

THE POTOMAC FLYER

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2026

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE POTOMAC DIVISION, MER, NMRA



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GOVERNMENT CENTER COMMUNITY ROOM, MCLEAN, VA.**

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COVER: ALEX BELIDA'S HO_N30 NEVADA MICRO LAYOUT ([BELIDA 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



The summer is passing too quickly. As some of you may be aware, I had a health issue that caused me to have a procedure done on my heart to prevent a super-fast heart rate. I greatly appreciate all the support and good wishes I received from our membership during the time I was going through this. I am very happy now to have this experience behind me.

Now I can move forward and enjoy some upcoming events, like the NMRA National Convention *Scenic City Express*, being held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, from July 27 to August 2, 2026. The convention website, <https://www.nmra2026.org>, has information about the happenings at the Convention and a link to make hotel reservations. I have received word that the host hotel is sold out so you should consider alternate lodging. This will be my first National Convention, and I am looking forward to attending it.

Speaking of conventions, registration has opened for the Mid-Eastern Region convention *Tracks to Tidewater*, being held October 15-18, 2026, in Virginia Beach, Virginia at the Holiday Inn Virginia Beach-Norfolk located at 5655 Greenwich Road, Virginia Beach. Many of our Division members will be presenting clinics. You can find more information about this convention on its website, <https://trackstotidewater.org>.

We had yet another successful in-person meet at Leisure World on June 27th and some great Maryland layout tour opportunities afterwards as a part of the day. The meet had two more NMRA Achievement Program certificate requirement clinics: AP Prototype models, presented by **Alex Belida, MMR**; and AP Cars, presented by **Martin Brechbiel, MMR**. These clinics are a part of the Division's commitment to get useful information

to the membership about the AP certificate requirements. I want to extend my thanks to the owners of the featured train layouts, the **Leisure World Train Club**, **Tom Matty**, **Andrew Dodge**, and **David Vaughn**, for opening their doors to the Division for visits.

We will be back at the Dranesville Governmental Center Community Room located in McLean, Virginia on August 8th for another live Division meet. It will feature two more Achievement Program certificate requirement clinics: Motive Power, presented by Alex Belida, MMR; and Electrical, presented by me. Planning is underway for this event, so you will want to watch our website for more information.

We are still working with the Chesapeake Division to schedule a joint meet in November at a location in Maryland, unspecified at this time. The location will be

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

May-June 2026

Nicholas O'Rourke-Alexandria VA
Stefan Cruise-Purcellville VA
Robert Shepard-Poolesville MD

THE POTOMAC DIVISION, MID-EASTERN REGION, NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION, INCLUDES THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA; CALVERT, CHARLES, MONTGOMERY, PRINCE GEORGE'S AND ST MARY'S COUNTIES IN MARYLAND; ARLINGTON, FAIRFAX, FAUQUIER, LOUDOUN, PRINCE WILLIAM, AND RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTIES IN VIRGINIA, AS WELL AS ALL AREA INDEPENDENT CITIES.

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announced as soon as a viable venue for the meet is found. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

As part of the National NMRA rebranding effort, the Division needs to have the banners we use at the meets and other activities updated to display the new NMRA and Division logos on them. We are working with an individual who is creating the necessary logo files to allow the update to take place.

I want to bring to your attention the fact that we have started to require a participation fee for our events to help offset the cost of break materials and the cost of materials needed for the build and take clinics we have. The decision to do so was not easy for the Board of Directors, but with the limited budget we have it is a necessity for the Division to survive financially.

I am still looking for a replacement Achievement Program Manager as our current Manager, **Martin Brechbiel, MMR**, will be stepping down at the end of the year. I am considering breaking the responsibility into two AP evaluation areas to reduce the travel distance and time required to conduct the evaluations when needed. You do not have to be a Master Model Railroader to hold this position, but you do need to possess the skills and knowledge to become one. Please contact me if you have an interest in filling this position.

And finally, I am looking for volunteers to work on the Division's various committees. You can earn points toward the Achievement Volunteer certificate by participating. If you have an interest in making our Division better, please contact me if you have a skill or knowledge in an area that one of the committees requires.

Until next time, continue to have a great summer and be safe in your model railroad endeavors.



THE POTOMAC DIVISION MODEL CONTEST 2027

The Potomac Division is organizing a 2027 model contest with three categories: motive power, rolling stock and structures. Entries will be displayed, evaluated, and awards decided at our 2027 Annual Meeting (*location and date, likely in May, to be determined and announced later*).



Judging of the entries will be conducted by a panel of expert modelers from the Division: Superintendent Ernie Little MMR, Senior Assistant Superintendent Greg Cassidy, and Martin Brechbiel MMR.

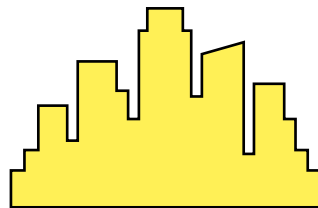
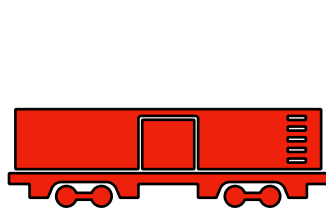
A popular vote will also take place with all those attending the meeting selecting a single **Popular Vote Winner**. All winners will receive prizes.

While there is no restriction on the types of models that may be entered, the panel will favor unique or unusual items and give added weight to those that are scratchbuilt or kitbashed.

The Potomac Flyer will publish anonymous photos of all models entered in this contest in its April-May 2027 issue. Therefore, you must send a photo or photos of your model along with a brief description of the project to the Flyer by March 15, 2027. This will constitute the deadline for entries. (*Models need not be completely finished by then, so work-in-progress photos will be accepted.*)

Completed models must be brought to and displayed at the Annual Meeting.

Superintendent Ernie Little MMR encourages members to enter this new Division contest, noting you have more than six months to work on your entries.



Rolling Stock, Structures, Motive Power, Popular Vote

JUNE 27 LEISURE WORLD MEET CLINICS

Photos by Alex Belida
and Ken Wilson

The Potomac Division held another in its 2026 series of Achievement Program clinics on June 27th at Leisure World in Silver Spring, Maryland. Nineteen members attended to hear presentations by **Alex Belida MMR** on the Master Builder-Prototype Models category and by **Martin Brechbiel MMR** on the Master Builder-Cars requirements.



Alex discussed in detail the building of his HO scale Woodsboro, Maryland depot diorama ([photo below](#)) set in the early 1900s with a nearby mill and adjacent hardware store and two houses. It featured two freight cars, a Railway Post Office (RPO), and a 4-4-0 engine.



To earn the Prototype Models certificate, a prototype scene must have at least six models of prototype equipment or structures, including at least two different

types of rolling stock, a railroad structure, and motive power. Any two of the six models must be scratchbuilt and the remainder must be superdetailed.

Plans or photographs must be provided to verify the prototypical appearance of each model and of the total scene. Alex used archival photographs provided by the Woodsboro Historical Society and a Sanborn map in making his 2' x 3' diorama.



Alex (photo left) noted the Prototype Models certificate is one of the least-attempted AP categories, but he argued it is a challenge worth pursuing by modelers. He also noted that the structures and cars in a prototype model submission could also be used for other AP categories.

Martin Brechbiel's presentation (photo right) focused on the specific requirements for the Master Builder-Cars certificate, noting it is often left as the last required step by modelers seeking Master Model Railroader status. His clinic included valuable information about how NMRA evaluators score scratchbuilt rolling stock for Merit Awards. He said the fundamental principles evaluators use are:

1. What did the modeler try to do?
2. How well did the modeler do it?



He urged members to consult the [AP Judging Guidelines](#) for Motive Power, Cars and Structures which include the scoring matrixes used to evaluate the quality, workmanship, conformity and complexity of model construction.

Martin displayed several of the O scale cars he has scratchbuilt, (photo left) allowing attendees at the meet to examine each closely for its detail.

To earn the Cars certificate, a modeler must submit eight scale models of railroad cars. There must be at least four different types of cars represented in the total of eight. One of these must be a passenger car and at least four must be scratchbuilt. The remainder must be superdetailed. Four of the eight cars must receive Merit Award scores of at least 87 ½ points.

A lively question-and-answer period followed each of the clinics. Attendees were reminded not to read more into the requirements for AP categories than is spelled out by the NMRA.



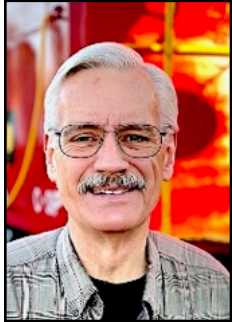
The Division provided refreshments, including donuts, cookies, and various beverages. Potomac Superintendent **Ernie Little** MMR thanked member **Henry Jordan** for arranging use of one of Leisure World's clubhouse meeting rooms for the clinics.

Following the clinics, participants broke for lunch before heading off to tour the four Maryland layouts open to Division members on June 27th.



LAYOUT TOURS JUNE 27TH

Article and Photos by Ken Wilson



On the last Saturday of June, the Potomac Division had the opportunity to visit four layouts after a clinics session at the Leisure World clubhouse in Silver Spring. Following these presentations, we were invited by **Henry Jordan** (Honorary Life Member #41) to visit the lower level where the Leisure World Model Railroad Club has three layouts.

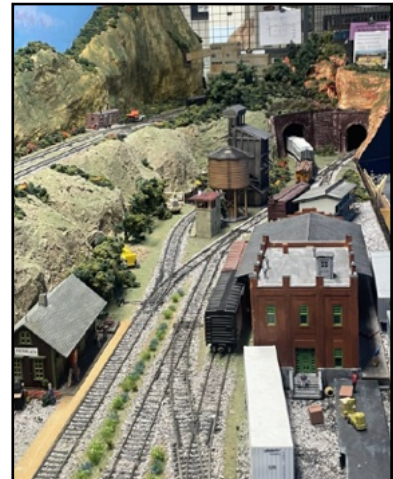
Leisure World Model Railroad Club



Entering the room and turning to the right is the O-27 layout featuring numerous vintage animated accessories. The track plan is much more than what you would expect of a typical O-27 layout ([photo left](#)). Multiple loops, switches, and sidings add some interest along with scenery including several tunnels.

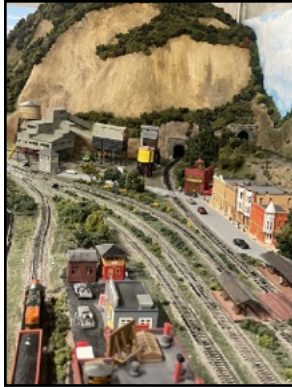
At the opposite end of the

room is the HO layout ([photo right](#)), which is the largest of the three. The design is two levels, but the lower level is out-of-view staging representing, at one end, Birmingham and Atlanta, and at the other end, Pittsburgh and Cleveland. There are numerous sidings and several yards on the main level that provide challenges for the club members during operating sessions.



Looking down the aisle between two sections of the layout, there is an interesting blend of backdrops. The original backdrop attached directly to the backside of the layout is now joined by a newer one ([photo right](#)) that is the full height of the wall. The painting of both is nicely blended and it effectively disguises the existence of the room. To the right, the tracks enter a tunnel





through a mountain, but what is seen on the other side is the third layout: this one in N scale ([photo left](#)). Once again, there are a number of sidings and yard space offering multiple areas for operations. Henry had several members of his club present to keep trains running on all three of the layouts. Henry, as a resident of Leisure World, has been able to secure free meeting space and special layout tours a number of times for the Division, and we all owe him a huge thanks for his continuing service to the NMRA.

Western Maryland Railway - Thomas Subdivision

Leaving Leisure World, the next stop was in Derwood, Maryland to visit [Tom Matty \(photo right\)](#). His HO scale layout is set in the 1969-1979 era and represents the Thomas Sub of the Western Maryland. Tom's layout fills two rooms, one 19'x 32' and the other 16'x 22', and is double deck point-to-point with staging at both ends. He uses uncommon, but prototypical looking, ProtoThrottles. Since he is modeling railroading in West



Virginia, there are numerous coal tipples and heavy industry ([photo left](#)) that the railroad serves. Tom describes his scenery as being only 15% complete, but he has had

excellent results blending photo backdrops with his 3-D models ([photo right](#)). Tom's roster of locos is quite impressive as well. In 1985 he set a goal of acquiring a model of every diesel purchased new by the Western Maryland and achieved that this year. He has 153 diesels with unique numbers, and additional ones representing various paint schemes used over the years rounding his fleet up to 200. While all 200 were not





visible during the tour, several interesting examples could be found. On one of his turntables there is an EMD BL-2 with a slug ([photo above](#)) and several ALCO RS-3 "hammerhead" versions ([photo below](#)). ALCO only made five of this version of the



RS-3, with four purchased by Western Maryland and one going to the PRR. The unusual high short hood was needed for installation of a steam boiler for passenger train operation and a dynamic brake. Bowser made this model, and you can rest assured Tom has all four road numbers.

Central Maine Railway

Our next stop was in Olney, Maryland to see Andrew Dodge ([photo right](#)) and his O scale Proto 48 Central Maine Railway set in 1899. This is Andrew's fourth layout in this location and is a freelance design. His layout is approximately 1,000 square feet and fills two adjoining basement rooms with a third for staging. Trains start in Bangor (represented by staging) and travel to the main hub of his layout at the fictitious





Camden Junction ([photo left](#)). Freight and passenger cars leave Camden Junction and continue to Deer Island (which, in reality, never had a railroad), south to Camden, or west to Bald Mountain, but that route is temporarily closed due to the damage done by the Portland Gale (a true storm) which occurred late the year before. Passengers going to Deer Island sail on the paddle wheel steamer *Mt. Desert Isle*, which is beautifully modeled on a

dollied platform ([photo right](#)). During operations the ship "sails" on casters from the mainland over to Deer Island. Freight traffic is handled by a car float under the control of a tugboat. Andrew's maritime models are completely scratchbuilt as are all of his structures, cars, and locomotives. His locomotives are a fleet of primarily 4-6-0 and 2-8-0 types ([photo below](#)) and have a variety



of servicing locations including a two-stall engine house with a gallows turntable, a large coaling dock, and a roundhouse winterized with heavy planking adjacent to a snow shed. Industries served include fishing, lumber, and a granite mine. There are a number of eye-catching scenes including a transfer

crane for moving slabs of granite from wagons to a railroad loading dock, passengers waiting for boarding the *Mt. Desert Isle*, a track crew surveying the damage of a pair of trestles washed out in the Portland Gale ([photo right](#)), and a horse and rider keeping a wary eye on a bear amongst the trees in the distance. That bear has plenty of trees for coverage. Andrew has crafted over 1,000 of them



to blend in with his heavily forested backdrops. Passengers brought to Deer Island by the *Mt. Desert Isle* try to avoid the bears by staying at several resorts nearby.

Kentucky Western Division of the NKP



The final stop of the day was in Clarksville, Maryland to visit **David Vaughn (photo left)**. David models in O scale 2-rail (OS2R) and has combined sections of three historic model railroads, the most famous of which is roughly 40% of John Armstrong's Canandaigua Southern Railroad (CSRR). These model railroads were never meant to be joined together, but David has done an excellent job of achieving that task. The railroad fills a large room that is 18'x 90' and is described as a "simple design" that is primarily a double track mainline with turnaround and staging at both ends. The

track folds back over itself and uses multiple levels from 34" to 80" to create the ability to run very long trains. Traveling at reasonable speeds, a round trip takes 35 minutes **(photo right)**. The uppermost level in one area is suspended on small cables attached to ceiling joists above. The cables are neatly hidden by running them through utility poles and then the exposed wire above was painted to match the blue of the backdrop. While David models the Nickel



Plate in May 1958, he is running his railroad jointly with the CSRR, and the two railroads have trackage rights with each other. He has restored a number of the CSRR locomotives including John Armstrong's scratchbuilt 4-6-6-6 **(photo left)** which is a semi-streamlined fictional creation. His structures range from large



trackside industries ([photo above](#)) to highly detailed small roadside businesses—including the iconic diner from Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks* ([photo below](#)).



David cautions his visitors to be aware that his aisles are very narrow.. However, that lost aisle space has been filled with a spectacular railroad that does not feel cramped by tight radii or short trains.

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Ken Wilson is the Potomac Division's Paymaster

IN MEMORIAM: RICHARD OWENS

By Jerry Stanley

One day while talking to one of our members, Richard made a comment that went something like this: “You know, we have golden nuggets in our Division.” He was speaking of members in the Potomac Division. As I thought about that statement, it immediately brought to my mind many names who are well known. Many in our division are world-renowned authors. Their railroads have graced the cover of many magazines; they create museum pieces, works of art; and then you have the great modelers who have incredible railroads for operations. There are modelers who may not have great railroads or no railroad at all, but they are the greatest members you have ever met. One near the top of my list is a friend of over forty years, **Richard Owens**. Most of you will think Richard who? I do not remember him. What railroad did he model? Was he the guy with the ...?



Richard Owens

Richard is one of the NMRA Potomac Division's great modelers who never had a railroad and never owned more than a few engines; but he touched many of your lives and you were not aware of it. In fact, he touched many people's lives outside of the model railroad group, God's honest truth. No matter where I went with Richard, someone knew him or he knew someone there! How did he touch your life you may

ask? Richard helped build the Hobby Barn. He spent many Saturdays out there in the blazing heat, in the freezing cold weather, Saturday after Saturday, working alongside me building the Hobby Barn so that we could hold the hands-on clinics in it.

After the Hobby Barn was finished, Richard helped me add the bathroom and remodel the basement of our house so we could move the clinics into the house. Richard also volunteered at almost every joint meet held at Battlefield Baptist. He also volunteered for many Greenberg train shows. In addition, he attended many of the clinics at the Hobby Barn. Often, he would pal around with me on the layout tours.

At the Leisure World event held on a Saturday this past June, right before the event started, I received a call from a number I did not recognize. I ignored it, thinking it was yet another spam call, and continued helping with setting up for the event. After things were all set up, I checked my messages. I was surprised to see that the "spam call" had left a message. I listened to the message and immediately I became very concerned. It was Richard's wife Pat. I stepped out of the event and returned the call. Richard had been having some serious health issues and I thought "Oh no, he is back in the hospital." Pat picked up after just a few rings and after a short discussion she informed me that Richard had passed Friday night.

As best as I could, I put on a brave face and continued on helping with the event, visiting the layouts, encouraging the host, while trying to comprehend what seemed to me was a very surreal time warp in the fabric of space and time. After all, how can a superhero succumb to the infirmities of life? How in the world does a legend die? I am still wrestling with that question.

Was Richard a great modeler? Will he ever grace the cover of a railroad magazine? Will the national news record and mourn his passing? The answer to all of these questions is no. But Richard was a great modeler. He gave his time and talents in a different way that we all benefited from. He is one of the silent giants behind the scenes making great things happen. Not all NMRA Potomac Division members have the great railroads that we wow over. Some of the greatest modelers just give their time. Richard gave a lot to this Division without awards, without being lifted high on a pedestal, or even receiving a pat on the back. To me he was and is an outstanding modeler whose efforts will live long beyond his life here.

Goodbye my friend. We will meet again one day on the other side of the track.



Jerry Stanley is the Potomac Division's Assistant Superintendent and owner/operator of the Hobby Barn.



POTOMAC DIVISION AND POTOMAC MODULE CREW AT MANASSAS RAILWAY FESTIVAL

Article and Photos by Ernie Little, MMR, Potomac Division Superintendent



On Saturday, June 6th, members of the Potomac Division and the Potomac Module Crew (PMC) provided an NMRA presence at the 32nd Annual Historic Manassas Railway Festival in Manassas, Virginia. Fine weather allowed a great crowd to attend. Several other model railroad organizations provided layouts for the public to view.



With the PMC having become a 100% NMRA railroad club recently, the event offered an opportunity for the Potomac Division to work together with the module group to provide information regarding the NMRA to the public and to recruit new NMRA members. PMC Coordinator and Division member **Doug Hess** and Division Superintendent **Ernie Little MMR**, agreed that the Railway Festival venture was a good opportunity to increase the number of NMRA members in the area.

The PMC supplied the Division with a designated area to display a module (with no scenery) that could accommodate a Division banner and room to set out

Division brochures. Senior Assistant Superintendent **Greg Cassidy** held down our booth all day with afternoon assistance from members **Tim Tilson** and Superintendent **Ernie Little**.

With the PMC providing a very good HO modular train layout to interact with youth in attendance, and with the Division providing staffing and informational brochures, the effort was successful. Several people stopped by and asked questions about model railroading, what the NMRA is as an organization, and about prospective membership.

Some of the PMC members directly interacted with youth in attendance and offered them an opportunity to run a locomotive. What better way to encourage youth to become involved in model railroading?

The Division looks forward to the next opportunity where the two organizations can work together as a team. Thanks to the PMC for allowing the Division this opportunity.

Watch the Division website and emails for announcements of future events and requests for help from Division members to assist in staffing a booth.



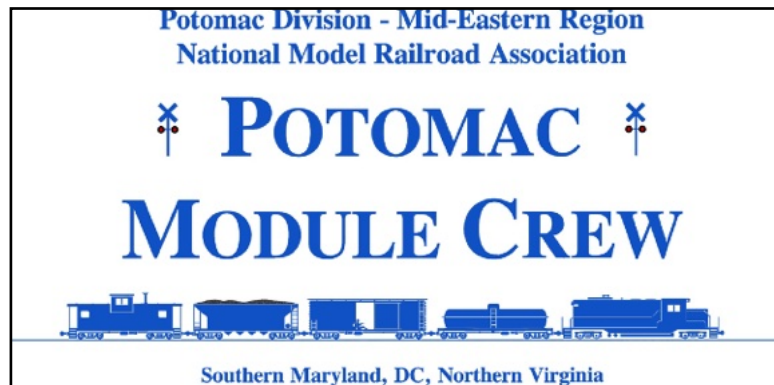
L to R: Greg Cassidy, Tim Tilson, Doug Hess



THE POTOMAC MODULE CREW BECOMES A 100% NMRA MEMBER CLUB

Article by Doug Hess

The Potomac Module Crew (PMC) is an HO module railroading group that has operated in the DC metropolitan area for more than 35 years. Our membership mostly hails from Fairfax, Loudon, and Prince William counties in Virginia and also stretches to include members from Culpeper, Virginia, to Baltimore, Maryland. It has been a regular participant at several area train shows and is a recurring exhibitor at the Fairfax Historical Railroad Museum in Burke, Virginia.



As the PMC sought an expanding set of venues to show its layouts, it became apparent that many potential sites are now requiring proof of liability insurance. The Crew leadership found that purchasing insurance commercially was cost prohibitive. Our most attractive and economical alternative turned

out to be insuring through the NMRA's insurance policy by becoming a 100% NMRA member club. The Crew reached this goal in April.

Slightly half of the PMC members were already NMRA members. The challenge was to achieve our 100% goal without losing any current PMC members. Group discussions, emails, and many one-on-one conversations were conducted to explain the pros and cons facing the Crew and to highlight the benefits of NMRA membership. This campaign was successful. We lost a few inactive members in the process, but everyone who was active in the group became NMRA members.

Today our roster includes 30 members. Of these, 16 became new NMRA and Potomac Division members in support of our group's transition in status.

If you are interested in learning more about the Potomac Module Crew, please contact the PMC Coordinator, Doug Hess, at doughess@me.com.



BIG benefits of a **NMRA** membership

- 100's of clinic videos + **NMRA** layout tours and educational videos
- Discounts from over 30 NMRA Partner companies (15% off, 25% off, 45% off)
- NMRA Interchange on Discord with free video hangout rooms
- A positive and supportive learning community

NMRA
We make model railroading more fun!

MEET THE MEMBER: **BILL LYDERS MMR**

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 Bill Lyders MMR, who also provided the photos.



Bill Lyders

Achieving my Master Model Railroad (MMR) certificate has been a major goal for the last 15 years. That's right, 15 years. I earned my first Achievement certificate in October 2010. Now I am MMR #819.

Model railroading is an amazing hobby. I started when I bought my first locomotive in 1970 at a Binghamton, New York train show. IBM moved me to Manassas, Virginia in 1973. I started my first layout in a loft in my first house. When I moved in 1988 to a new house in Manassas with a basement, I started designing a large layout. What really launched my model railroading hobby was joining the Prince William County Model Railroad Club (PWMRC) model railroad club in 1995. I immediately started making friends and learning model railroading skills. I also joined the NMRA Potomac Division in that timeframe and then got my Golden Spike award in 2002.

My initial Achievement Program certificate came about from participating in operating sessions on the Nickel City Line (NCL) of **Bob Rodriguez MMR**. He started tracking our hours, and when I had operated sufficient hours as a Road Engineer, Dispatcher, Yard Master, Hostler, etc., Bob provided me with the details to submit for my Dispatcher certificate in 2010. I learned a lot about roles on a railroad. Bob has now reached 200 op sessions [I participated in more than 50%] and did 55 remotely during COVID.

The other members of the PWMRC club who taught me skills were **Pete LaGuardia MMR**, **Ernie Little MMR**, and **Mat Thompson MMR**. My current AP Manager, **Martin Brechbiel MMR**, provided me with construction techniques for multiple AP cars.

The next few certificates came along on a reasonable schedule. As PWMRC President for three years and volunteering at Potomac Division activities, I earned the Volunteer

certificate in 2011. I love technical writing, so documenting my layout electrical design and wiring for many of the electrical components, with advice from Pete LaGuardia, earned me the Electrical certificate in 2012.



View of Whitewater

My Manassas basement layout spread into three rooms with a helix and went through walls at four points. On it, I completed a large part of my layout scenery and documented my techniques, completing my Scenery certificate in 2013.

Then, by writing articles over time, for the PWMRC Newsletter, the *Potomac Flyer* and the Mid Eastern Region (MER) *Local* newsletter and generating presentations for clinics, I completed my Author certificate in 2016.

I retired in 2013 and my wife and I moved to our Gainesville, Virginia 55+ community in 2017. With the help of friends, i carefully took apart my large double deck, three room Manassas basement layout, packed up the layout pieces, and moved all the sections to my new basement. Mat Thompson strongly suggested I get 4' legs to replace the previous 3' legs. So, with Home Depot/Lowes doing the accurate cutting of 96 legs [2"x2"], I stood up and had my current 22-Section layout operating in six months.



Multiple Levels in Main Room

Using an 18"x 8' section, I scratch built two turnouts and a 90° crossover and wired them to operate to complete my Civil certificate in 2020.

All that was left was AP Cars. This proved to be the hardest, but it was also the best skills training period en route to my MMR. **Mat Thompson** and others suggested I get some kits that had all the detailed car parts and use some as templates for my scratchbuilt cars. So, at the Timonium, Maryland train show, I found some wood kits and some styrene car kits. To better understanding car construction and as a source of some prototype pictures, I joined the *RealSTMFC.groups.io* group for all five years of working on Cars. This group proved invaluable in getting information, contacts, and just plain teaching me about features of each car I was constructing.

I scratchbuilt three HO styrene kits based on the wood kit templates and four HO superdetailed styrene models from the purchased styrene kits. I also took a Division clinic with **Martin Brechbiel** on scratchbuilding a stripwood O-scale Flat Car. Then I scratchbuilt an enhancement upgrade to a gondola that got a merit score.

I did not receive a merit score on every car I submitted, and had to redo three of the cars. I successfully completed my eight cars eventually over five years of trying and learning to achieve merit score quality. Probably the most important lessons were to spray paint vs. brush paint and to build to the prototype picture found in my research vs. just building to the template kit instructions. My writeups were long: 10-15 pages with many pictures.

Main Aisle with Yard and 2nd Level Industrial Park



Operational Turntable/Roundhouse

With my MMR complete, I can now focus on my personal layout and Division activities. My favorite Division activities are op sessions, open houses, clinics in-person, train shows (especially Timonium and the Big-E Show), Division meets, and MiniCons. I enjoy the camaraderie with other model railroaders, including meals where we can leisurely discuss train topics.

My layout is the HO scale Whitewater and Virginia [W&V RR]. I model N&W, SOU, VGN, and C&O in a semi-realistic fashion. The town center is called Whitewater and I include lots of lakes, streams, waterfalls, and river scenes. My W&V Mission Statement and Operational Concept documents depict trains traveling from West Virginia to Norfolk, Virginia and Charlotte, North Carolina to Alexandria, Virginia, crossing in the center by Lynchburg, Virginia. I have coal trains, freight trains, and passenger trains conducting operations while traversing these routes. I have staging yards in each of the four locations above and an operational roundhouse with turntable with many locomotives staged (including my first steam AHM locomotive from 1970.)



Main View of Layout with Classification/Servicing Yard

My philosophy is to design my layout with operations in mind and build rolling stock and structures to support this. I will continue to buy locomotives for my operational concept but not build any.

My initial loft layouts were DC. My first basement layout started as DC but was upgraded to Digitrax DCC. My retirement basement layout is also DCC.

My favorite part of the hobby now is participating in operations sessions. I had some ops sessions on my Manassas basement layout and learned a lot about setting up and conducting them and planning the consists of different trains and scheduling them. I also enjoy having people operate on my layout. My kids have shown no interest in running trains on my layout, but one set of my younger grandkids loves to run trains and play on the layout. My grandson will run every locomotive, making up his consists, and run trains on every section of track. My granddaughter will drive all the autos and trucks on every street or path she can reach. After their last visit, I didn't have one piece of rolling stock, locomotive, auto, truck, or building in the same place it was in

before they arrived. I bonded with them over operating on my layout regarding their idea of operating trains. When they get older, I hope they will want to learn how we really conduct ops sessions.

My least favorite part of the hobby are building benchwork and doing the layout wiring. In my current layout, I have switched to manual turnouts near the fascia. Maybe it's that I am getting older and don't enjoy climbing under the layout. I put my layout on hold during my AP Cars challenge but now I plan on getting it ready for an ops session and building some more businesses and rolling stock for this. I'll definitely be buying new locomotives.

My advice to newcomers is to create a mission statement and operational concept for the purpose of their layouts. They should go ahead and make a name for it, too. Then draw up a layout track design showing all the locations and businesses they want. Work slowly and carefully building the benchwork and laying the track. Do the wiring and then test run multiple trains to make sure everything is OK. Then enjoy operating the layout while doing the scenery including building structures.

I was an IBM Federal Systems Engineer for 35 years working as a Navy Department of Defense contractor. I did lots of technical documentation and system integration of submarine combat systems. These skills allowed me to understand creating a model railroad system and being comfortable testing and debugging the layout components.

In my opinion, The AP program has a lot of excellent objectives that can be worked on while building and operating a layout. So, I would recommend it for anyone who can do both at the same time. I was able to do that until I started AP Cars when car construction took over all my time. I am proud of achieving Master Model Railroader status, but it is not for everyone. I believe it is worthwhile because of the considerations I have made above.



BUILDING A MICRO LAYOUT FOR MY HO_{N30} MOTOR RAIL CAR

Article and Photos by Alex Belida MMR, *Flyer* Editor

“Micro layouts are small model railroads, usually less than three or four square feet in area that nonetheless have a clear purpose and excellent operating capability.” Carl Arendt 1936-2011

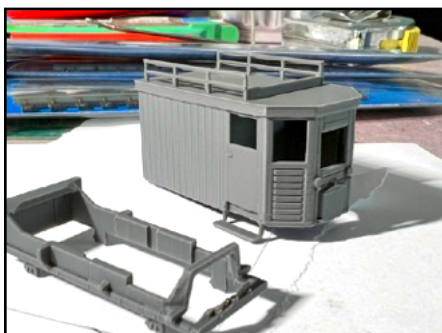


Way back when I was a teenager, I created a tiny shelf layout for an HO model railroad that would be located in Nevada. I called it the *Eureka and South Pass* (E&SP). Why? I had never been to Nevada, never been further west in the United States than Texas, and had even spent four years in Germany as a child. I think it was because the first television show I ever saw, in the waiting room at the airport after we returned from Europe, was *Wagon Train*. It obviously made a big impression.

I didn't get around to actually building my *E&SP* layout until 2017. It is an HO mining and logging operation. I was happy. But in the years since, even though it is a small bedroom shelf operation, I have let it languish. I spent my time building various structures, cars, motive power, and some small dioramas—but not working on the layout.

Somewhere in this period, I discovered there really was a Eureka in Nevada and that at one time it had a narrow-gauge railroad called the *Eureka and Palisade*. In the late 1800s and early 1900s it ran some 85 miles of track between Eureka, a mining town, to Palisade, where it intersected with the transcontinental railroad.

As the mining tapered off in the 1900s, the railroad, struggling financially, was renamed the *Eureka Nevada Railway* and began using motor rail cars, cheaper to operate than its steam engines. (Archival photo courtesy of nevadagram.com)



I fell in love with this defunct railroad, especially its tattered-looking motor cars. I discovered online a 3D printable plan for the Eureka Nevada's #22 motor rail car in HO_{N30}. I couldn't resist the temptation. I found a company that would make it for me (printathing.com). The 3D body and underframe are designed to fit on top of a Kato N-scale power chassis (#11-109). I got two of the Katos, just in case.



When I got the 3D parts for the motor car, I decided to paint the underframe flat black and the body a greenish-black. I added rust color to the wheels of the Kato drive. I also added the logo decal I had custom made for my Eureka and South Pass Railroad. I put a driver in the motor car and added some gear on the roof rack along with a side ladder to access the roof. For my final step, I weathered it with Pan Pastels and AK stains. Finally, I couldn't resist hanging a skull over the front window.

I ordered some Peco Code 80 narrow gauge flextrack (SL-400, 00-9, HOe) and some Peco switches. Then, inspired by friend and fellow Potomac member **Greg Cassidy's** On18 micro layout, I decided to build a micro for my HO_n30 gear on a piece of 2' x 2' pink foam insulation. It has one siding that runs to the edge so I can potentially create a second module of similar size and link the two. Who knows? I might rip up my

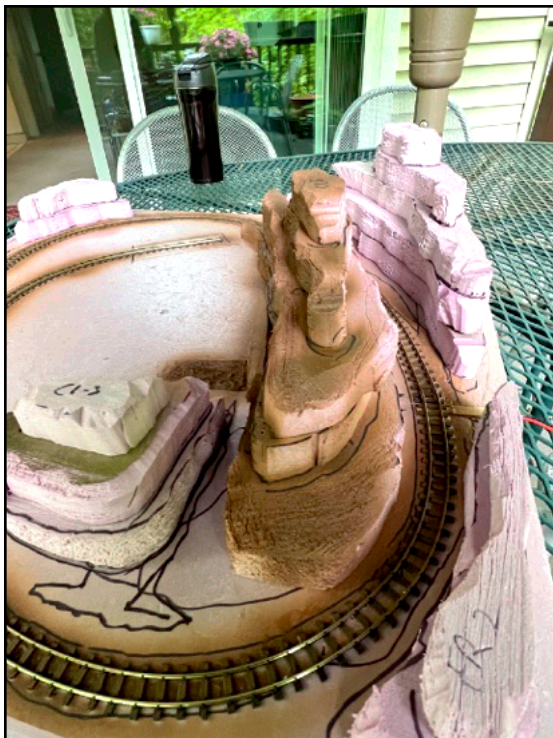
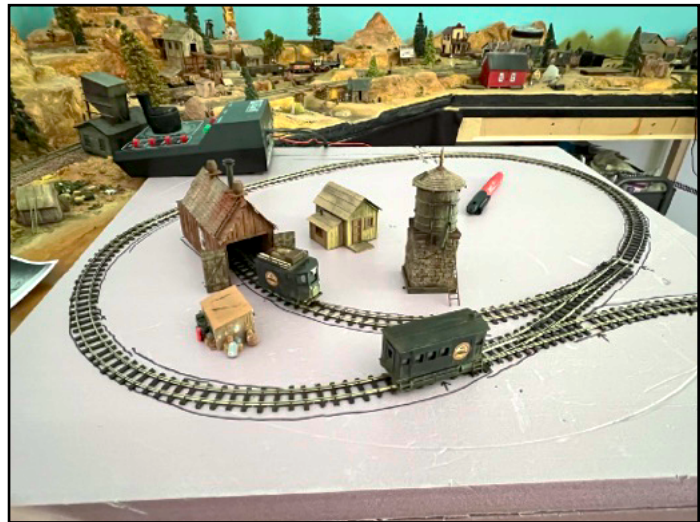


original E&SP trackage, built on the same 2' x 2' foam pieces and create a new dual gauge layout.

Since making the first motor car was such fun, I decided to acquire a second to go on the backup Kato 11-109 drive. I found an HOn30 3D printed motor combine, made by JT's Trains and Stuff and sold on eBay. I weathered it in a similar fashion after applying my logo.

Then I got serious about building the first micro layout.

After studying Greg's closely, I spent days trying to figure out a track plan. With the limits imposed by a 2' x 2' space, it came down to an oval mainline, with that one siding leading to the edge and a second leading into the center of the oval. Greg's sole siding, also in the center, leads to a mine. My siding leads to an engine shed.



To give the illusion that trains are actually coming from somewhere, like Greg, I created a view block along the back of the layout by creating a large western style rock formation. The motor rail cars disappear behind it, traveling through a narrow rocky pass, before emerging towards the front of the micro. I used my new hot foam cutting tools (Ryobi) to create the various formations. After some trimming and layering, I painted the terrain with Raw Sienna and Burnt Sienna acrylics, mixing in a bit of Yellow Ochre. Later I brought out the crevices and layers with India ink and did scattered touch-ups with my Pan Pastels.

The weatherbeaten engine shed off the inside spur is a kit from Dr. Ben's Scale Model Masterpieces called the "Ramshackle Backwoods Engine Shed." I also decided to



scratchbuild an abandoned mine with a blocked entry in the central rock wall. I put a derelict building I had scratchbuilt sometime ago nearby, with a heavily weathered dangling signboard for the “Devil’s Den Mine.” *[Article continues on next page.]*

WHY BUILD A MICRO LAYOUT?

You can complete them in a reasonable time

They’re cheaper to build

You can take them to train meets and shows

They need very little space and are easy to store

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THEY’RE A LOT OF FUN!



I took a Wild West Scale Model Builders structure called Zeke's Shed and also placed it on the layout. It could be viewed as the railroad's crew shelter and tool storage facility.

I placed desert plants, weeds, rocks, rotten wood, dirt, and other detritus on the layout to enhance the look and feel of the Southwest.

The layout thus depicts one of the small stops on the Eureka Nevada route in the 1930s, formerly serving a mine but now just a service siding for motor rail cars. I placed a small gasoline barrel (Rusty Rail) near the engine shed for refueling purposes.

I think I succeeded in creating a Nevada railway stop that has largely outlived its usefulness. But this operating micro diorama will serve a continuing purpose when I take it to meets and shows to demonstrate that a little layout can go a long way.

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Alex Belida MMR is the Editor and Publisher of The Potomac Flyer

OTHER MICROS IN THE POTOMAC DIVISION

GREG CASSIDY'S O_N18 UTE CREEK RAILROAD



The French Henry mine was originally discovered in 1869 by a team led by Henry Buruel; the mine's namesake. Operations were halted later that same year due to a lack of ability to process the ore. The nearby Aztec Mill, on the South Ponil Creek would not process the ore from the French Henry. Shipping the ore elsewhere to be processed would have been prohibitively expensive. In my world, the Ute Creek Railroad ran from the French Henry mine to the 50 ton stamp mill near the Cimarron River, thus enabling the mine to stay open to the turn of the century.





Greg Cassidy is the Potomac Division's Senior Assistant Superintendent. His micro is on a 2' x 2' piece of insulation.

JERRY STANLEY'S PIZZA BOX LAYOUT



The Pizza Box layout concept was developed by the Northern Utah Division of the NMRA. I am using it to encourage participants in a church youth program I am involved with to join the Potomac Division. I made a prototype of a 2'x2' N-scale layout. The plan is to have youngsters make their own layouts over a six week course.

Jerry Stanley is the Division's Assistant Superintendent.

GLENN OLSEN'S ALPINE MICRO



The micro layout measures 2' by 3'. It is HO scale narrow gauge sometimes called HOe, HOn30, or HOn2 1/2. The layout represents an Austrian 60 cm narrow gauge line in the far west of Austria called the Bregenzerwald Bahn or Bregenz Forest railway. The line ran from Bregenz on Lake Constance to Bezau. When I rode the line it was diesel powered by the small red diesels I use on my layout. Today only about five miles of the line out of Bezau remains active as a tourist railroad. The layout is a winter scene with two small villages. The buildings are ceramic purchased over the years because I thought they represented buildings in Austria and other nearby countries. The layout is a simple oval with two sidings in one of the villages. In addition to the two diesels I have a couple of two truck passenger cars, several four wheel passenger cars, and a handful of four wheel freight cars. Most of the cars and the locomotives are from a company called Lilliputian. Power is straight DC, no blocks, as I run only one train at a time. The layout is usually set up for the month around Christmas. *Glenn Olsen*

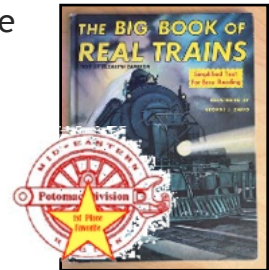


THE EMERGENCY SERVICES CHALLENGE

I enjoyed seeing the variety of submissions for this challenge. It seems that this is a popular category.

Thanks to all who sent in photos and brief descriptions for our Railroad Books Challenge! Our *Flyer* 1st Place Favorite Star for that challenge is awarded to Ben Sullivan for his *Big Book of Real Trains*. If you have a favorite among these emergency services offerings, send us an email telling us which one.

Looking ahead, our October-November 2026 Challenge will be a **Member's Choice**. Send anything model railroad or railfanning related. Just send your brief descriptions and a photo or two by September 5th to: potomac-flyer@potomac-nmra.org



And if you have an idea for a future challenge, please send us an email with your suggestion. **Inspiration, please!**

Readers of the *Flyer* in the Division, in the entire Mid-Eastern Region and NMRA members elsewhere benefit from seeing what you have accomplished (and are welcome to participate in these Challenges.)

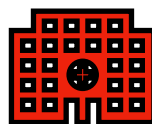
As *Flyer* Editor, I can tell you that reviewing your Challenge submissions is always among the most enjoyable aspects of the job. Encouraging you to submit can also be fun.

Let me also draw attention to the *Flyer's* outstanding editorial staff of **Dan Ebert** and **Bob Sprague** without whom this newsletter couldn't be produced. Thank you both.

Alex Belida, MMR

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. GREG CASSIDY'S SHERIFF'S INVESTIGATION



I thought “Dang, I don’t have anything that will work.” But downstairs I noticed something I had forgotten about. The sheriff (above) was visiting the apple packing plant since there had been reports about apples being pilfered off of the loading dock overnight.

Here’s a fire house (left) I built a couple years ago. But it’s not on my layout since it was S scale. It was a Motrak Models copy of the Alton Bay, New Hampshire fire station which is still there. *Greg Cassidy*



2. ALEX BELIDA'S 1883 FIREHOUSE



When you build a layout set in the late 1800s in Nevada with a town consisting of wooden structures, you need to have a fire house and a horse-drawn fire engine. The fire house was a kit from Wild West Scale Models and the fire engine was from Scale Structures. I dressed up the fire house with a bell in the tower, hoses hanging on the side of the building, and a water tank. (There's also a horse to pull the engine. It's nearby, munching on some feed.) *Alex Belida MMR*



3. ERNIE LITTLE'S READINESS



The crew of Fire Station 3 in Joyceville is always training to prepare to do what needs to be done to protect the community. *Ernie Little MMR*



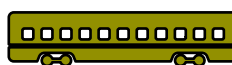
4. MARTIN BRECHBIEL'S HOSPITAL CAR



This is a very recently finished rebuild of an older, battered Walthers kit car [\(above\)](#) I took part, down to the metal.

Also this [\(left and below\)](#) is a scratchbuilt firehouse and tower with unique smokestack not easy to replicate that some might recognize: Colorado's Alpine Hose Company #2. The build of this was published in O Scale Trains years ago.

Martin Brechbiel MMR



5. BOB RODRIGUEZ'S HOT ZONE



7th Avenue and Railroad Loop is a problem area in Nickel City. Fire and Police are regularly called to Colonie's Nightclub, blocking the in-street tracks and delaying the local from doing its work. *Bob Rodriguez MMR*



6. FRITZ DAHLIN'S FIREHOUSE



This is the firehouse in the town of Halfway, Maryland on my B&O Broken Timber Sub layout. The building is part of a LifeLike Hamden fire house cut down to one stall. The interior is illuminated and has minimal detail. Obviously I need to make a sign declaring it Halfway VFD or something. Vehicles are Athearn, Rapido and Brekina.

Funny story, when I cut into the wall to install the completed fire house not only did I hit a stud, I also hit the steel wire protector! No photos but it was not an enjoyable process! *Fritz Dahlin, Chesapeake Division*



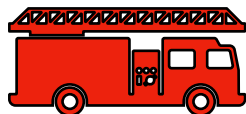
7. KEN NESPER'S FIREHOUSE



This firehouse is based on a design in *Early Wood Frame and Masonry Structures* by Pat Harriman MMR. Harriman writes that the design was typical of fire houses in small towns in the late 1800s and early 1900s. He notes that many of these firehouses had a tower, which contained a bell to call the volunteers to the job at hand. The tower also served as a lookout spot to locate just where in the town the fire fighters were needed. The structure was just big enough to house the fire apparatus and fire fighting equipment. The citizens of Westfield are proud of their new steam pumper. The firehouse and pumper are so new that the town hasn't had time to put in a gravel driveway.

I used styrene to build the structure for my On30 Ohio River & Western layout. The window and doors are from Tichy. I scratchbuilt the door for the fire engine. Lacking prototype color photos, I chose to make this structure stand out.

Ken Nesper



8. PAUL HUTCHINS' FIRE AND POLICE STATIONS



This is my volunteer fire house and local police station on my P&D HO scale layout. My entire family has been involved the in the fire service for many years, both on the volunteer side and in paid companies as well.

Paul Hutchins



BUILDING A CARSTENS REEFER

Article and Photos by Martin Brechbiel, MMR

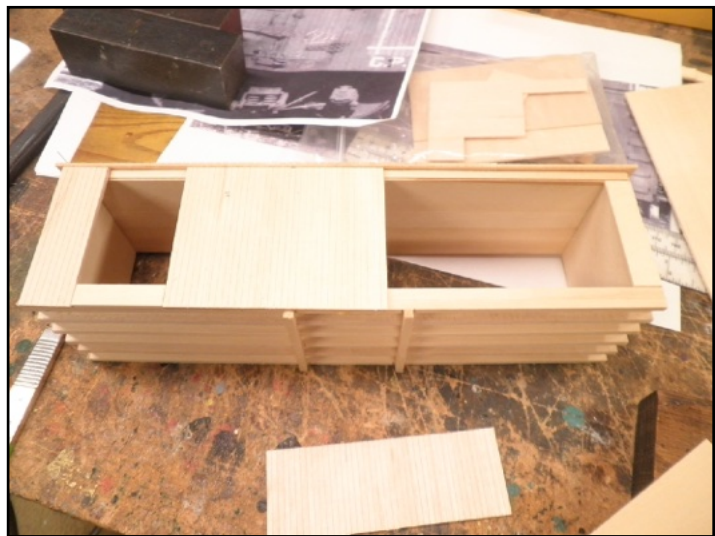


Quite a few years ago, on an online forum, I read a discussion regarding an earlier-era refrigerator car with a road name of Carstens. As it turns out, a company in the early 20th century, unrelated to the Carstens of model railroading publications, used a rather unusual refrigerator car with the door shifted from the center of the car far to the left near the end of the car. At one time Clover House sold dry transfers for one of the company's cars, unfortunately only in N scale. However, within that same online forum discussion, the builder noted having O scale decals made for his build. I impetuously contacted him to buy a set. Those decals sat in the project box for a good decade, along with some printed photos from that forum and some bits and parts to be used

“someday” in the future.

Where to start on this seemed obvious. I needed to build a basic reefer, shift the door location, resize that door (prototype photos show a narrower door), paint and decal, and finish off with the usual myriad number of details as befits this car. I decided that this project would again be more of a kit-bashing exercise with some scratchbuilding involved as needed. My go-to source for a generic reefer was my own kit shelf, where I had a Huff 'n' Puff 36' undecorated boxcar kit. This was going to provide just about everything I needed, or so I thought, until I found that the reefer door hardware had wandered off in the night. (A more likely scenario was that the packet of castings was never there to begin with, but being able to blame gremlins is more satisfying.)

I started by assembling the basic Huff 'n' Puff box car kit, putting together the floor, end blocks, and roof section. The floor architecture was followed per the instructions for a truss rod car. Then it was time to change out the sides and move the door area down to the end while also narrowing it to be close to the photos. Both sides were built in parallel. I used some 3" stock to fill the space below the door opening against the side sill ([photo right](#)).



I decided that the doors in the photos were made of a different width of wood and that I would build those up in place. To provide a platform and support for the doors, I glued some 1/32" sheet basswood behind the siding. Then, the lack of reefer door hardware came into play. The doors needed to match hardware that was not in the



kit's box. Rummaging about in the deepest, darkest regions of my parts bins yielded a pack of reefer door latches (Keil-Line) and a packet of hinges. The reefer door latch was set by the height of the doors. I used finer scribed siding from the scrap box to cut and fit a door in each side, then I filled in the space above the door with more 3" stock ([photo above](#)).

I added end sills prior to the installation of the truss rod system along with a pair of resin cast bolsters drilled and tapped for 4/40. For the truss rod system, I used Grandt Line queen posts, Tichy turnbuckles, Grandt Line nut-bolt-washer (NBW) castings, and one length of surgical silk. I added the K-brake system using a 3D printed K-brake

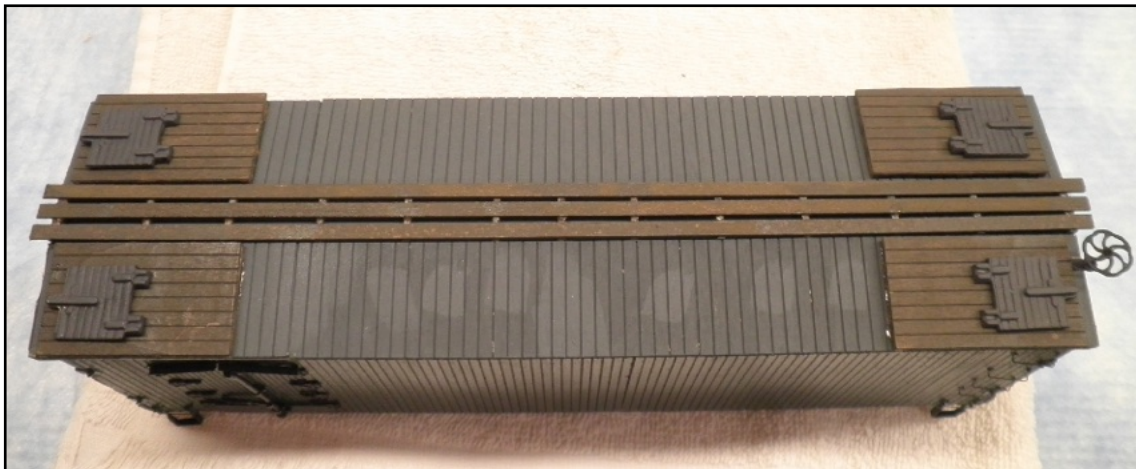
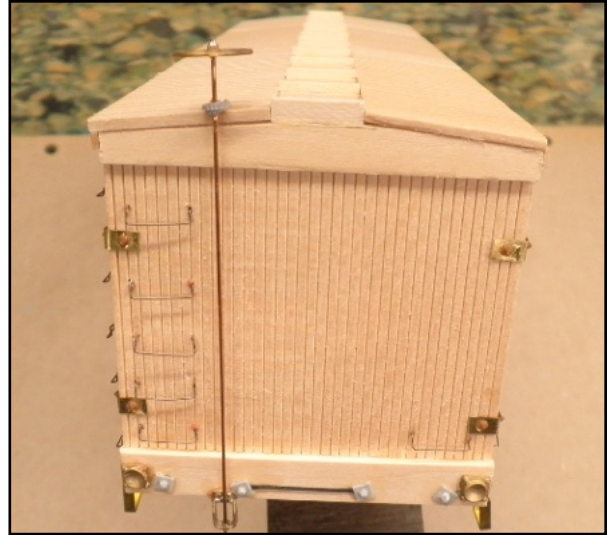


unit, Grandt Line turnbuckles cut down to make clevises, phosphor bronze wire (Tichy), and two Berkshire Valley brake levers ([photo left](#)).

I added grab irons and stirrup steps all around. Corner

braces made from 0.005" brass were added and secured with NBW castings. On the brake end, I soldered a brake wheel (PSC) onto some 0.025" phosphor bronze wire (Tichy). I threaded the wire through a ratchet & pawl casting which I had glued to the roof, then down through a brake stirrup casting (PSC) on the end sill. I added poling pockets (Wiseman) to both ends ([photo right](#)). I added scribed siding to the roof along with roof walk supports glued into place using Titebond.

I painted the roof Lark Dark Gray. I pre-painted the roof details (platforms, hatches, roof walk) and added them to the roof. I stained the underbody with mystery MinWax and let it dry for a day. I painted the sides and ends Hunt Club Green ([photos below](#)). There was some debate in the forum as to the original color of the car, but green seemed to be the consensus. Also,



the decals were white, so a somewhat darker color seemed to provide good contrast and visibility. I painted the exposed metal parts around the car body and underbody Engine Black. I pre-painted the reefer door hinges and put them into place with a little Goo and CA. A distinctive detail that I added was the rain deflector over the doors. The photos clearly showed this to be angled down from the middle of the doors as opposed to a simple flat angle shaped detail. I made these from brass angle that was nearly split into two parts, bent back together and flattened, painted, and mounted over the doors. I think that they aid in capturing the identity of the car and were worth the effort.



Lastly, and probably the most worrisome aspect, was adding the decals. I had no real idea as to the source or quality, particularly after they had been on the shelf in the project box for more than a decade. One other concern was that the decal for the car side was large and covered a lot of the side. After gloss coating the car sides and letting them cure for a day or two, I soaked the decals on an old plate. (I have a stack of junk plates in a tray under the radial arm saw... .) After prepping the surface, I was able to slide the entire decal onto the car side positioning it in a bit of a puddle. I removed the excess puddle and decal set with Q-tips to smooth it down and into

place. Given the size and scribed surface, I was optimistic that after slicing with a scalpel and coating the sides, this would look reasonably decent. It was that or a lot of weathering to hide whatever sins remained evident.

After a day, I coated the entire car with Clear Matte to seal the decals and make the surface uniform. The final details I added were trucks and couplers. Given the unique nature of this car, I fitted it out with trucks to match. I pulled a pair of Fox trucks out from their storage drawer and mounted them using 4/40 pan head screws. I added Kadee couplers using No. 0 x 3/8" wood screws.

That completes this build, and the reward here was three-fold: I have a unique reefer car, one less kit box on the shelving unit, and one less project box in the queue! It's good to get stuff built!

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

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A TRIP FOR AN AP SCENERY EVALUATION

Article and Photos by Ernie Little, MMR, Potomac Division Superintendent

On Saturday, June 6th, Achievement Program Manager **Martin Brechbiel**, MMR, **Ken Wilson**, and I went to the central part of our Division to do an AP Scenery evaluation for **Lee Stoermer**'s Codorus Subdivision of the Northern Central RR. Ken was participating as an observer to allow him to see what an AP Scenery evaluation entailed and to become more familiar with the AP evaluation process. We met at Lee's home in Aldie, Virginia, around 10:00 a.m., conducted the evaluation, and completed it around 11:15 a.m.

Upon arrival, we went to the basement of Lee's home to see his layout. Lee was ready for our visit. He had completed the appropriate forms and had already sent a PDF of pictures and descriptions of the scenery to Martin. Doing this saved a considerable amount of time and let Martin confirm that all the needed information required by the NMRA was there.

The AP Scenery certificate requirements can be found on the NMRA website at: <https://www.nmra.org/scenery>.



Modelers are required to construct a completed section of a model railroad of 32 square feet for an HO scale layout. The completed section must contain the necessary scenic elements of terrain, structures, background, lighting, and realism/conformity which combine to achieve a realistic effect. The section being evaluated does not have to be a single section of the layout. Rather, it can consist of several scenes on the layout that are not directly connected. The intent is simply to have the scenery show a prototypical rendering of the scenic elements from the ground up.

The evaluation consists of examining four areas: Terrain (35 possible points), Structures (20 possible points), Background, (25 possible points), Lighting (20 possible points), and Realism/Conformity (25 possible points). For a merit score, a minimum of 87.5 points of a possible 125

points must be attained.

For **Terrain**, the modeler must create the ground and all natural features such as rocks, water, trees, hills, and depressions, as well as man-made items like the railroad bed, cuts, fills, drainage ditches, embankments, and roads. Here ([photo above](#)), Lee used dead wood, a creek, a culvert, and various foliage to depict a scene

with an elevation change that demonstrated his ability to meld them into a realistic scene. In this scene (photo right), Lee used several different items to create a realistic image of cows grazing next to a creek, a change in elevation, a road, telephone poles (with painted insulators), and other related items that seamlessly go together. The evaluation focuses on the different vegetation types and the effects of weather and animals. Detail of the streets and roads, such as sewer and



water manhole covers, shoulders, cracks, patches, road wear marks, oil stains, and

such are items that are evaluated. Here (photo left), Lee has employed several scenic elements to provide a realistic road and related scenic items. One key consideration is that the transition between the scenes should be as smooth as possible, and not have glaring inconsistencies like a high rise building in the middle of a corn field or palm trees around a house in New

England.

Consideration of the use of backdrop dividers or other vision blockers to separate the different scenes is another item of the evaluation.

For Structures (photo right, the evaluation looks at the layout from the standpoint of prototypical suitability, placement, and appearance as scenic effects (not the actual construction which is covered by the AP Structures requirements). In this scene, Lee created a very realistic scene with appropriately located structures, such as the interlock tower. Included in the structures evaluations are bridges, trestles, culverts,





buildings, power lines, signs, fences, and retaining walls, and track and right-of-way features such as turnout controls, signaling structures, crossing gates and shanties, and turntables. The evaluation considerations include that structures should be in the ground and not sitting on top of it, their appearance should be consistent with the scenery items being used, and they should be weathered and not straight out-of-the-box shiny. In this scene (photo left), Lee provided items that have been weathered and look like they belong there. One big item is that switch machines should be disguised and not just present in the middle of the scene. Finally, are such details as outdoor lighting over doors and porches. These do not have to work but only to be present in appropriate locations.



For **Background**, the evaluation concerns the treatment of the wall, backdrop, and/or ceiling to realistically depict depth, distance, horizon, and the sky. The “illusion of reality” is what is being evaluated. Here (photo left), Lee has used corn rows, a signal, other foliage, telephone poles, and a blue backdrop for the scene. The background should match the scenery, and the transition between the two should be smooth and/or hidden. If the scene is of a town and made from a photo, the two should appear to be the same in appearance.

For **Lighting** the evaluation looks at illumination from three aspects: railroad cars and signals; buildings, streets, and roads; and overall lighting effects—day and/or night. A daylight only scene is acceptable. The

lighting information is required to be provided for the submission.

For Realism/Conformity, the evaluation considers how well the modeler did in presenting the four prior evaluation areas. In this scene (photo right), Lee used several items that worked together to create a realistic scene. The use of an animal, dead wood, and live trees, along with the track and culvert, created an interesting scene.

The last items required for the evaluation are photographs or other media, with a written description of the setting of the model railroad and the scenic details, including towns or cities in the area being evaluated. At least one photo should be provided of the overall layout. Also, a description of the materials and methods of construction used in creating various features of terrain, background, and lighting are required as a part of the documentation. These do not have to be elaborate but can be simple.



GREECE'S NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM

Article and Photos by Nicholas Kalis

Most tourists visiting Greece do not think of railroad museums, but in late May this year, outreach official Alexander Sikalias gave my cousin and me a tour of the under-construction National Railway Museum in Piraeus. When completed the museum will house rolling stock and equipment from all companies and gauges that once ran in Greece.



At present the museum consists of a guard and a skeletal staff of restorers along with a stone roundhouse. We were treated to a tour of the roundhouse and its electrically powered turntable. The roundhouse, built in 1912, was the central depot of the Peloponnesian network until 2005. It now looks essentially as it appeared when first built except for considerable wear and tear.

Perhaps the highlight of the tour was seeing an Ottoman era passenger car, designed for smoking, with open sides

and opulent decorations. In the 1860s, this smoking car of Sultan Abdul Azziz was part of a 14-car Imperial Sultan train gifted to him. Greece had been part of the Ottoman empire for centuries.

This museum is not yet open to the public for regular visits, but private visits might be able upon request and upon availability. For now, the museum has a [Facebook page](#).

I also visited the Electric Railroad Museum, which was inaugurated in 2005, in the port of Athens. This museum is on two floors and is contained within the terminal of an active electric railway. It has a [website](#).





CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

Saturday, August 8, 2026, 9AM, Potomac Division **In-Person Meet**, AP Clinics Motive Power and Electrical, Clinicians: Alex Belida MMR and Ernie Little MMR, plus a clinic by Greg Cassidy on Micro Layouts, Dranesville Government Center Community Room, McLean, Virginia

Sunday, August 16, 2026, 3PM, **Virtual Clinic**, Turnout Motors and More, Clinician: Ernie Little MMR

Saturday, September 12, 2026, 9AM, Potomac Division **In-Person Meet**, AP Clinics Chief Dispatcher and Author, Clinicians: Ernie Little MMR and Martin Brechbiel MMR, Silver Spring B&O Station, 8100 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland

Sunday, September 20, 2026, 3PM, **Virtual Clinic**, History of the Pere Marquette 1225, Clinician: Dean Pyers

MID-EASTERN REGION CONVENTION:

October 15-18, 2026: [Tracks to Tidewater](#), Holiday Inn, 5655 Greenwich Rd, Virginia Beach, Virginia



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PAYMASTER'S REPORT

by Ken Wilson, Potomac Division Paymaster

Regular checking account
Previous balance as of 05/29/2026 **\$6,049.15**

Checks
 #800 Annual mtg food/drink \$478.82
 #801 Leisure World food/drink \$153.75
 Withdrawal for new checks \$94.59
 Total payouts \$727.16

Deposits \$120.00
 Cash on Hand \$70.00

Balance as of 07/21/2026 **\$5,511.99**

Deposits by date
 6/16/26 \$120.00
 (Cash admissions for annual meeting on 5/23/2026)
 Cash on hand \$70.00
 (Fees collected at Leisure World meet)

PayPal checking account
Previous balance as of 05/29/2026 **\$100.00**
 Checks and other withdrawals \$0.00
 Deposits \$0.00
 Balance as of 07/21/2026 \$100.00

TOTAL ASSETS (both accounts) **\$5,611.99**



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