

April 30, 2016 Minicon Report

by Jesse Cantrill

Forty-eight members and some 20 visitors attended the annual Mini-Convention on April 30 organized by the Minicon Committee. The all-day event was held at Saint Matthew's United Methodist Church in Annandale—a lovely space with plenty of room for layouts, clinics, and socializing. Many thanks to church members for sharing this facility. Tom Brodrick was the Floor Chair.

Guenther discussed the pleasures and problems of modular railroading. Nigel Phillips explained how to correct the (upside down) brake system detail on Athearn 'Blue Box' freight cars. Gil Fuchs showed how to install Keep Alive devices. John Paganoni demonstrated the use of artist's chalk to weather locomotives and rolling stock. Late in the day Nigel Phillips demonstrated the



Setting up the modules

Ken Wilson greeted members at the registration desk and noted that “everyone was in a good mood, happy to be indoors on a damp chilly day.”

The eight clinics were each very well received. Brian Sheron explained how he designed the expansion of his Long Island Rail Road, including car float operation and how he modeled a working car float. Later in the morning Brian offered tips and tricks on layout construction and operation. Marshall Abrams showed how to use photographs and pictures to create realistic backdrops. Clarence

construction of working diaphragms from folded paper—a brilliant method that he adapted from an idea developed in Elgin, Scotland. This technique must be up there with such other important Scottish inventions as the steam engine, block signaling, and a certain whisky. All of these clinic presentations are available on the Potomac Division web site. <http://potomac-nmra.org/>. Click on Modeling Ideas in the menu on the left and then on Clinics and Libraries on the next screen. There's a wealth of resources there!



White elephant tables



Ron King's caboose: Scratch built from wood with the platforms built from individual planks. The caboose closely followed the Rio Grande design. The color foundation was a burgundy dye from Tandy Leather Company and came out beautifully for a prototypical appearance. The underbody brake detail was outstanding and followed prototype practice. The decals were custom ordered by Ron to meet the road name of his model railroad. The decal work on the caboose was excellent and the weathering on this model was superb. The gauge was narrow gauge O scale.



Martin Brechbiel's C&SL Boxcar #1 started out as the 6 pieces of wood from a PicardNovelties kit that assembles to provide basically a plain sided box with an angled roof. The entire shell was skinned in scribed siding including the underbody that includes a full truss rod and K brake system. Every exterior item was made (doors, tar papered roof and walk way, etc.) and applied to complete this car as photographed. Lettering was from Clover House.



Ron King's tank car was the same scale as the caboose and was weathered beautifully to replicate a well used unit. The tank was modified significantly from another kit to fit the needs of Ron's model railroad. The frame and tank supports and straps were scratch built and very well done. This model also sported excellent underbody details including all the brake components for a K-Style brake system. The decal work was very attractive and fit the era Ron models excellently.



John Paganini's Central Vermont Snow Train

Four module layouts were assembled and operated at the Minicon. The Potomac Module Crew set up a 12 foot by 20 foot HO layout. The Northern Virginia Ntrak group showed a 10 by 26 N scale empire. Prince William County Model RR Club displayed a 20 by 16 HO loop. Following a different concept, the Capital Free-Mo club set up a point-to-point demonstration that was about 40 feet long. (Capital Free-Mo was recently involved in construction of a point-to-point that was over 200 feet long.)

These setups, each different, had some similarities: it takes about two hours to set up a full-size modular layout, there are many places that welcome such groups to display their trains, and new members are most welcome to get involved. The Local and Interesting menu item of the PD Web Page will enable you to contact any group that interests you.

Jim Kinder ran the White Elephant tables packed with new and old treasures looking for a new layout to adorn. Several hundred dollars worth of goods changed hands using an honor system for payment that Jim brought from Long Island.

Ron King submitted an On30 tank car and a caboose that he had scratch built for judging in the Achievement Program. Both of these fine models received scores well in excess of the 87.5 points (out of a maximum of 125) required to receive an Achievement Award towards the 'Master Builder - Cars' certificate. The judges were John Paganini, Bill Roman, and Brian Sheron.

Martin Brechbiel displayed an ice house with landscape, a box car, and a self-propelled coal hopper motor that he had scratch-built. Just stunning!

John Paganini brought a model of a prototype Central Vermont Snow Train.



Doyle's Ice House built by Martin Brechbiel is a board-by-board scratchbuilt structure right down to the 2x4s and individually cut clapboards that was featured in O Scale Trains in 2015 as a construction article that was extrapolated from a photo of a FOS models HO kit. The structure has since been taken forward to be a fully detailed interior and exterior display to demonstrate the completion of a scene that will go on his layout.



Martin's scratchbuilt (kitbash from an O scale Weaver 2-bay hopper) coal hopper motor trolley that was featured in his column in O Scale Train in 2015. The hopper body was narrowed and reassembled and all the rest of the car was scartchbuilt from wood, styrene, brass, and other materials. At one point in time both coal and ash were transported to and from power plants generating electricity as these were not easily accessible from main line railroads and the traction railways acted as intermediaries.



Lance Mindheim addressing general meeting

Marv Zelkowitz and Tom Brodrick staffed the snack and lunch counters, offering coffee and doughnuts in the morning, and pizza and sodas at lunch. No one went away hungry from this event.

PD member Lance Mindheim, a noted author and layout designer, was our guest speaker. Lance used a series of slides to illustrate the importance of planning a scene first before structures are purchased and then showed how to make structures look more realistic through the use of color, weathering, and detail. Anyone who missed this compelling presentation may want to visit <http://shelflayouts.com/> for further information and materials.

Division Superintendent Brian Sheron conducted the annual business meeting. Bill White, chair of the nominating committee, presented the slate of nominees running for the Board. Four of the incumbent Board members, Brian Sheron, Marshall Abrams, Tom Brodrick, and Bill White, along with Jesse Cantrill, expressed interest in running. Ernie Little, who was elected to the Board last year, announced that he could not continue

on the Board because of conflicting personal commitments. Because there were only five candidates for the five Board positions, the nominees were duly elected by acclamation as noted on our website.

Brian announced that the Mid-Eastern Region Convention will be held in the Washington area in 2018 and asked for volunteers to assist in planning this event. Please contact Brian superintendent@potomac-nmra.org and let him know how you'd like to participate.

A special thanks to the PD leadership who went to the church on Friday evening to set up the rooms for Saturday morning and then, late on Saturday, put it all back as it had been. These events don't run themselves, but it was evident there are many members of the Potomac Division who are committed to put on a good show for the enjoyment of all of us.

John Paganoni, Martin Brechbiel and Brian Sheron contributed to this article.