



# The Potomac Flyer



February-April 1999

The Quarterly Newsletter of Division 2 ("Potomac"), Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association, Inc.

Spring Quarter

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### Reminder:

**John Armstrong  
to Speak During  
Mini-Convention  
on March 20.  
Details, Page 3**

## Survey Sparks Division Changes

ENOUGH DIVISION MEMBERS responded to the Potomac Division's Interest Inventory to provide the board of directors a statistically accurate measurement of what the membership expects from the division. By the December 1, 1998, deadline, 82 of the division's 300 members had completed their survey forms, meaning that 27 per cent of those paying dues in 1998 responded. A chart showing the average response from those answering the numerical questions is included on page three of this newsletter.

Education in the form of more clinics and a mentor program led the list of requested improvements. The home layout tours are the most popular activities, followed in order by shows with vendors, module shows and the swap meet. Scenery appears to be the most interesting modeling skill in the division. Kit bashing and kit building followed closely as second and third, but combined, kits topped the list. Rolling stock also showed a high interest level. Narrow gauge modeling seems to be the least popular activity among the respondents.

While three essay-type questions were asked, the answers often blended together. In addition to more educational activities, improved communications was

one of the most frequent requests. In response, Clint Hyde, the division clerk, has begun sending e-mail updates to division members who have supplied their e-mail address. Anyone who did not receive the January e-mail but wants this service should contact Clint.

Some modelers wrote thoughtful responses which are being carefully considered. At its December, 1998, meeting, the board decided to immediately implement as many changes as possible. Other ideas will need further discussion or planning to become reality.

The following changes will happen immediately:

- More clinics will be offered starting with an expanded mini-convention in March. For a related topic, see Matt Schafer's column on page six about informal Northern Virginia NTRAK clinics.
- There will be more variety in clinic topics.
- Monthly division updates will be sent by e-mail to those supplying their e-mail address.
- The division's website will be updated more frequently and will be expanded.
- A mentor program to assist new people in the hobby will start as soon as volunteers are available. Names and specialties will be announced when they are confirmed.

## Bob Minnis Retiring from Superintendent Post

AFTER EIGHT YEARS as a division leader, Bob Minnis is stepping down from the superintendent post he has held for the past three years. Previously, Bob served as HO Module Crew coordinator and as division paymaster. He is also a member of the MER budget committee.

Bob may be best known for his numerous detailed HO modules which have been the backbone of the HO Module Crew displays. He plans to remain active in modular railroading, but he is retiring from the board to devote more time to designing and building his home pike.

When asked what he likes best about being superintendent, Bob said, "I just like model railroading and the people in it. I enjoy seeing what everyone does in the hobby." Bob said the hardest part of the job is trying to satisfy everyone.

At the March 20 mini-convention, division members will vote to fill the one vacancy on the board. At their next meeting, the members of the board will vote among themselves to determine which board member will become the new superintendent.



The ever-energetic Bob Minnis checks a module wiring problem. (photo: ©Ken Heinen)





## The Potomac Division

Division 2 ("Potomac"). Mid-eastern Region.  
National Model Railroad Association, Inc.

The Potomac Division territory includes: the District of Columbia; Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, and Rappahannock Counties in Virginia, as well as all area independent cities.

### The Division Crew

Superintendent	<b>Bob Minnis</b> (703) 391-0675 (KahluaLab@aol.com) 3016 Dower House Drive Herndon, VA 20171
Senior Asst. Supet.	<b>Ken Jones</b> (301) 216-5210 (kjonesvim@aol.com)
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### The Potomac Flyer

Potomac Division's quarterly newsletter  
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(Please call first to send a fax.)

Submission Deadlines	Spring issue	January 1
	Summer issue	April 1
	Winter issue	October 1
	Fall issue	July 1
	(E-mail submissions are preferred. Unless special arrangements are made, no materials will be returned.)	
Advertising Rates	1/8 page business card	\$25 per year
	1/4 page	\$10
	1/2 page	\$20
	full page	\$40
	back cover - 1/2 page	\$40
	(Except business cards, rates are per issue. Contact the editor to place an advertisement.)	
Change of address	Send a completed Application/Change of Address form to: Clerk, Potomac Division, P.O. Box 3204, Manassas, VA 20108.	

For more local information, see the Potomac Division website at:  
<http://members.aol.com/merpotomac/potdiv.html>

### From the Business Car

## Changes Are on the Way

by Bob Minnis  
Division Superintendent

**H**APPY NEW YEAR. I trust that the past holiday season brought you joy and many of the train items you had on your list or lists. It is now time to start using all of those new goodies.

The Potomac Division Interest Inventory results /responses from the last newsletter have been tabulated and analyzed by the board. Please see the separate story on the front page and the chart page three. Thank you to all of those who took the time to respond to the survey and to provide so many written comments. Be assured, your voices have been heard and changes are coming.

**One frequently suggested idea** is to establish a mentor program in which experienced modelers serve as advisors for those who are just beginning or who are inexperienced in the hobby. I think this will be an excellent way to pass knowledge to future model railroaders. Anyone who wishes to sign up for to be a mentor, please contact the division's clerk, Clint Hyde, with your name and area of expertise. This information will be published as it is received.

In response to so many requests, more clinics are planned. The Northern Virginia NTRAKers have invited all Potomac Division members and passengers to attend any of their informal clinics. For details, see Matt Schaefer's column in this newsletter.

This spring's mini-convention will include a full schedule of clinics highlighted by a keynote talk by legendary track planner John Armstrong. Also being explored is the possibility of presenting a clinic during some home layout tours. This will be subject to space and the host's concurrence. Another consideration is having a series of clinics in lieu of a layout tour a couple of times a year. The availability of a suitable space/location will influence this effort. Speaking of layout tours, please note that the mini-convention replaces a home layout tour in March. Enjoy the scheduled tours in February and April.

**As in the past, the mini-convention** will need several volunteers to assist the board in running a successful event. Contact any board member if you can help.

As a reminder, when you renew your dues for 1999, please include your correct ZIP + 4 code. This will greatly assist in future mailings of *The Potomac Flyer*.

Finally, in the last issue, I said that there was going to be a vacancy on the board and asked for volunteers. That vacancy will be mine. After eight years as a board member, it is time for me to devote more time to the empty layout room in my basement. I have neglected it long enough. If you have an interest in serving on the board, please contact one of the officers for details. Thank you for the opportunity to serve and to learn in one of the most fascinating and diverse hobbies in the world. See you at the hobby shop ...

## Survey Statistical Summary

Scale:		Gauge:	
Z	0	Only 4 respondents reported	
N	12	modeling in narrow gauge.	
HO	64	Everyone else builds in	
OO	1	standard gauge.	
S	3		
O	11		
G	0		

NMRA members responding	58
MER members responding	46
Potomac Division members responding	82

### How much do you feel you benefit from the following:

NMRA	1	2.90	3	4	5
MER	1	2.01	3	4	5
Potomac Division	1	2	3.91	4	5

### How would you rate your interest in the following:

Clinics	1	2	3	4.20	5
Collecting	1	2.45	3	4	5
Command Control	1	2	3.10	4	5
Computer	1	2.49	3	4	5
Electrical	1	2	3.11	4	5
Fine Scale	1	2.46	3	4	5
Kit Building	1	2	3.58	4	5
Kit-bashing	1	2	3.73	4	5
Module Clubs	1	2	3.39	4	5
Narrow gauge	1	2.08	3	4	5
Prototype Operation	1	2	3.38	4	5
Rolling Stock	1	2.	3.45	4	5
Scenery	1	2	3	4.19	5
Scratch building	1	2.83	3	4	5
Traction	1	2.34	3	4	5

### How would your rate the following publications:

NMRA Bulletin	1	2.74	3	4	5
The Local (MER)	1	2.05	3	4	5
The Potomac Flyer	1	2	3	4.05	5

### How would you rate the following:

NMRA Convention	1	2.21	3	4	5
MER Convention	1.82	2	3	4	5
Mini-Convention	1	2.69	3	4	5
Prototype tours	1	2.94	3	4	5
Home layout tours	1	2	3	4.15	5
Module shows	1	2	3.54	4	5
Swap meet	1	2	3.42	4	5
Trade Shows (vendors)	1	2	3.75	4	5

### How would you rank the importance of the following as functions of the Potomac Division:

Charitable	1	2.39	3	4	5
Educational	1	2	3	4.51	5
Entertainment	1	2	3.83	4	5
Social	1	2	3.61	4	5

## Mini-Convention to Feature John Armstrong, Paul Dolkos

**L**EGENDARY TRACK PLANNER JOHN ARMSTRONG will be the keynote speaker for the Potomac Division's annual mini-convention scheduled for March 20, 1999, at Dulin United Methodist Church, 513 East Broad St., Falls Church, Virginia. John will autograph his books for anyone bringing them. Also featured will be prolific writer and photographer Paul Dolkos who has agreed to present a clinic.

The event will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with clinics beginning at 9:30 a.m. Admission is \$4 or \$3 if you bring an entry for either the popular model contest or the AP judging. The HO Module Crew will set up a DCC-controlled modular layout. Participants are on their own for lunch, but there are several restaurants and fast food places nearby. Division members can take part in the short business meeting and election.

The following clinics were confirmed by mid-January:

- Protoscale Modeling by noted author Paul Dolkos
- Estate Planning for Model Railroaders by attorney Nick Kalis
- The Reading Lines by MER President Bill Gruber
- The East Broad Top by book author Deanne Millander, MMR
- Soldering by N scale modeler Dave Greenacre

Other possible topics which are still being arranged include scenery, buildings and home computer-generated decals.

### Potomac Division Mini-Convention

March 20, 1999 -- 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

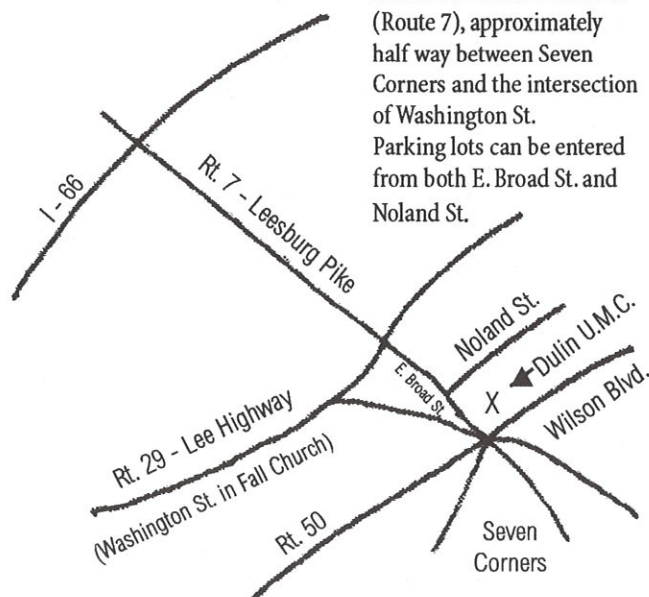
Dulin United Methodist Church

East Broad Street at Noland Street

Falls Church, Virginia

#### Directions:

Dulin U.M.C. is located in Falls Church, Va., on the north side of East Broad St. (Route 7), approximately half way between Seven Corners and the intersection of Washington St. Parking lots can be entered from both E. Broad St. and Noland St.





## AP Judges Follow the Paper Trail

by Ken Berthoud

NMRA Achievement Program Representative

**T**HE DIVISION CONGRATULATES Alex Pope and Pete Matthews for receiving their Volunteer Certificates. Alex also received his Author Certificate. Evert Beekmann and Roman Rusynko earned their Golden Spike Awards. The Achievement Program (AP) Staff Newsletter provided the following specific criteria for Author and Electrical Engineer Certification:

**Author** - A page is considered to be approximately 1200 words. For articles less than 1200 words use the following calculation. By way of example, if you wrote three articles, one of 400 words, one of 600 words and one of 800 words, you would be credited as follows:

One point for each article, plus credit for the number of words:

1 point + 400/1200 point = 1-1/3 points

1 point + 600/1200 point = 1-1/2 points

1 point + 800/1200 point = 1-2/3 points

The total points for the three articles would be 4-1/2 points.

**Electrical Engineer** - Five electrical track blocks are required for certification. Modelers using DCC are required to divide their layouts into five blocks even though these are not necessary to control trains. Blocking DCC layouts, however, makes trouble shooting easier. At the NMRA board of trustees meeting, a motion was passed that allows credit toward the Electrical Engineer Certificate for wiring a DCC decoder onto a locomotive, onto a piece of operating rolling stock such as a crane or onto a stationary device such as a switch motor. You must actually wire the decoder to the device being controlled. Just plugging one into a socket wired in by a manufacturer does not count.

**Here are a few suggestions** for those preparing their models for merit judging at the division's annual mini-convention in March. First, modelers normally direct their efforts almost entirely toward preparing the model, giving short shrift to the accompanying paperwork. In some cases, poor documentation in describing the entry can be the difference between achieving the 87-1/2 points necessary to obtain a merit award. The importance of properly prepared documentation cannot be over emphasized. Paperwork must be detailed enough to explain your techniques and the materials used in constructing the model. For example, if you produced your own cast parts instead of using commercial castings, this should be mentioned in your write-up.

Where appropriate, include plans, photographs, and other pertinent materials to help the judges better evaluate your model. Don't let the requirements deter you from reentering a model or models in division, region or even national NMRA contests. Keep in mind that if you fail to attain the required score, you can resubmit your entry for reevaluation after you have enhanced it.

For additional details, or if you have any last minute questions, please call me at (703) 354-1438.

## Industrial Archaeology Muse

by Ken Heinen

Editor

**N**OT SO MANY MONTHS AGO, a gentleman asked me a series of pointed questions about my HO Kenavator Appliances factory. He wanted to know when the prototype had been built, how many people it might have employed, what type of raw materials were consumed and how the product was distributed.

At the last Rockville Lions Club Train Show, another gentleman was curious about the same factory on my HO module, but from a different point of view. He questioned me about how coal is delivered to my fictitious structure, how that coal is transported to the furnace, how the power is distributed, and how the ash is removed. When I finished babbling about early-20th century industrial processes, he told me he has worked for 30 years at a PEPCO plant moving coal from hopper cars to the furnaces. He appraised my facility as a bit crude and inefficient, but accurate for the time period I claimed to be modeling. I took the last part as a compliment which satisfied my fragile ego, I think.

**The first gentleman** happens to be an industrial archaeologist who feels that by modeling the industries of the late 1800s, we are helping preserve the past and educating younger Americans. He explained that industrial archaeology is the study and preservation of industrial monuments which are being torn down thoughtlessly to make room for today's super-efficient structures. A notable example from the steel industry is the replacement of the open hearth furnace with the electric furnace. By studying the economic, social, technological and historical aspects of factories from the latter part of the industrial revolution, we can understand early methods of production, working conditions, social patterns and economic principles in their historical setting. We can have a glimpse of daily life a century ago.

**Now, I had never thought** of my models in such lofty terms. Industrial monuments, indeed! After all, they are the backdrop against which we run trains. Actually, when I built that particular factory I was thinking about the manufacturing process but in the sense that I wanted the structures to handle as many types of carloads as possible in my limited space. Besides transporting the product, I had considered receiving raw materials, supplying power and discarding scrap from the manufacturing process and from coal burning. The five-story height of my buildings, of course, hides the fact that there is nothing behind them except painted masonry. I was unaware that such structures are called vertical industries.

These two men have given me a new perspective on my modeling. In the future, I plan to understand more thoroughly through research what my industries do and how they relate to their surroundings and historical periods. Maybe I will photograph my finished structures, then write compelling histories. I can use my computer to blend these into small handouts which I can give to visitors to pique their curiosity about the industrial past.



## Try This Tender Improvement for Your Bachmann 2-8-0

by Ken Heinen

photo by the author

**L**AST ISSUE I RELATED THE SAD SAGA of how my Bachmann 2-8-0 engine found its way onto the basement floor in an untimely manner. Since the plastic pin which joins the engine to the tender was severed on the tender, I chose to make a radical improvement. I can now claim a limited success on the repair project. One of the criticisms of this locomotive is that the tender is too long. At the January Greenberg Show, I found a dealer who was offering a short Mantua tender sans engine. Before I share my secrets, I should note that my forte in this hobby is weathering buildings, not rewiring steam locomotives.

**My concern about fitting the circuit board** into the small tender was justified, but with minor filing I was able to shoehorn it in diagonally. There is, however, insufficient room for DCC control, at least not the way I went about it. My excitement when the 2-8-0 actually ran was quickly dampened as I yanked apart the wires to separate the engine from the tender. Whatever you do, never pull the plugs apart by the wires. To my horror, two of the wires broke from the socket. Being unable to find a way to replace them, I decided to cut the rest of the wires, then join the ends to make a permanent installation.

Guess what? The color of the wires on the engine and on the tender do not match. Still worse, two colors are repeated, but not in the same order. After several (\*&%#) experiments, I finally got the darn thing running. I carefully soldered the very fine wires together, mumbling all the while that my chubby fingers were never intended for that kind of work.

**Even an electrical klutz** like me knows that bare wires in close proximity to each other spell disaster. Keep the chuckles to yourself as I tell you that I carefully coated each wire with five-minute epoxy to keep them from touching one another. The result was ugly, I mean really ugly, but they were insulated. Luckily, there was enough wire so that I could tuck the whole mess inside the tender. No one will ever know just how inept I am at wiring until some wise-guy asks why the headlight is not lit.

If you are familiar with this particular tender, you may be wondering how I was able to jam all those wires into a model whose coal load touches the floor at the front. Thinking grandiosely, I whittled down the metal floor with my power bench grinder. You know, the delicate instrument one uses to hone garden tools. Fortunately, I had the foresight to remove the plastic tender shell so that it did not melt from the heat. Not so with my right index finger. The smell of burning flesh sent my scurrying to the refrigerator for a cube of ice to soothe the pain.

**I was observant enough** to note that the original tender is plastic and the replacement one has a zinc alloy base. Since the engine's drawbar screw is anchored to the frame, I reasoned correctly that the original metal drawbar would short circuit. I found a shopworn fiber one from an old engine which suited the situation. It did not occur to me, however, until I saw wisps of white smoke curling from the tender, that the metal base might come in contact with the circuit board. A strategically placed piece of 3x5 card nicely met that challenge.

When I applied the power, I was greeted with another red light on the power pack. Finding nothing amiss after I again tore the whole blessed engine apart, I discovered that the alligator clips I had snapped to the power pack terminals were touching. With a sheepish grin, I put everything back together, installed Kadee couplers, exchanged the deep-flanged Mantua tender wheels for the scale ones from the Bachmann tender and brushed on a little chalk weathering. Even though it copies no prototype, I like the look of the finished model and it runs well, including slow switching. Hopefully, the internal cancer won't eventually catch up with me.

As Ken Berthoud so wisely suggests in his NMRA Achievements Notes, it is important to properly document what you did to prepare the model so that you can receive all the credit you deserve. Well, now...





## All Meets Are Informal Clinics

by Matt Schaefer

**N**ORTHERN VIRGINIA NTRAK "CLINICS" are open to all Potomac Division members and passengers. My definition of a clinic is "a place where you take ones that need help." According to this guideline, all of our meets and train shows can be considered to be clinics. To illustrate my point, a new member brought eight feet of modules that needed track reconstruction and scenery work to the Chantilly, Virginia, show on January 2-3. Several of our members helped with the face lift.

I spent part of that same weekend at Chantilly gathering comments about my huge 300-module layout planned for the August, 1999, GATS show in Richmond. This sparked a lively discussion about dispatching 35 trains and crews at the same time. Also, I was getting help on how I could speed up the running time on the 55 miles of radio-controlled Red Line Route.

**These are just examples** of the range of questions that can start informal clinics at any show or at either of our two regularly scheduled meetings held every month except December and January. The first Sunday of each month we meet from 1 to 5 p.m., at the Prince of Peace Church just east of the Giant Food Store on Keene Mill Road and Rolling Road, about 2.6 miles west of Springfield. We call this our "backshop" meet. Every third Sunday we meet from 1 to 5 p.m., at the Fairfax Station on Fairfax Station Road, which is the first traffic light north of the Burke Center Parkway on Route 123. Modules are set up with trains running at all of these meetings. Some are Aristo-controlled, some DCC. Please do not wait for a schedule with your favorite clinic subject. Come to our informal clinics and bring your sick ones, from dispatchers to trees. There is always someone there who can help you.

All of our activities are listed on our website at <http://www.nvnttrak.org/>. You may also call Superintendent John Drye at 703-698-7148 for details.

## Dues Structure Clarified

There still appears to be some question about the current division dues structure. The division dues for 1999 are \$4.00 for members and passengers. In order to be a member of the division, you must also be a member of both the Region (MER) and National (NMRA). The word member refers to participation at all three levels. If you do not wish to maintain membership in all three levels, and only wish to pay dues to the Potomac Division, then you are a passenger. Annually, this entitles you to the four issues of *The Potomac Flyer*. Admission to other division events for passengers is extra or may be higher than the charges to members. Passengers cannot vote or hold office.

## DCC Control Used in New Way

by Bruce Strickland

**T**HE END OF 1998 WAS RATHER quiet for the HO Module Crew. Due to a conflict with the museum's schedule, we did not make our annual appearance at the National Capital Children's Museum the weekend after Christmas. This was the first time that we did not set up for the children and their parents since our first public event there eight years ago. We hope to return next year.

Normally, we participate in the Greenberg Train Show at Chantilly, Virginia. This year, however, Greenberg officials wanted to make room for an O-scale exhibit in a trailer. They asked our crew and the Prince William Model Railroad Club to pass on the show to make room for this special exhibit. We did, however, set up at the Chantilly Great American Train Show in October. The 22-module railroad featured a new corner module by Mark Andersen.

**In November, our railroad** at the Rockville Lions Club Train Show included modules from the other two module groups in the area. Joel Hoffman represented the Prince William Model Railroad Club and Jim Law covered for the Piedmont Model Railroaders. The 38-module railroad filled the whole auditorium. Bill Brandon and his son debuted a new module which features a "Star Wars" scene which many adults as well as children seemed to enjoy.

We participated in the Fairfax Station Train Show in early December. Although this show represents one of the smallest railroads that we set up, it did feature a first. We used our DCC capabilities to run trains in two directions on the same track at the same time. Colin and Lindsay became so proficient that they could operate with very few stops and no collisions. There were, however, a couple of sideswipes and a few close calls. Please come by the Lyceum in Alexandria on the last weekend in February to say hello. We are always looking for new members. You can contact us via our website at <http://members.aol.com/pmchorr01/>, e-mail at [Bstricklan@aol.com](mailto:Bstricklan@aol.com), or phone me at (703) 361-5620.

## Some Modules Need Upgrading

**A** FEW RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY commented that some of the modules in all of the scales are showing considerable wear from so much handling. Even before I read those observations, I had noted that my own HO modules, which are six or seven years old, have been looking quite tired lately. Suggestions included either sprucing up modules before meets or possibly starting fresh. Enough said. I have already cut the framing for new modules which hopefully will be built in the near future.

Other respondents mentioned that unslicked modules can detract from an exhibit. Works in progress are acceptable if they show advancement from meet to meet because they can be an inspiration to other modelers to get off their duffs. --Ken Heinen



## The Berkshire Air Line Railway

### Open House at Bob Rosenberg's New England Prototype HO Scale Railroad

**6623 Claymore Court, McLean, VA (703) 356-2633**  
**Sunday, February 28, 1999, 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

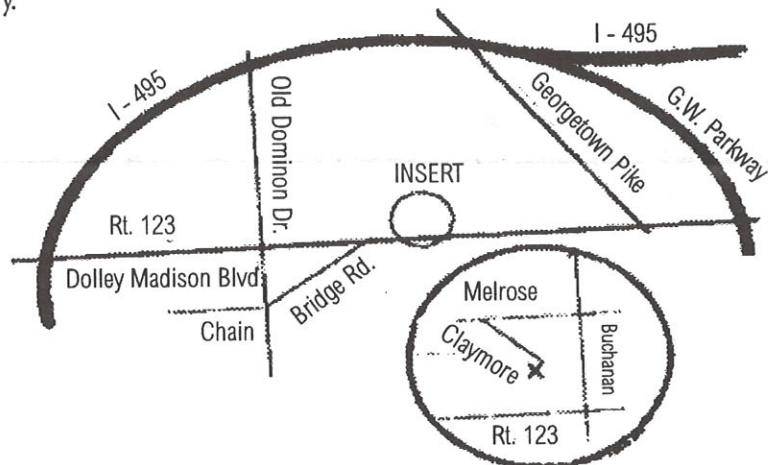
**HO SCALE:** The BAL is representative of many New England short line railroads which were built by local entrepreneurs to be leased to larger roads. This one is a fictional operation of the New Haven and the Boston & Maine located in Massachusetts. It runs from the Springfield line of the B&M at Northampton southwesterly across the Berkshire Hills to the Pittsfield line of the New Haven (formally the original Housatonic RR) at Ashley Falls, about 45 miles. Between the two end points, it crosses the Boston & Albany (NYC) at Huntington, crests the Berkshire at Big Pond (East Otis, current site of Otis Reservoir) and sends a branch from Montville to Roosterville.

The name is a satirical reference to the 19th century Boston & New York Air Line which later became the New York & New England and the New Haven. It appeared on the map as a straight line between Boston and New Haven. However, with its many sharp curves and steep grades, it was an early example of "questionable" advertising.

The model is a 125 foot single track point-to-point with passing sidings, a hidden storage yard and a connecting loop for continuous operation. Features include some hand laid track, custom built turnouts, three per cent maximum grade, and 30 inch minimum main line radius. Scenery is hydrocal dipped towels over screen with both painted and printed backdrops. There are two local cabs, three walk around modified TAT4s and dispatcher operated rotary switch block control. The main line is code 100 track. The yards and sidings are code 70 rail. The time frame is the late 40s to the middle 50s, the transition period in that region from steam to first generation diesels. Future plans include independent operation with its own equipment when the current lease expires, an extension to Amherst to interchange with the Central Vermont, additional sidings, replacing visible manufactured turnouts and more detailed scenery.

#### Directions:

- Take Rt. 123 (Dolly Madison Blvd.):
- Coming from the Tysons Corner area,
- Left on Buchanan Street
- From Washington,
- Right on Buchanan Street
- Left on Melrose
- Left on Claymore
- 6623 is at the end of the court on the right



#### Interesting Internet...



One can find lots of useful modeling information at the website run by Wayne Roderick, whose Teton Short Line in Pocatello, Idaho, "has been evolving since 1965 in the basement of the CEO's home." Roderick presents articles, pictures and circuit diagrams of solutions he has developed himself, including control systems, signalling, lighting, occupancy detection, computer integration, as well as links to other model railroad sites. The address is:

<http://www.ida.net/biz/tetonsl/railroad>

--Harry Bacas

Allan Gartner's website will be especially interesting to modelers using or considering digital command control. It is a well-organized site with a table of contents to point you to the information you want. Topics include soldering, getting parts, using miniature lamps, wiring switches, tips on wiring specific locomotives, sound, and how to read a schematic. I really appreciated one article, called "Demystifying Hex," in which he shows how to read and write hexadecimal notation without a chart--a skill essential for easy decoder programming. The page has links to a couple of dozen manufacturers, including our own Springhaven Shops. The address is:

<http://members.aol.com/wire4dcc/homepage.htm>

--Harry Bacas



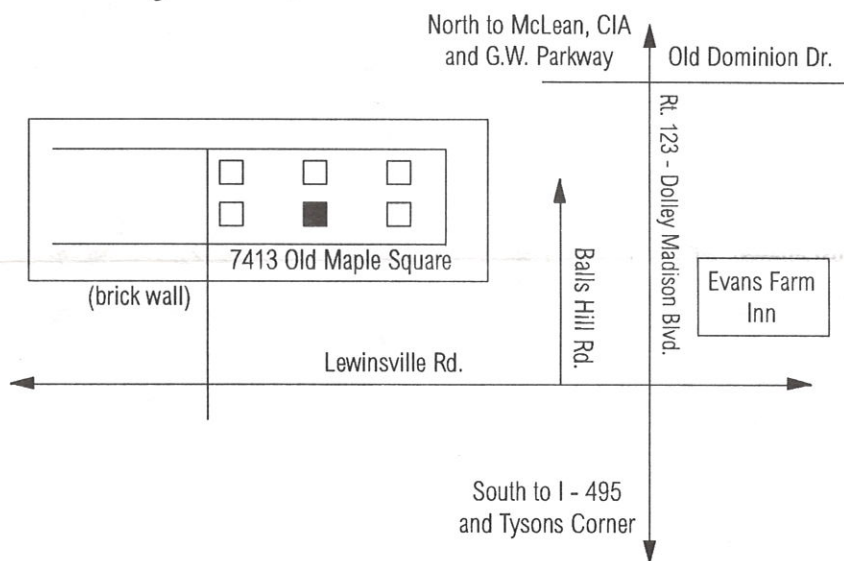
## The "Rathole" District of the Southern Railway

### Open House at JD Smith's Large HO Scale Railroad

**7413 Old Maple Square, McLean, VA (703) 734-0049**  
**Sunday, April 18, 1999, 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

**HO SCALE:** The Potomac Division has visited JD Smith's "Rathole" District twice in past years, observing the railroad's development over time. The 1976-1982-era pike has been featured in *Railmodel Journal* and *Mainline Modeler*. When he moved to a new home with a more expansive basement after the division's last visit, JD dismantled his former "Rathole" to develop a more prototypical rendition of Southern Railway's famous Second District. He refers to this layout as "Rathole II." The new layout, which starts at Emory Gap, TN, runs through the Cumberland Mountains to Danville, KY, with a main line run of over 350 feet. JD plans to model key sections of this 138 mile district.

All of the bench work and nearly 400 feet of track have been completed. Four major yards plus hidden staging will be constructed. Digitrax Radio Control and walk-around plug-in controls allow engineers to follow their trains as they tackle grades, tunnels and "S" curves of the "Rathole." When all components are fully operational, eight engineers will be required to move trains over the line while others perform duties as yard masters or CTC dispatchers. JD procured the actual CTC panels from the real "Rathole" this past year when Norfolk Southern switched to a computerized display. The original panels have been installed and are ready for connection to "Rathole II." JD wants all visitors to understand that this is a layout under construction. You will see very little scenery, but much of the trackage is in place with the main line operational. Trains will be operating and tackling the grades. For those contemplating moving from armchair concepts to creating a layout from years of thought, here is a chance to get motivated.



#### Directions:

- Take Rt. 123 (Dolly Madison Blvd.):
- Coming from the Tysons Corner area,
- Left on Lewinsville Road
- Coming from Washington,
- Right on Lewinsville Road
- Pass first light at Balls Road
- Right at second light (go into Maplewood development through brick wall entrance)
- Take first right onto Old Maple Square
- 7413 is middle house on left (7413 on box)
- Signs will direct you to back yard patio

#### Extra Spikes

### Our Readers Share Ideas. . .

**Cutting Homasote:** Homasote is a gray half-inch-thick cardboard-like material which can be purchased at lumber yards in four by eight foot sheets. It does a fine job of sound deadening. Unlike plywood, it is easy to drive nails into Homasote. If used by itself, it will sag, so put plywood under it.

Cutting Homasote is a bit tricky. Circular saws make a horrible mess, blowing gray shredded fine-particle paper dust everywhere. The cuts are straight, but not clean. Sabre saws with fine teeth make a smaller mess and you can cut curves. Razor knives make mess-free cuts, but using them is impossible for large pieces. The best approach is to use a "knife blade" (also known as a lino-

leum blade) in your sabre saw. It has no teeth, which means there is no dust. In fact, the cut surface is glassy smooth. It is a tempered blade, so it can take the heat of friction while cutting. It can cut as straight as you can manage or follow any curve you need. No mess eliminates the worst aspect of Homasote. Blades cost two dollars for a two-pack at Sears (part number 28814.) -- *Clinton Hyde*

**Chain Link Fence:** Wedding veil material from a fabric shop makes good looking HO chain link fence. Shops often have scraps for sale. The barbed wire on top of the fence can be made from real cotton thread, not synthetic or nylon. -- *Bob Minnis*

**Your Ideas:** If you have developed a technique which is a little different, please mail it or preferably e-mail it to the editor. Any topic of interest to model railroaders is acceptable.



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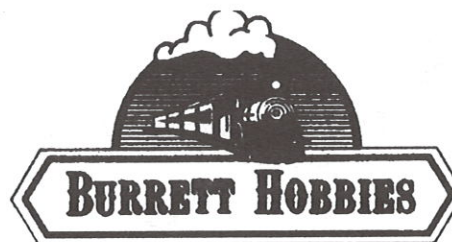
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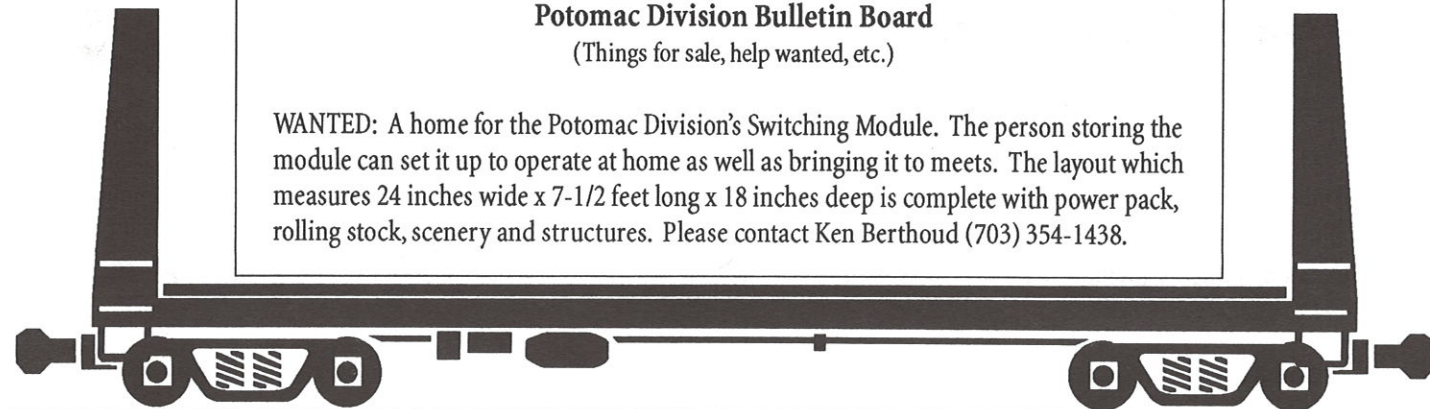
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## Potomac Division Bulletin Board

(Things for sale, help wanted, etc.)

WANTED: A home for the Potomac Division's Switching Module. The person storing the module can set it up to operate at home as well as bringing it to meets. The layout which measures 24 inches wide x 7-1/2 feet long x 18 inches deep is complete with power pack, rolling stock, scenery and structures. Please contact Ken Berthoud (703) 354-1438.





# POTOMAC DIVISION

Division 2, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association, Inc.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND INTEREST SURVEY

The Potomac Division provides various activities for all interested model railroaders, such as home layout tours, prototype tours, and a Mini-Convention every March. We publish a quarterly newsletter, the *Potomac Flyer*, detailing Division activities. We proudly boast one of the greatest concentrations of model railroading talent in the country with over 10 NMRA Master Model Railroaders in our area, as well as hundreds of other outstanding modelers.

The Potomac Division encompasses: Washington, DC; Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties in Maryland; and Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, and Rappahannock Counties in Virginia, as well as local independent cities. Local residence and MER or NMRA membership are not required for Division membership. Anyone interested in learning more about model railroading, improving their modeling skills, and enjoying the company of fellow model railroaders is invited to join the Potomac Division.

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Check here to indicate a change of address: ☐

Name:

Street Address or P. O. Box:

Additional Address:

City:  State:  ZIP + 4:  E-Mail address:

Home Phone:

Work Phone:

NMRA Memb. No:  Exp. Date:

MER Memb. No:  Exp. Date:

Birthdate\*:

\*-NMRA and MER use birthdate for demographic purposes as well as Life Membership applications.

NOTE: This information required by MER and NMRA

Occasionally we make our mailing list available to carefully selected model railroading-related companies. If you do **not** wish to have your name included, check here: ☐

### INTEREST SURVEY

Primary Scale  Secondary Scale

Do you have (Check all that apply):

☐ A layout or module? ☐

☐ Narrow gauge interest? ☐

☐ Module interest? ☐

☐ Traction interest? ☐

☐ Would you host a Home Layout Tour?

If so, may we visit within:

☐ 6 months ☐ 12 months ☐ 18 months

Favorite Railroad(s) & Prototype(s) Modeled:

Please list NMRA Special Interest Groups (SIGs), model railroad clubs, and railroad historical societies to which you belong:

**New and renewing members:** Please include a short paragraph or two (optional) describing yourself and your railroading interests for possible inclusion in upcoming *Call Board* columns. (See the current issue of the *Potomac Flyer* for examples.)

### DUES CALCULATION

Please fill out this section completely, including whether you are new or renewing. Renewing NMRA and MER members, please supply your birthdate, membership numbers, and expiration dates in the Personal Information section above. **Incomplete information may delay your renewal.**

**Potomac Division:** Dues are \$4 per year. Members receive the quarterly *Potomac Flyer*. Membership expires on December 31 of the current year. New members joining after November 30 will be enrolled through the end of the following year.

**Mid-Eastern Region:** Dues are \$8 per year. Members receive the bimonthly *MER Local*. Renewing members, please supply your birthdate and both your MER and NMRA membership numbers and expiration dates in the Personal Information section above. You may also write MER directly at: The Mid-Eastern Region, Inc. • Office Manager • 13212 Bellevue St. • Silver Spring, MD 20904. **NOTE: You must be a member of the NMRA to be a member of the MER.**

**National Model Railroad Association:** Dues are \$32 per year, or \$16 per year for an Associate Membership. Members receive the monthly *NMRA Bulletin*. Renewing members, please supply your birthdate and NMRA membership number and expiration date in the Personal Information section above. You may also write NMRA directly at: National Model Railroad Association, Inc. • Headquarters Office • 4121 Cromwell Rd. • Chattanooga, TN 37421. **NOTE: Associate members DO NOT receive the NMRA Bulletin.**

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Please make your check payable to **Potomac Division**. Send check with your completed application to:

**Clerk, Potomac Division • P. O. Box 3204 • Manassas, VA 20108**

The Division will forward National and Regional dues. Allow 6 - 8 weeks for processing.



# Potomac Division Calendar

☒ Mark events now which you don't want to miss.

## January

- ☐ 30 Great Scale Model Train Show, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, Md., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., adults \$5. Info: (410) 730-1036.

## February

- ☐ 13 Northern Virginia Model Railroaders, Inc., Open House, Sat. 1-5 p.m., W&OD Railroad Station, 231 Dominion Rd., Vienna, Va. Info: (703) 938-5157.
- ☐ 27 HO Potomac Module Team at The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria, Va., Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. Noon-4 p.m., free(donation). Info: (703) 838-4994.
- ☐ 28 Potomac Division Home Layout Tour - Bob Rosenberg's Berkshire Air Line Railway, McLean, Va., 1-5 p.m. Info: (703) 356-2633 (see page 7).

## March

- ☐ 13 Winchester Model Railroad Club Spring Train Sale, Clarke County Fairgrounds, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., \$3 adult, \$2 children under 12 with adult. Info: Craig Alderman, (540) 665-9898.
- ☐ 20 POTOMAC DIVISION MINI-CONVENTION at Dulin United Methodist Church, 513 E. Borad St., Falls Church, Va., 9 a.m.-3 p.m., \$4 (\$3 with model for contest). Info: Bob Minnis (703) 391-0675 (see page 3).

- ☐ 20 Greenberg Great Train Show, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, Md., Sat. 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-4 p.m., \$5 adults, \$2 ages 6-12, free for under 6.

## April

- ☐ 17 Great Scale Model Train Show, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, Md., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., adults \$5. Info: (410) 730-1036.
- ☐ 24 Potomac Division Home Layout Tour - JD Smith's HO "Rathole" District of the Southern Railway, McLean, Va., 1-5 p.m. Info: (703) 734-0049 (see page 8).

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The Quarterly Newsletter of  
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