

March 4, 2017 Minicon Report

Marshall Abrams, Ed Rosado, Bob Rosenberg, Brian Sheron, and Mat Thompson contributed to this report. Photos by Marshall Abrams (A), Angelo Rosado (R), and Mat Thompson (T)

The Potomac Division held its annual Mini-Convention on Saturday, March 4, 2017, at St. Matthews Methodist Church in Annandale, Virginia. Our membership includes many skilled and experienced modelers who contribute the time and effort to share and thereby promote the model railroading hobby.

Modular layouts

A highlight was the two modular layouts set up in the main room [R1, R2, R4]. The NVNTrak group set up their beautiful N-gauge modular layout with a variety of scenes on the different modules. The benefit of N-scale is that it allows more railroading in the same space compared to other, larger scales. This was evident with the long trains the club was able to run. Next to the NVNtrak club was the Potomac Module Crew (PMC), who set up their HO-scale modular layout. It too was filled with beautifully scenicked modules depicting a variety of scenes. Several cub scouts were seen with throttles in their hands running the trains on the layout!



Both of these modular layouts greatly added to the model railroading atmosphere of the Minicon.



The White Elephant sale, in the end of first floor [R3], gave members the opportunity to sell items they no longer wanted. There were great bargains if you happened to want an item that was on the table.

Clinics, Business Meeting & Featured Speakers

Following tradition, parallel clinic tracks offered alternative presentations. It was hard to decide which to attend! Copies of the clinics, or related information handouts, are available for many of the clinics on the Potomac Division web page at <http://potomac-nmra.org/Clinics/Clinics.html>.



All clinicians were well versed in the subjects they presented.

In the morning, we had Nick Kalis [A2] discussing his research of the **Oahu Sugar Company's plantation railroad on which he's** based his Fn3 scale home layout of the same name. Nick took us through some of his extensive

pictorial research of Hawaiian sugar mills and rail operations as sugar cane was harvested and transported for processing, with pictures dating from the late 19th to early 20th century. It was inspiring for modelers wanting to learn more about this almost forgotten function of early railroad days. The presentation consisted of photographs of his layout in progress, the town of Waipahu, which he is modeling, and the plantation railroad as a whole. While Fn3 could be too large in many situations, in the case of small plantation locomotives and rolling stock, Fn3 works perfectly for him. He is modeling 1944 and how WWII affected his favorite railroad.

Nigel Phillips [A1] presented a clinic on modifying commercial turnouts and scratch building others. He used PowerPoint to show that with the proper patience and right tools you can turn the old axiom around **and build turnouts "easier done than said."** Nigel also discussed appropriate wiring for DCC and power-routed turnouts as well as the complexities in



constructing crossovers and crossings.

Ramon Rhodes [A4] presented a review of **"The Santa Fe Railroad in Chicago."** Ramon took us through the suburbs of Chicago to demonstrate the complexity of lines running through the region and how interconnectivity of rail lines was achieved to ensure smooth operations in such a heavily used center of activity. His knowledge of the area was impressive, while laying out the various railroads and lines entering and exiting the region and the engines and stock used with emphasis on the Santa Fe Railroad, of course!





Gil Fuchs [A3] did a clinic on 3D printing, exploring the applicability of this new tool to model railroading with skill and abundant knowledge of the challenges and opportunities available for a number of modeling aspects. Gil went into detailed explanations on availability, prices, and uses of the different models currently on the market, including their strengths and weaknesses, and most everything else you'll need to make a decision on when or even if to invest in one yourself or to use a service to produce an item for use of your model railroad.

During the lunchtime break, we held our annual Business meeting. The two items addressed were election of the Board of Directors, and approval of proposed Bylaw changes. There were just five candidates for the 5 Board member positions, so these 5 candidates were elected by unanimous consent. Subsequent to the Minicon, the Board held a meeting by email and re-elected the officers – Brian Sheron (Superintendent), Marshall Abrams (Senior Assistant Superintendent), Ed Rosado (Assistant Superintendent), Bill

White (Clerk), and Tom Brodrick (Paymaster). The proposed Bylaw changes were presented by Bill White, as published in the special edition of the *Flyer* that came out before the Minicon, and those proposed changes were approved by unanimous consent as well.

Our lunchtime speaker was Bob Sprague [A5, A10], a Potomac Division member and also a well-known Model Railroader magazine author, who gave an excellent talk on using prototype railroads (or sections thereof) as a basis for your model railroad, and included source information on where you can locate the maps that you'll need to do the job accurately. Bob used some well-known track plans of famous model railroaders, explaining some of the benefits and pitfalls when planning a model railroad based on prototype trackage. His talk was filled with track diagrams and photos. Bob emphasized the old model railroading adage that “there’s a prototype for everything,” and proved it with some photos of prototype trackage that would make even an expert in building model railroad track components cringe, or as he said, “Would make FastTracks rich.”



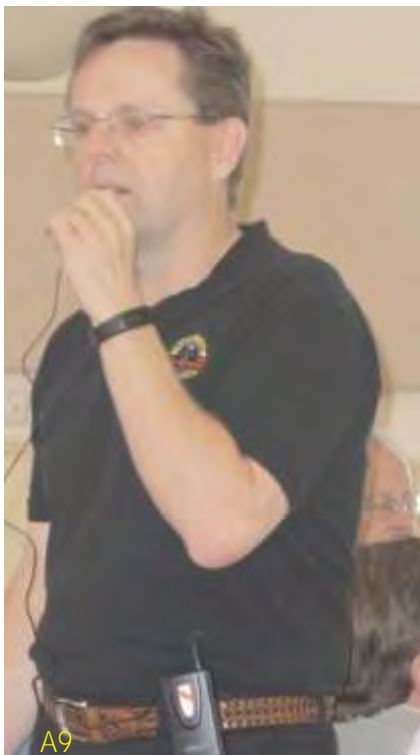


After lunch, Mat Thompson [A6] discussed ships and seaports as they are modeled on his Oregon Coast Railroad. Matt showed attendees the various model ships on the market that can be used or modified to be used on our railroads, giving tips on how best to fit and place them on model railroad layouts and pictures of prototype ships.

Martin Brechbiel [A7] presented the requirements for the AP author certificate in great detail. Martin explained the requirements for authoring papers and writings for those interested in publishing in model railroad magazines.



Bernie Kempinski [A9] finished up the day with a fascinating talk on Marine Terminals excerpted from his new book, just released by Kalmbach. Bernie discussed rail-marine operations, break bulk piers and terminals, grain and mineral terminals, railroad ferries and car float terminals, barges and container terminals. His emphasis was on the Port of Los Angeles (or POLA as he calls it), supplemented by other ports around the country. The amount of research that went into this publication and presentation was staggering. He finished with a book purchase and signing opportunity.



Celebration of Models

The Celebration of Models includes items being judged as part of the Achievement Program and others that were brought so that people could enjoy looking at them. The Models Room turned out to be much more active than last year and we had more models to review.

We were very fortunate to have John Paganoni chair the judging, assisted by Marty McGuirk and Bill Roman [A8]. The three of them did a thorough and fair job in evaluating the models. They used the NMRA matrix for scoring purposes and took the time to come to consensus on each of the models. John has shared his judging experience as guest author of the AP column in this issue.

There were eight models in the Celebration:

T1—Bruce Blackwood brought four models to the Minicon. This O scale gas station was inspired by a kit offering from Berkshire Valley Models. This nice looking O Scale gas station **takes you back to the 1950's, with a great interior, lots to look at, and a large amount of detail in the surrounding lot - protected by a scratch built fence to keep the thieves out. You can almost hear the junk yard dog guarding the side and back yards!**





T1



T2

T2—Bruce's other O scale model was a freight and passenger station complete with lighting. The back roof is off to allow viewing the interior details. This fine O scale rural small passenger and freight station could be found virtually anywhere across the US in the 1930-1950 era. It shows the need for some significant maintenance attention!



T3—Bruce scratch built this small passenger and freight station in HO. This small HO scale passenger and freight shelter could be located on almost any small railroad that passes through rural towns. It would most **likely be referred to as a “whistle stop” where the engineer would have to be on the lookout for a flag or ball signal to stop and pick up a passenger or some freight.**

T4—This Texaco station is the other HO model Bruce had on display. This eye-catching Texaco gas station brings back many memories for those who remember the days of yesteryear. You can almost hear the slogan **“Trust your car to the man who wears the star!”**

T5—Bruce detailed the second **story interior with a pool table. The black wires are for the model’s lighting.**



T6—Jerry Skeim mounted his HO scale water tower on a small diorama. This model was built from an original **water tank kit from the “early days” of HO modeling. Jerry wanted to share with our members what kits were then compared to what is available on today’s market. His beautiful module takes us back to a more quiet and peaceful time reminiscent of the setting for the “Petticoat Junction” TV series.**

T7—This truly outstanding On2 model of a Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes wood boxcar was totally built from scratch by Mat Thompson. Mat used prototype blueprints and many photographs of the actual prototype car to accurately construct a model of the prototype. The fully detailed brake system, the interior detail, the **scribed siding, finish, and lettering attest to Mat’s extraordinary modeling skills.**

T8—Tim Barr built this module as a modeling tribute to the victims of the Lac-Megantic, Quebec train crash in 2013. Several tank cars carrying highly volatile Bakken crude oil caught fire causing at least 47 deaths, Tim simulated the burning oil using an LED Fire module offered by Evans Designs.

T9—John Paganoni displayed his Central Vermont Wreck Train. The train represents the basic configuration for recovery from a wreck or significant derailment. This configuration lasted until the beginning of March **1957 when steam was terminated in the Southern Division. The “home base” for this wreck train was New London, Connecticut. If the truck-loaded flatcar wasn’t needed, it was left in the yard. Sometimes the**



T6



T7

boom car was used with a clamshell bucket crane for ditch and track maintenance, thus the presence of a clamshell bucket in the car. The models represent the late 1940 – early 1950s. The HO Scale locomotive is an N-5a Class consolidation by New England Rail Service; the boom car, crane, and flatcar are Tichy models, modified significantly. The caboose is scratch built.



Conclusion

It was wonderful Minicon! Knowledgeable and talented people got to share all that expertise on a single day. Our efforts have spread a lot farther than just the Potomac Division. Clinicians have already received e-mails from a local modeler and others in California and Colorado with friendly comments and interesting discussion **about their clinics.**