

The

Summer 2017

POTOMAC FLYER



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The Potomac Division, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association 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.

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Tip: All of the entries in the Bill Of Lading are links. Point to an entry and click to jump to that article.

Potomac Flyer

Potomac Division's Quarterly Newsletter

Submission Deadlines

Winter Issue December 1
Summer Issue June 1

Spring Issue March 1
Fall Issue September 1

Cover photos by Elizabeth Boisvert: Upper: Marty McGuirk's Central Vermont Railway by; Lower: John Swanson's PRR Cresson Branch.

From the Business Car

by Brian Sheron, MMR, Division Superintendent

As both Superintendent and a member of the Potomac Division Board, one of my main concerns is determining if the Division is providing the kinds of model railroading activities that the members want. As I'm sure most of you are aware, we sponsor layout tours/open houses about eight or nine times a year. We also sponsor the annual Mini convention in the Spring, and roughly once a quarter sponsor operating sessions.

There have been suggestions to me that we should hold Division meetings more frequently, perhaps monthly or quarterly. I am aware that other Divisions hold meetings with this frequency. They have a short business meeting and a couple of clinics in the morning, and a white elephant table. In the afternoon there are usually several layout tours.

We have considered this approach. However, the problem we have is perhaps unique to this area. While other Divisions are able to secure meeting locations, such as firehouse halls, for free, we have been unable to find an affordable place that we could meet on a more frequent basis. In the Washington area, most places charge one day rent of several hundred dollars. Thus, finding a location that is centrally located in the Division and is affordable has proven elusive.

Another issue is attendance. The Division has roughly three hundred members. However, at our layout open houses, we only get about twenty-five attendees, and not all are Division members. Some are spouses or children or friends. The Minicon attendance seems to stay a roughly 60 members for the past several years.

The real question in my mind, and I believe the minds of the other Board members, is "Are there other activities that we could be sponsoring that the membership wants?"

To answer this, we recently developed a short survey that went out to all the members asking them several questions about their current level of participation in Divisional and Regional activities, and asked them for any suggestions of things we could do to improve upon and/or provide more model railroading-related activities that they would like.

We requested responses to the survey by May 31st, so by the time you read this, the survey results will have been collected and in the process of being analyzed. I hope to report out on the results of the survey

either in a separate communication or in the next issue of the Flyer. **I**



Brian is a long-time model railroader, and models the Port Jefferson Branch of the Long Island Rail Road in HO scale. He earned Master Model Railroader (MMR) certificate number 469 in 2011 and is currently the Superintendent of the Potomac Division. His goal is to make NMRA membership, and model railroading in general, a rewarding and fun experience for Potomac Division members. In the spare time he has, when he's not working on his trains, he enjoys playing bluegrass banjo and plays with an informal group at monthly jam sessions.

[Return to Bill of Lading](#)

Potomac Division has a new model railroad club. The recently formed Chesapeake Beach Model Railroad Club is planning to meet every 4th Monday of the month, 7 pm at the Northeast Community Center in Chesapeake Beach, MD. Contact Larry Brown <lbrown9601@verizon.net> for further information.

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Achievement Program

Introduction by Brian Sheron, MMR

Since the last issue of *The Potomac Flyer* there have been no Achievement Program submittals. In the last issue of the *Flyer*, I asked John Paganoni to write the column, share his experiences as a judge, and pass on insights that he's gained while chairing the judging panel at the last Mini convention. John's column provided many good thoughts to help modelers prepare to submit their models for judging.

Mat Thompson, whom I'm sure many of you know or have heard of, is also an outstanding modeler and a frequent contributor to the *Flyer*. I often call upon him to chair judging panels when a Division member who lives in the southwestern part of the Division (i.e., the Manassas area) wants something judged as part of the Achievement Program Requirements.

Mat has recently written three articles on the Achievement Program. The first one, provided below, is on judging as it pertains to cars and structures. The second, which will be published in the next issue of the *Flyer* is about lessons learned in building structures for Achievement Program merit awards. That will be followed by the third article about lessons learned building cars for merit awards. What I really like about Mat's articles is that he is providing guidance and insights that came from his own experiences of having his models judged. **I**

Earning Merit Awards for Cars and Structures Part 1: Judging

by Mat Thompson

My challenge in gaining Master Model Railroader (MMR) certification has been earning the required Merit Awards in the Cars and Structures Categories.

To earn a Merit Award a model must receive 87.5 of 125 possible points (70%) using the *AP Judging Guidelines for Motive Power, Cars and Structures*.

For Cars, you must build eight cars total. At least four must be scratchbuilt while the rest can be built from kits.

Four must be merit-judged and earn at least 87.5 points. For Structures, you must build 12 models. At least six must be scratchbuilt. The remainder must be super detailed. Six must earn Merit Awards.

Category	Factor	Point Range
Master Builder Motive Power	Construction	0-40
Master Builder Cars	Detail	0-20
Master Builder Structures	Conformity	0-25
	Finish & Lettering	0-25
	Scratchbuilt	0-15



The first car I had judged was this 50-foot stock car kitbashed from two Proto2000 Mather stock cars. The prototype ran on the Nickel Plate Road.

Since I didn't read the judging matrixes for each factor, I didn't know what the judges were looking for and got

a terrible score: 64 points. The model is fine, even the judges liked it. The problem is that the model doesn't demonstrate the craftsmanship expected to earn a Merit Award.

So what's wrong?

- Construction Factor: The car is basically a kit; only the middle section required extra work. The modeling is nicely done, it just wasn't very complex. Result: 16 of 40 possible points.
- Detail Factor: Except for the middle, where I created new doors from molds, all the detail on the car is from the kit. It has no added detail from my modeling work. Result: 10 of 20 possible points.
- Conformity Factor: The prototype is a double deck stock car for carrying hogs. It had upper and lower deck doors where I have single doors for cattle traffic on my layout. That may be a believable modification but no cars were made that way, so the model is not prototypical. Result: 11 of 25 possible points.
- Finish & Lettering Factor: Painting and decaling are good; the model only lost a few points because the paint scheme is not complex. Result: 20 of 25 possible points.
- Scratchbuilt Factor: This model is mostly a kit with the cast doors and extended underbody piping being the only scratchbuilding. Result: 7 of 15 possible points.

That rocky start taught me the value of understanding the judging factors matrixes. I hope describing my experiences will make the journey easier for others. I will tell the story in three articles:

- Part 1: Judging - understanding the process
- Part 2: Lessons Learned in Structures
- Part 3: Lessons Learned in Cars

Who judges your work?

Judges are model railroaders just like you who are typically asked to serve by the Division Achievement Program Coordinator or contest chairmen for conventions. Judges are experienced modelers but may not be MMRs or have earned Achievement Certificates in the category they are judging.

Conventions have training sessions for judges. If the judging is at your home or another location, the person in charge of the effort keeps the team focused. Judging leaders use NMRA forms and published guidance to ensure consistency and fairness in the program.

In my experience, judges have done a conscientious job. I have not always agreed with the scores, but the differences have been minor. My models that did not earn Merit Awards just weren't good enough.



Ed Price, Brian Sheron, and Mark Anderson are judging models on my layout. Merit judging always has at least three judges.



Both the Bar Mills station and Branchline milk reefer kits are highly detailed models if carefully constructed. But neither would earn a Merit Award, since there is no scratchbuilding, neither kit is complex and neither kit has details other than those supplied as part of the kits.

Both the Structures and Cars categories require a combination of highly detailed and scratchbuilt models. If you are an experienced enough model railroader to be interested in the Master Model Railroader program, building “highly detailed” or “superdetailed” models is probably a skill you have already:

- A car is superdetailed if it has separate grab irons and ladders, underbody detail, and air hoses and/or similar items.
- A structure is superdetailed if it has weathering, roof details, electrical fixtures and similar things.

Four of the eight cars required to earn the Car Certificate and six of the twelve structures required to earn the Structure Certificate must earn Merit Awards. In the documentation submitted for each Certificate you explain that the other models are superdetailed but the models don’t need to be judged.

TIP: If you are unsure how your models will hold up to Merit Award, a good strategy is to scratchbuild your first models for either category. If they receive Merit Awards when judged, good. But, even if they don’t, you will have learned a lot about judging results and you can count them as highly detailed models.

Each of the five factors has a scoring matrix which is explained in the AP Judging Guidelines document (<http://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/education/achievement/pdf/2006-judging-guide-lines.pdf>).

TIP: Remember, judges are looking to see the craftsmanship skills you have shown building a model. For instance, commercial grab irons look good but bending your own from wire is a better display of your modeling skills.

CONSTRUCTION JUDGING POINTS MATRIX

Quality & Workmanship	Simple Model					Somewhat Complex					Moderately Complex					Very Complex or Difficult																								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
Poor to Mediocre	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40		
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			
Ordinary	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40				
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40					
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40						
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40							
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40								
Good	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40									
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40										
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40											
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40												
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40													
Very Good	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40														
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40															
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																	
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																		
Outstanding	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																			
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																				
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																					
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																						
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																							
Exceptional	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																								

The Construction Matrix considers the complexity of building the model and how well it was built. Complexity is determined by the model construction methods, not the size of the model. For instance, a plastic kit is a “Simple Model” so there is little workmanship to judge. However, the same car, scratchbuilt with individual pieces of wood, wire, and plastic might be “Somewhat Complex.” If you cut your own dimensional lumber and create parts from sheet brass, it might be “Very Complex.”

DETAIL JUDGING MATRIX

Complexity of Detail	Little Added				A Few Details				Moderate Detail				More Extensive				Extensive & Complete			
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Simple Easy-to-Add	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Hard-to-Add Complex	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25

The Detail Matrix rates added detail and the complexity of added detail. Adding a commercially-made vent to a roof is a simple detail. Adding a scratchbuilt or kit-bashed cooling unit is more complex.

TIP: Detail on a kit that is provided by the manufacturer as part of the product is not counted, only detail added by the modeler.

TIP: There is a relationship between judging factors. The more detail added, the more complex the construction of the model. Conversely, if you don't add details, it can impact the point score in both the Construction and Detail categories.

CONFORMITY JUDGING MATRIX

Conformity	Partly Prototypical										Largely Prototypical										Completely Prototypical									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25				
Minimal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25					
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25						
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25							
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25								
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25									
Extensive	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25										

The Conformity Matrix looks at how well the model duplicates the prototype and follows normal architectural practices.

For structures, prototype references are helpful, especially if there are unique features of the structure. But, since all of us have some sense of how real structures are built, following common architectural practices is just as helpful.

For cars, prototype references are critical. There is great variety in the methods, materials and placement of features between railroads, series of cars and periods of time. Without diagrams and photos, judges have no way of knowing how well the model duplicates the prototype.

TIP: Without good prototype information, judges cannot fully score Conformity. That will decrease the points awarded because the judges have no way to know if the model is correct.

FINISH AND LETTERING JUDGING MATRIX

Complexity	Poor					Average					Good					Better					Outstanding				
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Simple	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
Moderate	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25			
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25				
Complex	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25					

The Finish and Lettering category judges how well painting, weathering and lettering are done. A "Complex" finish would typically involve multiple colors requiring masking between the application of colors.

Commercial decals or other lettering and signs can be used with no point deduction. If you do make your own lettering or decals, that would be considered in the Scratchbuilt category.

TIP: On cars, adding lettering less often modeled (the small print) can also help the score in the Details and Conformity categories.

SCRATCHBUILT CATEGORY

Complexity	Little Scratchbuilt			Partly Scratchbuilt				Completely Scratchbuilt			
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Simple	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Moderate	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Complex											

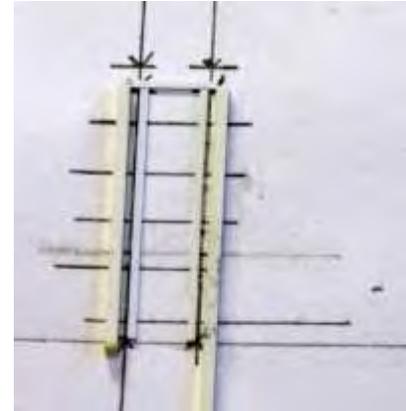
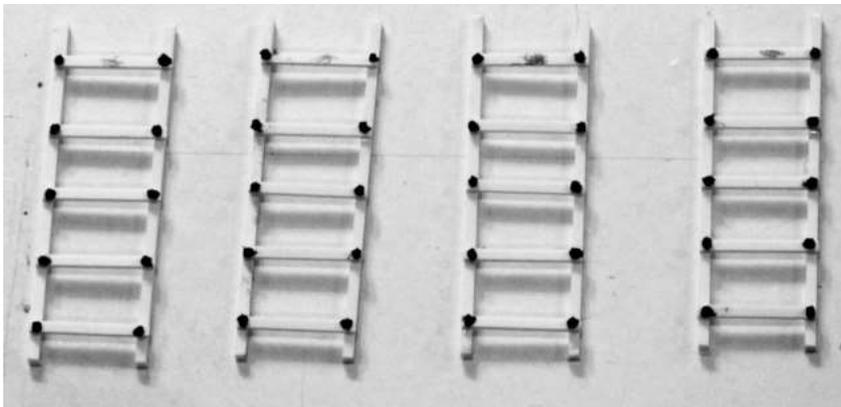
A model in which more than 90% of the parts are made from basic shapes such as scribed siding, wood and plastic strips and wire is scratchbuilt and will earn scratchbuilding points based on the complexity of the model.

A model which is not scratchbuilt can still have scratchbuilt parts and subassemblies and earn points in this category.

Some parts are excluded from being considered as commercial parts. They don't count against the 90% parts criteria for scratchbuilt models. These parts include trucks, couplers, brake appliances, decals, lights and nut/bolt/washer castings.

TIP: Scratchbuilding windows, doors, ladders and similar items can increase the Construction and Detail category scores while keeping the part count within the Scratchbuilt definition.

Judges don't count part by part to establish a number, but seeing numerous commercial parts on a model may cause them to consider a model as not being scratchbuilt.



Ladders provide an example of how scratchbuilding can help in earning Merit Awards:

- Each car ladder has 17 pieces, increasing the car's part count by 68 parts.
- Building the ladders instead of using commercial ladders increases the complexity of the model in the Construction factor. Adding the NBW castings improves the model for the Detail category
- Building the ladders improves the score in the Scratchbuilt factor.
- Painting worn spots on the ladder rungs improves the model in the Finish and Lettering factor.

In the next article, I will show judged structures and also explain their scores. **I**

Mark Me Up! — If Something Goes Wrong

by Mat Thompson

What if something goes wrong during an operating session?

On your best friend's layout the two of you can probably handle any problem. But if you are new to operations and don't know your host well, problems are more difficult.

Schedule Conflict: You are invited to operate and have a date conflict. That's simple, just politely and quickly decline.

If you said yes and then something comes up, let your host know quickly. The host can find another operator or adjust how the crew is used. What's hard and frustrating is adjusting at the start of a session when the host is unsure if you are late or not coming.

Think about how you are informing the host also. While some of us text, many don't — so a text may not be the way to go. If you have to back out within a day or two of the session, make a phone call. Not everyone checks e-mail daily, or the day of a session when they are busy preparing.

You don't know how to use the throttle: If you can, ask the host beforehand what throttle you will be using and then look it up on the internet. Different throttles are not all that different. In just a few minutes you can learn the basics.

It is not much harder to learn how to acquire or dispatch an engine. Then, even if you are a bit unsure, asking one of the other operators to show you will make it easier for you catch on.

You don't understand your train instructions or some other document: Don't bluff, ask. You are a new operator; questions are expected and welcome. The only caution is: watch what the host is doing, and try to ask questions when he is not overwhelmed with other problems. And you know what? Experienced operators also have questions; it's part of operations.

You made an operating mistake: Relax, mistakes are prototypical! Also, good for you if you can spot your own mistakes - you are getting the hang of operations.

Now think about the problem. If you dropped a car at the wrong spot, or didn't drop a car you should have, you should probably just continue on. There is always another train. These small mistakes are common on the Prototype and on model railroads.



The NCE, Digitrax and Easy DCC throttles shown all work in a similar manner. Speed is controlled by the big knob at the top. NCE and Easy DCC direction changes are made by pushing the Direction button. On the Digitrax throttle, the toggle is moved left or right. Function keys are activated on all three by selecting the desired function. Functions 1 (Bell), Function 2 (Whistle) Function 3 (Short Whistle) and Function 8 (Mute) are defaults unless functions have been remapped.



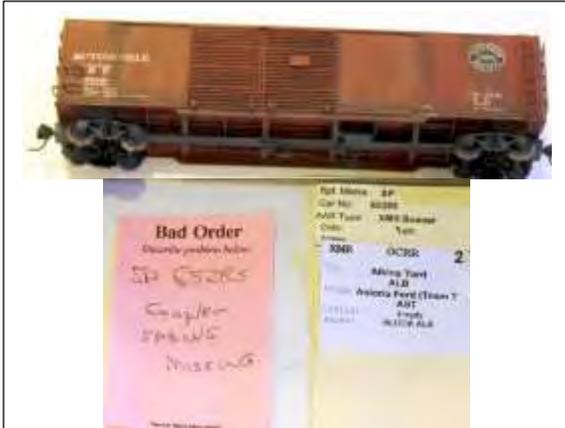
Despite the police car, the log car incorrectly spotted on the team track is not a serious problem. As long as the car card is left in the proper slot or the proper notation is made on the switch list, the car can be moved along by a later train.

If you got yourself on the wrong track or missed picking up a whole string of cars or dropped several cars where they don't belong, you probably should tell the host and the dispatcher since that can affect instructions they give other trains.

Some model railroad owners tend to script their operations very precisely. If a string of cars doesn't get where it is supposed to, a later train has no cars. Sometimes, the host can roll the clock back or change train instructions, sometimes they hand cars over to where they need to be.

Something is broken: Most hosts have Bad Order Tickets or something similar. Often in their briefing hosts will ask you to fill out a ticket and put it on the work bench. If the problem is a car, put it, whatever parts there may be, and its car card with the Bad Order Ticket.

If you can work with the problem, do it, and leave the host a Bad Order Ticket so he can deal with later.



Most hosts have Bad Order Tickets or just pieces of paper to record problems with broken equipment during ops sessions. You just fill one out and place it where the host has designated. For cars, add the car card also so later operators are not trying to match a card with a car not on the railroad.

For instance, if a turnout doesn't throw all the way but you can nudge it over with your finger, nudging it over is much smarter than continually derailing cars and engines on the turnout.

If you have a throttle or engine problem or a problem you just can't solve yourself, then ask for help.

One thing that probably isn't helpful unless the problem is serious is just telling the host about it while the ops session is underway. Most hosts are too preoccupied to remember such comments.

You break something: The first thing you can do is avoid this by following your host's instructions. Hosts may ask that you uncouple cars only with picks and don't handle the cars themselves. They may ask you not to place water bottles or soda cans on the layout or similar things. Be a good guest – follow the host's rules.

Still, things happen. Let your host know (unless he has already been alerted by the crash sounds). Should you offer to pay? I would say no, unless you did something extremely careless.

Layout owners accept occasional damage. Be careful and honest. **I**



Engineers and Fireman say "Mark me up!" to get their name on the crew Call Board for their next run. "Mark Me Up" is a quarterly column focused on how model

railroaders can become operators and members of the operations community. Mat Thompson's Oregon Coast Railroad was featured in Great Model Railroads 2014. Building structures and scenery are his favorite modeling activities. He is also an avid model railroad operator and regularly attends operating sessions.

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Mid-Eastern Region Bylaws Vote

[Note: This article, which was provided by the MER Bylaws Revision Committee, has been edited for clarity and style.]

Last Fall the Mid-Eastern Region (MER), NMRA President PJ Mattson appointed a committee to review and recommend necessary and desirable changes to the MER Bylaws. The committee is chaired by Director Ken Montero with members Director Martin Brechbiel, Business Manager Bob Price, and Treasurer Brian Kampschroer. The committee proved to have excellent synergy, with Ken's law experience, Martin's editorial expertise, Bob's practical knowledge of how everything actually works, and Brian's previous bylaws experiences and corporate memory. The committee met three times in person for at least four hours each time, had two conference calls of one hour or longer, exchanged hundreds of emails and used reams of paper printing drafts of revisions.

On April 22, the committee met with the Board of Directors of the MER and explained in detail, line-by-line, the many changes the committee presented for adoption. Some changes are necessary to bring the Bylaws into compliance with the statutes of Maryland, where the MER is incorporated. Quite a few are to simply streamline the running of the organization and to recognize that we are operating in the modern age. By far the greatest number of changes were to correct formatting, syntax and editorial errors that accumulated over the years and to better organize the various Bylaws articles and sections. After more than five hours and just a small number of changes, the Board of Directors recommended the committee's findings for a vote of the membership on the next ballot. Even after all that, a later special vote on April 30 was required to eliminate some redundancies.

If the membership of the MER approves the Bylaws as amended, the committee will then ensure compliance of the MER Executive Handbook with the mandated changes. Much of the work on the Handbook the committee found easier to do as it labored on the Bylaws, so these are nearly ready to be presented to the board for a vote, following the approval of the Bylaws by the membership. It is possible that by the Susquehannock 2017 MER convention in October, the Mid-Eastern Region will finally be ready to work for you in the 21st century as a modern, streamlined, and efficient organization.

So, please look for more information in the print and electronic versions of *The Local* this Summer, read and consider carefully the new Bylaws, then vote on the revised version when you receive your detailed ballot in a few months.

Ancient Modeler # 14: Temptations

by Bob Rosenberg

Once again, the Rapido people have offered a man dying of thirst in the desert a sip of water (alright, they're offering a man sitting under a big umbrella at a beach resort a Mojito). They are bringing out New Haven Streamlined Parlor Cars. If they look very much like the recently produced New Haven Streamlined Coaches to the casual observer, it's because they are very much like them. The only exterior difference is that the name of a river crossed by, or a city served by, the New Haven is on the side instead of just the number. There are nine windows with wider spacing instead of ten, to allow for the parlor arrangement on the inside. But at the rate Rapido is importing them, we New Haven types may soon catch up with the other major eastern fallen flag railroads in the amount of available equipment for us to run, and will no longer be turning Tuscan or two-tone Gray with envy over what those others have. And I'm not including their newly-released super detailed RDC-1, which is available in two New Haven paint schemes (although they're not advertising an undecorated version at this time that could be used by other railroads that ran RDC-1's, or their future plans for a New Haven (and Conrail) EP-5 electric.)

So if it appears that I'm reversing direction with respect to downsizing my collection, it's because I am, rationalizing with whatever excuse I need to get these new cars. When you've waited as long as I have for New Haven Railroad items to finally make their public appearance, the excuse bar is set very low. But don't think that I only blame model railroaders for these lapses in consistent behavior; that would be totally untrue. We're no worse than any other hobbyists when it comes to what floats our boats – it's only a question of degree. We may (or may not) spend more money than the baseball card collectors, but at least we don't compete on the same level as the antique car buffs or the yachting enthusiasts. I've seen people



rationalize all kinds of things, including serious health problems, and the end result is often far worse than a few extra trains around the house. No one ever died from that that I know of (irate spouse victims excluded, of course.)

The people who make our trains are subjected to the same market forces as those who make anything else; they have to come up with products that will sell and make a profit. It's generally known in the hobby that the Santa Fe and Pennsy people are at the top of the buying food chain followed closely by the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, Great Northern, NYC, B&O, C&O, N&W, and Southern devotees. The rest of us pretty much trail off from there. That's why the brass locomotive market was so important in the early years; they could make small runs of equipment for the less popular railroads, such as the New Haven or the B&M, cost effectively so that they would eventually sell them out at a profit. The unfortunate downside of that successful marketing strategy was the price the modeler had to pay for them. You don't see too many people driving around town in a Rolls Royce or a Bentley for the same reason. The advent of foreign-made less-expensive plastic models, with laser painted heralds and lettering, efficient can-type motors, and the now-added sophisticated electronic control systems, changed everything. These models and their steam hybrid counterparts, while hardly inexpensive, put each item within reach of much larger numbers of modelers than the small runs of brass locomotives ever could. The recent Rapido import of the New Haven Osgood-Bradley passenger cars, a relatively uncommon style of car with those rounded roof ends, is a case in point. A lettered, painted car with full interiors and lighting for \$80 may seem like a lot until you price them against the old Soho or NJCB unpainted New Haven brass cars which cost more than that 40 years ago, and with none of those modern appurtenances. Rationalization is not only easier, it's almost unnecessary.

We face many temptations throughout our lives; there's even a biblical appeal for assistance in avoiding them. But when you think of all the trouble we can get into in so many other ways, I'd rate train collecting and model railroading in general on a scale of 1 to 10 no higher than a 1.6. The minor temptations we cave to are generally referred to as "foibles"; for the major ones, the polite word is "vices" (and I guess the next step up is "felonies"). To my knowledge, no one was ever seriously injured (unless you were to drop one of those O scale steam locomotives on your foot) or had their lives destroyed by a collection of trains. Consider the economics of model railroading compared to golf. Start with the dues for the NMRA compared to the cost of belonging to a country club such as Westwood in Vienna, or Belle Haven in Alexandria. Then add in the club monogrammed golf shirts, the golf clubs from the pro shop, the club stamped golf balls (by the dozens; they do get lost, you know), and the gallons of sun screen you'll go through to prevent those Basal Cell things from growing on you while you're out in the sun all day long, and you could have had yourself a sizeable collection of brass locomotives. Just thinking about it makes me grateful that I'm such a terrible golfer. Model railroading has many advantages for people like me as we move along into senior citizenship, or in my case, beyond that into "ancient modeler" status. We can buy bigger, brighter, lights and magnifiers as our vision declines. I've not found either of those items particularly useful for locating a golf pin 300 yards from the tee. Additionally, the basement where my trains live is pleasant year round – cool in the summer and warm in the winter – because it's also the furnace room. Not even baseball was that accommodating. Unfortunately, the one essential thing model railroading lacks that most of us need at any age is a physical exercise component. As much as I'd like to believe otherwise, I really don't think that crawling around the floor looking for small, lost parts counts as an exercise program no matter how often you drop things, although just getting up after looking for them has for me become an aerobic workout in and of itself.

So as long as you're not spending your children's college education money or money that you've been saving to buy a house, and you can manage to do it within reason, indulge yourself a little. If, as they used to say back before I became quite so ancient, "life is too short to sweat the small stuff," we are talking about the small stuff here, at least if you're modeling in HO or N scale (now there's a combination of a rationalization and a bad pun). And if your spouse gets too bent out of shape over what you're doing, tell him or her that it was my idea; if you're lucky, they'll take it out on me instead of you, and if I'm lucky, I'll survive; if not, then Ancient Modeler # 15, when it come out in the fall, will have lengthy descriptions about all those great model railroad layouts awaiting the rest of you in the sky. **I**



Bob Rosenberg's current railroad, the Berkshire Air Line Railroad Company, is a fictional bridge/short line set in western Massachusetts in the 1950's that uses New Haven, B&M, and NYC equipment.

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Preparing for the Crossroads of the MER

The Potomac Division is hosting the 2018 MER convention, “The Crossroads of the MER.” It will be held over Columbus Day weekend, October 4-7, 2018 at the Rockville Hilton in Rockville, Maryland. The Potomac Division is staffing a Local Convention Committee (LCC) to plan and operate the convention.



Bill Demas, who has volunteered to serve on the LCC as the coordinator for home layout tours and operations callboard, has started recruiting and has a message for us: "As everyone knows, three of the main components to a convention are clinics, layout tours and ops sessions. The latter two are where I come in. If you are interested in hosting either or both, get in touch with me by phone [(Cell) 240 447 1218 or (Home) 301 460 0741] or email wsdemas@verizon.net. Please state if you have a preference for a specific day and or time slot or would be flexible. Obviously, we can't overload any one day or slot, but I'll do my best to accommodate you. You're the ones volunteering after all."

The times are Thursday: 1:00 - 5:00 pm & 6:30 - 10:30 pm; Friday: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm, 1:00 - 5:00 pm, and 6:30 - 10:30 pm; Saturday: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm, and 1:00 - 5:00 pm; and Sunday: after 11:00 am. Of course, the aim is to group layout tours in geographical clusters as close as possible to mitigate the effects of Washington area traffic. Ideally, layouts closest to the hotel would be best for Thursday and Friday evenings, and the Virginia and further-away Maryland layouts during the day Friday or Saturday. This has worked well for us in the past and will form the framework again, but we'll do everything to accommodate what works best for you.

Should you wish to volunteer, we'll need a brief description of your layout to put in the guidebook; pictures are really welcome. If your layout is listed in the Potomac website, we can use that if you wish. If you want to update it, let Webmaster Bill Mosteller know. If you are doing this for the first time and are not sure what to include, check out the descriptions on the website under layout tours.

Continues Bill, "I already have several home layout tours lined up, and a few operations sessions as well. Soon I expect the usual suspects who can always be counted on will step up, and that's great. I can almost close my eyes and name them. We are fortunate to have no shortage of famous names and layouts within our division and I know folks will want to see those layouts, meet those modelers, and attend their clinics. I really want to encourage everyone to participate. I'm writing this at those who for whatever reason hesitate or hold back. I have NEVER met any modeler who has disparaged another's work. Never. This is the most unselfish, supportive group I have ever been a part of – including my time in the Army. They share their

knowledge unstintingly and only offer advice when asked. Hosting a layout tour is also a great motivator to finish those projects you have been putting off for so long (mine is getting the fascia up among many, many things I've got to do).

"I hope I have encouraged a few of you to feel more confident to give it a go and host a layout tour. I really want to hear from you." **I**

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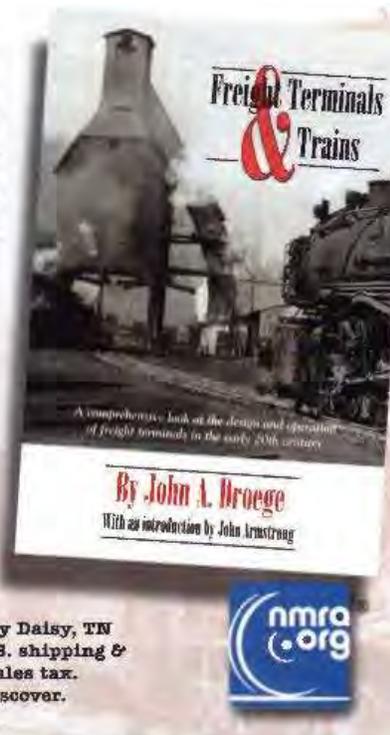
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We'd Like You To Meet: Brad Trenkamp

by Roger Sekera



Raised near Cincinnati, Brad Trenkamp is clearly in the early stages of his modeling career, but a career with a strong prototypical base and a clear direction. His interest in railroading began when his father worked as a Civil Engineer for CSX and, as a result, the family moved within the system to Baltimore, Columbus and then back to Kentucky. Brad has an undergraduate degree in Economics from Eastern Kentucky University (Richmond KY), followed by an MS in Public Policy from The University of Kentucky (Lexington). He then moved to Washington, DC taking a position with the Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics at the Social Security Administration.

A recent move to Alexandria has allowed him the space to begin designing and building a model railroad. For his HO scale layout (using Digitrax) he has chosen an area in and around Trujillo and Sons in Miami Florida, for a prototype that is Florida East Coast turf. The era is now.

In their own terms, Trujillo and Sons “was established in 1966 as a family-owned and operated firm to provide quality food products to the food service and distribution industries. Trujillo also manufactures oil, sauces, spices and condiments, and much more.”

Brad recently visited Miami and Trujillo and Sons with Lance Mindheim, taking 500 pictures. Lance, who has been a strong

influence on Brad both in layout design and operational detail, notes that “Brad spends a lot of effort and energy on research to get things right before starting the project.”

Brad notes that he “has the benchwork and track down.” Admittedly, with two turnouts this layout is simple—but not crude. This simplicity lends this layout sophistication. It is devoid of switching puzzles and superfluous complexity, instead electing to model the prototype as it exists. In fact, with little selective compression, Trujillo and Sons is modeled at nearly its full HO scale dimensions. Operations feature prototypically correct speeds, stopping to allow the conductor to flag unprotected crossings, open locked gates, set hand brakes on spotted cars and to allow time for break tests. If an operator adheres to these practices, the layout can support an hour-long solo session.

As Brad notes further, “the session starts with the local crew backing off the main slowly from the Hialeah Yard. Once the crew enters the Trujillo complex, they pull all cars currently spotted, even if they are not empty. The crew then places the entire cut of cars (current spots and incoming) on the sorting track, then proceeds to spot cars at the appropriate doors through a series of push/pull moves. Some cars will be empty and will leave with the crew. Others will be still loading or unloading and will require respotting. Others will not have room and will be left on the spotting track for the next crew.”

Brad and his wife Margaret and their two dogs look forward to a time when they will have more space, but this current approach serves them well. Thus, Brad has focused his efforts on replicating this single company and their traffic patterns. Often, as readers of this column know, the focus of this column has been on model railroads with a bigger footprint and more advanced scheme. That we can catch Brad in the emerging stage of his modeling life is totally refreshing, partly because of his strong attention to a prototype and that prototype's operational patterns.

We are encouraged to stay tuned. 



Roger Sekera, a retired executive search consultant, lives in Potomac Maryland. His HO scale Clinch Valley Lines (CVL) models railroad activity (heavy coal balanced by general merchandise traffic) in 1959 in the Southwestern area of Virginia. The CVL has been fully TT/TO operational for over four years.

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What's in that Name? Blatz Old Heidelberg Beer

by Nigel Phillips

The photograph shows a Branchline Trains Blueprint Series HO kit of a URTX (Union Refrigerator Transit Co.) 40' "billboard" reefer proudly advertising Blatz's Heidelberg Beer and dated 1933.



The Heidelberg in question is Heidelberg Castle, home of the largest wine barrel in the world, the

Heidelberg Tun. It was rarely used for its intended purpose of storing wine; it has a dance floor perched on the top. Blatz Brewery beer labels for 1933 state "Old Heidelberg", those for 1934 state "Old Heidelberg Castle." The beer had a 4% alcohol content, and was a Pilsner-type light lager.

So, time for another ramble through history – this time a tale of a consummate German immigrant brewer in Milwaukee, WI marrying the widow next-door (apparently quite common among Milwaukee brewery owners in the 19th century) and doing extremely well. Why Milwaukee? A number of factors were responsible for immigrant German brewers locating in Milwaukee – a plentiful supply of lake ice during the winter, essential for lager-style beer fermentation in the summer, high quality local barley for malt production, and pure water from deep (1000 feet or more) artesian wells. And, of course, there were all of those immigrants who liked to be reminded of the "old country" over a stein or three after work.

Valentine Blatz was born in Miltenberg-on-the-Main, Bavaria, on October 1, 1826. His father, Casper Blatz, was a brewer, and on leaving school at age 14, Valentine spent the next four years as an apprentice at his father's brewery. He then worked for four years in various breweries in Bavaria. His father paid for a substitute so that Valentine was exempt from mandatory military service upon reaching 21 years of age. Valentine promptly left for the USA, arriving in New York in August 1848. He spent a year in Buffalo, NY, working at Philip Born's brewery, and then moved to Milwaukee, WI, in 1849. He found work as supervisor (and was reportedly head brewer) at the Cedar Brewery, founded in 1846 and owned by Johannes (John) Braun. While working at the Cedar Brewery, Valentine boarded at Braun's house. Annual production was around 150 barrels, with a storage capacity of 80 barrels—small beer compared to what was to come.

Valentine Blatz saved enough money (\$500) while working for John Braun to buy half a city block close to the Cedar Brewery. In 1851 he left and founded his own brewery. John Braun died while on a business trip at about the same time that Valentine was establishing his own brewery, and Valentine married John Braun's pregnant widow Louise in December of 1851 (some sources say 1852). He legally adopted the daughter, also named Louise, and raised John Braun, the son of John and Louise Braun, as his own son. Valentine had five children with his wife Louise. The marriage enabled him to combine the two breweries, which he renamed City Brewery. This brewery produced 500 barrels of beer in the first year, employing "four hands," according to contemporary accounts. By 1861 the City Brewery was producing some 80,000 barrels of beer a year.

Valentine Blatz was by all accounts an excellent brewer as well an astute, well-respected and tenacious businessman. He was the first brewer in Milwaukee to produce bottled beer (1875). These would have had ceramic stoppers or possibly corks and wire bottle stops, as crown caps with cork liners were not invented until 1892. The bottling plant was located in the adjacent city block, as brewers by law could not brew and bottle in the same plant. A Milwaukee company, Torchiani & Kremer, managed the bottling plant after 1878. No wonder period illustrations and photographs of Milwaukee show the streets crowded with horses and wagons overloaded with beer barrels on their way to and from the bottling plants or the railheads. Regulations changed in 1890, allowing bottling within breweries. Later that year the transport of beer from the brewery to the bottling plant by pipeline (for those breweries that had already built separate bottling

plants) was permitted. Shades of the Heineken brewery, where the founder had a pipe from the factory to his house allowing a cool one on tap, just for quality control purposes of course.

Business boomed in the beer industry in the second half of the 19th century, especially in Milwaukee, as beer was cheaper than bottled water and a lot safer to drink. By 1868 Valentine Blatz had built a new malt house, malt kiln and ice store. The business suffered a catastrophic fire in August 1872, when the malt house, engine room and much of the main building, but not the brewery proper, were destroyed. Rapid reconstruction in three months had the plant up and running early the following year. This was in addition to the loss by fire of the maltings at Kenosha, WI, in the same year (fires were a common event in the days of coal- and wood-fired floor malting) and the collapse of the maltings in 1874. In spite of this, production was nearly 50,000 barrels in 1873 and rose to 64,000 barrels in 1874. By 1886, Blatz's beer vaults and ice cellars could hold 65,000 barrels of beer with a production capacity of over 150,000 barrels per year. Pasteurization of beer became commonplace after 1873, allowing breweries to transport their products long distances by rail.

The Blatz brewery had established a number of agencies in the 1870's and 1880's to which barreled beer was transported by rail and bottled locally, as well as being sold as draft beer in the company-owned taverns. Some reports state that 1000 reefer loads per year were being shipped from the brewery, a 35-foot reefer holding about 90 barrels of beer. This would have been well over 50% of the production. By 1886 the Blatz brewery was shipping beer to "every state in the Union." This was sometimes not particularly cost-effective, due to the practice of freeloaders drilling through the sides of the loaded wood reefers in the yards at night to "tap" the barrels stacked inside. Having the outermost barrels empty prevented this but increased shipping costs. Shipping pasteurized beer in crown top bottles finally put a stop to the pilferage. Competition between the different railroads for the beer traffic from the many breweries in Milwaukee was fierce. Commissions (rebates) were paid indirectly to the breweries through the reefer owners (who also had interests in or owned the breweries) until the practice was declared illegal in 1906.

Valentine Blatz was the sole owner of the business until 1889 when it became the Val. Blatz Brewing Company. Officers of the new corporation were all close family. The company was sold in 1890 or 1891 (various sources give different dates) to a group of British and American investors incorporated as the United States Brewing Company (known variously as the "English Syndicate," "Chicago Syndicate" or the "Milwaukee & Chicago Breweries, Ltd."). Valentine Blatz (who was a member of the syndicate) and his family netted \$3 million and continued to operate the brewery, probably as minority shareholders.

Valentine Blatz died suddenly in 1894, leaving a personal fortune of some \$8 million, and the brewery continued to be run by his sons Albert C. Blatz (Directing Head) and Valentine Blatz, Jr., along with John Kremer, a son-in-law. The year 1920 and the 18th amendment put a stop to brewing anything with more than 0.8% alcohol ("near-beer"), and the Company turned to a range of non-alcoholic beverages such as low alcohol near-beer, soda water and ginger ale, malt extracts, hops syrups and extracts, and even chewing gum (with some very questionable advertising that today would be banned). Low alcohol-content beer was nothing new to the Blatz brewery. The "All Hail" brand of 1896 had less than 2% alcohol, and in 1906 the "Tempette Non-Intoxicating Temperance Beer" brand had 0.5% alcohol. Blatz's "Standard Milwaukee Beer" brand of 1918 had, by comparison, 4.5% alcohol (which is low compared to beer today where 6%-9% alcohol is common). Old Heidelberg Brew in 1926 during prohibition had less than 0.5% alcohol. The Company returned to brewing real beer in 1933 under new control and a new name – Blatz Brewing Co. Sales fell significantly over the next 20 years, with Blatz ranking as the Number 10 producer by 1940 with 600,000 barrels. Sales continued to decline, and Pabst purchased the company in 1958. Prevented by a federal court order from brewing at the Blatz facility, the brand was sold to G. Heilman the following year, and then re-acquired by Pabst in 2000.

The Miller Brewing Company, a MillerCoors Company (itself a division of MolsonCoors) currently brews Blatz beer under contract for Pabst. Whether it is as good as Valentine Blatz intended is something we will never know. Contemporary reports strongly suggest that Valentine Blatz followed the Bavarian standard he was trained in – water, local barley malt, imported German hops, and yeast. Today many commercial beers are adjuncted with low-cost starches from unmalted grain – anything from corn to wheat – that have significant effects on taste and feel. American floral versus European floral and bitter hops have a significant impact on taste, and the use of 6-row barley versus 2-row barley affects flavor. Valentine Blatz would probably have some difficulty recognizing today's brew. There are no suppliers in the Potomac

Division area that I am aware of, so I cannot provide any tasting notes. If I do find some – Cheers! Or even better, Prost!

Modeling notes.

There are plenty of choices as long as you are OK with the auction house/used/old stock/white elephant stall. In N scale, there are models from Atlas and Minitrix. In HO scale, there are models from Athearn, Branchline Trains (now Atlas, and probably the only model still in production if you want a new one), Fleishmann, Red Ball, Roundhouse, Train Miniature (taken over by Walthers), Ye Old Huff and Puff, Varney and Walthers. Most of these will require new wheels and couplers, as well air pipes, trip levers and underframe brake details (especially the Athearn one, where the brake work is on the wrong side). See The H.O. Beer Car Collectors Website (hobeercars.com) for some photos of the various models. There was even one in American OO scale (4mm scale). In O scale, there are models from Atlas, K-Line, and Williams. There are also card sides and decals in HO and O scale. The date of 1933 on that Branchline Blatz reefer is spot on and corresponds to the beer label of that year. (This, of course, makes me wonder whether the Branchline Blatz billboard is actually taken from the beer bottle label. Hmm.)

Interestingly I have been unable to find a photo of a URTX reefer painted up for Blatz Heidelberg Beer. The Branchline Blueprint effort seems to be historically correct based on some HO decals that state they are “based on the real thing.” What the reefers looked like before the URT 40-footers came along is something I am currently researching.

A note on “URTX Billboard Reefers”

The following is from the Branchline Blueprint kit insert with some additional information:

The American Car & Foundry Co. built 400 reefers for URT in 1926. They had bright yellow sides with red ends and roof, and black car cement for the underbody. These cars had a wide variety of “billboard” paint schemes applied when leased to private owners, serving as highly visible rolling advertisements for the private owner’s products. Billboards lasted until July 1934, when ICC regulation #201 came into effect, stating that after that date the lessee’s name must not be larger than 12”. Starting in January 1937, cars with billboard schemes were banned from interchange between railroads, thus restricting their use to one railroad. By the beginning of World War II the cars that remained in service reverted to the URT color scheme. If you want to be pedantic, the modeling period for large billboards is from the turn of the century to 1934, for small billboards 1934-1941.

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Nigel Phillips models in 4mm scale (18.2mm standard gauge and narrow gauge), and 7mm scale narrow gauge. He builds his own turnouts (at \$5 a pop it's a lot less expensive than RTR), and build/solder white metal locomotive kits, as well as scratch building in brass,

His primary railway modeling interests lie with the Great Northern Railway, circa 1924 (steam and electric) and 1955 (steam-diesel transition). His other railway modeling interest is the Great Western Railway (GWR) in the UK, 1945-1960. This covers the nationalization of the railways and the death of “private owner” freight cars (“wagons”, “vans”, tankers) after 1947.

Around the Bend

Ready to share your layout with fellow enthusiasts? Well, we would love to see it. Currently, the schedule is open, and we are taking requests to host layout tours for Fall 2017 and 2018. Your layout does not need to be complete; in fact, it is often better that way. When is a layout ever complete anyway?

Hosting an open house is also a great way to meet other model railroaders in the Potomac Division area. And it is not a big deal! The Potomac Division sponsors tours of members’ layouts approximately once every month. They are held on a Saturday from 1 pm to 4 pm. The Division 1.) can provide you with pointers for preparing your layout for the open house, 2.) will advertise it on the Division web page, 3.) remind the membership about it a week before it is scheduled, and 4.) will provide a greeter to greet visitors, have them sign a guest register, and show them the way to your layout.

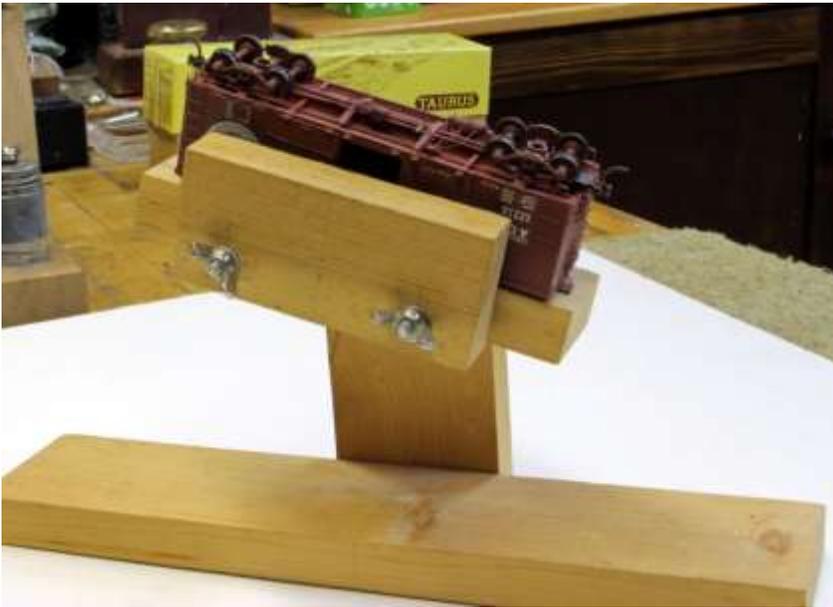
So if you are ready to have some great folks over to compliment your layout and to share some good stories, shoot Tom Brodrick an email at Layout-Tours@potomac-nmra.org or give him a call at (301) 253-

0558. **I**

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Car Rotator

by John Paganoni, photographs by Mat Thompson



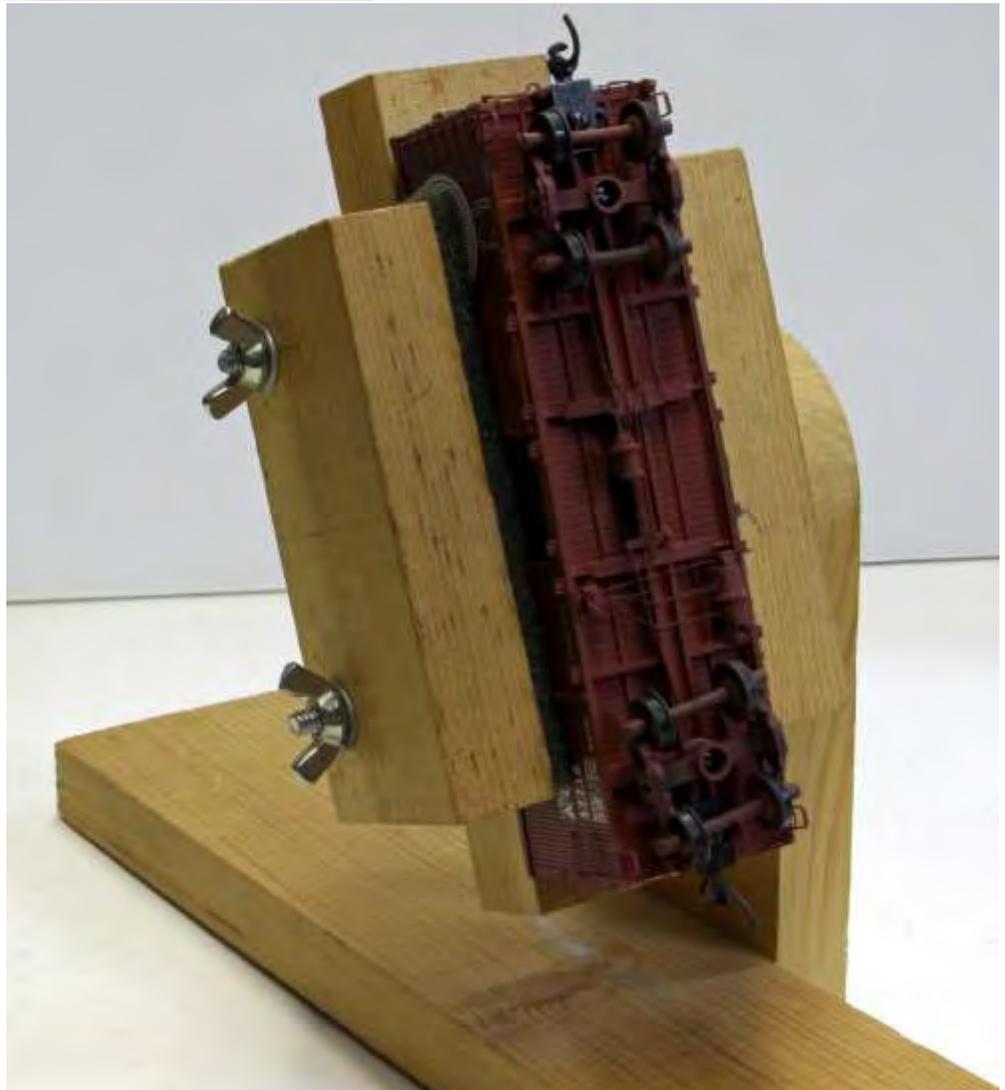
Building and detailing cars can be a difficult chore – especially as the car is nearing completion. A car rotator can be helpful when applying detail parts, such as brake detail, and decals on the ends of cars. This device rotates the car for easy access, making adding details such as brake parts and ladders much easier. Also, by turning the car upside down in the cradle of the rotator, you can have easy access to apply brake air tanks, cylinders, valves and lines, other details, and even install the trucks.

You can make an assortment of cradles to fit various cars that are shaped differently. Tank cars have very delicate platforms that can easily be broken, so a special custom fit cradle can be a big help

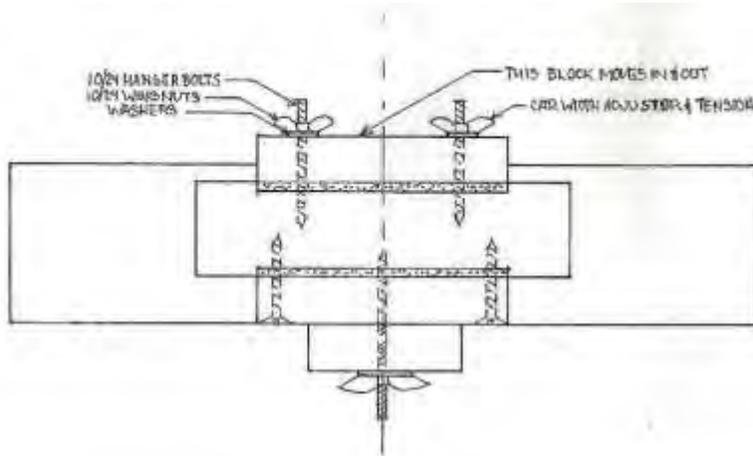
in doing the undersides of the cars and also for painting the bottom of the car.

CAUTION: You should clamp the car rotator to the workbench or you may find your car and the rotator on the floor.

The rotator can be made from $\frac{3}{4}$ " pine, plywood or any other scrap material you have around the shop. A lag screw with wood threads on one end and machine thread on the other serves as a pivot. A wing nut on the threaded end through one of the cradle side pieces applies pressure to hold the car. The "jaws" of the cradle are padded with foam rubber to hold the car firmly, yet without damaging the model. Be careful not to overtighten the wing nut! See the enclosed drawing of the rotator; however, you should consider the length of the cars you plan to work on and adjust the height of the pedestal accordingly. **NOTE:** this rotator was built for HO cars; however, the concept can be adjusted for any scale.

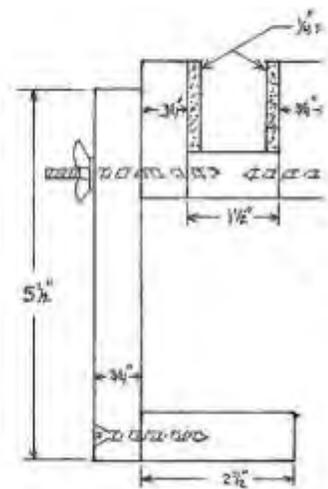
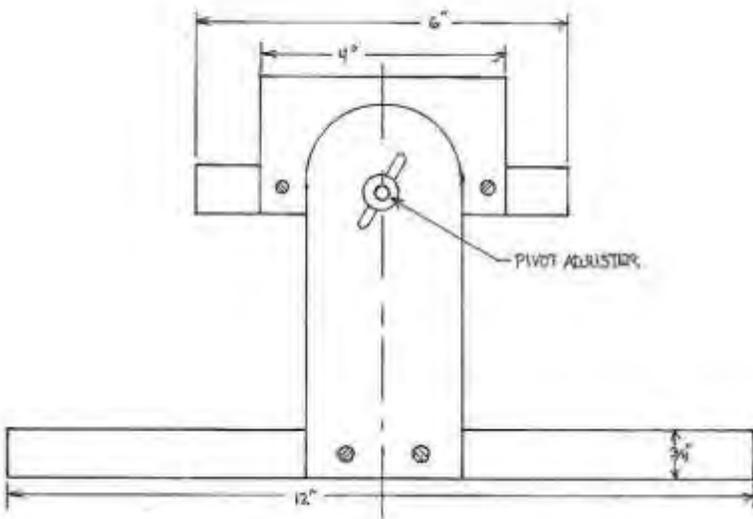


The pictures show the “car rotator” in a couple of positions that are handy for applying the decals and details. **I**



CAR ROTATOR

JOHN A. PAGANONI



John Paganoni grew up never out of sight of the Central Vermont Railway in the days of steam. He lived in Montville, Connecticut where there was a lot of activity for the paper mills and fabric mills in the late 1940's to mid-1950's. A lifetime objective was to try to capture the CV in those days of steam in HO scale, and John was fortunate enough to gather enough historical information to draft scale drawings of all the major CV facilities between New London, Connecticut and Montville. He is in the process of building a very compressed layout to feature the main interest items that recall the CV's "Golden Years."

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Installing the Miller Engineering Movie Theater Marquee

by Brian W. Sheron, MMR

I like building urban nighttime scenes on my layout. In addition to interior building lights and street lights, I love all the animated signs available. Miller Engineering makes a wide variety of signs, a vendor in Greece also has some nice U.S.-based signs, and Miniaturics has several small animated window signs.

When I expanded my Long Island Railroad into the other side of my basement, I wanted to model the car floats and car float bridges in Long Island City, which are in the southwest corner of the Borough of Queens in New York City, very close to the Borough of Brooklyn. But another scene I wanted to model was the streets of Brooklyn with the unique and colorful storefronts and storefront signs.

When I saw the Miller Engineering animated theater marquee, I had to have it for a movie theater on the Brooklyn street I was modeling. However, for those of you who have ever installed a Miller Engineering sign, you know that the trick is to find a way to hide the wide, narrow plug that must be attached to each sign. For rooftop signs, it is fairly easy, and usually involves cutting a slit in the roof just large enough for the plug to pass through. However, the theater marquee plug attaches to the side of the marquee sign.

If you have a movie theater sign, you obviously need to attach it to a movie theater. There are several HO scale movie theater kits available. I selected the Walters Rivoli theater kit.

The Walters Rivoli kit has a rounded marquee above the entrance, and of course, Murphy's Law kicked in and the Miller Marquee was slightly too short to wrap completely around it. However, I determined that if you do not install the rounded marquee support, and leave the front of the theater above the entrance flat,



the Miller Engineering marquee fits perfectly across the front of the theater. I therefore did not install the rounded marquee, and left the theater front flat. I attached the Miller marquee sign to the theater front with double-sided tape. The only thing left was to figure out where to hide the plug that plugs into one side of the marquee sign. When the plug is plugged into the sign, it protrudes from the side of the theater. The solution was to simply attach a store next to the theater and hide the plug by cutting a slit in the side of the building next to the theater exactly where it lined up with the female end of the sign plug on the theater. Once the slit was lined up the marquee sign plug, I glued the building to the theater. I then mounted the electronic circuit board that runs the sign inside the theater building, and snaked the marquee cable around the back of the theater, into the next-door building, through the slit in the wall, and into the marquee plug. I painted the vertical ends of the theater black, because the marquee plug is black and therefore the small section of the plug that is visible to an observer is not very noticeable. The building to the left is glued to the side of the theater and hides the plug. **I**

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A Compendium of Model Railroad Operations

Book review by Mat Thompson

The Operations Special Interest Group (OPSIG) of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) has just published its second book, *A Compendium of Model Railroad Operations*.

Here's the bottom line: Wow. Buy it, read it, learn and enjoy.

The first thing you will notice is that it's a real book, hardbound and measuring 8 ½ inches by 11 inches. The front cover photograph is a yard view of Dick Elwell's Hoosac Valley Railroad. The back cover is a close shot of an RS3 working its way through Rangeley River Junction on Jack Ozanich's Atlantic Great Eastern Railroad. The two photos are the perfect wrapper for the 300-page discussion of model railroad operations inside.

The volume is a five-year labor of love team effort led by Phil Monat with his co-editor, Steve Benezra. Their vision was to have experts in the various areas of operations contribute chapters. They have succeeded wonderfully. Many authors are or were professional railroaders. Most are well known within the model railroading operations community.

The book is divided into ten chapters, each covering a different facet of model railroad operations. Here's the breakdown:

Chapter 1: What to Model and Why Operate It by Craig Bisgeier and Phil Monat

Chapter 2: Layout Design for Operations by Byron Henderson

Chapter 3: "The Crew": Your Operating Positions by Jim Providenza

Chapter 4: Fundamentals of Freight Operations by Dave Clemens

Chapter 5: Passenger Operations by Doug Matheson

Chapter 6: Yard Operations by Phil Monat

Chapter 7: Centralized Traffic Control & Railroad Signal Systems by Michael J. Burgett and William J. Sheerer

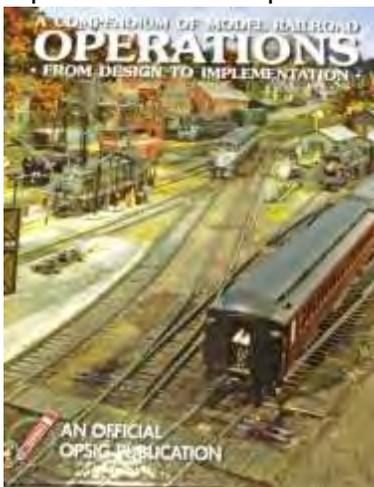
Chapter 8: Authorizing Train Movement by Steve King

Chapter 9: Model Railroad Communications by Seth Neumann

Chapter 10: Hosting an Operating Session by Eric Lundberg and Detlef Kurpanek

Chapters stand on their own with references to other chapters when needed to fully explain a concept. Most chapters follow a pattern. First is the history of the subject divided into eras; and then those concepts are applied to model railroad operations in each of the eras. That's followed by examples of the paperwork needed to make it all happen, including aids for operators. Several chapters end with brief bibliographies of useful and generally easily-available references. Editing is superb, especially considering how many authors made contributions.

Typical of the book's "big tent" approach is that chapters are equally inclusive of period railroading, the steam-diesel transition era and modern railroading. Modeling scales are barely mentioned, but several scales are shown in the book's photographs. Prototypes and models of prototypes range from Wallace, Idaho, to Altoona, to New York City. There are also several photographs and references to railroads and model railroads in Canada, a welcome addition not often seen in the hobby press. Layouts range in size from table-top to basement empires.



Photographs deserve a special mention. Kalmbach does a great job with their magazine-like books on various hobby topics. But they do tend to focus on just a few layouts, so the distinction between books can become blurred. In contrast, *The Compendium* features photographs of many railroads that have had limited exposure in the hobby press. Examples are Phil Monat's Delaware and Susquehanna Railroad, Don Ball's Stockton and Copperopolis Railroad, and Jim Providenza's Santa Cruz Northern Railroad. Many of the pictures unapologetically show unfinished layouts – the book is about operations, not modeling.

I found the chapter on freight especially interesting. This is a long chapter tying together the history and complexity of freight operations in a succinct package. Dave Clements starts the discussion with how railroads moved and tracked freight; in other words, how they did their business. He then uses this foundation of freight forwarding concepts to briefly explain several tracking systems model railroaders have developed to replicate prototype practices

and control car movements. Along the way he deals with several intriguing subjects: developing a freight car roster, dealing with empty cars and less-than-carload shipments are some examples.

Doug Matheson does an equally good job explaining passenger operations. Most of us don't know this subject in depth because so few of us model it. Doug, who lives in Canada, explains it well, including differences between Canadian operations and those in the U. S. This chapter also has an interesting explanation of milk train operations on the Rutland layout built by Randy Laframboise and Mike Sparks, and of the passenger car standards Chuck Hitchcock used on his AT&SF Argentine Division.

Steve King is a co-author of the OPSIG's first book, *19 East, Copy Three*. In it he talked about Time Table and Train Orders rules, mostly as they were used by the men in the cab. In *The Compendium* he takes a more managerial approach, talking about the rules as they apply to operating a railroad. He also covers Track Warrant Control and Direct Traffic Control.

Mike Burgett and Bill Sheerer, who wrote the chapter on CTC and signal systems, and Seth Neumann, who wrote the chapter on railroad communications, are professionals in their fields. In fact, they are probably the folks you would talk to if you owned a real railroad. Both chapters are well organized, clearly written and illustrated with superb graphics.

I mentioned that this book is a labor of love. The editors, Phil Monat and Steve Benezra, and all of the authors and photographers have contributed their work free of charge to better our hobby. Steve has even taken on the inglorious task of managing sales and distribution. If you know any of them, tell them "thanks." – they have earned it.

The price of the book is \$39.95 to OPSIG members and \$49.95 to non-members. Add \$8.00 to your order for shipping. Send your check to:

Steve Benezra
2737 Thistle Trail
Hillsborough, N.C. 27278-9302

You can pay using PayPal. Add \$1 to the price and send the payment to OPERSIG@Yahoo.com. For foreign postage rates or other questions send an e-mail to Opsig.editor@gmail.com. **I**

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Operations Initiative

The monthly operations program, similar to the monthly open houses, continues to provide an opportunity for division members to experience operations as practiced on layouts around the division.

If you've never participated in an operating session, these are excellent opportunities for you to try your hand at it. If you'd like to participate, or have questions, E-mail Bill Mosteller (wsm@greatdecals.com). You can register for an upcoming session by sending a check for \$5 made out to Potomac Division, NMRA to Bill Mosteller, 3306 Parkside Terrace, Fairfax, VA 22031-2715. The nominal fee helps to defray the incidental costs of carrying out this initiative.

Next Opportunity: Roger Sekera's The Clinch Valley Lines, Potomac, MD on Saturday, September 16, 2017, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Please arrive between 9:00 and 9:30 AM. An optional lunch at a nearby restaurant follows.

Roger has graciously invited us to return to his Clinch Valley Lines for another operating session. He has room for up to 7 participants, 6 train operators and one dispatcher.

The original inspiration Roger drew for his HO scale Clinch Valley Lines (CVL) came from a photo taken in the fall of 1972 of a set of Louisville and Nashville diesels heading up a freight train on the Norfolk and Western. Roger has developed an interesting layout based on a freelanced prototype railroad and set in 1959 Appalachia, that is designed for operations, fun to run and visually appealing. Roger draws heavily upon the prototypes that ran in the southwestern area of Virginia, such as the N&W, L&N, SRR, C&O and Clinchfield, to add realism to his layout. [Click here](#) to read about Roger's last session. [Click here](#) to read about and see Roger's last open house. **I**



Layout Open House Report John Swanson's PRR Cresson Branch

by Bob Rosenberg

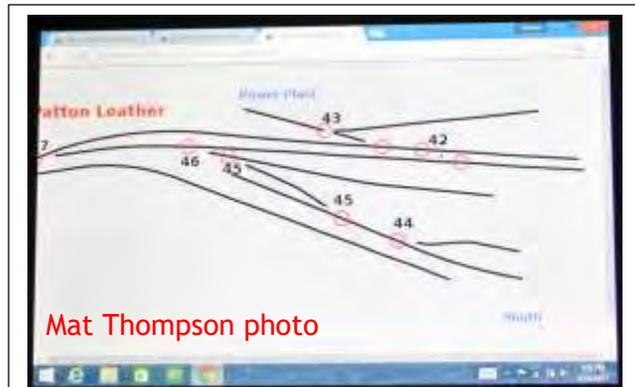
MODEL RAILROADING IN A TIME WARP

Groundhog Day is long past (except in the movie, of course, where it goes on ad infinitum) but when John Swanson's PRR Cresson Branch came up on our March home layout tour schedule the opportunity to check up on Punxsutawney Phil again was irresistible. John is from Punxsutawney, and has set his model railroad in the area from Cresson, Pennsylvania, just west of Horseshoe Curve, through Punxsutawney and continuing westward from there. It's a large layout, weaving through several different rooms, and takes up most of the available space in John's sizeable basement. It was designed using the XTrack CAD program. John uses the standard construction techniques and benchwork components going back to Linn Westcott's original girder construction method, with Atlas code 83 flex track and Shinohara DCC-friendly turnouts over cork roadbed, all held together with DAP 230 adhesive – no nails; even his curves are super-elevated by stringing .029 fishing line under one side of the track. The DCC control system is Digitrax. The always-on Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI) configuration running on a Raspberry Pi3 supports the panel images used to control the turnouts. It works via a Microsoft Desktop connection using any PC. And that concludes our Geek language lesson for today.

The focus is on operation; he and his fellow modelers have things moving quite nicely ahead of schedule, and possibly even under budget (What exactly does under budget mean? I've never heard that expression used around here before) with the goal of instituting operating sessions later this year. John is using hardware and software that will allow for control of trains and turnouts via Android tablets as well as by your standard DCC controllers, a classic example of culture

shock to those of us who still have Lambert and Shinohara Twin Coil machines thrown by pushing little spring loaded SPST red and green buttons. He has also installed several Rapido Railcrew electromagnet uncouplers under the track, activated by a fascia switch. When activated both the fascia panel and the installed uncoupler show a blue light.

There's something about John's railroad that give you the feeling that you've walked into a time warp. Set in the transition era, there was plenty of steam and diesel action. The SW's, Sharks and EMD's are from various model manufacturers; the I1s, K4s and M1 class steam locomotives are all by BLI. There were groups of N5 series cabooses spotted at various locations on the layout



Close-up of a tablet, turnout numbers are shown in their locations on the track plan. Turnouts are switched simply by touching the red circles.

waiting to be tied on to departing freights. A pair of Baldwin Shark units were running that day with a dozen or so box cars, as was a twelve car Broadway Limited train made up of the new Walthers cars and pulled by double headed K4's, a most impressive sight. The whole scene was standard early 1950's PRR, except that trains were all controlled by 2017 cutting edge electronic devices such as touch screen tablets. These were things that you rarely saw in sci-fi movies back in those days. You almost had to step back and think for a minute; in which century are we, exactly? A significant amount of basic construction is already completed, the track is installed, and the trains are running over the branch successfully under these advanced space-age controls. There is very little scenery except for some switch towers, but there is ample room for it when



Rapido Railcrew electromagnet Uncouplers. The green object on the layout is an uncoupler yet to be installed.



Elizabeth Boisvert photo

the time comes. The only thing missing was an HO model of Punxsutawney Phil himself. There was an unconfirmed rumor that while we were there he was in his hole taking a nap, having finished his work for the year and collected his check. A typical celebrity, he couldn't be bothered to wake up and crawl out of it just to greet us, his loyal groupies.

For someone like me, who once had a DC rectifier wired to a Lionel transformer to power up his Varney F3, visiting John's layout was comparable to visiting the Starship Enterprise. I used to think that DCC was the cat's pajamas (now there's an expression perfectly attuned to the Ancient Modeler's era), but while watching those trains controlled by all those sophisticated electronics, I felt more like the GEICO caveman: a person living in but completely disconnected from the real world around him as it currently exists. And if that weren't depressing enough, Elizabeth Boisvert was there contributing to the surreal atmosphere by recording the entire 1950's scene on her state-of-the-art smartphone camera that takes digital pictures as well my Nikon (that

is when it's not communicating with some Martians up in the cloud). My wife keeps suggesting that I join the 21st century with invitations sent, no doubt, from her iPad or one of the other Trekkie-type electronic communication devices that she has. Maybe I should take her up on it. **I**

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Have 50 model railroading clinics right in your living room.

Just because you can't make it to a national convention doesn't mean you have to miss out. Right now the NMRA's Kalmbach Memorial Library has over 50 DVDs of clinics presented at national conventions from 2002 to 2010. Each is available for NMRA members to borrow for the cost of processing and postage.



So you can see clinics on everything from decoders to design, tools to techniques, helixes to highways, and research to resin casting.

All from the comfort of your very own couch.

Visit www.nmra.org and go to the Kalmbach Memorial Library page for a complete listing. Or call the Library at 423-894-8144. Then, get that popcorn ready.



Layout Open House Report Marty McGuirk's Central Vermont Railway

by John Paganoni photos by Elizabeth Boisvert
"THE END OF THE LINE"

The Open House visit to Marty McGuirk's by a large number of visitors was both a happy occasion and also a sad one. Sad, because we learned that this was the last time we would be seeing the beautiful Central Vermont Railway Roxbury Subdivision for operations and visitation of this superbly done model railroad. Marty and wife Chris will be moving soon to a close-by location (fortunately for us modelers in the area) where he will be building yet another geographical-area recreation of the Central Vermont (CV) Railway in New England.



It was a happy occasion because the visitors could take one final trip through the Vermont countryside, thanks to the magic of model railroading, on this 16' x 45' model railroad. The scenes on this fine model railroad leave no doubt that you are viewing the pastoral settings of New England in the mid-late October 1954 timeframe during the

most beautiful time of the year. The foliage colors created by Marty (see the November 2015 issue of *Model Railroader*) make a very realistic atmosphere for the surrounding rural countryside and the numerous trackside businesses along the CV line. All of the structures on this layout are replicas in scale of typical New England buildings, most of which were in the actual locations modeled by Marty. The rivers and bridges needed to cross through steep hill country are superbly done and replicate their prototypes accurately. The locomotives and CV owned-rolling stock represent the prototype very closely, adding to the realism of Marty's modeling. One can readily tell that Marty did a huge amount of research to capture the essence of New England and the Central Vermont Railway in the golden days of steam. The attached photos attest to his success in meeting his established objectives in creating this model railroad.

As we bid farewell to the Roxbury Subdivision of the Central Vermont Railway, we thank Marty for his hospitality, his sharing of modeling experiences, and we wish him and Chris the very best as they set out on a new adventure. We look forward seeing his next chapter in CV modeling. **I**

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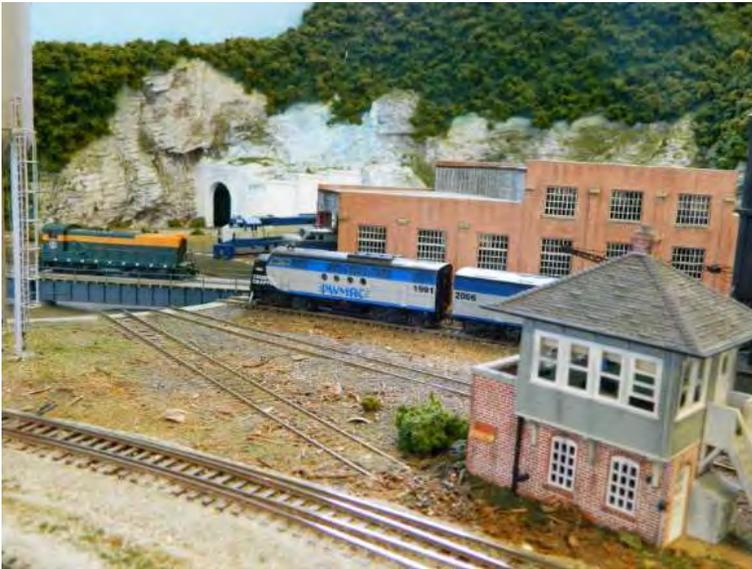
Layout Open House Report Prince William Model Railroad Club

by Brian W. Sheron, MMR Photos by Nigel Phillips, except as marked

On Saturday, April 29th, Marshall Abrams, the Division's Senior Assistant Superintendent and Potomac Flyer editor, and I headed down to Quantico to visit the Prince William County Model Railroad Club. I had not been down that way in a while, and forgot how big our Division is! The club is located in the VRE train station that is on the Quantico Marine Corps base. To enter the base, you must stop at a checkpoint and all people in the vehicle have to show identification (driver's license). Upon receiving approval to proceed, we drove to the town of Quantico, parked at the VRE station, and proceeded to the layout, which is housed in a room on one end of the station. Entering the layout, we received a warm welcome from Bill Sydow, the club president, and several of the members who were there operating trains. I would estimate that the layout is about 30' x 30' and consists of a folded dogbone track plan with various passing and industrial sidings. The layout uses Digitrax DCC.



Photo: Marshall
Abrams



Bill explained that the railroad is called the PD&Q, which is the Potomac, Dominion, and Quantico Railroad. During our visit, they were running both steam and some early generation RS diesels. However, I was told that the members could run any engines that they wanted to. The scenery varied around the layout and included a waterfront dock area, some industrial sidings, and some trackage that went through hilly rural areas.

Bill explained that they have recently been focusing on some overdue maintenance, but are now ready to get back into operations.

The club has served the Northern VA area for over 25 years, and was created with the primary purpose of sharing the hobby of Model Railroading with the public.

The club started as a modular club and still does 10-12 modular shows annually throughout the county and at train shows in the Washington, DC and Baltimore areas. In 2005, the PWMRC began construction of its permanent layout.

In addition to the modular shows, the club hosts an open house at its Quantico layout on the first Saturday of every month, on the Marine Corps Birthday, and on the first three Saturdays of December.

The club is looking for new members, whether they are seasoned veterans or brand new to the hobby. They have a relaxed atmosphere and encourage members to run the equipment and railroads that interest them. The club is proud of its Junior Member program, which introduces the hobby to boys and girls between the ages of 8-17. The club also hosts clinics and operations sessions. Their meetings and events are usually open to visitors and potential new members, and they encourage everyone to come out and meet them. Their website is

www.pwmrc.org, or you can contact the President, Bill Sydow at westernrrfan@gmail.com.

Marshall and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit to this well-done club layout. If you missed the opportunity to see it, I strongly urge you

to take advantage of their open house on the first Saturday of each month and stop by for a visit.

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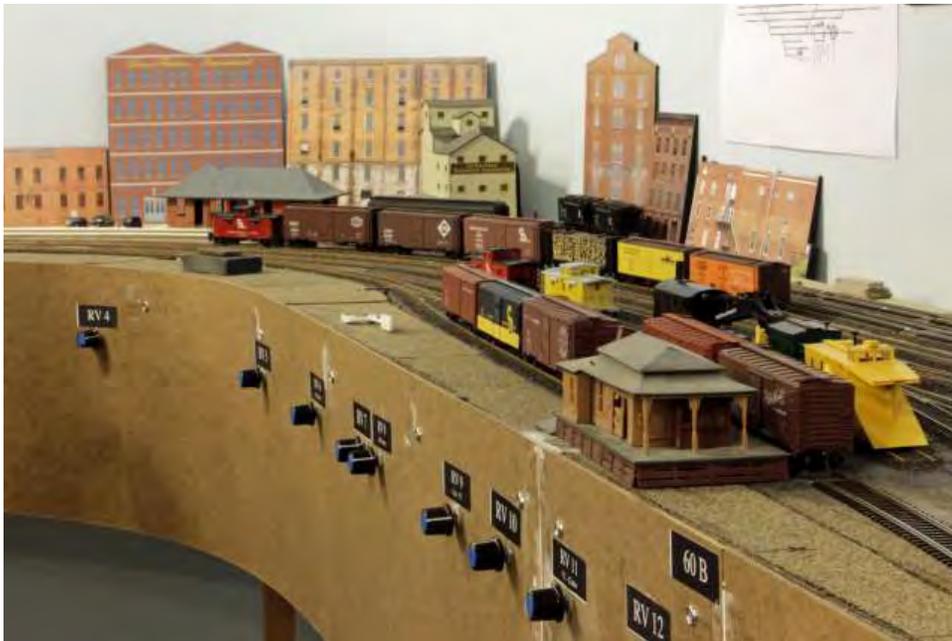


Layout Open House Report Bryan Kidd's Chesapeake and Ohio Allegheny Sub-Division

by Bob Rosenberg photo by Jim Kennedy

A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF A POPULAR AREA TO MODEL

It may seem unusual for a New Englander like myself to have an interest in the C&O, but considering where I was in the early 1960's makes it more understandable. I was in Richmond at the time, and if I wanted to see trains at all, the closest site was Main Street Station, used by the C&O. At that time, the C&O was big in Richmond. The company's headquarters was there, and the main line from Newport News split into the mountain sub-division (Charlottesville – Clifton Forge) and the James River sub-division (Lynchburg – Clifton Forge) in the middle of a long viaduct paralleling the river south of downtown. The famous three level crossing (C&O, SAL, and SRR) is also nearby.



Bryan's circa 1952 C&O Allegheny Subdivision is a large point-to-point shelf style layout that runs around the walls of three rooms. It starts at Clifton Forge and extends west to Hinton, West Virginia, giving him the opportunity to run those enormous H-8 2-6-6-6s that had long been replaced by multi-unit EMD GPs by the time I arrived on the scene. It also includes branches to the Greenbriar Hotel at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, and the Greenbriar Division to Durbin and Cass from Ronceverte, West Virginia. His main line is a double tracked 145' run with Shinohara code 83 track and turnouts and a minimum

radius of 32". Tortoise motors controlled by Digitrax power the turnouts at present, but long term plans for the railroad are for it to be centrally dispatched using CTC run by a computer and JMRI. An extension to the large Westvaco Paper Mill complex at Covington, Virginia, and mixed-train service to the Homestead Resort at Hot Springs, Virginia, are also in the works.

You enter into a long room, one side of which is a long yard/staging area representing Clifton Forge and Covington. One of his DCC/sound equipped H-8's was chugging up and down moving cars around. If you're modeling the C&O with their long coal trains you need those long staging tracks to set them up. From there it sweeps around a broad curve into the next room, expands to four tracks (two main, two passing) and enters Allegheny, the center point of the railroad. The model of the station is there along with a tower, a large turntable (for those H-8's), and photographs of that section on the wall to document the accuracy of the scene, but little else at this point. The starkness of the location would be typical of the C&O back in the steam days; not much grew in places like that (fortunately, there was no EPA to take soil samples either). There was a pair of E-8's on a 10-car streamlined C&O train with two Pennsy cars at the rear parked there facing west, no doubt waiting for orders to move on down the line. The railroad continues around the other side of the room where a Kanawah, C&O's designation for the 2-8-4, was doing its thing. These versatile locomotives, the steam version of the GP7, were used with equal success on fast freights and first-class passenger trains and served the railroad well in that capacity until they were eventually displaced by the aforementioned diesels. The railroad eventually curves around into Ronceverte. There is a smaller turntable there and more structures, both railroad- and town-related. From there it travels around to the third room (Hinton and the end of the sub-division) with another large turntable and more long staging tracks.

In most people's minds the Appalachians of western Virginia and West Virginia are noted for coal and trees. Fortunately, from an aesthetic point of view, the coal is under the trees. The railroad areas

themselves have little growth as previously noted, but the surrounding mountains in Bryan's layout are set to blossom forth with vegetation utilizing pre-fitted sections with large numbers of trees on them. Over the past three years, visits to other Appalachian-themed home layouts have convinced me that you can't have enough trees when you're modeling that region, and Bryan is following that pattern as well. If the finished product with all the scenery in place looks anything like the beautifully laid and ballasted track work that he has already done, his layout will truly be a showpiece of model railroad design and construction.

To top it all off, Bryan, a retired Navy musician, has even written a song about it, but at the top of the song sheet it says something about "intended for professional singers only," probably to dissuade people like me from trying to perform it.

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Saturday, September 16th, 2017, Burke, VA Double Header

Because of poor turnout due to inclement weather in December, 2016, Rick and John have graciously agreed to repeat their joint open house. Chance of freezing rain should be reduced.

For that reason, we can offer you the layout write-up and slide shows ahead of time, in hopes of encouraging your visit. [Click here](#).

Rick Wright's CONUS Lines, Burke, VA

When:

Where:

Note: Railroad is located in a basement which can only be accessed by stairs.

CONUS Lines is an O Scale, 3-Rail layout filling Rick Wright's 24 x 35 ft. basement. Based on a track plan "Big Trains You Can Live With" by John Armstrong, the layout includes a double-track main line, mountain grades, a branch line, and continuous run, out-and-back, and point-to-point operation options. With the exception of the yard and engine servicing facilities, the layout is all open-grid construction. Trains run using MTH's Digital Control System, with all the sights, sound and smoke that entails. Scenery is 100% finished from the standpoint of appearance, but new projects on the drawing board will change its appearance in several areas in 2016.

For the forthcoming visit, the featured timeframe will be November 1953. Union Pacific will be featured, with freights powered by steam, first generation diesel, and gas turbine power. The pre-dome "City of St. Louis" will be running as it was in the early 50s as a thru St. Louis to Los Angeles "Streamliner." All motive power running will be MTH, with rolling stock (all scale, Kadee coupler-equipped) from Athearn, All Nation, Atlas, Crown, K-Line, Lionel, MTH, Pecos River, Sunset, and Weaver.

[Click here](#) for details of Rick's prior open house with us.

John Sethian's PRR Nassau Division, Burke, VA

When:

Where:

Note: Railroad is accessed through a duckunder with handlebar assists.

John Sethian's Pennsylvania Railroad Nassau Division is a 2-rail O Scale layout inspired by the PRR electrified main line through New Jersey ca. 1956. The main line is double tracked throughout, but expands to four tracks reminiscent of the high speed raceway flying over New Brunswick and through Princeton Junction. Catenary poles are up in most of the visible parts of the layout, but the catenary itself must await completion of the scenery behind it. Motivation for other scenes on the layout are: the tracks leaving Trenton Station, the Whitford Bridge in Exton PA, the "Trenton Makes the World Takes" bridge, an imprecise blend of Trenton and Philadelphia, and the typical Garden State landscape.

As expected, the locomotive roster is dominated by heavy GG1 and P5a electrics. But there are also diesels and steam that are acceptable for the era and, for the most part, the locale. Rolling stock and locomotives come from several manufacturers, and include limited run brass pieces as well as converted 3-rail offerings from MTH or Lionel. The layout uses the MTH DCS control system. Scenery ranges from

magazine cover quality to painted pink foam. But all cars and trucks are “age-appropriate” weathered and have 1956 New Jersey License plates.

The walls and the ceiling are painted to look like the sky and the fascia top has a constant height. This allows a panoramic, photo-friendly look. Lighting is provided exclusively by LED light bars which are dimmable to 5%. As all the buildings are lit (several with interiors), and there are many illuminated street lights and signs. One can always bask in tranquil twilight in the layout room.

[Click here](#) for details of John's prior open house with us.

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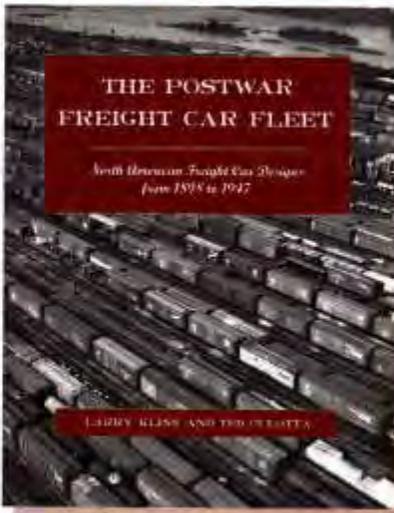
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