



The Local

Official publication of the Mid-Eastern Region,

NMRA – A tax-exempt organization

SEARCH

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Master Model Railroader

By Jack Dziadul, MMR (Photos by the author)



A scene from MMR Jack Dziadul's layout which helped him on his journey to become a Master Model Railroader. Story on Page 6.

President's Column...



**Better Train Control -
Thanks to NMRA LCC
Standards**

By R. Scott Unger

The railroad that I model utilized time tables and train orders to manage scheduling until 1974. After 1974, all trains were run as extras. Train orders were delivered at several towers staffed by operators. One section of the railroad (the portion I constructed first) was single track and utilized automatic block signals (ABS).

A primary benefit to ABS is that it allowed trains moving in the same direction to rely on the signals rather than timetable superiority. However, ABS systems do not grant authority for a train to move. That still requires a train order. I established an ABS territory that included a dozen track segments (blocks) using Arduinos. A similar system could have employed a simpler technique using transistors, but I felt compelled to expand my knowledge and tried it with Arduinos. Arduinos are programmed, using a "sketch" and, once configured, just go about their business when power is applied. They don't require a computer to operate. ABS on the B&O were often color position lights with three aspects. In some cases, mine included, the three aspects can be expanded to six by the addition of an upper lunar white lamp. In my haste to keep construction moving, I failed to account for the lunar lamp and my signal wiring harness is now exactly one wire short to support the additional lamp. Since the upper lunar lamp was utilized on the prototype, I will probably address that in a future project.

Contents

Print Issue

<u>Master Model Railroader</u>	Jack Dziadul, MMR	1
<u>Better Train Control- Thanks to NMRA</u>	R. Scott Unger, President	2
<u>Who's Who</u>	Staff	4
<u>AP Update</u>	Kurt Thompson, MMR	11
<u>Learning a New Art</u>	Greg Warth, Editor	12
<u>Advertising</u>	Staff	13

eLocal

<u>Elections 2025 - Directors - We Need You!</u>	Greg Warth	14
<u>Send in Your Articles</u>	Greg Warth	15
<u>NERx Is Back</u>	Greg Warth	17
<u>MER Convention Review</u>	Jack Dziadul, MMR	18
<u>Salvaging a GE 44- Tonner</u>	Alan Mende	37
<u>Tip of the Month</u>	Jerry Lauchle, MMR	39
<u>Knowing When to Tear It Out</u>	Lee Stoermer	40
<u>LaBelle Trolley - Part 3</u>	Martin Brechbiel, MMR	47
<u>Upcoming Conventions</u>	Greg Warth	53
<u>Branch Lines / Links</u>	Greg Warth	54
<u>In Memoriam/More Links</u>	Greg Warth	55
<u>Back on Track</u>	Greg Warth	56



How to Build a Model Railroad

Around the same time as the Chessie System merger, the B&O Division that I model was removing sections of double tracked main lines and adding Centralized Traffic Control (CTC). The B&O called it their Traffic Control System (TCS).

Unlike ABS, CTC or, in the case of B&O, TCS, *did* provide authority for a train to move and also used color position lights, but with the addition of a fourth restricting aspect. While the Arduino-driven ABS system operates without any user input, my CTC system will need to provide a way for the dispatcher to choose routes and offer a signal in the direction of the appropriate train. To do so will require either the fabrication of a physical CTC panel (the ones I have seen are very authentic in both their appearance and function and are quite impressive). I considered building a conventional CTC panel, but I am now starting to consider using Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI) to create a digital panel for the dispatcher. This solution does not provide the same authentic feel but does provide the opportunity to make revisions more easily should you change your railroad design over the years.

In addition to ABS and CTC signals, as discussed earlier, I also need Train Order Signals for the ABS portion of the railroad. Again, I considered building an authentic looking train order signal panel but, at least for now, I am successfully using JMRI. As I write this, it is becoming apparent that it would have been much easier to only have one signal system... but what fun would that be?

JMRI offers several methods to interact with your railroad, one of which works through your railroad's digital command control system (DCC). This method also allows you to automate train movements and other features. Since I am more focused on operation, I was looking for other options that would preserve bandwidth of the DCC system for running the trains.

The option I ultimately settled on is a stand-alone LCC approach. As I did more research, I discovered that a stand-alone or "open" LCC is based on the principals utilized in the automotive industry. Historically mechanical devices or relays have been replaced with electronically activated ones in modern automobiles. The electronic components provide an extensive array of responses by allowing for the interaction and communication between various systems in the car. This is accomplished using what is called a CAN bus, which stands for controller area network. Once configured, the CAN bus does not rely on a central computer.

Given the cost of cars presently, this is a probably a good thing since the failure of such a central computer might result in your insurance company declaring your vehicle a total loss! The NMRA adopted an extensive set of standards through a cooperation agreement with Open LCB, open layout control bus.

While the LCC system seems like a promising candidate for my CTC system, for it to function properly it would need the capacity to share occupancy information with some of the ABS blocks/ track segments. Since the input/output pins on both the Arduino and the LCB systems utilize 5V DC logic, they should, at least in theory, be able to communicate with each other...as long as the grounds are connected at a single location. So far, my early testing appears to confirm this. Fingers crossed!

Clearly, intricate signal systems can be and have been built by modelers using conventional techniques. The amazing capability of LCB was available to me within a very compressed learning curve. That is largely because of the NMRA adopting LCC standards. As NMRA members we all benefit from the work of the gifted volunteers who continue to develop and improve JMRI and the LCC Standards adopted by the NMRA. The open system of standards, for LCB and other NMRA-developed standards, provides a basis for both existing and new manufacturers to innovate new products with greater functionality while retaining compatibility. What a great hobby we share and, thanks to the NMRA, what an exciting future of possibilities!

Here's Your Chance to Give Back to the MER!




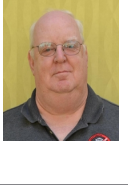




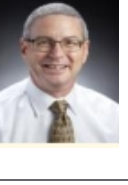

**Positions are now open and available for:
Executive Convention Chairman (ECC), and
Business Manager for the MER.**

**Job descriptions can be found here for Business Manager, p. 10, and ECC, p.17.
To apply, send email to president@mer-nmra.com.**


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	President: Scott Unger 610-462-0756 president@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large Greg Warth 757-816-8399 gjwarth@mer-nmra.com		Achievement Program Manager: Kurt Thompson, MMR 410-507-3671 apchair@mer-nmra.com
	Vice President: Gary Brown 757-641-7671 vp@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large: Bob Bridges rkbridges@mer-nmra.com		Nominating Committee Chair: Bob Charles, MMR 717-763-1848 rcharles@mer-nmra.com
	Secretary: Rick Stoneking (856)296-9291 secretary@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large: Kevin O'Connor 919-593-2537 kjcoconnor@mer-nmra.com		Editor: Greg Warth 757-816-8399 local-editor@mer-nmra.com
	Treasurer: William "Bill" Wurtzell (201)819-8701 wwurtzell@mer-nmra.com		Business Manager: Howard Oakes 717-632-5990 301 Moulstown Rd Abbottstown PA 17301 business@mer-nmra.com		Registrar: Kirk Bateman 410-442-0446 mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com
	Ballot Committee Chair: Bob Minnis, MMR 434-589-3011 ballots@mer-nmra.com		Contest Chair: Alan Mende 717-469-1047 contests@mer-nmra.com		Web Master: Jeff Burch 443-280-9127 webmaster@mer-nmra.com
	Assistant Business Manager: John Hoyt 410-340-1776 jhojt@mer-nmra.com		Assistant Treasurer and Convention Treasurer: William "Bill" Wurtzell (201)819-8701 wwurtzell@mer-nmra.com		Archivist: Michael Maurer archives@mer-nmra.com
	Executive Convention Chair (Acting): Gary Brown 757-641-7671 ecc@mer-nmra.com		MER Photographer: Jerry Lauchle, MMR 814-404-6955 photos@mer-nmra.com		Assistant Registrar: Jim Fisher 443-504-3919 jfisher@mer-nmra.com
	Past President: Kurt Thompson, MMR 410-507-3671 pastpresident@mer-nmra.com				

MER Division Superintendents


	<p>New Jersey Division 1 John V. Gallagher (856)228-2239 njdiv.super@gmail.com Division web page: njdivnmra.org</p>		<p>James River Division 5 Phillip R. Taylor (434) 589-6006 drphilster@gmail.com Division web page: jrdnmra.blogspot.com/</p>		<p>Carolina Southern Division 12 Andrew Stitt (919)637-1282 superintendent@carolinasouthern.org Division web page: www.carolinasouthern.org</p>
	<p>Potomac Division 2 Ernie Little, MMR super@potomac-nmra.org Division web page: potomac-nmra.org/</p>		<p>South Mountain Division 10 Bob Johnson southmountaindiv@gmail.com Division web page: http://www.smdnmra.org/</p>		<p>Carolina Piedmont Division 13 Charles Rausch, MMR (919)533-6054 crasch@mer-nmra.com Division web page: www.cpd13.org/</p>
	<p>Philadelphia Division 3 Joe Walters, MMR (302)521-5884 Josephwalters@yahoo.com Division web page: www.phillynmra.org</p>		<p>Susquehanna Division 11 Alan Mende (717) 469-1047 super@susquehannanmra.org Division web page: www.susquehannanmra.org</p>		<p>Chesapeake Division 14 Kirk Bateman (410) 442-0446 super@chesdiv-nmra.org Division web page: www.chesdiv-nmra.org</p>
	<p>Tidewater Division 4 John Robey (571)217-0599 jrobey2019@gmail.com Division web page: nmra-mer-tidewater.org</p>				

IPSWICH HOBBIES



Craftsman Structure Kits

Jack Dziadul



IpswichHobbies.com

919-721-8757

UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

- 2025 — Philadelphia Division — “Philly Express,” October 16-19, 2025, Crown Plaza Hotel, King of Prussia, PA
- 2026 — Tidewater Division — “Tidewater Triangle,” Virginia Beach, VA - TBD

MER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE

- Board of Directors Business Meeting — 11AM April 12, 2025, Convention Hotel, King of Prussia, PA

Master Model Railroader

By Jack Dziadul, MMR (Photos by the author)

Finally, yes...finally, 2024 was my time. It only took me 14 years to check the box on my seventh Achievement Program certificate. Master Model Railroader was not on my radar as an achievable goal. But some Achievement Program certificates were reasonable targets. When I became editor of *The Herald* in 2006, I found myself soliciting articles from members. Model Railroad Author credits were one of the inducements. I figured that I needed to set an example, so I started drafting articles and posting photographs myself.

Author AP is measured in a point system, with 42 points being required. No more than 21 points can be earned at the Division level. (See www.NMRA.org for the requirements of each of the eleven certificates. At least one certificate must be achieved in each of the four categories.) Back when I earned my Author AP, *The Local* was a paper product with an eight-page limit. The editor at that time estimated a two-year wait to get into the MER's newsletter. Although acceptance of an article would have been sufficient for AP credit, I preferred to actually get into print. So, thanks to the then Editor Paul Volker, I was able to get published in *The SouthErneR* of the Southeastern Region instead. Presenting a clinic at the NMRA convention in Milwaukee put me over the top. **AP #1 Model Railroad Author** was received in 2010.

I had been quite active in volunteering at events and projects in the Carolina Piedmont Division. Ray Bilodeau's clinic in 2006 got me interested in becoming an apprentice contest judge. Seeing contest models up close and at the elbow of experienced evaluators was probably the best decision I made within my MMR journey. In addition to other volunteering positions, judging at several National and MER conventions brought me well above the required 60 Time Units. **AP #2 Association Volunteer** was received in 2011.

After touring many well-done layouts locally and at conventions, I signed on as a regular operator on Jack Frame's HO scale Monon layout. I later became a regular operator on Bruce Faulkner's large N-scale layout. About this time, I signed up for operations callboards at conventions and other ops weekends in North Carolina organized by Marcus Neubacher and Steve Benezra. I made a point to contact hosts in advance to request assignment as dispatcher or yard master, depending on hours I was lacking to that point. Before long...**AP certificate #3: Chief Dispatcher** in 2012. To date, this is my only certificate in the **Engineering and Operations** category.

Then came a long pause; too many long work days and too much travel. But termed-out MER Director Don Jennings talked me into running for office. Okay, **AP certificate #4: Association Official** in 2019. This gave me the trifecta: all three certificates in the **Service to the Hobby** category.

Yes, the first four AP certificates without touching glue or paint. I actually felt a bit awkward about this. Hmmm, I had better get going on some real modeling. Especially since President Kurt Thompson, MMR challenged us to achieve MMR status in time for the 2020 75th anniversary of MER’s founding, which I ended up missing by four years.

During this timeframe, however, I was into producing Ipswich Hobbies craftsman structure kits as my small contribution to the economy. So, I really did have some familiarization with glue and paint. 2021 was to be the year. I kicked off January with my Golden Spike Award, just to prove that I could get two locos running at the same time on more than plywood ([Photo 1](#)).



Photo 1

Then, scratch-building structures and super detailing craftsman kits from other manufacturers brought in **AP #5: Master Builder – Structures** later that year ([Photo 2](#)).



Photo 2

This was quickly followed by **AP #6: Master Builder – Scenery**, also in 2021. (See the “Master Builder – Scenery” article in the March-April 2022 issue of *The Local*.) This was my second certificate in the **Settings** category (**Photo 3**).



Type to enter text

Photo 3

Then another long pause as life got in the way of hobby time. So, **AP #7: Master Builder – Cars** finally got me over the MMR finish line in 2024. AP #7 allowed me to check the **Model Railroad Equipment** category box ([Photo 4](#)).



Photo 4

There were many supporters and mentors along the way. I was fortunate to have a very supportive Carolina Piedmont Division evaluation team of Vic Bitleris, Bill Hanley, Gene Sing, MMR, and Charlie Rausch, MMR along with encouragement from Dave Chance and Joe Walters, MMR. But the biggest contributor to pulling me over that finish line was Martin Brechbiel's scratch-building series on New Tracks Modeling, and related writings in the Potomac Flyer, plus MER make-and-take clinics by Martin and Clint Hyde.

Achieving Master Model Railroader was a fourteen year journey for me, but well worth it. I never would have challenged myself without the framework of the AP program. I cannot recommend it highly enough. Now on to AP #8. Why not keep challenging myself to improve and broaden my skills?

PS: Have you noticed all of the names mentioned in this article? That, my friends, illustrates one of the most important benefits of NMRA membership.



Did You know...

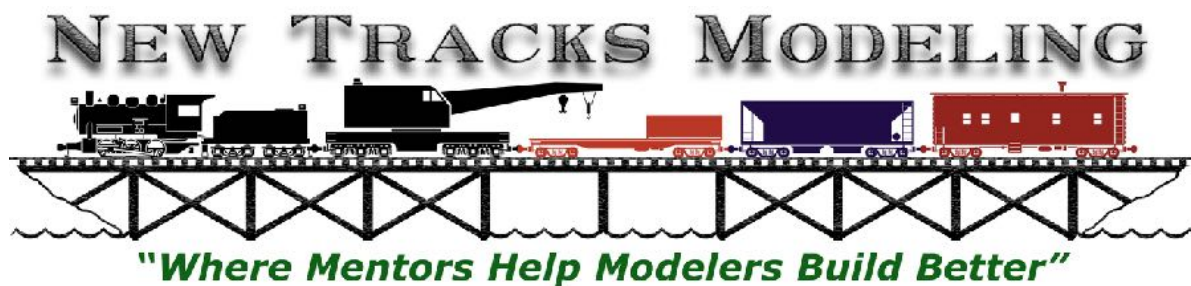
2025

is the 90th Anniversary of the NMRA!

Happy Anniversary!

That's 90 years of helping model railroaders.

Thank you!





NMRA Achievement Program Update

By Kurt Thompson, MMR
MER AP Manager

Kurt Thompson,

First, a correction to last month’s report. James Murphy’s MMR number is 783, not 785. Doesn’t change the amount of work he did to earn his MMR, just a pesky typo.

Potomac Division, Division 2:

Greg Cassidy	Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical
Greg Cassidy	Master Builder - Scenery

Philly Division, Division 3:

Eric Dervinis	Master Builder - Scenery
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Tidewater Division, Division 4:

Fred Humphrey	Chief Dispatcher
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Carolina Southern Division, Division 12:

Andrew Stitt	Model Railroad Engineer - Civil
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Carolina Piedmont Division, Division 13:

John Sokash	Association Volunteer
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From the Editor's Desk...



Learning a New Art

By Greg Warth

When you have been a model railroader for as long as I have, sometimes you begin to yearn for something different - not a different hobby, of course, but something new, within the hobby. So far, I have concentrated on designing and building layouts, and creating scenery. I'm now working on my seventh or eighth one. I've lost count. This newest layout is N scale which will be on display in our new museum (Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads - MRMHR.org) currently being built by local model railroaders in Norfolk. It will require a backdrop showing the Appalachian Mountains on the left (southern) and container ships and harbor ports on the northern, or right side, totaling about 40' from one end to the other. I looked up the possibility of purchasing photographic backdrops online which would cost about \$1200. That isn't too bad considering some people would easily spend that much on a G scale locomotive. But since we are a nonprofit organization and we have no income except for donations, I thought it would be better to paint my own backdrop.

My artistic talent is limited to three-dimensional landscaping. My two-dimensional skills are undeveloped and basically nonexistent. However, perhaps it's time that I learned some of those skills. How difficult can it be? Other modelers paint their own backdrops. If it doesn't work out, I'll just go back to my original idea of purchasing the backdrop.

So how does someone with no talent learn a new

art form? After watching a few [Bob Ross](#) videos, I decided to ask AI how to do it:

1. Plan - scale and size, choose a scene, consider perspective.
2. Choose the backdrop material - foam board, Masonite, fiberboard, canvas, vinyl or paper, something that will curve around corners to minimize harsh lines.
3. Paint it - sky base coat, lighter blue at the horizon and darker at the top, then dab white paint with a sponge to make clouds. Use gray, green or brown to make hills and mountains and add shading. Recognize that the sun is shining from the south, at least in this hemisphere. Dabble some fall colors on the hills to suggest autumn if that's your season.
4. Blend the backdrop with the layout scenery. Match the colors with your scenery as much as possible.

An even better idea is to watch this video from [RTNT](#) (Ron's Trains 'N Things).

Okay, I got this. Dilemma solved. I'll let you know how it goes.

The point is, try something new. It revives your interest, exercises your brain, and if you really get into it, it should come out pretty well.

This issue of *The Local* contains much more art than you will get from this column. Lots of great tips and techniques adorn these pages, painted with brushes of knowledge and wisdom. Part 3 of the trolley build by Martin Brechbiel, MMR will lead to a beautiful, artistically completed model. A review of the Piedmont Junction Convention and how it was done will show future convention leaders how to do it in considerable detail. Alan Mende demonstrates how to salvage a GE 44-Tonner from the scrap heap. And Lee Stoermer provides wisdom on knowing when it's time to tear it all up and start over (And I thought painting a backdrop was hard.)!

Once again, I would like to thank our outstanding editorial staff for all their hard work, not only for this issue but for all they have done over the last several years:

Jack Dziadul, MMR

Alex Belida, MMR

Martin Brechbiel, MMR

And special thanks to all our authors. Without them, we would have nothing to show you.

Happy railroading,

Next Up:

In the next issue of *The Local*...

- *Division Reports for 2024*
- *Directors Candidates' Statements*
- *Building Stilwell Oyster Car Kits, by Martin Brechbiel, MMR*
- *Add Lighting To Your Caboose, by Brian Sheron, MMR*
- *And much more...*



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 rates per year are shown on the right.

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.

Advertising Rates (per year)	
Divisions & Clubs	Free
Clinics & Education	Free
Convention Ads	Free
Full Page - Color	\$100.00
1/2 Page - Color	\$60.00
1/4 Page - Color	\$35.00
Business Card	\$10.00
Text Only	\$7.00

Elections 2025

THE MER NEEDS YOU!

Now Accepting Nominations for Directors

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 for the Mid-Eastern Region (MER). The MER Board of Directors generally meets three (3) times per year, once in January, once in April, and again at the MER convention. The deadline for nomination entry is **May 30, 2025**. The term of office is two years, with a limit of two terms for the President or Vice-President, five terms for Treasurer or Secretary.

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, 2025 – to ALL of the following nominations process officials:

Nominations Committee: Chair: Robert Charles, MMR rcharles@aol.com; Jack Dziadul, MMR jackdziadul@gmail.com; Kenneth Montero, va661midlo@comcast.net

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

Deadlines and Schedules for 2025 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, 2025 -- 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.

August 1, 2025 -- Deadline for mailing paper ballots to members and for commencing electronic voting.

September 3, 2025 -- Deadline for electronic voting, also last day as shown by postmark for mailing paper ballots.

September 7, 2025 -- Deadline for receipt by Balloting Committee of paper ballots sent by mail.

September 14, 2025 -- Deadline for Ballot Committee to transmit results to President, the Director overseeing this committee, and the Business Manager.

September 21, 2025 -- Deadline for The President to communicate the election results to candidates. The Business Manager also notifies the MER Web Master and the NMRA of the election results.

October 10, 2025 -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER's website.

You can make a difference by giving something back to the hobby you enjoy. This is your chance. Successful completion of three years in office fulfills the requirements for the Achievement Program "Association Official" certificate. Please respond in one email to all three committee members to ensure receipt of your nomination! That is all there is to it!

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 our 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.

We love our authors and we love our jobs in creating *The Local* for you to enjoy. We receive many articles with great content and we are always anxious to publish them. However, so many articles that we receive are not in a good format and require many hours of work to get them ready for publication. When you are preparing your article to send to the Editor, please follow the instructions presented here. It won't require any more work for you in writing the article, but it will save us many hours of proofreading and publishing time. Depending on the size of the article, it may take as many as 10-12 hours to actually get it in the newsletter. We can save at least half that time if it comes to us prepared according to the instructions.

How to Submit an Article for *The Local* ([Please Follow These Steps Carefully!](#))

1. ***Please read*** the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on "[Preparing Your Manuscript for Publication in The Local](#)."
2. Compose and submit your text in Word format (.doc or docx).
3. Use Times New Roman font in 12 pt size.
4. The title should be **centered** and in **bold**.
5. Directly under the title should be "By (your name)" - centered, not bold. If you are an MMR, put it there.
6. If the photos are yours, enter in parentheses (Photos by the author) right after your name.
7. Enter your text with no paragraph indents. Justify the text so it is even on both sides.
8. In your text, refer to your photos this way: (**Photo 1**) - in parentheses, bold and blue.
9. Between paragraphs in your text, write "**Insert Photo 1 here**" where you want the photo to appear. DO NOT put your photos there. Otherwise, we just have to take them out.
10. Include the number of the Photo in the file name of the Photo so we know which one goes with which number.
11. Photos must be clear and sharp or they cannot be accepted. JPG, GIF, TIFF and PNG formats are acceptable.
12. Photo captions should be listed at the end of your article, or in a separate Word file, and numbered with the same number as the photo.
13. Send your text and your photos separately by email to [The Local Editor](#). They can all be sent in the same email as long as the total file size is less than 25 MB. If the size is larger than that, you will have to split them into two or three emails.

What Happens to Your Article after You Send It In?

First, the substance and context of the article has to be reviewed. Is it original? Has it been used before, or published elsewhere? Was it borrowed from someone else's work? Is it an appropriate topic for our newsletter? We've had to reject a few articles because they were more about rail fanning than they were about model railroading.

Then the text is carefully reviewed line by line by four different sets of eyes to check for typos, grammatical errors, wording or phrasing problems that have to be rewritten to be more understandable. Punctuation has to be corrected. If there are photos in the text, they have to be removed. Photos frequently require editing to make them look brighter and more appealing. File names of the photos have to be changed to include the number of the photo.

After the proofreading is finished, the text has to be entered into the publishing program, paragraph by paragraph, sometimes line by line. The text often has to be resized to make it fit properly without looking inconsistent. When we come to a point where a photo has to be inserted, it has to be resized so that it fits in with the text and in the right order with the proper caption. If a photo is missed, the whole article may have to be redone in order to get the photo in the right place.

It's just like putting a model together in many ways. You start with the raw materials or the parts that come in a kit. The materials and instructions for the kit are what the author provides. In this case, the various parts include the words that have to be put together properly. Then the paragraphs and the photos may have to be rearranged. Then you have to fit the pieces into the right places, so that they make sense and look appealing. There are many details that have to be added or corrected. Eventually, we glue them all together by converting them from Word into a pdf file.

What Kinds of Articles Do We Like to See?

1. Anything about modeling, whether it be about just putting a kit together, kit bashing, scratchbuilding, or just adding details or weathering to a model.
2. Any type of "How to..." article, as long as it is about model railroading.
3. New tips or techniques, or even old ones used in a new way.
4. A tour of your layout or that of a friend, including its name, location, theme, era, scale, size, best features and biggest challenges.
5. Summary of a model railroad conference you visited.
6. Tell us about your workbench, or any special tools you use.
7. Tell us how you fixed a problem you encountered with your model or layout.
8. If you received an AP or MMR Certification, explain how you did it, what were the challenges. What would you recommend to others working on the same project.
9. New electrical techniques that you performed, new automations, how you set up signals, how you installed sound or flashing signs, billboards, or other details.
10. Scenery techniques, mountains, water, river rapids, trees, forests, ground cover.
11. Building a bridge or trestle.
12. Photographing your layout or model.
13. How to recruit more people into the hobby.
14. Your summary of a clinic you attended.
15. How we can help each other.

Special Notes for Authors (MUST READ before submitting an article):



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NERx Returns on March 17-20

The NERx is a virtual convention established in 2020 by the Northeastern Region of the NMRA during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when it was not possible to have in-person clinics. It is now back again by popular demand! You can also access all previous events held by NERx since they started in 2020.

Every evening during March 17-20, 2025, various clinics, layout tours and roundtable conversations will be shown virtually that you can watch for free from home including the following:

Natural Ice Industry by Bruce DeYoung

Scratchbuilding a Rural Station by John McHugh

Basic Scenery from the Ground Up by Doug Dederick

RPM Meets by Dave Owens

3D Printing by Bernard Hellen

Simulations in Model Railroading by Andy Estep

Preview of the Concord Flyer, the next NER (in-person) Convention, by Tage Erickson

If you would like to present a clinic or have a layout to present, send an email to info@nerx.org.

To find the stream for this event, subscribe to the [NMRA Channels on YouTube](#).

Piedmont Junction Mid-Eastern Region Convention Durham, North Carolina October 17-20, 2024 After Action Report

By Jack Dziadul, MMR, Convention Co-Chairman

Convention Review:

Background

Carolina Piedmont Division (CPD) Superintendent Charlie Rausch, MMR suggested that CPD host the 2024 MER convention. The matter was brought to the CPD Board, which approved submitting a bid for the convention on December 14, 2021. The Mid-Eastern Region approved CPD’s bid, and a hosting agreement was executed on March 22, 2022. The purpose of this report is to summarize what CPD did to plan and execute the convention. **The intent is to offer a critical analysis, which would provide guidance for future conventions.**

The CPD Board approved Charlie’s recommendation that Kevin O’Connor and Jack Dziadul be named Co-Chairmen, and they assembled the Local Convention Committee (LCC) to oversee various aspects of planning and managing the convention. The LCC for any convention will likely have a final list of key volunteers that differs from the initial committee due to health issues, work schedules, or other reasons for withdrawals. To ensure thorough planning and communication, the LCC met quarterly throughout 2022, bi-monthly throughout 2023, then monthly in 2024.

Local Convention Committee (LCC):

Kevin O’Connor, Co-chair

Jack Dziadul, MMR, Co-chair

Randy Foulke - Prototype Tours

Gene Sing, MMR - Company Store

Charlie Rausch, MMR – Operating Callboard Sessions

Jack Dziadul, MMR – Hotel and Meals / Finance

Neil Blumenkopf - Asst Ops Callboard

John Sokash – Home Layout Tours

Kevin O’Connor - Clinics, Volunteers

Rob Rousseau - Webmaster

Bob Bridges - Marketing

Bob Gamble - Technology

The LCC drew upon the MER Convention Action Team (CAT) resources throughout the planning process and the event itself:

- Gary Brown MER VP and Acting Executive Convention Chairman
- Kirk Bateman Registration
- Bill Wurtzell Convention Treasurer
- Alan Mende Contest

The Carolina Piedmont Division could not have managed this very successful convention without all of this support, for which we are grateful. The LCC also had for reference materials from the 2005, 2011, and 2016 conventions hosted by the Carolina Piedmont Division, program materials from other recent MER conventions, and Section 6 of the Executive Handbook, which discusses the protocols of managing regional conventions.

Here is a look at the 2024 convention as we review what was new, what was traditional, what worked well, and what we could have done better.

VENUE - Marriott RTP, Durham, NC

The ECC, initially Sam Rogers, then VP Gary Brown as Acting ECC, was responsible for negotiating the hotel contract and had signatory authority delegated to him by the MER. Since we had an excellent experience with the Marriott in 2016, that was our first choice. With virtually the same terms as in 2016, we contracted to return to Durham September 17-20, 2024. The only term change was a modest rate increase from \$99.99 to \$109.00.

However, after executing the contract, new ownership scheduled renovations that conflicted with our convention dates. The LCC searched alternative venues and found none suitable in our price range, so we notified hotel ownership of its contract default. The hotel owners response was to offer a substantial change in the financial aspects of the convention in exchange for rescheduling our event.

- The room rate was reduced from \$109 to \$79.
- The food and beverage minimum was reduced from \$5,000 to zero.
- All ancillary charges were waived.

The alternative event dates mutually agreed to were October 17-20, 2024. The downside was that the LCC had to undertake the significant burden of rescheduling more than 40 clinics (Kevin), more than two dozen home layout tours (John Sokash), and rescheduling more than one dozen operating callboard sessions (Charlie). Some clinicians and hosts were unavailable on the rescheduled dates.

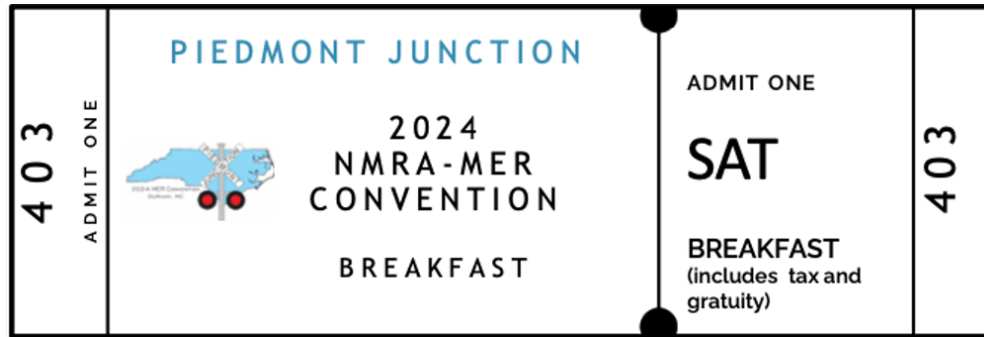
The MER Board of Directors had an opportunity to tour the hotel facilities at its April 8, 2024 Board meeting held at the hotel.

ROOM RESERVATIONS

- The final room statistics were as follows:
 - o 115 rooms
 - o 153 guests in those 115 rooms
 - o 344 room-nights versus 322 room-nights in 2016
- Hotel registration was an easy process and was readily linked from the convention web site. The only early on glitches were when bookings exceeded expectations. This was quickly rectified by the hotel expanding the room counts blocked at the discounted rate.
- One of the contract provisions was that for each thirty room nights, we received one comp room night. The Executive Handbook provides that the MER President, the MER Registrar, and the LCC Chairman receive complementary hotel lodging, if earned. The success with the hotel reservations allowed the convention budget to avoid incurring hotel charges for these three comp rooms. The hotel was generous in awarding the complimentary rooms, so we ended up with five. These were assigned to the President and Registrar as noted above. Since there were two Co-Chairman, each received a comp room. The fifth was awarded to the Contest Chairman.
- No comp rooms were provided to speakers or clinicians.

PREPAID BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

- Ticket sales were booked through MER registration
 - o Prices were inclusive of taxes and tips
 - o The convention charged \$1 above the hotel cost
 - o Wait staff collected the tickets at the tables
- Breakfast sales were Friday 65, Saturday 66, Sunday 53
- We arranged an early breakfast start of 6:30am on Friday and Saturday. This helped to spread out the congestion and helped to get guests to tours and clinics on time.
- The Superintendents' Breakfast on Saturday was nine additional sales, paid by MER. Some found that having the breakfast in the public area of the restaurant was too noisy an atmosphere for a meeting.
- The Editors' Breakfast scheduled for Friday was cancelled due to insufficient interest.
- \$20/\$21 breakfast



- \$25/\$26 lunch
- The Contest Judges’ Lunch on Saturday resulted in 22 tickets. This was more than necessary and should be more closely monitored in the future. 15 lunch tickets should be sufficient. This was an MER expense, not charged to the convention.

BANQUET

- \$59.22 all-in cost / \$65 price to registrants
- The Carolina Buffet was again the banquet meal selection as it was quite popular at the 2016 convention.
- Serving tables were set up in the hallway. Guests were called by table as directed by the hotel staff.
- We had two lines, one on each side of the food service tables. Banquet tickets were collected at the beginning of the line by convention volunteers. There was congestion both arriving to the line and leaving the line. This flow could have been a bit easier with a larger banquet room; more room / aisles between the round tables.
- The head table was called first to the food service.
- We actually had a de facto second head table. This was set up for the tech team and contest room volunteers who needed to be near the projection equipment, awards table, etc. We also had additional guest presentations (future conventions) who needed to be near the podium.
- The banquet speaker and his wife received complimentary banquet tickets.



- We budgeted for 100 banquet attendees and ended up with 127, an increase from 114 in 2016. The count was a pleasant surprise, but it did create a very tight seating arrangement with ten per table

Marriott meal cost estimate 1 10/15/2024

Meal	Day	Date	Count	Cost	Total
Banquet	Saturday	10/19/24	127	\$59.22	\$7,520.94
Breakfast	Friday	10/18/24	65	\$20.00	\$1,300.00
Breakfast	Saturday	10/19/24	66	\$20.00	\$1,320.00
Breakfast	Sunday	10/20/24	53	\$20.00	\$1,060.00
Lunch	Friday	10/18/24	35	\$25.00	\$875.00
Lunch	Saturday	10/19/24	26	\$25.00	\$650.00
Superintendents' Breakfast	Saturday	10/19/24	9	\$20.00	\$180.00
Judges' Lunch	Saturday	10/19/24	22	\$25.00	\$550.00
Estimate Total					\$13,455.94

BANQUET ORDER OF EVENTS

- Executive Handbook Section 6, 11MER Convention Banquet Activities, 11.1 The Program provides the agenda for the banquet / Annual Meeting / speaker / awards, etc.
- The MER President and ECC approved the program in advance.
- A copy of the program was provided to each of the presenters.
- Rick Hollings opened the banquet with a prayer. This is optional, but traditional in North Carolina hosted events.
- A cash bar was set up near the banquet entrance for one hour: 6-7pm.

We planned for and kept to a tight banquet schedule.

- Each speaker should be reminded to keep the microphone 2-3” from their mouth.
- We communicated with the speaker in advance about presentation logistics. He opted to forgo a PowerPoint presentation in favor of a more free-wheeling review of the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad history and operations, followed by a question and answer finish.
- There were two brief presentations about future conventions.
 - o MER 2025 King-of-Prussia, PA hosted by the Philadelphia Division.
 - o SER 2025 Gatlinburg, TN hosted by Smoky Mountain Division

- NMRA VP Rick Coble also made brief remarks about happenings at the national level (with more details provided at his Sunday morning clinic).
- As to the award portion of the program, which historically had time-consuming individual recognition and individual photographs, we went with a group photo. The group did block one of the two large screens. We'll need to plan this detail better in the future.
- One table was set up near the podium for the award plaques.
- There was an awkward aspect of the contest award presentations in that the names of award recipients were unavailable and were not matched to the photographs displayed.
- Marriott Rewards points were earned for this event. The 50,000 points were split and offered to the banquet attendees in a drawing, with Dale Young and Andrea Barch each receiving 25,000 Marriott points. The Executive Convention Chairman and LCC hotel liaison were ineligible for the awards to avoid any appearance of conflicts of interest.
- We did not think to have water at the podium. This would have been convenient for the speakers.

FUNCTION ROOMS

- The Marriott had a ballroom divisible into four rooms: Salons A,B,C,D
 - o A was dedicated to the Company Store
 - o B and C were set up for lecture style clinics
 - o D was used for the “hands-on” / “make-and-take” clinics
- There were two other function rooms.
 - o Ford housed the Contest
 - o Franklin was used for a large T-TRAK layout that was organized by John Wallis.
- Common Areas
 - o Rick Allen set up his circus display modules in the hallway outside of Salon A.
 - o Gene Sing set up the CPD raffle layout in the hotel lobby.
 - o Kirk Bateman set up the convention registration desk in the lobby area closest to the main entrance. This proved to be unsatisfactory due to proximity to the bar. It was just too noisy and distracting for the registration intake volunteers. We would recommend a different location for registration in the future.
 - o A book signing table was set up in the corridor leading to the Saturday banquet. Steve Benezra and Kevin von der Lippe were pleased with their book sales.

· Triangle Conference Room. In 2016 this room was used as a volunteer break room. In 2024, we initially planned to dedicate that room for use by non-rail (spouse) activities or socializing. But that never came to fruition. Most socialization, volunteers as well as other registrants, occurred in the Company Store, in the bar, or in the seating near the registration desk. It would have convenient to have a dedicated break room supplied with drinks and snacks as in 2016. However, the hotel contract does not allow food to be brought in to the hotel function rooms.

BUDGET / FINANCE

- The LCC and Convention Treasurer Bill Wurtzell developed the budget that was approved by the MER on April 8, 2024 at its Board meeting in Durham, NC. This anticipated a surplus of \$13,048 before the 50/50 split. The final actual surplus was \$10,591 before the split for a difference of \$2,457.
- MER approved a disbursement of \$5,295 to CPD at its January 10, 2025 Board meeting.
- The material differences between budget and actual were
 - o Registrations came in less than expected (discussed further below).
 - o Extra fare excursion sales were less than expected (discussed further below).

COMPANY STORE

- The Company Store was a remarkable success.
 - o 469 lots (some lots included multiple items) were offered for sale.
 - § \$5,526.60 total sales
 - § \$828.99 15% commission to the convention (versus \$300 budgeted)
 - § \$4,697.61 net proceeds to sellers
 - § Of 27 individual participants, 22 made sales
 - § MER and the Carolina Piedmont Division also sold items in the Company Store
 - o 120 items were donated to the raffle, an increase from 100 donations at the 2016 convention.
 - § 46 manufacturers and retailers, plus 10 individuals
 - § \$916 in raffle tickets were sold to conventioners, down from \$973 at our 2016 convention.

- MER itself thinned its inventory of freight car kits at the Company Store. Alan Hardee still has cars available for future conventions if MER decides to continue its disposition of cars formerly used for the Boy Scout Merit Badge program.
- Items for sale had two options:
 - o Buy-it Now, or
 - o Silent Auction
- Buy-it-now allowed sale items to leave the store at a measured pace throughout the three days.
- The silent auction provided a typically better pricing option, but kept the items on the tables until the 3pm closing on Saturday. This ended up creating too much work under pressure in a compressed time for the after banquet settlements. A long line resulted. We will likely avoid the silent auction option in the future.
- It has been suggested that administration of the raffle and the white elephant should have separate oversight. This is probably a good idea and would lessen the burden placed on a single entity. One clinic size room should be sufficient to handle both store functions.

MARKETING / PUBLICITY

Bob Bridges and Don Roback put their marketing and writing skills to good use.

- They wrote a very nice convention article that was published in the NMRA Magazine.
- There were six articles published in *The Local*. This provided a marketing / promotional presence in each newsletter after the conclusion of the Altoona convention.
- Tom Shafer produced a very nice logo that was used in all marketing and on the convention shirts.
- The team submitted material to Editor Greg Warth for publication in *The Local*. Each of the Division superintendents and newsletter editors lent their support with their announcements and by posting in their newsletters and website calendars.
- Don submitted bi-weekly promotional posts to the NMRA Facebook page. These notices included deadline reminders (registration discounts, banquet and prepaid meal tickets, shirt orders, etc.)
- Flyers were printed and distributed at train shows and local hobby shops. The date change required that date change stickers be produced, then adhered to hundreds of flyers.
- MER Business Manager Howard Oakes assisted with promotional e-blasts to the MER database. These e-blasts focused on one aspect of the convention with each communication although some members reported not receiving them..

- Bob developed a PowerPoint exhibit to market the convention. This was presented at the 2023 convention in Altoona, PA, the Carolina Piedmont Division membership, the New Tracks Modeling podcast, and MER Divisions that had Zoom availability.
- Daily email blasts were provided to attendees each evening that provided guidance and promotions for the following day's events.
- At every practical print and web opportunity, our sponsors and their logos were listed.
- Two booklets were produced at a cost of \$3.25 each = \$1,040. MER's non-profit status allowed the savings of the sales tax.
 - o The Convention Guide provided the overall schedule and the clinic descriptions, 26 pages. 220 copies were printed.
 - o The Operating Sessions and Layout Tour Guide, 24 pages. 100 copies were printed.
 - o Each booklet includes six pages in color, two of which promoted our sponsors.
 - o We over produced on the books as we had 63 Guidebooks, and 21 Tour books left over.
- Bob designed and arranged for convention shirts to be ordered through the registration process. We budgeted for 55 sales and came close to that mark with 52 sales.

LAYOUT OPEN HOUSE TOURS

The open house scheduling was challenged by the convention date change. We lost one host to the changed schedule, but it allowed other hosts an extra three weeks to prepare.

- John Sokash provided the excellent professional-grade photography for the layout tour photos that were used in all of our marketing.
- The open house layout tours were comprised of 22 home layouts plus two club layouts.
- There were open houses available each day of the convention.
- Schedules and maps were included in the Tour Guide.
- Maps and addresses were also available to registrants by email for Thursday "on-the-way" open houses.
- Private home addresses were not posted to the website.
- In addition to early visits for photography and preparing descriptions, CPD scheduled open house previews throughout the summer.
 - o This allowed CPD volunteers who would be anchored to the hotel to see the layouts.
 - o It challenged hosts to prepare early to host and to complete projects.

- o It also made for a convenient way to deliver tour signs in advance of the convention.
- Collecting layout tour signs has been a perpetual challenge of conventions and Piedmont Junction was no exception. Despite tracking the distribution, tracking the returns become a herding cats exercise.
- Host comments:

Glad to report that another 10-12 visitors were here for my layout tour on Saturday morning after five operated on Friday. Again, we ran trains, and everything worked. I enjoyed meeting some pretty impressive leaders in the hobby, including two featured in Model Railroaders' *Great Layouts*, and another two active in the upcoming 2026 Chattanooga convention. Erik

- o We had 37 at the open house. Rick
- o I had 31 people, and it went very well. Vinny
- o Great convention...I had about 20 people at my house ... and it went very well. Don
- o Re: Carolina Model Railroaders club layout, Greensboro - I had not taken a count of convention visitors. I heard that close to 12 had passed through. Walter (Note: Walter Sabin escorted visitors on a tour of the restored Greensboro Depot.)

WEBSITE

- We were very fortunate to have a very capable webmaster in Rob Rousseau. Rob set up the website as soon as the CPD Board and MER approved of our hosting.
- We had frequent changes to clinic schedules and descriptions, layout open house schedules, operation callboard slots availability, etc. This required frequent website updates and Rob handled each very promptly.
- There cannot be enough proofreading of each page of the website. Gremlins will always pop up, especially with so many changes to clinic and tour schedules. Each update or change likely affects more than one web page.

AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT / TECHNOLOGY

- The LCC toured the hotel facilities several times in the planning process. This enabled the LCC to visualize the screen and projector requirements along with the peripheral equipment needs.
- This convention was our first opportunity to take advantage of the MER audio visual equipment. ECC VP Gary delivered the computers and peripherals at the March 2024 MER Board meeting held at the hotel. We used the hotel provided screens at no charge.
- Bob Gamble tested each of the computers in advance and preloaded clinic and banquet presentations.

CLINICS

- Kevin developed a schedule of 43 clinics utilizing two lecture / theatre style seating rooms and one room set up with tables for hands-on style clinics.
- Screens were provided by the hotel, so we did not need to use the new MER screens. We did use MER computers, projectors, and mics.
- The hands-on clinic room required a floor covering. We used the blue roofing tarp that Jerry Lauchle, MMR passed along to us after the Altoona convention. After the conclusion of Piedmont Junction, the tarp was provided to Joe Walters, MMR for the 2025 King-Of-Prussia convention.
- The hands-on clinic room also required table coverings. We also received the left over heavy-duty roll of paper from Jerry.
- The scheduling of clinics was a complex puzzle complicated by the rescheduling of the convention as noted above.
- Master Model Railroaders were approached for clinic presentations with the usual strong response. Thank you to Neal Anderson, Alex Belida, Gil Brauch, Martin Brechbiel, Chuck David, Andrew Dodge, Ernie Little, Ed Smith, Rich Steinmann, Kurt Thompson, and Joe Walters.
- The app Dropbox was used to allow clinicians to send their presentations, which were pre-loaded on all clinic room laptops. Using the request for file functionality is the best way to have files uploaded to the Dropbox app.
- Clinicians wrote their own clinic descriptions and provided them to the convention clinics coordinator. There should be sign-off on the final proofread before publication.
- Among considerations for scheduling is the issue of having one presenter responsible for multiple clinic hours. Any last-minute cancellation compounds the rescheduling with substitute clinicians. We prepared for this with host committee members prepared to be last-minute fill-ins.
- Some conventions opt to run some clinics two times. This is an LCC choice, and we preferred a broader selection of clinics.
- Piedmont Junction dedicated one of the three clinic rooms to “hands-on” participation. We planned for 108 participants across six clinics. We served 100, which was quite close to target.
- We typically ask clinicians to cover one subject, but on occasion clinicians present 2-3 clinics. Andrew Dodge and John Sokash each presented three clinics.

OPERATIONS CALLBOARD

- Charlie Rausch did an excellent job of scheduling the operating callboard to ensure that we had sessions each day of the convention.
- Charlie and John Sokash did an excellent job of coordinating op sessions and layout tours on the same layout, thus eliminating the chance of any overlap.
- Many of the comments in the Layout Tour section above are applicable here as well.
- Operating hosts are generally very experienced model railroaders. However, this convention had several callboard hosts who were new to operations. Charlie and Neil worked with both new and experienced hosts to set up operating schemes.
- Each callboard had practice sessions throughout the summer to ensure that all went well for the convention Ops.
- The host should know or find out the level of experience before the ops session. This will make the selection or assignment of the jobs ahead of time possible and allow the orientation to be a bit quicker.
- Some hosts provide a map, photos, a web link or other orientation guidance in advance. Having a map reference as a handout is helpful. Most ops callboard folks will not be familiar with the railroad.
- Hosts will want to confirm attendance again just prior to the convention and to ensure that folks have transportation from the hotel and back, if applicable. Carpools should be encouraged.
- The MER Executive Handbook does discuss a \$5 allowance per participant that can be paid to the host of an ops session (this does not apply to layout tour hosting). This cost should be budgeted.
- The Registrar found it burdensome to chase down those on a wait list due to so many cancellations and schedule changes. Kirk suggested that MER consider charging more than \$5 to reserve a valuable ops callboard slot.
- We did have two issues that surprised us.
 - o One participant failed to show. This created some necessary adjustment by the host in the job assignments.
 - o At another session, someone showed up who had not registered for the session. Fortunately, the host was accommodating.
- Host comment
 - o Session went well. We actually had too many guys, but it worked out. Good guys. Mostly good operators. Dan

PROTOTYPE TOURS

- Prototype tours are another staple of conventions. We have historically had mixed results with setting these up and the tours are very much driven by the leadership of this function. Piedmont Junction was fortunate to have three quality offerings arranged by Randy.
- Don Tichy of the Tichy Train Group had hosted open houses numerous times for the Carolina Piedmont Division and willingly opened his doors again for our convention. There were 71 participants spread over two sessions. Buses could easily have been justified, but the LCC opted not to undertake the financial risk and logistical hassles of dealing with bus transportation. Instead, the LCC arranged for a tour captain to be pre-positioned at the Tichy Train Group factory to receive the attendees. These captains were provided with the attendee lists in advance. As to the departure from the hotel, previously LCC members organized carpools in the hotel lobby. However, with the new NMRA policy prohibiting this, participants were on their own to arrange their ridesharing.
- The New Hope Valley Rail Road presented an opportunity to operate a loco, as at the 2016 convention. There were four participants. Additional train ride options were anticipated, but the financial risk and limited sign-ups resulted in cancelling these. Randy provided a detailed description and directions to the participants.
- The big hit of the convention for the 27 participants was the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad headquarters and maintenance shop excursion, which included a tour of a restored depot that house a railroad museum and the Sandhills Model Railroad Club layout. This charter bus tour, which included a box lunch, was a \$75 extra fare. We reached breakeven financially on this tour, had budgeted for 40 sign-ups. Randy provided participants with a detailed itinerary and event description in advance.

RAILROAD PROTOTYPE MODELS (RPM) and NON-RAIL ACTIVITIES

- We initially planned to dedicate a room for an RPM display and to arrange for non-rail activities, but ultimately decided against these efforts.
- Karen Confer had hoped that she could get a group photo of woman NMRA attendees present for the Women in Model Railroading Special Interest Group. But, of 37 women attendees, only Karen and Cindy Cook were NMRA members.

REGISTRATION

- We budgeted for a total attendance of 220, and had a final count of 215. That's a reasonable variance. However, the regular paid members (plus two non-members) was only 175, which was 30 less than the 205 full fares budgeted. This was only partially made up by family members where we budgeted for ten and achieved 39 registrations.
- 75% of the attendees registered in the first two hours on Thursday. Kirk will consider Randy's suggestion of having someone to assist folks in the line in order to expedite processing. Perhaps just a larger table to seat three instead of two would suffice.

- Kirk appreciated having an equipment storage area located near registration. There are conventions where he has to take equipment to his room.
- Kirk found it helpful that we used the registration area as a “help” desk in the off hours. This allowed Kirk to keep the equipment set up during meal breaks.
- The location of the Registration desk was too close to the bar. The area became quite noisy, especially on Friday night. This made for difficult intake conversations.
- Any registration volunteers who are also clinicians should schedule their clinic slot for a time slot not in conflict with registration duties.
- As shown in the tables below, only 148 MER members attended the convention. This represents only about 10% of MER members. As to the host Division, 50 members represents just 28% of the 181 total CPD membership. Attendance at MER conventions typically have fallen in the 10-15% of membership.

MER Division		Count
1	New Jersey	7
2	Potomac	19
3	Philadelphia	14
4	Tidewater	10
5	James River	12
10	South Mountain	3
11	Susquehanna	5
12	Carolina Southern	17
13	Carolina Piedmont	50
14	Chesapeake	11
TOTAL		148

Region		Count
21	NER	3
25	PNR	1
28	MWR	3
30	MER	148
32	MCR	1
33	SER	16
36	SSR	1
	Non-Member	2
TOTAL		175

CONTEST

- The contest room and the contest itself are Region responsibilities under the leadership of Contest Chairman Alan Mende.

- The LCC provided the room dimensions as well as the table layout plan to Alan well in advance of the convention for his review and approval.
- Alan was also consulted regarding the table coverings. The Marriott does not provide table coverings. Purchasing table cloths was less costly than renting them as Bill Hanley discovered when he researched this issue in 2016. So, we again purchased table coverings. The cost of 16 60”x102” coverings was \$102.55. After the convention, CPD retained one half and donated the rest to the Neuse River Model Railroad Club.
- We did overlook T-TRAK modules for awards. There were no NMRA Form 901b applications submitted. We could have promoted this opportunity in our marketing.
- Alan used a ten-minute timer to encourage the evaluation teams keep to an efficient schedule.
- Alan will be using Word software next year for easier formatting and printing the 2nd and 3rd place certificates.
- Kurt Thompson, MMR adjusted Alan’s scoring spreadsheet to automatically tabulate the scores and to note if the entry qualified for a Merit Award.
- Award plaques for this first time did not include a vendor inscribed date or convention name. These were applied separately, if awarded. This allowed for the reuse of plaques if there were no entries in a particular category.
- 39 models were submitted for evaluation.
- There were no entries for Traction or for Modules.
- There were 19 awards presented.
 - o The full list of award recipients is available on the MER website.
 - o Jerry Lauchle, MMR and Joe Walters, MMR each took home three awards.
 - o The host division members received 11 of the 19 awards.
- The following were contest evaluations (judges): Doug Algire, Vic Bitleris, David Ellis, Patrick Flash, Howard Garner, Rob Hinkle, Ken Montero, Roger Ossman, Dan Peele, Scott Unger, and Mark Wallace, along with Master Model Railroaders Neal Anderson, Chuck Davis, Ernie Little, and Kurt Thompson.
- There was some debate about the contest categories, particularly regarding maintenance-of-way and non-revenue. It is important that the categories be well-defined in advance as spelled out in the MER’s Executive Handbook and at the point of registering models in the Contest Room. Presently, the EHB Section 6, Paragraph 3.10.4, includes Maintenance-of-Way as part of the Non-Revenue category. The NMRA Rules also include Maintenance-of-Way under the broad umbrella of Non-Revenue. Note the different treatments of structure and display awards as shown below.

- There has also been some discussion about considering some changes with the contest administration and the awarding of plaques.
 - o Perhaps presenting a certificate instead of a first place plaque in a category where no entry has achieved 87 ½ points. This would lessen the risk of diluting the value of receiving convention contest recognition. MER might consider this approach.
 - o Contest officials should avoid teaching clinics other than the traditional Thursday night recruitment and training. Contest room management is a large responsibility that is best served by avoiding distractions.

Contest categories as of 1-17-2025		
Category	MER EHB	NMRA website
Steam	Yes	Yes
Diesel	Yes	Yes
Traction	Yes	Yes
Freight Car	Yes	Yes
Passenger Car	Yes	Yes
Caboose	Yes	Yes
Modules	Yes	Yes
On-Line Structures	Yes	-
Off-Line Structures	Yes	-
Structures	-	Yes
Off-Line Display	Yes	-
Displays	-	Yes
Non-Revenue	Yes	Yes

- We did have two glitches relating to awards.
 - o There was a snafu with losing the professional quality photographs, which required last minute scurrying to retake pictures with cell phones.
 - o There was no list of award winners available at the banquet. This created awkward and embarrassing moments at an important part of the convention.

VOLUNTEERS

- 20 CPD members received white volunteer shirts at no cost. In order to qualify, a minimum of ten hours of volunteer hours must have been scheduled at the hotel venue. Additional shirts could be purchased at cost.
- Kevin maintained a spreadsheet of time blocks for volunteers. CPD members had opportunities to select their volunteer tasks at any of our monthly Division meetings.

CONTRIBUTED COMMENTS

- I hope that you're all basking in your successes of putting on the convention and all that goes with it. Well done! Erik

- ...your team put on an excellent convention! Congratulations! I know those of us from the SER I talked to had a great time. And I could tell your folks did as well. I know it takes a lot of work to throw a regional convention, and the Piedmont Junction 2024 was a big hit. One thing I appreciated was the emails you sent out keeping everybody posted on changes to the convention. Picked up a few ideas for the National Convention planning. Since a lot of people will be coming to Chattanooga by car, I think it might be an interesting idea to include layouts in the MER for convention attendees to visit either heading to or coming back from Chattanooga....And great job getting so many entries for judging and contests. Bring them to Chattanooga in 2026. Again, thank you for a great convention. Roy Masterson, President, Southeast Region

- I wholeheartedly agree with Roy's assessment of the Piedmont Junction Convention. You really did a great job with it! I also liked the daily updates you provided. I hope future convention leaders continue with that. I have marked my calendar as well and will be attending in Chattanooga. Thanks again for a great convention. Greg

- Thanks for a great job organizing and overseeing the convention! From my perspective, everything went smoothly, and everyone seemed to enjoy it. I learned more about the workings of the company store, and Alan and Rob have a very efficient routine down for the contest room. I had 12 people stop by to see the layout on Sunday, and received many positive comments. Thanks again for all of your work to make this a great convention. Tom

- ...thank you for the excellent convention. Everything from the start to the end was great. Ed S

- ...the MER and the Piedmont guys have done a great job with this convention! Bob H

- It was interesting to see the daily updates. A&R tour was great, rest of convention was very good. Only issue was company store settlement. KF

- Thank you...for a really well organized convention. Enjoyed it greatly. Alex B

- I had a good time. We had a good time. It was a convention well done. Thanks. DB

- Congratulations to ... the Piedmont Junction planning committee...Everyone I spoke with said that it was a great convention. Steve B

- Thanks for following up. Your work is never done. Great convention, appreciate all your efforts. Chris A.





HO Covered Hopper from the Cincinnati Division

Hello once again to NMRA, MER, Division Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Directors, News-Letter Editors, Web Masters, Facebook Managers and members in-general.

We previously reached out to you in the Fall of 2022 and in subsequent ads since then.

We are getting in touch with you once again with a request to publicize and promote Cincinnati Division 7's limited-edition, HO scale, N&W HC-46 ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper cars that we have for sale. This car is unique in that it is a repaint scheme with patched-out data.

The following link provides details about it as well as pricing, shipping and ordering information.

<https://division7mid-centralregionnmra.godaddysites.com/car-projects>

It would be greatly appreciated if you would make your membership aware of this limited-edition freight car by publicizing it in your Region's and/or Division's web page, newsletter or email blast.

We thank you in advance for your support!

Paul Maciulewicz

NMRA; MCR; Cincinnati Division 7

Announcement...

RPM-East Prototype Modeler Event in Metro-Pittsburgh, PA

By Eric Hansmann, RPM-East Publicity and Web Guy (eric@hansmanns.org)



The 2025 Railroad Prototype Modeler (RPM)-East returns to the Westmoreland County Community College in Youngwood, PA, March 21 & 22! The location of our long-running railroad prototype modeler meet is just 40 miles southeast of downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Make plans to rekindle your modeling efforts!

Thirty-eight modelers and historians are scheduled to speak at RPM-East. Many presentation titles have been posted to the RPM-East website. A tentative presentation schedule will be posted to the website in late February.

Early bird registration is only \$40 (until February 28th). RPM-East is sponsored by Division 2, MCR-NMRA. Registration forms, presentation details, op session layouts, and participating vendors can be reviewed at the RPM-East website:

http://hansmanns.org/rpm_east/index.htm

There will be plenty of action over **March 21 & 22**.

- two days of prototype and model presentations
- a large display room to share your modeling efforts and learn new techniques
- a variety of vendors selling goods for prototype modeling
- Thursday operating sessions on local model railroads
- Sunday model railroad layouts to visit

There are several hotel options in nearby New Stanton, PA, just off of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. This Google Maps link can help you find lodging.

<https://goo.gl/maps/Kf55KEzfhJSMmaEV7>

Gather your models and make plans to attend the 2025 RPM-East prototype modeler event in Youngwood, PA!



Salvaging a Keystone Locomotive Works GE 44-Tonner

By Alan Mende (Photos by the author)

What do I need a GE 44-tonner for? I model the Central Railroad of New Jersey in 1953 and the railroad never rostered even one of them. But I was at a convention of the Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA and saw the kit for sale in the company store. I bought it simply because it was a kit and inexpensive. I'm a builder, so I shy away from ready-to-run models (unless it's an imported brass CNJ steam locomotive that has a ridiculously low price tag on it – yes, I'm dreaming). How in the world would I use this engine on my model railroad? Well, my proposed CNJ layout which will run between Plainfield, NJ and Somerville where the South Branch extends to Flemington will have a short spur of the Middlebrook Branch which served a quarry. At one time, it was known as the Chimney Rock Quarry, and it had its own engine – ex-CNJ Alco HH-600 switcher No. 1021 painted in pumpkin orange. Okay, I can use that 44-tonner there.

The Keystone Locomotive Works GE 44-tonner kit dates from around 1990 and had never been started. It is a composite kit with flat brass hoods and frame with white metal parts. The gearboxes were produced by Grandt Line with the wheels, axles, and gears from North West Short Line. The chassis was completely assembled; all I had to do was build the superstructure.

BUT THERE WAS A PROBLEM

The axles were held in place with plastic clips, and every one of them was broken (**Photo 1**). I contacted both Grandt Line and North West Short Line, but they didn't have any replacement clips. It seemed like I had purchased an unusable piece of motive power. But I've never been one to shy away from a challenge. Glue wouldn't hold the broken clip pieces together, so I had to come up with my own solution: Evergreen No. 227 7/32" styrene tubing (**Photo 2**). I cut 1/8" lengths of it and removed one quarter of it to form a C-clip. They all snapped neatly in place; now I had a useable chassis (**Photo 3**).



Photo 1



Photo 2

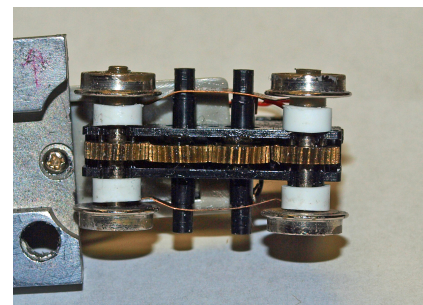


Photo 3

BUILDING THE REST

There isn't much I can say about building the rest of the engine; I followed the instructions. I did, however, make a few modifications. After gluing the brass hoods to the cast hood ends, instead of anchoring the subassemblies to the frame by relying on the cast pins on the hood ends, I drilled the pins out and tapped the holes for 0-80 flat head machine screws. And to keep the hoods centered above the frame opening, I soldered bits of brass strip on the inside of the hoods (**Photo 4**).

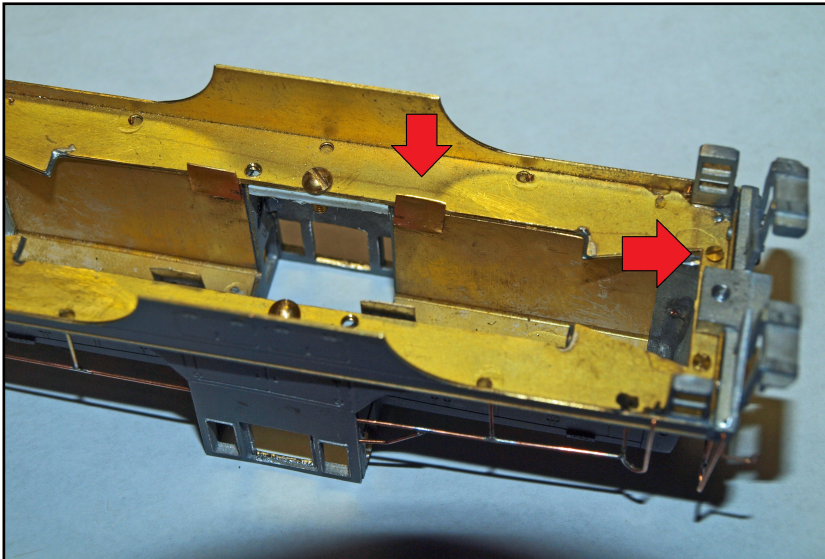


Photo 4

I have to admit that forming all the handrails was difficult. The handrail bending diagram didn't show the true configuration of them, so I went to the internet and looked at many photos of prototype engines. I also looked at several photos that I took at the Walkersville Southern Railroad during a Susquehanna Division meet. Apparently, handrails on GE 44-tonners changed over time or during use on the various railroads (**Photo 5**). It took a while, but I formed them from 0.020 phosphor bronze wire and soldered the pieces together.

Oh yes, I painted my model pumpkin orange (**Photo 6**).



Photo 5

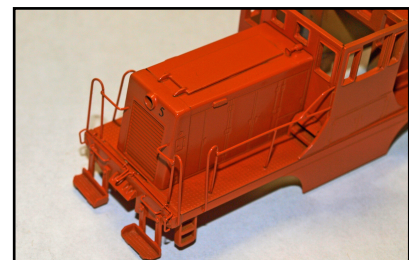


Photo 6

After decaling the engine as Chimney Rock Quarry 5, I gave it a spray of Testor's Dullcote and then glazed the cab windows with Evergreen No. 9007 0.015" clear styrene. I took the dividers out of the center windows so the engineer had a place to rest his arm. I added a Digitrax Z scale decoder and a pair of 12 volt incandescent bulbs (**Photo 7**).



Photo 7

And now #5 lives on for (hopefully) many more long years of useful life at the Chimney Rock Quarry.

Tip of the Month

By Jerry Lauchle, MMR

When I began model railroading many years ago, I learned that to make water “wetter” put a few drops of Photo Flow in the tap water. The first and only bottle I purchased was in 1980, and it ran out just a couple of years ago. I then used liquid soap as a substitute, but found that it took a lot more wetting on scenery to get good scenic glue absorption. An internet search for Photo Flow came up empty, but another product appeared: Film Photography Project Flow. I purchase a bottle of that and found it makes water wetter than liquid dish detergent. I recommend this product to model railroaders for wetting scenery materials including ballast. See <https://filmphotographystore.com/search?type=product&q=wetting+agent>

Knowing When to Tear It Out

By Lee Stoermer (Photos by the author)

I'm a proto-freelance modeler, so I have taken broad liberties and selective inclusion as to what I modeled and how. I am modeling the Northern Central Railway from New Freedom, PA, near the Maryland Pennsylvania State line, towards York, PA, with connections to the Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad (MPA) and the Western Maryland Railroad (WM). The NCR continues north and meets with the northern end of both the WM and MPA. Modeled areas are the Grantley/York industrial area, Hanover Junction, PA and New Freedom, PA with connection to the Stewartstown Railroad and a separate branch line for the Stewartstown RR. The NCR came into York from the north and south, the WM came in from the southwest and the MPA came in from the southeast.

During an online railroad club meeting that I was attending, I was sitting at my workbench - my usual spot. Everyone was carrying on a conversation about what they have been doing over the past week and what they were looking forward to during the holidays. While sitting there weathering a Proto 2000 tank car, I looked up and noticed something then that I hadn't seen before. And it wasn't the tank car model.

My northbound staging yard is located directly above my workbench area. Right in the middle of the group meeting, I noticed there was a definite sag in the middle of it - and not just a little sag ([Photo 1](#)).



Photo 1: Overview of the original staging yard area. Not the greatest photo possible but the only one I can find of the area prior to changes. The joint between sections is just left of the orange notepad on the benchwork. Note the piece of plywood that covers the joint as a strengthener from when I first installed it. I guess I noted an issue back then and thought this would solve it.

When I constructed the bench work, it was in two modules each 6' long, that were then connected together. The back portion attached to the wall brace was still straight and secure. The 'sag' I realized was really a 'twist' in the front section. There hadn't been any issues when first constructed, but then issues began popping up trackwork reliability that forced me to keep doing maintenance work. What had been satisfactorily operating track work for a few years was now causing problems with some rolling stock occasionally - not all the time and not affecting all railcars and locos equally. And, it was involving more of the tracks towards the front of the benchwork and not as much towards the back tracks.

I hadn't realized the real cause of the track issues was a gradually sagging, twisting frame. I now had an explanation of what the real problem was, but I was still unsure how to resolve the situation.

While the conversations were ongoing in the virtual meeting, I was actively looking at the cause and considering possible solutions. Would it take a full rip out? Someone asked what I was doing as they could see my activity on the video feed. I mentioned about the sag I had noticed and was trying to come up with a solution. I had been shoring up the sag with some scrap wood and clamps, just to see how much it was going to take and how much destruction was going to be needed. Turns out it was just over half an inch, pushing close to three quarters of an inch.

While talking through it with everyone, Martin Brechbiel, MMR suggested using a metal framing square, and someone else showed a shelf frame bracket they had handy while others chimed in about some other options ([Photo 2](#)).

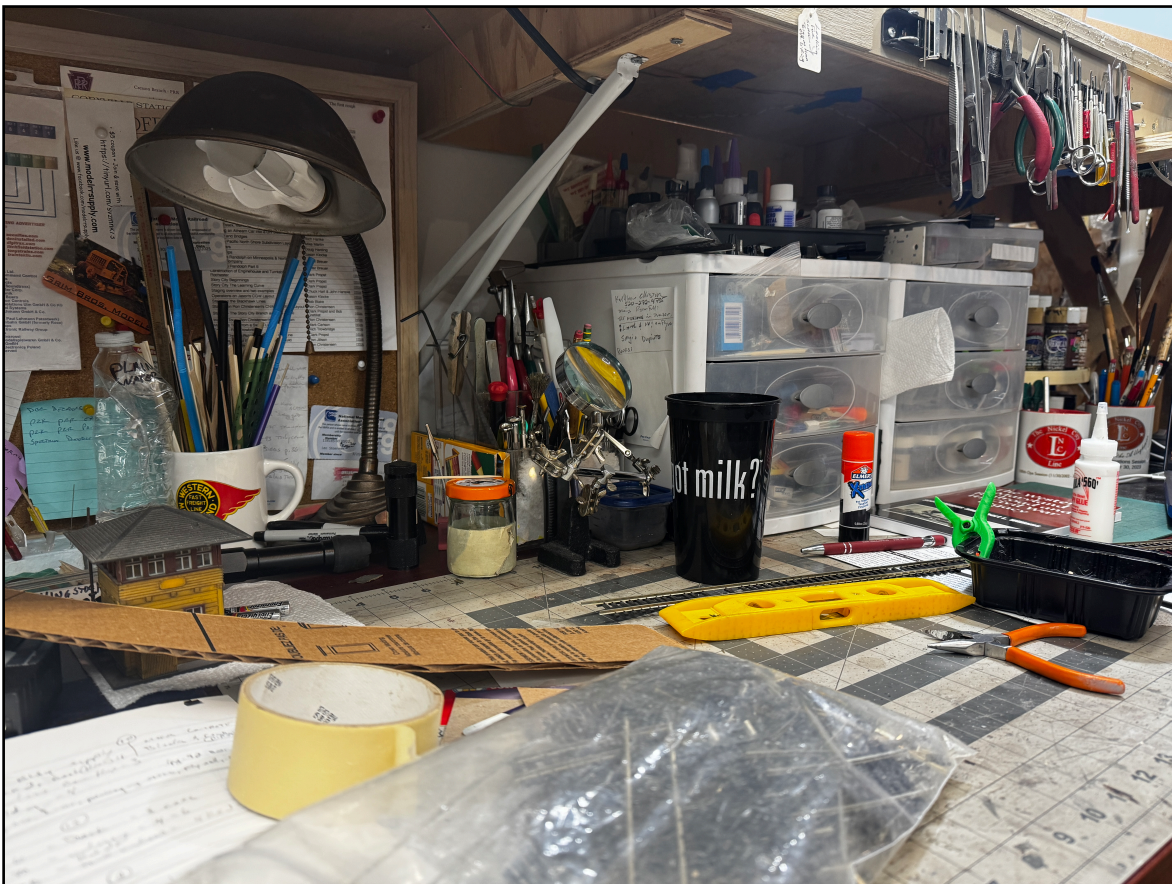


Photo 2: View underneath the benchwork showing the two small metal frame brackets. One would have worked fine but I added the extra one for good measure. I didn't want to take the chance that having only the one bracket could fail.

I wound up solving the saggy twist with a pair of metal brackets that I happened to already have on hand, as shown in **Photo 2**. That has been working well so far and all is now level. Yay! I will probably use a framing square in the future to check for any recurrence of the problem. So, next time I get to Harbor Freight, I will be picking up a couple, you know, just in case.

From all my pushing of the benchwork up to its proper position, the track work, which had been fastened down only with track nails as an interim installation, began to loosen and pop up. I tried, half-heartedly, to reinstall the tracks as they were. I say halfheartedly as I had also been considering whether there was a way to adjust some of the staging yard tracks to allow for some front-sided industry. So, the decision was made to rebuild it all. How long would that take? It took all of about an hour to come out. Those online during that meeting were all witnesses. All twelve feet plus yard ladder leads of eight staging tracks came out, tracks and wiring.

Rebuilding it has taken a tad longer though (**Photo 3**)....



Photo 3: A fresh blank slate

I totally removed everything. After removing all of the track, and also having to clear out everything on the workbench table, I was able to clearly access the framing and install the shelf brackets. I repainted the deck with a fresh coat of medium gray (**Photo 4**).

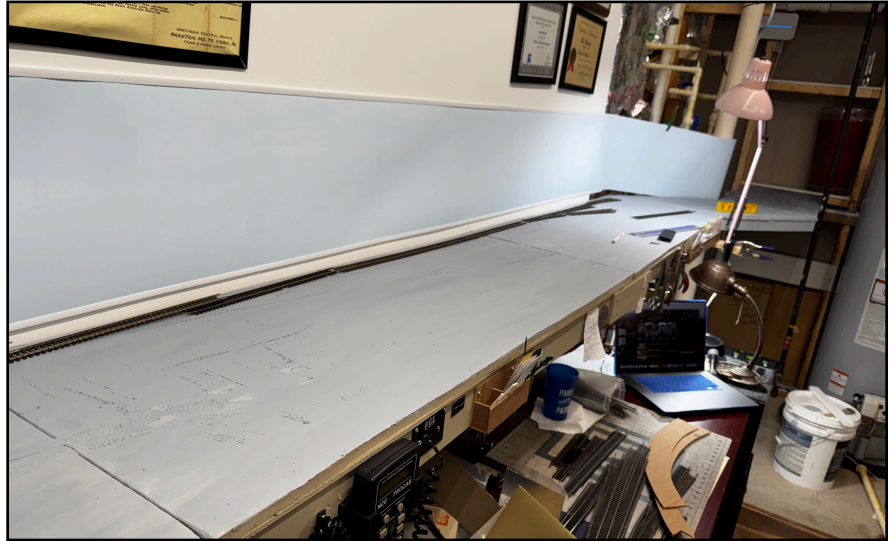


Photo 4: A new section was extended to the end of the previous benchwork for the new staging yard area.

There was a flaw in my original track design installation that I was not ever pleased about. There was a dual mainline which was the northern staging area for the Northern Central (NCRy). These stayed separate, then each split into three staging tracks, giving six in total. This was by design to keep these apart. In actual use though it wasn't working out as it took too far to travel to re-stage the yard tracks, and did not allow enough flexibility to accommodate traffic flow. The correction plan was to install a double crossover to connect the north bound and south bound mains coming out of staging. This was another reason why I started looking at this area over the past couple of months. Towards the front side of the deck there were three staging tracks for the MPA (Maryland and Pennsylvania RR), which after using it for a while turned out to be more than what was needed. If you're familiar with how the prototype was laid out, these both actually headed east, then the NCRy turned north and the MPA turned south (**Photo 5**). **Photo 5** shows the NCR's six staging yards installed. In a significant departure from the original plan, I brought both mainlines together just after the corner where the ladder began previously, single tracked it all along the back to access staging. Then, nearer the newly-extended staging area, the yard ladder fans out in a compound ladder to six staging tracks.

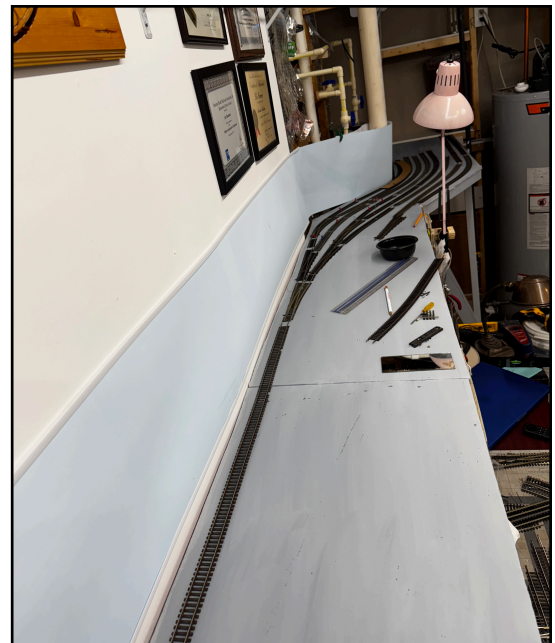


Photo 5: The newly installed NCRy north staging tracks are all operational, and much simplified.

I eliminated a double crossover in what would be a hidden, or at the least a less easily viewable location, as well as simplifying the installation and increased flexibility in access. This has all been laid out, installed and is operating quite well now and is a definite improvement. In the photo, it may not appear as such, but all the tracks are still easily within arm's reach, thereby maintaining access (**Photo 6**).

So now I have a newly opened area for an additional industry/town area. Yay!

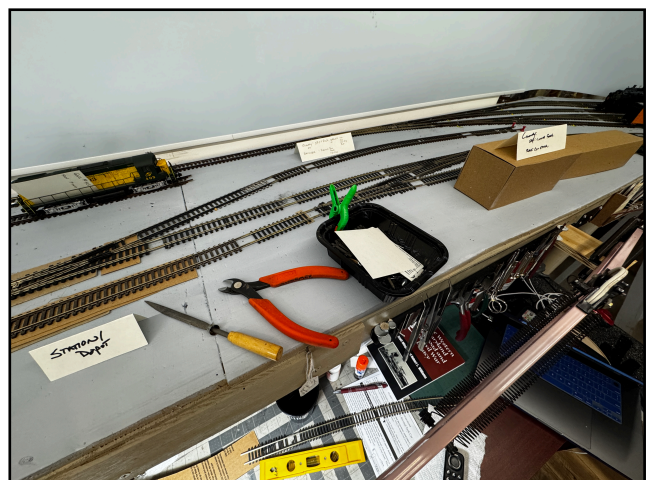
Trying to come up with some industry sidings for this area, I am considering what I would like to include. I'd want to add something that fits in with the area but might be different than what is already on the layout. If it were closer to the main city area being modeled it could have been an extension of the city, but it's further out suggesting some distance traveled, so I thought I would go with making this a rural town. I haven't decided on a town name yet. If I were modeling this as more of a specific prototypical layout, I could pick any one of several, but I am more of a freelance prototype modeler (**Photo 7**). With that in mind, I am considering these industries as they were found along this line, although not particularly in all the same location or town at the same time (**Photos 8,9**):

- feed mill
- fertilizer distributor
- fuel distribution (coal, oil, kerosene, gasoline)
- building materials/lumber
- cannery/dairy processor
- quarry

Photo 7: While I have drawn plans for other portions of the layout, this one is a free for all design.



Photo 6: A closer view of the newly installed staging yard. The house utilities are accessible with the removal of two bolts, the staging section can be removed as a whole unit. Of course, this is after pulling all the rolling stock out of the yard....





Photos 8 and 9: Views left and right of the new town area in progress...

One caveat is that the back sidings need to have a lower height building/scenery because the staging yard turnouts are directly behind. It's easily reachable currently, as turnout control is not an issue. My current plan is for a low 3-4" tall backdrop separating the town from the staging yard lead track. I am using over center spring action to control each turnout, although those in the back I may return to using a push pull rod, which I have used on a previous layout and liked that action. This is more of a visibility thing in my mind, being able to see turnout position and track occupancy. I guess I could go with some form of an electronic option, with occupancy on a panel and remote-control turnouts with position indication, although I prefer a more simplified direct option (**Photo 10**).

After shuffling these around and coming back to it a couple times over a few days, the sidings at this point are being planned as such:

- #1. Feed mill or fertilizer distributor
- #2. Fuel dealer, lumber yard, team track
- #3. Quarry lead track
- #4. Cannery/ dairy processor
- #5. Station depot

The quarry lead (siding #3) is simply a long lead track back to the quarry, disappearing behind a row of trees. For now, the track is all tacked down, but nothing is firm as to location as I continue to decide on which industry and more importantly the size and

position of the structures associated. I am referring to several of my favorite publications: Great Model Railroads, Model Railroad Planning and Best of Industries from Kalmbach (now Fire Crown) while still looking for some prototype locations for inspiration. I am firm on three of the industries so far and have an idea about the other two, so once I figure out the structures footprint, I can put the track in place more securely. In the meantime, its tacked down well and fully operational in its current position. There are cardboard boxes and other shapes as well as place cards with the industry named on them for some visual effect. All in all, it is doing well.

I shared a short part of this review with the Tuesday evening online crew of the Rockville (Maryland) Model Railroad Society in an email asking for input. Greg Cassidy replied that it was nice that I had shared about an issue and taken the leap into such a large correction and renovation. His email reply made me think I'd share it with you all. This is the full story. Maybe it will resonate with some of you and possibly spur you into taking action as well to fix something on your layout that just isn't what you want it to be, or not be afraid of making a big change for longer term improvements. I can tell you that I am much happier with the staging yard operation and the prospect of this new town and industry siding area, which will be a big boost to operations. I'm now looking at another location, but I had started scenery there so revisiting that one is going to be a bit messier. We'll see if I jump on to that, but I think one spot at a time is more manageable!

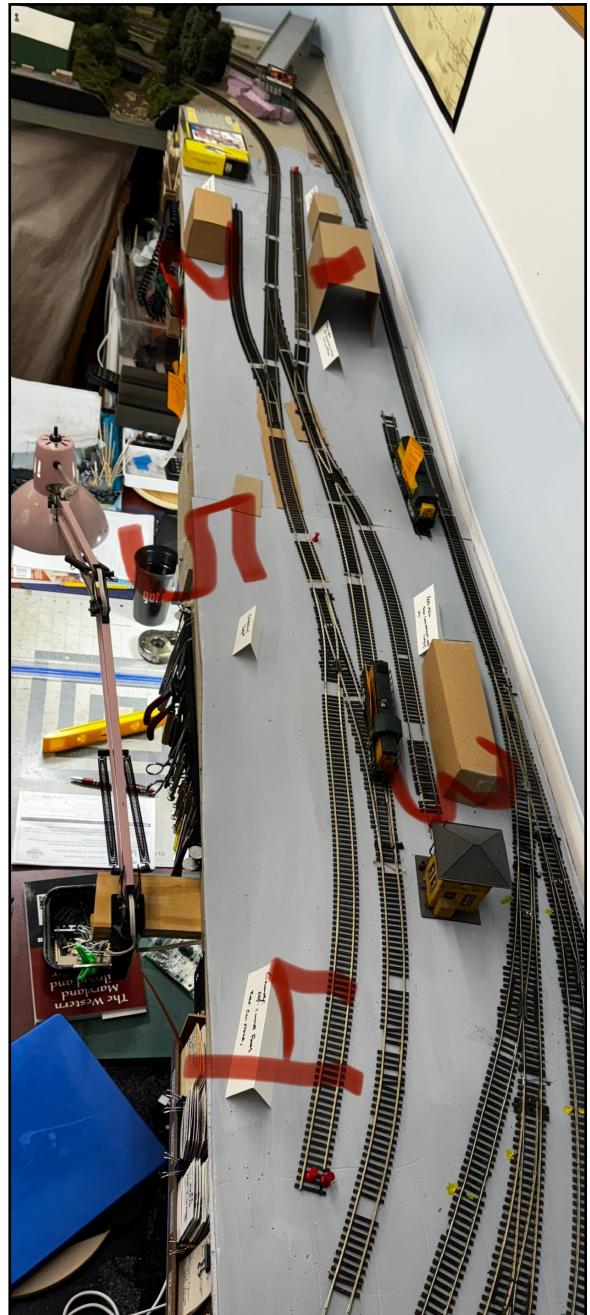


Photo 10: This is the current layout of the sidings. Numbers in the photo indicate businesses from the list noted.

Re-Visiting Building a LaBelle Trolley Kit – Part 3

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR (Photos by the author)

We're coming into the home stretch now so I'll be able to wrap this adventure up with this final installment. The roof walk was added and while a pair of body spacers to keep the sides at the correct width at the roof level is called for early on, that will be modified. That later spacer becomes more important at a finishing stage. It's also a bit cumbersome working around these while painting and installing details in the interior space.

There are a host of detail parts to be installed both interior and exterior. There are roof mats, steps(!), poles and pole bases and hooks, fuse boxes, anticlimbers, retrievers, brake cylinder, resistors, a compressor, bolsters, needlebeam, queenposts, truss rods and turnbuckles, air tanks, and more yet (Photos 1, 2).

There's also the need for a drive to make this trolley go. Fortunately, I had on the shelf a Q-Car drive and trailing truck that fits tidily under the floor so there's not the all too frequently seen hole in the floor with the drive visible inside through the windows (Photo 3).



Exterior, cab, and underbody details.....

Photo 1



.....and more exterior, cab, and underbody details

Photo 2



Q-Car drive.... pretty close to under the floor

Photo 3

The underbody parts were added before the interior and much painting and staining. The body bolsters for the power and trailing trucks were mounted using Goo and CA. Note that these are different in style to accommodate the differences in the car bolster heights. Needlebeams were fabricated from 3/16" styrene channel sandwiching flat styrene to glue on the queenposts. The truss rods were made from 0.025" wire with one end having a soldered on mounting plate securing that at the base of the body bolsters. The truss rods joined together using turnbuckles (Tichy) and some CA. I did not have an actual prototype plan for the underbody so the rest of the components (brake cylinder, resistor banks, fuse box, compressor, air tanks) were planted in reasonable locations. The one air tank was fabricated from brass tubing and Walthers end castings (**Photo 4**). Later, the entire underbody was painted Steam Black (Polly Scale) (**Photo 5**).



Photo 4



Back to the interior which got painted/stained and used up the last of my cherry stain (**Photo 6**). The exterior was Reefer Orange (Floquil) and Tuscan (Polly Scale) (**Photo 7**). Once the exterior painting was completed, glazing installed all around. The steps were fitted into place. The anticlimbers were installed along with the radial couplers. Two sets of controls were assembled onto mounting blocks leaving a gap for the end doors. These were pre-painted and then inserted into each cab space (**Photos 8, 9**).



Interior – cherry stain

Photo 6



1st pass with a bit of paint on the exterior

Photo 7



More paint on the exterior

Glazing installed all around
Steps installed...
Anticlimbers installed
Controls installed
Radial couplers installed

Photo 8



Steps installed...
Anticlimbers installed
Controls installed
Radial couplers installed

Photo 9

Additional interior details that had to wait until the glazing were then added. There's some thought as to the order of actions that is required in finished out these kits, particularly if an interior is included. I think that with a passenger trolley, seating and interior painting is a must. So, the order of business was painting the interior and exterior, followed by glazing, and then inserting interior details.

Back to the roof now where the poles, pole bases, and hooks were added pre-painting all as much as possible. The screws holding the poles extend through the roof so that if overhead power collection was desired, that option would be available to pursue. The roof mats are soft white metal so shaping to conform to the roof curvature was done prior to painting. These were secured into place with a film of Goo and then some CA (**Photos 10, 11**). Glazing the clerestory window opening was done using overhead projector film (remember overhead projectors?) that had been printed with dark green stripes that once cut out were fitted into the roof space. Powerpoint is useful for setting these up and once done, you have a file that can be used and modified for all sorts of other projects.



Photo 10



Photo 11

Interior seating started out using some seats from Walthers but they were just too wide for a trolley interior. I turned to Grandt Line for seats (No. 3017). These have to be assembled and painted. It's a tedious process, but one that provides good rewards in appearances (**Photo 12**).

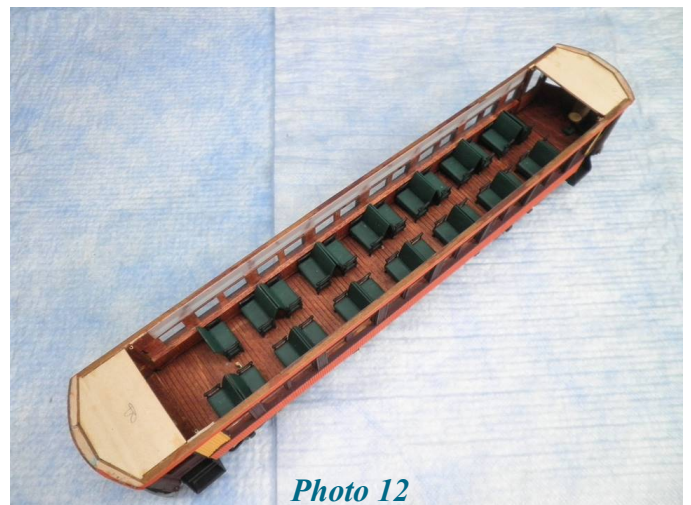


Photo 12

Attaching the roof was where I tried something new to me. I wanted it to be removable for electrical access, and any further detailing that might be desired. I hit upon using some rare earth magnets (**Photo 13**). I secured three (later 5) to a single body spacer with a corresponding number in a spacer in the roof (**Photo 14**). Yes, it's a little tricky on getting these all into a matched alignment as I expected, but it can be done with patience and CA. A final detail was to add the bell at each end (**Photo 15**).



Photo 13

That little last step wraps up this adventure while reminding me of why it's been better than a decade since the prior La Belle trolley car kit build in my shop!

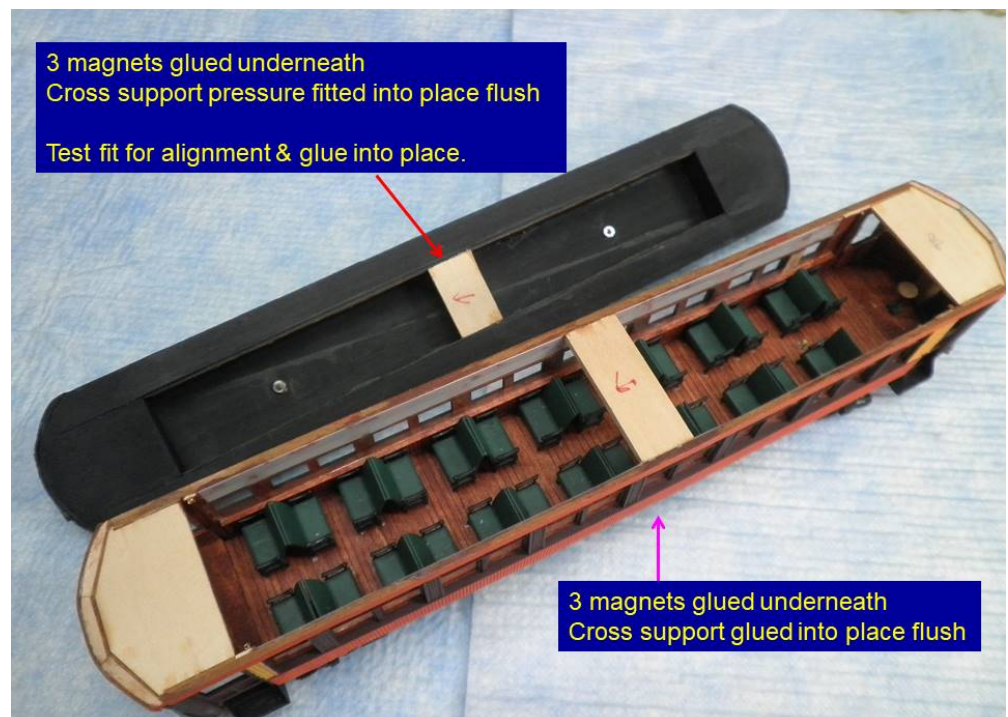
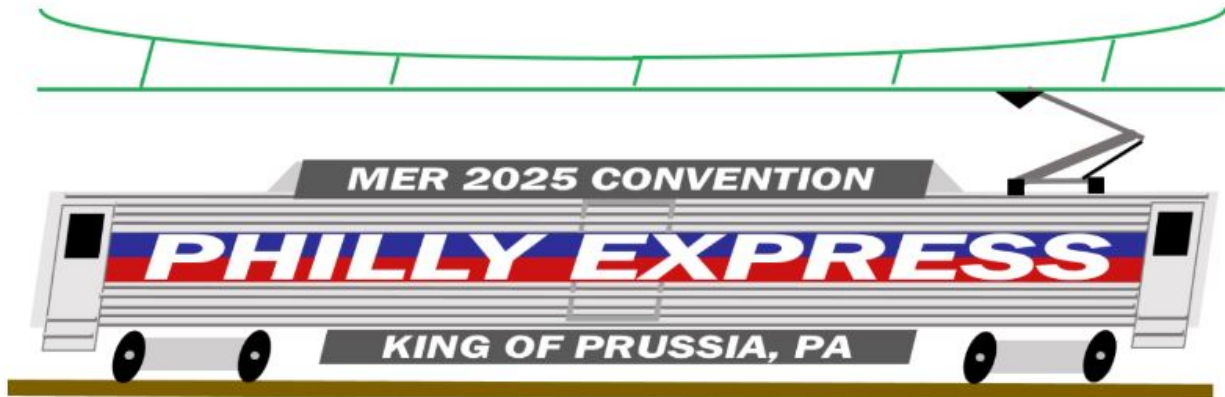


Photo 14



Photo 15

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS



2025 NMRA National Convention

Station No.VI - hosted by the North Central Region of the NMRA

July 14-19, 2025

2026 NMRA National Convention

July 27 to August 2, 2026



 www.facebook.com/NMRATakesChatt

nmra2026.org

From the Divisions...

Branch Lines

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 and to their Division Websites for easy access:

Divisions	Newsletters
1 - New Jersey Division	<i>Train Orders</i>
2 - Potomac Division	<i>Potomac Flyer</i>
3 - Philadelphia Division	<i>The Dispatcher</i>
4 - Tidewater Division	<i>The Callboard</i>
5 - James River Division	<i>Crossties - Index</i>
10-South Mountain Division	<i>Wheel Report</i>
11 - Susquehanna Division	<i>Sidetracks</i>
12 - Carolina Southern Division	<i>The Brass Pounder</i>
13 - Carolina Piedmont Division	<i>The Herald</i>
14 - Chesapeake Division	<i>The Relay</i>

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In Memoriam

John Janosko, formerly of Youngsville, NC passed away recently at the age of 82 in an assisted living facility in Somerset, VA.

John was Superintendent of the Carolina Piedmont Division from 2006 to 2009, after serving one year as a Director. John was Vice President of the Mid-Eastern Region in 2008 and 2009, then President of MER from 2010 through 2014. Most recently, John was active with the Golden East Railroad Modelers in Rocky Mount, NC.

A summer remembrance will be scheduled.

A great modeler, a great leader, and mostly a great friend. He will be missed. By Jim Murphy

Links of Interest

A Modeling Opportunity:

[Atlantic and Western Railway - WVNC Rails](#)

Improving Clinic Quality by Jim Gore:

<https://youtu.be/aSbZTYnYt5M?si=d95IpxByYmy6VzEX>

The Art of Detail by Darryl Jacobs

https://youtu.be/oLJ7IGMo9GY?si=ifS_GCqMID_FjPdg

Securing the Hobby's Future:

<https://www.trains.com/mrr/beginners/model-railroad-clubs-next-generation-challenges-changes-and-chances-to-thrive/>

Back on Track...

Climate Change and Model Railroading

By Greg Warth

How can climate change possibly have anything to do with model railroading? You might be surprised to know that it does...in more ways than you might imagine. One would expect that it would affect prototype railroading because the equipment used is constantly exposed to the elements of nature. However, model railroading is mostly indoors in what we might like to think are controlled environments. But the effects can still be significant.

1. The cost of modeling materials increases due to climate-related transportation and manufacturing challenges.
2. Spaces like attics or basements are less accommodating to model railroads during periods of marked heat or prolonged freezing temperatures.
3. Marked changes in heat and humidity cause expansion (from heat) and contraction (from cold) of track, drying out of scenery, plastic warping or becoming more brittle, changes in color of paint, yellowing of water displays.
4. Not necessarily related to climate change, products kept in storage for long periods of time are subject to many of these changes as well, especially if they are near a window that allows sunlight and heat to enter by the same path every day. Plastic often becomes brittle with the passage of time. Glue, paints and other liquids harden even in unopened bottles.
5. Not all model railroads are indoors. Garden railroads are very susceptible to damage from severe weather events just like the prototypes.

How do you prevent this natural unwanted “weathering?”

Use more environmentally friendly materials like water-based paints, biodegradable and easily replaceable scenery elements. Use more sustainable wood products for models, benchwork, and backdrops. Avoid certain glues, caulking or plaster that tend to easily crack or become brittle during prolonged periods of dryness, or attract mold in prolonged periods of high humidity. Read labels on the products you use to know whether they will break down under certain conditions.

We hope you enjoyed this issue of *The Local*. Please continue to send in your original articles. Let us know what you are working on. Whatever it is, if it’s related to model railroading, I am sure it will be of interest to the rest of us. If you want to learn more about any particular topic, let us know about that as well. We’ll do our best to research it and write about it.

Thanks again to our fantastic [editorial staff](#) for their assistance in putting this together. The quality of these issues is largely due to their expertise, wisdom and “eagle eyes.”