

THE POTOMAC FLYER

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2026

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE POTOMAC DIVISION, MER, NMRA



INSIDE THIS SPECIAL ADHESIVES ISSUE:

KEEPING IT NEAT, BAD GLUES, GOOD GLUES

PLUS CHATTANOOGA AND POTOMAC MEETS REPORTS

MEET THE MEMBER: JIM HELLWEGE,

AND THE MEMBER'S CHOICE CHALLENGE



**TRACKS TO TIDEWATER, MER CONVENTION, VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA
OCTOBER 15-18**

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COVER: ASSORTED MODELER'S ADHESIVES (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



I am pleased to announce that after a NMRA worldwide search **Tom Matty** has stepped up to the plate and agreed to take on the responsibility of being the Achievement Program Manager. He will be working with Martin Brechbiel and the Division's Board of Directors to make a smooth transition by the end of the year.

Several other Potomac and James River Division members and I attended the NMRA's National Convention "*Scenic City Express*" from July 26th to August 1st. This was the first National Convention I have attended. From the Potomac Division I saw **Bob Gifford, Rich Steinmann, MMR, Marty McGuirk, Bernie Kempinski, MMR, and Paul Hutchins and Jim Young, Paul Germain, Rick Lull, and Phil Taylor** from the James River Division. Marty, Bernie, and Rick presented excellent clinics at the convention. At their meeting the NMRA Board voted to establish a new AP category "Master Builder - Modular Railroading" and to reduce the membership dues. There is an article elsewhere in the Potomac Flyer that provides more details about the convention.



The Division continues to hold clinics on the NMRA Achievement program requirements. On August 8th two more virtual clinics, "Motive Power" by **Alex Belida, MMR** and "Electrical" by me were presented and well received. The clinics, like all of our clinics, were recorded and posted to our YouTube channel. In addition, PDF files have been created and posted for members' use. You can find more information about the remaining scheduled clinics on our website.

Welcome New Members! August

William Brandon - Arlington, VA
John Dowling - Leesburg, VA
Rafel Morales - Fort Belvoir, VA

As part of the National NMRA rebranding effort the Division has adopted a new Division logo that meets the requirements of National NMRA. This has also spurred work on updating our banners to have the new NMRA and Division logo on them. The Mid-East region is paying for one of the new banners.

At our Annual meeting on May 23rd discussion took place concerning having Division shirts made. **Lee Stoermer**, our Clerk, has taken this project on and as soon as a suitable provider for the shirts at a reasonable price is found we will be providing more information on this project.

The Board of Directors had an all-day work session on Saturday, September 26th at the Bull Run Library in Manassas, Virginia, where the Board worked on a roadmap for the

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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future along with policies and procedures associated with our Division's incorporation.

We are still planning for a joint meeting with the Chesapeake Division that will be held on November 14th at a location to be determined. The location will be announced as soon as we can find an acceptable venue. Watch the website and your emails for more information as it becomes available.

The next Mid-Eastern Region Convention, "*Tracks to Tidewater*," will be held October 15-18, 2026, in Virginia Beach, Virginia at the Holiday Inn Virginia Beach- Norfolk located at 5655 Greenwich Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia. The convention's website is now live and taking registrations. The link for the convention website is <https://www.mer-nmra.com/savethedate/index.html>

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





THE POTOMAC DIVISION 2027 MODEL CONTEST FOR CARS, ENGINES AND STRUCTURES

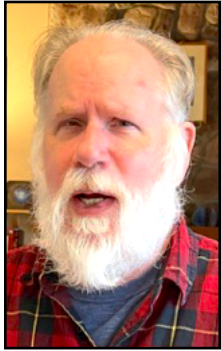


TO ENTER, BUILD A MODEL OF AN ENGINE, A PIECE OF ROLLING STOCK, OR A STRUCTURE—SCRATCHBUILT, KITBASHED OR KIT—AND SEND PHOTOS (WORK IN PROGRESS OK) TO THE POTOMAC FLYER BY MARCH 15TH, 2027 WITH A BRIEF DESCRIPTION. WINNERS WILL BE DETERMINED BY A PANEL OF VETERAN MODELERS AT OUR 2027 ANNUAL MEETING, EXPECTED IN MAY. ALL SUBMISSIONS WILL APPEAR ANONYMOUSLY IN THE APRIL-MAY ISSUE OF THE FLYER. PRIZES WILL BE AWARDED, INCLUDING ONE FOR BEST OVERALL BY A POPULAR VOTE BY THOSE ATTENDING THE ANNUAL MEETING.

SEND ENTRIES TO: POTOMAC-FLYER@POTOMAC-NMRA.ORG

ADHESIVES: KEEPING IT TIDY

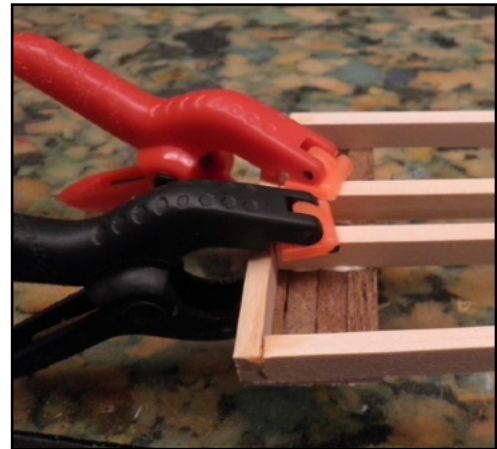
Article and Photos by Martin Brechbiel, MMR



We use a diverse assortment of adhesives and glues in our hobby and while pages can be written about the choices and which to use for what, one of the critical aspects is using them cleanly. Nothing detracts from the appearance of a model like visible blobs of glue or that shine at the seams of an assembled joint in a structure or piece of rolling stock. A few small tips will be provided here regarding a few select, commonly used adhesives and glues.

One factor has to be accounted for in using almost all adhesives and glues. Those blobs and shiny bits that you see are almost always present because too much glue was applied. Consider just what is being done. Two pieces of material are being put together and the space between them, which should be none, is where you are applying your glue. You clamp or weight the joint together and out squeezes the glue! So, the first really important tip is not to use any more glue than is absolutely needed. More is not better, and, if anything, causes problems. If your joinery is not succeeding, it's probable that you've chosen the wrong adhesive. Adding more glue doesn't solve anything and just creates a bigger mess.

Wood glues are routinely used, particularly for wood kits. None of the glue bottles, though, are really designed to dispense wood glue for modelers. Generally, what modelers do is to transfer what is needed for assembling a model to another surface, picking up what is needed with something smaller and better suited to the scale of the model. What most end up doing is to squirt out a puddle of glue and then use a small stick to apply the glue to the parts of the joint being made. That small stick has historically been the simple toothpick, but any small conveyance will work as long as you can lift up just the amount needed and apply it neatly without overkill. Going back to the glue bottles, I'm using Titebond, and I transfer an inch or more into a smaller plastic bottle that operates with a bottom siphon feed. That means I'm not picking up the bottle and turning it over and squirting glue. Rather, I just squeeze the bottle and glue travels up to the top where I can pull off what I need with that toothpick or whatever. Such bottles are pretty easy to find, and the first one I had was obtained at the Timonium train show. I bought the later ones on eBay (search for Wash Bottle 250ml) and then I cut the curved tips off.



CA (super glue) seems a ubiquitous glue in the modeler's arsenal. You can trace its origins back to the '40s and that history, while interesting, is not for this short

communiqué. Suffice it to state that there exists a large family of CA glues that are based on the cyanoacrylate core structure that gives rise to low, medium, high, thick, gap-filling, etc. possibilities. They all have a propensity to self-cure and polymerize (“go bad” in the vernacular) thanks to sensitivity to moisture. Proper storage is key for a long use.

So how do you apply CA without making a mess? If you’re using that low viscosity CA, making a mess is really easy and it flows everywhere. I tend to stay with a medium viscosity and on very rare occasions I’ll open a tube of the gel CA. Again, very few if any bottles of CA are really designed with delivery tips that are best for modelers. In many ways the packaging is designed solely to frustrate the modeler and then doubly so when the CA solidifies before the bottle is halfway emptied. The tips that are supplied invariably clog, and yes you can stick a pin in the opening to keep it from clogging. I’ve found that to be a good way to glue a pin into place.

Several commercial tools are sold to facilitate the discrete transfer of CA from bottle to work surface. Again, too much CA is not going to help make a better joint. Micro Mark sells a Micro Glue Applicator (https://micromark.com/products/micro-glue-applicator?_pos=1&_sid=7ed9180da&_ss=r). This looks like the head of a sewing needle that’s been cut off. It holds a droplet of CA via surface tension allowing you to transfer and control the application of the CA where you want it to go. And, you can make one yourself easily enough, oddly, from a sewing needle, cutting off the head with your Dremel, and then sticking the point into a cork or dowel to use as a handle.

But this really doesn’t address the CA coming from the bottle’s tip in unwanted quantities and out of control. Those tips that come with the bottle not only clog, but are too generous in dispensing and worse yet, they are almost always not clear. A clear tip would let you see the flow of the CA so that you can control the amount. I toss the tip that comes with the CA I use (Zap-a-Gap medium viscosity) and replace it with a micro-pipette tip that snaps right on the bottle top. The ones that I use are 5 or 10 μL capacity with a ~ 0.1 mm I.D. at the end of the tip which is almost too small (See [photo right for a representative sample.](#))

There is real back pressure when squeezing the bottle, but you can actually see the flow of the CA and, hence, control its application to where you want it and how much to place there. So, where to



get these tips? Searching for them on eBay is the easiest solution, but you'll probably have to buy a case of 1-10k, which might serve the entire Potomac Division. I have a dwindling supply of these and was selling them at the last meet at Battlefield Baptist. I know that one person there recognized them for this use and was a happy customer. So, these are polypropylene and resist clogging, but even these clog. Simple solution: just snip off a few millimeters, open the tip slightly larger, and keep on gluing!

Gluing small details, bits, into place can be a particular challenge. The combination of holding, positioning, etc. while simultaneously handling something sticky tends to be a recipe for disaster. This is usually in the form of the small bit flying off to parts unknown until stepped on like a Lego block at 3 AM, invariably after the purchased replacement has arrived. Holding on to stuff (tweezers and hemostats) is another story. If the part has a bit of a sprue that can be received into a hole at its ultimate destination, then that makes things a bit easier. Depending on materials involved, CA tends to be close to universal although the Aleene's Tacky is touted by many due to its drying clear. Parts without the mounting sprue pose a greater challenge since the binding is solely at the surface and too much glue results in an unsightly mess. The temptation to use too much is very real. When I am confronted with an awkward small bit I will frequently drill and add a mounting post. That's not always realistic. Then, I have to look to my backup alternative, which is a bit of Goo on the porous part (if that's possible) and a bit of CA on the other part. The advantage here is that the Goo usually aids in positioning and holding while the combination cures very rapidly. Again, the technical term for use of too much of either is "bad" and should be avoided.

Glazing windows tends to be another challenging exercise. This is partly dependent upon the choice of glazing material and then how it reacts (or not) with the adhesive. Using real glass avoids chemical reactivity, but careful edge gluing, regardless of adhesive, remains one's methodology for mounting it into a window frame. Clear styrene and other plastics will (or not) react with CA and others adhesives. Aleene's Tacky glue, carefully applied to glue the glazing into place, seems optimal due to its drying clear. Most of my glazing now is done using overhead projector film (having a carton or two self-promotes its use here) using Aleene's Tacky. This adhesive also seems not to attack the film—so that seems to be all in its favor.

There are a host of other glues and adhesives. **The real trick to not making a mess is to lose the *more is better* behavior and use less!** Or...you could move up to a larger scale!

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Martin Brechbiel, MMR is an O scale modeler who has served as Potomac Division Superintendent and, more recently, as the Division's Achievement Program Coordinator.



WHEN GOOD GLUES GO BAD

Article and Photo by Mark Gionet



This summer's travels took us beneath Boston through the Tip O'Neill Tunnel, part of the very big "Big Dig" construction project completed decades ago. As we headed safely north to I-95, I remembered that almost precisely twenty years before, on the nearby Fort Point Tunnel, a concrete ceiling panel held in place with epoxy grout (i.e. glue) collapsed on a passing vehicle. Sometimes glue, or the chosen glue, isn't the right choice, and bad things happen.

Readers of the *Potomac Flyer* are familiar with the modeling consequences of bad glue(ing). Stuff doesn't stick, and parts fall off. Glue sticks the wrong stuff (your fingers, my neoprene gloves, various nearby tools) to the model you are building. Model parts get stuck in the wrong place. More glue gets stuck in the joint and on adjacent parts of the model than required. Stuff you want to relocate after an errant first try, replace or simply remove does not unstick when you need it to. Glue issues extend well beyond little glue globs in prominent places on your model. What to do?

Poor adhesion sometimes results from relying on glue alone when a mechanical connection or assisted connection would be stronger. When building resin railroad car kits, I now make sure to use very short bits of .010" brass rod to pin parts like cut-lever brackets, brake air hose mounts or other small parts that sit proud of the surrounding surface and are subject to being knocked off. Pins can be glued with CA and filed down to look like rivets, or nut-bolt casting can be similarly used to simulate bolted connections.

Misplaced adhesion varies in strength and difficulty to undo. Dried two-part epoxy joints are very strong. Theoretically, acetone, or nail polish remover (which may contain it), can remove bits of cured epoxy. Contact adhesives, such as Barge, a neoprene based contact cement, also create strong bonds. They require thinners to undo, and Barge also makes a universal



Zap Z-7 Debonder and Deluxe Materials Glue Buster

thinner that works with neoprene or urethane based adhesives. I haven't tried it, so I'm uncertain how well plastic, resin or 3D printed model parts will respond to cleaning with it. The thinner contains toluene (typically a component of paint thinners), heptane (reportedly used as an adhesive remover by stamp collectors), and ethyl acetate (less toxic and sometimes used in nail polish removers). As always, read the instructions and the manufacturer's safety data sheets, and then test removal on small areas not planned to be part of finished models.

White glue (polyvinyl acetate, or PVA) in its many forms is a commonly used model adhesive, especially for wood models. While wet, it's easily cleaned up with warm water. Water, of course, can deform wood parts. Fully cured PVA joints may be softened with heat, or with vinegar or acetone, though I haven't tried those methods. I'd likely start with vinegar. Usually, I'm able to pull apart small PVA glued assemblies. Dilute white glue used to hold ballast in place can be softened with 91% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol. I have had excellent luck with old alcohol I had used to strip paint from a badly painted passenger car. The alcohol was left with a nice rust colored tint that was a totally appropriate residual effect for a stretch of track I needed to remove and realign.

Cyanoacrylates (CA) are probably the adhesives most *Flyer* readers use for resin, plastic, and other mixed media model construction. Because hardening is triggered by moisture, the stuff is notorious for joining together any two things that come in contact with it, whether or not intended.

I tried a couple of CA glue removers in an attempt to disassemble the same badly botched resin passenger car. I used Z-7 Debonder by Zap, a well-known maker of Zap CA glues, and Glue Buster by Deluxe Materials, a company in the UK. Both were effective, although the thinner Glue Buster penetrated glued joints better on my model and continues to be my top choice. Glue Buster proved effective in dislodging a plastic sanding bit on my relatively new reticulating sander that was inadvertently attached by a spreading pool of spilled CA. The Zap product left a slight reddish tinge, perhaps useful for showing where the stuff ended up, so you should make sure to clean it. Neither product completely dissolves the CA; but turns it into a somewhat gooey substance that you can clean off with a Q-tip or soft cloth and warm soapy water. As always, read the instructions and safety information and try the products out on small, inconspicuous parts of you model first. Using these removers, I've successfully painted over cleaned-up CA glue errors, so not all bad glue events are permanent.

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Mark Gionet is a retired landscape architect and planner who loves New England railroads. He models the B&M's Western Route between Boston and Portland in HO scale.



WHICH ADHESIVES FOR MODEL RAILROADING?

Editor's Note: Depending on the materials they are working with, model railroaders need a variety of adhesives. Using the right one will ensure the structural integrity of engines, rolling stock, structures, scenery, track and benchwork. The Potomac Flyer reached out to some members of the Division to get their recommendations. Here are their responses.

BRIAN SHERON, MMR:



Here are the adhesives I usually use, from left to right ([photo below](#)).

Plastruct Plastic Weld works great when assembling most plastic kits.

I use Bob Smith Industries Insta-cure+ gap-filling CA for attaching many small parts to models. It is thick (hence the name “gap-filling”) and does not set up instantly, but rather will set up in perhaps 15-20seconds, giving me time to position the part. If I want it to cure immediately, a quick mist spray of Hot Racing USA Insta-set accelerator will cure it immediately.

For some larger items that need to be glued and require good strength, I use a dab of Gorilla Glue.

For most other gluing tasks I use Duco Cement. I used to use Ambroid Cement, but since they went out of business years ago, I found Duco is an acceptable substitute.



GREG CASSIDY:

Most of my building is wooden structures.

Aleene's Tacky Glue: This I use primarily for strong joints on wood, such as the corners of buildings or attaching roofs to the walls. It's slightly thicker viscosity than canopy glue and has more holding power.

Canopy Glue: This is used for almost all of my other connections of wood, such as corner trim or platform boards; or wood to plastic, such as Tichy windows into wood walls.

Micro Mark PSA (Pressure Sensitive Adhesive): This is an excellent glue for applying details where there's concern about glue oozing out and possibly marrying a surface.



Examples of usage for this are downspouts and electric meter wires on the outside of buildings.



Super Glue (Liquid and Gel): I prefer to use the least expensive Super Glue I can find, which are tiny little squeeze tubes that come 12 to a pack for under \$9 from Amazon. You can't beat them for price, and it's especially useful when used in conjunction with Walther's Goo to make an incredibly strong bond.

Tamiya Extra Thin Cement: My favorite adhesive for gluing pieces of acetate into the frames of plastic window castings. Once the acetate is placed inside the frame from the back, just a touch of the tip of the applicator allows the glue to wick underneath the acetate and it forms an incredible bond.

MARTIN BRECHBIEL, MMR:

Medium Viscosity Zap-a-Gap CA: This is my general standard use CA for almost anything other than all the rest of the specifics that follow. Using a clear micro-fine tip so flow can be seen and controlled application is possible. I have some tubes of a gel CA but it's rarely in use. All best stored in a good desiccator with color indicator desiccant.



Walther's Goo: Yes, that terrible messy stuff that's been around forever (Hobbsco's Goo), but for many materials it's another go to particularly when dealing with mixed materials, e.g., wood and white metal. More specialized is when metal parts are being attached to wood and the wood is an end grain surface. A smear of Goo on the end grain and the Zap-a-Gap CA on the white metal (brass, styrene, etc. even other not end grain wood), put them together like a 5 min 2-part epoxy, but you only need 10-15 sec so get it right the first time.

Titebond wood glue: General use for all wood construction other than that involving end grain. Dispensing it from a siphon fed squeeze bottle for controlled application.

MEK (Methyl ethyl ketone): I use MEK for all styrene (and ABS) being bonded to either of those same materials. With Tenax gone (methylene chloride regulated out of use), pure MEK is now my standard, despite the unpleasant odor and high flammability.

Epoxy: Devcon and other 5-minute, 2-part epoxy for larger and again mixed material joinery. Also J-B Weld epoxy.

Aleene's Original Tacky Glue: A recent addition to the pantheon for me. Using it for installing glazing in windows and doors.

[Not really an adhesive or glue, but soldering brass - generally using a small pencil torch, 0.015" solder, and liquid Ruby Flux.]



SEPT. 12 DIVISION MEET & LAYOUT TOUR REPORT

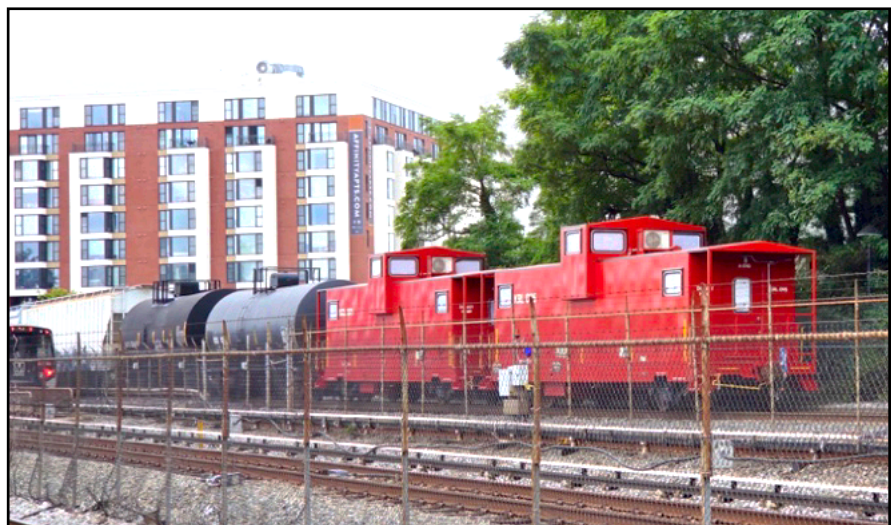
Article by Greg Cassidy

Photos by Greg Cassidy and Ken Wilson



The Potomac Division of the NMRA held its fourth public membership meeting of the year at the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. This is a wonderful venue for holding any kind of railroad-related meeting, whether it's prototype or model. You not only get all the historical architecture and vintage artifacts from railroading's Golden Days, but you

also get to see quite a few trains passing by on Amtrak and the CSX Metropolitan Branch. We even caught a mixed freight that had two cabooses on the end ([photo below right](#)), causing a fair bit of speculation as to why they were there. There is also an HO display layout that set up in the baggage room and maintained by the Rockville Model Railroad Society. It operates whenever the station has an open house, which is the first Saturday of every month as well as other times. The one caveat to this location is that there isn't very much parking at the station. That unfortunately means that some people had to use the parking garage across the street, which does charge on Saturdays. The Division was putting on two presentations at this meeting. One, by **Ernie Little**, MMR, dealt with the Achievement Program certificate for Dispatcher, and the other, put on by



Martin Brechbiel, MMR, was the Achievement Program certificate for Author. A fair bit of discussion and questions occurred between the Board members and the attendees, especially about the Author certificate. One of the lesser-known details, for anyone planning to put on a clinic or presentation to count towards their Author AP, is that they must include handouts. This is one of the requirements that unfortunately sometimes gets overlooked.



The meeting was followed by four layout tours, three in Maryland and one in the District of Columbia. A separate article covering the layouts follows in this issue of *The Flyer*.

Regrettably, we were disappointed at the turnout for both the meeting and the layout tours. Very few people attended either. As part of our effort to make sure we stay relevant to the members of the Division and offer them what they want, we must try



Rockville Model Railroad Society Layout

to understand why the last couple of meetings have had low turnouts. In the case of this meeting there is, of course, the possibility that having to pay for parking could have had a negative impact. We are also wondering if, perhaps, the Achievement Program presentations this year dealing have not been of as much interest to the membership as we thought they might. In addition, this meet was held in Maryland, even though it is inside the Beltway.



Clinicians: Ernie Little, MMR (left) and Martin Brechbiel, MMR (right)

Please send me an email if you have ideas that might help us put on meetings that are of more interest. Consider this less of a survey and more of a chance for you to let us know what you would like to see. Send your thoughts to my email, Sr-Asst-Super@potomac-nmra.org. I will treat all the emails confidentially, unless someone wants their thoughts to be known to the membership.

SEPT. 12 LAYOUT TOURS

Article and Photos by Ken Wilson

Potomac Division members had the opportunity to visit three layouts in Maryland and one in Washington, D.C. These tours were arranged by **Greg Cassidy**, Senior Assistant Superintendent, as the afternoon activity followed two in-person clinics held at the historic B&O station in Silver Spring, MD.



My first stop was to see **Jim Anderson's** HO-scale 1930s PRR switching layout set in North Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Camden and Newark, New Jersey. Jim ([photo left](#)) is new to the NMRA but certainly not a new modeler. His layout is 20 years old. It fills his basement with numerous switching locations, mainline trackage, and over 250 city structures ([photo top next page](#)). The complexity of his urban scenes is quite stunning, with trackage running through canyons created by a blend of industrial and high-rise buildings. His opportunities for switching include passengers or a variety of industries to be served. Several of my favorite views didn't even

include trains! Jim told me that his degree is in urban planning, but he said that he never did anything using that education: I respectfully disagree. Welcome to the Potomac Division, Jim!

My second stop was in Laurel, Maryland. We were fortunate to have good weather that afternoon, which allowed Glenn Olsen (photo below) to show his G-scale outdoor layout. I had seen his railroad previously when I delivered some cars he purchased from a Potomac Division donation. Since then, he has added those cars, plus a GE 44-tonner painted in Washington and Old Dominion scheme.

His operation loosely mimics the W&OD in that trains originate at either end of the railroad, and meet in the middle to swap cars. A loop at either end allows for continuous operation. Outdoor layouts have unique challenges. Since his locomotives are battery powered, his railroad operates using non-powered "dead rail" (not to be confused with the novel *Dead Rail* by Potomac Flyer editor Alex Belid). Track cleaning is rather simple using a leaf blower. Apparently single leaves are not a problem, but clumps of them or sticks need to be cleared to prevent derail.

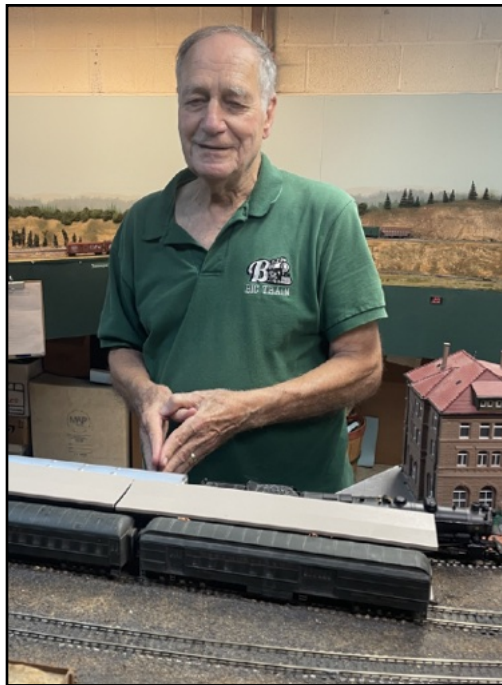
When I asked about snow, Glen told me that he has a wedge plow that works quite well when there is a limited snowfall. (That would be quite an event



to witness!) One significant new feature was not planned by Glen. A storm had toppled a dead tree which fortunately missed all of his structures and tracks, but what has been left is a very nice natural bridge over the railroad (photo right)!



For the third layout, I returned to see the HO-scale Westmoreland Railroad layout by Bill Demas set in the 1950s (photo below). I have visited several times before, but I always pause to enjoy seeing the tributes that honor the memory of the late Marshall Abrams and Tom Brodrick, who were both Potomac Division Board of Directors members. Tom and



Marshall were regular operators on the Westmoreland RR, and Bill begins each of his operating sessions with a run from each end of his layout with a train from the Providence and Worcester (Tom's railroad) and the "ARE" Abrams Railroad Empire (Marshall's railroad). Once they meet at the middle of his layout, the operating session then begins. Bill's layout design is two peninsulas connected by narrower wall shelf track. The blend between three-dimensional structures and scenery flats creates an image of visual depth. Switching locations are found

throughout along with engine servicing facilities for both steam and diesel and a large passenger terminal (photo right).

My final visit was to Washington, D.C. to see Ken Nesper. I had never visited before, so I was glad to have this





opportunity. Whenever we have layout tours, our superintendent, Ernie Little, is the one who creates the color maps and driving instructions that are available for members. However, I was grateful for my GPS, since looking at a paper map while driving in the Brookland neighborhood of D.C. can be a bit challenging. Once I turned onto Ken's street, his house was easy to find since it was the only one with an authentic railroad crossing cross buck at the top of the steps from street level ([photo left](#)). He also participates in the Little Free Library program by providing a box of books near the sidewalk. Whimsically, his box is in the form of a boxcar lettered for (of course) The Reading Railroad. Ken has

built three separate model railroads in his basement by stacking them vertically ([photo right](#)). The top level is his O-scale Shepard Branch based on the B&O's trackage in Southeast D.C. set in 1958. His track is all hand-laid and has numerous structures and switching locations for operations using switch lists (photos 30-32) along with a waterfront scene featuring the B&O tugboat William J. Dickey (photo 33). In



the middle level, he has built an O-gauge three-rail Potomac & Patuxent Railroad to operate old Lionel, American Flyer, and Marx locomotives and cars, including a vintage deck plate bridge (photo 34). At desktop level is the Ohio River & Western On30 layout set in southeast Ohio in 1912 (photo 35). He has been working on adding numerous structures to upgrade from his mockup ones (photos 36-37). From what I saw that Ken has stuffed into his three-layout basement, adding a bunch of additional structures should be no problem for him.

[\[More Ken Wilson photos from the layout tours follow on the next page.\]](#)



Glenn Olsen's Layout



Bill Demas' layout



Ken Nesper's Layout



AUGUST 8TH DIVISION MEET REPORT

Article and Photos by Alex Belida, MMR

Summer vacations and related obligations meant only a small group of members were in attendance at a Potomac Division meet on August 8th at the Dranesville Government Center in McLean, Virginia. But the meet proved lively, nonetheless, with participants enthusiastic and engaged in the program of two more Achievement Program clinics plus a third clinic on the newly-popular topic of micro layouts.



Ernie Little Photo

Alex Belida, MMR (photo left) led off with his clinic on the Motive Power AP category, asking the audience to examine the requirements closely and then discussing how he advanced from tinkering with an old Roundhouse Climax and making a small GE 23-ton boxcab kit to building the required three Merit Award winning HO scale engines, including a vertical boiler Climax that he scratchbuilt.

Alex displayed the engines so that the attendees could examine them closely. (Next to the engines, Lee Stoermer also displayed a gas station he built from a kit but added extra details that enabled him to win a Structures Merit Award (photo below).

Superintendent Ernie Little, MMR followed with his clinic on the AP Electrical certificate, outlining the requirements and stressing that members should not overread them. He noted, for example, that many of the requirements can be met with commercial electrical components and do not have to be scratchbuilt (photo next page).





After a break for lunch and the distribution of door prizes (books), Senior Assistant Superintendent **Greg Cassidy** (photo left) presented his clinic on the making of an On18 micro layout built on a 2'x2' base of pink foam insulation.

The layout depicts an early New Mexico mine with characteristic Southwestern rock formations.

Greg noted various advantages of micro layouts, saying that they are relatively inexpensive to make, they can be built more quickly than a full-size layout, and they are easily transportable to meets and shows.

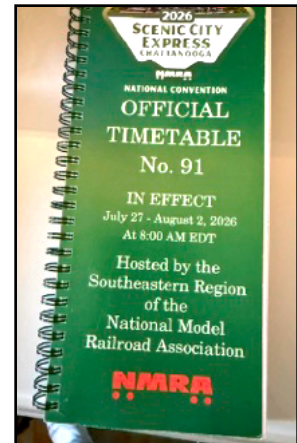
The Dranesville meet included donuts, sandwiches, and other refreshments in the fee charged for attendance.

CHATTANOOGA NMRA CONVENTION REPORT

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

The NMRA National Convention, “*Scenic City Express*,” was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, from July 27th to August 2nd, and hosted by the Southeastern Region of the NMRA. This would be my first National Convention, and the Admiral (my wife) and I started the trip by driving to Dublin, Virginia, on Sunday, July 26th, staying the night, and then driving on to Chattanooga on Monday, July 27th.

We arrived at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Chattanooga at around two in the afternoon and checked in. Then, I went to the convention center to pick up my registration package and scout out the venue. The Chattanooga Convention Center is 100,000 square feet in size and has several exhibit halls. One of them is where the National Train Show was held Friday and Saturday, while smaller meeting rooms were used for the various NMRA National Convention clinics, Modeling with the Masters®, the NMRA Board of Directors meeting, and other associated activities. Many NMRA members were already there when I arrived and, like me, were scouting out the venue. The check-in process was smooth with NMRA staff and NMRA volunteers getting it done. At this point, I encountered a Potomac Division member, **Paul Hutchins**, with whom I shared a few initial observations about the venue. During the week I would



encounter several other Potomac and James River Division members which included **Bob Gifford**, **Rich Steinmann (MMR)**, **Marty McGuirk**, **Paul Hutchins**, **Bernie Kempinski (MMR)**, **Jim Young**, **Paul Germain**, **Rick Lull**, and **Phil Taylor**. Marty, Bernie and Rick presented clinics at the convention.

The NMRA Board of Directors (NMRA President **Gordy Robinson**, MMR, [photo left](#)) had had a meeting at 10AM on Monday, but I could not attend, as it was before my arrival. The Board did two things of importance for the membership. First, a new Achievement Program Category, Master Builder-Modular Railroading, was approved. Second, it was announced that the NMRA dues have been decreased to \$50.00 per year with digital

subscription to the NMRA magazine, and \$74.00 with a printed magazine.

On Tuesday, the 28th, I attended two clinics in the morning. The first was “Making Round Things” presented by **Dave Ackmann**. Dave provided information on using 3D printing to create things that are round using Tinker CAD and a 3D printer. The second clinic I attended afforded members an opportunity to meet NMRA President Robinson and ask him questions concerning current NMRA activities.

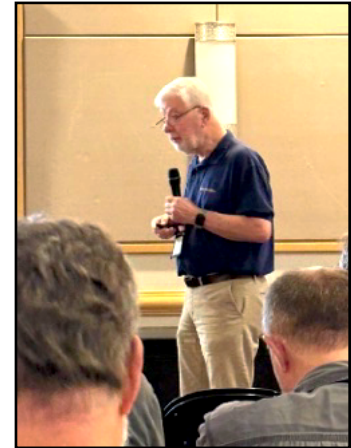
Afterwards, around 11:30, the Admiral and I boarded a bus and went to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Grand Junction Depot to ride the two-and-one-half hour “*Missionary Ridge*” train excursion. The train was pulled by a TVRR 4617, a GP10 diesel locomotive, and consisted of several vintage passenger cars. Leaving the depot the train proceeded to Chattanooga East Station, where the locomotive (photo right) was put on a turn table and turned around for return to the main station. Riders were able to get off the train and watch the turntable action as well as tour the TVRR active restoration shop and yard before returning to the Grand Junction Depot.



On returning, I went back to the convention center to attend more clinics. The first was “*A Different Approach to Block Signaling by Azatrax*” presented by **John Parsons**. This covered how to design a model railroad block signaling system using modular Azatrax signal control circuits and infrared train detectors. The second clinic, “*Arduino Board Clinic*” presented by **Seth Newman**, concerned how to use Arduinos to enhance operation and provide animation on a model railroad. After these clinics, the Admiral and I boarded another bus to go back to the TVRR Grand Junction Depot to take the dinner train. The train was pulled by the same diesel locomotive and featured a three-course dinner served onboard vintage dining cars. The train followed a similar route as the “*Missionary Ridge*” train but went beyond the East Chattanooga station into urban East Chattanooga where it stopped to allow the locomotive to do a run-a-round so it could pull the train back to the Grand Junction depot. That concluded the day for the Admiral and me, and I can say we were tired but the food on the train was very good.

On Wednesday, I was back at the convention center to attend several clinics. First up, was “*Using DCC-EX*” presented by **Steve Todd**. This covered what his team of dedicated enthusiasts provides with their open-source DCC and DC solutions to run a

model railroad. There were demonstrations of their products, and I was especially interested in their DCC-EX command station, which you can purchase as a unit, or you can buy parts and construct it yourself. From what I saw, it is a very economical device that is compatible with JMRI, Engine Driver, WiThrottle, Rocrail and more. Next, was “*Introduction to the OPSIG Achievement Program*” presented by **Scott Wooddell**. The OPSIG Achievement Program was started last year and, though it shares a common name, it is not the same as the NMRA Achievement Program. OPSIG members can participate and receive an OPSIG AP certificate for various categories of activities. The next clinic, “*CTC and LCC Centralized Traffic Control for the Masses,*” was presented by **Rick Lull**. Rick is a James River Division member, and he presented information on how to implement a physical CTC. It included a demonstration of a CTC panel he designed and constructed.



I took a short break for lunch and then took in another clinic “*Update on the Nickel Plate*” presented by my friend and mentor **Tony Koester** (photo right). It was an excellent presentation on his model railroad and the changes he has made to it. It was good to see Tony, who looked like he was ready for another 100 years of model railroading. After this clinic, I continued my quest to gain more knowledge and skills by attending another clinic, “*Understanding North American Railroad Signals*” by **John Parsons**. John told those in attendance that all of the prototype railroads have a signaling system, but they have different aspects and meanings to their signals. John provided the attendees with a handout containing “blank” signal heads and had us put round stickers in red, yellow, and green in the appropriate locations based on scenarios he provided. It was a great teaching method to help explain “complicated” signals. That concluded the day and time for some rest and relaxation with the Admiral.



Thursday found the Admiral and me boarding a bus to the TVRR Grand Station at 7:30AM to ride the “*Summerville Special*” which was sponsored by Scale Trains. The excursion started at the TVRR Grand Depot and was pulled by Southern 4501 (photo left), a vintage “Mikado” 2-8-2 steam engine with a consist of twelve vintage passenger cars. The riders were informed that this train was the longest train ever pulled by a TVRR locomotive.

The Admiral and I were joined



by Rich Steinmann and his wife, Paula, from the Potomac Division and Jim Young, from the James River Division (photo left). The excursion started at the Grand Station and went to Summerville, Georgia, through the towns of Chickamauga, Rock Spring, LaFayette, and Trion, Georgia. Included was a one-hour layover in Summerville where 4501 was turned on a turntable for all to see in preparation for the return trip to Grand Station. During the layover, Scale Trains provided a catered lunch consisting of beef or chicken BBQ with coleslaw, baked

beans, corn bread and green beans.

During the lunch, Shane Wilson, one of the Scale Trains partners, and other Scale Trains executives told us what Scale Trains is currently doing and advised that there would soon be an announcement about a new line of railroad items it will be offering. One great thing Scale Trains did was to give an HO or N scale passenger car to each ticketed rider. I got two HO scale passenger cars, as I had two tickets. Goes to show that it is a great thing to take your wife with you on a train ride. We got back to Grand Station at around 7:00 pm and took the bus back to the convention center.



On Friday, I attended clinics and took a road trip to the Scale Trains facility in Cleveland, Tennessee.

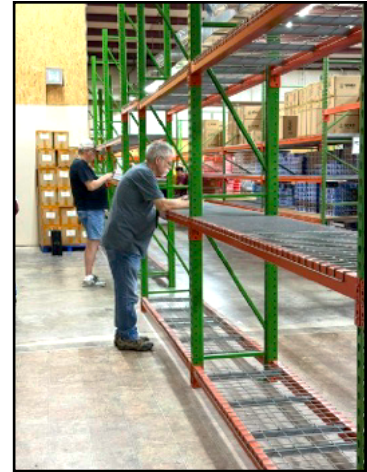
The first clinic was Bernie Kempinski's "*Manifest Destiny: The USMRR Aquia Line in O Scale*." Bernie (photo left) told us about the expansion of his model train layout to fill the available space in his home. He also discussed new additions to his layout, which include an automated telegraph, random events,

timetable, and train order operations in the 19th century. I should also warn you that if you encounter Bernie somewhere he may want to take a picture of you and, with AI and his magic computer program, he will put you in civil war era clothing and you may appear on his blog.

After this clinic, the Admiral and I retrieved our car and drove to Cleveland to attend Scale Trains' open house that had started at 11AM. I learned that GPS does not always have correct information and we wound up at the former Scale Trains building in Benton, Tennessee, to find two other NMRA members looking for the Scale Trains facility. The building had the Scale Trains logo on the door, but the lights were off, the building was empty, and there was no one around. Fortunately, one of the NMRA members there was able to get internet access and found the correct address. Scale Trains had moved to a larger facility two years ago and relocated to Cleveland,

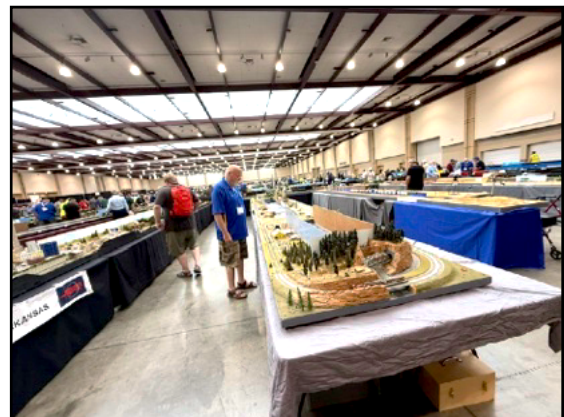
Tennessee. Therefore, we arrived at the Scale Train facility around 11:30, as we had to drive about 20 miles back toward Chattanooga. The open house was a great time. It featured tours of their facility and an awesome “sales event” where they had products were discounted far below the normal selling price. I had a yearning for a GP40 locomotive and ended up buying two. Well, not really: the Admiral bought one of them for my upcoming birthday. In addition, I acquired one for **Bob Rodriguez** and I understand it will appear on his Nickel City Line in September after going through the acceptance process. With the visit completed, the mission was accomplished, and around 1:00 pm I was back at the convention center

for more clinics. Oh, don’t let the picture fool you into thinking that Scale Trains doesn’t have much in inventory. The picture only shows a part of the warehouse ([photo above right](#)) and the “clearance sale” was to make room for more train goodies that were due for delivery the next week.



On my return, I attended **Marty McGuirk’s** clinic on “*Modeling Autumn Scenery.*” Marty ([photo left](#)) explained how to make a believable overall color tone, modeling fields and pastureland by effectively blending static and other grasses to avoid the “golf course” look; how to make foreground trees; and how to add fall season-specific details that will bring a model railroad to life in a blaze of fall colors. I also learned that Marty is now publishing books on

model railroading and that Bernie Kempinski has written a new book that Marty will be publishing. At 7PM, the National Train Show opened for convention attendees only, to allow a quick look at what was going to happen on Saturday. The show featured two large train layouts, including one T-trak scale modular covering more than 10,000 square feet ([photo right](#)). Word has it that the T-trak assemblage was the largest ever done. There were also plenty of vendors there, including Makin’ Tracks, Kadee, Walthers, Scale Trains, Walthers, Southeast Hobbies and more. I scouted the show with the intent of going back first thing Saturday morning.



Saturday morning, I went back to the National Train Show to find a lot of other NMRA members and others in attendance. During a weak moment, I purchased a Digitrax ut6 throttle, for a good price from Southeast Hobbies, to use on my layout, as Digitrax simplex is on its last legs and is no longer supported by Digitrax. I will have to move my railroad to duplex and WiFi to operate trains eventually.

A few thoughts about this National Convention: Overall, it was a great experience, and I totally enjoyed being one of the 1,300 to 1,400 NMRA members in attendance. I met and made several new friends who I know I will encounter at some point in the future. The 2027 National Convention will be held in Tacoma, Washington and in 2028 it will be held in Rochester, New York.

Overall, I feel that overall the convention was well organized, but there were a couple of things that could have been better. One was the official timetable that displayed incorrect room locations where the clinics were to take place. When I picked up the timetable, I noticed there was an eight-page addendum providing updated information. There were also several last-minute clinic cancellations. Replacement clinics were being offered, which caused confusion for the attendees. Communication regarding the changes could have been improved through the use of a convention app for members to download. If you wanted to participate in the offsite layout operation sessions, open to members to attend, you had to register very early in the registration process as they booked up quickly.

After attending the show, it was time for the Admiral and me to say farewell to Chattanooga and proceed on our journey to Atlanta, Georgia and Garner, North Carolina to see family.



NOVEMBER IS...



POTOMAC MODULE CREW UPDATE

Article and Photo by Doug Hess

The Potomac Module Crew (PMC) continues its schedule of shows highlighting the model railroading hobby to the public and attracting new members. Our largest recent show was hosted by the Culpeper Baptist Church for a 2-1/2-day event. This show is a highlight for the PMC because of the size of our venue—the church’s Fellowship Hall. Our very large layout featured 46 modules contributed by our members and was shaped as a large sweeping “S” that filled the room.



Our “Potomac Yard,” recently engineered and built by Crew members **Adam Rittierodt, Tim Gallagher, Rob Gallagher, Mark Hume, and Roger Boughton**, uses a flexible design that can include up to six ten-track (two mainlines and four sidings on each side) modules including a curve and yard throats. This provides excellent access to mount and hold trains while entertaining the public watching operations through the yard.

By the time this edition of *The Flyer* is published, the Crew will have exhibited again at Fairfax Historic Railroad Museum (FSRM) over Labor Day weekend and at an annual train show in Kensington, Maryland. The next opportunities to see the PMC will be the Rockville Lions Club annual train show (Nov 7-8), FSRM’s annual Holiday Train Show (Dec 5-6), and again at the Culpeper Baptist Church (Dec 11-13). Come see us!

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



MEET THE MEMBER: JAMES HELLWEGE

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 Jim Hellwege, who also provided the photos.



I have been active in N-scale model railroading since 1990. My interest in model railroading began as a youth, when I, thanks to loving parents, was given a Lionel layout during the heyday of Lionel. It was complete with the popular Santa Fe Warbonnet and Pennsylvania GG1 locomotives and every imaginable accessory.

I chose N-scale for my first adult layout for several reasons. I wanted to be able to fit as much layout as possible within the basement room available, while taking advantage of the relative scale of scenery vs. railroad. Also, the original Lionel collection had been sold to assist with college expenses, so that was not an option!



My layout focuses on the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad in Maine. No particular time period is modeled—this was thought to be too limiting as to what type of locomotives and rolling stock I could run. **Rule #1: Never let strict adherence to realism get in the way of your fun!**

I wanted a layout that was fun to build, fun to run without much effort, fun to watch while being able to continuously run multiple trains at the same time on different tracks, and interesting to view from a variety of vistas. Consider my layout as somewhat like the model railroad holiday displays in department store windows that have long since disappeared, but which some of us saw as youth (reference the movie *A Christmas Story* without the Red Ryder rifle).

The layout is a walk-around to enhance scenic viewing possibilities and to preserve access to the adjacent walls and windows. It is U-shaped in configuration. The rear of the U is 12' long. One leg of the U is 8' long, while the other leg is 7' long. Each leg is 4' wide, and the back of the U is 3½' wide. I found that these dimensions provided more than enough space for a substantial N-scale layout (and permitting access to the track), while not consuming the entire room (or my budget). **Rule #2: A layout will likely take all of the space that is available if you are not careful.**

My layout is strictly DC, using one MRC dual-throttle power pack and one MRC single-throttle power pack for the three 35'-38' mainline loops (which can interchange to form a single longer mainline). I also used PECO's electrically directional electrofrog turnouts to negate wiring needs for the 40+ turnouts. All turnouts are hand-operated and easily accessible. **Rule #3: The simpler the better.**



The basic ground scenery is formed from PermaScene (no longer commercially available) over a Hydrocal hardshell base (formed from Hydrocal-soaked paper towel strips placed over wadded, taped-down newspapers). Thought was initially given to ballasting the track, but this idea was quickly dropped as not being worth the time and effort once I suffered through the experience of ballasting a few sections of track (see Rule #1). Black Instant Roadbed (AMI no longer commercially available) was used for track roadbed due to ease of use—just place the track onto the adhesive roadbed and forget about it, even after 35+ years (see Rule #3). As the Bangor & Aroostook was essentially a single-track railroad traversing the wilds of Maine, wilderness landscape (as opposed to towns) plays a large role in the layout, and I particularly enjoy this creative aspect of layout construction.



I discovered, many years after having completed my layout, that I surprisingly had met the requirements for the Golden Spike certificate, the AP Scenery certificate, and the AP Electronics certificate. I had enjoyed the sense of accomplishment of working toward completion of these milestones in the hobby without even knowing that I had been doing so! Regarding Division activities, I have enjoyed hosting layout tours over the years, particularly as the number of N-scale layout tours are far less in number than HO layout tours, as are the less-than-basement-size layouts (cool as they are). In any event, track planning and scenery lessons transcend whatever scale is chosen, or the size of the layout, and I accordingly enjoy visiting other layouts and seeing everyone else's take on the hobby. Finally, I have enjoyed learning new modeling skills, be they constructing, updating, or adding new building structures; creating realistic scenery, or weathering rolling stock and structures. One fun attribute of the hobby is that it exposes one to many varied types of modeling skills, far more skills than I had initially possessed. **Rule #4: If an aspect of the hobby is not fun, such as feeling obligated to weather every piece of rolling stock you own, don't do it.**

As a long-time Scouting volunteer, I have also served as a Railroading Merit Badge counselor, imparting lessons in safety (Operation Lifesaver) and the operation of

railroads to youth, as well as exposing them to the enjoyment of model railroading (one of the early STEM activities for sure).



My advice to newcomers to the hobby is to do as much research as possible when doing your track planning; visit as many layouts as possible to get a flavor for what is possible; seek advice from others if need be; and don't let the technical intricacies of the hobby get in the way of building a layout. There are always simple ways to do things that save time and money, while still enabling you to have a satisfying layout.

Finally, my railroad experiences have also included at one time having a G-scale backyard railroad, complete with a radio-controlled live steam locomotive and time spent as a guest engineer on the Norfolk & Western 611 full-size live steam locomotive—what fun those experiences were! Happy railroading to all.



THE MEMBERS' CHOICE CHALLENGE

Thanks to all who sent in photos and brief descriptions for our Member's Choice Challenge! The variety of the submissions is much appreciated.

Our December 2026-January 2027 Challenge will be for **What's On Your Workbench**. The *Flyer* is looking for your latest project, whether it's a kit, a scratchbuild, a detailing or paint job, a scenery addition, new track work or any other layout or modeling work. You decide.

Just send your brief descriptions and a photo or two by November 5th to:
potomac-flyer@potomac-nmra.org

Our *Flyer* 1st Place Favorite Star for our **Emergency Services** challenge is awarded to **Martin Brechbiel, MMR** for his hospital car. If you have a favorite among these Members' Choice offerings, send us an email telling us which one.



A heads-up: Our February-March Challenge will be for **Animation on Your Layout**. This can include things like working crossing gates, cargo doors that roll up, water tank spouts that lower, operating coal or mine features, figures with moving arms — just about anything. Lighting or sound effects are also OK. These submissions will be due on January 5th, 2027.

I want to thank the members of the Potomac Division for sharing their work in these challenges. 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 among the most enjoyable aspects of the job of putting together each issue. Please try to get your submissions in early.

Alex

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.)

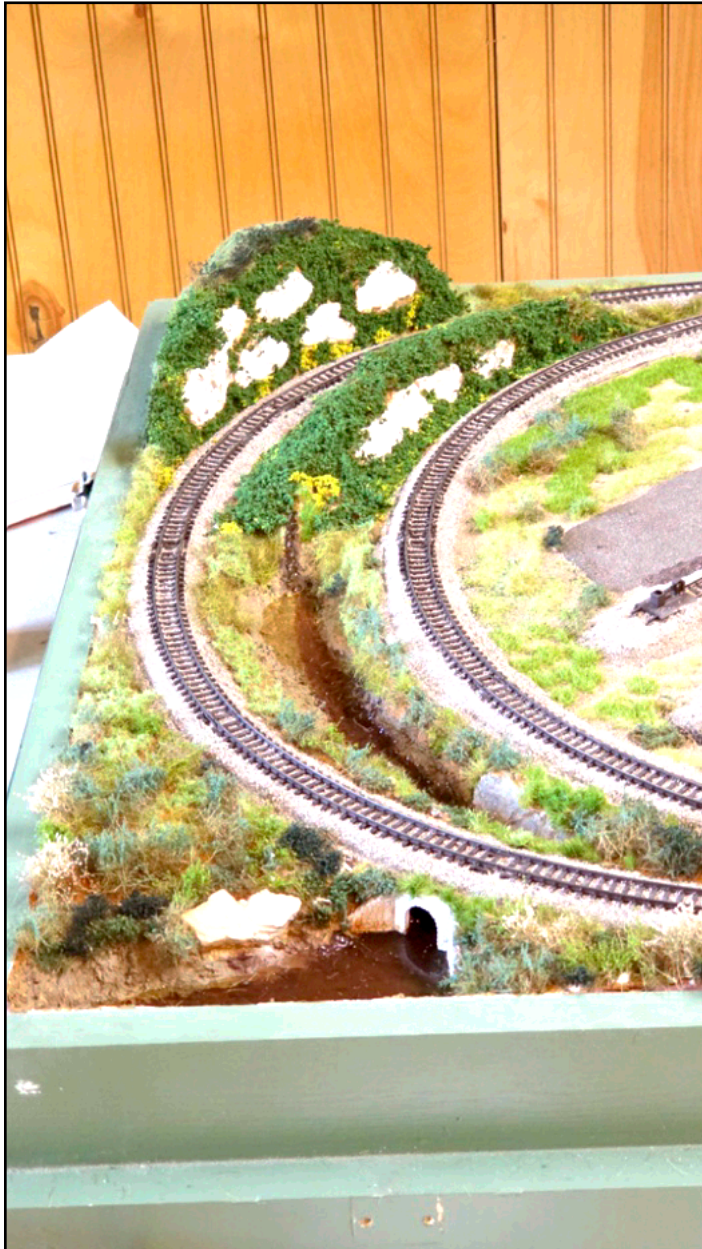
1. JAMES HELLWEGE'S TRAVELS



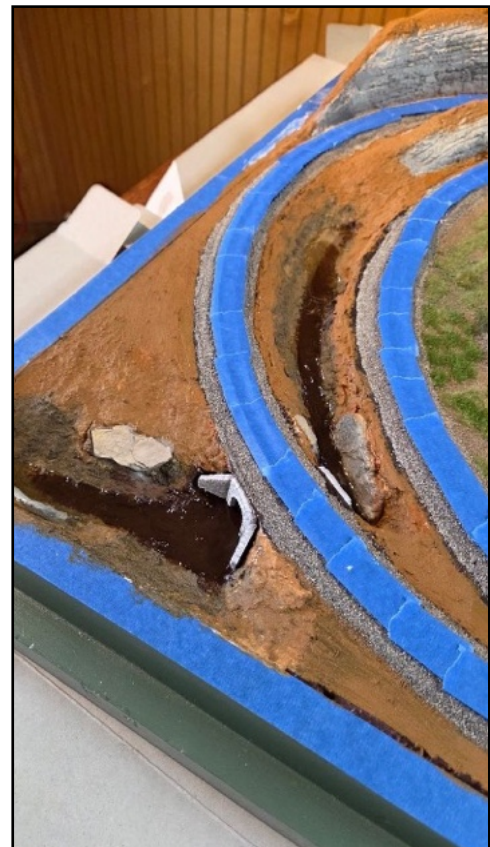
Several years ago my wife and I cruised the Columbia and Snake Rivers in the Northwest. We had occasion to see Amtrak's train 27, the Portland-bound section of the westbound Empire Builder, as it followed the Columbia River on the Washington state side on a BNSF line, with the remaining section of the Empire Builder having previously split off at Spokane to head to Seattle per custom. Several days later we cruised under some impressive railroad bridge engineering as a Canadian Pacific line traversed the Snake River in Washington state highlighted in the early morning sun. *James Hellwege*



2. GREG CASSIDY'S CLUB PROJECT



My Members Choice is adding a culvert and railroad cut to our Rockville Model Railroad Society N scale layout. That's one of my summer projects, getting it ready for the October Timonium show.
Greg Cassidy



3. ALEX BELIDA'S COWCATCHER



Several years ago, on a trip west, I visited the Northern Nevada Railway in Ely, Nevada. In addition to seeing a live steam engine operating in the yard and admiring old freight cars, I was able to explore the entire facility, including the restoration shop. I took many photos, including this one of an old cowcatcher, propped up on what looked like some old wooden tie pieces. The cowcatcher, in the unlikely case that you don't know, was a device mounted at the front of old steam locomotives to deflect obstacles on the track that might otherwise damage or derail a train.

Alex Belida, MMR

4. MARTIN BRECHBIEL'S CHURCH OF BACON



Multiple inspirations intersecting in this model; structure is derived from an existing relic of a church in Pennsylvania that's been fully restored in my build..... now being in the form of a United Church of Bacon (see signage), but also a bit of homage to the Witches of Eastwick. Structure is scratch; windows were laser-cut parts bought through Etsy; wood steeple was modified laser-cut from Frenchman Creek (I think) sheathed in copper with a bell added, and four 3D printed unpainted figures were purchased from two sources on eBay. *Martin Brechbiel, MMR*

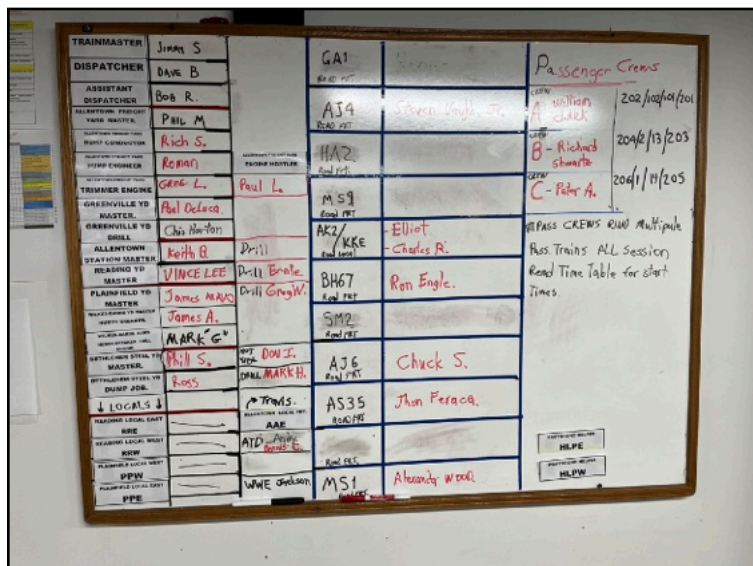
5. ERNIE LITTLE'S RAILROAD OPERATIONS

My favorite model railroading activity is participating in operations sessions. I have been fortunate to attend sessions both in the NMRA Potomac and James River Divisions, and Long Island OPS and DC/VA/New Jersey Ops sessions over the past few years. These experiences have exposed me to several excellent home and club layouts including the West Island Model Club.



If you want to learn about prototype railroad operations, you should try to attend an operations session in your area. Many times, hosts will welcome new attendees and have you work their railroad with a more seasoned model railroader that has operated

on their layout as a regular crew member to allow you to learn about operations and have fun.



This is a picture (photo left) of the assignment board at the West Island Railroad Club's layout in April of 2025. This layout is in a 5,000 square foot industrial building space in Hicksville, New York. It can handle over 50 people operating and believe me the action is nonstop. It takes two dispatchers to handle the workload. **Ernie Little, MMR**

6. JOHN WHITTAKER'S BUILDING BOOM



This is my Hotel California built from a DPM kit (M.T. Arms Hotel). It is my little tribute to the Eagles (although they came along long after the 1920s-1930s era of my Colorado & Silver Hope Railroad). This hotel will be placed in the town of Silver Peak on the last bench of my layout.

On the right is a photo of my Main Street Gas & Garage in the town of Hope. It was built from a BTS kit (Best Auto Garage).

Below is a photo of the depot for the town of Hope that I built from a BEST Dulce Depot kit to which I added a platform.

John Whittaker



7. DALE LATHAM'S COAL SWITCHING



Pope's Creek Coal 70-tonner #2 switches the Anita May Mine at Pope's Creek, Virginia on my HO scale Piedmont Southern R.R. *Dale Latham*

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BUILDING DONOVAN'S SHOP

Article and Photos by Martin Brechbiel, MMR



Once again, I've been sorting out the mélange of bits & bobs and finding that their best use is to put them all together and build something with them. That certainly beats putting everything back into a shoebox or drawer to age more. Rummaging about found a few windows (Grandt Line 3702 and 3713) and doors, and a resin chimney casting. A few slabs and scraps of clapboard were readily available for hacking and gluing. I found a pair of white metal kits for a winch (Crow River) and a gas-powered engine (Wiseman). These provided a bit of inspiration for the identity of this build.

I laid out four basic walls and tried to make these a bit more interesting than the usual rectangular box. This also makes the roof line a bit less boring. I opened these walls up for windows and doors with 3/32" square stock corners added to the front and back walls. I added some mounting cleats (3/16" square balsa) at the base of the sides. I framed out the large door opening using 3/32" x 5/32" basswood.

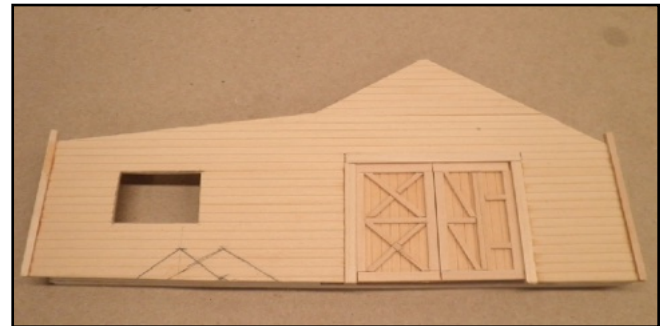




Focusing on the front wall, I trimmed out the door frames with 1" x 3" around the interior perimeter and HO 1" x 12" around the outside. I built up one door on 1/32" sheet stock using 1" x 12" top and bottom, 1" x 8" sides, and 1" x 6" to set the panels. The second door was built up on some 1/16" scribed

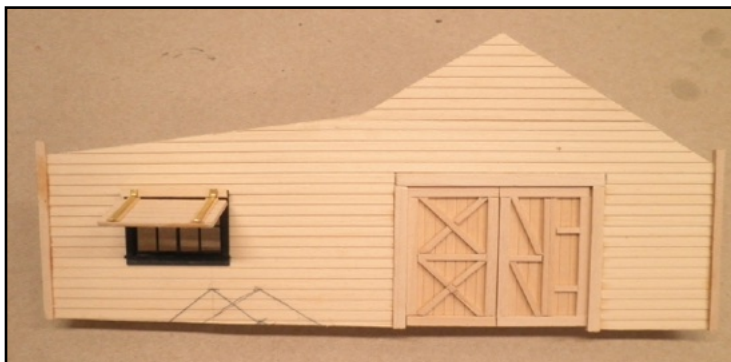
siding using HO 1" x 12" for the top, bottom, and diagonal boards. I then dropped these doors into place with a little bit of glue.

Going around to the back wall, I trimmed out the large door area with some 3/32" x 5/32" basswood. I glued scribed siding to the interior of the wall to provide a base to build out the door. Thereafter, the door area was built out to be two large doors, one of which having a smaller entrance door within it, a door in a door scenario. All of this door framing was done using 2" x 6" and 2" x 4" stripwood.

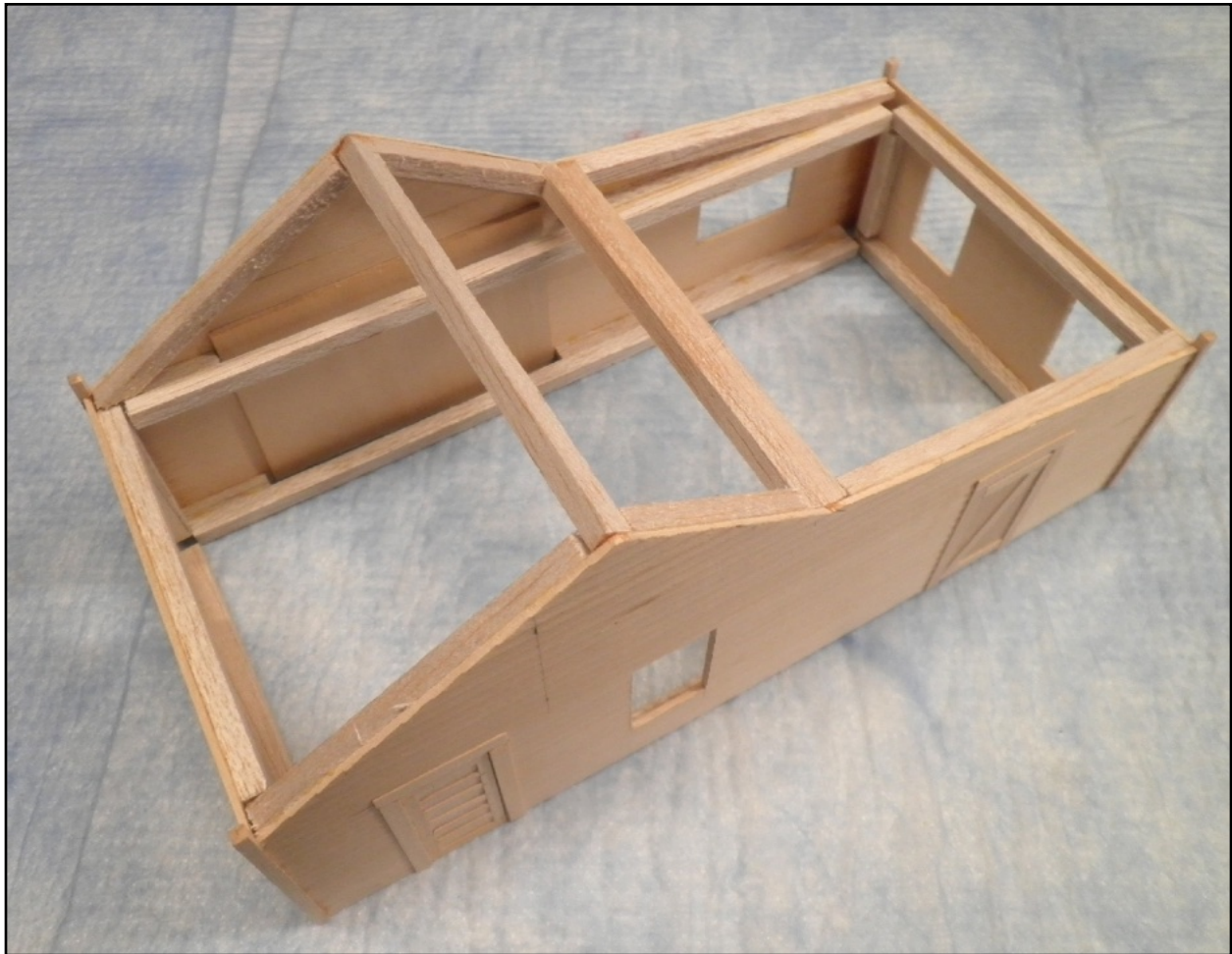


While on the back wall, I decided to make the window there a little more interesting by adding a shutter that opens from the top of the frame. This Grandt Line window was another stray that was looking for a home, a left-to-right sliding open window. I made the shutter from some scrap scribed siding with 2" x 4" cross members. I formed hinges (non-functioning) from 0.015" x 0.060" brass bent to hold the shutter partially open and then mounted to some 2" stock appended to the upper portion of the window casing. While I was making this shutter, I decided that all of the windows

should follow suit, and so more were made in a similar fashion for the other Grandt Line c



I assembled the four walls with copious amounts of 3/16" square balsa reinforcement and then also added spanning on the front-to-back walls to provide gluing surfaces for attaching the roof. I'm finally running out of



this balsa, too! Now was the time for putting on the roof. I glued down simple 1/32" sheet basswood onto the balsa surfaces and applied 1" x 4" trim around the perimeter under the roof sheathing.

Some steps toward finishing were taken next. A two-tone paint scheme was roughed in using Harbor Mist Grey and S. Freight Car Brown. I applied hinges to the one front door along with a handle (brass wire). I mounted the two chimneys into place while installation of a basic tar paper roof was initiated. I added rafter tails under the roof at



the two ends and applied more hinges to the large back door.

The roofing and the painting were completed. I added the remaining door knobs and handles, front and back, during this stage. I applied roofing tar liberally around the base of the stack and then some about the chimney. I fitted a base plate to the building and then glued it to the cleats that had been applied to the inside of the structure.

I painted the windows and shutters Reefer Gray (Floquil). After glazing the windows with overhead projector film, I installed them in the openings and secured them with a dab of Goo at the underside edge. I then mounted the shutters into place.



Now it was time to marry all those other bits from Crow River and Wiseman into the mix. But first a little basic scenery had to be installed about the building on the base plate. After painting the entire exposed surface of the base with glue, I applied ground cover. I added gravel a day later along with more ground cover, and after it was sprayed with alcohol, I added matte medium scenery adhesive via disposable pipette. Various crates and barrels (pre-



painted using Polly Scale paints) were added and glued into place using Goo or hot glue. The gas engine from Wiseman, once assembled and painted, was planted out front, presumably to be picked up by a customer.

I added a ladder around back, as that roof, with all the tar, does seem like it might be in need of some attention soon. I placed more crates and oil drums on a pallet along with some theater seating for employees.



I built up a mound around the one side using "stone dust" from the Dry Run quarry, using more alcohol and matte medium scenery adhesive. I placed the winch from Crow River, once assembled and painted, at the one side. I found that I had an oil tanks center kit from Berkshire Valley, so, after I assembled and painted, it ended up being incorporated into that stone dust mound with more scenery debris added about it. I left the fourth side of the building uncluttered.



I installed lighting over the doors, which are functional, with the wiring snaked through the base plate. I added the small roof over the front entrance door, made up from some scrap scribed siding and stripwood. The roofing was from leftover paper



roofing product. I applied weathering all about the building, using both washes and paint pigments. I created all of the signage using PowerPoint and printed it out on an inkjet printer. Business must be good, as the one sign informs you there's "No Admittance" and to "Go Around Back," while around back the sign there informs you there's "No Admittance" and to "Go Around Front." The office sign notes "Closed" and "Gone Fishing," so you are on your own at Donovan's!

Martin Brechbiel, MMR is an O scale modeler who has served as Potomac Division Superintendent and, more recently, as the Division's Achievement Program Coordinator.



FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE POTOMAC FLYER

[Editor's Note: This new feature is intended to remind members, new and old, of previous Flyer items that might still be of interest. Check [The Flyer archives](#) on our website.]



Ten years ago, the [Fall 2016 issue](#) of *The Flyer* included an article about John Paganoni's *Comboose* — a multi-purpose car suitable for a logging operation. Here's how John introduced it:

"My wife is fascinated with Shay geared locomotives and some years back, I had bought her a couple of brass imports that I found on sale while on a business trip. This meant a requirement for a small logging scene for her Shays. As I was sketching some logging trackage in the very small space I had, the thought came to me that I might come up with something that might meet my needs for a multi-use car. The solution was the creation of a "comboose" - a car that would fit in with the theme of a logging scene, and make my wife happy. I decided I would take it one step further and name the car after her as a reward for her patience and support."



Editor's Note: Check out the [link](#) to read (on page 18) how John Paganoni, MMR built this unique car he named for Nancy.



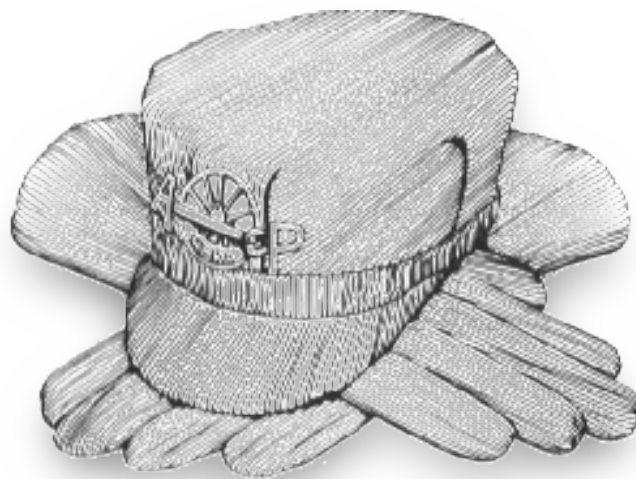
CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

October 10, 10 AM, Hobby Barn Clinic, Carpentry for a Layout, Clinician: Jerry Stanley, Hume, Virginia

October 15-18, MER Convention, Tracks to Tidewater, Virginia Beach, Virginia

November 14. 9AM-3PM, TENTATIVE Potomac-Chesapeake Joint Meet, LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED, Clinics to include AP Civil with Ernie Little MMR

November 15, 3PM, Virtual Clinic: AP Review and Wrap-Up



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

PAYMASTER'S REPORT

by Ken Wilson, Potomac Division Paymaster

REGULAR CHECKING ACCOUNT

Previous balance as of 07/21/2026	\$6,069.15
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Deposits:

Cash from five (5) registrations for Sept. 12, 2026, clinics	50.00
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Balance as of 08/18/2026	\$6,119.15
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PayPal CHECKING ACCOUNT

Previous balance as of 08/18/2026	100.00
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No activity

Balance as of 09/25/2026	\$100.00
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CASH ON HAND	\$70.00
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TOTAL ASSETS (both checking accounts and cash on hand)	\$6,289.15
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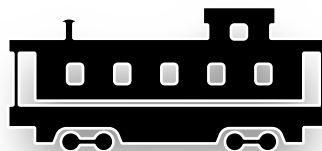
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