The Potomac Flyer

October-November 2025

The Newsletter of the Potomac Division, MER, NMRA

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Battlefield Baptist Church, Warrenton, VA.
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Oct. 16-19

Bill of Lading

Cover: Scene on Marty McGuirk's Central Vermont Railroad (McGuirk Photo)

The Potomac Flyer

Submission Deadlines – Issue

Nov. 1 for Dec.-Jan. Jan. 1 for Feb.-Mar.
March 1 for April-May May 1 for June-July
July 1 for Aug.-Sept. Sept. 1 for Oct.-Nov.

From the Business Car

by Ernie Little, MMR, Potomac Division Superintendent

To start, I want to ask you to join me in congratulating **Alex Belida**, MMR and immediate past Division Senior Assistant Superintendent, on the receipt of the 2025 National Model Railroad Association President's Award for service to the Division. This award was established in 2017 and is awarded by the NMRA President to one individual in each Region per year who has done outstanding "beyond the call of duty" work to make his or her division effective, engaging, and welcoming to members. Alex **(photo right)** has been very active in our division for several years and currently serves as the editor of our newsletter, *The Potomac Flyer,* and assists with the Mid-Eastern Region's newsletter, *The Local*. Thanks for what you have done and are doing Alex.

I encourage you to attend the 2025 Fall MiniCon on November 1st, which will be a joint meet with the James River Division. It will be held at the Battlefield Baptist Church in Warrenton, Virginia with a format similar to that used at the March 17th meet in McLean. Planning is moving forward. Watch for more information on the Division's website.

Welcome New Members
July 2025:
David Komyathy-Reston, VA
Zachary White - DC

The National NMRA has hired a consultant to create a new marketing plan. Work done to date on the NMRA Branding Project included a discovery phase to understand what the NMRA means to people, and to define its purpose/mission, position, and alignment to its vision. Key objectives of the project are establishing a new and consistent brand style and logo across National, Regions, and Divisions. A schedule of moving to the new logos has been established with the launch of the National program on November 1st, the Regional level on January 1st, and the Division level on April 1st (and this is not an April Fool's day joke!)

We continue to look for venues in Maryland, especially in the Montgomery County area, to hold meetings. If you know of or can assist with securing a venue, please let me know so the Board of Directors can follow up on it. We have been successful in finding venues that are affordable in Virginia but not in Maryland. This keeps us from having meetings in Maryland.

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

The Division Crew:

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We are still looking for members to host open houses as part of a layout tour. I ask you to please consider opening your layout for an open house so the membership can see what you have been up to.

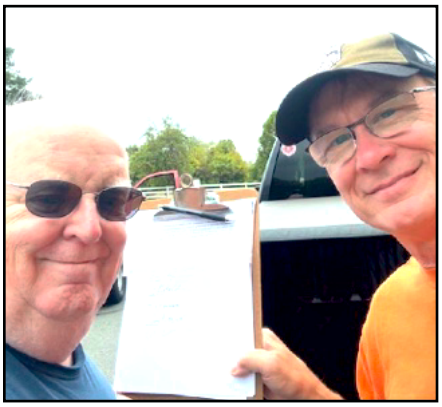
We have been successful in the finishing the effort to sell the G scale train items donated to us by the Adams family. This effort resulted in the Division receiving some income to support our operations.

I created an adhoc committee to look at two issues—first, the Division becoming incorporated, and the second, securing non-profit status. The committee consists of **Greg Cassidy, Gary Mason, Lee Stoermer,** and myself. During a recent attempt to change our bank account signatures it was discovered that when our account was with Suntrust Bank, now a part of Truist Bank due to a merger with BB&T, that the bank approved the opening of the account without an EIN (employer identification number). We addressed the issue by securing an EIN, necessary to incorporate the Division. This was discussed at prior Board of Directors meetings and at our meeting on September 16th, the Board passed a motion to incorporate and pursue securing the associated EIN. This is an important step in the Division's future.

We are having some success in finding clinicians for in-person clinics and I ask all of our members to step up to make a difference and work toward the NMRA Achievement Program volunteer certificate. You can give a presentation on a railroad topic you enjoy, a project you are working on, or even a recent railroad excursion you went on. If you are interested in presenting a

clinic, please contact **Jerry Stanley** for the in-person clinics or me for the virtual clinics to get on the schedule.

As a reminder, time is running out to register for the 2025 MER Convention, "Philly Express" being held in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, October 16-19 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the same location where the 2019 MER Convention was held. The convention website, phillyexpress.org, is online and has a link to make hotel reservations. Registration and other convention information is available online.



On Sept. 21st, Ernie Little, MMR, and Lee Stoermer completed the Board of Directors signing of Virginia's incorporation document for the Potomac Division, clearing the way to apply for non-profit status.

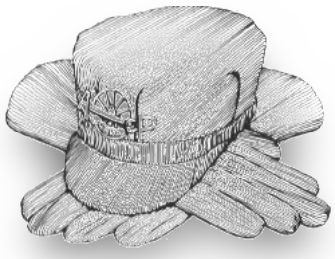
In Memoriam: John Griffith, MMR

The Flyer has received word of the death of **John Griffith, MMR #723,** a former Potomac Division Board Director and *Flyer* Editor who had published articles in *Model Railroader* and the NMRA's *Scale Rails*. A full obituary can be found at https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/washingtonpost/name/john-griffith-obituary?id=58864741. An appreciation of his modeling will appear in the December Flyer.

John Griffith receives his MMR plaque in 2022 from MMRs Martin Brechbiel and Mat Thompson. (Ernie Little Photo)

Achievement Program Report

by Martin Brechbiel, Potomac Division AP Coordinator



If you're working on one of the AP categories and are about to fill out the Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) form using a pencil or pen, **STOP!**

Use the "Fillable PDF" version of the SOQ forms that are finally available (so very long overdue….) on the NMRA website (find them under the "Education" > "Achievement Program" > "Forms" tabs) and are there for you to download onto your computer.

Using these lets you fill in the blanks at the keyboard (e.g., your name, remember that detail…), check off the check boxes on the form using your computer, and then save the results as a PDF file.

When you are ready to submit your package for an AP category, you can just attach the PDF file to the e-mail message to me.

No more scanning or running over to the library to photocopy your handwritten or typed SOQ form to create an electronic file. Better yet, using the "Fillable PDF" SOQ form ensures that everything on the form is legible (lots of personal memories here…)

Of course, you still must submit all of the required documentation for whatever category you are pursuing. This documentation is best submitted as another PDF file for review purposes at every level. Most word processing and other software has a "save as" option that will let you select PDF as the output format. And that should accompany your SOQ PDF file.

Once I have your electronic submission packages, I can review them and forward them up the line to the MER AP Manager, who will review them again and forward them to the National AP Manager. This process should expedite the review process.

You might have seen this already in the NMRA magazine, but it was delayed here for a while since the certificate itself took a roundabout tour of the region before landing on my desk. Yes, **Lee Stoermer** was successful in obtaining his AP Author certificate!

I'll note that this category is one that everyone should be able to obtain. You have ready made Division and Region publication destinations just waiting for your articles and photos. Half of your 42 points from each (add 10% just for a buffer) and you've got this certificate.

If you have questions, contact me at: Achievement-Program@potomac-nmra.org

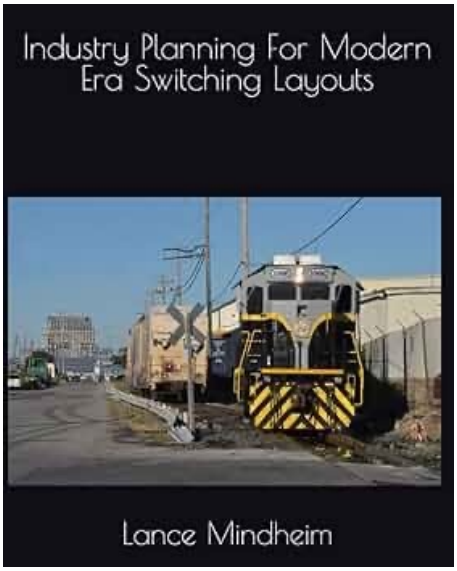
November 1st Joint Meet with James River

The Division is finalizing the program for our annual joint Potomac-James River meet. There will be clinics and demonstrations at Battlefield Baptist Church in Warrenton, Virginia, starting at 9AM, with layout tours nearby in the afternoon.

For clinics, **Pete LaGuardia** and **Rich Steinmann**, both MMRs, will discuss car cards and timetable operations; James River's **Stan Stocker** will hold a clinic on 3D printing a fleet of cars for your railroad at a cost of 20 dollars per car including trucks, couplers and decals. **Jack Dziadul**, MMR, from the Carolina Piedmont Division will discuss and display his Ipswich Hobbies models.

For demonstrations, James River's **Bret Jones** will show how to make model buildings from foam. Potomac's **Greg Cassidy** will explain painting and weathering with Pan Pastels, and **Pete LaGuardia** will display track cleaning and show his Tortoise edge connector.

We will have these layout tours: **Bryan Kidd**'s C&O, **Bill Mosteller**'s Virginian, **Cam Green**'s Maine Central and **John Swanson**'s PRR Cresson Branch.



There will also be White Elephant sales table space available by prearrangement with Clerk **Lee Stoermer**. **Martin Brechbiel**, MMR will evaluate AP models by pre-arrangement.

We will also have our annual Popular Vote and Model Display event. This year's theme is **Flatcars, with or without loads**, which happens to be James River's modeling theme for November 2025.

The winner of this contest will receive a plaque from James River and from Potomac a copy of **Lance Mindheim**'s *Industry Planning for Modern Era Switching Layouts.* Second and third place will also be recognized.

If you bring a model to display in the Joint Meet Popular Vote, please bring a 3x5 card or a slip of paper with your name and the name of your model and hand it to the contest monitor. We will place a number next to each model. If you want to place information about your model with the display, make sure your name is not on it. Those attending the meet will be able to cast ballots using the numbers next to each model to identify their choices. Voting slips will be provided along with a ballot box.

Meet The Member: Marty McGuirk

Editor's Note: This feature is designed to promote greater knowledge about members of the Potomac Division and their model railroading interests. If you are willing to participate, please send an email to potomac-flyer@potomac-nmra.org. The following text is by Marty McGuirk, who also provided the photos.

How did you get started in the hobby? How long have you been an NMRA member? How long with Potomac Division? Do you still have your first engine/ train set? What was it? Tell us a bit about your life, where you grew up, what jobs you held?

Since I can remember, I've always liked mechanical "things"—ships, trains, planes, and cars (pretty much in that order!). I had Lionel trains that belonged to the sons of people my parents got to know when they moved to the United States from Ireland. I played with the Lionel trains a lot. I decided, though, to do something about the fact that the Lionel New York Central and Santa Fe Warbonnet F units didn't look anything like the New Haven FL9s I saw running through our hometown in Connecticut. Some black and red poster paint (and white house paint!) took care of that. My mother was horrified to see what I'd done to the "pretty trains." I'd describe those as my first painting projects, although I'd like to think my painting skills have improved in the intervening decades!

I switched to HO scale a few years later. My first home layout was based on Linn Westcott's "HO Scale Railroad That Grows," although I added a second *Model Railroader* project layout, the Portage Hill & Communipaw, to one end of the 4'x8' table. The sharp curves played havoc with any larger equipment, but I mostly ran AHM 4-4-0s on that layout, and at some point I built a Model Die Casting Old Timer 2-6-0 and 2-8-0. This was a challenge for my rudimentary metalworking skills and a shop

that consisted of a hacksaw, dull files, and a huge soldering gun! But I built them and got them to run after a fashion.

I built a lot of ship and airplane plastic models in my pre-teen and early teen years, and I also built some wood and plastic rolling stock kits. I didn't do any real model railroading during college or immediately after. However, when I was in the Navy and preparing to deploy, I stopped by the hobby shop looking for something to putter around with during my downtime at sea. At this time, some new manufacturers were making resin kits that resulted in detailed, accurate models. I ended up building a few of them, although I learned to avoid installing the trucks on any kits I built at sea. One morning I had returned to my stateroom to find a couple of pairs of trucks rolling across the deck amongst hundreds of shattered bits of resin that had once been a couple of Westerfield PRR hopper cars prior to their terminal trips to the deck.

I eventually parted ways with that first layout. It did remain, dusty and neglected, in my parent's basement, until one time home on leave I spent a couple of days tearing it out and hauling it to the dump. I didn't keep any of those old locomotives or cars, but I do have two cars from my early modeling days. One is a resin New Haven boxcar that I managed to build without any corner being square; the second is a Central Vermont milk car, my first attempt at scratchbuilding. While they are hardly the pinnacle of modeling art, I do exhibit them in a display case. They serve as a reminder of whence I started.

I did manage to try my hand at scenery on that first layout, and I actually stumbled across a photo of that milk car on that layout. The photo itself is horrid, but it does prove that my layouts have always been set in New England in the fall.

My last duty station in the Navy was in the Washington DC area. It was at that time that I joined the NMRA and what was then known as the Dixie Division. I also joined the Rockville Club, which at the time had a layout in the basement of a church hall in Silver Spring. This was really my first exposure to "social" model railroading. It was then that I met many local modelers, both in and outside of the club, who remain friends to this day. That was when I first met Paul Dolkos and John Paganoni—two true craftsmen. I met Paul when I invited myself over to see his Boston & Maine layout. John (who turned out to be a much more talented CV modeler than I!) had reached out to me after I'd started the Central Vermont Railway Historical Society. If I recall, I first met John at a Dixie Division MiniCon. (Did we even call them "MiniCons" back then?) This also means I've been a member of the NMRA on and off since the early 1990s.

Upon reflection, getting to know Paul had a significant impact on the trajectory of my life. It was through Paul that I gained an inroad into Kalmbach, so when a position became available on the editorial staff of *Classic Toy Trains,* I got the job. I'm certain that Paul's recommendation played no small part in me getting the position! When an associate editor position opened at *Model Railroader* a year or so later, I moved over to that magazine. Kalmbach is also where I met my wife Christine. She was on the staff of the *Dollhouse Miniatures* magazine. She must have liked me since she followed me from Kalmbach in 2001 to Colorado where I worked in product development for Intermountain Railway Company, and then back to the DC area in 2005 to take a job as a Navy contractor—where I've been since.

What's your favorite Division activity — open houses, MiniCons and Meets, clinics in person, virtual clinics? What do you model now: layout, scale? What's your

favorite part of the hobby? How about your least favorite? What projects have you been working on recently?

I settled on the Central Vermont Railway as my favorite prototype many years ago. My current HO scale layout fills about half of our basement with my depiction of a CV branch line as I imagine it looked 60 years or so ago. I like all aspects of the hobby although some I have less tolerance for than others. For example, I don't mind connecting wires together to get something to work, but I hate stringing wires through the underpinnings of the layout. And while I like building "scenery," I could live happily if I never made another tree! I find myself with most of the base scenery completed and all the track and wiring installed and working well on this layout. I've turned my attention to the structures that I need to scratchbuild to consider the layout truly "complete." Most recently I've been working on installing DCC and sound in my CV brass steam locomotives. I have a couple of brass engines that need some serious mechanical work. I'm gradually building up the courage to crack them open and see if I can restore them to working order.

In the far back of my mind is the question of what's next? I'd like to think I have another layout in me, but maybe not. Time will tell. I have sufficient unbuilt kits to

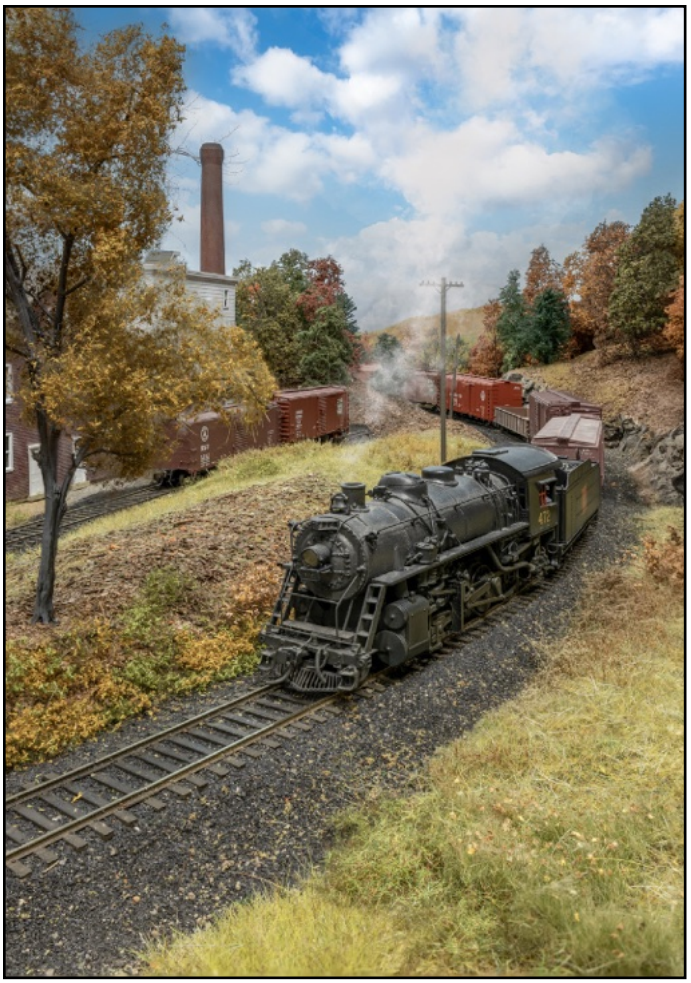
model every passenger train that ran on the CV in my era. Of course, those trains didn't run on the branch line I'm currently modeling. I joke with some of my close friends that the day they see all those passenger cars complete, the wrecking crew won't be far behind! But that's in the distant, maybe never, future. In the interim I plan to complete the Richford Branch and continue to host operating sessions and open houses as the mood strikes.

As far as the Potomac Division activities I enjoy the most, I'd say that clinics, both in person and virtual, and layout open houses top the list.

Describe your model railroad philosophy? What to you is the value of the AP program? Is shooting for MMR worthwhile?

One thing I don't believe in is that "no layout is ever complete." There is a point where these things reach a natural stopping point, and if we don't realize that, they, and the modeler, can stagnate. If I have a model railroad philosophy, it's to learn something new with each project. Maybe it's using new material, or a new tool, or a new brand of paint. And trying something new doesn't have to be something elaborate. For the latest structure I finished, I experimented with a couple of different approaches to duplicating the look of cloth awnings until I found something that worked for me.

I've had a real on again/off again relationship with the AP program over the years. MMR is worthwhile if it's worth it to you. I look upon the AP program as a way to challenge myself and improve my modeling—kind of like forcing me out of my comfort zone. I'd like to say that I've taken on the AP program headlong. But the fact that I



got my first AP certificate more than 20 years ago is a strong indication that I'm in no rush to get my MMR anytime soon! But I do plan to finish it—someday.

What advice do you have for newcomers to the hobby?

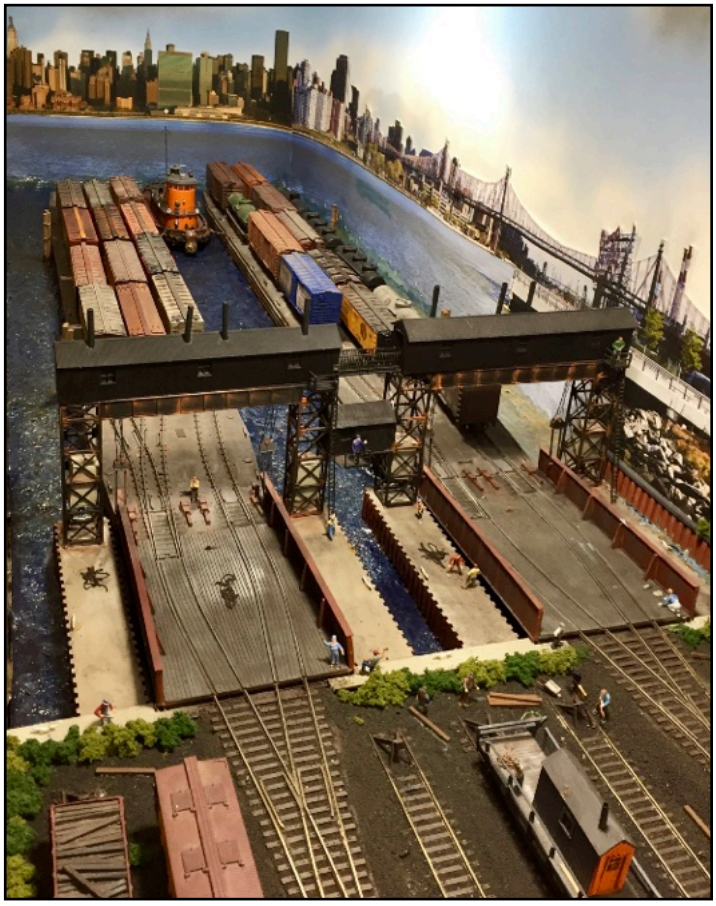
First, read and research—but don't fall into the armchair trap. The goal should be to build a model (or layout, or to operate, or whatever). Reading about it, or looking at others do it on YouTube, will only take you so far. Have fun, never shy away from a challenge, and don't feel the need to keep every model you ever start. I've had plenty of models that ended up in the bin since that was the best place for them! And don't be shy about asking for help or advice from other modelers. However, don't feel that you always must take that advice. Try something, and if it works, be sure to share it with the rest of us!

Flyer Photo Layout Tour: The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR)

Article and Photos by Brian Sheron, MMR

[Editor's Note: Brian's layout was one of two Maryland open houses on Sept. 28th.]

I was fortunate to have my HO scale Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) layout featured in the August 2024 issue of Model Railroader magazine. Although most of the details about my layout are contained in the article, I will repeat them here for those that haven't seen the article.



I model the Long Island Rail Road (yes, Rail Road is written as two separate words in LIRR) in HO scale. I started the layout in 1988 when my family moved into our current house. I originally modeled just the Port Jefferson branch, which runs from Port Jefferson to Hicksville and from Hicksville to Jamaica station in the Borough of Queens. I set the era to be1964, because that was the year the World's Fair was held in Flushing Meadows, New York, and the LIRR commemorated it by painting their fleet of C420's, RS1's, and RS3's gray with an orange sweep on each side.

Several years ago Broadway Limited Imports (BLI) came out with an H10 steam engine, which was the freight workhorse of the LIRR before dieselization. I bought several of these engines, and decided that if I turned the clock back about 10 years, I could

prototypically run steam on my layout. My steam roster also consists of K4's, E6's, L1's, B6's, G5s's, and a G53sd, all prototypic of the steam era on the LIRR. The G5s's, B6's, and G53sd are older brass models in which I had to install sound decoders.

All of the mainline and yard trackage is code 83 with the exception of Sunnyside Yard, which is code 70.

In 2005 I expanded my layout into an adjacent 12' x 12' room and modeled the City Terminal Zone, which runs from Jamaica to Pennsylvania (Penn) Station in Manhattan. This included high-rise buildings, an operating elevated subway, and a cutaway showing the mezzanine level one level below Penn Station. Here I modeled the shopping mall and LIRR ticket windows and the level below the mezzanine level

where LIRR trains would arrive and depart.

In 2015 I retired from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission after 42 years of government service and expanded my layout once again into the finished portion of my basement. This expansion is a 5' x 17' island with a view block running down the middle. On one side I modeled the LIRR's car float bridges and yard on the East River in Long Island City in Queens. On the other side, I modeled the LIRR's Atlantic Branch. This included modeling Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn (which also includes an operational elevated subway running above the roadway) and Holban Freight Yard (which is not actually on the Atlantic Branch, but I needed a freight yard!).

The layout is powered by a Digitrax DS100 Command Station and two DB150 boosters. The average height of the layout is about 50" off the ground and the minimum radius is about 24."

I belong to an operations group and when we operate on my layout, I can accommodate a maximum of eight operators

In addition to modeling the railroad I was familiar with as I grew up on Long Island, one of my goals in building the layout was to also try to capture the hustle and bustle of the largest class one passenger railroad in the United States. This meant

lots of people and cars. There are over two thousand figures and over eight hundred vehicles on the layout. Another goal was to capture details so the layout looked realistic. I have incorporated a lot of detail on the layout, ranging from discarded newspapers blowing up against posts to operating crossing gates.

Considering that the original layout is now close to 37 years old, it has held up fairly well with routine maintenance, and I look forward to more years of operating fun.

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Brian Sheron, MMR is a former Superintendent of the Potomac Division.

Editor's Note: The Potomac Flyer is seeking members who are willing to provide a photo layout report for our newsletter. You can take your own photos and provide basic layout info, but we are also looking for members willing to act as a photographer for these visits. This initiative is designed to supplement, not replace, our regular in-person layout tours. It will allow those of you may be reluctant to host a tour to let other members see what you've done or are constructing without the pressure of preparing for scores of visitors. If you are willing to participate in these solo layout visits or act as photographer, please send an email to the Flyer at Potomac-Flyer@potomac-nmra.org.

Layout Tour: John King's B&O Shenandoah Subdivision

Text by John King, Photos by Greg Cassidy and Ken Wilson

[Editor's Note: John's layout was one of the Maryland open houses on Sept. 28th. A full report will appear in our next issue.]

The B&O Shenandoah Subdivision represents the B&O branch from Harpers Ferry to Strasburg Junction via Charles Town and Winchester in the fall of 1949.

Track work is complete and all turnouts between Harpers Ferry and Strasburg are hand laid to ensure smooth operation. Trackage at all stations replicates the prototype, although some sidings are not included and/or are shortened to fit in the available space.

Power is all steam, mostly custom detailed brass to more closely represent locomotives that ran in the valley. The freight car fleet

represents what might have been seen in 1949.

I host regular operating sessions representing trains and traffic as it would have been in the fall of 1949. A crew of eight to 12 operators is required to run the railroad.

Unfortunately there is not much scenery.

But note the Dispatchers Office with the1942 Interlocking Machine that once controlled the junction at JD Tower in Hyattsville and the early 20th Century dispatchers telephone system.

(John King photos left & below)

Greg Cassidy's Hobby Barn Clinic

Photos by Greg Cassidy and Ken Wilson

Potomac's Senior Assistant Superintendent Greg Cassidy **(photo below left)** led a workshop on Sept. 27th at Jerry Stanley's new Hobby Barn clinic facility to show how to paint detail parts using Pan Pastels. According to Greg, the key is using alcohol as the carrier as it allows you to brush the pastels onto what you're painting, and it evaporates quickly. Then you can use a paper towel with alcohol to clean your brushes.

Participants at the workshop **(photo above)** were furnished with 3D printed detail parts in HO and N scale. Once painted they were free to take them home. The detail parts **(photo below)** were donated by Mudd Creek Models.

Materials used in the clinic included Pan Pastels, plastic palettes, inexpensive brushes, isopropyl alcohol, a small spray bottle and the detail parts.

The Flatcar Challenge

After the last issue's Caboose Challenge, I thought it was time to showcase your favorite **Flatcars, with or without loads**. After all, flatcars are the popular vote contest theme for our November 1st Joint Meet with the James River Division at Battlefield Baptist Church.

Thanks to all who sent in photos and brief descriptions. For our December-January issue, we're opening the challenge pages for a **Member's Choice.** Send anything you want as long as it is related to model railroading.

Please send in your descriptions and photos by November 5th for our **Member's Choice, Anything Goes Challenge**. Sent to: potomac-flyer@potomac-nmra.org

Our *Flyer* 1st Place Favorite Star for cabooses was awarded to **Ron King** for his "Shorty" Caboose. **If you have a favorite among these flatcars, send us an email telling us which one.**

I truly enjoy organizing these challenges and look forward to seeing the submissions for every issue. I want to thank the members of the Potomac Division for sharing their work. Based on the reactions I receive, readers of the *Flyer* in the Division, in the entire Mid-Eastern Region, and NMRA members elsewhere appreciate seeing what you have accomplished.

Alex Belida, MMR
***Flyer* Editor and Publisher**

(The following items appear in the order in which they were received. The texts and photos are by the modelers who submitted them unless otherwise noted.

Some texts may have been edited for length and/or clarity. We welcome submissions from members of other NMRA Divisions in the MER and beyond.)

1. John Paganoni's Flatcars

The flatcar with a BEST 60 bulldozer from years past makes a good load and adds weight to the otherwise light car. The dozer is a Rio Grande Models kit #3008-BD, Tractor with dozer attachment. This is a very accurate model and I was able to compare it with a totally restored BEST 60 while I was in Missouri a few years ago. On my layout, the dozer is headed to the Doyle Sand and Gravel Company and will be offloaded there to push sand to their cement facility. The flat car is Tichy 40 foot, 50 ton kit #4021. This is a fine replica of the typical prototype and can be easily superdetailed in a lot of ways to meet the needs of model railroaders.

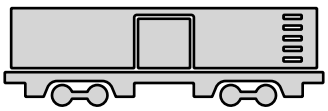
The second flat may not be of much interest for folks with layouts, as a flat car with trucks for wrecks is quite common. The flat car is Tichy also. ***John Paganoni, MMR***

2. Ernie Little's Flatcar

One of my favorite flat cars is UP50596 a 40' flat car with a load consisting of a Caterpillar forestry dozer and blade secured with chains as a load. As I was in the fire department for over 38 years I had the opportunity to work around such a forestry dozer on several brush and wildland fires which the memories make the combination of the flat car and dozer load one of my favorites. ***Ernie Little, MMR***

3. Alex Belida's Little Flatcars

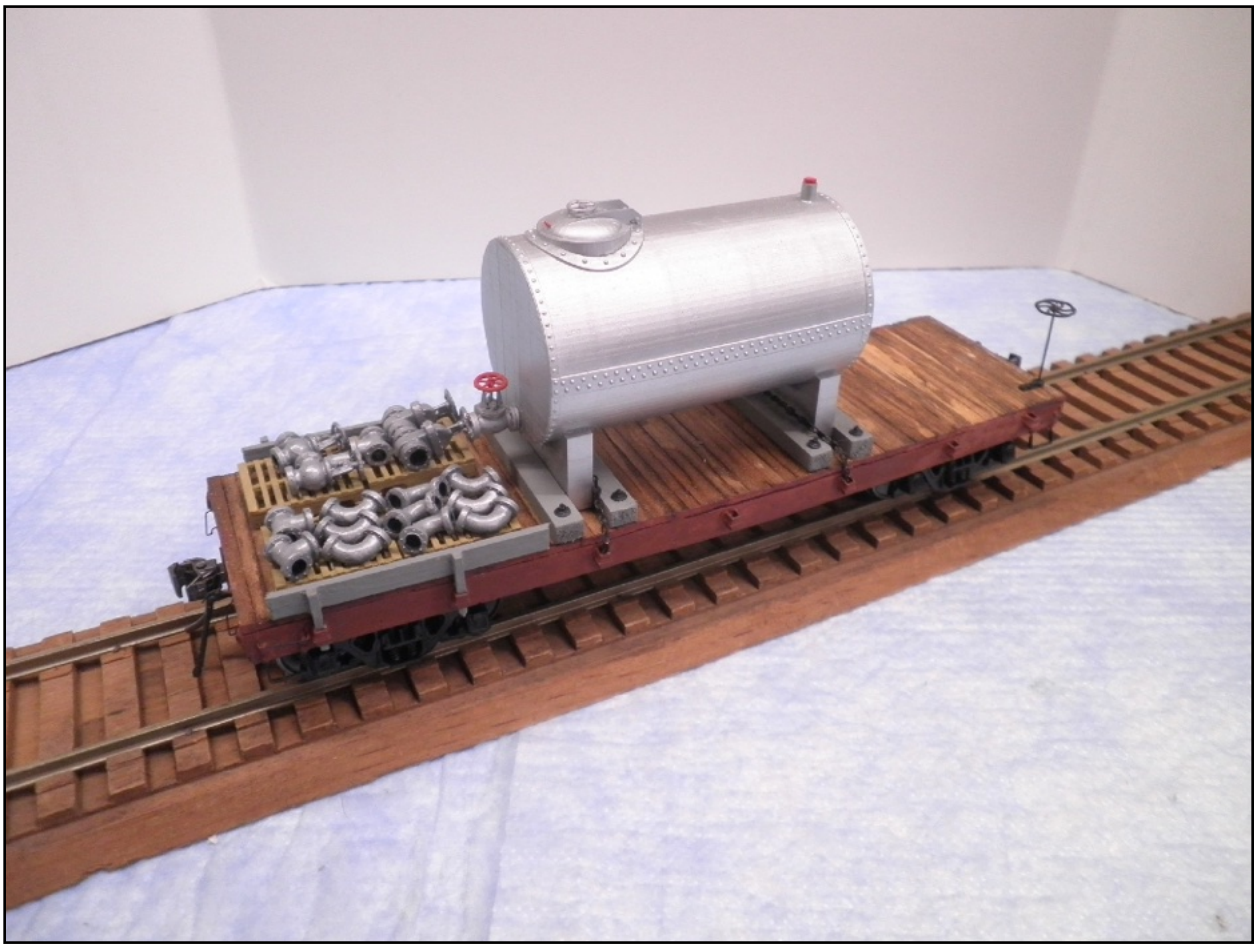
Aside from a scratchbuilt log-carrying flatcar, the only flatcars I have are these little ones I acquired back in 2017 when I started making my Eureka and South Pass Railroad layout set in Nevada in the late 1890s. In reacquainting myself with model vendors at the time, I stumbled upon E.J. Brannan's Cache Creek Scale Models. I was struck by his craftsmanship in making old-time HO, O and narrow-gauge logging, mining and maintenance of way cars—some of them just a scale 10' in length supported by a single truck. I couldn't resist putting in an order that including the water car and box car besides the flats. Sadly, Cache Creek is no longer in business. ***Alex Belida, MMR***



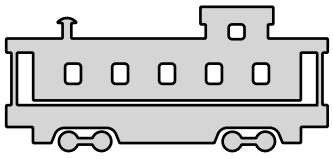
4. Jerry Stanley's Flatcars with Army Tanks

"One is an AHM. I think one is an Atlas. Not sure about the third. Bought these at a Greenberg train show several years ago." ***Jerry Stanley***

5. Martin Brechbiel's Flat with Tank & Plumbing Parts



This flat car was made from two leftover fragments of two entire resin cast cars that I had cut into pieces to make a longer car for another project. The car was pieced back together, 3" decking boards applied, a fairly complete AB brake set installed, and then other details were applied. Grandt Line stake pockets hold the boards with the four Crescent Locomotive laser cut assembled pallets holding the "plumbing" parts. Some chain loops through the stake pockets hold the tank up against the blocking bolted into the deck. The tank and "plumbing" parts were 3D printed parts that I gambled on buying based on a photo I saw online. ***Martin Brechbiel, MMR***



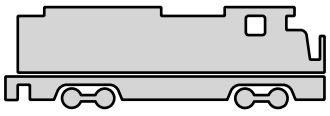
6. Fritz Dahlin's Three Flatcars

N&W 32708 is a Tangent kit with a shortened wheelbase to more closely match the prototype. Car was painted, decaled and weathered with acrylic craft paint.

CNW 780748 and SOU 15040 are heavily modified Front Range kits for a Southern Railway prototype. Both cars had wire grabs and cut levers added, were lowered and weighted. Cars were painted, decaled and weathered with acrylic craft paint.
Fritz Dahlin, Chesapeake Division

7. Greg Cassidy's Flatcars with Loads

These three flat cars are carrying a load from Bethlehem Steel to an unknown industry somewhere off my layout. As with many large loads I have no idea what they're actually for, but I'm sure they're important to someone. And some day I've got to get around to using chains or heavier bindings on that crankshaft. It's just waiting to go flying off and cause some headlines in the news. ***Greg Cassidy***



8. Tim Tilson's Favorite Flatcar Load

When you model 1905, in rural northern Michigan, there aren't many options for flat car loads. However, with a bit of ingenuity you can come up with some. Here is my favorite. The car is a Funaro and Camerlengo flat car kit (#6501) in HO scale. It comes with Pennsylvania decals but I lettered it for the Soo Line. The load is a horse drawn steam engine from Model Tech Studios (S0201). I added the wooden deck. The engine is glued down and has some shims. I chose to use silver thread to represent a cable because it is easier to work with than chains which are probably more prototypical. The car with load was way too light, so I added some ¼ oz weights and then covered them with wooden boxes from a kit. The car runs just fine now. Photo by Mr. Bruce Weigle. ***Tim Tilson***

9. Anonymous Flatcars with Loads

This pair of Athearn flatcars have custom installed loads of construction equipment.

Both of these cars are Roundhouse/MDC with custom made steel beam loads.

The ACL bulkhead flat and load are by Atlas, significantly worked to weather the car and load. The WM flat and load are a Proto2000 product on its inaugural run.

The IC has a home made ‘tarped’ loads on an Atlas bulkhead flat.

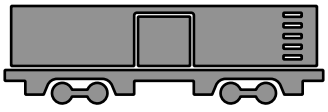
The T&NO bulkhead flat is by Atlas with a cast resin load by Chooch, the SP flat is by Athearn with a scratch built lumber load.

Unsure of the manufacturer of the bulkhead flat car. The tube load is custom built.
Anonymous

(Editor’s note: These cars will be displayed in the Battlefield popular vote contest Nov. 1st. The member’s identity is withheld to preserve the anonymity of the voting.)

10. Ken Wilson's Flatcar

The model is a modified Athearn kit shortened from 50' down to 44'-6" to match a Santa Fe class Ft-M car. The underside was completely rebuilt, including a Type K brake system with all pipes and rods. The generators are from Life Like and the blocking was cut from Evergreen styrene. ***Ken Wilson***



Broadway Limited's DCC Aids

Article and Photos by Mat Thompson, MRR

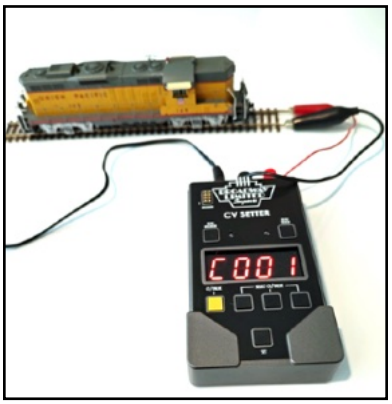
Broadway Limited Imports (BLI) has released two easy-to-use devices for configuring DCC decoders. One is an address changer **(photo below, left)**, the other is the CV setter **(photo below, right)**. The retail cost for each is $79.99, but they are widely available in the $65 to $70 range. Both are handy, but if you only have a few engines, read to the end of this article to see how the CV setter alone could meet your needs.

What you will get is the device, a power cord, and an instruction booklet. Using either device is so simple that BLI's instruction booklet starts by saying that you don't need to read it! Just in case, instructions are on the back of the device cases **(photo next page)**.

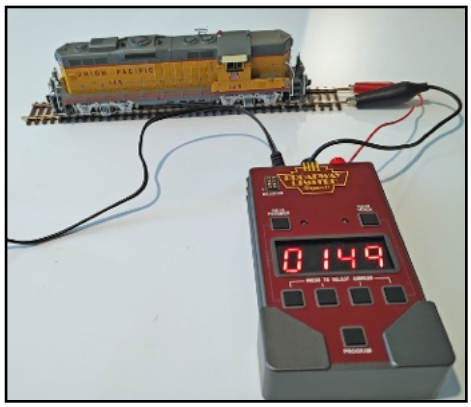
To use either device, connect two wires to the program track terminals on top of the device and to a piece of track long enough to hold the engine, including the tender, if appropriate. **Don't connect either device to your layout track**. Then, plug the power

cord into a wall plug and to the device. When the screen lights up, you are ready to program.

To program an address using the address changer, enter the address into the four *Select Address* boxes. Each push of a button increases the number by one. Once you have the address you want, press the *Program* button. You will see blinking lines, and after a few seconds the address you have selected will show on the screen **(photo below right)**.



Changing a CV using the CV setter is a two-step process **(photo left)**. First, press the yellow *CV/Value* button. When a "C" shows, enter the CV number you want to change. Then, press the yellow *CV/Value* button again and enter the value you want for the CV.

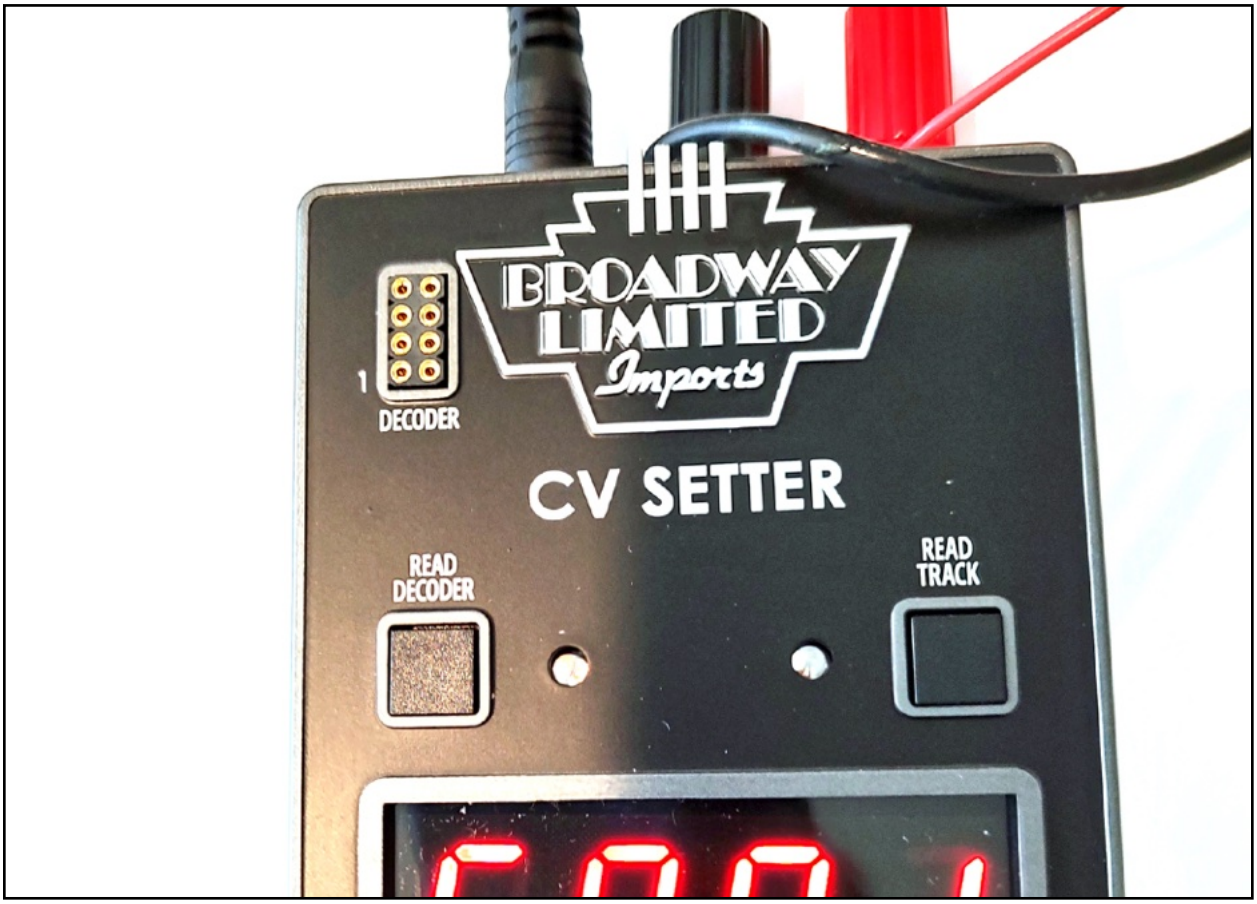


Next, press the *Set* button. You will see blinking lines, and after a few seconds the value you selected will show on the screen.

The only thing tricky about setting CVs is that only a few of them follow NMRA standards. You will need to refer to your decoder manufacturer's documentation to determine the CV controlling various sound, lighting actions, and other features.

That's it. I have programmed engines with Soundtraxx, Digitrax, and ESU decoders, all with some variation of a keep alive, with no issues.

On both devices, you can also plug a decoder directly into the decoder 8-pin socket. Depending on the decoder, you might also need an adapter. BLI identifies adapters for some decoders in the instruction booklets. Once the decoder is plugged in, addresses and CV changes are done just as they would be done if it was in an engine on a piece of track **(photo below)**.



Besides changing an address or other decoder values, you can read CV settings by pressing the *Read Decoder* button if you have plugged a decoder into the device. If the decoder is in an engine on the track, press the *Read Track* button. If you are using the CV setter, you will first enter the CV number you want to read.

As simple as both devices are to use, there are two instances where you might want to read the instructions. These are if you use locked CVs, or if you have BLI Blue Line engines that use two decoders. Neither instance is common, and if you don't know what a locked CV or a Blue Line engine is, the comments probably don't apply to you.

Although the BLI instructions don't mention it, you can also use the CV setter to change engine addresses. The CV for a short address (addresses 1 to 128) is CV1. Select CV1 on the CV setter and then select the short address you want as you would for any other CV. Even if the engine address is higher than 128, you could use just the last two digits and still set the address using CV1. The advantage of doing it this way is that you do not need an address changer.

I have not tried to use the CV setter for extended addresses, also known as long addresses (address 129 to 9983 or higher), so I don't know if it is possible. This would be somewhat complex, because settings CV 17 and CV 18 are different within different series of numbers, and CV 29 would also need to be set for long addresses.

To conclude, for most of us, setting long addresses is a job for BLI's address changer.

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Mat Thompson, MMR is the Potomac Division's former Achievement Program Manager.

Story Idea: Artificial Intelligence?

Have you used an AI like ChatGPT to assist you in any aspect of model railroading? If so, please send us a description detailing how you used it and what AI you used. Send along any photos that illustrate your use.

Send to: Potomac-Flyer@potomac-nmra.org

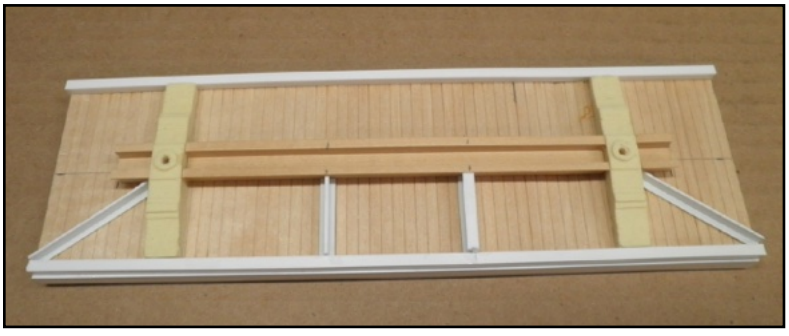
Another Pulpwood Car

Article and Photos by Martin Brechbiel, MMR

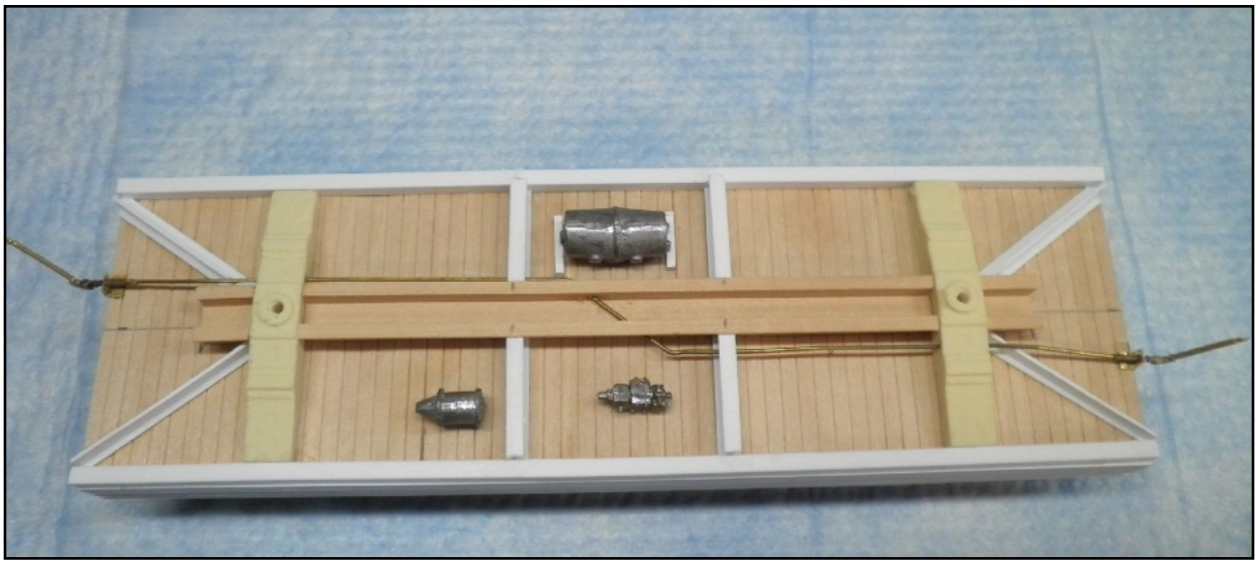
Due to some momentary lapse of reason, I acquired a Berkshire Valley pulpwood load casting, probably prompted by a very low up-front investment price. This article might be the resulting back-end cost and story. I had built a pair of pulpwood cars in the past derived from O scale Athearn parts and a passing visual of a kit using such parts from Locomotive Workshop. Having been down this path before, I felt confident that this familiarity would serve to get this car built without too much trouble and then allow for the departure of the pulpwood load casting.

I gathered the basic parts to start this project **(photo right)**. I was going to cut a basic floor from some pine floor stock (2 3/8" x 3/16"), and there were two brass car ends, a center sill and a set of cross members, some brass ladders, and a pair of bearing blocks to mounting trucks into that underbody ensemble.

I completely abandoned the metal center sill and a set of cross members, and instead built up the underbody. The length of this floor was predicated upon the dimensions of the pulpwood casting, and I skinned the floor with 1/8" x 1/16" scribed siding. I added a pair of my own resin car bolsters drilled and tapped for 4-40 5' in from the ends. I fitted a milled wood center sill (Northeastern) in between the bolsters and where Kadee coupler boxes would extend in from the ends. I enclosed the sides in styrene using square (Evergreen 1/8" x 1/8") and flat stock. Cross-members were built up from flat stock (Evergreen 1" x 8"; 0.040" x 0.188, and Plastruct 0.030" x 0.125") to make "I" beams and angle parts into the corners **(photo left)**.



After finishing the assembly of the underbody framing, I threaded a train line (0.033" brass wire through the center sill and cross members. I added air hoses (PSC parts)



using 3/64” tubing unions anchored in brackets made from 1/8” brass angle and set into place with Goo and CA. I mounted a set of white metal AB brake parts to the underbody **(photo above)**. I added styrene channel and angle (Plastruct 1/8” and Evergreen 0.080”, respectively) to the top side of the floor for the pulpwood load **(photo right)**.

I fitted and soldered ladders to the brass stamped ends and poling pockets (PSC) were added. I glued a brake gear box and Ajax brake wheel to one of the ends. A pair of grab irons (PSC 5623) were also soldered to each end **(photo left)**.

I mounted the brass ends to the ends of the floor using Goo and CA. This mix, with the Goo on the end grain of the wood and the CA on the metal, is very effective in binding these two materials together. I soldered brass diagonal bracing (0.125” x 0.015”) to the brass ends and then glued the assembly to the styrene. At the styrene attachment area, the bracing parts were drilled through for pins to be added and anchored with CA.

I painted the car with Rustoleum Red primer with a black underbody.

Now I'm going back to that pulpwood load casting. This was a single large casting and weighed way too much for a car load even in O scale. But how do you make such a thing lighter? After pondering a bit, I thought that if I could only remove some of the interior part of the casting without compromising its structural integrity, then this would be more reasonable. I hit upon using one of my larger Forstner bits in the drill press and used that to open a lot of the central space of the casting. While this worked, it also made a pile of resin chips and shavings in my shop. Worse, the resin that Berkshire Valley had used way-back-when was pungent. Exhaust fan and shop vacuum came to the rescue, but at the end of the day, I found a solution to the overall problem and applied it. I painted and dry brushed the resin "logs" of the casting using just about all of the various grays, browns, and tans (Polly Scale) that I had available. Once painted, the casting was fitted into place with just a bit of pressure and left mounted in that way to complete this little project **(photo above)**.

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Martin Brechbiel, MMR is the Potomac Division's Achievement Program Manager and an O scale modeler.

What to Do with Another Broken Coupler?

Article and Photos by Lee Stoermer

The railroad coupler is an integral part of railroad rolling stock. It has undergone numerous incarnations and improvements since railroads began. The amount of mechanical stress these devices are subjected to is substantial.

Photo right: A broken coupler on Amtrak rolling stock.

Real railroads suffer this issue on a regular basis. This is why spares are carried on the loco and the caboose, as well as near Repair in Place (RIP) track sheds and on rolling stock maintenance trucks.

Photo below: A group of prototype railroad couplers.

A broken coupler is something we have all experienced at some point in our railroad modeling lives. Breaks could be caused by a derailment, normal uncoupling activity, or even due to improper packaging. If you are running shorter trains that have less weight and stress, or if you are not doing a lot of switching where uncoupling skewers sometimes are used, then it may not be as much of a problem on your layout.

Recently I have been doing maintenance on some rolling stock that had developed issues and been set aside. I will typically let a few of these cars build up and then work on them as a group. While doing this I accumulated several broken couplers, as seen in the photo.

Photo right: A batch of broken HO scale couplers that have been removed from some rolling stock.

As visible in the photo, the coupler that caused problems may not be readily apparent, as the coupler issue may be related to the small plastic whisker that acts as a spring to center the coupler or to close the knuckle. Some of plastic couplers will lose their "springiness," or, if held under tension, may develop a memory and not close properly. With metal Kadee brand couplers it is not very often an issue; but it does happen. However, it seems to happen a little more often with plastic couplers. When the plastic versions first came out, I liked the color of some brands as they were molded in a sort of rusty brown color—a definite benefit for our use here. After replacing the couplers, they sat in a pile on my worktable. Just as I was about to discard them, it dawned on me how I could use these damaged parts.

The photographs show the process using the plastic couplers. The metal couplers follow the same process except that you will be cutting metal. While this is a fairly soft metal, I would suggest using a different set of cutters than you use on the plastic ones so that your dedicated plastic cutters do not develop a nick in the cutting jaws.

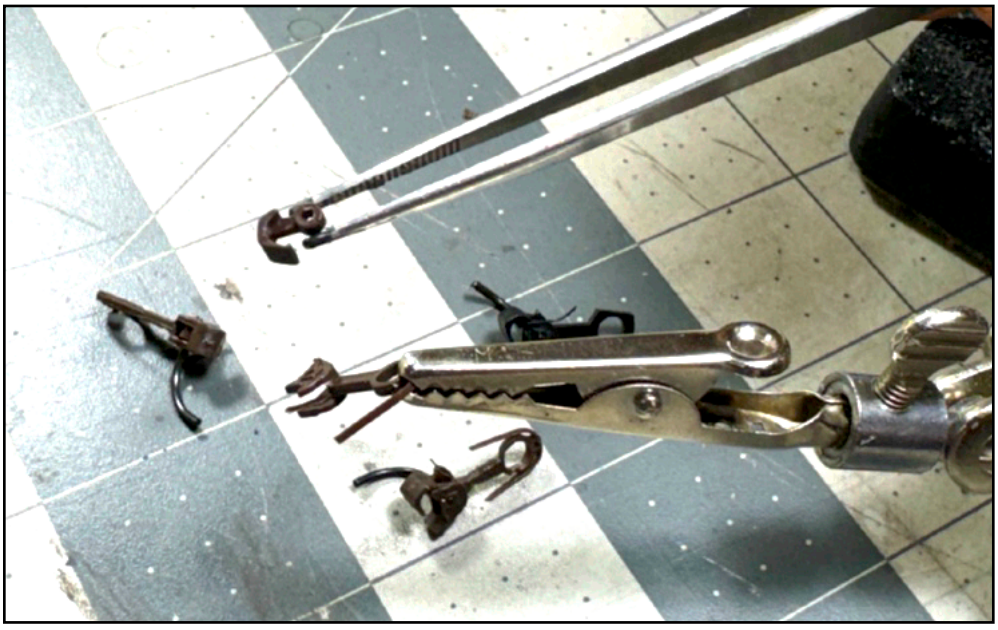

Photo left: Disassembled coupler parts after 'pulling the pin'.

The first step is to remove the pin that simulates the air hose and gives the magnetic reaction for hands-free uncoupling. This pin holds the coupler hand and knuckle together. These are simply a press-fit and should come out with a slight twist and pull. You should end up with a knuckle and the main coupler body as shown in the photos. Set the small knuckle aside.

Now you can trim the coupler shaft to length. You can trim off the centering whiskers as well. Set this aside with your other parts.

Photo right: A group of coupler parts.

So far, I am not sure what to do with the uniquely shaped loop and whisker end, or the metal "air hose" pin, but I have put them in a specific trimmed piece container for potential use later, most likely in a recycling center scrap metal pile.

Photo below: Maintenance scene using some of the coupler parts.

At this point you can paint, color, and weather these parts in various forms using your preferred method. If these are meant to be newer couplers, I leave them in a fresher metal or light rust color. If these wind up being discarded broken coupler pieces destined for the scrap pile, then you can rust them more heavily. I tend to leave them as is, except for the metal ones. I may add a little weathering just to take off any shine.

Now you are ready to use your new detail parts in various scenes. You would find these on a rack, on pallets, sitting on the ground in your railroad yard RIP track, or possibly near an interlocking tower, or another right-of-way maintenance shed. Spare knuckles are also found on some locomotives and cabooses.

Hopefully this will give you an idea of another detail item to include on your layout that makes use of some potentially discarded parts. I am certain it is taking you

longer to read this than to actually undertake this project, let alone how much longer than it has taken to document the process and write this article!

I close with this photo of a “repaired” coupler to show what the real railroads sometimes try, although I wonder sometimes how this really was meant to help with.

Here is a link to a video of a real life changing of a coupler hand…

https://youtu.be/gKZ-ImbNVto?si=pDAyFT99pxQssqfP

And here is a link discussing coupler slack action and issues.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-hg6hJ-sg4

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Lee Stoermer is the Potomac Division Clerk.

Layout Cleaning Postscript:

The Light at the Tunnel's End Is the White of Mice Eyes

Article and Photos by Greg Cassidy

When I was building my layout back in the 90s, I used a lot of natural products for my trees. This hadn't been causing a problem until the spring of 2018. The previous year we had noticed that we somehow had managed to acquire a couple of mice in the house, and one of them must have been pregnant. We first found this out when they played havoc with some of the cookies my wife had baked for church and left out to cool. We scattered traps around the house and managed to catch a few, but we still found signs of them throughout the winter. Buying more traps helped immensely with the problem. Like locomotives, you can't have too many traps.

My layout is HO scale and roughly 16' by 20'. By 2018 it had been awfully neglected because of an ill-fated choice to go back to the race car track where I had left off in my youth. At some point I came to my senses and stopped spending money on the race car and reintroduced myself to the layout. As I started to clean the dust and some of the track, I noticed that some trees looked a little thinner than I remembered. My first thought was that fall had visited my layout.

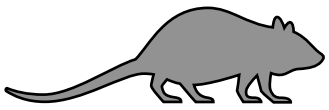
After the brief realization that this was impossible, I started noticing which trees had been stripped and started looking around for the material that had been stripped from them. It didn't take much time with the flashlight to realize that I had a lovely little mouse nest inside one of my tunnels. We had by this time caught the last of the mice

and hadn't seen any sign of them for a few months, so I was greatly relieved that there was no one looking back at me. But my problem now was how to get rid of this

mouse nest, and what other damage may have been caused by it. Crawling around under the layout and feeling my way into some of the tunnels that were harder to investigate, I found a second location where a small nest had been built. Not surprisingly, I could tell that the mice did not have the best bathroom habits.

My solution to the problem was simple. I called my son, who loves me dearly, and asked him to get under the layout. Here he could get into the tunnels with a vacuum and a Bright Boy. He made quick work of getting all the debris out of the tunnel and the Bright Boy made the track relatively passable, but I still had to run my Centerline cleaning car around the entire layout several times before everything ran smoothly again. I have replaced most of the denuded trees, but left a couple of them near the entrance to the tunnel as a sign of what can go wrong if you ignore your layout for too long.

Editor's Note: Greg, the Potomac Division's Senior Assistant Superintendent, offered to share a photo of a dead mouse caught in a trap, but, in the interest of protecting the squeamish, we opted against the idea.



One More Caboose…with Open-Air Benches

[Editor's Note: This submission came in too late to make our Caboose Challenge in the August-September Flyer but I felt it was worth including in this issue.]

During WWII, many railroads were desperate for additional cabooses to serve on the increased number of freight trains. Most railroads converted old wooden box cars by cutting some windows in the sides and ends. The Santa Fe converted 165 early century box cars selected from eight classes. What made the Santa Fe cars unique were the benches they added to the roof. Because of this feature they became known as "Hollywood" cars. Many were these lasted in work train service long after the war. This model was made in Korea by Samhongsa and was imported by Key Imports.
Ken Wilson

And Another Unique Latecomer…

Jerry Stanley says he picked up this brass Norfolk and Western HO scale transfer caboose at an estate sale. It was made by NJ Custom Brass.

[Editor's Note: I thought, if you let in one latecomer, why not a second?]

Help Wanted:
MER Editor for the Local – Maintains and publishes the MER newsletter. The editor also assists those desiring to have their work published in the newsletter. Please contact Greg Warth (local-editor@mer-nmra.com) if you are interested and would like to more have information.

Calendar of Coming Events

Oct. 11, 10AM Hobby Barn: "Making Shingles," Clinician: Jerry Stanley

Oct. 19, 3PM Virtual: "A History of Narrow Gauge Railroads—Two Feet in the Pine Tree State," Clinician: Ed Koehler

Oct. 21, 7:30PM Virtual: Monthly Potomac Division Board Meeting

Nov. 1, 9AM Joint Potomac-James River Meet, Battlefield Baptist, Warrenton, Va.

Nov. 16, 3PM Virtual: "A History of Narrow Gauge Railroads—D&RGW through the Cameras of Richard Kindig and Richard Jackson," Clinician: Ed Koehler

October 16-19 MER Convention:

https://phillyexpress.org/

November is National Model Railroad Month and Time to Celebrate!

NMRA Partnership Program

Partnership Program Member List

To receive your member discount codes, log into the NMRA website and click on the **Partnership Program** link on the top line (or the **Benefits** link lower down). You'll see a complete list of participating firms and learn the special discount codes to use in your purchases.

Remember: You must have an NMRA member login to get the discount codes!

Potomac Needs You!

Let People See Your Layout!

The Potomac Division sponsors layout tours quarterly and is on the lookout for willing hosts. Layouts don't have to be complete. Layouts in various stages of construction are just as interesting and informative to members. If you would like to host an open house on a Saturday afternoon contact our Layout Tour Coordinators **Ken Wilson** (Asst-Super@potomac-nmra.org) or **Paul Hutchins** (ff3hutch@aol.com) or send to layout-tours@potomac-nmra.org.

Clinicians Wanted!

The Potomac Division is always looking for clinicians for our in-person and virtual meets. If you're willing to offer a clinic, we need you to step up! Contact our Superintendent (super@potomac-nmra.org) or **Jerry Stanley** (paymaster@potomac-nmra.org).

The Potomac Flyer Needs Your Help!

We are looking for Potomac Division members to contribute to our regular Flyer features in 2025 and 2026: Meet the Member, Layout Profiles, What Does Your Workbench Look Like, and Flyer Bits & Pieces.

If you are willing to provide material for any of these features, please go to this link for more information on what we need: https://tinyurl.com/yc3uy7w4

(And if you're interested in becoming an Assistant Editor and someday taking over, contact Editor & Publisher **Alex Belida** at the Flyer email address below!)

Send your submissions and/or inquiries to: Potomac-Flyer@potomac-nmra.org

Did You Know?

The Potomac Division has its own Groups.IO site where members can discuss all aspects of model railroading and exchange information on techniques, products, prototypes, and much more. If you haven't joined, please do so. Go to https://groups.io/g/PD2MERNMRA and follow the link to sign up.

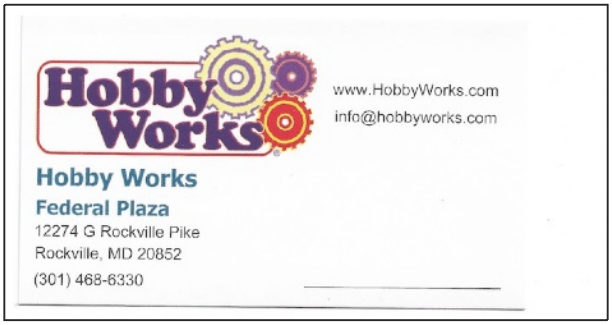
★★★★★

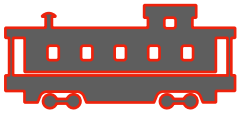
Paymaster's Report

by Jerry Stanley, Potomac Division Paymaster

1.Checking account (beginning balance)	$ 6291.04
2.Cash on Hand (Hobby Barn)	$0.00
3.Total assets as of 8/29/2025(end balance)	$ 6286.04
4.Deposits by date	
a) $0	
5.Total Deposits	$0
6.Individual Deposits	
a) $0	
7.Total Deposits	$0
8.Total payouts	
a) $5.00 8/21/25 Service charge	
9.Total Payouts	
Bank Fee	$5.00
10.Checking account balance as of 8/29/2025 (Lines [1+5]-9) =	$6286.04
11.Total Cash on hand 8/29/2025	$00.00
12.Total Assets (lines10+11)	**$6286.04**

Hobby Shop Business Cards





END OF THE LINE