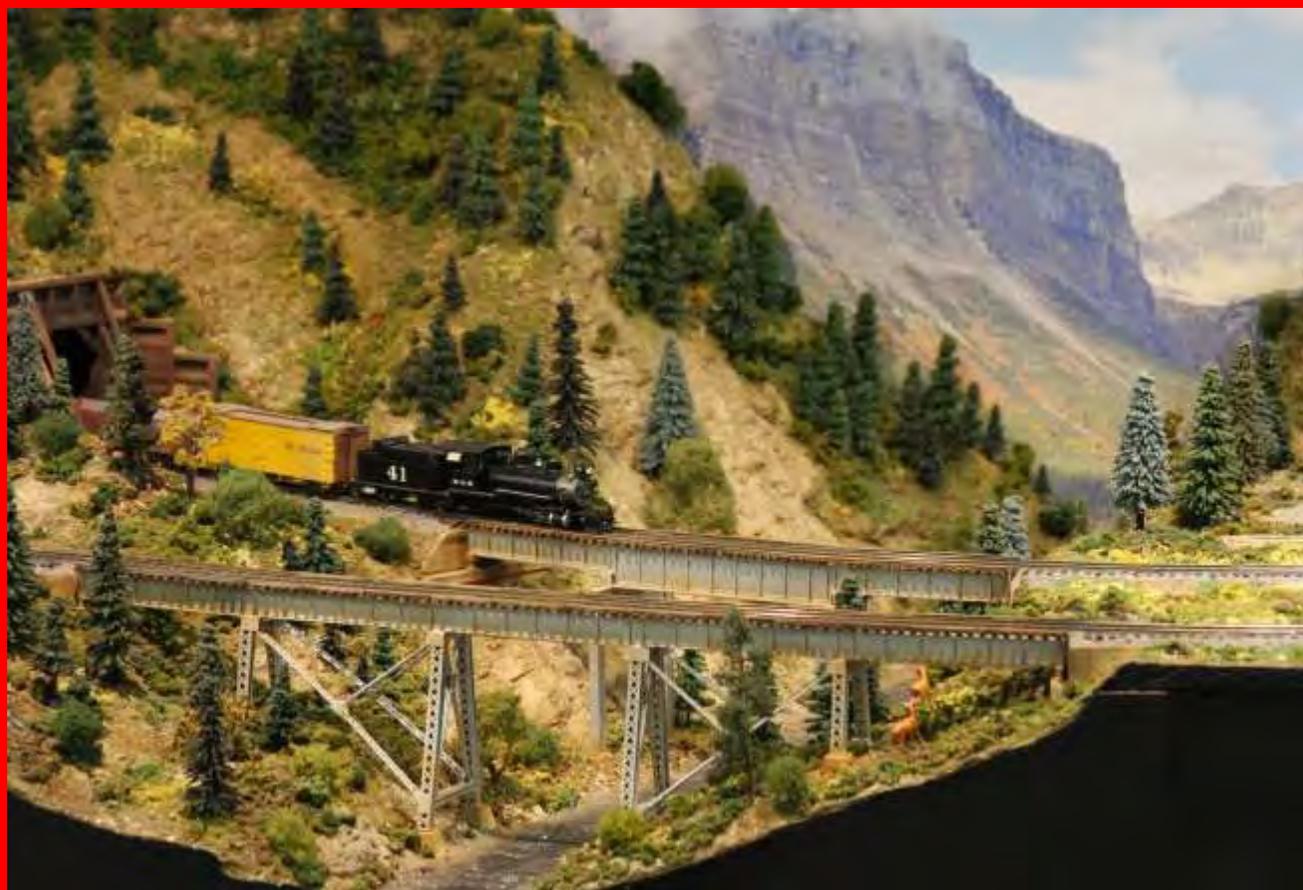


# THE POTOMAC FLYER



**Staying at Home and Working on the Railroad: PD Members Report on Their Modeling Activities**

**Remote Operating Sessions: Yes, You Can!**

**Plus Telltales, Crossbucks, Trucks and Flats**

**And more: Turning A Hobby Into A Business, Hosting Your First Layout Open House and Railfanning Nevada...**

**ALL INSIDE**

## From the Business Car: Here We All Sit...

by Martin Brechbiel, MMR

As I write, it is the last week of April. Looking forward is complicated by a lot of unknowns. Plans are not being made, events are being cancelled, and it's unclear just what will take place or not as we look forward to the rest of 2020. Previously, I noted canceling the MiniCon. I tried very hard to not cancel it until the last minute, with some help from the Governor. Anyone who thought there was an ulterior motive to delaying a decision needs to seek professional help. May is now essentially another lost month. June is rapidly becoming doubtful in VA and MD. We have cancelled the clinics program meet scheduled in June in Vienna. In all too many ways, the rest of the year is at very real risk of being lost. Despite my general pessimistic knowledge-based outlook and analysis, I'm still working to remain optimistic that we might be able to at least get together somewhere later this year. The MER Fall convention has not been cancelled yet, but it is at very real risk now existing at the intersection of financial prudence and general health safety. So, recapping where we have been for the past month might be more productive.

Despite canceling the MiniCon, the Board felt it very important to maintain some sense of continuity of action and decided to forge on with this year's elections. We had three candidates for two positions. After slogging about through the limits of how elections might be done in the Division, we did something novel and put a ballot into the mail to reach out to and engage every member of record for this select purpose (for the first time in my memory). All the election specifics are in a separate article, which is the just before the Calendar at the end of this issue. An interesting side result of this was to test the data in the roster extract that the Division receives from the Region. We had just one return to sender out of nearly 300 ballots mailed.

Just prior to the elections, the Board met via e-mail to consider two actions. One was to

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

### 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 by Ron King: Eastbound freight pulled by Rio Grande Southern #41 crosses Misty Creek on his 1940's era HO-Scale Misty Creek Railway.

appoint Ernie Little, MMR to be our Webmaster and to be the Computer Clerk. In as much as Ernie was already doing these jobs, this was really just formalization. Nonetheless, congrats and thanks to Ernie for stepping up and taking on the work that makes this Division operate. The other action was to direct our Open House Program Chair to formally integrate the open house scheduling into the clinics program starting in 2020, hopefully back in Clinton, MD at the Surratt House facility. We are forward looking!

The Board met again by Zoom video conference after the election results were finalized and after I had spoken with all three candidates regarding the results. Currently, the elections are to the Board, and not to a specific position, which provides an opportunity for persons to change roles and to “re-shuffle” the Board. I offered to do just this and to take on a different role for a variety of reasons, primarily an operational one regarding the Paymaster’s job, and another to allow someone else to earn a year’s qualification towards the Achievement Program Official certificate. Due to changes in the AP program, being a Superintendent can now earn the required time (three years) to get that AP certificate. Having the official certificate already, I offered up the position to the other Board members. That offering was effectively rejected, providing a vote of confidence that the Board should remain in its current form while adding Jerry Stanley as our new Paymaster. Most importantly, right here and now, we all need to thank Tom Brodrick most sincerely for his diligence and duty as the Potomac Division’s Paymaster, and for all of the other roles and heavy lifting done over many years to every member’s benefit.

The Flyer team and I also tested out Zoom about two weeks back and managed to get things workable, with the potential of doing clinics and maybe even layout open houses via video conference. The MER Board meeting three days ago was done using WebEx, with some using video and some dialing in, but again a workable solution. A day later the new Division Board met by Zoom video conference, with four out of five managing to get their video camera and microphones working, myself included. This appears eminently doable, and given current conditions “Team Zoom” will be forging ahead on drafting up information and hopefully a few clinics to fill some future afternoons. We should also be able to record these and provide them later on the Division website for members.

Now in the meantime, I’m hoping that you have all seriously indulged in your hobby over the past months; and this issue of the Flyer showcases some of your efforts. I wrapped up that LWS LWS MP54 kit that I started with a kitbash into the combine with nary a lingering side effect or any physical damage. I’ve also managed to take care of some cosmetic repairs to a PSC reefer in readiness to paint it, weather permitting, along with finishing a pair of scratchbuilt styrene reefers. The paint queue is growing. This opportunity to get some modelbuilding done is proving productive! Now please share your efforts here in The Flyer.

In the meantime, be careful out there. Take care of yourself and your health!



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## The Coronavirus Effect: A Special Note from the Flyer Team

This horrid pandemic has forced us all to stay home and maintain social distance—quashing our planned MiniCon, Outreach Events, and Layout Open Houses. But, on the upside, it has given many of us lots of extra time for our model railroading projects.

In recognition of that new reality, we reached out and encouraged members of the Potomac Division to write in and tell us what they’ve been working on.

And the response has been gratifying.

While we’re rarely lacking in submissions month to month, we often have to push and prod to get enough quality material to make up the Flyer. But on this occasion, we suspect that—in

addition to having more time for modeling—more members than usual have decided to sit down and send us photos and text about their projects.

While most involve building or upgrading models, we have one special feature that demonstrates a creative way to host an operating session while social distancing!

Now it's possible that some members might realize their activities during this enforced hiatus could become a business. And that's why we also have an article from a member who has taken the leap and turned his hobby into an enterprise.

You might not want to take it that far, but when this pandemic passes and life returns to a semblance of normalcy, the Division will resume its schedule of layout open houses, and we have an offering about hosting your first. Think about it!

One other activity that will resume is travel—and our members often include railfanning in their trips. If you're looking forward to that kind of excursion, we have something for you as well.

Thanks for sharing. (And please keep it up! Because in our next issue, we'll be instituting a new feature: "What's On The Workbench.")

In the meantime, between working on your models, consider how the internet can keep you abreast of our hobby. The NMRA has launched "virtual conventions" with clinics and tours on its Facebook page. If you don't use Facebook, the Association says it will eventually post videos of these sessions, dubbed NMRA-X, on its YouTube Channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGModelRailroading>

And you should be sure to check the Potomac Division's own website. It has a plethora of good information, including clinics and tips as well as layout tour reports and, of course, back issues of the Flyer. (We certainly hope every member has a link to our site on their computers, but just in case, here it is: <http://potomac-nmra.org/>)

Marshall Abrams, Publisher

Alex Belida, Editor 

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### Note to All Potomac Division Members:

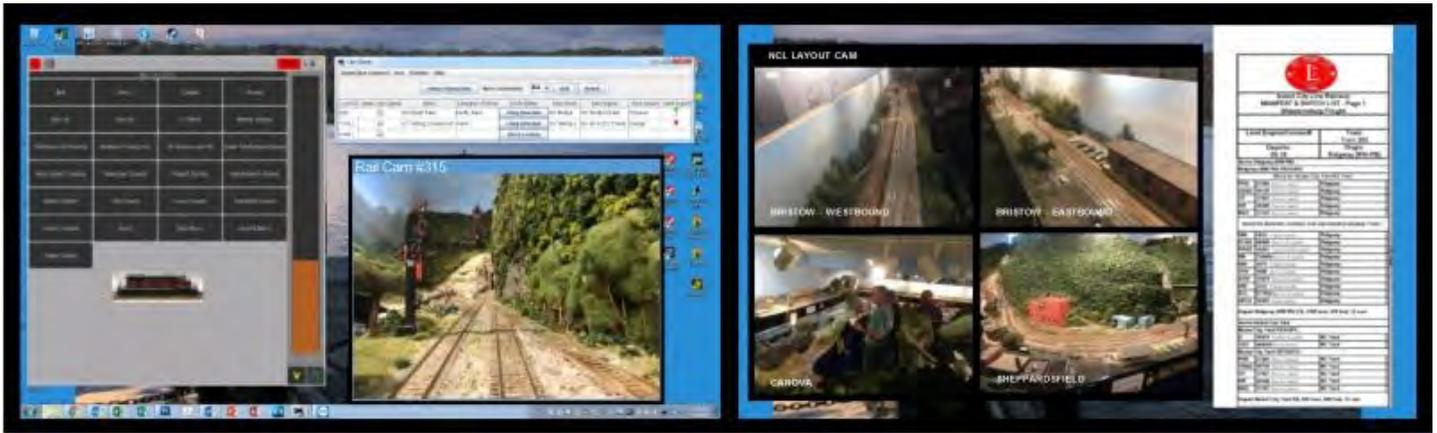
For our August-September issue the Flyer team has a couple of requests:

1. We want you to continue sending us your articles about what you are working on in your model railroading. We'd like to make this a regular feature in each issue. Please attach a photo or two.
2. Alternatively: send us a photo of your workbench and explain how you have it organized and what your go-to tools or supplies are and any other suggestions you have for better modeling. We already have one short item lined up for the coming issue on "Workbench Tips."
3. You may have forgotten this pitch: send us photos for "Models We Admire." Surely you have a structure or loco or piece of rolling stock or some scenery you are especially proud of. Who knows, it might become a Flyer cover!
4. And don't forget: send us a brief bio and a headshot photo of yourself with your contributions. We have a few on file for some members but we'd prefer fresh ones from everyone.

## Remote Operations — Creative Option for Holding Operating Sessions in the Era of COVID-19

by Bob Rodriguez

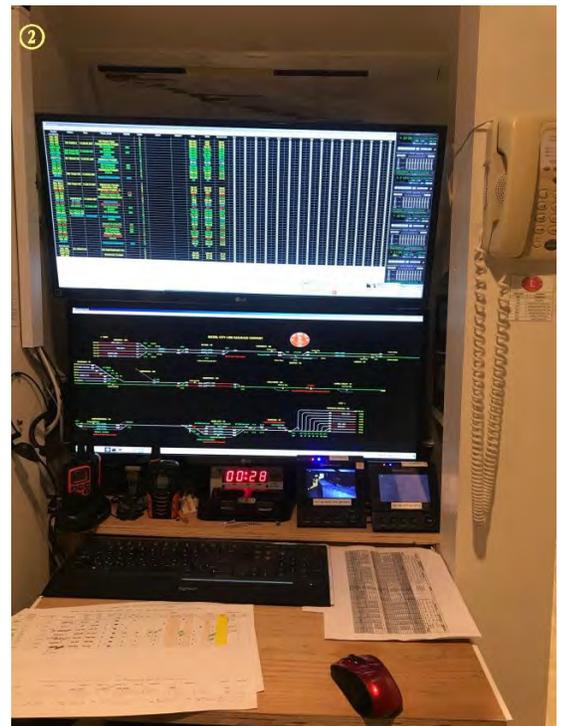
When I was first going to write this article, I had planned to discuss remote dispatching for operating sessions. But now I sit in front of my computer, it is early April, and the world as we know it has been turned upside down. The emergence of COVID-19 across the globe has initiated thousands upon thousands of closures and gatherings worldwide. In the model railroading world we have seen cancellations of meets, conventions, meetings, and yes, operating sessions. And while, at some point, this pandemic will come to an end—and those very smart scientists will develop a vaccine—my thoughts turn to how one might host an operating session while still maintaining the appropriate social distancing.



*An engineer operates Train 202 remotely on his home computer using JMRI's Web Access and HD web security cameras installed around the layout.*

Let's discuss the position of the Dispatcher. Depending on the layout and era, the role of the Dispatcher may be as simple as writing orders and recording train movements on the Dispatcher's Train Sheet. Or it could involve the operation of a CTC console or even a modern computer aided dispatch (CAD) screen on a computer. So how could this job be done remotely? In the first instance where the Dispatcher issues train orders and maintains a Train Sheet for the session, the Dispatcher and the Operator could be connected by an open phone line (land line or cell). I operated on Roger Sekera's Clinch Valley Line where the Dispatcher, Steve King, was in Pennsylvania issuing train orders while the crew operated on Roger's layout in Maryland. In that instance, the Operator recorded the orders locally and handed them to the train crew. In a complete virtual environment this could be accomplished by the Operator writing the orders he receives from the Dispatcher via telephone. He then takes a photo of the order and texts the order to the train crew. The train crew receives the order and begin their run accordingly.

In the latter instances, the Dispatcher's CTC or CAD screens would need to be created on a computer which is

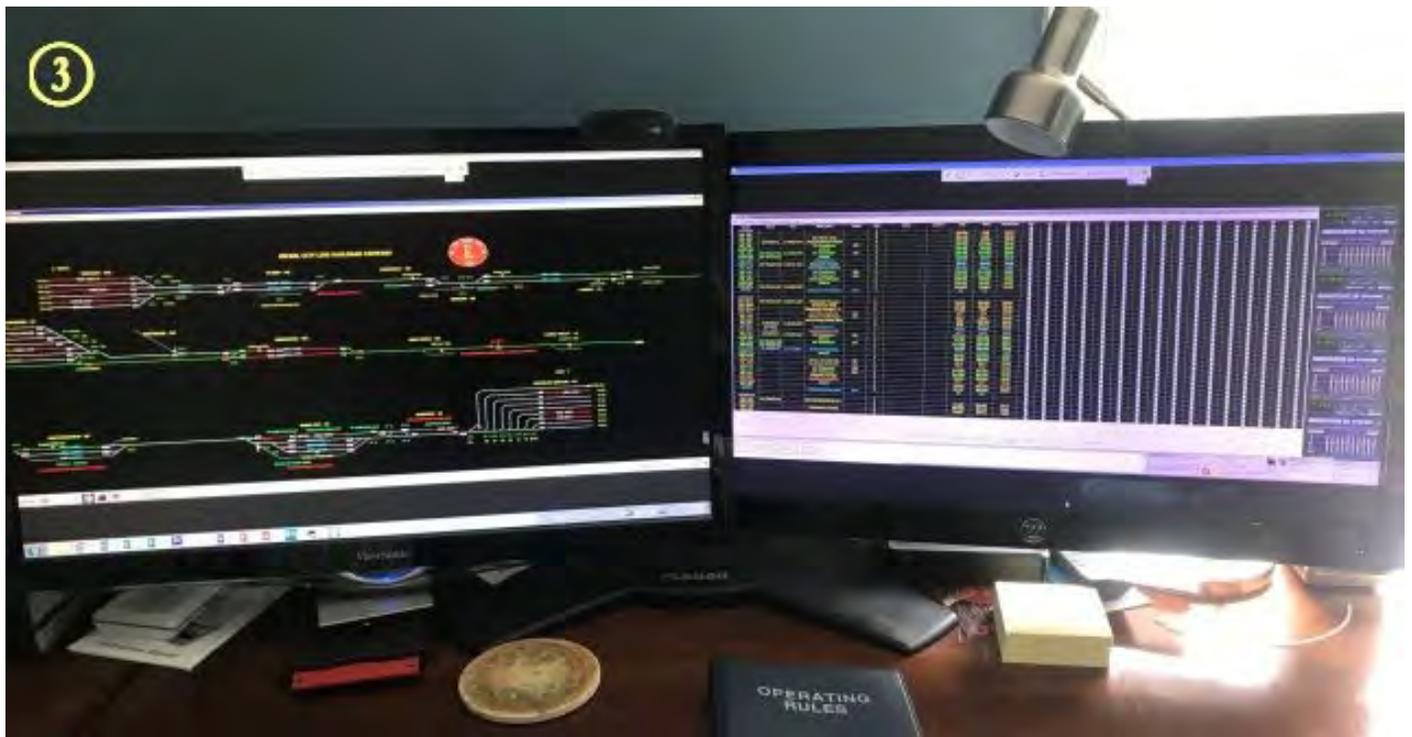


*The Dispatcher's Office for the Nickel City Line Railroad.*

connected to the layout. The layout would require a number of pieces of hardware to communicate with the Dispatcher's computer, which I will discuss later.

I have been an avid user of Bob Jacobsen's Java Model Railroad Interface software (JMRI) (<https://www.jmri.org/>). JMRI is free and updated twice a year by model railroad enthusiasts who also have great computer software programming skills.

JMRI sets up a communications link between the Dispatcher and the layout. Design and construction of a CTC or modern CAD Dispatcher's screen is pretty straightforward. See photo (2). I discussed the basic process to do this in the January 2015 issue of the *Potomac Flyer*. Once the Dispatcher's screen has been created, the next step is to operate the screens remotely. JMRI has a web interface that can provide a user access to the dispatch computer in order to accomplish that. I prefer to use a program called TeamViewer (<https://www.teamviewer.com/en-us/>). TeamViewer is a remote desktop tool that permits operation of a computer by another computer via the internet. (3) The software is free for personal use. On my railroad, the Nickel City Line (<http://nclrr.potomac-nmra.org/>), I have successfully had the railroad dispatched remotely by several of my operators who were miles away. I saw firsthand the benefits of TeamViewer when I operated on Dave Abeles' Conrail Onondaga Cutoff back in the fall of 2016. Dave's layout is located in New Jersey, and his Dispatcher was at home in Philadelphia. In that instance, as with my instances, the Dispatcher had complete control to throw turnouts, allocate track segments, and operate signals along designated routes over the internet. Regardless of which method you prefer, there is a way to dispatch remotely.



*The author's office computer, which is connected via the internet using TeamViewer software to control all functions of the Dispatcher's computer remotely.*

Let's turn to communications. How would a train crew communicate with the Dispatcher or Operator? Well, in the prototype world it was done via the Station Agent / Operator by telegraph, telephone, or by two-way radio in the modern era. In the first instance, a simple phone call to the Operator as a train passes a control point would work. The Operator could also call the train crew

if they had new orders. As mentioned earlier, orders could be photographed and texted to the train crews as well.

In the modern era two-way radios are the norm. So how does one communicate via two-way radio remotely? Let's look at two options. The first option would be to run a separate web conference using software such as Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>). Because we are replicating two-way radios, a webcam on the engineer's PC is not necessary. The Engineer's and DDspatcher's audio would default to the 'Mute' setting. When the Dispatcher needed to communicate with a train crew, the Dispatcher would unmute their PC, transmit the message and then mute their mic. The train crew would repeat the procedure used by the Dispatcher to respond to the message. Zoom has apps for iOS and Android smartphones in addition to desktops.

On the Nickel City Line when I use remote dispatching, I allocate an FRS (Family Radio Service) two-way radio to the Dispatcher's PC. I use a Midland radio ④ which has separate mic and earphone jacks. Using audio cables, I connect the speaker jack of the two-way radio to the mic jack of the computer. I connect the mic jack of the two-way radio to the speaker jack of the PC. The radio is set to VOX (Voice Operated Switch), and I adjust the sensitivity to achieve the best result. TeamViewer has an audio component, and I use that feature to connect the two-way radio. At that point the Dispatcher can transmit and receive over the internet and communicate with the train crews in the layout room via two-way radio. In the complete virtual world, a conference call app with operators on Mute until needing to speak would be the preferred method.

With communications established the issue is how to operate trains remotely. Again we need to turn to JMRI and its web interface. JMRI, as mentioned earlier, allows operators to connect remotely via the internet in order to interact with the JMRI software. One of these components includes throttle control. Using the JMRI web connection, an operator can connect, open a throttle, acquire a locomotive address, and operate a train. This means that the operator does not need to be present in the room with the train, or even in the same building. But while that sounds good, the big issue is sight. How do you see the train you are operating?

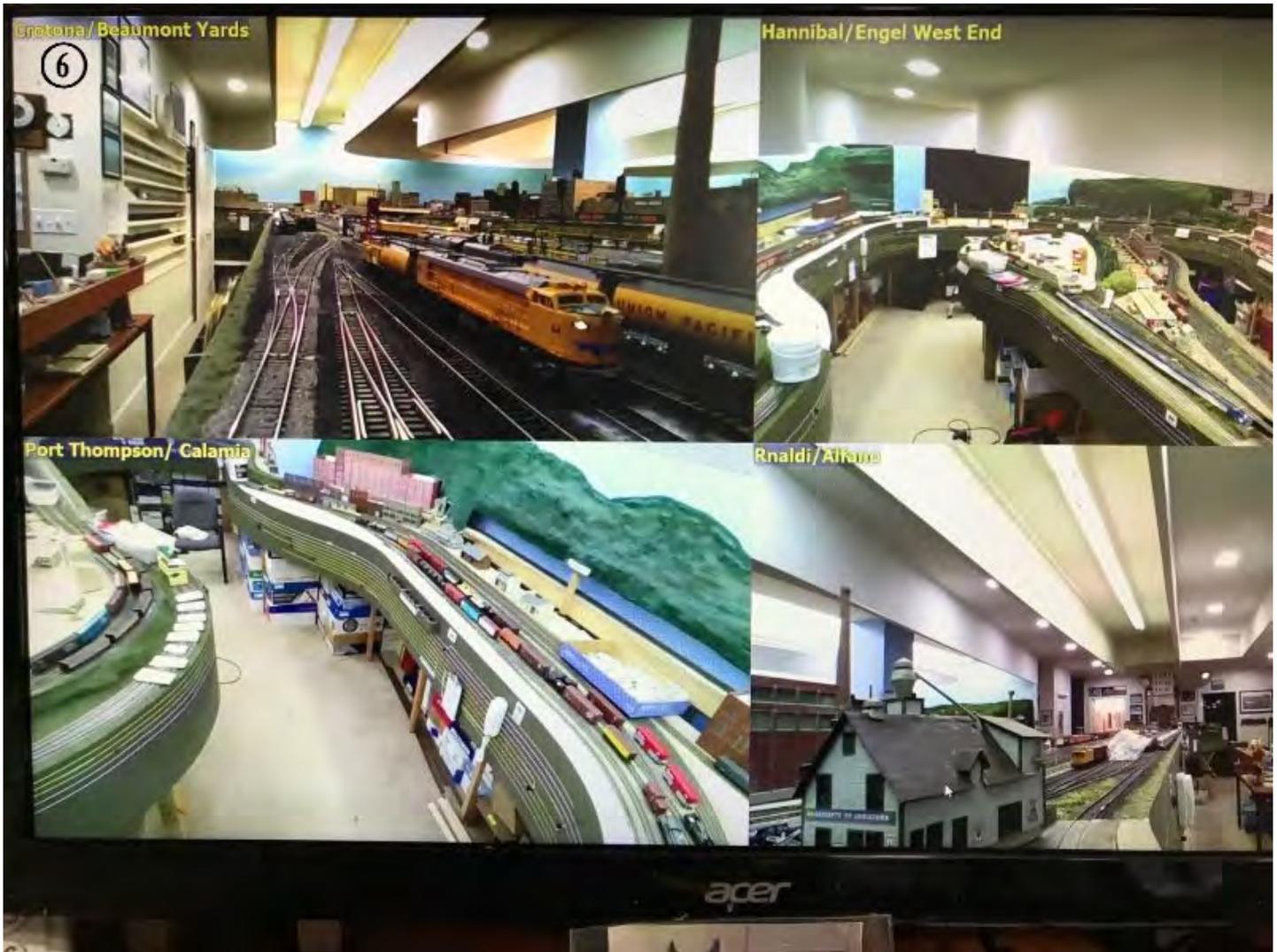


*Midland FRS radios use two jacks. One for audio and one for voice. It is easy to attach cables from this radio to a PC in order to remotely use two way radio communications over the internet for operation sessions.*



In today's era of wireless security cameras, you can find a number of High Definition, web-based security cameras to use on your layout. You can purchase them for a reasonable cost from a distributor or find them on eBay. On Pete LaGuardia's New York Central Western Illinois Division, Pete has purchased several web-based cameras ⑤ that he strategically placed around his layout. While Pete's purpose for doing this was so the Dispatcher could see what was going on around the layout during an operating session ⑥, the same idea can be applied to a remote dispatching model. Cameras could be mounted around the layout in sufficient quantity to provide enough coverage so operators had a good view of their trains as they ran across the entire layout. Using the JMRI web access throttle and the web camera app, a train crew would have a very good idea of what was happening on the layout with their train. A separate screen could be developed that would show train occupancy and signal aspects along the route to further enhance operations. JMRI provides these features as well.

What about switching? Magnets are the choice. Uncoupling magnets strategically positioned at each town would permit trains to uncouple and move cars to various industries that needed them.



*Pete LaGuardia's NYC Western Illinois Division utilizes several D-Link HD web cams (5) so that the Dispatcher can see what is going on during Pete's ops sessions (pictured right). These cameras can be easily interfaced with the internet to provide remote viewing for operators during a virtual ops session. Photos: Pete LaGuardia*

If the locomotives are manufactured by MTH, the DCC locomotives come equipped with DCC operated front and rear couplers which further aid in switching operations. All local turnouts would need to be motorized, tied into a stationary decoder, and provided a DCC switch address so that the train crew could operate them remotely.

Finally we need to look at equipment and paperwork needed. Requirements for the layout would include block detection, automated turnout control, signaling (if required), and transponding (if required).

Block detection is essential in order for the Dispatcher and train crews to determine where the train is. Transponding accompanied with block control is nice to have. Digitrax® offers transponding in all of its newer mobile decoders and as a decoder add-on. If the locomotive is equipped with a Digitrax® decoder that supports transponding and the block detection system has transponding enabled, then the train can be tracked in real time with its actual location reporting to the Dispatcher via JMRI. Locomotives equipped with another manufacturer's decoder can add a small transponding-only decoder inside the locomotive. Another alternative is to equip a piece of

rolling stock with a transponding-only decoder that travels with the train the entire journey and reports the train's location to the Dispatcher.

Automated turnout control is essential for the Dispatcher to perform mainline operations and for the train crew to perform local switching moves. Automated turnout control connected to JMRI will permit the Dispatcher and train crews to control turnouts remotely during a session. JMRI provides remote turnout control locally and via the internet.

If the layout uses signals, then the signals should interface with the digital command system and be able to report their status to the Dispatcher and train crews. Digitrax® provides in-cab signaling ability which can be seen on the Digitrax® throttle. It can also be seen via JMRI applications.

On the Nickel City Line, I use Digitrax® products for block detection, transponding, turnout control and signaling. But most manufacturers offer their own versions of these products, and you should check on what is available for the system you currently use. Also check other manufacturers who offer a product your manufacturer doesn't. In some cases the products are either interchangeable or can be used together through JMRI.

Now that I have gone over some of the opportunities available out there, let's discuss how a virtual ops session could be run. In advance of the operating session, all paperwork, train manifests, switch lists, customer service maps, track diagrams, etc., would be available for the operators to download. On the Nickel City Line I have an Operations Page where I post all relevant material a week ahead of time so my operators can look it over beforehand (<http://nclrr.potomac-nmra.org/Operations/OperationsReadAheads.html>) (7). In addition, an email with each participant's preferred contact number for the session would be sent out to the group along with the assignments for the session.

On the day of the operating session, the layout host would power up the layout, computers, cameras, and JMRI webserver and have everything ready in advance. The links and passwords for the JMRI interface, TeamViewer Session and teleconference meeting would be sent out in advance by email.

The ops briefing would be held on the teleconference software. Operators would log in at the designated time and the host would conduct the ops briefing. At the appointed hour, the ops session would begin. The Dispatcher would be operating the CTC or CAD Dispatcher's computer screen. Train crews would run virtual throttles and follow their trains on the web cameras and occupancy diagrams. Yard crews would switch cars via virtual throttles and webcams. And the layout host would be touring the layout and addressing any issues that arose.

*Operators on the NCL can see and printout paperwork ahead of time by accessing the Nickel City Line's website.*

At the conclusion of the operating session, the host would hold a short video conference wrap-up before sending his guests on their virtual way.

Maybe what I described sounds a bit far-fetched; but in reality everything mentioned in this article is available now and at a reasonable cost. Remember back in the early 80s how the thought of DCC was met with skepticism? And who knows what would have been said back then if someone were to mention DCC with sound and light functions.

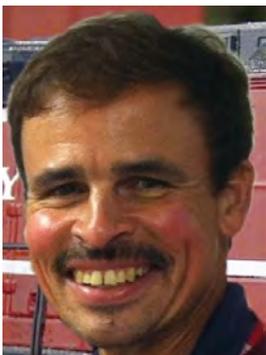
With a little time and effort, the above example could be achieved realistically. And now you ask “Why would I consider doing this to my layout?” That is a very reasonable question. First off, I truly hope that the COVID-19 pandemic is the last pandemic I see in my lifetime. But there will be other possible events which would make having a layout equipped for a virtual session inviting. Weather is the first thing that comes to mind. I know I have cancelled a session or two due to a serious snowstorm or other serious weather event. In those instances, with a properly equipped layout, the operating session could still go on, and all my guests would not need to put themselves in peril getting to and from the session.

The second thing that comes to mind is when someone cannot fully participate due to an illness or injury. Let’s say that one of your regular operators is nursing a bad cold and does not want to pass it on to everyone else. Or maybe that person had a recent surgery and can’t stand or move around much. They still enjoy participating and don’t want to miss out on an opportunity. In either case, rather than cancel, the guest could log in remotely and fully participate in the session. It also means that the layout owner would not need to do a revamp of the operations assignments due to an absence. The end result is your guest has an enjoyable time, even if it is virtual, and you can run the original schedule you labored to set up for everyone.

In conclusion, the simple fact is that no virtual set up can ever replace the fun and camaraderie that an in-person session generates. But in those cases where we cannot get together, for whatever reason, there are options out there that permit us to gather together, interact, and enjoy the hobby, even if it is through a computer screen and keyboard in the virtual world.

I hope each and every one of you stays safe and healthy during this pandemic. As I sit here in early April, typing on my computer, I eagerly look forward to the day when I can resume my own operating sessions as well as have face-to-face interactions again with all my model railroad friends. Until then, I have projects that await me in the layout room. 

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Bob Rodriguez has been a model railroader for more than 40 years and has built several small and medium size layouts, including assisting with construction of the Prince William County Model Railroad Club's layout formerly in Quantico, Virginia. Bob began operating sessions on his own Nickel City Line railroad in November 2002, and has hosted more than 100 sessions to date, introducing 80 model railroaders to operations on his railroad. He also operates with a round-robin group of model railroaders from Maryland and Virginia. You can view Bob's layout at: <http://nclrr.potomac-nmra.org/>.

## Central Vermont Telltales On The Montville Branch

by John Paganoni

I model the Central Vermont Railway from New London, Connecticut to Montville—a six-mile section of the Southern Division from the late 1940's through 1957. I like to keep as close as I can to the prototype in my modeling, and it is often difficult or impossible to find commercial structures to meet that objective. The telltales on the Montville Branch were such an item, so after years of searching, I finally decided that the only way I was going to get HO scale telltales close to the prototype was to build them from scratch. After I came up with a construction plan, I went to the scrap box for the parts.



I used HO scale Code 55 rail for the uprights, and drilled holes in the rail web to attach the rod holding the telltale section, the stabilizer wires, and the guy wires. I carefully measured the clearance needed for the freight cars and the engine to pass under the telltale, and made appropriate scale drawings so I could mark the height needed.

I temporarily soldered a bar midway down between the rails for strength while handling. This bar is shown in the picture before installation. After the telltales were installed, this bar was unsoldered and removed.

The tricky part was to make the telltale itself. The commercial telltales I have seen have hanging wires (maybe some roads used rope, but not the Central Vermont) that are much too heavy. My solution was to use a .009" diameter musical instrument string cut to scale 5' lengths. Brass wire could be used, but the music wire is far less likely to bend, though it is harder to cut. The next challenge was to use a scale styrene 2" x 4" and drill evenly spaced holes for the wires. I used a ponce wheel to impress evenly spaced pilot holes in the styrene, and then used a #80 drill for the holes.



I used ACC to glue the wires in the 2" x 4" strip. I drilled another four holes in the strip to attach eyebolts evenly spaced along the top of the bar. Then this assembly was slid onto a piece of brass .020" wire that was soldered to the rails at the correct height. The diagonal wires used to stabilize the telltale and keep it centered are .012" brass wire soldered to the rail BUT glued to the styrene telltale bar to preclude melting the styrene. The guy wires are good grade (minimum fuzz)

black thread. I ran the thread across a beeswax block to help keep the "fuzz" down - a trick I learned from model ship building. 

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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, a Master Model Railroader (#615), 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."

## Taking My Own Advice

by Martin Brechbiel, MMR

Being restricted to limited activities away from the homestead due to COVID-19, and having more than a few decades of models, kits, projects, etc. lined up on shelves or just piled up, it was time to take advantage of the situation and get some stuff done that would clear much of my workshop. Top of the list was that project sitting over on workbench No. 1 for the past decade plus. First, you need a little background to place this short story into some perspective as to origins. Somewhat more than a decade ago I built this model of a PRR MP54 from a LWS kit (LWS = Locomotive Workshop).



The sides were actually made from very bad injected styrene parts that had to be flattened, filled and sanded, and then assembled. The ends were not too terrible and workable. I replaced the wood for the floor. I think the floor was cut from some old wood paneling. The bolsters were badly warped injected styrene, and had to be trashed. Each step was soldered together from six bits of brass that had to be prepped with a file and sanding wheel. And, the roof was milled poplar, not basswood, and so aged as to be very hard to rasp, sand, etc. After assembly, I added a full interior and as much of an underbody as I felt necessary. The white metal trucks got a pair of some competing version of what might be mistaken for NWSL Magic Carpet drives. It's been so long that I've forgotten the source, but they came out of a small advertisement that was in *O Scale News*. But, despite all the fun—and that's the short, short story—I managed to persevere through to the end. Shortly thereafter, I experienced a momentary lapse in reason.

Feeling confident (foolish more likely!) I bought and started a second LWS kit for an MP54 with the intention of bashing it into an MPB54. I sort of got the sides assembled and then hacked apart, bashed in the baggage doors, and almost got it patched and sanded. And, then I stopped cold. I

have no idea why. The switch on this project got flipped to a hard stop. I've easily scratchbuilt more than 100 cars, trolleys, and structures during this lapse. The partially assembled project had been occupying workbench No. 1 unfinished for most of a decade under an accumulating blanket of dust (and sawdust!), and I just worked around it to get to supplies and other parts. Every time I tried to approach it with intentions of working on it, peals of derisive demonic laughter would issue forth rapidly, reducing my resolve to come closer, let alone attempt to complete this project. Oh, the horror, the horror!

So, mid-March of this year I exorcised the demon, and now this project is done. Well, it is done enough for me to be able to claim it to be done. I even installed a decent interior as well. As for shaping that milled poplar roof, well, I got a bit of help from Mark Andersen and his table saw to nibble away the underside a bit so it would drop down within the car body. Shaping the ends, you ask? It is impressive what a fresh 4" x 24" belt on the upright belt sander can do to poplar. It was just the ticket, and did the trick in seconds without loss of skin or finger tips!



Best part of this exercise prompted by being stuck at home is that I now have recovered workbench No. 1 for full use again! I have one of John Armstrong's interurban cars next up to install a Q-Car drive into, and an IMP boxcab project to finish off. Then there's those three reefer cars in the rack in the hall. Well, I've got projects to work on, and I'd bet you do too! So, let's see your projects. ☒

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Martin is a long-time O scale model railroader who models the South Mountain Branch of the Cumberland Valley Railroad. He also has a strong interest in traction and trolley modeling that freely adopts the Chambersburg, Greencastle & Waynesboro Rwy. He earned his Master Model Railroader (MMR) certificate #629 in 2019 and is currently the Superintendent of the Potomac Division, Secretary of the Mid-Eastern Region, and also the Editor of *O Scale Trains* magazine. His goal is to make the Potomac Division a thriving environment for all aspects of model railroading while promoting the values of NMRA membership.

## Misty Creek Junction Update (Or something to do when you are Self-Quarantined)

by Ron King

My original HO scale Misty Creek Junction was built in sections. As I built it, I added a few toggle switches here and there to control turnouts and various other electrical features. I also added an interlocking signal system keyed to the turnouts. Most of this was hidden under the layout, but there were a few extra toggles added to turn features on and off. Photo #1 shows the original railroad main section and its fascia loaded with toggle switches.



Then a few months ago, I decided that I wasn't happy with what I had created. So I ripped up the track, exchanged the eastern foliage for the western look of Colorado, and went back my first love: narrow gauge (HOn3).

Oops! I had an extensive signal relay system controlled by turnouts in an electrical interlocking system and that isn't something you find on a typical narrow gauge railroad. So I crawled under the layout and removed the signals, signal controllers, and the relay chains that controlled everything. I ended up with a pile of relays and a tangled mess of wire.

As I converted from a double track main to a single track with passing sidings, I reduced the number of switches and controls needed even further, so I had a number of "dead toggles" on the fascia of my layout. Even though things worked okay and I knew which switch did what, I promised myself that I would clean things up "someday."

Then the coronavirus came to the U.S. and everything I was doing or planning to do was cancelled or postponed indefinitely. That left me with a lot more extra time on my hands, and I turned to my little HO-sized world with an excitement that I hadn't felt in years. It was time to build the new sections and finish my mainline—and it was time to clean up my electrical mess and prepare for visitors, even if I never get anyone other than my wife or a few relatives to visit. Yes, "Someday" had arrived.

I wrote an article for *Railroad Model Craftsman* back in April, 1988 about hiding switch controls behind the fascia. Thirty years ago, many of us were using twin coil switch machines from Kemtron (and others). My article described how I put the switch controls inside the fascia to help make the layout look nicer, especially with the faux wood paneling we used as the fascia back then to add a bit of class to our layouts.

I changed to Tortoise slow motion switch machines many years ago, and had forgotten my old article. Then I looked at that box full of relays and realized that I could also use them to control the Tortoise motors. Why not mount the turnout switches behind the fascia again? They could stay out of sight and drive the relays to control the Tortoise motors just like they did 30 years ago.

So back under the layout I crawled. I wired up the relays to act as DPDT switches controlled by the old faithful Atlas slide switches. I then removed every panel mounted DPDT toggle switch and plugged the holes. After a bit of filling and sanding, I repainted the fascia and the result is shown in photo #2.

Photo #2 shows the new, cleaner fascia along with the new narrow gauge railroad. Misty Creek is in the same location and the rocks are the same, but the trees are different and the brewery is the only original structure remaining.

The small, button-sized furniture nails along the lower edge of the fascia indicate where each switch is located. I simply place my thumb on the button, curl my finger under the fascia, and the switch is right under my fingertip. It's simple and easy to operate, plus I like the cleaner look—even though I no longer use the old walnut wall paneling!



So where do I go from here? One thing noticeable with the move back to narrow

gauge is that the smaller structures (aside from the brewery), smaller locomotives, and smaller rolling stock all give the illusion that I have more space than I had before. The mountains even look bigger and better.

But the nicest part of this change was discovering how much fun I am having again. I finally completed my layout design and have started construction of the final two sections of my little railroad. It will be a folded dogbone with reversing loops at both ends, and I plan to operate it as an “Out and Back” with numerous customers along the route.

So this is what I have been doing since the coronavirus forced its way into my life. My next project is to solder up a bunch of harp switch stands. And if this pandemic lasts long enough—and if I live through it—maybe I will even scratchbuild some more stub turnouts. Please stay safe and healthy! 

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Ron King is a retired Systems Engineer. He started building HO scale railroad models when he was 12 years old and fell in love with narrow gauge after a visit to relatives living in Colorado in 1960. He saw a few D&RGW K-37 Mikes running, and has been in love ever since. He has built narrow gauge models in many different scales, but has concentrated on HO scale since his move to Virginia in 1999.

### Did You Know This Is On The PD Website?

The Potomac Division website contains a lot of useful links, including ones that take you to members' layouts. You can see these at:

<http://potomac-nmra.org/PDnewsite/HomePages/HomePages.php>

Some are actually hosted on the PD website, others are simple links to a member's own web site or blog hosted elsewhere. Do you have a website featuring your model railroad and modeling activities? If so, we'd like to add yours. Just send your link to: [Potomac-Flyer@potomac-nmra.org](mailto:Potomac-Flyer@potomac-nmra.org) or to webmaster Ernie Little: [Webmaster@potomac-nmra.org](mailto:Webmaster@potomac-nmra.org)

## Boxcar Upgrades

by Roger Buchholz

I just finished converting three beautifully-detailed Lionel scale-sized PS-1 boxcars from 3-rail to 2-rail O scale.

I used an article by Mike Culham in the Jan/Feb 2004 issue of *O Scale Trains* magazine as a guide to build up the truck bolsters to accept Athearn O scale trucks with Intermountain metal wheel sets.

I also I added Kadee couplers to the underbodies along with Intermountain laser-cut wood floors to the interiors. One of the cars is lettered for the Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic railroad. This car is finished in Polly Scale Special Oxide Red and Engine Black and Testor's Dullcote, while the lettering is from a Protocraft decal set for the 100 PS-1 boxcars delivered to the DSS&A in November 1948. 



Roger Buchholz is a retired Federal Government accountant living in Dumfries, VA. He has been interested in the model railroad hobby for over 40 years. His primary interest is O scale traction, but he says he also loves freight cars and has built up a collection of cars that he hopes to operate on a small traction layout planned for his basement in Dumfries. Roger is interested in meeting fellow model railroaders in his area.

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## Kit Building Free Time

by Kenneth Nesper, Jr.

Although I am retired, I usually spend many hours from February through mid-April serving as a volunteer tax counselor for the AARP Foundation in the D.C. public libraries. The COVID-19 epidemic unfortunately provided me with some unexpected free time. After completing my own to-do list and my wife's honey-do list, I wandered into the train room looking for something else to do.



After looking at the various kits on the shelf, I picked two simpler ones produced by Hyde Systems. Clint Hyde, former MER President, ably assisted by Martin Brechbiel MMR, current PD superintendent, produced a number of wood kits in O and HO scales. I acquired the Fruit Stand at the 2015 PD mini-convention (I think) and the Post Office at the 2018 Scale O National Convention. These structures ① are for my On30 railroad, which is inspired by the Ohio River & Western in 1912.

Instructions for each kit run about 17 pages, are well documented with suggestions, drawings, and photos, and come on a CD included in the kit (or, at least, included in the Fruit Stand kit). (Side note: there is also an amazing collection of signs on the CD.) I closely followed the instructions for the assembly of the basic structures, then free-lanced a bit on the details.

### Post Office

I started with the P.O. ②. The building walls were stained with Varathane Sunbleached; the floors were stained with my tie stain (not sure what exactly I have in there, but it looks dark and oily). The Tichy doors and windows were painted brown. The cardstock roof is removable, and reinforced with basswood strips to prevent warpage. I cut the Clever Models roof material in strips so that I could overlap the edges and provide some texture at the seams. I used some extra siding to detail the backside of the front wall extension. The interior has a simple counter, clerk, and

customer. I added a light bulb in a back corner to illuminate the interior, since it is pretty dark otherwise. There will be a flagpole in front of the P.O. once the building is planted on the layout.

### Fruit Stand

I stained all the wood parts of the Fruit Stand ③ with Minwax Colonial Maple. The roof treatment is the same as with the P.O., but the roof is glued to the building. I added a handle to the door at the rear of the structure. Again, extra siding material was used to detail the backside of the front wall extension. The sign is from a Smucker's magazine ad. They apparently used the Orchard Brands name between 1897 and 1927. Smucker's seemed like a good choice since both the company and the railroad were contemporaries in SE Ohio.



### Team Track Loading Dock

I cheated by cutting a solid wood base and painting it flat black ④. The structural details were added around the edges to make structure look authentic. I have another loading dock on the standard gauge railroad that has all the joists, posts, and cross-bracing. Unless you get up really close and use a flashlight, you can't see any of the under-deck detail. So, I took a shortcut on this one. The deck is made from coffee stirrers. All of the wood detail parts took a bath in my trusty tie stain.



### Weathering

The three structures were drybrushed with my earth-tone ground cover and oily black paints. The fruit stand and the loading dock were over-sprayed with flat black and pebble colored paints from rattle cans to simulate dust and soot.

Now it's back to the train room to plant these structures. ☒



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In addition to his OR&W-inspired narrow gauge railroad, Ken Nesper models an O-scale operations-oriented urban industrial railroad loosely based on the B&O's Alexandria Subdivision, circa 1958. Ken is a life member of the NMRA and MER, a member of the B&O Railroad Historical Society, the B&O Railroad Museum, the National Railway Historical Society, and O Scale Kings. He retired from the Postal Service in 2009 and resides with his wife in the Brookland neighborhood of NE D.C.

## Crossbuck from the Scrap Box

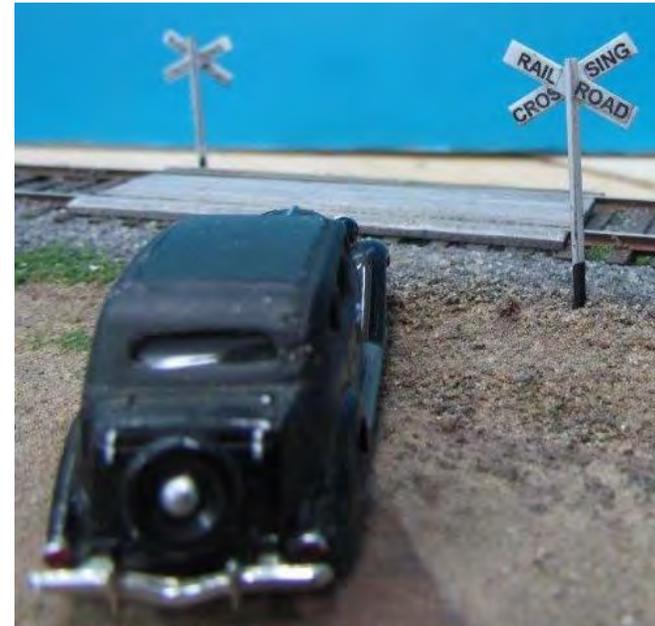
by John Paganoni

I was not successful in finding a HO scale commercial crossbuck that was close to the Central Vermont (CV) prototype on the Palmertown Branch in Montville, Connecticut, so I decided to make my own.

It is a simple project, but one that adds a prototypical detail to my layout. Once I had a crossbuck drawn to my satisfaction, I made a simple jig for assembling it. After cutting the crossbuck arms from .100" wide x .020" thick 5/8" long styrene, I laid them in the jig, and glued them with plastic cement. (I also use acetone and MEK when working with styrene, but beware of the fumes, and work in a well-ventilated area). Next, I glued the crossbuck to a piece of scrap rail (I used Code 55) with ACC epoxy.

Then I printed off some "Railroad Crossing" wording on a computer, using 6-point font for HO. I used Arial lettering, as it came close to the CV lettering. (If you have access to decals to do the lettering, that would really be the best way to go.) I trimmed the computer-printed lettering to fit on the crossbuck and glued it on. I like to use Weld Bond adhesive for projects like this, but white Elmer's glue will do. Finally, I carefully painted the rail and added a little appropriate weathering.

Now take a close look the prototype photo taken by Mr. Jim McFarlane in April 1965, and you'll see some interesting things from a model railroad perspective. First, the crossbuck is the only one at the crossing of Connecticut Route 32 in Montville, Connecticut. This road was the major road from the "big cities" of New London and Norwich, so traffic was considerable and a real hazard for train operations, yet only one crossbuck was installed. Usually, we see a crossbuck on both sides of the road. Today, crossing gates would be required. Next, look down the railroad track and you will see that the Palmertown Branch had some significant grades for Consolidations to handle in the days of steam. They had to "get up steam" to make that grade and then contend with automobiles coming off the hill to the left of the crossbuck. Also, note the TV antenna



on the "typical" New England home. TV antennas were prolific in the mid-1950's through the 1970's, so if you are modeling this era, don't forget the TV antennas. ☒

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## Installing Berkshire Junction Operating Crossbucks

by Brian W. Sheron, MMR

With the coronavirus pandemic in full swing, many of us have probably been spending more time in the basement working on our layouts. Even if your layout is finished, as mine is, there are always maintenance tasks that need doing, and there are always small projects waiting that you just never got around to.

One of my projects in the latter category was to add operating crossbucks at a roadway crossing (see Figure 1). In researching the available operating crossbucks on the market some time ago, I found that those marketed by Berkshire Junction seemed to be best suited for me. I currently have five sets of their crossbucks installed at various locations around my layout and have been extremely pleased with their performance.

When the editor of *The Potomac Flyer* (Alex Belida) suggested that Division members could write articles about what model railroading projects they were working on during the coronavirus pandemic, I suggested to Alex that I could write an article describing the installation of the Berkshire Junction crossbucks, since I would be installing a set at the roadway crossing mentioned above.

The most common devices used to automatically detect trains and activate flashing crossbucks as a train approaches a roadway crossing are optical sensors and infrared sensors. Optical sensors are usually single sensors embedded between the rails with the sensor facing upwards. As long as there is light shining on the sensor face (e.g., normal room light), the signal from the sensor is used to keep the crossbuck flashers off. However, when a train passes, the train will cover the optical sensor, block the light reaching it, and the signal from the optical sensor will change and activate the crossbuck flashers. By installing an optical sensor on the other side of the crossing, the light reaching it will also become blocked as the train goes through the roadway crossing and covers the second optical sensor. This will keep the cross-bucks flashing. Once the last car on the train unblocks the light, the sensor signal changes, and the flashers will stop.

This is a fairly simple system to install and will work for trains approaching the roadway crossing in either direction. The only drawbacks I am aware of are that it will not work in a dark room, and if you have a crossing with multiple tracks, detectors must be placed in each track. If you have installed lights in your buildings and occasionally like to simulate nighttime scenes, note that once the room lights are out, the cross bucks will continuously flash!

Infrared sensors perform the same function as optical sensors, which is to detect a change in light intensity when a train goes by, and then send a signal to start the crossbucks flashing. The only difference is that the light being used is in the infrared spectrum. Thus, these systems require using an infrared emitter and detector pair. The infrared emitter is aimed across the tracks towards a detector on the other side. As the train passes, the infrared beam of light is broken by the passing train. The infrared detector senses the loss of the infrared beam and sends a signal that starts the crossbuck flashers. Just like the optical sensor, if an infrared emitter and sensor are also located downstream of the roadway crossing, the train will break that infrared beam and the crossbucks will continue to flash until the last car on the train passes between the emitter and



*Roadway crossing where I wanted to Install Flashing Crossbucks*

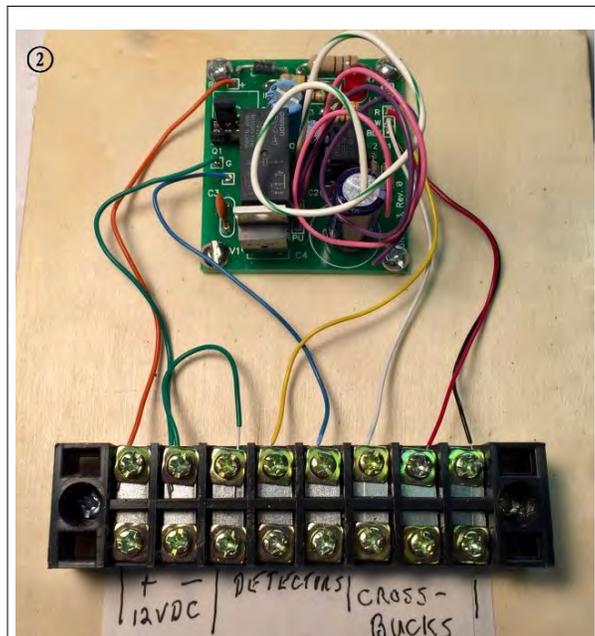
detector. The benefits of the infrared emitter/detector pair are that 1.) because they use light in the infrared spectrum, you can turn off all of the lights in your layout room and the cross bucks will continue to work normally, and 2.) If you have a multiple track crossing, you only need one emitter/detector pair.<sup>1</sup> The drawback, however, is that the emitters and detectors must be located on each side of the track. This can be a disadvantage if there is inadequate space on either side of the track. Also, emitter/detectors do not look prototypical, and efforts are needed to disguise or hide them.

The Berkshire Junction automatic crossbucks use infrared emitters and detectors, and I selected these because I occasionally run night scenes on my layout. Moreover, I have now had a number of the Berkshire Junction automatic crossbucks installed on my layout for a good number of years, and they continue to work flawlessly.

The HO scale kit sold by Berkshire Junction lists for \$64.95 on their website (<http://berkshirejunction.com/subdirectory/>), and includes a circuit board, two crossbucks, two sets of infrared emitters and detectors, and an instruction sheet.

As I got older, I decided (or should I say my knees decided) I needed to start to minimize my “quality time” under the layout. What this means is that I try to assemble as much of the electrical components as I can at the workbench, so when I do need to go under the layout, the number of connections that need to be made (and the time spent under the layout) is minimal!

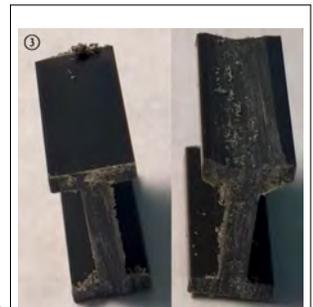
The circuit board comes with 10 wires attached from it. Not to worry! The instruction sheet tells you what each wire is for. The orange and green wires connect to your 12VDC power supply, with orange to plus and green to minus. The red, white, and black wires will connect to the red, white, and black wires on the crossbucks. The blue and yellow wires will connect to the emitters and detectors. There are three additional wires. These are not needed unless you either want to operate auxiliary devices, such as a crossing bell or crossing gates, or to be able to turn the unit off.



*Circuit Board and terminal Block Mounted on Plywood Panel*

I started by first mounting the circuit board on a small piece of thin plywood. Below the circuit board I mounted an eight-terminal terminal block. I then connected the various circuit board wires to the terminal block (see figure 2) and labeled them.

The next step was to construct mounts for the infrared emitters and detectors. The emitters and detectors must be mounted high enough above the track level so that an engine or freight or passenger car blocks the infrared light beam. I found that Plastruct 9/16” I-beams cut to 1/2” in length work well for this. Once cut to length, I used a rattle file to file a rounded depression on one I-beam flange face (see figure 3). I then glued the emitters and the detectors into this



*Cutting a circular groove in the flange of an I-beam (left is plain I-beam section, right is I-beam section with circular groove cut in it)*

<sup>1</sup> The emitter and detector that come with the HO scale crossbucks can only be placed a maximum distance of about 6” - 7” apart. Therefore the HO system will only work for about a two-three track grade crossing. However, if you have more tracks, you can purchase an O scale emitter/detector. This will work across a much wider distance (I use it on a four-track roadway crossing).

depression and soldered extension wires onto the emitter and detector leads.

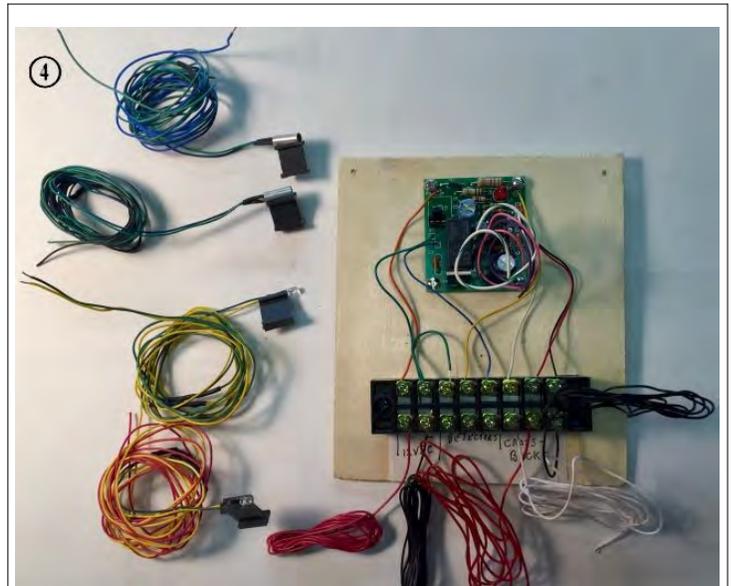
The I-beams can be mounted directly to the layout surface, either by gluing them or using a small screw to hold them in place. I found that if you have the room, gluing a small piece of styrene plastic, approximately 1/2" by 1/2" x 0.040" to the I-beam flange base, such that about 1/4" extends outward on the side, allows a mounting hole to be easily drilled into the flat surface. The completed circuit board and emitter/detector pairs, ready for installation, are shown in figure 4.

Installing the crossbucks simply involves drilling small holes where the crossbucks will be located, then feeding the 3 wires from each crossbuck through the holes and using a dab of glue to hold the crossbucks in place (see figure 5).

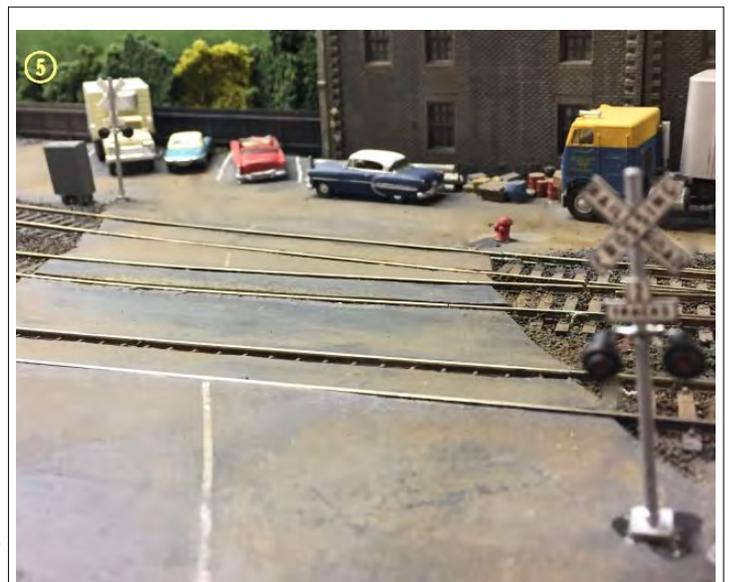
When installing the emitter/detector pair, it is important where you locate them. Obviously, you don't want them too close to the roadway crossing, since it would not be prototypical for the crossbucks to start flashing just a few seconds before the train arrives! Similarly, you don't want them located too far upstream and downstream of the roadway crossing because if the back of the train clears the emitter/detector before it reaches the roadway crossing, the crossbucks will stop flashing before the train arrives at the roadway crossing. Ideally, you would like the engine to go through the roadway crossing and pass between the emitter and detector located downstream of the roadway crossing before the last car on the train clears the upstream emitter/detector. That way, the cross bucks will flash continuously until the last car clears the downstream emitter/detector.

During operating sessions on my layout, a typical train will consist of an engine and six to seven cars, including the caboose. Thus, if the emitter/detectors are located approximately three car lengths away on both sides of the roadway crossing on my layout, most trains will proceed through the roadway crossing with the flashing crossbucks not being interrupted. However, each modeler has to decide what optimum distance away from the roadway crossing they need to locate their emitter/detectors.

When locating the infrared emitters and detectors, they should be located on an angle with respect to the track, not perpendicular to the track. The reason is that if they are located perpendicular to the track, the infrared light beam will become unbroken when the space that exists between the cars (where they couple together) passes the emitter. Thus, the crossbucks will momentarily stop flashing each time the gap between cars passes by the infrared beam. By placing



*Detectors Mounted and All Parts Ready to be Installed*



*Crossbucks Installed*

the emitter and detector across the track at an angle, the infrared beam will not see the gap between cars, and the crossbucks will flash uninterruptedly. Figure 6 shows the emitter and detector mounted in place.

Once the crossbucks and infrared emitters and detectors are mounted in place, simply connect up all the wires according to the instructions.

1.) Connect the red and green wires from the circuit board to the plus and minus terminals of a 12 V DC power supply respectively.

2.) Connect the red, black, and white wires from the circuit board to each of the red, black and white wires connected to the crossbucks.

3.) Connect the yellow wire from the circuit board to a yellow wire attached to an emitter. Connect the remaining green wire from that emitter to the yellow wire of the second emitter. Connect the remaining green wire from the second emitter to the green wire on the circuit board (the minus terminal).

4.) Connect the blue wire from the circuit board to a blue wire attached to a detector.

Connect the green wire from that detector to the blue wire of the second detector. Connect the remaining green wire from the second detector to the green wire on the circuit board (minus terminal).

Now turn on the power and test the crossbuck flashers. If everything is connected correctly, when you put your hand in front of either emitter, the crossbucks should start flashing, and they should turn off when you pull your hand away.

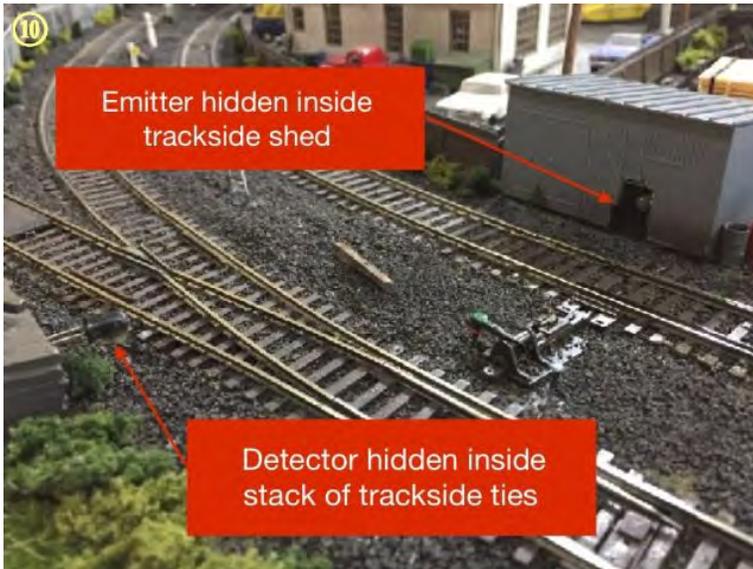
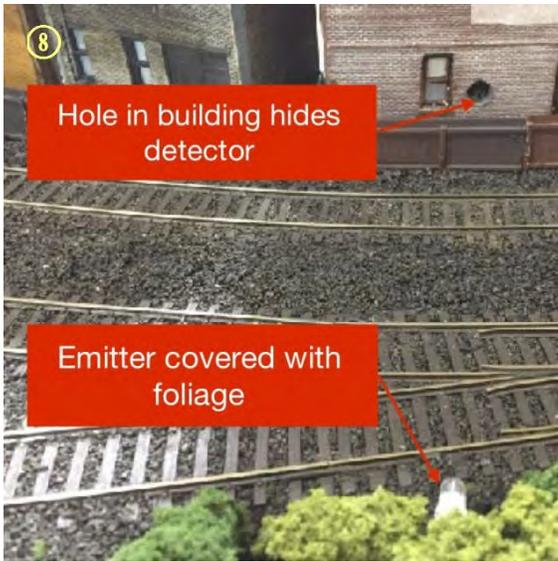
The last step is to try and disguise the emitter and detector so they are not noticeable. How you disguise them is really a matter of personal taste (and creativity!) and available space. On one side of my roadway crossing, I glued Woodland Scenics foliage clumps around the detector. For the emitter, which I had to locate in a parking lot, I constructed a hollow box that looked like a piece



*Emitter/Detector Pair Mounted on an Angle  
Across Tracks*



*Detector on left with foliage covering it, and emitter on right with machinery cover (note hole for infrared beam)*



of machinery sitting in the parking lot to cover the emitter. I drilled a small hole for the infrared beam to go through. (see figure 7). I have infrared emitter/detector pairs elsewhere on my layout. Figure 8,9, and 10 show examples of other ways that they can be disguised and/or hidden.

In summary, these operating crossbucks are relatively simple to install, and will add some realism to your layout. ☒

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Brian is a long-time model railroader who models the Port Jefferson and Atlantic Branches as well as the City Terminal Zone of the Long



Island Rail Road in HO scale. He earned Master Model Railroader (MMR) certificate number 469 in 2011 and was formerly the Superintendent of the Potomac Division. Brian's layout was featured in the September 1997 issue of RailModel Journal. When he's not working on his trains, he enjoys playing bluegrass banjo and plays in a local band.

## What I Did During the Pandemic

by Tom Brodrick

You fellas would be so proud. After a month, I found myself standing by the container yard looking over the new section on my layout. It was all ballasted, with buildings in place and completed.

Of course, then I awoke with the TV still going. ☒

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## Scratchbuilding Trucks

by Stan Knotts

I have been scratchbuilding and kit-bashing HO model trucks for several years. I used to buy the Jordan plastic model trucks, but sadly they went out of business some years ago. My model railroad is based on the 1939 era, so all of my models are no later than that date.

Usually I build trucks related to a recent industry model I have built. I have quite a few books on old trucks to use as a reference, and I also search on the Internet, which is frequently helpful. I do not bother drawing plans, but sometimes I make rough sketches, mostly to establish dimensions.

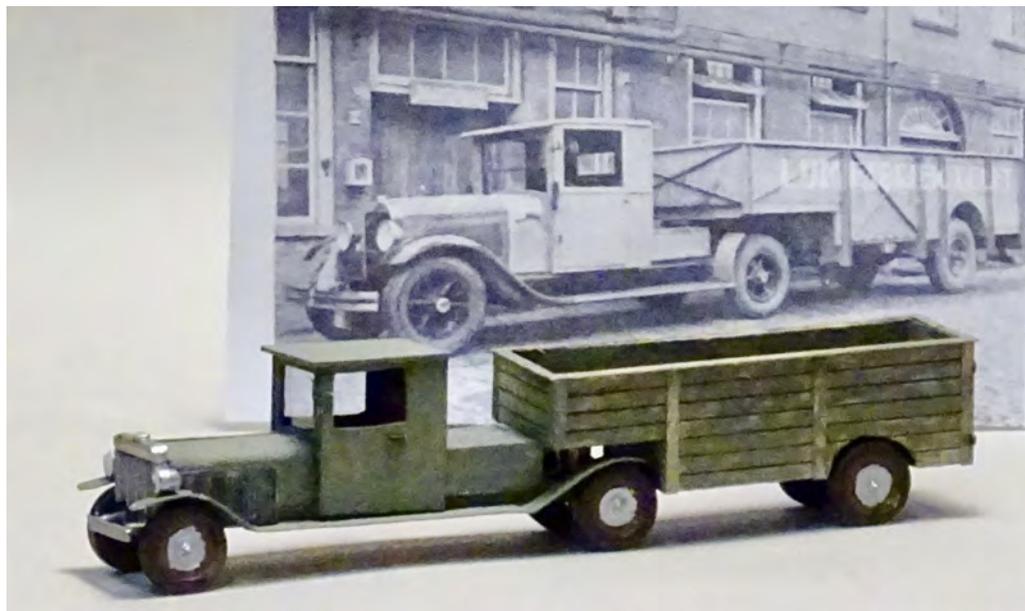
My model trucks rarely use commercial parts other than wheels, and sometimes steering wheels. I do have a drawer for truck-related parts that I have saved from kits or other sources. Actually, I have parts drawers for all kinds of modeling parts, so I seldom need to buy parts for anything I model.

Once I decide what truck to model, I start with the frame. Next, I usually build the cab and the engine compartment. The inside of the engine compartment is mostly a seat and a steering wheel. The front windshield and small rear window are made from thin clear plastic. Fenders are sometimes tricky to model, but more often than not I use thin cardstock bent to shape. Next, I add the axles and the wheels. I have a pretty good collection of wheels of all types (and you can buy these from various manufacturers). I have also sometimes used buttons from old shirts for wheels.

The rear of the truck depends on what the purpose is for the truck. Usually it is open, with front and side sections of various types. The floor of the truck rear is usually wood, scribed or board-by-board.

### Pallet Truck

I scratchbuilt an old-style truck for carrying pallets. A few parts are commercial. They are the wheels, the pallets, the front grill, the seat, and the steering wheel. The rest are mostly made from wood and cardstock. The seat



is a solid wood passenger car seat from an old LaBelle kit. The front bumper is a thin piece of aluminum. The headlights are from a plastic sprue.

### Truck and Trailer

I scratchbuilt a truck with a trailer modeled after a prototype seen in the photo. The truck was made using wood pieces and cardstock. The wheels were made from

shirt buttons. The fenders are cardstock. The front grill was made using metal scraps. The seat is a vintage wood passenger car model seat.

### Cable-Pulling Truck

I modeled a cable-pulling truck for my electric power service company. This truck pulls cables for underground installation. It took me longer than expected to build this, as it has lots of small parts, mostly built from scraps and wood. I



modeled this from a prototype photo. The cable-pulling device is located behind the seat. Behind that are sets of storage cabinets for tools and supplies.

The rear of the truck is loaded with supplies and tools, including a small cable drum. The large cable drums in the prototype photo are blocking the view of the front of the truck, so I just guessed what it might have

looked like. The cable pulling device is above an open manhole, so I guess it was going to pull a cable through that, although I have no idea how that would have worked. ☒

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Stan Knotts has been a model railroader for more than 65 years. He says his father got him into it because he said he needed a hobby to keep him out of trouble. Stan has built many layouts. The current one, the HO scale Royal Oak and Southern, was started almost 30 years ago. These days he says he mostly spends his modeling time scratchbuilding structures and associated details like trucks. Stan is a former editor of the MER's *The Local* and has written for NMRA's *magazine*.



## Changes on the Oregon Coast Railroad

by Mat Thompson, MMR

Complying with the COVID-19 stay-at-home order encouraged me to proceed with a major change to my layout.

My Oregon Coast Railroad was designed for operations. It was built as a typical model railroad running from one town to another. For a while, I have been planning to evolve the OCRR into a large switching layout like Chuck Hitchcock's Argentine Industrial District (*Model Railroader* February 2007) and Paul Dolkos' Baltimore Harbor District.

Instead of a long mainline, the layout will be divided into "switching districts." For operations, crews will work mostly in a specific switching district as opposed to running from town to town along the length of the railroad. The entire layout will be loosely based on the Peninsula Industrial District in North Portland, Oregon with a five-mile mainline versus the present modeled distance of 150 miles. The time will remain 1957.



*Before I started making changes, Willbridge was a rural scene with a small harbor and a logging scene on a forested mountain. In this picture a log train is on the passing siding waiting for a superior train to come by on the mainline, which is closer to the aisle.*

The roughly 6' x 10' area that was called Willbridge will become a switching-intensive industrial district with fruit and vegetable cold storage plants, an Armour Meat branch house, and a change to the present harbor scene. These changes will give my layout six switching districts. My plan is that each would be worked by a two or three-person crew, but could be operated by a single person. Because the districts are independent of each other, there is also no need to operate them all during an ops session.

As I tore out scenery and track for the change, I realized I needed to remove more track than first planned. Using track and turnouts already in place limited the changes I could make and still have reliable trackwork. I also wanted any new track to be no more than 24" from an aisle, so it would always be within an easy reaching distance, something I had failed to do in the area's previous iteration.

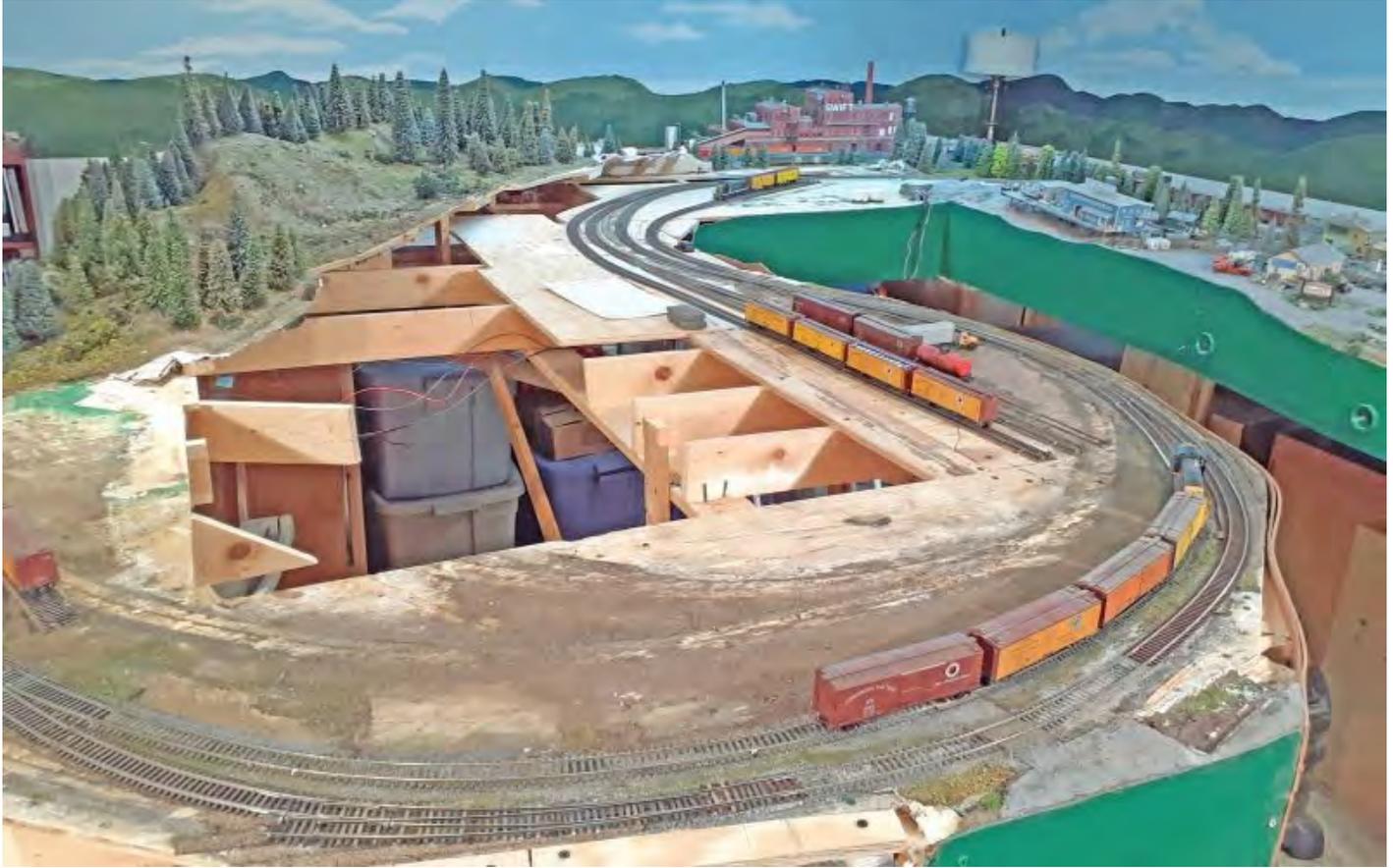
The new track configuration consists of two trailing point sidings, two facing point sidings, and a runaround track with a 10-car capacity. Most new sidings have long lead tracks, so a train can remain clear of the main line while working trackside industries. I handlaid the turnouts, which is a new challenge for me. Turnout construction did take time, but allowed me to build four curved turnouts with radii not available from commercial offerings.



*The mountain, logging scene, and tunnel have been removed and the terrain leveled to make way for a new track configuration. The opening in the middle will not have track; it is too far to reach from the aisles.*



*I trimmed off part of the layout to widen the aisle from 20" to 28" at the tightest point. More aisle space is needed, as an engineer and a conductor will work from this area for most of their switching tasks.*



*Major track work is finished. The engine and cars are on the new main line—the old passing siding. At the bottom of the picture is the runaround with a spur to the harbor area. The four reefers near the open area are on the track that will serve a string of fruit and vegetable wholesalers. Beside it is a working track. The track with the red tank car will be a team track. The engine and two yellow reefers near the top of the picture are at the Armour branch house.*

With the track in place, the mainline is restored so the railroad is once again useable for operations. The next steps are to run trains over the new track to be sure it is reliable, and to develop an operation scheme. When I am satisfied, I will paint and ballast the track and finish the fascia before moving on to building structures. ☒

[Return to Bill of Lading](#)



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.

## Building a Station and Some Flats

by Al Pugliese

I have been building a replica of Mount Royal Station in Baltimore. I have been in love with this station since the first time I saw it. Since I only have room for two large stations on my Pugsburg Railroad layout, I decided that Mount Royal would be one of them. The walls were laser cut by Mark Bandy. It will be a large HO structure, 8.5" x 38".

The tower is a scale 140' high. Hopefully, when the coronavirus pandemic is over, I will be able to have another open house so people can see it. *[Editor's Note: Al's layout can be seen on the PD website at:*

<http://potomac-nmra.org/PDnewsite/LayoutTours/Prior/Al%20Pugliese%2029Dec18/index.html>

While shut in, I've also made more Baltimore city HO flats. They're photos mounted on foam board and used as backdrops.

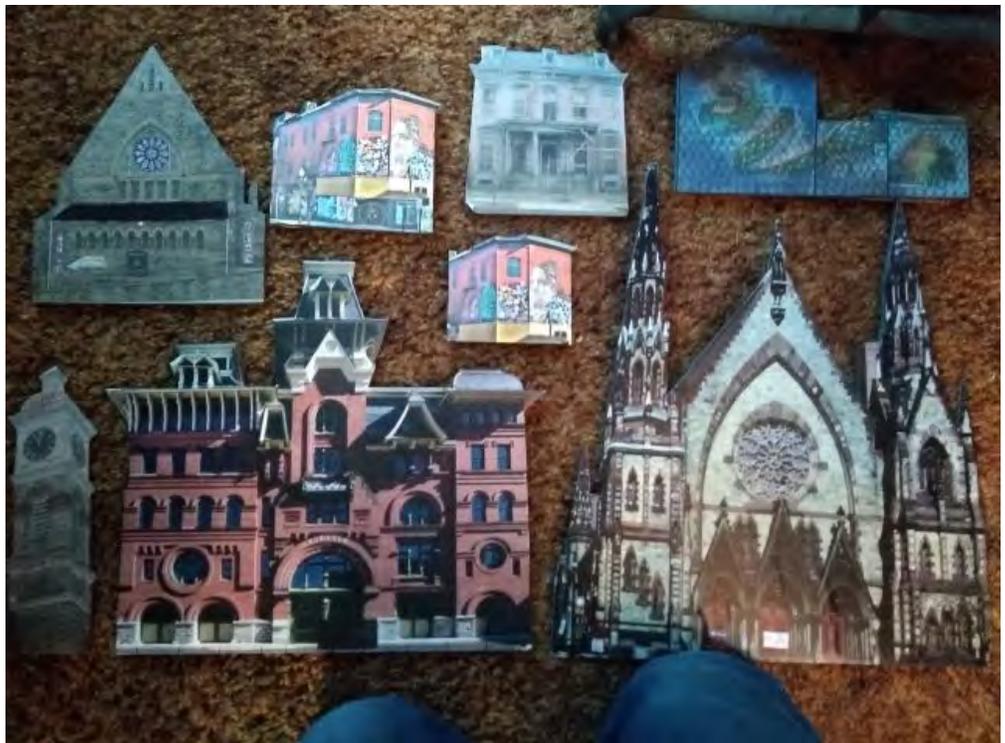
Being shut in is not so boring. ☒

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Al is an independent auto damage appraiser. His Pugsburg model railroad is a

freelance 24' by 32' HO layout with sections of floor-to-near-ceiling scenery.



## Don't Jump

by Bernard Kempinski

For several years I have been meaning to add a figure on a plank as seen in this prototype photo of Potomac Creek. Last month, I was preparing paperwork for the NMRA Master Builder Prototype Models Statement of Qualification and I thought, "this is a good time."

So I dug out an appropriate figure from my stash. (Note to self: you have at least 10 pounds of unpainted figures in your stash. You don't need any more.)

I found one that had a similar pose and style of dress. This figure came from Knuckleduster Miniatures. They offer a nice line of O scale Wild West figures that work for the American Civil War era.



All the saloon figures they offer are tempting me to add a saloon to my layout. But where?

Anyway, it was a simple matter to build a plank, stack some rocks, and pose the figure. ☒

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Bernard Kempinski is a freelance writer who has written dozens of magazine articles and several books on model railroading. He is an active model railroader and has built models on commission for museums and individuals. A former U.S. Army Captain, Bernard is retired defense analyst. See his blog for more info on his layouts and projects: [www.usmrr.blogspot.com](http://www.usmrr.blogspot.com).



## “So How Did You Get into the Decal Business, Anyway?”

by Bill Mosteller

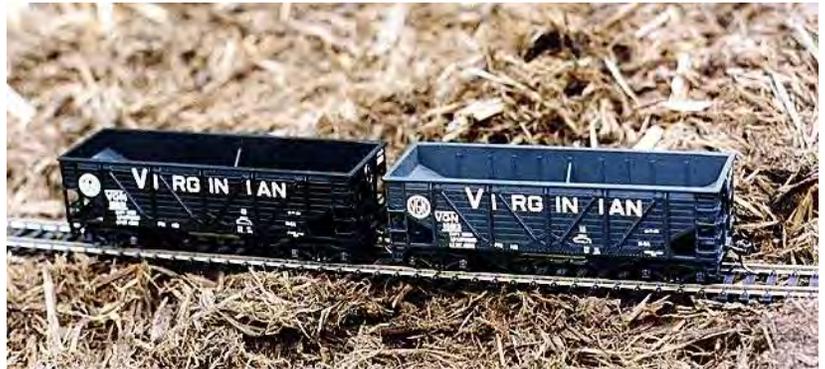
Mike Bartel of Imperial Hobby Productions produced a resin kit of PATCO (Port Authority Transit Corp., Philadelphia/South Jersey) subway cars. I had been wanting to make a model of such a car and had gotten as far as a wood mock-up of the end. Mike’s model promised to get the project done quicker, so I bought two, but no decals were provided. I set about fixing that problem. Bill Vigress, who worked for PATCO, and Ron Roberts, of Rail Graphics, were of enormous help in getting the project done. I sold a few, and had a great time doing it.

The next step was to do a project with commercial focus. Bob Thatcher, owner of Granddad’s Hobby Shop, was of immense help in setting me on the right path; and was always willing to stock a few of any new project I produced. Still focused on traction, I decided to produce destination signs for Walthers Washington METRO subway cars. You gotta love the advertising pitch:

*“Recently, Walthers Washington DC METRO transit cars have been found wandering aimlessly around layouts. Research has uncovered the problem: these cars lack direction! Like Charley on the MTA, they may ride forever. Don’t let this happen to your METRO cars! Give them direction with destination sign decals.”*

Again, I sold a few, and had a grand time doing it. More importantly, I had a template and game plan for future projects. Thanks, Bob. I miss you.

At this point, I had lived about half my life in Northern Virginia, and decided that instead of pining for Northeastern electrification, I should learn about the home teams. This brought me to the Virginian Railway, America’s shortest Class 1 railroad. It ran from Norfolk, VA,



to Deepwater, WV, with an electric zone between Roanoke, VA, and Mullins, WV. I haven’t *quite* produced decals for everything the railway had, but it’s darn close. Various friends helped with this: Mike Dodd, Bob Moore, and Skip Salmon come to mind, and they introduced me to the Norfolk & Western Historical Society.

While I attended the University of Pennsylvania, I avoided any Wharton classes, and spent the rest of my life in industry. Great Decals! has taught me a lot about business. I keep a spreadsheet for each project and can plot cumulative sales over time. I’ve identified three distinct curves:

1. *The Ground Ball*—Very little elevation of the curve. The businessman in me looks at it and says, “Whose idea was this, anyway?”
2. *The Hockey Stick*—Initial enthusiasm followed the Ground Ball. The businessman hopes the curve pivots when we’re nearly out of decals.
3. *The Rocket*—Customer interest starts out strong and persists, demanding regular reprints of the decal. The businessman wishes he had more of those.

Promoting a small decal line is challenging, so early on my priority was to enlarge my catalog. Strategies included taking on all sorts of projects, and producing decals ranging from N scale to G scale. Luckily, at work I had been involved in testing a mainframe web server product—Apache—for IBM’s VM operating system. I learned enough web coding to test the product, and that experience prepared me to build the Great Decals! website.

The website landscape in the hobby at that time seemed, to me, a bit amateurish. Big, grown-up companies, with employees and everything, had websites with addresses that had the look of a site managed by a teenager, not that of a serious business. Again, Bob Thatcher was a big help. He

invented the name Great Decals!, so I got the domain greatdecals.com and built the site.

I also discovered eBay, and since something like 80% of my sales are there, I've not been tempted to put on-line ordering into my website. Seems like duplicating work.

Several other hobbyists have produced decals and struggled with promoting a small decal line. My website includes a page which features links to all the decal producers I've ever heard of. For the smallest ones, I began offering to sell them a page on my website, and over the years several have taken advantage of that.

I've made other arrangements with other decal producers. Bob Wingo, of Manassas, VA, had a small decal line featuring Washington & Old Dominion and Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac offerings. Bob Thatcher suggested I talk with him, and I ended up taking over his line, reprinting several existing sets, and adding two RF&P titles and one Southern title to the line. Most of those have since sold out.

Chip Coburn of Cincinnati, OH, did some of our printing. On a visit to his sign shop, I suggested that he should turn his Midwestern prototype decal line inventory over to me, and I'd sell it for him. He accepted, and I've been doing so for the past decade with good results.

The year 2017 proved challenging for my business. Chip stopped printing decals and Ron Roberts announced that he was closing Rail Graphics at the end of the year. I spent the year examining my titles' sales records. The analysis started with, "how long will I remain in this business?" and that moved quickly to, "how long will I live?"—not a comfortable space. I answered the former question with "10 years," and attempted to order a decade's worth of inventory for each of my popular sets. I'm sure it proved a nice retirement package for Ron.

Since then, I have found two new printers and have done projects with each of them, so the business continues. ☒



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Bill Mosteller was born in Boston and grew up riding trolleys and subway trains. He says electrified vehicles always seemed like magic to him, and still do. He tells the Flyer "The only two things I'm much good at in the hobby are decals and couplers." Bill is a former computer programmer.

## My First Home Layout Tour

by Thomas Washburn

It was November 2017 when the dreaded phone call came. The voice on the phone said, "I am the layout tour coordinator for the Potomac Division, NMRA, and we would like to schedule your layout for an Open House. When would be a good time for you?"

For more than 20 years, I had started and aborted a half dozen attempts at my "dream layout." There are too many reasons to list, but mainly I didn't like where any of them were going, and life continued to get in the way. But now I was caught. All of our children were adults and on their own, and I had finally completely retired. I had the time.

I protested, "I really don't have a layout, at least not one anywhere near completion or even functioning on the most basic level." "Not a problem," the voice replied, "we'll schedule you for a year out. That should be plenty of time to get your layout up and running. It doesn't need to be completed."

Damn, I had run out of excuses and was trapped like a rat.

We had moved to Northern Virginia in the early 90's and stayed after I retired from the military. I had been to dozens of other modelers' layout open houses and been exposed to everything from

“shock and awe” to “I can probably do that, maybe even a little better.” I also realized that I had actually only seen three layouts that were “completed,” and one of those was Howard Zane’s before he expanded his layout space. Every layout was a work in progress.

During that 20-year period the industry had changed radically, moving from Blue Box kits to R-T-R with exceptional detail, DCC, DCC with sound, etc., etc. As I attended shows during that period, I had amassed sufficient rolling stock and structures to start my own HO scale country.

So I got working in earnest and made my open house deadline, October 20, 2018. It was neither shock nor awe, but having a deadline had forced me into my work mode. My initial challenge was to dismantle my three most recent attempts and then decide exactly what I wanted to achieve given the space available. Another modeler had once told me that most of us try to put too much into a single layout. Keeping things simple also keeps it realistic, even if you are not recreating a prototype.

I decided that what I really wanted was a continuous running layout with a small hidden staging yard. I model the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (Katy) and the Cotton Belt, because they are the railroads I remember from my childhood. I settled on using the town of Forreston, Texas as my location, because I have a family connection there and because the Katy had a mainline that ran through the town. I also settled on the year of 1974, because it was between the Barriger Red and the final John Deere Green paint scheme the Katy Diesels wore until being eaten up by the Union Pacific in 1987, and provided more variety in terms of power and rolling stock.

I then created a fictional transfer yard to support additional industries other than the grain elevator that was the only industry in historical Forreston. It could also be a collection point for industries of Waxahachie to the north and Hillsborough to the south. Engine facilities were omitted but could be added later.

I completed the demolition of the old and began working the new. Surprise, at age 70 I could no longer wield complete sheets of plywood, which necessitated breaking the layout into semi-modules that I could manhandle—a solution, but one with its own challenges. I learned that multiple sub-roadbed joints is not a good thing. Yes, I made mistakes, mostly new, but some old.

I also had decided to go to DCC; which meant that not only was the existing wiring going to the wrong places, it wasn’t the correct gauge. I had read enough to create power districts, so it was off to Home Depot and a variety of other locations for 500 feet of heavier gauge wire, terminal strips, suitcase connectors, circuit breakers, etc.

As Saturday, October 20 got closer, a slight degree of panic set in. The wiring was completed, all of the track was laid (and in several places re-laid), and the major sections of backdrop were painted blue and installed, but there was basically no scenery. There were a couple of Pratt bridges and several buildings from layouts past but that was it. It was obvious that the term “work-in-progress” was going to be the best I could achieve. By the Wednesday before the open house, I finally got enough diesels and rolling stock up and running smoothly. Some of the diesels still had packing foam between the side handrails and the body, but all were DCC (no sound) and running.



We had just under a dozen visitors, not bad for an unknown modeler. Not one of the visitors was critical and all were very helpful. What was most interesting was the number of modelers who didn’t have a layout. One visitor was in the same situation, a year out from his own first Open House.

## Lessons learned:

I have yet to meet a model railroader who was not happy to provide their own insights and lessons learned to others with less experience. Ask, ask, ask. The best advice I mentioned earlier—keep things simple—but other tips included: run trains in your head until you develop your plan, and remember, it's your railroad, make it so.

All modelers truly enjoy seeing what others have done, from shock and awe to “I never even thought of that.”

Folks without layouts or just beginning one appreciate knowing what the average Joe can do given the motivation and time.

Our hobby needs these tours to keep the hobby vibrant. Don't just go alone; take your kids or grandkids. “Granddaddy, when is the choo choo train going to be ready?” is a powerful motivator.

When you get the “dreaded call,” don't hang up! Grab the opportunity and give it a shot! The Division will provide signs for your house, a greeter to sign-in and usher visitors to your layout, a photographer to take pictures, and a reporter to do an “Open House write-up.” Some bottled water and cookies from Costco, and you're the latest hero.

What's next: I am not sure at this point. I am restructuring part of Forreston Yard as of this writing. There are too many duckunders for the old man to negotiate, and I need to move my staging yard to some place more accessible. Maybe there will be a redo open house in a year or so.



Thomas Washburn retired from the US Army and almost twenty years as a government contractor. He lives in Burke, VA, where his HO scale Forreston Yard models a fictional yard in Forreston, Texas in 1974.

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## THREE BIG BENEFITS OF NMRA MEMBERSHIP:



Those are the discounts that manufacturers and hobby shops in our Partnership Program are giving us right now. Partners like Micro-Mark<sup>®</sup>. Model Rectifier Corporation<sup>®</sup>. Badger Airbrush<sup>®</sup>. Unreal Details<sup>®</sup>. Hot Wire Foam Factory<sup>®</sup>. Logic Rail<sup>™</sup> Technologies. And over 30 more companies. It's savings that can actually pay for your membership!

And are you taking advantage of our other big benefits? Like 150+ national convention clinic videos. Or over 15 hours of “how-to” videos produced by the biggest names in model railroading videos. Or our directory of model railroad layouts all over the world that you can visit. The list goes on and on.

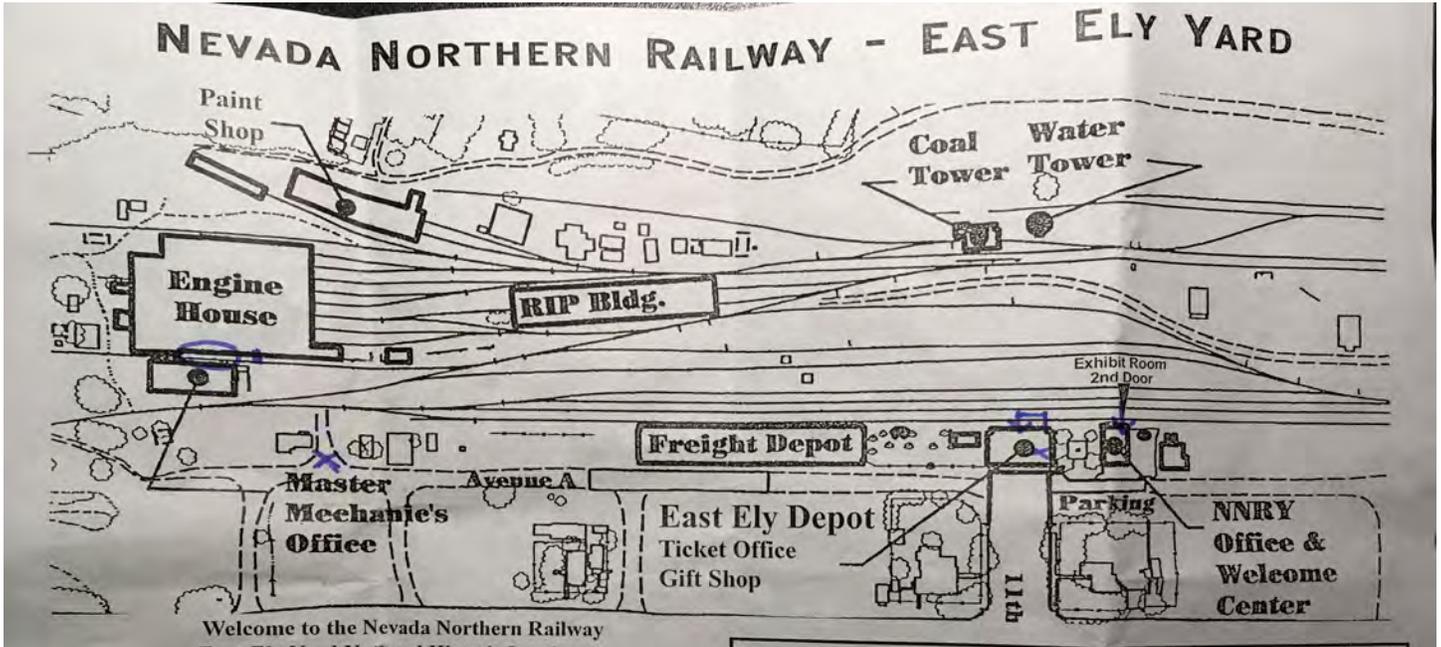
If you haven't visited [www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org) lately, you're missing out on some really great stuff. Starting with a boatload of discounts!



## Railfanning: The Nevada Northern Railway

Article and Photos by Alex Belida, *Flyer* Editor

The coronavirus has kept most of us at or close to home. But when the crisis passes, travel restrictions are lifted, and you want to get away, how about a trip out west for a change in scenery? And if that is appealing, then you should consider a trip to east central Nevada to visit the Nevada Northern Railway's East Ely Yard, a National Historic Landmark. The yard covers 56 acres, and visitors can explore at their leisure.



Visitors enter the complex via the lovely depot ② where you purchase tickets to tour the yard and the museum.

Coming out of the depot onto out the track and yard side ③, you can see an array of cars, both passenger and freight.

The big surprise the day we visited was seeing the NNR's restored 2-8-0 in operation ④. We were told someone had paid for the privilege of actually operating the engine (under supervision, of course.)





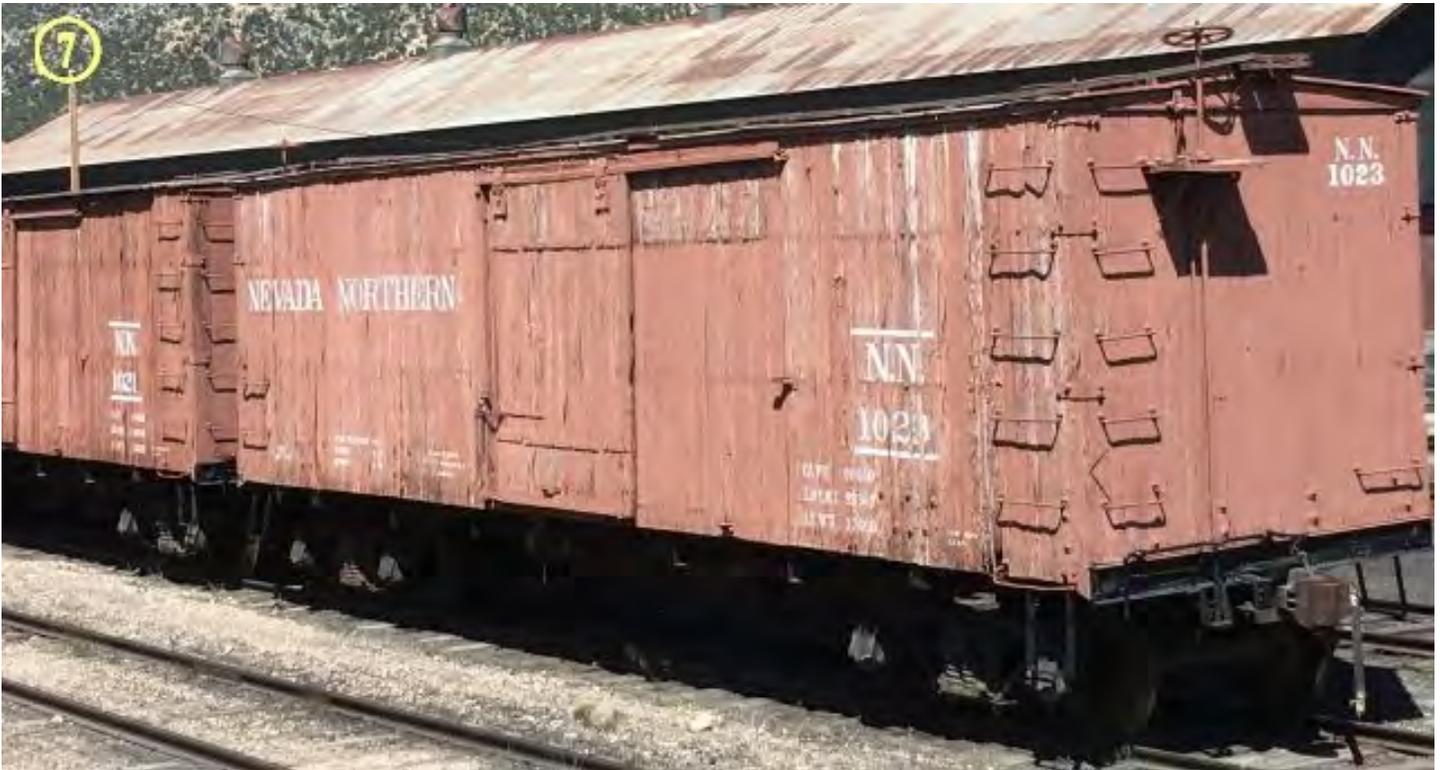
We were able to get up close and enter the cab, where the (real) engineer ⑤ was going over the train orders for the day.

There were lots of vintage cars to be seen in the yard, including an old snowplow... ⑥ ...and old freight cars ⑦, ⑧.

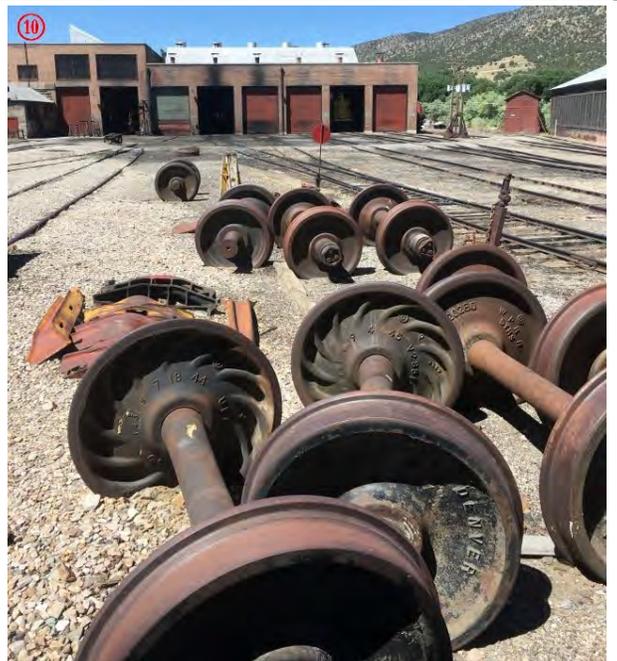
Eventually we made our way into the engine house. There were several old diesels of the Kennecott Copper Company, which—we were told—simply donated its equipment when they closed their nearby mine.

But there were a couple of steam engines inside, including this one under restoration ⑨.





The yard is home to scattered detritus ⑩. There were two tourist trains running the day we visited, but the departure times didn't suit our travel schedule. For me (and I suspect all railroad buffs), it was a heavenly heavenly experience with lots of opportunities for getting those



prototype photos to help in future modeling. Ely is on Nevada's infamous Highway 50, dubbed "the loneliest road in America" by *Life* magazine in 1986. There are vast distances between towns, but the vistas and terrain are amazing. (Just make sure you tank up whenever possible.)

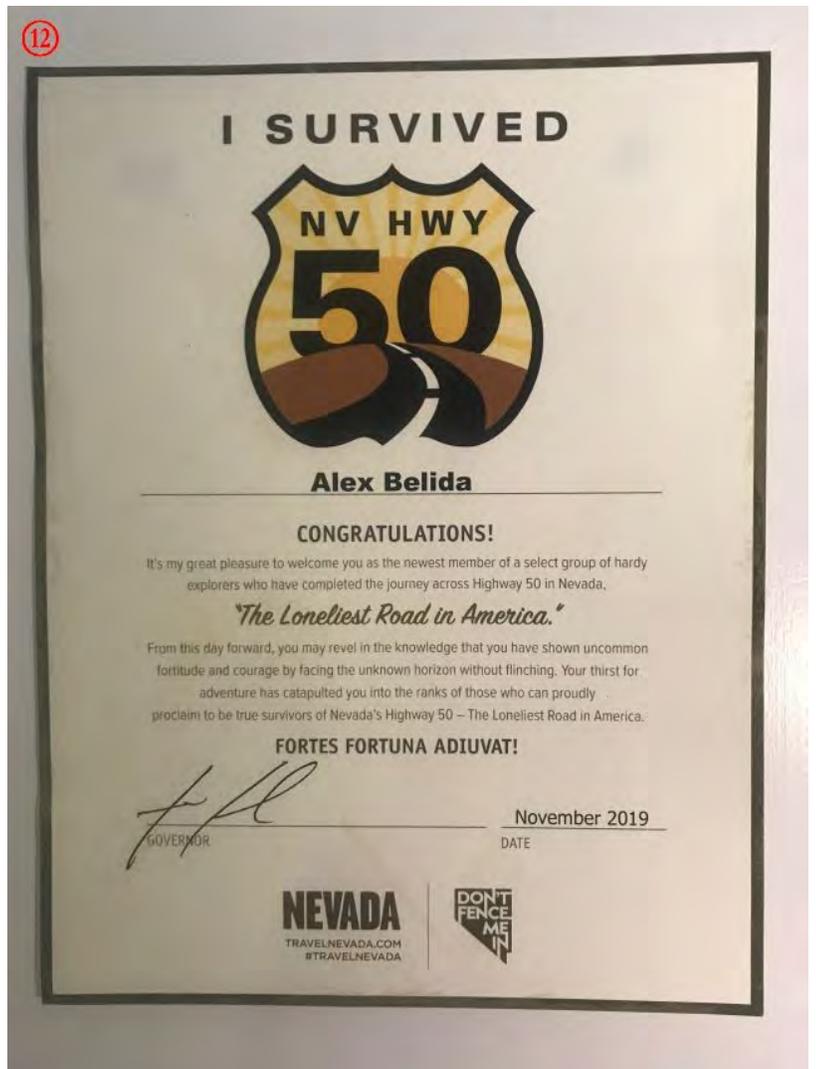
The route goes through Eureka, an old mining town whose existence I never knew about. But I had to see it, since my fictional HO scale Eureka and South Pass RR is set in the late 1890s in Nevada and includes two mines. I'm thinking about adding an Opera House ⑪ like the one in the real Eureka! You should pick up a pamphlet called "The Official Highway 50 Survival Guide"—available at the Ely depot and stores, parks, and other places on the way. Get it stamped at five different locations and the State of Nevada will mail you a certificate and a lapel pin proving you "survived" the Highway 50 journey ⑫.

We picked up ours as we came out of Utah and stopped just inside Nevada to see Great Basin National Park before proceeding on to Ely and Eureka. Traveling onward west towards California (to see the fabulous ghost mining town of Bodie), other stops on Hwy. 50 included Austin, Fallon, Fernley, Dayton, and, finally, Carson City.



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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.



**Mark Me Up**

## **COVID-19 — The Day of the Railroad Bandana**

by Mat Thompson, MMR



*This was a typical scene on my layout. Six people are working the Hoyt Street Yard or getting their trains out. Even with 4' aisles and a 25' long yard, operators were often crowded together.*

Even as we carefully return to work, shopping, and other important activities, model railroad operating sessions are in for a hiatus. Social distancing and the shoulder-to-shoulder environment of our train rooms just don't mix.

Many layout owners, and I am one, will be hesitant to host sessions in their homes or attend sessions at other homes. The age and medical condition of many operations enthusiasts also suggests caution. In the meantime, reach into your kit stash (we all know you have one) and build something.

If ops is still on your mind, I have some suggestions.

You can always use the time to brush up on your skills, whether you are a new operator or old hand. My one-stop reference remains Lance Mindheim's book *How to Operate A Modern Era Switching Layout* (Mainline Hobby and Amazon are two sources). Lance explains operations in simple and precise language using 100 pages that are more photos and diagrams than text. If you understand what Lance is saying, you will be an asset in any operations session anywhere.

Judging by what I hear from friends, most layout owners are busy fixing trouble spots and adding new capabilities to their layouts. Layout owners might also think about how to resume operations with smaller crews to avoid crowding. I can see going from 16 to 18 down to four or six.

Here are some thoughts. If you have others, let me know.

- Don't run a full schedule, just do a part or modified part of your schedule at 1:1 time or with no clock. Forget about running an eight hour shift.
- Use one-person crews.
- Slow the pace of operations, think more of moving cars than moving trains.
- Concentrate on switching locations that can keep a single operator occupied and not require constant moving around the layout.



*Swift is designed to keep two operators busy during an entire ops session. For now, it could be run with one operator. Normally at the start of the session the operator brings a train out from Hoyt Street Yard; but the session could start with that train on the interchange track where the stock cars and caboose are now.*



*Astoria Yard is normally worked by two people, and trains with two-person crews come into the yard from the left and the right. During COVID-19, one person could work the yard and the local industries. Inbound trains could be staged on each end of the layout just out of sight. The Yardmaster can bring them in, and after work with a train is completed, the Yardmaster could run it just out of the yard and leave it there.*

- Eliminate specialized positions like hostlers, dispatchers, and second crew members.
- Don't run some trains, or don't switch some areas—decrease the amount of running you expect in a session.
- Consider shorter sessions. Even if three hours is something of a standard, just getting together with a few train friends for an hour or two can be fun.
- Use Switchman Joe, a person on the ground, to slow the pace of switching operations.
- Don't run trains around the entire layout with their crews jostling past everybody else at the session. Instead, stage trains at the boundaries of the areas to be worked. When work is complete, run the train back to the area boundaries.
- In a yard, use only one person, who can build or break down one or two trains, and perhaps work local industries. The Yardmaster becomes the switcher engineer and the hostler, making the yard job a switching job like a big industry.

With a bit of thought and the appropriate caution, I hope we can all enjoy our trains and being with at least some of our train friends soon. Be sure and wear your bandana. ☒



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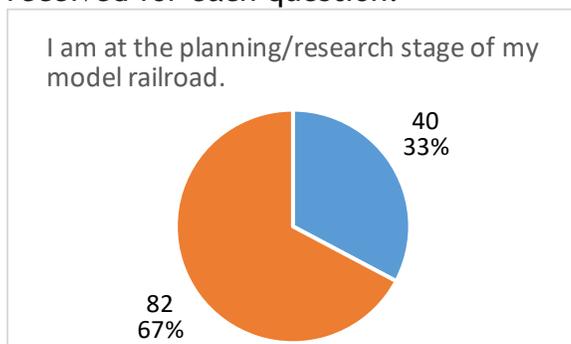
## Layout Survey Results and Analysis

The Potomac Division recently conducted a survey to provide the Board of Directors with information regarding the membership's model railroad layout activity. The survey's yes-no questions were:

- I am at the planning /research of my model railroad.
- I have a model railroad layout.
- My model railroad is under construction.
- My model railroad is operational.
- I consider my model railroad to be presentable.
- I currently own a module or work on a club layout.

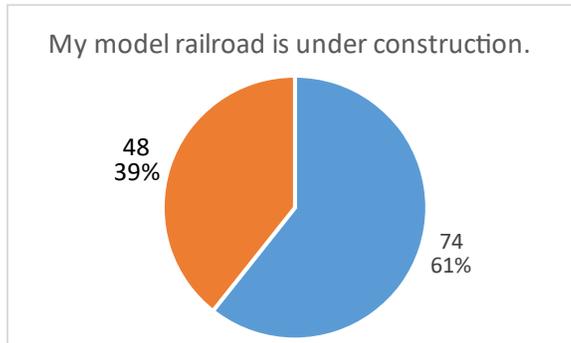
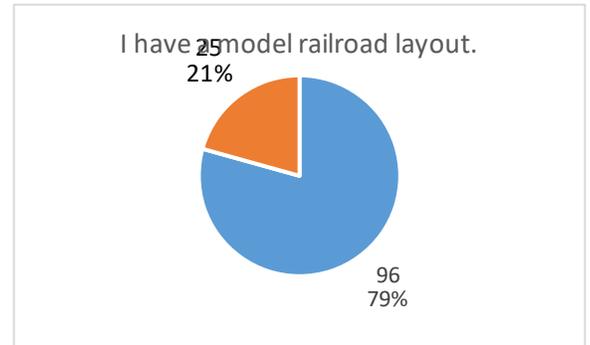
An optional seventh item, a text box, was provided for members to provide their name. One hundred sixty four (57.3 %) of the emails announcing the survey were opened, 144 were PD members and 20 were NMRA members from outside the Division. Of the 164 emails that were opened, 112 (68.3%) recipients opened the survey link, and of the 112 that opened the link 92 (82.5 %) completed the survey.

A reminder notice resulted in 32 additional participants. The following is an analysis of responses received for each question.

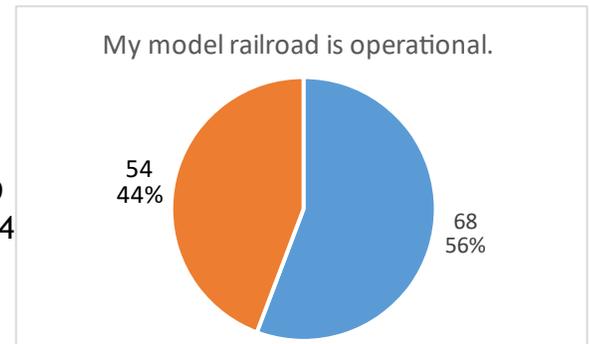


Question 1 had 122 responses, indicating 40 (33 %) PD members were at the planning/research stage of their model railroad and 82 (67 %) were not.

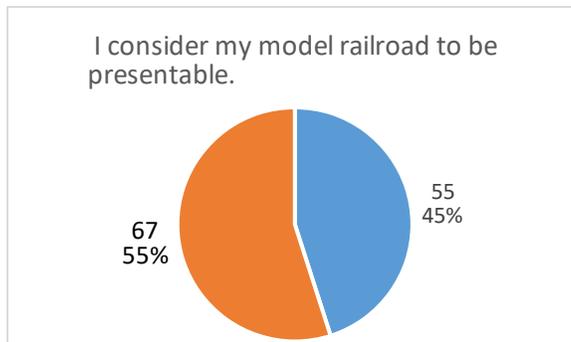
Question 2 had 121 responses, indicating 96 (79 %) PD members had a model railroad layout and 25 (21 %) did not.



Question 3 had 122 responses, indicating that 74 (61 %) PD member's model railroads were under construction and 48 (39 %) were not. It was pointed out by one respondent that model railroads are never finished and always under construction.

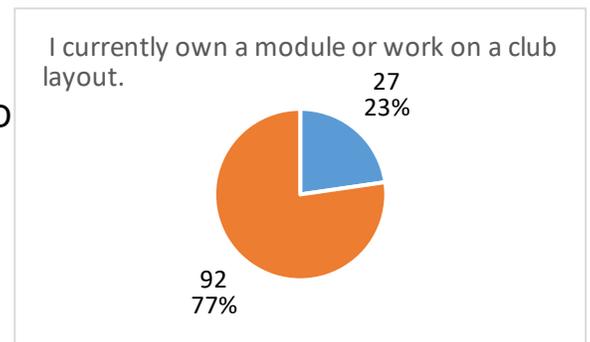


Question 4 had 122 responses, indicating that 68 (56 %) PD members had a model railroad that was operational and 54 (44 %) had model railroads that were not.



Question 5 had 122 responses, indicating that 55 (45 %) PD members felt their model railroad was presentable and 67 (55 %) felt it was not.

Question 6 had 119 responses, indicating that 27 (23 %) PD members either owned or worked on a club layout and 92 (77 %) did not. ❌



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## Achievement Program News

by Mat Thompson, MMR

Even in the world of coronavirus we have had AP achievements.

Bernie Kempinski has earned the designation Master Model Railroader. He is #654. We all know Bernie is a master in our hobby. It's good to know he now has his well-deserved official recognition.

Bernie recently completed both the Cars Certificate and the Prototype Model Certificate. Combined with the five other certificates he had already earned (Civil Engineer, Electrical Engineer, Author, Volunteer, and Scenery), he completed the requirements for his MMR designation. Congratulations, Bernie.



*Bernie's stunning version of the Potomac Creek Bridge during the Civil War is the work which earned him the Prototype Model Certificate. This certificate requires using prototype photos to model a scene including the appropriate engines, cars, and structures. Go to Bernie's Blog - <http://usmrr.blogspot.com/search/label/Bridges> - to see more.*

Bill Lyders completed his scratch-built track work to earn the Civil Engineer Certificate. Two summers ago, Bill knew he was moving. He asked to have the requirement to demonstrate the satisfactory operation of a completed 50-foot section of his HO model railroad and track work verified before he took down the layout.

This Spring Bill finished the track fixtures and they were evaluated to complete the required task. Congratulations to Bill, both for earning the Certificate and for his persistence. One lesson learned for all of us is the credit earned towards certificates never expires.

If you need to do some tasks in a piecemeal fashion. Let me know. We will work with you.. 

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## **2020 Potomac Division Election Results:**

# **Ernie Little and Jerry Stanley Elected to Board**

With the coronavirus affecting the ability to have an Annual Meeting and an Elections Meeting, the Board of Directors is providing the following information to allow the membership to see the process used for the 2020 elections.

Under the existing Potomac Division Bylaws, Article XIII, Terms of Office, Nominations, and Elections, Section 2, there shall be five members of the Board of Directors. Two members are elected in even-numbered years and three are elected in odd-numbered years. As 2020 is an even number year, two of the Board positions needed to be filled due to the term of office expiring.

In accordance with the Bylaws, Superintendent Martin Brechbiel appointed a Nominations Committee consisting of Division Clerk Nick Kalis and member John Paganoni, with John Paganoni as Chair of the Committee.

In preparation for the 2020 Election Meeting, the Nominating Committee reviewed the Division membership roll and solicited candidates from the membership. A list of proposed candidates and validated members who agreed to run for office was provided by the Election Committee to the Board of Directors.

Using the March membership extract data received from the Mid-Eastern Region—the most currently available—a list of Potomac Division members in good standing was created which contained each member's name, e-mail address, and home address.

An official ballot was prepared and sent to those Potomac Division members for whom the Division does not have e-mail addresses via U. S. Mail to conform with Region requirements of both notifying and offering the option to vote to all Division members. Each ballot had a unique number, and no two ballots had the same number. No record was kept of what ballot number was sent to which member. In the mailing, the recipients were advised to return the ballot to the Election Chair. Those ballots included provision for accepting the revised Bylaws for the Division.

In mid-March it was determined that the MiniCon and associated meetings scheduled for April 4, 2020, would have to be cancelled due to the Executive Orders from the Governors of Maryland and Virginia, as well as the Mayor of Washington D.C. With this cancellation, the Board began the process of exploring options for the 2020 election, as it was originally to take place at the Annual meeting. After considering options and considerable scrutiny of the current Bylaws, in consultation with the Region, the Board opted to move forward with the elections by sending ballots to all of remaining members of the Division who had not been sent ballots, with the recipients being directed to return their ballots to the Election Chair. Again, the ballots were assigned a unique number; no two ballots had the same number, and no record was kept as to what number ballot was sent to a member. The deadline for voting was extended to midnight Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup> due to the short amount of time to make this notification. Also, due to a Bylaw requirement, voting for the revised Bylaws was removed from these ballots. That will be re-visited at a future meeting, at a time and place to be determined.

The Election Committee developed a procedure for the receipt and counting of the ballots returned to the Election Chair. The procedure was as follows:

- An official ballot box was created, and as the ballots came in they were logged as received, date stamped, and put directly in the ballot box by the Election Chair. The ballots were not opened at this time.
- After the midnight, April 11<sup>th</sup>, deadline for voting passed, the Election Chair conducted a recount all of the envelopes containing ballots that were in the Ballot Box and recorded same. The ballot box was opened by a “disinterested” third party and the ballots were handed to the Election Chair by that party.

- Each envelope was then opened, in the presence of the “disinterested” third party, to be sure all the ballots in envelopes were accounted for and included. This was done in case someone sent an envelope without a ballot or sent two ballots in the same envelope.
- A tabulation sheet to record the votes for each candidate was prepared, and the Election Chair called off each vote for the “disinterested” party to record the votes.
- The Election Chair and the “disinterested” party then confirmed the voting to assure an accurate count had been made of the votes for each candidate.
- A second recount was performed to assure voting record accuracy.
- The tabulation sheet was kept by the Election Chair and not made public to anyone but himself.
- The ballots were then placed in a sealed envelope and forwarded to Division Clerk via USPS priority mail on April 13<sup>th</sup>. The tabulation sheet was not forwarded to clerk Nick Kalis to prevent him from knowing the unofficial voting results and to assure an independent accounting.
- Upon receipt, the Division Clerk opened the envelope, removed ballots, and counted the votes for each candidate using the same tabulation method used by the Election Chair. Again, the voting count was not shared.
- After completion, the ballots were sent to the Senior Assistant Superintendent by the Division Clerk for a third count on April 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Upon receipt, the Senior Assistant Superintendent opened the envelope, counted the votes for each candidate, and made a tabulation of the votes. After his tabulation, he compared the counts by the Election Chair and Clerk and found that all three counts were identical; and the official voting results were determined.
- After the count, the ballots were sent back to the Election Chair on April 18<sup>th</sup>, where they will be held in his possession until such time the Board of Directors provides him direction as to their final disposition.

The official vote count was as follows:

- Ernie Little - 55 votes.
- Jerry Stanley - 44 votes.
- Bill Lyders - 40 votes.

By vote, the elected candidates were Ernie Little, an incumbent, and Jerry Stanley.

Superintendent Martin Brechbiel notified the three candidates of the election results via telephone on April 20, 2020.

The results of the 2020 elections were posted on the Potomac Division website on April 20, 2020.

The New Board of Directors held a video conference on April 26, 2020, to determine who would occupy each of the five Board of Director Positions in accordance with the Potomac Division Bylaw. The results of this meeting were:

Superintendent: Martin Brechbiel

Senior Assistant Superintendent: Andrew Dodge

Assistant Superintendent: Ernie Little

Clerk: Nick Kalis

Paymaster: Jerry Stanley 

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## Potomac Division Events Calendar

Potomac Division Events Calendar				
<b>Open House Schedule 2020</b>				
<b>Cancelled</b>	Brad Trenkamp	<a href="#">State Line Feed Co.</a>	HO	Vienna, VA
<b>Cancelled</b>	Alex Belida	<a href="#">Eureka and South Pass Railroad</a>	HO	Rockville, MD
<b>Cancelled</b>	Bernie Kempinski	USMRR Aquia-Fredericksburg Line	O	Alexandria, VA
Aug. 15	John Swanson	Cresson Branch PRR	HO	Gainesville, VA
Sept. 5	Brian Sheron	LIRR Port Jefferson Branch	HO	Poolesville, MD
Sept. 5	Brian Benoit	Seneca Junction	HO	Poolesville, MD
Nov. 14	George Meyrick	The Tri-State Line	HO	Manassas, VA
Dec. 12	Todd Hermann	Lehigh & New England Railroad's Catasauqua Branch	HO	Falls Church, VA

Potomac Division Events Calendar				
<b>Outreach Program 2020</b>				
<b>Cancelled and will be rescheduled at a future date.</b>	Northern Virginia Model Railroad Club Vienna, VA (NVMR)			
Sept. tbd				
Nov. tbd				
<b>MiniCon 2020</b>				
<b>Cancelled</b>	<a href="#">St Matthews United Methodist Church, 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA 22003</a>			
<b>Operations Saturday 2020</b>				
<b>Cancelled</b>	<a href="#">At least two sessions on the Maryland side of the Potomac and at least two on the Virginia side</a>			

Potomac Division Events Calendar		
<b>MER Conventions</b>		
2020, Oct. 15 - 18	<a href="#">Crowne Plaza Charlotte Executive Park, Charlotte, NC</a>	Carolina South. Div.
2021, Oct. 21 - 24	Marriott Hunt Valley Inn, Hunt Valley, MD	Chesapeake Div.
2022, tbd	tbd	James River Div.
2023, tbd	tbd	Susquehanna Div.
2024, tbd	tbd	New Jersey Div.
<b>National Conventions</b>		
<b>Cancelled</b>	<a href="#">St. Louis, MO</a>	
July 4-10, 2021	<a href="#">Santa Clara, CA</a>	
August 14-21, 2022	<a href="#">Birmingham UK</a>	

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