

THE POTOMAC FLYER



Issue Highlights

More New Outreach Events Coming!

Details inside Page 2

New Feature: Models We Admire

Photos of Work by Potomac Division
Members Page 11

Coming Events

Aug. 17: Layout Tour: Paul Hutchins
CSX

Sept. 15: New Modeling Outreach
Program Inaugural Event

Sept. 21: Layout Tour: Mark Gionet's
Boston and Maine Western Route

Oct. 10-13: Liberty Bell Special
NMRA/MER Convention

Nov. 16: Joint Model Outreach Events
with James River Div.

DETAILS INSIDE!

PD New Modeling Outreach Program Update

As we head toward Autumn, the Potomac Division is already expanding its recently-unveiled Modeling Outreach Program. Now, in addition to the previously-announced Sept. 15th inaugural event in Vienna at the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders club, we have a second great event to look forward to: a joint gathering with the James River Division on Nov. 16th in Warrenton! It will include clinics and layout tours.

And there's a third coming in 2020 before our next MiniCon! Mark your calendars now for these special social occasions:

Bill of Lading

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Tip: The above entries are all links. Click on the title to jump to the article.

September 15, 2019 2:00-4:00PM Northern Virginia Model Railroaders 231 Dominion Road NE, Vienna, VA

Please note that the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders club is NOT handicap accessible.

This event will feature a short meet-and-greet with the Potomac Division's new Board of Directors; followed by Mark Gionet discussing his Boston & Maine layout in HO scale, which will be open for a layout tour on the following Saturday (Sept. 21).



Branchline engine facilities

Potomac Flyer

The Potomac Division's Bi-monthly Newsletter

Submission Deadlines—Issue

Dec 15—February-March	Feb 15—April-May
Apr 15—June-July	June 15—Aug-September
Aug 15—Oct-Nov	Oct 15—Dec-Jan

Cover photo: Andrew Dodge's scratchbuilt O scale Colorado Midland rotary snowplow

The second presenter is well-known modeler Paul Dolkos, who models Baltimore railroad operations. His program will discuss modeling track in the streets and some of the construction techniques used to create former prototype scenes in the city. (Photo next page)

The third speaker will be Zach Pabis, a teenage member of the NVMR club, who will discuss the increasingly popular art of 3D printing.

November 16, 2019 Saturday, 9:00AM–4:00PM

Battlefield Baptist Church, 4361 Lee Highway, Warrenton, VA

Note: Battlefield Baptist Churrch (www.battlefieldbaptist.org) is closer to Gainesville than Warrenton, even though the address is 4361 Lee Highway in Warrenton. From the East, take Route 66 West. Get off on either Rt. 29 South (Exit 43A) or on Rt. 15 South at Haymarket (Exit 40A) and then right onto Rt. 29 South. The church is 5 miles from Rt. 66 on the left as you are heading South.



Paul Dolkos - modeling tracks in the street

Doors open at 9:00AM, and we'll gather together for a few words, a cup of coffee, and maybe even a donut or three. We'll have two tracks of clinics, using two rooms; so four clinics before lunch. After the clinics, we are planning an open discussion on the NMRA Achievement Program. You can bring your models, and we can either judge them or just discuss whatever you want regarding all aspects of the AP with at least three MMR's. We'll have a modeling theme— scratchbuilt rolling stock—so bring your models for display and popular vote.

Lunch will be on your own (and there are plenty of local options for foraging within 20 minutes along Rt. 29/15.)

Then, in the afternoon, we'll have at least two layouts open to visit in the area. So come on out for our November end-of-the-year fling!

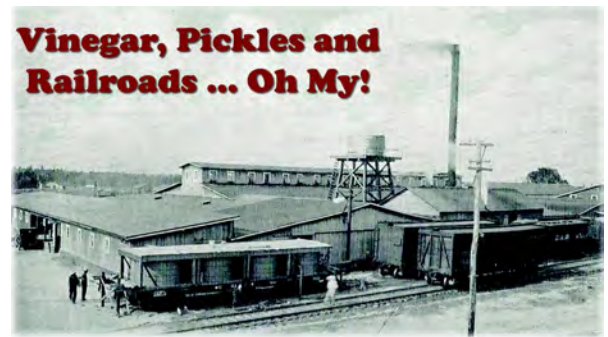
Clinic Track 1	Clinic Track 2
9:30AM	
Jerry Stanley "Building the Building for Building the Layout"	Rod Vance "Vinegar, Pickles, and Railroads... Oh My!"
10:30AM	
John Sethian - "Modeling in 2 rail O Scale"	Terry Terrance - "Modeling the B&O West End"
11:30AM- Room 109	
Achievement Program - an open discussion	
12:00PM Lunch (on your own)	
1:00 pm Open House Layout	1:00 pm Open House Layout
Terry Terrance - The M&K Junction Model Railroad	Cam Green - Maine Central Railroad - Lower Road

Editor's Note: you can see we've tinkered with the look of the Flyer and rearranged its contents to put more emphasis on promoting coming events in hopes of boosting member participation. Please let us know what you think: Potomac-Flyer@potomac-nmra.org

Clinic Synopses

Jerry Stanley - “Building the Building for Building the Layout” In the clinic , I’ll talk about the process to select a building site. I hope to have a video loop playing of the actual construction drawings of the “Hobby Barn” on the flat screen TV. I will go through what type of building to build on different terrains, the basic requirements to provide a set of plans for a building permit, and “things to consider” when designing your hobby room building.

Rod Vance - “Vinegar, Pickles, and Railroads ... Oh My!” This clinic talks about modeling the pickle and vinegar industries during the time period from the late 1800s to the early 1970s. We’ll talk about how pickles and vinegar were made and processed, including looking at the typical structures and facilities used in their production. We’ll also talk about the special railroad cars used to transport pickles and vinegar. We’ll finish by surveying some of the structures and freight car models commercially available that can be used to represent the pickle and vinegar industries.



John Sethian - “Modeling in 2 rail O Scale” O Scale has many advantages: The larger size gives the feel of heavy moving machinery, and fine details can be added and seen without heroics. O Scale is not outrageously expensive, does not require an aircraft hangar size space, and most equipment is readily available. The talk presents the basics for O Scale modeling, including sources, suppliers, and techniques.

Terry Terrance - “Modeling the B&O West End”

How does one go about modeling an iconic, yet isolated and obscure part of the Baltimore & Ohio’s original main line? This clinic will describe how I went about it.

- The seed of an idea.
- Objectives?
- What to include, what to omit.
- Developing the track plan
- What time period?
- Locomotive roster
- Rolling stock fleet
- How I built the layout: civil engineering, electrical engineering, etc.

While I built my representation of the West End in O Scale, this clinic will be as scale-agnostic as possible.

Layout Tours

We’ll have handouts for each layout with directions from the church available after the open discussion on the Achievement Program

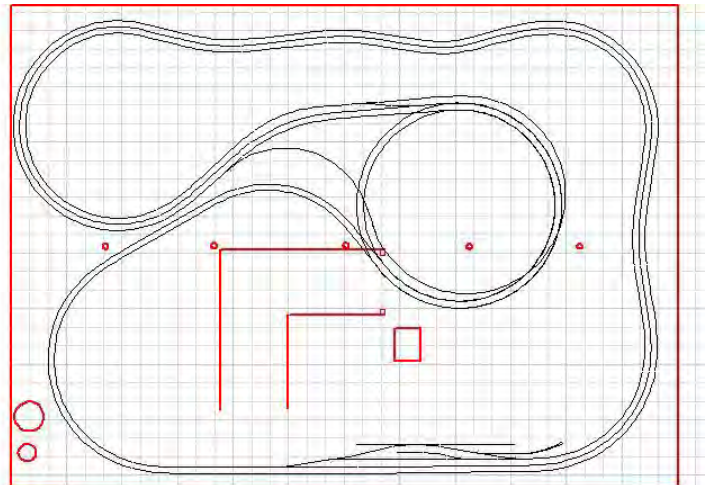
Cam Green - Maine Central Railroad - Lower Road HO scale double-deck layout featuring the “Lower Road” between Yarmouth Junction, ME to Augusta ME. Set in the late 1970’s and operated per prototype with some modeling license. Operations center around Brunswick Yard, where

several local freights exchange cars; and Augusta, where several locals worked through from Waterville, ME. DCC Digitrax control system. Train orders are used to govern movements.

Terry Terrance - The M&K Junction Model Railroad (O Scale) Part of the “double humped” B&O crossing of the Allegheny mountains, the grade on Briery Mountain (Cranberry Grade), the crossing of the Cheat River at Rowlesburg, WV and the grade up Laurel Mountain (Cheat River Grade), is depicted in condensed form on this layout. Rowlesburg was a helper station, as trains needed to be pushed up the grades in both directions. The Morgantown and Kingwood Railroad (merged into the B&O after 1922) interchanged with the B&O at Rowlesburg, *ergo* the railroad’s name for Rowlesburg - M&K Junction. The time period is late 1949 through early 1952 - the period when diesels and steam co-existed at M&K. Seven four-unit F7 diesel sets arrived in 1949, and were so superior in heavy mountain railroading that the subdivision was dieselized in 1952.

The track is designed to create the feel of the prototype, with heavy grades and very little tangent (straight) track; and to be “*scenically sincere*,” that is, trains pass through a scene only once. There are few on-line industries on the prototype, and few will be included on the model railroad (some have been added for scenic/operational interest). A model of the B&O’s four stone-arch Tray Run Viaduct is planned. The model will be 2/3 full scale size and more than six feet long. The B&O’s crossing of Cheat River is represented with a truncated single span bridge.

The basement is approximately 25 ½ x 36 feet. Minimum mainline radius is 60”, and that is only on the inner track on one curve. The minimum radius elsewhere is 62” or larger. The layout is 2-rail “O” scale. The layout runs on a Digital Command Control (DCC) system using a combination of Lenz power/command stations; Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI) software and computer control; JMRI WiFi throttles running on Android devices; and locomotive and accessory decoders from many different manufacturers.



March 7, 2020: Saturday morning 9:00AM—12:00PM Division Superintendent Martin Brechbiel has revealed plans for a March Outreach Event ahead of the April MiniCon. Many details still need to be worked out; but here’s a preliminary outline:

Mary Surratt House and Museum: 9110 Brandywine Road, Clinton, MD 20735 Meet and Greet: Socializing, Coffee and Donuts Short Business Meeting and Update on Potomac Division Elections Preview of Layouts Open During the Afternoon Modeling Theme: Cabooses: Share and Show and Tell Including Andrew Dodge’s DSP&PRR and Colorado Midland *Break and Social Time*

Saturday Afternoon: Open Houses

- Dale Lanham’s HO Scale Piedmont Southern
- Glenn Paulson’s HO Scale Conrail Allegheny Division

April 4, 2020: Saturday 9:00AM—3:00PM

Potomac Division’s MiniCon:

St Matthews United Methodist Church 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA 22003 Meet and Greet: Socializing, Coffee, and Donuts Business Meeting and Division Elections

- Clinics & Open House: TBD ☒

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The Potomac Division Wants You!



Yes, **you!** Lend the Potomac Division a hand, so we can fill all our empty personnel slots.

Please don't tell us you can't help because you've got too much else to do.

A commitment to volunteer is not a lifetime commitment. Help us out for twelve months, and your Division will be grateful.

We cannot continue as an active Division without volunteers. So please give it some thought and step up to help out.

Two Board Positions Are Up For Election on April 4, 2020

(See election schedule and requirements below)

Other Position Vacancies

Layout Tour Volunteer Coordinator	- Vacant
Layout Tour Assistant	- Vacant
Webmaster	- Available Now
Computer Clerk	- Vacant

Just contact any Board member with your name and the slot you wish to fill. Your Board of Directors and your fellow Potomac Division members will thank you for your service!

Important details

John Paganoni and Nick Kalis have been appointed by the Board as the Election Committee for the 2020 Board of Directors elections to be held April 4, 2020 During our MiniCon at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 8671 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, Virginia.

If you're interested in running, please note:

- NMRA membership is mandatory;
- Candidates must reside within Division boundaries;
- Candidates must be endorsed by two or more active Division members;
- Members are encouraged to become familiar with Potomac Division Elections Procedures Manual and applicable portions of the Bylaws (located at Potomac Division web site). See: <http://potomac-nmra.org/PotomacDivisionBylaws%20adopted%2024Mar18.pdf>; and
- More info at: <http://potomac-nmra.org/Potomac%20Division%20Policy%20Document.pdf>.

Board Membership presents an excellent opportunity for: Gaining experience in management of our Potomac Division; Gaining insight into our Mid-East Region activities and its leaders, and the NMRA hierarchy as well; and Earning ½ TU (time units) per month of service toward the Volunteer Merit award.


Please contact John (john.paganoni@comcast.net) or Nick (nkalis@verizon.net) with questions or for additional information.

Election calendar key dates

March 5, 2020—Nominations deadline to Election Committee 30 days before election.

March 20, 2020—Date and time of election communicated to membership 15 days before election.

March 20, 2020—Candidate names for Board communicated to membership 15 days before election.

April 4, 2020—Election. 

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Coming Layout Tours

Paul Hutchins, Modern Day CSX

What: Paul Hutchins, Modern Day CSX

When: Saturday, August 17, 2019, 1:00–4:00PM

Where: Addresses are not published on the web

I model current era CSX, Conrail, and Norfolk Southern in HO-Scale. I call my railroad the “P&D Railroad.” It’s close to a circle eight, horizontally; and in a dogbone vertically. My operating system is Digitrax.

My layout is in my garage so it is handicap accessible. This is PD’s first visit to this railroad.



Mark Gionet’s Boston & Maine Western Route

What: Mark Gionet’s Boston & Maine Western Route

When: Saturday, September 21, 2019, 1:00–4:00PM

Where: Addresses are not published on the web

My grandfather was a conductor on the Boston & Maine. I have photos of him in front of the Flying Yankee, and he often worked the Western Route from Boston to Portland, Maine. The inspiration for the layout comes from an article “Crossing Gates at Dover” from the February 1965 *Model Railroader* magazine. It describes an urban scene in Dover, New Hampshire. I’ve modeled a number of the structures visible in the article’s illustrations or inferred from information contained within it. The balance of the layout will feature small towns and New England scenery and structures, based on real and imagined scenes. The period modeled ranges from 1955 to about 25 years later, allowing me to run worn passenger equipment, the Budd RDCs that replaced them, and diesels from the maroon and deluxe gold to McGuinness Blue era. The period of modeling has been significantly longer, as parts of the layout were retained from prior efforts dating back decades, constructed in layout spaces far, far away. Much remains to be done. This Western Route is of modest size, about 9’ x 18’; essentially 2 peninsulas. The plan is a point to point double track main line from Dover to a fiddle yard. A branch line diverts off and doubles back to create a continuous loop for entertaining less prototype-demanding visitors. Sidings serve a creamery, bakery, paper mill, and more modern industry. The layout is not handicap accessible. The easiest access is down about a half flight of stairs from our outside backyard terrace. It is in the rather compact, low-ceiling, mostly unfinished 1936 basement of the older part of our home, so it’s a bit tight to move around. Aisles in the railroad room are about 3 feet wide.



This is PD’s first visit to this railroad. ☒

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Potomac Division Ops Saturday



Host Fritz Dahlin dispatches his railroad using a CTC panel (sadly, just out of sight) he built himself.



Bill Ward had read about using car cards, but never actually seen them before arriving at Pete's layout. Here Bill is switching the meat plant and ice dock so it is obvious the car cards were not a mystery for long.

More than thirty model railroaders ran trains during the Potomac Division's first Ops Saturday on June 29th. Experience levels ranged from first-timers to layout owners who have sessions on their own layouts.

The concept was simple. Four layout owners volunteered to host: Pete LaGuardia and Bryan Kidd in Virginia, and Frank Benenati and Fritz Dahlin in Maryland. Pete and Frank would host morning sessions, Bryan and Fritz would handle the afternoon. Each session was planned for three hours.

Participants could sign up for any one or any two of the sessions. First time operators and Old Heads were equally welcome. The one proviso was that if a participant signed up for two sessions



Rich Tobias (seated) and Jim Navaco switch Halfway Yard on Fritz' Chessie System Broken Timber Subdivision. Fritz uses NCE DCC to control his railroad, and Rich is using an NCE throttle for his switching moves.



Steve Strachein is running the helper at Allegheny on Bryan Kidd's C&O layout. Steve is preparing a room for his future railroad, and had not yet decided which DCC system he will use. At Pete's, Steve used NCE, and at Bryan's he used Digitrax; so now he has practical experience to help him make his choice.

and space was tight, they would only get one of their choices. As it worked out, those who asked to operate twice were able to.



Bill Mims and George Meyrick, both experienced operators, ran Cortana Yard on Pete LaGuardia's Western Illinois Division of the New York Central. Here they are assembling a freight train for engineer Nick Kalis.



Frank Benenati's camera-shy operators were too busy to stop for pictures. That's Frank in the center wearing blue jeans. Frank built the layout around the walls in a smaller room. Now, with the layout reinstalled in a larger room, it is accessible from both sides; and he was able to add a yard on the left where Ken Nester is working.

A week or so before the sessions, hosts e-mailed preliminary layout information to operators attending their sessions. Once the crews arrived, they had time to walk the layouts and meet the host and his helpers. Then hosts gave short briefings, and the trains started rolling.

Operators old and new worked together, and the work to be done quickly sorted itself out. Hosts put newer operators with more experienced people, or started them on less-demanding runs. Within an hour or so, somebody just poking their head in to see what was going on would have had trouble spotting the new folks.



Bryan Kidd (in the C&O shirt) and Bill Mosteller are watching approaching traffic at White Sulphur Springs, while Ernie Little (partly hidden) is switching passenger cars at the station mockup. Notice that Bryan's layout is operations-ready even though scenery is still a work in progress. That's common on ops layouts, allowing owners to run their railroads even while construction is ongoing.

Typical of the operator's day, in the morning Randy Ghertler ran on Frank Benenati's railroad, which uses Timetable and Train Authority to dispatch trains. In the afternoon, he was at Fritz Dahlin's, who controls his railroad using his homemade CTC panel (Centralized Traffic Control) to control signals. Randy said prior to the sessions he had limited operating experience; but he had no problems running freights on either layout.

Each host was thanked for their contribution with a Certificate of Appreciation from Potomac Division Superintendent Martin Brechbiel. Division plans are to hold a second Ops Saturday next year, probably in May or June. Watch for the announcement, and join. ☒

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Models We Admire

Martin Brechbiel, MMR scratchbuilt this O scale model of a Maintenance Of Way (MOW) car with fully detailed interior, removable roof and operating hoist.



Andrew Dodge, MMR totally scratch built this O scale model to Proto48 standards, with a few castings such as side frames for the trucks, some of the machinery castings inside, and the water hatch on the tender. Everything works; and when powered up, the impeller blades create a breeze out of the exhaust chute.





This HO scale model by John Paganoni, MMR. Is a highly modified early version of a Walthers Jordan Spreader that replicates the Central Vermont Spreader Number 4284. The prototype was assigned primarily to the Southern Division to

perform ditching operations for right of way maintenance and, in the winter, performed snow removal.



This HO scale yard office scratchbuilt by Mat Thompson, MMR was inspired by a *Model Railroader* story about yard structures on Bill Darnaby's Maumee Route. Details that make the model

include the rain porch, gutters, the goose neck lights over the doors, and the building identification stencil.

With these photos by some of our Division MMRs, we are launching what we hope will be a regular feature to showcase member skills. We encourage you to submit your photographs—and you don't have to be an MMR. Whether it's a prized locomotive or piece of rolling stock, a structure or some scenic feature, we'd be delighted to have you send it to us for possible publication.

JPG, GIF, or PNG format is best for pictures. Send them to: Potomac-Flyer@potomac-nmra.org



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Building Freight Car Kits, Part 1 – Craftsman Plastic Models

by Mat Thompson, MMR

I still build HO scale car kits. They got me started in model railroading and keep my interest fifty years later. New offerings are rare, so most of my kits come from train shows or eBay. Judging by the often-spirited bidding, today's conventional wisdom that everything must be ready-to-run is wrong.

This article and a follow-on article about resin car kits will share my observations on the quality and ease of building kits from several different manufacturers. A few passenger car kits are on the market, but my focus is on freight cars.



The car on the left is a Proto2000 kit. The middle car, now used for hay storage, is a 1950s kit from Ambroid. The Oregon Short Line car was scratch built using Camino plans and substituting styrene for wood. The Ambroid kit was state-of-the-art when released, but the dimensional lumber looks thick compared to more recent products.

My first kits were Athearn, known as “screwdriver kits” for the single tool required for assembly or “shake-the-box kits” for their ease of assembly. Today Accurail, Walthers Mainline series, Bowser, and others offer similar kits. Older kits by Athearn, Roundhouse, and Trains Miniature are common on eBay and at train shows. I loved them as a boy but have moved on to more demanding kits.

That led me to wooden kits from Ambroid, LaBelle, Silver Streak, Quality Craft, and others. They were challenging and often unique models. However, the materials, detail level, and castings are crude by today's standards, and the wood is often dried out, making it hard to cut cleanly. To my eye, the cars look out of place in a consist of more modern offerings. That said, the plans can be hidden jewels. They were drawn to scale, and often included underbody detail. I have built cars from scratch using those plans.

The kits I build now are either what I call “craftsman” plastic kits or resin kits, which I will write about in a later article. My definition of a craftsman plastic kit is one that has separate grab irons and ladders and underbody detail that includes airlines. There is nothing absolute about the definition, but I am looking for cars that will take two or three evenings to assemble.

Using that definition only, Tichy still produces car kits in volume. Intermountain decorated models are now sold assembled. Proto 2000 cars are sold RTR now that Walthers owns the line; and the same is true for the former Branchline models since Branchline has been bought by Atlas. A few companies that now mostly release their products in RTR versions, like Intermountain, Kadee, and Tangent, offer some of their products in kit format on their web sites.

But even with the decline of manufacturers, a wide range of kits is available. Tichy kits are available at hobby stores and many internet sites and by mail from Tichy direct. Life-Like Proto 2000 kits are plentiful on eBay and at train shows. Older Intermountain kits (and IMWX, an Intermountain predecessor) and Red Caboose kits (now part of Intermountain) are also common on eBay. Branchline Blueprints cars are on eBay in limited quantities. Don't confuse the Blueprint line with their Yardmaster offerings of screw-driver kits.

Regardless of manufacturer, most kits are cars of the steam era into the transition era with a few covered hoppers, and 50 foot boxcars built in the late 50s or early 60s. *Freight Cars of the '40s and '50s* by Jeff Wilson (Kalmbach, \$21.99) is a good single source reference if you need help determining if a car type is correct for your model needs. Intermountain offers undecorated versions of modern car types such as jumbo hoppers, hi-cube boxcars, and 89-foot auto racks in kit form.

Plastic kits have some things in common. Except for kits sold as “undecorated” cars, models are painted and lettered. Cars need little or no touch up painting when assembled. Kits come with trucks and wheels and some variation of a knuckle coupler. I routinely upgrade the kits by substituting Kadee couplers and Intermountain or Proto2000 metal wheels. Kits also normally come with weights, although not always enough to meet NMRA recommendations.

One construction confusion point is many instructions do not clearly show how the underbody A and B ends align with the A and B ends of the car body. A simple way to remember the proper alignment is to note the underbody A end of a car, the one without the brake wheel, has only an airline pointing to the end of the car. The B end, or brake wheel end, has an airline and a retainer line pointing to the end of the car.

What follows is my impression of several kit lines:

Branchline Blueprint Series:

- **Parts quality:** Many parts are delicate and prone to breaking easily. Parts are cast close together on thick sprues, making it difficult to remove them without breaking grab irons and other smaller pieces. Sprues have extras of many detail parts. Large body pieces have predrilled holes for inserting smaller parts but the holes, and the parts don't always line up correctly when the parts have multiple insertion points such as the corner brackets on the roof walk and the underbody airlines and brake lines. All body holes on painted cars need to be drilled out and slightly enlarged. Kits come with steel bolts for weights that fit into flanges on floor interiors.

- **Instructions:** Instructions include a car history with an explanation of car variations. They are clearly written and illustrated with photographs. A photo also identifies parts on sprues. Instructions are in 5x8 inch pamphlet making the print and photographs small and hard to read.



Branchline included steel nuts in their kits to use as weights. They supplied two, which are glued over the trucks on each end of the car. I added a third nut to this still under-construction boxcar because I like to run cars slightly over the NMRA weight recommendation.

- **Ease of Assembly:** Construction is challenging even when holes for detail parts have been drilled out. Test fit often, and trim parts or enlarge holes to avoid breaking parts. Even when securely glued, many detail parts are delicate and must be carefully handled
- **Offerings:** Cars include 40-foot and 50-foot boxcars and refrigerator cars of the transition era and later, many with plug doors and build dates into the early 60s. Branchline also released many 40-foot reefers with billboard paint schemes common until they were banned in 1937.



This car kit came from Intermountain, but regardless of the manufacturer, tank car kits are difficult because of the thin body railing.

Intermountain (to include Red Caboose and IMWX):

- **Parts quality:** Box car shells, tank car tanks, and similar bigger pieces have predrilled holes for grab irons, ladders, and other details. Detail piece fit can be tight, so it is wise to drill out holes with a slightly larger drill bit before attempting assembly. Parts are well detailed, arranged in groups on sprues, and generally leave enough working space between parts to allow cutting them off

the sprue without damaging them. Extra detail parts are included. When appropriate, extra doors or car ends may be included with instructions on how to determine the correct parts to use for the car you are modeling. Some kits do not include weights which can be a problem for open cars such as flats and gondolas. The only way to tell is to look in the box.

- **Instructions:** Clearly written with a logical construction sequence and diagrams identifying parts on sprues. Clear drawings aid identifying part locations. Diagram notes help clarify the proper part where confusion is possible such as the orientation of underbody detailing and the A and B end of cars. Instructions include a car history.

- **Ease of Assembly:** Construction of cars is straightforward once holes for detail parts have been drilled out and slightly enlarged. Tank cars and Caswell gondolas are the most demanding kits because of numerous small and delicate parts.

- **Offerings:** Intermountain offers a wide range of car types decorated in many paint schemes to include variations over time as prototype car were modified and paint schemes changed. As an example, their website currently shows more than 15 variations of PFE refrigerator cars and just as many ATSF reefers. Many of these variations were offered as kits. Intermountain has also offered kits for 40-foot and 50-foot boxcars, flatcars, tank cars, hoppers, gondolas, and stock cars.

Life-Like Proto 2000:

- **Parts quality:** Superb — predrilled holes for grab irons and ladders are the right size to easily insert and glue



Life-Like Proto 2000 50-foot boxcars were offered in at least 12 road names and as both single and double door cars. The prototypes were first delivered in 1940. Some continued in revenue service until at least the late 1960s.

parts. The car length cylinder/brake linkage piece easily lines up with the holes in the underframe. Trucks come with metal wheels. Weights meet NMRA recommendations.

- **Instructions:** Clearly written with a logical construction sequence and practical advice including how to cut parts from sprues. The drawings are clear and uncluttered, so it is easy to identify parts and part locations. Printing and diagrams are small. Instructions do not include a car history.

- **Ease of Assembly:** Tank cars are a challenge because the grab rail around the tank is thin and must be carefully worked into place. Add it as late as you can in construction to avoid breaking it. Construction of the other cars is straightforward, since parts fit as they are supposed to fit.

- **Offerings:** Proto 8,000-gallon and 10,000-gallon tank cars are noted within the model car building fraternity for being correctly painted and lettered. Other offerings include single deck and double deck Mather Stock cars, single and double door 50-foot boxcars, a 53-foot mill gondola, a war emergency gondola, a 52-foot flat car, and PS2 covered hoppers. They also offered 40-foot Mather boxcars in limited numbers, but no other more common 40-foot boxcars.



Tichy's flat car goes together well, but is light even with the supplied weight; so the car needs a load to track well. Lettering was done using decals from a Tichy set containing the road names for several railroads.

Tichy:


- **Parts quality:** Parts are generally flash-free and well-detailed. In fact, Tichy parts are often included in other kits, particularly resin car kits. Weights designed for the models are included, although the flat car weights are well under the NMRA recommended weight. Tichy sells parts also, so replacing a broken or lost part is easy.

- **Instructions:** Diagrams are large and clearly rendered. Construction steps are logical. Printed text is small but almost unneeded because the diagrams are so well done.

- **Ease of Assembly:** Parts fit together well. Holes are started, parts are notched, or flanges guide part placement making construction easy.

- **Offerings:** Tichy offers 40-foot flat cars, wooden boxcars, and wooden refrigerator cars. They also offer short ore cars, hoppers, gondolas, two versions of a 36-foot tank car plus a 120-ton crane and boom car.

My experience with these brands is that Life-Like Proto2000, Intermountain and Tichy kits are all quality products and offer a pleasant few hours of modeling. Branchline Blueprints models are more demanding because of their fragile parts and slightly mis-aligned predrilled holes.

In the next article we will take a look at resin car kits. [Editor's Note: This is the first of a two part series. In our October-November issue, Mat will report on resin car kits.] 

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Battered, Beaten, and Broken: How To Make A Derelict Building

by Alex Belida

If—as I do—you look to Ghost Towns of the Old West for prototype structures to model, or if you simply have a hankering for models that look aged and run down for that “other side of the tracks” look on your layout, then you should consider making your own derelict building. It’s not too hard and—given that it is *supposed* to look decrepit—any construction or weathering mistakes you might make are easily covered up.

First, though, you should find a structure to model. When I decided to make one, I looked at photos of several abandoned buildings online before settling on two as my starting point.

One is in the ghost mining town of Bodie, California that at various times served as a hotel, clothing store and

casino. It was

known as the Swasey building,

My derelict building

named after Horace F. Swasey, who bought it in 1894. The other is an abandoned storefront along US287 in Montana.

For my purposes, I decided to build a single-story structure (with a false front) and I used vertical (as in the Montana photo) instead of the horizontal boards of the Swasey version.



Montana store



Swasey building

I used Popsicle sticks for the exterior siding, but coffee stirrers will also work (and either will be cheaper than buying scale stripwood). These were roughened using a hobby knife and wire brush. I shaved away portions

along the sides to ensure there were no even boards. I also broke some boards and made holes in others. (FYI, the rounded tips of the Popsicle sticks were cut off and saved, as they resemble tombstones suitable for an eventual graveyard.)

I did use stripwood for the building framework and the roof supports, as well as the scratchbuilt collapsed door. The roof itself was made from torn strips from a dirty coffee filter, a versatile material that I have used along with old teabags to simulate canvas, tar paper, and similar products.



Roof



Front

The woodwork in the structure was stained with Testor's FX gray, followed by a drybrushing of white paint (to simulate the faded relics of an original paint job), an application of India ink wash and a dusting of Doc O'Brien's weathering powders (rusty red, dirty brown and grimy black). The coffee filter roof received a similar treatment with the India ink and weathering powders. The weathering shows up well in the front view.



Rear

The back door has been boarded shut.

Since I intend to place this structure in an as-yet-unbuilt section of my layout, I decided to give it a base that serves as a temporary pedestal but can be integrated into its eventual site. I used Sculptamold spread in a thin layer on wax paper. While still wet, I pressed a piece of cardboard cut to the dimensions of the inside of the building into the plaster to create a roughly even base for the structure.



Sculptamold Base

I then cut pieces of Popsicle sticks and laid them out in the flattened area for a rotting floorboard for the building. (The photo on the left shows the sticks before weathering and splintering.)


I painted the base in ground colors to match my existing layout and added ground cover, including rocks made from Sculptamold leftovers. The earth and grass are Woodland Scenics products. I then fitted the derelict flooring for size in the space for the building.



Weathered Boards & Base

I also added some weeds inside the building, stuck between the floorboards, and outside I positioned a broken and rust-painted gear wheel (from a scrap bag of small clock and machine gears) and a set of rust-painted cast barrels (from an old detail kit).

One thing I think I may add later is an old, weathered, and rotting sign, perhaps fallen on the ground with a faded inscription indicating what purpose the structure may have once served. I'm thinking, maybe undertaker?

There you have it: a derelict building. I submitted it as one of the scratchbuilds for achieving my Master Builder — Structures certificate. 



Alex Belida, a retired journalist, is Editor of the Potomac Flyer. He lives in Rockville, MD where his HO scale Eureka and South Pass RR models a mining town in Nevada in the late 1800s.

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A Change of Pace: Foreign Model Railroad Publications

by Nicholas Kalis

Getting tired of “the same old same old” in your model railroad reading? Looking for change? Try a foreign magazine just for a year—that’s all you need to commit to. And you don’t need to learn a foreign language. Time and again we hear of a modeler who has long ago given up on *Model Railroader*. They never seem to return. What to do?

Try *Voie Libre: The Magazine of Railway Creators* (French) in its English edition. The cost for four quarterly issues is only €29.90 (Euros). Their mailing address is BP30104 56401 Auray Cedex France. I never cease to be inspired by the clever layouts LR Presse <https://trains.lrpresse.com/CT-152-voie-libre.aspx> features thanks to its publisher, Christian Fournerau. LR Presse wants you as a reader; if not, they would not publish this magazine in two separate language editions, one French, the other English. You don’t see any American model railroad magazines publish in a second language.

Another great alternative is the quarterly *Narrow Gauge & Industrial Railway Modelling Review* <https://narrowgaugeandindustrial.co.uk> Sunnydale, Kimpton, Andover SP11 *NU, UK. It is available for an annual £45.00 for overseas (US) subscribers. You will see great photographs and great articles of typically two smaller layouts each issue.




Another source of inspiration is the Australian-published quarterly *Narrow Gauge Downunder* www.ngdu.com.au. Similarly, smaller layouts abound, though often of US prototypes. NGDU is published by Gavin Hince at 25 Dwyer Street, Clifton Hill, Vic 3068, Australia. Their email address is mail@ngdu.com.au. This publication is all-color, with about 66 pages per issue. Often the subject is railroads set in tropical climes.

But wait, many will respond, “I don’t like overseas prototypes.” A fair objection—but take it from someone who is also not a fan of foreign prototypes, there is more than meets the eye with the layouts in these publications. They shout creativity, and there is nothing more creative than squeezing a great deal of model railroading into a small space. Nothing will spark your creative juices more than seeing photos of, and reading about, layouts that eschew forests of puffballs or around-the-wall basement behemoths, the stuff of many American model railroading publications.

And if you are still an armchair modeler, or returned to armchair modeling from prior larger layout, these magazines inspire. Read a few issues and you will be champing at the bit to build a smaller layout.

The Flyer asked a model railroader from England for his opinion on foreign magazines, and he told us what he liked was learning about “the different techniques modelers use for scenery, weathering, etc., compared with what we get here (in the U.S.)” Referring to British modeling magazines specifically, he also said he thought the photos “tend to be better composed and reproduced, and the product reviews are much more critical and useful, compared with the unfailingly glowing reviews in MR.”

The same individual said he also enjoyed reading railway and model railway magazines in France and Germany when he visited there. They had their distinct production values too, he said.

Another modeler, an American, said he liked seeing in foreign publications some of the layout designs, which generally are constrained by smaller houses without basements. 

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Nick Kalis is Potomac Division Clerk. He writes: “My adult layout experience has been a never-completed HO Sunnyside Yard, then on to the Lower Montauk Branch LIRR featured on the cover of RMC. My current Oahu Sugar Company in Fn3 graced the cover of *Narrow Gauge Downunder* and was the feature story of the July 2018 issue.”

Layout Tour Report

Bob Rodriguez's Nickel City Line

Article and photos by John Paganoni, MMR



Bob's Nickel City Line is a freelanced railroad that runs through the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania in the late 1990s. The railroad had the original primary purpose of hauling coal and ore from the owner's mining interests. The line was then expanded to move goods and services. Bob's model railroad empire encompasses all of the three business ventures and he has accomplished this feat realistically, which makes operating sessions genuinely realistic. This layout is focused on operations, and Bob hosts six to nine sessions annually. NMRA members who operate on this magnificent layout can, over time, actually earn full credit toward achieving a Chief Dispatcher Achievement Program certificate.

Bob started this modeling venture in a 12' x 20' area in his basement, and through negotiations with his spouse, was able to lease the entire area of their basement. Although the layout was "completed" in 1997, he has added the last available basement space of another 7' X 24' in 2019. This new addition includes a coal washing plant, relocation of staging yards, plus other additions, to make an already excellent operations-based layout even more challenging. There are more than 20 scale miles of trackage, and his classification yard, turntable, and roundhouse facilities are truly exceptional.

Businesses for railroad revenue are vital to a prototype railroad, and they are also a realistic feature for an operations-centered model railroad. Bob has done a splendid job featuring 106 industries served by his railroad, including coal, ore mining, and fabrication plants. Towns such as Canova and Chessie City add interest and purpose, and Bob has carefully designed his layout to include eight stations and passenger stops along the line.



Coal washing plant

Bob has taken the operations environment to the extreme. He has designed and installed a lighting system that truly brings realism to operations. He can set the system for full daylight, late evening/early morning, and night operations.

With the aid of his excellent fast clock system, he can incorporate various lighting schemes to challenge operators to the maximum. A major feature of the Nickel City Line's operations capability is a spectacular Chief Dispatcher's office. The electronic panel shows virtually all of the train movements occurring on the layout at any given time, allowing the Chief Dispatcher to make real time decisions with maximum safety in the forefront. There are seven PABX phone stations, which include Dispatcher, Yardmaster, Hostler, Laurel Valley, Nickel City East, Dubois, and the Dispatcher-Track Authority Desk.



This write up only touches the surface of features on this fantastic layout. You need to see it to believe it! This is a layout all model railroaders MUST put on their "bucket list." If you get the opportunity to see, or operate, on Bob's Nickel City Line, DO IT!!

Bob's web site is outstanding and I encourage all who read this layout tour summary to look it up: <http://nclrr.potomac-nmra.org/index.htm>

[Editor's note: A report on the July 20 layout tour at the home of Doug Hess will appear in the Oct-Nov. Issue of the *Flyer*.]

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From the Business Car

by Martin Brechbiel, Division Superintendent

On the Modeling Outreach Program

Roughly a decade ago, I, along with Bill Day, attempted to set up and run a clinics program for the Potomac Division—the so-called White Flag specials. These were envisioned to provide additional opportunities for members to benefit from the expertise and experiences of other modelers, exchange information, build stuff, socialize, and generally have a bit of model railroading fun while learning. This worked fairly well for maybe a year or so before running out of gas.

Looking back, there were a host of obstacles in the pathway to success for this program. Maybe the greatest was the inability to secure a reliable venue far enough in advance to promote each clinic adequately, and to be able to get it on the personal calendars of our members. If we can't inform our members far enough in advance, we rapidly start to compete with a host of other activities. We had good venues based on space, location, and price (free!), but we failed to make timely reservations for the rooms. Other obstacles included a lack of basic support, which was a source of frustration. Lastly, and maybe most importantly in hindsight, this was a stand-alone program; and that was almost certainly a mistake.

So, how to correct past mistakes and revive this program is what Andrew Dodge and I debated and discussed prior to being elected to office. I've spent the last decade plus as Contest Chair for the region. I've traveled not only to every MER Convention during that time, but also to every division as part of a judges training program, where I extensively promoted the MER and continue to do so. During this period, I was able to see first-hand how almost all of the other divisions (James River, Carolina Piedmont, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Susquehanna, and Chesapeake) operate, where and how they hold their events, and the content and style of their events. As such, I have very real experience to assess what appears to be working across the MER. One thing I can conclude is that none of the other divisions in our region pursue singular stand-alone events. The reasoning here is fairly obvious: singular events just do not offer enough to compel meaningful attendance; we all want "more" to entice us to invest our time and effort to attend.

All of the above divisions have regular meetings built around a morning program that generally has coffee and donut time (socialization), two clinics with breaks for Q&A, and generally some sort of business. Lunch is on your own, and then there is generally at least one layout to visit, if not more. In sum, they offer a full day or at least as much of one as an attendee might partake.

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.

To this point, as I discussed in my previous column, we are setting up a recurring clinics program that will be integrated with our open house program (Modeling Outreach Program). And, we're finding a few different and diverse venues about the Potomac Division. (We can always use your help on that effort!!! Contact me or Andrew if you have a line on a venue so we can reach out to all of our members to set up an event in your part of the Potomac Division.)


To date we have following dates and times set:

Date	Time	Program
September 15, 2019	Sunday, 2 PM – 4 PM	Meet-and-greet, three speakers, layout tours
November 16, 2019	Saturday, 9 AM – 12 PM	<i>Joint Meet with James River Div.</i>
March 7, 2020	Saturday, 9 AM - 12 PM	Mary Surratt House and Museum: Clinton, MD
April 4, 2020	Saturday, 9 AM – 3 PM	Potomac Division's MiniCon

The full schedule of these events, locations, and other details are in the first article in this issue of the *Flyer*, “*PD New Modeling Outreach Program Update.*” You’ll note that there are few “To Be Determined” (TBD) listings in that article, as we are still looking for a few members who might want to present a clinic or have their layout open. Please contact Andrew or myself if you are interested in stepping up and actively, constructively participating. For those interested, there are Volunteer points available for doing that, and we could also just use a few extra volunteers.

Lastly, we’re already looking at the 2020 MiniCon, now that we have secured the venue, so that we can assemble a new, vibrant program. You might note that the date for the 2020 MiniCon is set, so get that on your calendar and plan to attend. Again, if you’re actively, constructively interesting in participating (see those “TBD” parts in the calendar), please contact any of the Board members now!

The By-Laws

On an unrelated topic, both Andrew Dodge and I have long felt that the Potomac Division By-Laws were at best outdated, and at worse something left over from far too many decades ago. Upon review, there are considerable inconsistencies with the Region and lack of compliance there. There were also quite a few aspects of the By-Laws that prevent us from making timely changes. These need to be stripped out and put in a policy document to permit rapid modifications. The Division needs to be more nimble and responsive, and excessively binding it poses a very real problem. Conversely, there were also quite a few aspects and topics within the By-Laws that were simply missing and without guidance of any kind. Suffice it to state that there will be significant changes across the board for this document, and that oversight from the MER is active in this effort. Fortunately for all of our members, Assistant Superintendent Ernie Little has taken on the bulk of this revision and what will ultimately be a reissuance of the By-Laws next year. We’ll have more to report on this as we grow closer to completion of this critical effort, one that will certainly benefit the Potomac Division. 

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Achievement Program News

by Mat Thompson, MMR

Three Potomac Division members have received AP Certificates recently.

Alex Belida earned both the Structure and Author Certificates. Many of his articles have been in recent editions of the Potomac Flyer.

Ernie Little also earned the Author certificate. Besides his *Flyer* contributions, Ernie earned points for his web site, www.norfolksouthernconnectorr.weebly.com. Ernie is now working on Cars, his last step to becoming a Master Model Railroader.

Bernard (or Bernie as most of us know him) Kempinski earned his first two certificates, Author and Volunteer. Bernie has written five books for Kalmbach and innumerable articles in the model press. Now he is documenting his other hobby efforts so he can also earn Master Model Railroader recognition.

If you are working on Certificates, take a look at the NMRA Achievement Program forms page, <https://www.nmra.org/forms>. Most have been revised and have a 2019 date. Requirements have not been changed but may be easier to understand.

The most significant update I noticed is for the three track pieces required for Civil Engineer. The requirement was clarified a few years ago to be basically a go/no go test of scratch-built track items meeting NMRA track gauge standards. The updated form makes that all obvious.

As always, if you have a question, let me know. ☒



Bernie Kempinski (L) receiving his first two certificates

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Special Report Preview: Earning Merit Awards

by Randolph Ghertler

The Special Interest Report on Earning Merit Awards is compiled from a series of articles written by Mat Thompson and published in the Potomac Flyer in 2017. Mat shares his experiences learning about how to best score points in the NMRA achievement program for modeling cars and structures.

Mat candidly discusses his experiences, allowing you to benefit from his time spent learning the hard way. The lessons he shares go deep into the point methodology of the *AP Judging Guidelines for Motive Power, Cars, and Structures*. Learn how models are judged and how points are assessed.

Some very fine modeling work could end up with a low point score from not understanding the nuances of the point scoring systems. Mat goes into great detail on the achievement program and the types and quantities of models to build. He describes the point matrices and how complexity, detail, and prototypical accuracy can affect score. The benefit of scratchbuilding to increase point count is addressed.

If you are interested in the Achievement Program, Merit Awards, or just building models of contest quality, this Special Interest Report is highly recommended reading.

Special Reports are posted on the Potomac Division's website at:

http://potomac-nmra.org/Special_Interest_Reports/index.html ☒

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Helping the Operators

by Mat Thompson, MMR

Operating sessions on my layout often host new operators or operators who haven't been to the layout for a while. Over time I have found sessions can be more pleasant and much less confusing for them and for me, by doing a few simple things that make operating more comfortable.

I learned what to do by watching and listening to my operators. If each time they stop their trains, they are searching around on the fascia or the edge of the layout, I realized they were having trouble finding an uncoupling pick. Every session operators would ask again about the maximum train length, which told me signs could be helpful.

Operator aids do more than answer immediate questions. Operators learn to look for them. They gain faith in the logic of the layout and expect to find answers to many of their questions quickly and easily.

Here are the things I have done to help operators on my layout.

- **Uncoupling Picks:** The standard solution for uncoupling cars is to use picks—wooden skewers from the grocery store. A package of 100 to 200 skewers costs less than five dollars yet on many layouts, skewers are few and far between. I spray paint mine yellow for visibility and place them in holders every five to ten feet along the layout fascia.
- **Direction Signs:** Like the prototype, my model railroad use directions to define the flow of traffic. In my case it is East-West. I have posted easy to see and understand makings in several places to help operators stay oriented.
- **Location Signs:** Trains go somewhere. Signs on the fascia help those working on the railroad to know where all those somewheres are.
- **Industry Signs:** Signs on industries are prototypical and part of good modeling. They are also helpful to operators. Even when a model isn't complete, a sticky tab or other temporary marker eliminates questions and confusion.

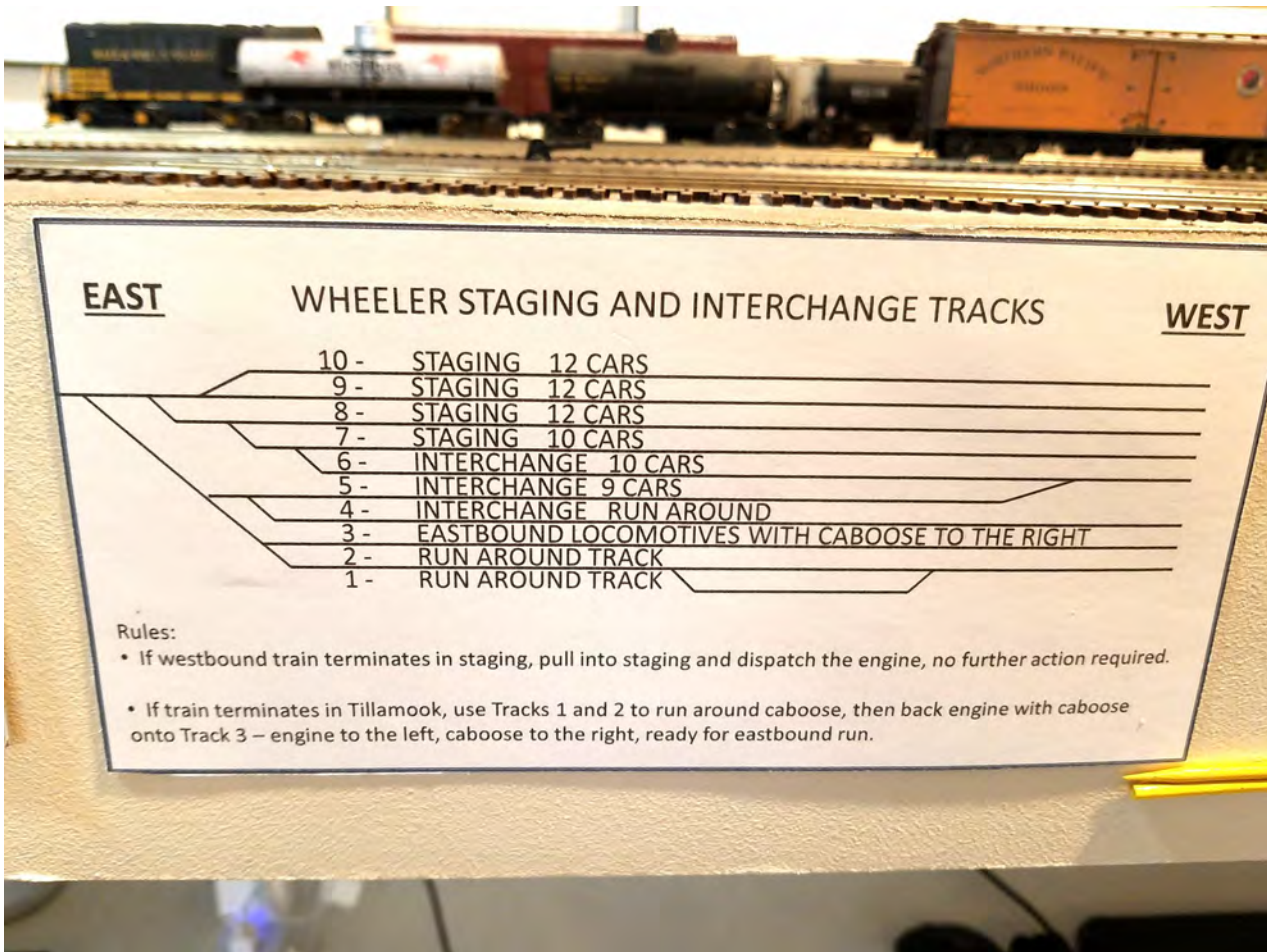


Uncoupling picks have been painted yellow and placed in holders at every yard and industry. Train length signs are placed at each yard. The inset toggle switches control turnouts.



Signage like this tell operators where they are, locate industries and confirm the primary directions of the railroad, all in a brief glance.

- Track Diagrams: Every yard and multi-track industry has a small, removable track diagram so the operators working there can familiarize themselves and plan their work.
- Extra Car Card slots: Most location car card boxes have a free slot labeled “Conductor



A diagram takes the mystery out of the mazes of tracks in yards and at large industries.

Working” that can be used as a “for now” holding space while car movements are being worked. Plastic strips, sold at hardware stores as trim pieces, are also present for sorting cards and building trains.

- Fascia Notes: I use Advanced Consisting on diesel lash-ups so their DCC address is different than the engine numbers. Placards on the fascia at each yard list the addresses. Another placard shows maximum train lengths.

You may have noticed several of these things involve placards or signs on the fascia of my layout. In addition, the fascia has car card boxes, turnout toggles recessed in plastic caps, throttle holders and DCC plug-in panels. Just as important, I don’t clutter up the fascia with other material.

Besides operator aids, I do some other things intended to make things go easier:



Unassigned spaces in carcard boxes give operators extra working space.

- My briefings are very focused. For those working in yards or other fixed positions, I brief them standing at that position so they can see what we are talking about. Engine crews are briefed separately if I think it is needed at all. The point is, no one has to listen to a briefing about anything but the work they will be doing.
- Sessions are no more than three hours - longer than that and the fun disappears as operators get tired.
- Part of my layout space is carpeted. For the rest, I have added floor rubber mats so operators aren't standing on hard concrete.
- I use a fast clock, but I turn it on 15 or 20 real minutes before the first trains are scheduled to move so people have a chance to think about what they need to be doing.

Making important information easy to find, not burdening operators with information they don't need, and helping them be comfortable during a session helps everybody concentrate on running trains. That's why we all gathered in the first place. ☒

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Engineers and Firemen 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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Liberty Bell Special 2019 Update

Vacation? We don't need no stinking vacation!

The committee for Liberty Bell Special 2019 is hard at work finalizing what promises to be a great experience for our attendees at the October 10-13 gathering. The host hotel is so excited about our upcoming get-together that they've redecorated the entire lobby and common areas.

Our webmaster is laboring diligently to keep the convention website updated with the latest news. In fact, he's foresworn a vacation this summer to keep the www.libertybellspecial.org site current with the committee's progress. If you haven't already done so, bookmark the site to stay abreast of all that is going on in preparation for October. Currently, the clinic schedule is on the site, and I have it from good authority that the detailed clinic descriptions are about to be posted.

Also on the site is a list of the Open Houses and OpSig sessions, again updated as we add layouts. There are a great number of super layouts covering all scales and interests. The committee has been in touch with the "Weather Gods" to make sure there will be no rain for the outdoor layouts. Trust me! We would still like to have some of you "outliers" speak up for hosting visits at your empires for travelers to and from the convention.

For those who don't want to leave our spacious new convention digs, there will be two modular layouts which will offer operating times within the hotel. Our thanks go out in advance to the Reading Company Technical & Historical Society Modular Group and the New Jersey FreeMo Group for donating their time and equipment to make this possible.

And what would a convention be without a banquet? Our very talented liaison with the hotel has challenged the hotel Chef to prepare something different for us Saturday night. This won't be the usual rubber chicken drowned in gravy meal. Our liaison and the chef have agreed to prepare a buffet featuring actual dining car recipes for your enjoyment. We are hoping the banquet hall won't sway and rock like a dining car, but the fare will equal or exceed what you may recall from the golden age of meals on rails.

So while you're "down shore," up in the Poconos, out at OBX, or wherever your vacation plans may take you, make time to register for Liberty Bell Special 2019. There are some deadlines posted on the website. Stay abreast of deadlines, additions, changes, and enhancements throughout the summer.

You'll be glad you did! ☒

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Reading Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet

September 13-15,
2019 Reading Railroad Heritage Museum
500 South 3rd Street, Hamburg, PA

There will be clinics, model displays, vendors, white elephant table, and raffle prizes. The Reading Railroad Museum features locomotives and rolling stock displays. Saturday lunch and dinner will be available. On Sunday, there will be home layout tours.

For more information, registration forms and updates, go to: www.ReadingRRMM.com ☒

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