
1	3 PIN MALE HEADER	JAMECO	686680	\$ 0.08 *
1	2-PIN SCREW TERMINAL	JAMECO	2120647	\$ 0.55
PERF BOARD, MISC HARDWARE/WIRE/SOLDER				~
~TOTAL				\$ 3.73

PRICES NOT INCLUDING SHIPPING.

* PRICES ARE FOR 1 UNIT WHEN PURCHASED IN LARGER QUANTITIES

Photo 13: Parts for photoresistor circuit

The software (Arduino sketch) for the described IR detection circuit is available on my Github site: <https://tinyurl.com/35jyvm4r>.

I would be happy to provide “programmed” ATTINY85s for MER members, and of course I will provide further information about these projects in correspondence over email. My email address is: tractionfan@aol.com



Marty McGuirk’s Richford Branch layout in Gainesville, VA (Photo by Greg Warth).

Notable Structure at John Sethian's Open House

Text and Photo by Nicholas Kalis

John Sethian of Burke, Virginia - O scale (1:48) Potomac Division Open House on Saturday April 22, 2023, 9 – 12 Noon

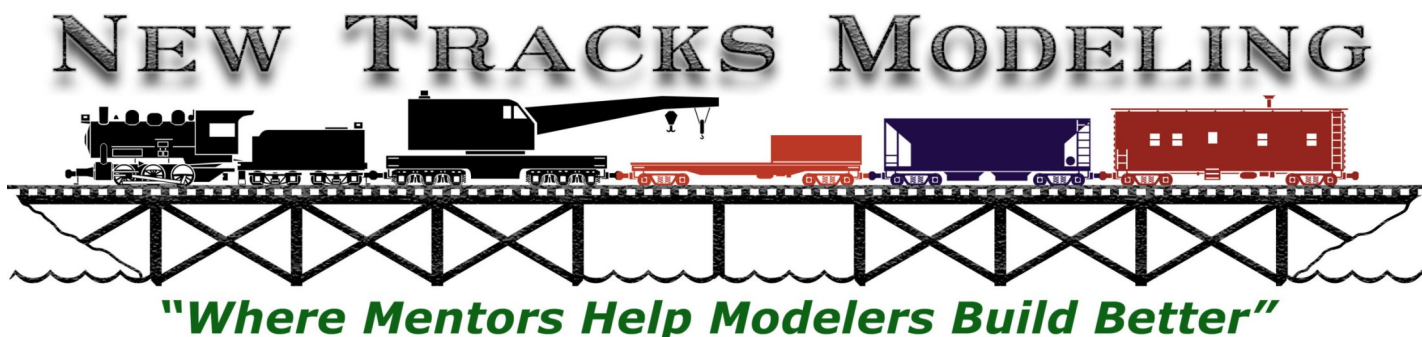
Smith Bros. Television & Appliances



This is a stupendous basement layout. Entry is through a duck-under which John has generously outfitted with a pair of handrails. Note the full interior including Perry Mason on the television. Note the joke, two men carrying a sheet of glass in front of a boy throwing a baseball. One of the men is an African-American, something often left out of model railroads. A nice touch are the fire escapes and window air conditioners in the apartment building behind. Also noteworthy is the bare urban tree located behind a building yet poking out. Also, there is nice realistic juxtaposition of varied brick colors throughout the neighborhood. In addition, nice period cars are on display (as someone who also models in O scale, these vehicles can cost a pretty penny, but they are worth it.)

“New Tracks Modeling” “Where Mentors help Modelers Build”

By Jim Kellow, MMR



Who am I? I’m just an old guy who loves our hobby and is trying to give back for the benefit of future generation of model railroaders.

I’m a life member of the NMRA, MMR No. 202, and the 7th person to have obtained all 11 of the NMRA Achievement Program awards. I also serve as an Ambassador for the Association of Professional Model Makers to the Model Railroad Community. I am a modeler of O Scale Traction, a scratchbuilder in brass and basswood, an author and clinician.

What is “New Tracks”? It’s my way of giving back. I look at “New Tracks” as a community of Model Railroad Modelers whose purpose is to get more Modelers building more Models so we can preserve the modeling knowledge and skills that make our hobby so great. So, if you are a modeler or want to be one, join us!

“New Tracks” started over 5 years ago, and continues today, as a series of articles in S Scale and O Scale Resource magazines, which are all about modeling and mentoring. About 3 years ago, essentially because of the pandemic, I started the weekly “New Tracks” Zoom show.

In both my magazine articles and the Zoom shows you will meet modelers who share their skills and knowledge to help you in your modeling projects. You will also meet small and medium sized manufacturers some of which you may never have heard of.

So Welcome Aboard to “New Tracks”!

Subscribe to either or both the S Scale Resource or O Scale Resource magazine. They are both free. Look for “New Tracks” in the Index. There are both individuals and manufacturers profiled in most articles. I always ask the manufacturers to offer a contest drawing where a lucky reader will win a prize. There are links to the articles on our website: newtracksmodeling.com.

Also, you can watch our live “New Tracks Modeling” weekly shows on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm Eastern Time. Our shows are on Zoom, and live streamed and recorded on our YouTube channel, “New Tracks Modeling.” You will meet talented modelers worldwide who show and discuss their modeling techniques and skills. You also get to ask them questions. The programs are designed to help viewing modelers learn new skills and gain confidence in their model building abilities. All model railroad scales and gauges are included, and modelers in all skill levels are welcome and encouraged to participate.

For example, some upcoming show segments will feature Tom Yorke. Tom came out of retirement, to produce a new O Scale kit for “New Tracks.” He will be building the kit live on our shows in 15-minute segments over the course of several weeks. Join Tom, as your own personal mentor, while he builds the kit on the show.

We call these segments Build Along because “New Tracks” viewers can purchase the kit to be built at a discount from the manufacturer and build the kit along with the Company’s owner or an experienced modeler on the show.

There are only 25 of Tom’s kits available and you will need the password to order one of them. You can get the password and find out the dates when you can order the kit for \$40.00 which includes shipping price by going to our website: <https://newtracksmodeling.com/>.

Other regular segments on our shows are called: Quick Tips, Bits and Pieces, Watch Me Build, Local Clubs and NMRA Divisions, Let's Go to The Local Hobby Store, Workshop Tips, Tools, and Techniques, Scratchbuilding Projects, Layout Construction Projects, Scenery Construction. Actually, if you name the topic, we have probably done it or will want to do it at least once. Some of these segments will be on all our shows. Our current month's schedules are listed on our website.

Also, I hope you will want to join us at our Modeling Lifestyle series every two weeks on Thursday evenings at 7 pm Eastern Time. These shows are live only on our YouTube channel.

If you have ever wanted to meet and talk with some of the outstanding modelers alive today, this is your opportunity. Past shows have featured Allen Littlefield, Tom Yorke, Keith Wiseman, Tom Farrell, John Burchnall, David Vaughn, Lou Sassi, Cheryl Sassi, Dan Rousseau, Mike Tylick, MMR, to name a few. All our past shows are available by video on our YouTube channel.

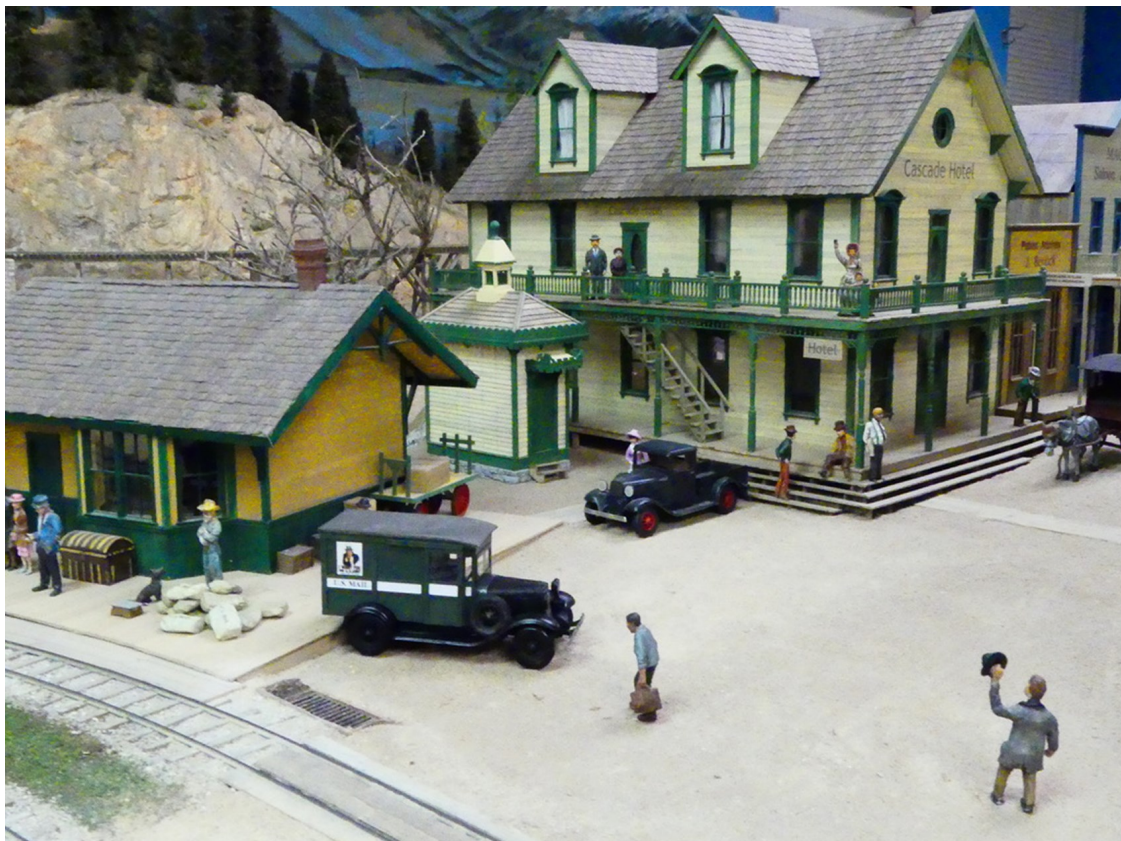
My Facebook page is Jim Kellow MMR. I post weekly about our upcoming shows and events. Follow me there to see what we are planning. By the way, if you have an idea for our show, please let me know. I love to get viewer input and new ideas. Naturally, since I am an NMRA member I hope some of the members of this Division will want to participate on our shows or be profiled in one of my articles.

Join us live on Zoom, or on our New Tracks Modeling YouTube Channel. Please subscribe to our website: <https://newtracksmodeling.com/> for more information about what we are doing, and to automatically get our Zoom log in links so you can join us live on the weekly show.

Subscribe to our YouTube channel New Tracks Modeling and click the Bell to receive YouTube notifications for each show. There are over 800 videos of our past shows and events.

Subscribe for free to the S Scale Resource and O Scale Resource magazine and read my articles.

Contact me at jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com with any comments or questions. Welcome Aboard to "New Tracks" where I look forward to meeting you.



Scratchbuilt Structures on Richard Rands' O Scale Mineral and Southfork Railway in St. Louis (Photo by Greg Warth).

Planned Giving – Part III

By Scott Unger, President, and Randy Foulke, Director-at-Large

In Part 1, on the subject of planned giving (Local 2021, 76-5, page 5), former Director-at-Large Bob Morningstar discussed the overall concept of giving back to the hobby after passing, including the simple bequest via your will. In Part 2 (Local 2021, 76-6, page11), Bob discussed the more advanced form of giving, known as the Charitable Trust. In this, the final installment on planned giving, we will review giving and the forms of doing so. Some are optimal while others are not truly appropriate for small organizations such as the Mid-Eastern Region (MER).

Asset Types

There are two basic types of assets to be considered after one passes. They are monetary and non-monetary assets. For our purposes, our definition of monetary assets will include cash or items that can be quickly and easily converted to cash such as stocks and bonds. In general, these asset types, MER can easily accept.

Non-monetary assets can take many forms such as vehicles, boats, trailers, fine art, furniture, etc. In the case of model railroaders, non-monetary assets can include layouts, scenery, tools, rolling stock, locomotives, books, electronic/electrical systems, etc. As a volunteer organization, these items are usually impossible to handle since we have no permanent staff, no storage space, and lack the manpower to deal with them. Further, we have no legal or financial staff to deal with the issues this type of item brings.

Conversion of Non-Monetary Assets to Monetary Assets

We would encourage members and their families who are interested in bequeathing a memorial gift to MER to convert the assets to monetary assets so the MER can deal with them. We recommend the member convert prior to passing or designate an individual to do so. The proceeds of the sales could then be forward to MER.

Exception for Car Kits

The MER would accept car kits, especially in HO scale, as a non-monetary asset. Car kits can be used for donations to other non-profit organizations to assist in the education of others to model railroading. The MER Outreach Coordinator does maintain storage for car kits.

Remember to Consult a Professional

As mentioned previously, estate planning can be simple or complicated depending upon your financial, tax, and legal circumstances. Please consult with an attorney, estate planner, and/or financial planner on how best to gift the MER. Remember that the MER is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Conclusion

Planned giving to the MER is an excellent method to give back to the model railroading hobby after our passing. For the MER, planned giving is in the form of bequeathing a portion or all of your monetary assets to the organization. Planned giving to the MER can take the form of a simple bequest via your will, or can take the form of a Charitable Trust. If you are interested in discussing planned giving to the MER, please contact one of the Board Members or the Business Manager.

**Minutes (Draft/Unapproved)
Board of Directors Meeting
Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
April 15, 2023**

Altoona Grand Hotel, Duncansville, PA

Officers and Staff in attendance:

Scott Unger, President, MER (**SU**)

Gary Brown, Vice President, MER (**GB**)

Rick Stoneking, Secretary, MER (**RS**)

Charlie Rausch, MMR, Director at Large, MER (**CR**)

Randy Foulke, Director at Large, MER (**RF**)

Bob Charles, Director at Large, MER (**BC**)

Howard Oakes, Business Manager, MER (**HO**)

Meeting was called to order by President Unger at 11:01 EDT. Introductions of MER Officers and Staff, as well as visitors.

President Unger asked for any additions to the published agenda. Director Foulke stated he wanted to discuss reporting of Board of Director info to the membership.

No other items were added to the agenda.

President Unger asked if there were any comments regarding the minutes published by the Secretary for the October 2022, and January 2023 Board meetings. Director Foulke pointed out a misspelling of his last name in the Jan meeting minutes.

Director Charles made a motion to approve the October 2022 minutes as published and the January 2023 minutes as amended. Seconded by Director Rausch – approved unanimously.

President Unger inquired of the Board members if anyone had any suggestions on how to reduce redundant admin processes (e.g. motions to approve Director reports which become part of the Board meeting minutes which are approved). Director Charles agreed that the Board should review what/why things are done and streamline our processes as/where appropriate.

Director Foulke discussed the topic of requirements for reporting out to the membership the activities of the Board. He stated that a previous decision had been made that the Board would provide a summary annual report to the membership to be published in the Local. He stated that this has not been done for 2022. President Unger tabled this discussion until the New Business section of the meeting.

Presidents Report

President Unger discussed the current requirement for Director reports to be sent to the Secretary one month in advance of the Board meeting date. The Board agreed that it would make more sense to reduce that to two weeks ahead of time to allow the reports to reflect the most recent information, so this will be the process going forward.

President Unger reported on the Region Presidents meeting, and commented on how he feels NMRA President Gordy Robinson is really doing a great job for the national organization. Gordy is driving improvements in the software being used to manage NMRA membership information and Division Superintendents should be receiving new Division member rosters directly from National going forward. President Unger reported that per Gordy there are now Divisions with much younger Superintendents than what has been the historical norm, as well as overall growth in the organization, and these would seem to be positive indicators for the Organization. President Unger also mentioned that the NMRA Interchange is now online and encouraged the Board members to make use of it if they are not already.

President Unger reported that he received a report for all MER Divisions showing what counties the NMRA lists as belonging to each Division and asking the data to be reviewed and confirmed by the Superintendents of the Divisions. President Unger believes this indicates that the NMRA is looking to make sure there are no orphan counties. Director Charles talked about potential benefits of creating more contiguous Divisions in certain areas to mitigate geographical related issues for some geographically large Divisions. Director Rausch talked about how the Carolina Piedmont Division Board is discussing holding 'mini-meets' around their Division as a way to try and address this particular issue within their Division.

As a final comment in his report President Unger stated that the Organization needs to focus on the new members that have recently joined the NMRA, and more specifically the retention of those new members.

VP Report

VP Brown reported that he had received reports from 7 of the Divisions in the MER, and they are all quite active. 43 Achievement awards, and three new MMRs.

VP Brown reported on status of upcoming MER conventions:

2023 - activities are well underway but there is still work to be done getting more clinics lined up. Registration expected to be open on April 24th.

2024 - planning is in progress, with the Hotel contract finished. Jack Dziadul doing a great job with planning for that convention.

2025 - VP Brown has been in contact with NJ Division they are currently looking for potential Hotels.

2026- No activity yet.

Director Foulke made a motion to accept the 2023 Convention budget as amended during the Jan 31, 2023 Board of Directors meeting. Director Charles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Old Business

Discussion of the proposal for the MER to purchase laptops and projectors to be used by the MER convention clinicians, to avoid compatibility issues and avoid the excessive fees typically charged by the hotels to use their projection equipment, VP Brown took the action item at the January Board meeting to investigate the cost of purchases three of each, and provided that information to the Board via email ahead of the March Board meeting. Director Charles made a motion to allocate up to \$3500.00 for the purchase of the four sets (estimated cost of under \$800 per set). The motion was seconded by Director Foulke.

Some discussion was then had around whether MER Convention clinicians were going to be required to use only these laptops for their clinics or would they be able to bring and use their own if desired. After much discussion the decision of the Board was that only the MER provided laptops can be used. This is, again, to avoid technical problems around having the right cables to connect laptop brand 'x' to the projectors, etc. The laptops will all have Microsoft Office 365 installed so the clinicians will have access to the standard suite of applications it provides (Word, Excel, Powerpoint, etc.). The board agreed that there are some logistics that still need to be worked out, and the Executive Handbook will need to be updated to explain so clinicians can understand the expectations and limitations.

President Unger called for a vote on the motion and it passed unanimously.

President Unger placed the meeting on recess at 12:36pm for a 15-minute break.

President Unger reconvened the meeting at 12:54pm.

Director Foulke Report

Director Foulke reported that Kevin is doing a great job with the Archives. Nothing additional to report on merchandise.

Director Rausch Report

MER Website has been updated to address all of the items previously reported to the webmaster. Alan Mende is on track with contest activities. The issue where the MER website and Roundcube email system had been offline was discussed.

Director Charles Report

Director Charles commended Greg Warth as Editor of The Local for the continued high quality of the newsletter, stating it is better now than it has been in a decade. He reported that Greg has requested that each Board member submit at least one article per year to be published in the Local.

Director Charles reported that the Nominations and Ballot committee has been beating the bushes and there are currently two candidates for the three Director positions that are up for election this year. Directors Foulke and Charles will not be running for re-election, Director Rausch will be running.

On Fundraising Director Charles had nothing to report. Director Foulke discussed prior committee efforts around the Planned Giving Program. This was intended to be a three part series to be published in the Local. Parts 1 & 2 were completed by Bob Morningstar and published in the Local as planned, but Part 3 was never completed. Director Foulke has created the Part 3 article, which he provided to the Board via email prior to the Board meeting. If the Board approves, then he will submit it for publication in the Local. This action was approved by the Board.

Business Manager Report

Howard Oakes reported that John Hoyt is not able to continue his efforts as the Assistant Business Manager due to health issues. Howard has taken on the roster activities John was handling for the short-term, but a new Assistant Business Manager is needed.

Director Foulke had one additional item of old business and discussed the revised Outreach Coordinator Job description which was his action item from the Oct 2022 Board Meeting. Director Foulke provided the revised description to the Board via email ahead of the meeting. President Unger asked for comments from the members of the Board on the revised job description. There was some discussion regarding whether a change to the job description would require the Outreach Coordinator to be re-appointed - with the Board deciding that it does not. Director Charles commented that the revised job description was "vastly superior" to the previous version and it encourages involvement, and adopting it will adequately protect the organization and still allow for doing what needs to be done.

Director Charles made a motion to approve the new job description, and VP Brown seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Director Rausch reported that the Carolina Piedmont Division is requesting to expand to include counties that are currently orphaned (not assigned to any Division). As discussed previously it appears that National is taking steps along these lines to make sure of the same thing. VP Brown will review the information sent out by National and then take further action as appropriate.

There was discussion around when registration should be open for MER conventions. The pros and cons of earlier registration opening was discussed and it was the decision of the Board that it makes more sense for registration to not be open until after the April Board of Directors meeting of the year of the convention. VP Brown made a motion that a policy be created that convention registration will not be open until after April Board of Directors meeting of the year of the convention. Director Rausch seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Director Foulke discussed clarification of the MER Travel and Expense Reimbursement policy. It had previously been stated at a General Membership meeting that the policy only applied to members of the Board. This is incorrect, anyone who incurs expenses at the request of the Board is eligible for reimbursement under the terms of the policy.

Date, Time, and Place of next BOD meetings

Board of Directors Meeting – October 19th, 2023 – 8pm

[Altoona Grand Hotel, Altoona PA](#)

MER Annual Meeting – October 22nd, 2023 – 9am

[Altoona Grand Hotel, Altoona PA](#)

The President called for a Motion to Adjourn. Motion made by Director Charles, 2nd by Director Foulke.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.

Celebration of Life for Philip J. Mattson

His life was about service to community. PJ graduated from Augusta Military Academy in Fort Defiance, VA and then earned a Junior Business Degree from Goldey-Beacom College. He worked for a short time at DuPont before he was called to serve his nation: April 1968 he was drafted into the Army. His Basic training was at Fort Dix followed by advance training in Fort Leonard Wood where he would become a Combat Engineer. He then had Vietnam jungle training at Fort Sill Oklahoma before shipping off to Vietnam in April 1969. He served 1 year in Vietnam, came home a Sargent E-5 and received an honorable discharge from the Army. He returned to work at the Chambers works as an Emergency Response Technician where he worked until he retired in 2003. He had joined the Woolwich Fire Company in 1964 as a reserve and won the Outstanding Reserve award in 1965. In 1966 he became a regular member. In 1980 after serving as 2nd assistant Chief and 1" Assistant Chief, he became Chief and served for 14 years in this position. He was also the Fire Marshall, State certified Fire Inspector, and the State certified Fire Official for the Borough of Swedesboro.



Philip J Mattson

He was never more comfortable than when he was out in nature, shotgun or rifle in hand: PJ was the Captain of the Swedesboro Antlers. He also was the Treasurer of the Woodbury Antlers. His other interest was model railroading. He would open his house for visitations to his railroad every November; it took 10 people to run the operation. PJ was always upgrading. He was awarded the National Model Railroad Association designation of Master Model Railroader. He served as an Officer in the Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA where he rose to be the President. When the VFW Post 10886 was formed he joined and became the Quartermaster for the post. But of all his endeavors he most loved being a grandfather; the only time the grandkids had to be quiet was if he was watching sports: PJ suffered with his beloved Phils, Flyers, and Eagles.

He met a pretty girl named Jeanette. The love of his life, they shared a 43-year marriage. PJ is survived by his stepdaughter, Janet Bain; stepson, Martin Graham; 3 granddaughters, 3 grandsons, two great-granddaughters, one great-grandson, and one more on the way.

Come celebrate 78 great years Friday, May 5th, 9-11 a.m. at Daley Life Celebration Studio, Swedesboro where there will be an 11 a.m. story-time service. Donations in lieu of flowers to Woolwich Fire Company, 1517 Kings Highway, Swedesboro, 08085 will be appreciated.



Reflections on P.J. Mattson

By Eric Dervinis

Over the last 30 years, no member devoted more time and energy to making the Mid-Eastern Region successful. I first met PJ in 1988, when he started his involvement in the region. His outgoing nature made everyone comfortable and encouraged all modelers to join in region activities. Once you got to know him, you would laugh a lot, as he had a wicked sense of humor. PJ had great knack with computers and wrote his own code. While the registration process for regional conventions was on paper in 1980's, he took it electronic. I estimate that he handled registrations for 25 MER conventions. For the 1993 Valley Forge Express NMRA national convention, he managed 3,600 registrations flawlessly.

Around 2001, when I was the MER Trustee, I appointed PJ as the AP Chair for the NJ Division. With his organizational skills and adherence to deadlines, I knew he was a good choice. He continued in this job for over 20 years. Many NJ Division members achieved AP certificates during his tenure, and he recruited many reluctant members to work on their certificates. As a person with leadership skills, he placed his hat in the ring and joined the MER board. He served a number of terms as Vice President and then four years as President. PJ managed to bring people together and he was always pushing forward to get things done.

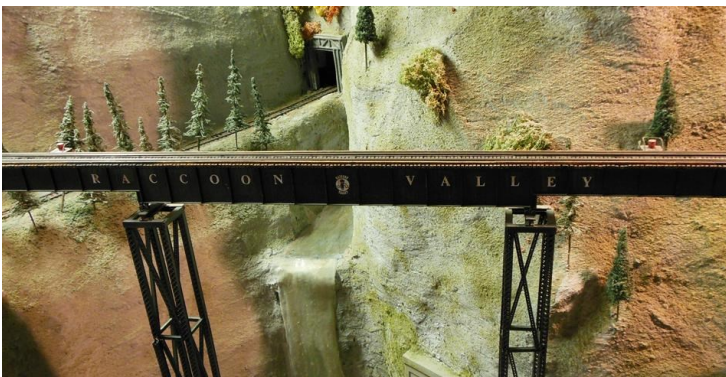
While working full time at Dupont, serving as Swedesboro Fire Chief, volunteering many other places, he built large model railroads in his basement. With his love of electronics, they featured mostly powered turnouts, working signals, detection, and a CTC panel. Every month he hosted a raucous operations session. In November he would be open multiple days to the public. Visitors would be wowed by his signature scenes, Horseshoe Curve, the huge stone arch bridge, and a scratch-built model of the Swedesboro, NJ station in his hometown.

Anyone that attended an MER convention over the last thirty years probably met PJ. All of us in the MER have enjoyed a great region in many ways thanks to his thousands of volunteer hours. Thank you, PJ for your incredible record of service. All of us are going to miss you.

Rest in peace old friend PJ, we are all going to miss you!
Eric



*Photos from PJ's
Raccoon Valley
Railroad*



Back on Track...

Admiring Legends

By Greg Warth, Ed.



No. 734 at the Western Maryland Scenic Railway in 2015

There are many legends in the world of model railroading, both nationally and locally. John Allen, John Armstrong, Allen McClelland, Dave Frary, and many others come immediately to mind. There are legends in medicine as well, like Sir William Osler, Hippocrates, Florence Nightingale, Louis Pasteur, and others. Legends and heroes make up the backbone of our society. They give us roots and bedrocks, upon which we can stand firm. They create a foundation for all our endeavors into the future. Without our history, there would *be* no present or future. I am grateful for the legends and the history that we have and will always admire those who have gone before us and contributed so much, so that *our* lives can be better. At the same time, I am struck by the great responsibility that we, in the present, have to carry this legacy forward and improve the lives of those ahead of us. So, whatever our skills, and we all have them, our main job in this life is to carry those abilities forward and make things better for the next generation. That's what our legends did and that's what we must do.

So, send me your tips, your articles, and photos. Do a clinic. Teach everyone what you know. Your knowledge is tomorrow's future. That's what makes us better.

