



The Potomac Flyer



Aug 2000—Oct 2000

The Quarterly Newsletter of Division 2 ("Potomac"), Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association, Inc.

Summer Quarter

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More modeling talk from the Internet newsgroup Rec.Models.Railroad

gathered by Harry Bacas

How do you photograph a layout?

One of my friends asked me to photograph his home layout, writes Francois Turcotte. Which macro lens would be the best for the job? I use Nikon gear.

Glenn Panentilt replies, A macro lens will not necessarily allow you the depth-of-field that you need to capture a scene from a layout. All you need is a good wide-angle lens (ie., 24mm) with an f-stop of at least 22 and a lot of light . . . preferably from a single point source.

If your lens cannot focus close enough, I'd suggest getting an extension tube rather than shelling out all that money for a good macro lens. You'll need more light, though. Check your focus with your depth-of-field preview. It should allow you to view through the camera with your stop set. Your actual viewing will be darker, but you can see what will be in focus. Adjust your focus to select the preferred "zone" you wish to have reasonably sharp.

A pin-hole lens under sunlight would yield some excellent results, but it takes some

experimentation. If you can't do the pin-hole/sunlight arrangement, mount a strobe anywhere BUT on the camera set for maximum stop. A bare-bulb strobe will get you close to simulating direct sunlight. Otherwise, bounce it off a white ceiling or white card overhead for overcast sky. This will give you the most uniform lighting effect and render colors much better without harsh shadows.

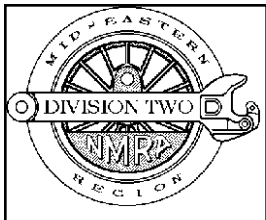
Web Sites

People interested in building their own Digital Command Control systems might want to visit the oddly named Internet Logmeter. It offers diagrams and parts lists for a homebrew system, as well as links to other helpful sites for people who want to do it themselves. The pages are available in English and French. It's the work of NMRA member Robert Cote of Pointe-Claire, Quebec, at <http://www3.sympatico.ca/robert.cote/>. David Harris built a small 4-loco controller using Cotes plan; his site is at <http://adcc.webjump.com/>.

Allan Gartner's popular site has moved from AOL to WiringForDCC.com.

Those of you without Internet access may wonder why it is getting featured so much in the Flyer...or maybe not. In any case, it's because the amount of worthwhile information is substantial. The amount of worthless information is also substantial—annoyingly so—but in a reasonably tightly focused forum like the above newsgroup, the "signal to noise ratio" is reasonably high, and in a moderated newsgroup or mailing list it's very high. And the net is about communication—you can ask a question in a widely read place, and get a variety of good answers very quickly. If you start with rec.model.railroad, you'll find a lot of noise, and pointless arguments, and things that apply to a scale you don't care about, but you can learn to filter that down pretty quickly. Harry is doing some of that work for you in this sequence of articles, paring it down to the interesting messages. We'll have more next time, a segment that's a bit more chatty and less on technical details.

Reminder: We need zip+four from everyone soon. Check your mailing label—I may have it.



The Potomac Division

Division 2 ("Potomac"), Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association, Inc.

The Potomac Division includes: the District of Columbia; Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, and Rappahannock Counties in Virginia, as well as all area independent cities.

The Division Crew

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The Potomac Flyer

Potomac Division's quarterly newsletter © 2000

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	Summer issue	April 1
	Fall issue	July 1
	Winter issue	October 1
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	1/2 page	\$20/issue
	full page	\$40/issue
	back cover, half-page	\$40/issue

Change of Address Send a completed USPOCOA form to:
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For more local information, see the
Potomac Division website at:
<http://home.cox.rr.com/hydesystems/Potomac.html>
(that's a capital P)

From the Business Car

by Garret Nicholson
Division Superintendent

garretnicholson@hotmail.com

Recently, I received an e-mail from John Drye, a NVNTRAKer, who has suggested that the Potomac Division hosts an MER convention (we are a little bit obligated to do this eventually). He has also offered the volunteer help from other NVNTRAKers. The convention dates are reserved a year or more in advance so we have ample time to plan a schedule of events. We have had many good clinics at our mini conventions and I hope that the hosts of these clinics will contact one of the directors with a clinic subject. Our division has many excellent home layouts that we have seen in our division layout tours, so we have much to offer in this category. We need to come up with prototype and industry tours. The Amtrak passenger shops north of Union Station and some heavy industrial sites in Baltimore are possibilities and I would welcome suggestions from any members in this category. Of course, the NVNTRAKERS will show their work and I'm sure that the HO module crew will have a good display as well. Clint Hyde has suggested a module building contest between NTNTRAK (N) and our own Module Crew (HO), and clinics showing work on the modules. If any of our members have ideas for the convention, please contact me or any of the other directors.

Next March we will have the division miniconvention in a Northern Virginia location, possibly the Methodist church at 7 Corners that we used two years ago. We feel that we can use this as a dry run with the NVNTRAKers for the MER convention. Last year the miniconvention got scheduled on the same day as the Greenberg show. I looked up the Greenberg web site for dates but it only goes to December of 2000. I will contact them directly to avoid scheduling conflicts. We plan to invite a representative from LifeLike to make a presentation. We also want to encourage our new AP crew, Bill Roman and Ed Price by entering contest models. Thanks to the hard work of Nick Kalis, we have home layout tours scheduled for the rest of the year. We need more volunteers for next year. Please contact Ed McGill, our new layout tour coordinator, or me if you wish to show your layout. Our reader survey showed that this is the most popular event that the division offers but it needs hosts as well as guests.

We have not heard anything new about the single dues payment program from the NMRA lately and will pass on any information as it becomes available to us.

Please note that the annual NMRA membership fee has gone from \$32 to \$34, effective a few months ago.

Achievement News

by Ed Price

NMRA Achievement Program Representative

Edmund.W.Price@USACE.ARMY.MIL

I would like to thank Bill Roman for volunteering to be the AP coordinator for the Maryland Area. We will share the job and I will handle the Virginia area. This quarter I want to discuss the Association Volunteer certificate.

This certificate uses something called certified time units or TUs. You receive a different number of TUs for different volunteer activities. You must accumulate sixty (60) TUs to qualify for the Association Volunteer certificate. There are 8 types of activities that qualify for this certificate, they are:

- Serving on a NMRA committee (National, Regional, or Division)
- Editor of an NMRA publication
- Service as a Division officer or director
- Newsletter Editor of a NMRA club having at least 10 members
- Official judge at a NMRA sponsored model contest
- Individual (or their crew) who opens their home or club aout for layout tours in conjunction with a NMRA sponsored event
- Individual who participates in modular layout setup in conjunction with a NMRA sponsored event
- Boy Scout Railroading Merit Badge Counselor

As example of how easy it is to get the 60 TUs, let's look at participating in a module layout event. If the event is at the regional level you would get 3 TUs, so you would only need to set up 20 times (most modular clubs set up between 5 and 10 times per year). Remember there are more TUs for higher levels of participation.

The important thing you need to remember is to keep track of your service as you do it. The best way to do this is to obtain a record form from your local, or Regional, AP Chairman and get it filled out and signed at the time. This is much easier than going back and collecting signatures later when you're ready to apply for your certificate.

The last thing you need to do is submit a completed Statement of Qualification (SOQ) itemizing evidence of the above requirements. Let's see more of you volunteering and earning this certificate.

If you have access to the world wide web, all the AP requirements for this certificate and a detailed list of the TUs can be found at the NMRA web site: <http://www.nmra.org/achievement/apc9.html>. This site includes the record and SOQ forms. There is also an article in the September, 1992 NMRA Bulletin about service awards.

Coupler Comments

Electronic Gadgets & Communications

by Clint Hyde

Clerk and Flyer Editor

chyde@bbn.com

Things change everywhere. On the Internet, it seems to happen a bit more often and faster. I've lived with this for 15 years, and now it's hitting the Potomac Division.

My ISP, where our web-pages are, was Media General Cable here in Fairfax County. Last year, Cox Communications bought Media General.

So now the web-address, which was "mgfairfax" is going to change to "cox". Our web-pages address will change correspondingly, from

<http://home.mgfairfax.rr.com/hydesystems/Potomac.html>

to

<http://home.cox.rr.com/hydesystems/Potomac.html>

Both addresses will be valid through September—or so I was told. It may be that mgfairfax is already dead. There's a good possibility I will change the above URL slightly, that folder is getting crowded, and needs some better organization. In addition, you can now find MER web-pages at:

<http://home.cox.rr.com/hydesystems/MER/MER.html>

We have an opportunity to provide some written input to a nearby hobby shop's web-pages, and get some money or at least AP Author points for it. More on this later...

Submissions to the Flyer:

Please send them to me electronically, I don't have the time or interest in retyping them...I am happy to fix grammar and spelling, etc., but please, if you're already typing it once, don't make me type it a second time. Pictures can be sent in the mail, I can scan them for inclusion (albeit imperfectly). This works fine. You could send a photo-scan as a JPG file, that would be fine too, those are generally small enough to email (a typical scan file size is 20 megabytes, far too large to email).

There is always room for a submission here, and you do get AP Author points for it (up to a limit, see the NMRA AP Regs for exact details).

Northern Virginia NTRAK News

by Matt Schaefer

Over the past several months, a number of Northern Virginia NTRAK members (some of whom are also members of the Potomac Division) have attended the MER Fall and Spring Conventions. NVNTRAK set up modular layouts both at Hagerstown and at Norfolk. The Hagerstown layout featured a couple of enjoyable informal operating sessions that included members of both NTRAK and the MER. Much fun was had by all. At Norfolk, NTRAKers put on a lively clinic on scenery techniques, and the NTRAK modules managed to take home a couple of NMRA Awards. At both shows, NTRAKers who hadn't previously experienced all that a local convention offers came away pretty well impressed. As often happens, good news spreads fast, and even more NTRAKers are planning on attending this fall's convention in Altoona along with joining the Potomac Division and the MER.

These conventions have shown that that the NMRA and NTRAK can cooperate for mutual benefit and enjoyment. NTRAK can supply a "home layout" tour right at the convention site, demonstrate railroad operations, help supply convention clinicians and staff and display techniques to share with modelers in all scales. The convention provides an opportunity for NTRAKers to visit home layouts as well as area industry tours (lots of folks are looking forward to the Altoona Shops tour, offered as part of this fall's convention). Clearly, this can be a mutually beneficial arrangement, fun and educational for all.

At both shows, there were some discussions as to whether the MER might consider Northern Virginia as a possible future convention location. Turns out some of the NVNTRAKers attending the MER Conventions have put on shows of their own over the past several years (Alexandria in 1996 and Richmond in 1999). These folks, who also wear Potomac Division hats, have offered to help out if such a convention came to pass. These get-togethers have provided an opportunity for a number of model railroaders to share ideas and techniques, enjoy this great hobby and make new friends. "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

NVNTRAK helps conventions and shows where we can by providing layouts or in assisting other clubs coordinate big shows. Conventions can attract a repeat crowds with modular layouts. For the Richmond GATS show we attracted the same clubs from all over the world that came to our '96 Alexandria convention. For more info on your local NVNTRAK club, the past shows and the schedule of coming activities see <http://www.nvntrak.org/>

Potomac HO Crew Module Notes

by Bruce Strickland

I promised that I would get on my soapbox and preach to the masses this column. As you may recall, I went off the deep end about operations or lack of operation on our modular railroad the last time I wrote this column. The Module Crew has had a quiet three months. The only appearance was at the Manassas Railroad Festival on June 3. The Railroad consisted of 26 modules assembled in the old reliable closed oval. There were all the usual distractions at the Festival which included VRE excursion trains and many other modular railroads of all scales. Amtrak brought the Cardinal to the Festival to show off its modern equipment and the Norfolk Southern and VRE presented locomotives for the public.

Our future schedule includes a railroad set up at the Lyceum in Alexandria on August 19-20. We will also be present again at the Rockville Lions Club Train Show on November 11-12. We may also take the opportunity to join the Tidewater Division Train Show in October at Virginia Beach if all the arrangements can be made.

We are always looking for new members. If you think Modular railroading is for you please contact us via our Web page, E-mail at Bstricklan@aol.com, phone at 703-361-5620, or by mail at:

Bruce Strickland
10766 Tullamore Court
Manassas VA 20111

Reminder: If you haven't been receiving division-related emails, it means we don't have your address in our database—send an email to the clerk (chyde@bbn.com) in order to get added. emails occur once or twice a month.

Potomac Division Layout Tours

by Nick Kalis

As I pass the baton of layout tour coordinator to my friend Ed McGill, I would like to leave my fellow members of the Potomac Division with a few thoughts.

First, it drives me to distraction that more of our members do not come out for each layout open house we bring them. Admission to the layout tours is free. Along with seeing a great layout or seeing how a fellow modeler is tackling the construction of his layout, one enjoys camaraderie, often a soft chair to view a railfan video, and refreshments. When passing by the membership table at the host's home, don't forget to make sure that you are current in your membership dues and that we have a current address for you so that you do not miss any notices of future layout tours.

Second, members of our Division enjoy an embarrassment of riches when it comes to layouts. Where else in the country can one be treated—without waiting for a national convention—to such layouts as John Armstrong's Canandaigua Southern, or Monroe Stewart's Hooch Junction? Who can forget their first visit to Pliny Holt's N-scale extravaganza with his reknowned model of the San Francisco Mole? Layouts featured in our monthly open houses have been featured in such renowned publications as Kalmbach's *Model Railroader* (even gracing the cover as with Ed Rappé's O scale Pensy layout), Kalmbach's annual *Model Railroad Planning*, or their other annual *Great Model Railroads*. Not to be overlooked are the many local layouts that have appeared in such magazines as Rail Model Journal, and Model Railroading, to name a few. Several model railroads that have hosted open houses in recent years belong to the very exclusive club of layouts that have appeared in Allan Keller's Great Model Railroads series of videotapes—Monroe Stewart's and John Armstrong's layout come quickly to mind. I folks out there will pay some forty dollars to purchase these tapes and see a very limited look at such a layout, doesn't it make sense to jump at the chance to see the entire layout firsthand and speak with the builder, in person, for free?

Hosts on our layout tours are not just great modelers. A regular layout open house is Alexandria's Paul Dolkos. Everyone recognizes Paul's name as a noted author and photographer for *Model Railroader*. Another famous model railroad author who has hosted a Potomac Division open house is our very own Matt Chibbaro of Maryland. Not to be forgotten is author Lance Mindheim and his wonderful N-scale layout which we have visited recently.

Our layout tours have not been limited to just the finest in model railroading. We have also had as our hosts, folks whose layouts were projects underway. I sometimes think these can be even more encouraging and educational than finished layouts. Works in progress serve to remind us that all great model railroads once started out as plywood plains.

One of the most memorable layout tours I enjoyed was when I was able to visit the Tucker Collection in Old Town Alexandria. David Cammack, our host, graciously opened his private museum to use when we unexpectedly had a slot to fill at the last moment in our schedule. Although attendance was light, all those who did were wow'd by the breadth of his collection on the famous Tucker automobiles. I was so inspired I went out to Blockbuster to rent a copy of the Jeff Bridges film, Tucker. The tie to model railroading that day was the huge operating LGB layout David ran for us on the second floor of his museum. [*Clint: another room had a huge load of Native American arrow/ax-heads.*]

Third, our layouts featured in our open houses have run the gamut from N-scale to live steam backyard layouts. Open Houses are well-balanced as to each side of the Potomac. We seem to run a little short on layouts in the District, but Ken Nesper has helped us in that regard. There is something for everyone.

Finally, don't take our enviable layout tour program for granted. Other NMRA Divisions simply don't have such layout tours as part of their ongoing program. The next time you read about a layout tour, come on out and have a great time. If you come away from a tour thinking "I could do better" — so much the better. Give a call to the new layout tour coordinator, Ed McGill, and commit to hosting an open house of your own. You see, you cannot lose—you will come away from every layout tour with at least one of these benefits: fellowship, a nice snack and beverage, encouragement to continue working on your layout, or amazement that the layout you recently saw in a national magazine is even more wondrous when viewed in person. Don't be one of those folks whose excuse is "I lost my Flyer". Put it someplace safe, like your nightstand. [*Clint: I always have extra copies, you can get one in the mail in a few days, or electronically in minutes.*] If you have other time commitments that particular Sunday, include a visit to the host's layout one some leg of your day's itinerary. If you happen to have a friend, family member, anyone with you, bring them along. Stay as little or as long as you wish. I hope to see you at the next tour!

Are you a scratch-builder? Interested in participating in a group purchase of some materials—scale sizes of stripwood? We are contemplating making a bulk purchase of wood from Kappler USA (<http://www.kapplerusa.com/k-p-dlr.htm>), a dealer pak of KP090N (\$117) or KP090HO (\$150), or KP090O (\$175). If we do this, we need a list of who's interested and how much they want to figure the per-person cost, whether that's acceptable to those interested, and then have money up front (the Division does not have the money to pay for it). These are dealer packs, with a fair amount of stuff in them, at a 40% discount. The material is all basswood. Let Clint Hyde know, at either 703-803-3068, or chyde@bbn.com

Only three members have responded on this so far...I know there are more scratch-builders out there.

A Great Source of Scratch Building Supplies in the Potomac Division

By Nicholas Kalis

One negative to building a dominoes style layout such as the one I currently have underway are joints between the sections. To hide one such joint in a waterfront area likely to garner a great deal of visitor attention, I turned to sheet styrene. I learned this technique from Iain Rice in *Small, Smart & Practical Track Plans*, Kalmbach Books, 2000. Styrene also has the benefit that it can be taken outside to paint whereas painting the sections once assembled can only be done indoors. Two problems though. First, sheet styrene available at hobby shops tends to run to fairly small sizes and so proves little help in an application such as mine. Second, sheet styrene is also quite expensive when used in large quantities.

I solved my problem by visiting Acme Plastics of Va, Inc at 5655A General Washington Drive in Alexandria, Virginia 22312. Acme is located in an industrial park inside the Beltway right off of Edsall Road and Interstate 395, near Marlo's and the now gone Obie's Trains. Acme's telephone number is 703/642-3030. Besides a myriad of plastics that could help modelers, Acme carries both .060 and .030 sheet styrene in 4 foot by 8 foot sheets. My .060" thick sheet cost \$25.99 plus \$1.17 tax. I now have a lifetime supply of styrene for all the scratch-built structures I plan for my HO scale Long Island Railroad.



Reminder:

The Flyer is *always* accepting submissions for publication—and you get NMRA AP Author points when things get published! Don't wait, get that stuff in now! You can see that there are holes to fill.

Inexpensive Ballast

by Nick Kalis

Today I acted upon the advice of my good friend J.D. Smith and picked up a 100 pound bag of a product called *Black Beauty*®. J.D. Smith has a friend in the Baltimore area who has used this product successfully on his layout. The cost savings with a 100-lb bag are just mind-boggling. *Black Beauty*® is a slag product used by contractors as a loose abrasive to remove paint from bridges—they shoot it at the surface to remove old paint. *Black Beauty*® is manufactured by Reed Minerals. My bag cost \$9.30 plus 42 cents tax, a total of \$9.72 for the finest variety. The finest variety appears to me to be the correct scale for either HO or N scale ballast—I leave it up to you to decide. There are three grades. The other two grades may cost a tad less. The only problem is comparing the grades as the employees are unwilling to open a bag for you. The other grades may be suitable as for modeling coal. Modelers are cautioned that this product does have a sheen to it. I am told the sheen can be eliminated when it has been bonded to the layout with a flat adhesive such as Matte Medium. The bag says that *Black Beauty*® is not hazardous.

A local source for this item is Wharton Supply, Inc., 7620 Backlick Road, SPringfield, VA, 703/455-6700. I tried Home Depot, no luck there. If you have a medium to large-size home or club layout, this could be just right for you.

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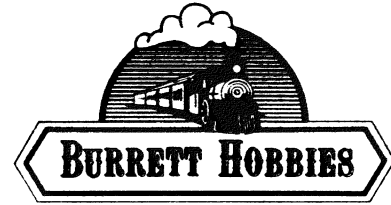
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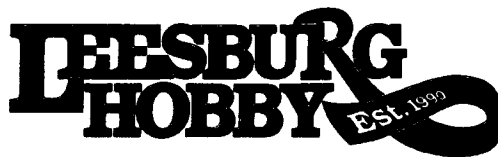
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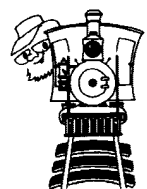
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I am still looking for someone who would be willing to wire my small layout for DCC, for a fee. I have to have wire arounds on Shinohara turnouts done as well. If you know anyone who can do this, and would be interested, please let me know AYC. Thanks, Tory Martinelli, 703-360-0613

Liquidating collection of books, HO scale passenger cars, turnouts, etc.
Call Nick Kalis at 703 734-6800 or send SASE to N. Kalis Suite 600 1420
Spring Hill Road, McLean, VA 22102

POTOMAC DIVISION

Division 2, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND INTEREST SURVEY

The **Potomac Division** provides various activities for all interested model railroaders, such as home layout tours, prototype tours, and a Mini-Convention every March. We publish a quarterly newsletter, the Potomac Flyer, detailing Division activities. We proudly boast one of the greatest concentrations of model railroading talent in the country with over 10 NMRAMaster Model Railroaders in our area, as well as hundreds of other outstanding modelers.

The **Potomac Division** encompasses the District of Columbia; Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, and Rappahannock Counties in Virginia, as well as all area independent cities. Local residence and MER or NMR membership are not required for Division membership. Anyone interested in learning more about model railroading, improving their modeling skills, and enjoying the company of fellow model railroaders is invited to join the **Potomac Division**.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name		Home phone		NMRA #		Exp. date	
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Street Address or PO Box		Work phone		MER #			
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INTEREST SURVEY

Primary Scale

Secondary Scale

Do you have

A layout or module?

Narrow Gauge interest?

Module interest?

Traction interest?

Would you be willing to host a Home Layout Tour of your Layout?

Favorite Railroad(s) & Prototype(s) modeled:

Please list the NMRA Special Interest Group(s), model railroad clubs, and railroad historical societies to which you belong:

New and renewing members: please include a short paragraph or two describing yourself and your railroading interests for possible inclusion in upcoming Call Board columns.

DUES CALCULATION

Please fill out this section completely, including whether you are new or renewing. Renewing NMRA and MER members, please supply your birthdate, membership numbers, and expiration dates in the Personal Information section above. *Incomplete information may delay your renewal.*

Potomac Division: Membership is **\$4 per year**. Members receive the quarterly *Potomac Flyer*.

\$	<input type="text"/>	New	Renewal
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Mid-Eastern Region: Membership is **\$8 per year**. Members receive the bimonthly *MER Local*. You may also write MER directly at: The Mid-Eastern Region * Office Manager * 13212 Bellevue St. * Silver Spring, MD 20904. **NOTE: You must be a member of the NMRA to be a member of the MER.**

\$	<input type="text"/>	New	Renewal
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

National Model Railroad Association: Membership is **\$34 per year for full membership**, or **\$16 per year for an Associate Membership**. Members receive the monthly *NMRA Bulletin*. You may also write the NMRA directly at: National Model Railroad Association, Inc. * Headquarters Office * 4121 Cromwell Rd. * Chattanooga, TN 37421. **NOTE: Associate members DO NOT receive the NMRA Bulletin.**

\$	<input type="text"/>	New	Renewal
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please make your check payable to *Potomac Division*. Send check with your completed application to:

\$	<input type="text"/>	TOTAL

Clerk, Potomac Division * POBox 3204 * Manassas, VA 20108

The Division will forward National and Regional dues. Allow 6-8 weeks for processing, none of us are fast.

Potomac Division Calendar

Mark events now which you don't want to miss.

August

12 Chesapeake Railway Association Picnic
3.30 PM until dark. Walkersville Town Park,
Walkersville, MD CRAW&WS members: \$7.50,
non-members \$8, 12&under, \$5. tickets:
POBox 397, Gaithersburg, MD 20884-0397

28 Northern Virginia Model Railroader's Club
Open House. see page 7.

27 John Armstrong Layout Tour. See page 6.

September

16 Northern Virginia Model Railroader's Club
Open House. see page 7.

24 Layout Tour, Vance Morrison. See page 7

October

14 Northern Virginia Model Railroader's Club
Open House. see page 7.

22 Bob Rosenberg's Layout Tour.
see page 8.

Timonium?

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Division 2 ("Potomac") — Mid-Eastern Region
National Model Railroad Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 3204
Manassas, VA 20108

The Potomac Flyer