



Special Interest Report

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

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Overview

From time to time, the officers of Potomac Division receive a request for assistance in disposing of someone's model railroad. The request typically comes from a survivor or executor who doesn't know much about our hobby and who has many other things on his or her mind at the time. We use the term "executor" to refer to the person whom this report is designed to help. It also applies to model railroaders who are uninterested or unable to continue.

This report includes narratives, under the heading Voice of Experience, that describe real-life experiences in order share a wide range of situations and experiences.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
MODEL RAILROADER’S PRIORITIES	4
MODEL RAILROAD ASSETS	5
THE LAYOUT.....	5
UNATTACHED ITEMS	6
HIGH VALUE ITEMS	7
GET ORGANIZED	7
WHAT’S ITS VALUE?	7
WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS — A WILL OR INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXECUTOR	9
SELLING	9
SUGGESTED CONTACTS FOR POTENTIAL DISPOSITION	10
EXPERIENCES	10
PLANNING FOR LAYOUT DISPOSITION (JOHN PAGANONI)	10
ADVICE FROM A SURVIVING SPOUSE (ADAPTED FROM ARTICLE BY ARTHUR BOYD).....	12
REMEMBER THE FEES (TOM BRODRICK).....	13
EVERYTHING MUST GO! (JEFF & SUE SCHMALTZ)	13
COST TO BUILD & REMOVE A MODEL RAILROAD (JERRY STANLEY).....	14
A PROFESSIONAL’S VIEWPOINT (SCOTT NICHOLS, THE GREAT SCALE MODEL TRAIN SHOW AND KEYSTONE MODEL TRAINS)	15
A VOLUNTEER’S OBSERVATIONS (WALTER REID).....	16
A VOLUNTEER SELLS THE COLLECTION (KENNETH MONTERO)	18
TAKING DOWN A VERY LARGE RAILROAD (STEVE BENEZRA)	25
SCENARIO SKETCHES	25
NEARBY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	25
KEYSTONE MODEL TRAINS & MAKIN’TRACKS, LLC.....	26
NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	26
TRAINZ STORE AND AUCTION.....	26
AMERICAN EAGLE RAIL GROUP	26
TRAIN CITY.....	26
GRAHAM’S TRAINS	26
REFERENCES	27
APPENDIX: USING EBAY (BRIAN SHERON)	27
WHAT IS EBAY?	27
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SELLING ON EBAY?	27
WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS TO SELLING ON EBAY?	28
SEARCH EBAY TO KNOW HOW MUCH YOUR STUFF IS WORTH.....	28

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

MORE OBSERVATIONS ABOUT EBAY	29
TIPS FOR SELLING ON EBAY BY EBAY.....	30
WARNING (ANONYMOUS)	31

Introduction

This report collects advice on terminating a model railroad. A model railroader may decide that he or she is no longer interested or able to continue owning and operating a model railroad. Alternatively, the model railroader may be including the model railroad in estate planning. The executor of the model railroader's estate also may find useful information herein.

Model railroading is something that you enjoy doing when you are not working. The serious model railroader is involved in activities that are substantial, rewarding and results in a sense of accomplishment. This report addresses the tangible assets accumulated. These tangible assets include collections that the model railroader enjoyed seeking, locating, acquiring, building, organizing, cataloging, displaying and storing. Sometimes collectors have turned their hobby into an investment or business, becoming commercial dealers that trade in the items being collected. Investors and dealers should have plans for valuing and liquidating their inventory. While this report may be useful to them, they are not the principal audience.

This report is not legal advice nor tax advice. Talk to your lawyer, accountant or financial advisor.

One of the first questions is "What is it worth?" In most cases the answer is "less than anticipated." A good way to temper expectations is to think of the model railroad as used toys. Enthusiastic model railroaders may overestimate the cash value of their collections. Their families and survivors may assign inflated values, perhaps based on the model railroader's enthusiasm. The advent of Internet markets, such as eBay, have provided a way to estimate the market value of a collection. Market value for tax purposes is determined as of the date of death.

The value of used model railroad equipment (engines, structures, cars, etc.) is primarily determined by supply and demand. The marketplace determines value. It will take organized effort to determine selling prices. See the appendix "Selling on eBay". Dealers and other experts are also available to provide estimates.

Model railroad layouts are unique in the hobby world. Layouts may be large, filling "a whole basement," are typically built to fill the available space, and may be physically attached to walls and floors. Although a great deal of skill and effort went into their construction, they often have negative residual value. That is, a considerable effort is required to cut the layout into manageable sized scrap, remove and dispose of it. Restoration of the space for family use is often required.

If you are reading this report and are just beginning to plan a home layout, and want to consider its value at the "end of its life," you may want to consider modular construction techniques, especially if moving is a possibility or you know that you're not in your "retirement" home. There are articles about modular construction in the popular magazines.

Model Railroader's Priorities

Preparation for disposal should start while the model railroader is alive. All the considerations in this report apply. The model railroader can simplify disposal of the layout and collection by discussing priorities with the survivor(s) and executor. The model railroader can save a lot of emotional turmoil and energy, and even possibly expense, by being candid with the information provided to the survivor(s) and executor. The model railroader and survivor(s) may or may not care about the method or approach that the executor employs to dispose of the layout and collection.

Some collections may have significant value, while other are more like used toys. The value of the collection is but one of the considerations in determining how to dispose of the model railroad. Even value is not absolute, but is relative to the survivors' financial condition. The value of a model railroad may seem large to one survivor and small to another. The length of available time is another consideration.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

Preservation of a collection, (i.e., keeping it all together) can provide a legacy to the model railroader and/or survivors. In this case donating it is probably the best option. Check state law about wills, trusts and lists. It can't hurt to sign and date everything. Make hobby disposition part of further estate planning. Consult an estate planning expert for specific advice.

Another potential option is to donate some or all of the collection to a modeler's friends, or to a modeler who is just getting started.

If the decision is made to sell the collection, the priorities of the seller are important. If the objective is to maximize the revenue, then it will be important to make a thorough inventory and research the best methods for selling it. Some business owners may be willing to sell items on consignment. This minimizes their risk, but will take time. If selling the collection quickly is a priority, then working with local business owners may be the best option. However, this will generally mean getting a lower return on the collection.

Regardless of the priorities, the overall revenue from selling the collection will depend on its individual parts. Some items may have a much higher value, and it may be worth disposing of them individually. Often, the items in a collection are common and will only have value to those buyers who are interested in that particular item. As stated before working with an expert or a local model railroad business owner is recommended.

Model railroad assets

Model railroad assets can generally be divided into two classes. First, there is the layout, which could either be custom built to fit a particular room or the desires of the owner, or could be built as a set of modules. The second class of assets are all of the unattached items such as engines, rolling stock, removable scenery, buildings, tools and supplies.

The Layout

Let's consider the layout first. Everything that is removable, such as building, are considered as "unattached items" below. A custom built layout is most often attached to walls and floor, and is built on a wooden frame. Scenery is constructed out of a variety of materials that won't withstand much handling. Railroad tracks wind through this landscape. Under the layout "ground level," usually accessible by getting down on the floor and working overhead, is a maze of electrical components. While the general purpose of these components is easily understood, the specifics of each layout are barely understandable, even to the model railroader who built it. Moving and re-using a custom layout requires a great deal of work. The layout will need to be cut up and significant damage to the scenery is likely. When put together there may be alignment or electrical problems that prevent the layout from working properly. Most layouts are not worth the effort. One approach is to cut the layout in a way that can be converted into a modular configuration. Even then, some parts of the layout are likely not going to be reusable.

Layouts built using a modular approach are far more salvageable. A modular model train layout is put together from several small railroad layout building blocks (called modules) that connect together to form one big model train layout. The modules are generally designed for easy transportation and assembly into a working layout. Assembly is supported by standards that specify mechanical and electrical interconnection so that modules may be connected. For more information about modules see [NMRA Module Standard - National Model Railroad Association](#) or [Free-mo](#). A very common size for modules is 2 X 4 foot. It should be obvious to the executor if the layout to be disposed is modular. If it is,

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

the owner was probably associated with a group that coordinated setups. The Potomac Division web page has [a list of local organizations](#).

For a large, semi or fully permanent custom-built layout, the executor may have to pay for removal. Very few layouts have actually outlived their builders in museums. Most of them remain in a dismantled state waiting for someone to bring them back to life. This isn't easy! Parts of others have been given or sold to other modelers for incorporation in the new owner's layout. This isn't easy either!

Consideration of the physical plant (bench work, track, permanent scenery) is unique to the estate planning guidance for model railroading as compared to many other hobbies. Other hobbies may have collections, but none that have to be dismantled and the space restored to a typical residential setting. There are other hobbies that involve large objects (e.g., boats, looms), but these objects are not attached to walls and floors. Very few layouts are designed with thought of removal and very few are worth the effort and cost of careful disassembly for eventual reassembly elsewhere.

If an attempt is going to be made to sell the rolling stock and buildings, it might be prudent to wait for the buyers to come and see if they will buy other things like electrical parts, turnouts, and switch machines that are salvageable.

If demolition becomes necessary, the cost of having a contractor remove the layout and restore the room can run to a few thousand dollars.

Unattached Items

The unattached items, also called "the collection," includes anything that is removable from the layout along with other railroad related items. These items may have some financial value.

Examples of this class are:

- Locomotives/Engines
- Rolling Stock (Railroad Cars)
- Buildings
- Scenery (Trees, Telephone Poles, Lights, etc.)
- Track
- Electrical/Electronic Components (Turnouts, Wire, Command Stations, etc.)
- Books
- Photos/Framed Prints
- Miscellaneous Items (Hats, Belt Buckles, Lanterns, etc.)

These items may be disposed of through several different approaches. Some businesses will buy the entire collection for a negotiated amount. The purchase price of the collection will depend on the priorities of the buyer and seller. Most often, unless the collection includes unique and rare items, the collection will not be worth its original purchase price. Other businesses are willing to auction the collection, either in total or by dividing the collection into lots. The amount recovered through this approach will depend on the fees charged by the auctioneer and the interest of possible buyers.

It may be advantageous to donate the collection to a 501(c)3 tax-deductible organization (e.g., NMRA, scouts, local model railroad club, museum, library), or suggest to the survivor that they give the collection to a qualified tax-deduction organization rather than have the estate do it. If a tax deduction is desired, then an assessment of the value of the collection will be needed in order to substantiate the tax deduction. This approach has the advantage that the items will go to a home where they will be used and appreciated. Consultation with an expert is recommended.

High Value Items

Brass models have traditionally been high value, but not all brass is of high value. Older pieces with poor drive mechanisms aren't worth a lot. Some characteristics contributing to high value are:

- Rare or unusual non-brass
- Items that have a history
- Older items that are in mint or near-mint condition
- Older items that are stored in their original boxes

Get Organized

Somebody should make an inventory and determine current market value, preferably the model railroader while still alive. Digital is more convenient than paper. It easily updated, copied, shared, and stored in multiple locations. The inventory should everything related to the hobby, such as kits, supplies, parts, and tools. Digital pictures are easy to take and include in the inventory. Leave copy(ies) with friend(s), relative(s), and/or in cloud. The inventory can be a list, Excel spreadsheet, database, or dedicated-purpose program.

The inventory may also be useful for the model railroader's next discussion with the home insurance agent. If the homeowner's policy will not fully insure the layout and collection, the insured may wish to find an alternate satisfactory homeowners' policy or purchase a policy of the sort advertised in the various publications of the model railroader press (e.g., endorsed by NMRA). See the report *Insurance for Your Model Railroad* - by Marshall Abrams at http://potomac-nmra.org/Special_Interest_Reports/Insurance.pdf.

If the model railroader didn't make an inventory, a hobby friend, a third party dealer, or an appraiser can do the job after the model railroader's death.

Make sure the inventory is accessible to the executor. Keeping in mind how much your executor knows about the details of model railroading, the inventory should provide help in identifying items. Itemize what's borrowed and lent out.

In addition to the inventory, organize the physical assets. Make it easy for the executor to associate items in the inventory with the physical items. Kits, parts, and similar physical items should be labeled and kept tidy.

What's its value?

Most used model railroad items do not have great cash value, their value was the pleasure they gave the owner during his lifetime. Realistically, many items have no resale value. Remember that values are relative, not absolute. Supply and demand are major factors, as are whims and styles. As painful as it seems, some items are best given to a charity or put in the trash. Local model railroad clubs might accept some items if you deliver them, but ask first:

- A box or two of trains that used to be setup around the Christmas tree, even with plywood with track and scenery – be glad it gave your family pleasure and let it go. The same is true of a ping-pong table size layout in the basement.
- Boxes of the kids' (or even Dad's) old trains. If everything boxed up doesn't fill the trunk of your car, the trains aren't a collection; they are just toys that have outlasted their day.
- Model railroad magazines, a few or a lot.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

Most modern era trains (from every manufacturer) devalue like a new car, they depreciate as soon as you take possession. When selling a collection, you are selling it wholesale, since the dealer reselling it incurs all the costs of carrying the inventory, advertising it, printing lists, cleaning and repairing, paying auction fees, credit card fees, packing it for shipment, etc.

It will take effort to determine if any part of a collection has value. It will take a lot of effort to get the highest possible prices for items that have some value. How realistic is your guess as to current fair market value? Have you reviewed the current value periodically, to consider fluctuations in the market, (e.g., reissue of brass pieces in plastic)? With the advent of DCC and sound, most brass engines will not run on a DCC layout unless they are upgraded with a decoder. Many brass steam engines require some serious modification to isolate the motor from the frame. Having someone professionally retrofit a decoder into a steam engine can cost several hundred dollars. The combined cost of the engine plus the decoder installation cost will likely exceed the market value of the engine.

What are similar items selling for on eBay? (See the Appendix “Using eBay”) Search for half a dozen or so different items you can describe well (maybe because they are boxed) and use that description for an eBay search term. If they show up, look at the asking price and most important, look for bids. You may want to “watch” these items (eBay has an option that lets you do that) to see if they do sell.

Ensure the physical security of the collection (e.g., it remains in a dry temperature controlled environment).

Some items can have value. Prices are based on their collectable value which means the model's condition is important. Having original boxes in good condition and associated paperwork drives up value. Potentially valuable items include the following:

- Märklin: Models of European trains made in Germany. Steam engines in particular can be worth hundreds of dollars. If you have Märklin, check the Internet for a Märklin dealer or perhaps a Märklin club in your area.
- Lionel: Some Lionel offerings are rare. Such items, in good condition, and with boxes, can be worth hundreds of dollars. Used equipment without boxes has little value unless it is a large collection – say 100 pieces or more. If you have these items, check the internet for Lionel dealers or toy train collectors
- American Flyer: These trains are the “little brothers” of Lionel both in size and value but a large collection could have value. If you have these items, check the internet for American Flyer dealers or toy train collectors
- Some hard bound railroad picture books in good condition, stored in a non-smoking home, can be worth fifty to a hundred dollars and large collections can be worth thousands. Antique book sellers are the bulk buyers of these items. They know how to value, buy and sell books, it's immaterial that the books are about trains.
- Brass models: Engines and railroad cars made of brass – painted or not – can be valuable. Years ago they were the finest models available. Today some have gained or grown in value, others still have some value although the market probably peaked 10 years ago. The best engines can be worth a thousand dollars or more. More mundane items may go for a few hundred dollars or less. These models came in nice boxes with liners; value is much lower without the boxes.
- Collectable kits: A few kits of structures have become collectables and can be worth a few hundred dollars. Brand names to look for are Fine Scale Miniatures, South River Models and Sierra West.
- Boxed equipment: Model engines and cars came in boxes. Many modelers stored unused equipment in these boxes. Many also saved the boxes of equipment on a layout, meaning the

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

equipment could be boxed if you can match it up with the proper boxes (remember the warning about some effort required?). Boxes of boxed equipment are easy for used train dealers to sell so a dealer is likely to buy them from you. Expect modest prices – like \$50 for a medium box filled with boxed cars.

- Electrical controls and powered tools: Train control systems and electronics and specialized tools such as a lathe can be valuable. These items have labels; use them to check eBay prices

Written instructions — a will or instructions for executor

Instructions to the executor can simplify both the legal and personal aspects of settling your estate. The way your will and trust documents (if you have a trust) are set up determines the exact format of these instructions. They might be part of the will/trust or they might be a letter or memo signed subsequent to the will/trust. Discuss this with your lawyer. Instructions can serve to communicate important information to your executor. Instructions are applicable to the entire estate; we're concerned in this report only with the model railroad. There might be other instructions concerning furniture, works of art, jewelry, etc.

You (and your lawyer) may decide to designate a separate executor for the model railroad or an advisor to the executor for the model railroad, in which case it would be preferable to have a separate letter of instruction just for the model railroad. This separate executor or advisor could be one of your hobby friends or other “subject matter expert” (SME). Instructions can include model railroad items that have little or no monetary value. Include a list of the items and desired recipients. The executor’s compensation should also be specified. The instructions might allow certain people to have first shot at purchasing your collection (i.e., right of first refusal).

Selling

Let’s examine selling the collection. The alternatives include:

- Broker-reseller. This could be a professional or a friend of the deceased modeler. A consignment reseller might be appropriate for high value collectible brass locomotives or cars. Typically, resellers will charge a fee to assess the value of the equipment and then collect a percentage of whatever is received from the eventual buyers. Resellers may list the items on their website. Another approach they may take is to make an offer to purchase the entire collection and then resell it, keeping the proceeds. Most resellers are reputable, but checking is advisable. The executor may need to ship the collection to the reseller for assessment and resale; careful packing and shipping can be very time consuming as well as expensive. The reseller’s business model is to buy for low prices in order to stay in business. Your return will be modest but it is easy process.
- Auctioning or fixed-price sale. Distribute a list of sale items by such means as Yahoo groups, or other e-mail lists of model railroaders. Or, advertise in division and regional newsletters. Physical sale held at a certain place, date, and time, or virtual sale on the internet. Sale could be conducted by broker-reseller, executor, or other volunteer
- Contact a club that is focused on a particular type of hobby equipment. For example, antique Lionel equipment may be of particular interest to one of the Lionel clubs or a member in your area. Use the web to locate them.
- Sell the equipment on eBay or any of the other web market places. This will require the most time and energy to accomplish. Seller will have to research market prices, photograph and list the items, deal with the auctions and finally pack and ship the equipment when it is sold. There are some companies that will do all this for you for a fee or percentage of the sale price.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

- Sell the equipment at a model train show/swap meet. Most operations charge a fee for a table at their market. Seller will have to research the market to set selling price of the equipment and spend the time at the meet selling the equipment. NMRA meetings and conventions may have “white elephant” sales or auctions. Perhaps a friend of the modeler might help with this process. You probably won't sell everything at once, necessitating multiple sales attempts.

The seller needs to evaluate trade-offs of time & effort versus money. The seller will get less money if in a hurry. Maximizing return will take time and effort (e.g., schlepping to convention/show).

Suggested Contacts for Potential Disposition

These venues and dealers have come to our attention. The list is by no means exhaustive. Suggestions are welcome.

- The Great Scale Model Train Show (www.gsmts.com/) Show Location: Maryland State Fair 2200 York Rd. Timonium, MD 21093. Shows are held 4 times a year, in February, April, June (or July) and October.
- Makin' Tracks, an HO scale focused retail operation selling quality new items, some very nice vintage pieces, detail parts, and layout building supplies, Fredericksburg, VA (makemytracks.com/)
- Brass Trains.com (www.brasstrains.com/) is a web consignment reseller of brass models. They also advertise that they buy estate train collections including non-brass items.
- Trainz (trainz.com) is always looking for great trains and accessories to satisfy the demand of our large and ever growing customer base. We do the hard work for you and guarantee fair pricing!
- American Eagle (<http://www.aergroup.net/our-services/we-buy-trains>) either buy it all or sell it all. This would include – scenery, parts (new/broken), all scales of O, G, HO, N, Z, toys, parts, junk, track, etc.
- The Chicago Kid -- is a collector and buyer of trains and old toys. Contact: jay@thechicagokid.com 847-913-1205

Experiences

This section includes personal experience or viewpoints that reinforce the prior abstractions. They are not necessarily consistent, but that's life!

Planning for Layout Disposition (John Paganoni) Fact: Most layouts are built to eventually be torn down and disposed of.

Planning is essential in the construction of a layout and it is prudent to also plan for the disposition of the layout, especially if any part of the layout would be useful for another modeler. Also, items of value should be listed so family or friends can sell parts and pieces of the layout when the time comes to dispose of it.

Like many of you, I have had to dispose of a couple of layouts over the years because of moves I had to make. These layouts were very small and I therefore was able to find friends who took the basic layouts, with scenery, (minus rolling stock and power packs), without having to cut them up in pieces. My current layout, though small by comparison to many Potomac Division layouts, has some features I want to save when the time comes to dispose of the layout in case they may be of use for others.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

My plan was developed over a period of years so I could capture the essence of a prototype railroad location. In my case, the Central Vermont (CV) East New London, Connecticut terminal and yard in the period of late 1940's to mid-1957. This was a time when steam was the prime mover. I also wanted to capture the location where I grew up – Montville, Connecticut. With this objective in mind, I drew my plan with very specific requirements in mind. I also began planning the layout in sections that I thought other modelers might be interested in when it came time to disassemble the layout.

It is important to keep a detailed notebook to annotate layout construction and notes that would help in disposition. Also, a large number of photos should be taken as construction progresses. These will be extremely valuable for those who are tasked to dispose of the layout.

A major consideration in building my layout was to use wood screws and deck screws for anything attached to walls of the room. I also used screws wherever possible in putting the benchwork together. About the only parts that were screwed and glued were the pieces of the "L" girders and those areas essential for strength or in unique sections of the layout.

A first step in planning for disposition is to remove all locomotives, rolling stock, and vehicles as these might be of significant value. Then structures should be removed. Figures and details such as telephone poles, switch stands, signs, and loose details should be gathered after removal of locomotives, rolling stock, vehicles, and structures.

I prioritized layout structures that I thought would be salvageable and useable for others. My priority is as follows:

1. **The roundhouse and turntable.** I built these on a 4' x4' piece of ¾" plywood. By building the turntable and laying out the footprint of the roundhouse on this base off the layout, I was able to compress scale where necessary and ensure the turntable operated correctly before installing it on the layout. When I attached this base to the benchwork, I used coarse wood screws and then circled each attaching screw in red so anyone who is disassembling the layout will know how to lift this important section out.
2. **Montville Station and Depot.** These specific structures are very special to me, therefore I want to make these easy to remove. As a practice, I try to make all of my significant structures easy to remove. An example of an exception would be a piling type trestle.
3. **The Coal Tower, Sand House, and Flammable Storage building.**
4. **Other detailed structures** that would be useful including scratch-built and kit structures.

PREPARE A DETAILED INVENTORY LIST. Prepare this list by category and where possible, list the purchased price to allow a non-modeler to have an appreciation for value and selling price.

1. Motive power
2. Railroad cars
3. Vehicles
4. Figures
5. Structures – commercial and scratch built
6. Anything else of value

LIST ITEMS NOT USED ON THE LAYOUT.

1. Unbuilt kits – all kinds
2. Extra track and turnouts
3. Scratch building tools, such as Fast Track fixtures
4. Tools, such as Dremel and associated bits and accessories
5. Roadbed such as cork and Homabed

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

6. Wire and electrical accessories such as terminal strips
7. Turnout motors
8. Any accessories that may be useful for other model railroaders

NOTE:

If possible, make a list of model railroaders who might be interested in any parts of your layout and let family members know where this list is kept.

Advice from A Surviving Spouse (Adapted from article by Arthur Boyd)

As far as Steve knew, none of his friends had an interest in model railroading, and he was not a member of a train club or organization. Model trains were a personal enjoyment, shared only with his wife, Joan. It was pure chance that an NMRA member's car mechanic, knowing of his hobby, asked for ideas for a relative whose husband had died leaving a beautiful model railroad.

Joan is accomplished in many crafts, most notably creating art works in stained glass. She well knew the value in skill and time that goes into model railroading, as in other crafts pursued to a high level. But she, too, did not know of other model railroaders – until, that is, conversations with other women after Steve's death. These were friends she already knew from other parts of her life. "Many of these ladies had spouses who were model rail-roaders" she learned. "But none of them had a clue as to what to do with model trains after their husbands die."

Joan did have a clue, many in fact, thanks to Steve's preparations.

Over the years Joan had on occasion accompanied Steve to hobby shops and the Great Scale Model Train and Railroad Collectors Show at the Maryland State Fair in Timonium, so that Joan at least knew about them and "knew the territory" so to speak. Steve made a careful inventory of the more expensive items – namely locomotives, with original prices marked for each, and their special features.

Steve made a list of a few particular items – mostly from his other hobbies - which he wished to go to relatives and friends. Joan made suggestions to add to that list, and made a list of a few railroad items with special meaning, in-cluding some she had helped construct, that she would keep for their memories and their intrinsic aesthetic value. Some tools and modeling materials have applications to other household and hobby activities of her own, and Joan will "re-purpose" these.

Most importantly, Steve thought about what portions of his layout might be reconfigured into an easily moved free-standing unit. Then he tackled that as a new modeling project he could accomplish as his capacities diminished. Was there more she wished he would have done to prepare her for handling disposition? "No, he did as much as he could."

Joan has been looking into ads in the back of model railroad magazines, of people purchasing estates and collections. She will be visiting a large hobby shop and train shows to learn about current prices, including people who make and sell model railroads. She will seek out vendors who buy model railroad items for resale, and learn about options for her situation.

"My advice to 'model railroad spouses'" says Joan "is to get your husband to at least make a list of valuable items, like locomotives. Get his wishes as to where he wants stuff to go. And from time to time take you along to hobby shops and train shows so you know about them."

You should let friends and acquaintances know of your love of trains. You never know what might emerge from sharing your interest with others.

Remember the Fees (Tom Brodrick)

My wife just sold 3 high-end sewing machines on E-Bay thru a consignment shop. The rate was 35% for the first \$1000 and 25% for anything over. The 3 machines sold in 2 weeks. She thought that they would sell for a little more but she was happy with the amount she got. What she wasn't happy was the extra 17% that was added for transaction fees which means that she only received a profit of 52% of what the machines sold for. My point of all this is if you are going to use a seller of this kind --check ALL the fees.

Also you can bundle a lot of the items and sell them as a group, i.e., bundles of 5/10 cars together. The store will research and assign prices if you are uncertain.

Everything Must Go! (Jeff & Sue Schmaltz)

Our experience in selling off most of our G-Scale trains

We'll start by describing what we did and then suggest what we would have done differently if we knew then what we know now.

We planned to put our home on the market in the spring of 2018 so we had planned to get started selling the trains in the spring of 2017 but really didn't get rolling until that summer.

1) So, the first thing one needs is an inventory of what is actually for sale. We had kept an inventory spread sheet as we acquired the trains so that was a good start. For each item, our sale list had the name (we tried to get the "official" name of the product from the manufacturer's catalog or web site), the model number, a photo of the item (for most items we just stole online photos to show folks what the item was (since most haven't memorized the LGB model numbers like Jeff did)), and the price. Pricing was done by looking at eBay (only the "sold" prices are valid!) and other online sources of sales prices. Rather than trying to individually price every item, we set a price for general categories like "fairly common pre-2000 LGB cars", "less common post-2000 LGB cars", "small 1 motor locos", "large 2 motor locos with sound", etc. We priced them originally at what we thought we had a fairly reasonable chance of actually selling them for on eBay – this is in our minds the "market price".

2) We started by offering the list to members of our club at a 25% discount off our "market prices". We got the list out about July and only sold to club members for about a month.

3) Next we started selling some of the items we guessed were more desirable (e.g. Christmas cars, Disney items) on eBay. We started with passenger and freight cars because they were easier to pack and price shipping in a uniform box with shipping materials. We (Sue really) faced a very steep learning curve in the eBay shipping department. We sold on eBay from late October until early February.

4) At about the same time we started on eBay, we also sent the list of a few of our internet train friends and they also sent them on to others. We did sell some items this way, including two FedEx golf club boxes full to California.

5) At about the same time we started on eBay, we also put an ad on Craigslist. We included a photo of the still huge stacks of LGB red boxes in our basement along with a short description – "Large G scale train collection for sale, most LGB, mostly European, mostly steam, mostly 2-axle freight, write for list". Many folks have security concerns about using Craigslist but we ended up having many people come to our home, both for the trains and for many other items we sold or gave away, and had no issues. But we did know that we were emptying and selling that house so that allayed some of our fears. We did use a disposable email address for Craigslist.

6) By the New Year, we were coming up on the time we needed to start refinishing the house so at that time we contacted Trainz (trainz.com) and in early February their truck and team showed up and hauled

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

away the rest of our collection. Most of it sold over the next couple of months but as we write this in early August, there are still a few items being sold. The sold prices on Trainz are much lower than on eBay and, after the auction fees, we ended up with a very low return on these items. But we knew that ahead of time, and by that point in the process the most important thing is that they were out of the house!

What we would do differently:

1) Start earlier, much earlier, at least two years before we needed the trains out of the house, two and a half or three years would not have been unreasonable.

2) We would need that extra time because we should have started with eBay for the higher priced and more desirable items – most of the locomotives, the more desirable of the LGB cars, Disney, etc. The extra time and effort to pack and ship these items to eBay buyers would have been rewarded by significantly higher sales prices. As we went along, we would have learned which items were worth the effort to put on eBay and which weren't.

3) Then we would turn to club members and Craigslist. And then maybe internet friends, but that does entail packing and shipping.

4) Lastly, the remainder would still go to Trainz because you have to get the house emptied out!

We believe in the end it comes down to how much effort you're willing and/or able to put out. eBay is the most work and hassle but it also provides the best return. At the other end of the spectrum, Trainz is a very viable option for those who don't have the time and/or knowledge to do it themselves.

Cost to build & remove a model railroad (Jerry Stanley)

I have worked in Construction for 35 +/- years and currently I am a senior Project Manager for a builder/developer out of Tyson's corner called Madison homes.

In returning a room to the original condition or just finishing it off the cost can vary widely depending on scope, season of the year and how heated up or not the economy is.

The answer is not a simple answer. Nor is it black and white. But in order to give you something to start with let's assume the room was already finished and just simply needs to have the structure of the railroad removed, lights for the railroad removed and standard surface mount lights reinstall and maybe new carpet.

The first cost will be the demo of the railroad framing and disposal. A small dumpster or a small dump truck will cost \$200 to \$500 dollars. The labor to demo the structure will be about \$40 an hour let's assume two guys 8 hours that will be \$640. Next you will need an electrician they are roughly \$70 an hour for four hours. That should be around \$350. Electric supplies will be approximately \$150. Next you will need drywall patch and paint. There will another two days at \$40 an hour cost should be \$640. Paint supplies will be around \$200. A room of carpet will be approximately \$300. A company would add up all of these cost and multiple it by 35% for cost of OH&P.

The cost would be \$3180 OH&P \$1113 for a total of \$4293.

[Ed note: prices in 2018]

A Professional's Viewpoint (Scott Nichols, The Great Scale Model Train Show and Keystone Model Trains)

I have never been approached by an individual seeking to do financial “estate planning” regarding their model train collection. I have friends who have asked me to look after their trains if something should happen to them prematurely and dispose of accordingly, which, sadly, I have had to do twice now. But as far as offering a service or to work in an estate planning capacity, I have never done so. The problem I see with this type of “planning” is that what is appraised today may not have the same value tomorrow and is too easy to set false expectations with the family when the day does come to handle the collection.

This is especially evident in the Brass marketplace as many models have decreased in value significantly over the last 10-15 years – market conditions, overabundance of inventory, high cost compared to plastic, lacking in technology (DCC/Sound, etc). I could go on and on. Brass models can be exquisite, as those of us deeply entrenched in this hobby are well aware, but the average model railroader is otherwise unimpressed.

We can also look at the Lionel market that has undergone a near total collapse in recent years. There are those who still have unreasonable expectations of values, especially with the Greenberg Guide fueling the fire with respect to outlandish pricing, but many I know who are still involved with Lionel and the like are only successful in buying and selling O gauge with a “buy it by, and sell it by the pound” mentality.

I also see some ethics challenges in approaching a train collection from a financial estate planning perspective as well. I believe it to be unethical to appraise anything and then make an offer to purchase it, whether now or down the road. I believe valuation must be approached as either an appraiser or as a buyer, but to wear both hats is something I will not do. Appraising and then acting as an agent on consignment, which I do somewhat regularly, is a different matter and completely acceptable.

I have often been approached after the fact by the family to step in and resolve their issues with disposing of the trains and related materials. Much of this comes from being involved with the Great Scale Model Train Show. Many folks who are tasked with liquidating their loved one's collection know of us because that person was very often a regular show attendee. So quite naturally, we are asked by the decedent's spouse or other family members to provide assistance. This is most often in a buyout type of arrangement where I will go in, establish a value, do the transaction, and then pack it all up and remove it. Collections of this nature are small to mid-sized and are often \$25,000 and under. Many collections fall in the \$10k to \$15k range. I do work on larger ones as well and those can be a mix of purchases and consignment type arrangements. I have had several that have exceeded \$100,000 in value and one that I was partially involved in that had an appraised value of \$175,000.

Concerning layout disposal, I have always gone in and “stripped” the layout of anything of value that can easily be salvaged and removed. I once removed over 75 Fine Scale Miniatures structures that were built by a very skilled modeler from his layout in Central New York State. All of the track and scenery was left and the widow had taken it upon herself to order a dumpster to be delivered and a handyman service to come in and disassemble the remaining bench work and related materials. Most families have already made these type of arrangements prior to my arrival or asked me to advise them on the next steps once I have removed the trains and other things of significant value.

I think to provide a layout demolition service is a slippery slope as you would be viewed as a contractor, in Maryland anyway, and would need proper licensing from the Maryland Home Improvement Commission along with the requisite insurances and bonding. Furthermore, I believe there would be

concerns with liability of going into someone's basement and beginning any type of disassembly. Then factor in the logistics of providing a suitable vehicle to remove the debris and this could become a very difficult situation to remedy if there was a problem. I don't have an idea on pricing but I am sure the average contractor is over \$45.00 per hour for this type of work plus expenses.

A Volunteer's Observations (Walter Reid)

Your train collection is a testament to years of enjoyment you have obtained from your hobby. You may think that once you are gone it is over. Sometime the survivors gain a great deal in that loss. Sometimes they gain a mountain of stuff, a financial nightmare, an on-going emotional struggle. But it is in your power to help the people you leave behind with a guide on what to do with your collection.

Some questions to think about:

- ▶ What are your feelings about the disposition of your collection?
- ▶ What valuable assets may be part of the collection that should be noted?
- ▶ How are you going to share this information?
- ▶ What do you want done with your collection?
- ▶ You need a PLAN !

One example was a widow who wouldn't consider parting with her husband's collection because he told her that it was valuable and she shouldn't sell it to anyone. When she became too ill to stay in her home, it was found the collection was a bunch of junk.

You should be very honest with your spouse or family about what your collection is. If it was a part of your life that you didn't care if anyone else cared about in the future, let that be known. There is no point in saddling someone with an emotional bond to a collection that you enjoyed while you were alive but didn't care one way or another if anyone concerned themselves in the future. On the other hand you may have spent \$100,000 over the years and you may not have wanted to reveal that to your family. You may be embarrassed while you are still alive to admit that the \$100,000 can't be retrieved. But you may have salted away a real gem or two that will go a long way to recovering some of that investment.

You would save your family a lot of emotional turmoil and energy and possibly even expense if you are candid with that information while you are alive.

The preservation of your collection also can be a concern. Your legacy may be the items you preserved for future generations. Don't let them go to the dumpster.

Let's consider 2 scenarios of estates I have dealt with, and through this article I can give you some tips that you may use on your plan.

The first estate I did the family believed that the train collection was of great value (in the \$100K+ range) and wanted to extract maximum value out of it. My role was to inventory, assess value, and pack the estate. The unfortunate thing was that the value the family was expecting was nowhere near the actual value, so my assessment was contested and in conclusion the family disposed of the asset themselves.

In the second estate, the deceased actually put some instructions in his will. He identified 2 people to process his collection, and a commission for these people to pay for their time and labor. The value that he had determined the collection to be worth was actually underestimated, so that when we sold the assets, we were able to give the estate more than they anticipated. There was no inventory.

Summary of Estates

Estate #1	Estate #2
Will / Executor with no instructions	Will / Executor with some instructions
Perceived value \$100k Actual Value ~\$40k	Perceived value \$7k Actual Value \$10k
No plan for disposition	Limited plan for disposition
No inventory	No inventory

The main point to stress is there a will? It is so important that your wishes be expressed in a legal way to avoid confusion at a very emotional time. If you are uncomfortable with your executor knowing your wishes beforehand, make sure to leave an envelope with these guides and label it “to be opened in event of my death” with more details of your exact plan. It is also a good idea to have a person that understands the hobby as either the executor or as a resource to the executor.

Once the legal part is clear, then the actual process of dealing with your collection becomes the prime focus. Having an approximate value of your collection is handy for the executor to know so he can fairly divide assets and may be needed for reporting the estate. This is where the inventory comes into use. Having a plan to distribute, preserve, or sell your collection is the next step

To plan, you need an idea how big the estate is, so having an inventory of your collection is critical. This can be a spreadsheet or a database. You can include pictures of the items for easier identification, especially by an executor unfamiliar with the hobby. Use the spreadsheet to help the executor know the real value of items and what has little to no value. This should be net present value—what the item would sell for in the current market, not original nor inflated cost. It is also critical that the inventory be available to the executor.

The best inventory that is inaccessible is worthless. You need to either print it, or give people access to it. With so many computers with passwords these days, all your efforts may be in vain if hidden behind security.

Next is what info you want to capture in your inventory. It doesn’t have to be complex, but the most important things are identifying the item in a way the people can understand, and estimating the value of the item, highlighting anything of significant value. Special instructions and information should be included, such as what can or should be donated and the location of the items. It is also important to have an active inventory of items you are borrowing / things you have loaned to others that are of value. You don’t want an argument over who owns what.

With the inventory all done, now you need to help with a potential sales plan. This is just a guide; the executor will have to figure out what works best. You may want to allow certain people to have first shot at purchasing your collection. These may be people that helped you build your layout, or people you know who are filthy rich and can afford to relieve the estate of your excesses. It is also useful to have a railroad or hobby friend to help the executor navigate through the disposition process. It may be just someone who knows how to get in touch with fellow model railroaders, vendors, etc. Finally, it is important to identify what of your collection should be donated so that the executor does not have to plan for sale of these items, just routing them to an appropriate archive / SIG or the dumpster.

Additionally, you can suggest someone who is knowledgeable on how to pack your collection. Keep your boxes for the more valuable rolling stock / locos, but be cautious with old foam liners that they are not damaging, rather than protecting your asset. Kits that are either sealed or built have value. Partially built kits are lower. Explain to the executor whether the power is DCC or DC and the implications for value.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

Other parts of this report address converting the assets into cash. The following table summarizes my experience.

Alternative	Speed	Effort	\$
Auction company	fast	low	lower
Estate purchase companies	fast	low	higher
Ebay	moderate	medium/high	medium
Consignment	slow	low	medium
Flea markets / train shows	slow	high	medium

Photos and books can be difficult to deal with. Some books have value through sale over the internet. Magazines rarely have value and are more burden than an asset. Photos usually have no monetary value, but have intellectual value to SIGs and archives.

What you do now will be your legacy. No, it is not time to give up your hobby and start packing it away. But now is the time to think about what you want to become of your hobby remains and that may change the way you collect, store, document, cull materials and supplies.

A Volunteer Sells the Collection (Kenneth Montero)

This scenario is an email announcement by a volunteer who is selling a collection. The email has been lightly edited. Ken's comments are enclosed in boxes. Ken's listings contain a lot of information. The first page of several listings follow the email message.

----- Message -----

It is best to draft your email on the first day, self-proof/review it the next day, and ask a second person to review it. I did none of these things, so a major error occurred (which has been corrected in this publication).

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

Subject: Model Railroad Estate Liquidation
From: Kenneth Montero <lcoal_mine.train@comcast.net>

Dear Fellow Model Railroader,

I am Ken Montero, a member of the James River Division of the National Model Railroad Association. I am helping the widow of John McDonald liquidate his extensive model railroad collection. John was a member of the James River Division of the National Model Railroad Association and an active participant in the Richmond Freelance and Prototype Modelers. As is my practice, all sales proceeds go to his widow, as I don't collect any compensation for my efforts.

You are receiving this email because you are on one of several lists for model railroaders that I used for this email. Consequently, you may receive more than one copy of this email, even though I tried to avoid sending multiple mailings to the same email address. Please share this email with your like-minded model railroaders.

SALE ITEMS

So that your eyes don't glaze over from looking at one long list of over 2000 items, I have created 15 spreadsheets (some very short) by major categories (locomotives, parts, etc.), with the contents of each spreadsheet further divided first by scale (HO, N, etc.) where applicable, and then further divided by various sub-topics (railroad names, vehicle types, etc.). These spreadsheets are attached to this email.

To help you navigate this information, here are the general descriptions of the spreadsheets (the range of item numbers precede the description of the contents):

100-356	Locomotives - HO, HO Europe, OO, N, and Z scales.
360-366	Train Sets - HO, N, and Z scales.
400-656	Passenger Cars - HO, HO Europe, OO, N, and Z scales.

The person or entity that is conducting the sale always should be disclosed—not only for transparency reasons, but also to help with the sale—for example, a group member may be more inclined to purchase from a fellow group member or from the group conducting the sale. If the person or entity is conducting the sale without compensation and/or is absorbing the sales expense (such as table fees at a train show), that information should be disclosed, as it promotes the perception that the sellers are not conducting the sale for personal gain.

Identifying whose collection is being sold is a decision that varies, depending upon the unique facts of each situation. For example, if the collection belonged to a famous person, a person known to the potential buyers, or is a member of a group to whose members the sales solicitation is being made may create more incentive to purchase (especially if someone wants a souvenir associated with that person) than purchasing from the collection of a stranger. On the other hand, the collector (or, if deceased, the survivors asking that the sale be conducted) may want that information to be kept confidential for all sorts of reasons.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

700-1727	Freight Cars - HO, 00, N, Z and S scales.
1200-1326	Structures - HO, N, Z and S/O scales.
1400-1464	Circus, John Deere, and Misc. Specials - HO and N scales.
1500-1727	Parts - HO, N, Z, O and S scales.
1800-1992	Vehicles - R.R. Scales Models - HO, N and Z scales.
2000-2046	Scenery - All, HO, N and Z scales.
2100-2226	Track - All, HO, N, Z, and S scales.
2300-2362	Books.
2400-2442	Paint, Brushes, etc.
2500-2565	Displays, Electronics, Glues, Lubricants, Tools - All, HO and Z scales.
2700-2707	Vehicles not R.R. Scales (toy models - some HO and S scales).
2800-2809	Aircraft.

NOTES:

- Each item has a unique number.
- If more than one copy of an item is for sale, such is noted on the spreadsheet.
- Carefully look at all the details listed for each listing. Some items that appear to be the same at a quick glance actually have a feature that distinguishes it from a similarly listed item (New v. Used, Kit v. RTR, car name or number, etc.)
- There are some gaps in the numerical listings due to a prior disposition of some items.
- N scale cars and locomotives that are listed as New because John did not have an N scale layout and was not known by his widow to have ever operated any of the equipment. They all appear New unless listed otherwise, but such is not a certainty because a few items do not have the original box.

This collection was extensive—over 2250 separate items. Unless the collection is very small, the listing of the items need to be broken down by major topics, then sub-topics, etc. Otherwise, the reader's eyes glaze over. My listings contain a lot of information—they help drive sales by email, but take a good bit of time to assemble. How much information to provide is a judgment call, based in part on the size of the collection and the human resources available to input it and sort it. You may want to use one or more pages from some of these lists as examples. NOTE: Such lists generally don't provide much help at in-person sales venues such as train shows for large items such as cars, locomotives, etc. It may help the seller in answering the question as to what items are available for sale, especially small parts.

ORDERS PROCESS

- Use the attached order form, if possible. It is a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet ready to be filled out.
- Include both your email address and your telephone number, as well as your name. It helps to have both of them if follow-up is needed.
- Order by item number. If ordering more than one copy of an item, add the quantity being ordered.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

- Especially for freight and passenger cars for which only one copy of an item is listed, please provide an alternative selection for a similar item in case someone's order for the same item is processed before your item is processed.
- Send your order and inquiries to: 1coal_mine.train@comcast.net (there is an underline between "coal" and "mine".) I use this email address to keep your orders separate from the barrage of email that comes to my other email address. I don't want your order to get lost.

There are a lot of items, and you may find additional items that you want after you place your initial order. If you are sending a follow-up additional order, please so inform me when you send that follow-up additional order so I can combine orders when possible.

Upon receipt of your order, I will confirm my receipt of it (because not all emails get through) within 24 hours of receipt (except for August 22-26, when I will be away). If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt within 24 hours of your sending your order, please re-send it together with a note that it is a copy of the original email. If you still don't get a confirmation of receipt within 24 hours after re-sending your order, please call me at 804-794-5704 and leave a message for me to call you back (and leave a phone number which I may use to call you back).

Once I process your order (which may take more than 24 hours after receipt), I will email back to you a response showing what parts of your order that I was able to fill. Doing so also gives you an opportunity to verify that each item that I so list is an item that you ordered. Please bring any discrepancies to my attention within 24 hours of my sending you this response so that any errors can be corrected promptly.

NOTES:

- If you don't get this response within 7 days from my confirmation of receipt of your email, call me at 804-794-5704 and leave a message with your phone number so I can follow up on this matter.
- If you are on a budget and I am unable to fill all of your initial order, please consider a follow-up order for other items.

TERMS OF SALE:

- Each item is sold "as is", and priced accordingly. All descriptions are believed accurate to the best of my knowledge, but are not guaranteed.
- Discount of 10% on all orders totaling \$100.00 or more. Discount applies to the entire order.
- Multiple orders only from the same person will be combined for discount purposes.
- Orders accepted through August 31, 2018.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

- Payment due only upon pick-up or delivery, not when placing the order (in case one or more of the items is no longer available due to a prior sale).
- Only cash or checks (make checks to Mary K. McDonald) - no credit or debit cards.
- No mail shipments.
- Pick-up and delivery - The items are not stored at my house. Please contact me at least 3 days before the desired pick-up date to arrange the date and time of pick-up so that I have your items ready for pick-up.
- Pickups dates and times are listed below.
- Delivery option - For orders from one or more individuals totaling over \$500.00 for delivery at one time and place and if delivery is to be made at a place with 3 hours of Richmond, Virginia, I will deliver to you if a mutually acceptable date and time can be arranged (I am retired, so that usually is not a problem - and I need to get out of the house).
- Pick-up and delivery must be accomplished by September 16, 2018.

Avoid offering to ship unless there are a few items for sale or the items are high value items (brass models, Fine Scale Miniature kits, etc.) Shipping takes a lot of effort, for which the cost should be added to the purchase price. I use personal delivery at Division meets, other events, and my house, and for large purchases within a short range of my place.

PICK-UP LOCATIONS AND DATES:

Midlothian, Virginia

- On July 14, 2018 - before, during or after the James River Division meet at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church, 1100 Mt. Pisgah Drive, Midlothian, Virginia.
- At my house in Midlothian, Virginia, at a mutually agreeable time.

Charlottesville, Virginia

- On Saturday, August 4, 2018 - outside of the Virginia Train Collectors, Inc. Train Show, The East Rivanna Fire Hall, 3501 Steamer Drive, Keswick, Virginia.
- Also, by mutual agreement, at Friday lunch of the model railroad group - no later than August 31, 2018.

Lynchburg, Virginia

- On Saturday, August 11, 2018 - in connection with Lynchburg Rail Day, Boonsboro Ruritan Club, 1065 Coffee Road, Lynchburg, Virginia 24503.

Farmville

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

- On Saturday, September 8, 2018 - Before, during and after the James River Division meet at 510 West Third (3d) Street, Farmville, Virginia (former Norfolk & Western Railway station).

Richmond area

- At my house in Midlothian, Virginia, by mutual agreement.

Questions? Please email me at: lcoal.mine.train@comcast.net or call me at 804-794-5794 and leave a message.

----- end of email body -----

The following pictures show the top of the email attachments listing the items for sale.

Locomotives

Box #	Item #	RR	Description	Engine No.	Mfg'r.	Mfg'r.#	KD or X2f	RTR or Kit	New or Used	Other	No. Units	Unit Price
HO SCALE												
Atlantic Coast Line												
00-2	100	ACL	4-6-2 Pacific	1516	IHC	M9891	KD	RTR	N	Blue boiler, "states" logo on tender	1	\$30.00
00-5	101	ACL	4-6-2	5208	Life-Like	T 236 P	KD	RTR	U		1	\$16.00
00-4	102	ACL	EMD E-6A	519	Proto 2000	21180	KD	RTR	U	Factory DCC Sound, purple paint scheme, part of 2-part set	1	\$175.00 this set 349.98 new
00-5		ACL	EMD E-6B (Dummy)	751B	Proto 2000	21180	KD	RTR	U	Purple paint scheme, part of 2-part set		
00-7	103	ACL	EMD E-7A w/Mars Light	529	Proto 2000	21053	KD	RTR	N	Purple paint scheme	1	\$80.00 Option - Set sale price is \$110.00
00-8	104	ACL	EMD E-7B (Dummy)	755B	Proto 2000	21054	KD	RTR	N	Purple paint scheme	1	\$30.00
00-9	105	ACL	EMD E-7B (Dummy)	758B	Proto 2000	21055	KD	RTR	N	Purple paint scheme	1	\$30.00

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

Train Sets

Box #	Item #	RR	Description	Mfg'r.	Mfg'r. #	KD or X2f	New or Used	Other	Unit Price
HO SCALE									
WWWWW-1	360	Amtrak	Acela Express	Bachmann Spectra	1202		U	powered), 3 cars, track, power pack. Unique couplers. Original box.	\$75.00
XXXX-1	361	American Orient Express	American Orient Express	Rivarossi	0824	X2f	U	2 E-8 engines (1 powered w/ no front coupler), 6 cars w/ interiors & metal wheels. Limited edition - #616 of 3000. Original box.	\$60.00
N SCALE									
YYYY-1	362	Alaska	McKinley Explorer	Bachmann	24010	R	U	Engines - 2 (1 powered), 3 cars, E-Z track & power pack. Original box?	\$40.00
YYYY-3	363	SP	Morning Daylight 10-car passenger train	Kato	106-060	D	N	locomotive, only display track. Original box?	\$100.00
YYYY-2	364	UP	The Old Timer	Bachmann	4404	R	N	"Jupiter" 4-4-0, 5 cars, track, power pack. Original box?	\$25.00

Structures

Box #	Item #	Description	Mfg'r.	Mfg'r.#	Blt. or Kit?	New or Used	Other	No. Units	Unit Price
HO									
Railroad									
Interlocking & Signal Tower									
AAAA-4	1200	Interlocking Tower w/platform	Bachmann Plasticville	45132	RTR	U	Gray sides	1	\$5.00
AAAA-2	1201	Interlocking Tower	Revell	T900	RTR	U	No smoke stacks, 1 lacks gutter downspouts. Decaled	1	\$5.00
AAAA-8	1202	Large 2-story interlocking tower	Tyco "West Germany"	7773	RTR	U	Interior light	1	\$9.00
AAAA-5	1203	Signal Tower, Brick first floor, wood second floor	Atlas	704	RTR	U	Labeled "Tamaqua Junction", window shades on 2nd floor	1	\$5.00
Pedestrian Overpass Bridge									
DDD-8	1204	Pedestrian Overpass	AHM	5865	Kit	N	Plastic	1	\$8.00
EEE-4	1205	Pedestrian Bridge	Bachmann Plasticville	45172	Kit	N	Plastic	1	\$5.00

Taking Down a Very Large Railroad (Steve Benezra)

Steve Benezra posted the following email:

I am having my open house Saturday, August 18, 9 am-2 pm to sell HO scale structures, freight cars, engines (diesels), track, and tortoise machines (47). No bulk prices since or best offers. Whatever doesn't sell will go on Ebay at higher prices. Some structures have been sold. If you wish updated lists let me know and I will send them to you. The diesels have not yet been priced. All prices reflect market value or less and are based on "sold" items on Ebay. If you wish to reserve an item(s) because you cannot attend, let me know. Reserving an item is a commitment to buy and although I cannot enforce the commitment, it doesn't reflect favorably on you if you don't honor the commitment.

After the open house he wrote: "I took down a very large railroad with almost 700 pieces of rolling stock (split evenly between coal cars and other cars), probably 1000 feet of track, 40 engines, etc. About 5 people showed up and while I took in about \$1,000 (\$3000 total so far selling outside the open house as well as the open house), I barely scratched the surface. I estimate I have another \$6-7000 to go and will put everything up on eBay. Living in central North Carolina is not what I would call a "hot bed" for model railroads such as the Northeast, Midwest, and the West coast. I will get rid of everything eventually but patience is required. I will not sell to a dealer who offers pennies on the dollar. I know what my equipment is worth and I know the eBay market value by looking at "sold" auctions.

"It's an entirely different situation for a spouse of a deceased model railroader. Often they don't know the value of what has been bought over a period of perhaps decades, items which have been scratch built, etc. They just want the stuff gone and some dealers swoop in like vultures and take advantage of their situation. The best thing a model railroader can do is to give the spouse the names of some knowledgeable people willing to help the spouse take down and sell the equipment before he/she passes away."

Scenario Sketches

- A widow who wouldn't consider parting with her husband's collection because he told her that it was valuable and she shouldn't sell it to anyone. When she became too ill to stay in her home, it was found the collection was a bunch of junk.
- A collection given away to a thrift store that was valuable
- Survivors not so much worried about getting money for the trains, they just want the train room cleaned up. They contacted the local Scouts and offered a deal. In exchange for cleaning out the basement, the Scouts got the trains, either to use or use for their own fundraiser.

Nearby Professional Services

We recommend that you view the web sites to get a first impression of the services and then contact several to compare and contrast their approach and services. Inclusion of a dealer or service does not constitute endorsement by Potomac Division or the NMRA. This information is provided as representative of available dealers and services.

Keystone Model Trains & Makin'Tracks, LLC

Mike Militello and Scott Nichols would definitely be interested in helping out The Potomac Division, it's members and their families, and anyone else with whom you come in contact regarding the handling of model train collections. In addition to producing The Great Scale Model Train Show, both of us are very active in buying and selling collections, appraising trains, and also working in an advisory and representative capacity with respect to estate collections. Mike operates [Makin' Tracks](#), an HO scale focused retail operation selling quality new items, some very nice vintage pieces, detail parts, and layout building supplies. His email is Pwc586@hotmail.com and phone is 540.846.6206. Scott owns Keystone Model Trains and focus on high end HO scale, Brass, 2 Rail O scale, and Railroad books and antiques. His email is scarternichols@hotmail.com and phone 410.212.6053. He also works with some Lionel, MTH, and Large scale. In addition to their work together on Show production, they have combined our efforts on the retail and resale side to better serve their customers. Their approach is straight forward with no hassle or non-sense and you can be assured of honesty and integrity.

They can do outright purchases of collections or work on a consignment type basis. They also have storage facilities available so larger collections that may take several months to sell are never a problem. While the primary focus is HO scale, they are up to speed on just about everything out there in any scale. Railroad books and "railroadiana" are of interest as well.

National Professional Services

TRAINZ Store and Auction

Trainz operates a [web-based store](#) and a set of auction services, buying, selling, and repairing model trains out of two warehouses in Buford, Georgia, selling over 180,000 items a year. They would like to [buy your trains](#). Trainz Auctions employs [Train Collectors Association](#) Grading Standards, maintains their own in house repair staff. They provide a set of service for the model railroader to inventory and establish the value of the collection. [A Guide To Selling Your Trains](#) is available. At [Trainz auctions](#) you can track your collection, view model train values, show off your layout, or buy new & collectible.

American Eagle Rail Group

[American Eagle Rail Group](#) in Ludlow, KY buys model train collection. They suggesting that you have the following general information regarding the scale, condition and whether you have the original boxes for each item when you contact them. They also offer custom model railroad construction services.

Train City

[Train City](#) in Cape Canaveral, FL has been buying and selling electric trains now for almost 30 years. If you don't mind a nice drive to the a warm, sunny place, you can come directly to their warehouse. You can send your trains through the mail for evaluation and an offer. You can send a list of your train collection for an offer. On larger collections in many cases they will travel to you to purchase your collection. The site has links for [buying info](#) - [trading](#) - [finder's fees](#) - [florida sellers](#) - [testimonial](#) and [more testimonials](#).

Graham's Trains

[Graham's Trains](#) in central Ohio suggest you send a list of your train collection for an offer. Keep in mind that the better the descriptions are and the more detail that you include, the more accurate and better the offer price will be to you. If the descriptions are sparse, they will tend to be more

conservative with the offer price. Digital pictures usually don't help much as I cannot see the detail needed to determine grading.

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Appendix: Using eBay (Brian Sheron)

eBay has been mentioned several times in this report. This appendix describes eBay and how it can be useful.

What is eBay?

eBay is a large international internet auction site. People who want to sell items can list them on eBay. eBay has three options; selling by auction, selling outright ("Buy it Now"), or a combination of the two. Selling by auction means you put an item up for auction on eBay, you specify the length of time the auction will last (usually a week), you specify if you have a minimum amount of money you must get for the item before you will sell it, and you specify how much you will charge for shipping costs as well as specify to which other countries you are willing to ship it.

Once an item has been auctioned, the winning bidder pays you. In order to simplify payment and minimize problems, eBay requires you to subscribe a payment plan they run called "PayPal." Thus, the winning bidder will automatically receive an invoice from eBay to pay for the item just won via Paypal. The winning bidder, who should also have an account with Paypal, will authorize payment (which could come from his/her bank account or credit card). The payment will be deposited in your Paypal account. At any time, you can transfer money to and from your Paypal account.

What Are the Benefits of Selling On eBay?

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The value of used model railroad equipment (engines, structures, cars, etc.) is primarily determined by desirability (How rare is it and how many model railroaders want it?). An item that is hard to find, or is no longer being manufactured, will command more money than a item that is readily available in hobby shops, or is already trying to be sold by many people on eBay.

If you are interested in getting the maximum amount of money for your items, you are likely to get it by using eBay. You should first search on eBay to see how many other people are selling the same or similar items. Note how much they are asking for the item (if they are using "Buy it Now"), or follow it and see what it sells for, and that can give you an idea of what an item is worth or for how much it would likely sell.

If you list an item and it doesn't sell the first time, you can immediately re-list it, and you can lower the minimum price if you think that might encourage someone to buy it.

Like any other business, eBay will charge you a small fee just for listing the item (regardless if it sells), and a percentage of the sale price if it does sell.

What Are the Drawbacks To Selling On eBay?

There are several downsides to selling your model train items on eBay.

First, it takes time. In order to list an item on eBay, you should take one or several photos of the item and download them to your computer (people want to see what they are buying). Next, you have to fill out the forms which specify the category for the item, the title and description of the item, etc. Filling this out and downloading the photos to the listing takes time. Doing this for a few items is fine, but for hundreds of items, it will be time consuming. Shipping costs are also something you have to deal with. Unless you want to specify "free shipping", or specify a fixed shipping cost, you will need to get a postage scale, package up the item, weigh it and enter the shipping weight so once the address (zip code) of the winning bidder is known, the shipping costs can be calculated by eBay.

Second, if you have a large collection of, say, engines and passenger cars from the same railroad, putting all of them on eBay at the same time could "flood" the market. In other words, there are only so many people out there that are interested in a specific railroad, and probably are interested in one or two items. Putting 25 or 50 engines on eBay at once will mean that probably only a few will sell, and the rest will remain unsold, or will sell for less than you had hoped. Thus, selling large engine or car collections of a particular railroad should probably be done over the course of months or even years, if you want to get a good price.

Third, once someone purchases your item, you need to package it up, take it to the post office or shipping store and send it off. Unless you already have boxes, packing peanuts or bubble wrap, and packaging tape, you will have purchase these. And packaging also takes time.

Search eBay to Know How Much Your Stuff Is Worth

One valuable feature on eBay that isn't so obvious is searching COMPLETED auctions. If you're selling stuff on eBay, it can be hard to know how much it's worth. You can actually search eBay's completed listings, so you know how much similar items sold for.

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

To do this, just search for a similar item on eBay and scroll down to "Show Only". Check the "Completed Listings" box, and you'll see all completed auctions for that search. Items with green prices sold at that price, while items with red prices didn't end up selling. That should give you a good idea of how much your item is worth.

More Observations About eBay

Selling on eBay is time-consuming, especially if you are trying to maximize return. It takes time to examine each item, determine what it is and its condition; a good marketing approach; take, edit, and resize photos; and write up the description. There is more time involved in monitoring the auctions, responding to any questions, invoicing and tracking payments, packing, and shipping.

The junk, broken, toy, and heavily worn stuff is seldom worth putting on eBay. Unless a good condition version is worth more than \$20-\$30, I wouldn't put poor condition stuff on eBay. My reasons, the time factor as discussed in the 1st bullet, the damage it does to your reputation as a seller, and eBay, PayPal and Post Office fees and costs. There are more likely to be issues of description accuracy. These can negatively impact the price you will get for the "good stuff". So I only sell the "good stuff" on eBay. The various fees and costs are loaded against merchandise that sells for less than \$20.

On eBay, the buyers determine the value, not the seller. There is enough model railroad stuff on eBay that buyers tend to be fairly discriminating. I found starting the auction off at about 25% or less of what I think the item will go for works much better than a high starting price or a reserve. This approach has a real risk that the item will sell for less than I want. But most times I am pleasantly surprised, and it seems to even out in the end better than I thought. Risk or not, to me it sure beats not having any bids at all - which I see all the time for dealers with their high starting or reserve prices. My analysis is that dealers selling the same item at a "Buy it now" price have pretty much set the top end of what you can expect to get for it. Finally, to be brutally honest, I can afford the risk because it's not my personal \$\$ at stake. You have a similar situation. Remember that you have no real investment - financial or emotional - in what you are selling.

eBay will generally bring in a higher gross price than any other venue just because of its nationwide (and global) reach, and its reputation as a place to buy model railroad equipment. All the other options reach a more limited local market, which may be even further limited by the type or roadname of what you are selling. For example, my Dad modeled mostly Eastern railroads that are not particularly popular here in Northern California. The lack of market would have caused the local price to be much less than I was able to get on eBay.

Realistically, you are going to have to have somebody that knows model railroad equipment to come in and look at what you have to advise you of what is of value and what isn't. From there you can examine your options. If you have a knowledgeable person sell the stuff on eBay for you, unless you have a close personal friend who will do it for much less, expect to net about 50-65% of the gross after all costs plus commission. Commission may be in money (usually eBay resellers charge 25-35%) or a model railroader who chooses to keep some items for himself as payment. Higher value items do better on percentage return.

If you don't want to do any work, consignment (a hobby shop, estate auctioneer, someone who will do the eBay selling for you) is the way to go, but they take a good bit of the proceeds.

Tips for Selling on eBay by eBay

This guide is intended for the seller who does not have a lot of knowledge about trains, but is looking to sell the "old trains that were stored in the basement."

When selling model railroad equipment, the most important thing to include in your listing is the scale, such as N, HO, O, etc. Sellers who have little experience with model trains sometimes make the mistake of listing their locomotives and cars under the wrong scale; if a potential buyer is looking for an HO scale locomotive, that buyer will be looking for HO scale only... an HO scale locomotive listed as N scale will not get many (if any) bids. The seller should pay close attention to the scale of the model being sold, and list it correctly.

The type of rolling stock (locomotives and cars) being listed is also important to note in the auction heading. Many times, sellers with little knowledge of trains or model railroads will list their auctions with generic titles like "train," "trains," "train car," and the like. This will not generally get the attention of the average buyer; most of the time, a person seeking a caboose will search under the word "caboose," and so forth. Try to determine the type of railroad equipment you are selling. Is it a steam locomotive or a diesel? Steam locomotives are usually black and cylindrical, with various domes and piping on the body, and driving rods and other moving parts near the wheels... the "choo-choo" sort of locomotive. Steam engines will rarely have any markings besides a number on the cab and/or a railroad name on the tender (the "coal car" which is usually attached to the locomotive). Diesels have no visible moving parts besides the wheels, and are generally boxy or streamlined in appearance; they can be in a variety of color schemes. If you are selling a freight car, is it a tank car, or a boxcar, or a hopper? Please keep in mind that NOT every railroad car is a "boxcar." Boxcars are just that... cars shaped like boxes, with doors on their sides. Tank cars look like cans on a set of wheels. Hoppers are open-topped cars with chutes on the bottom, while covered hoppers have a roof. Gondolas are basically low, open-topped cars with flat bottoms. Flatcars... well, they need no explanation. Caboosees are usually short, boxy cars with a few windows (they are NOT "passenger cars").

The name of the railroad that is printed on the car or locomotive is also important to include in your auction heading, such as "Pennsylvania," "Great Northern," or "Santa Fe." Reporting marks (railroad initials) can be listed instead, such as "PRR," "GN," or "ATSF." There are lists of reporting marks which can be found online; simply search under "railroad reporting marks" and a number of websites are available which will show the name of a railroad and its reporting mark.

If you have a locomotive that you wish to sell, but don't know if it works, SAY SO in your listing. Sometimes, bidders are not necessarily looking for a working locomotive; they may just want the body of the locomotive for a modeling project, or may want to use your old junker for spare parts. For the same reason, if your car or locomotive appears damaged in any way, make sure you include a description in your listing. Does your boxcar have a missing door? Are the little step-ladders at the end broken off? Is there a coupler (the "connector" at each end) missing? Are there any scratches, cracks or dents? Post a good, clear photo with your listing if you can; eBay will host one photo for free.

One last thing to avoid: titles with words like "RARE" and "WOW." A good honest title and description will get more attention than flashy phrases that lack any substance. More often than not, buyers looking

Estate Planning for Model Railroaders

for model trains are not seeking collectors' pieces; they're looking for models to build or operate. Give them a good accurate description, and they may be very interested in what you've got to offer.

Warning (Anonymous)

Beware! There are buyers who will try and cheat you by keeping the item just about the time of return is near and open a case against you, keeping money & train. I know, it happened to me.