

The

POTOMAC FLYER

Jan-Mar 2013

Winter Quarter

Open House Reports

Install Berkshire Junction Flashers



C&P Junction - 2013 MER Convention!

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The Potomac Division, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association includes the District of Columbia; Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's and St Mary's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, and Rappahannock Counties in Virginia, as well as all area independent cities.

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The Potomac Flyer

Potomac Division's Quarterly Newsletter

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From the Business Car **Marshall Abrams, Division Superintendent**

Most of my time spent on NMRA activities has been directed at the MER Convention that Potomac and Chesapeake Divisions are hosting at the Crowne Plaza in Rockville October 10-13, 2013., C&P Junction 2013. The Crew working on the convention involves people across the MER, most from the local area. We're using a private Yahoo group to communicate. I'm delighted that is working very well.

Discussion threads on the Yahoo group include:

(1) Design of name badges to include information about a member's model railroading interests to serve as an ice breaker and encourage more interactions. Another aspect of the badges is to highlight the role a member plays in the MER and/or the convention. A consequence of including more information is that the size of the badge will increase. The LCC has previously decided to purchase lanyards to hang the badges around the neck. Who would think that were so many variables concerning badges!

(2) Food service is controversial because of conflicting objectives and values. The MER convention is very much a social event for a significant number of attendees. They get to see some friends once a year and want to maximize time spent together in the hotel, since they don't want to wander around an unfamiliar area. Food service in the hotel is not cheap. For the banquet, the less expensive plated dinners on the hotel menu will cost over \$50 including service charges and tax. Some folks are surprised that buffets are even more expensive. Prior experience is that about 100 breakfasts are consumed at the hotel by our attendees. We're concerned about both the price and the ability of the hotel to serve that many meals rapidly.

(3) A list of local and favorite restaurants is being used to produce maps.

(4) Publicity is being produced that may be aired in the NMRA Magazine or the MER Local.

(5) The web page is about ready for review by the crew before going live. The placeholder at <http://home.comcast.net/~CandP2013/> will probably be live by the time you read this.

(6) We need to pin down the cost of the banquet on the registration form. If you want to be among the first to register, a preliminary form is at <http://mer.nmra.org/MERConv/MERConv.html>. But you'll have to update your

registration as more options become available.

We're also planning layout tours and operating sessions, arranging prototype tours, scheduling clinics, and arranging with modular groups to set up at the convention.



PD activities continue while we work on the convention. Brian Sheron has scheduled open houses for January and February. Bill Day has scheduled a White Flag Extra clinic on animation on Sunday, January 20, 2013. See the details in this issue.

If you know someone in the Potomac Division who doesn't receive this copy of the Flyer, please get in touch with me. We continue to hear from people who think that the Potomac Division has gone inactive because they haven't heard from us in a long time. The other side of the coin is that we continue to get notification of invalid email addresses. When you see your model railroad friends, please ask them if they saw this issue of the Flyer. If not, they should contact Mike White or me and we'll get our database updated. Our contact information is on the masthead.

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Achievement News

Brian W. Sheron, MMR



Although they got their certificates a while ago (see the September issue of the NMRA magazine), I want to acknowledge both Ronald King of Gainsville, VA, and Bill Lyders of Manassas, VA for receiving the Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical achievement certificates. Please join me in congratulating them for this achievement.

There has not been lot of activity in the achievement program over the last few months. I'm hoping folks were just enjoying the warm autumn temperatures we were experiencing, and now that cooler weather is here, we can get back to some serious modeling.

I want to remind everyone that the Potomac Division, along with the Chesapeake Division, will be hosting the 2013 Mid-Eastern Region (MER) Convention, which will be held at the Rockville Sheraton Hotel (just off of Shady Grove Road) October 10-13, 2013.

The MER convention, in addition to clinics and area layout tours, will have a contest room. This is a great opportunity for you to bring that model you've been working on all year and get it judged. While it is called a "contest room", the "contest" is just a part of the activities. Models are judged by groups of experienced, qualified judges, and are judged against the scoring criteria established by the NMRA. Each model judged will receive a score. The maximum score a model can receive is 125 points, divided among 5 categories. As long as model receives 87.5 points or more, it receives a merit award, which counts towards several of the modeling achievement awards, depending on what was modeled (i.e., car, structure, motive power).

Additional awards are also awarded to models with the highest point score in each of the various categories.

And just as if you had your model judged in your home, the judges will provide you with constructive feedback on what you did well, and areas for improvement. So maybe now is a good time to start building that model you've been contemplating building, and have it ready for the October convention!

WANTED: LAYOUT HOSTS!

Do you have a layout? It doesn't matter if it is complete, just in the benchwork phase, or somewhere in between. As long as you have some track laid and can run a train, many members would like to see it. Visiting a layout that is under construction is very informative, since members planning a layout can see the benchwork, how you are attaching scenery, roadbed, trackwork, etc.

Hosting an open house is also a great way to meet other model railroaders in the Potomac Division area. And it is not a big deal! The Potomac Division sponsors tours of members layouts approximately once every month. They are held on a Saturday from 1 pm to 4 pm.

The Division can:

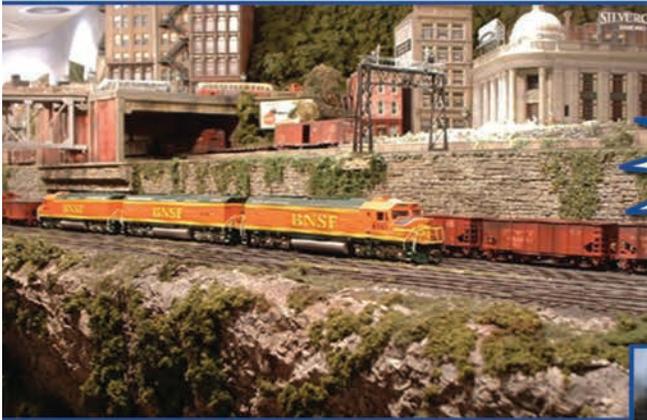
- 1) Provide you with pointers for preparing your layout for the open house,*
- 2) Advertise it on the Division web page*
- 3) Remind the membership about it a week before it is scheduled, and*
- 4) Provide a greeter to greet visitors, have them sign a guest register, and show them the way to your layout.*

So if you have a layout, don't be shy! Show it off! Contact Brian Sheron at BWSheron@mac.com or give him a call at 301-349-5754 to schedule your layout for a Potomac Division layout tour.

C & P Junction ROCKVILLE

MER Convention

COLUMBUS DAY WEEKEND
OCTOBER 10-13, 2013



Layout Open House at
Howard Zane's
Piermont Division (HO)



Clinic by Marty McGuirk
on his Central Vermont,
Winooski Subdivision (HO)

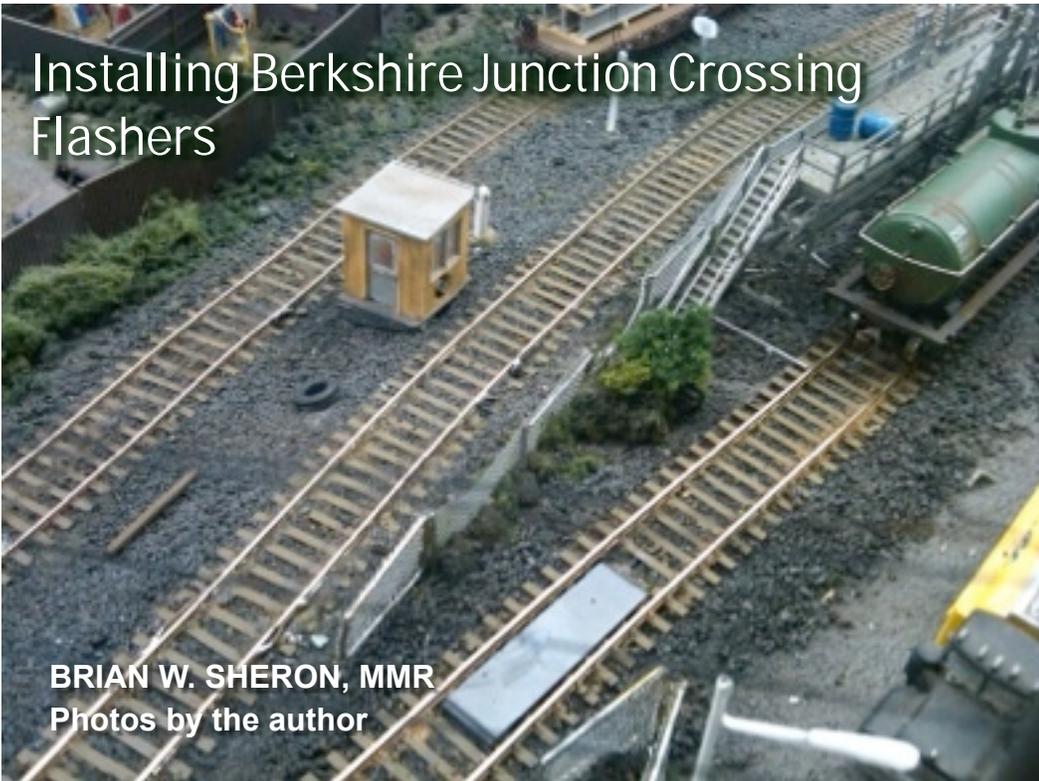


Layout Open House at
Monroe Stewart's
Hootch Junction (N)

Email: CandP2013@comcast.net
website: <http://home.comcast.net/~CandP2013/>

C & P Junction * Rockville, MD

Tips and Techniques



Installing Berkshire Junction Crossing Flashers

BRIAN W. SHERON, MMR
 Photos by the author

blocking the light to the photocell to activate the flasher. This is not a problem if you keep the lights on in the layout room all of the time. However, I have installed lighting in most of my buildings, along with street lights, parking lot lights, etc., and often turn the lights off in the room for a more dramatic night time effect. Unfortunately, turning off the lights means the photocell thinks a train is going by and the crossbuck flashers will activate.

Another alternative is a flasher unit that is activated by an infrared beam of light. You place an infrared bulb

on one side of the tracks,

and place the infrared detector on the other side of the tracks opposite the infrared bulb. When a train goes by, it breaks the infrared light beam and that is used to trigger the flasher circuit. The advantage of this method is that the infrared light beam is unaffected by the room lighting, so the system works whether the room lights are on or off.

Crossing flashers that automatically activate when a train approaches a grade crossing, and then automatically shut off once the train has gone by, add a lot of realism to any train layout. However, the thought of having to install detection and associated electronic circuits make some model railroaders think it is too complicated or difficult to do, and therefore they won't do it. However, in this day and age, hooking up operating crossing flashers is quite simple.

There are a number of companies that make automatically activated crossing flasher units. The main difference among them is in the activation mechanism.

I have one set of crossbucks that connect to a circuit that is triggered by photocells set in the tracks between the ties. I like this because once they activate, the circuit makes the crossbuck flashers stay on until the train crosses a photocell mounted on the other side of the grade crossing. Thus, even if just an engine (no cars in tow) crosses the photocell, it activates the crossbuck flasher, and the flasher won't go off until the train crosses over a photocell again. The drawback to this system however, is that it relies on the engine

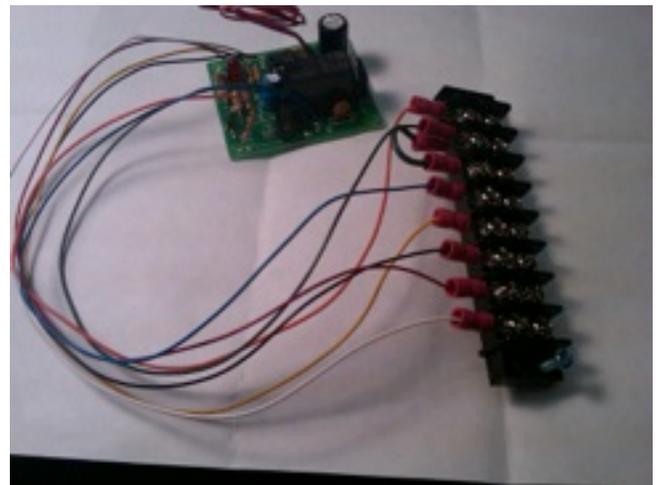


Figure 1

A company that regularly comes to the Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium, Maryland is Berkshire Junction. Berkshire Junction sells an assortment of electronic equipment and



Figure 2

accessories for the model railroader, including an infrared activated crossbuck flasher circuit. The kit comes with two crossbucks (with flashers), two infrared bulbs, two infrared detectors, and the activation circuit. You simply place one infrared bulb and detector on one side of a grade crossing, and place the other infrared bulb and detector on the other side of the grade crossing. The crossbuck flashers activate (alternately flash) when a train breaks the infrared light beam as it approaches the grade crossing. As long as the infrared light beam is broken, the flashers will flash. However, once the last car passes the infrared bulb and detector, the detector will once again see the infrared light beam, and the flasher will stop flashing. However, after the engine and consist pass the first infrared bulb and detector, starting the flasher, the engine and consist goes through the grade crossing, and then breaks the infrared light beam on the other side of the grade crossing. This will keep the flashers going until the last car passes. The drawback to this system is that if the train is shorter than the spacing between the two infrared bulbs and detectors, the flasher will stop while the train is between the units. Thus, you should have a good idea of how many cars your average train will be pulling, so you know where to locate the infrared bulbs and detectors. In other words, the spacing between the infrared bulb and detector pairs should be

equal to or shorter than the average train length that you normally run.

The instructions with the Berkshire Junction crossing flashers are clear and easy to understand, and connecting up the bulbs, detectors, and crossbucks to the circuit board is simple and straightforward. I suggest connecting the wires coming from the circuit board to a terminal block (see figure 1). That way you can mount the circuit board and terminal block in a convenient location under your benchwork, and then run all the wires from the bulbs, detectors, and crossbucks to the other side of the terminal block. The system requires a standard 12VDC power supply.

In order to get the bulbs and detectors to a reasonable height above the railheads, I glue them onto a short piece of scale I-beam (see figure 2), and then glue the I-beam with either the bulb or the detector next to the track.

Another potential drawback to this system is that the infrared bulbs and detectors have to be mounted trackside, and thus are non-prototypic in appearance. However, there are numerous ways to hide both the infrared bulbs and detectors so that they will not be very noticeable to visitors.



Figure 3

1.) Cover them with foliage (see figure 3). Gluing small clumps of foliage around either the infrared bulb, the detector, or both, will essentially hide them from view. Just be sure not to cover up either the bulb or the detector lens (you'll quickly know if you did, because the flashers will start flashing).

2.) Build a cover for them. I mounted one of my infrared bulbs near an unloading area by a trackside industry. I simply built a large crate that would look typical, and would sit over the infrared



Figure 4

bulb (see figure 4). I cut a small hole in the side so the bulb would shine into the detector. I covered another infrared bulb by placing a trackside shanty over it (see lead photo), and drilling a small hole in the side so the infrared beam would shine on the detector. You could also build a stack of ties (hollow in the center of course!) with a small hole on the side for the infrared light beam. This would look prototypic along any trackage.

I have four grade crossings along my branchline leading from the yard to the mainline. During operating sessions, most freights consist of the diesel engine, 4-5 freight cars, and a caboose. Watching the crossbucks automatically start flashing as the train goes by each grade crossing, and then turn off, adds a little more realism to the operating sessions.

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A Flatcar from Cass

MAT THOMPSON

Photos by the author

After a trip to the railroad at Cass, WV, I was reviewing my pictures and noticed an interesting flat car I vaguely remember photographing. It is on a siding a few hundred feet east of the depot.

Strapping oil barrels and wooden boxes to a flat car seems to fit the "get 'er done" attitude of a logging railroad. The method would never be allowed in interchange service but worked just fine for getting supplies up to the logging camps.

I decided modeling the same look on my Oregon Coast Railroad would be an easy and interesting project.

OCRR #604 is a Tichy car I built several years ago. The lettered oil barrels are from JL Innovative Design. The wooden crates were in a junk box just waiting for a place to be used.

I made the straps .010 inch black wire from Artistic Wire which is available from craft stores. I bent the wire to shape and used ACC glue sparingly to hold the wire down on the barrel and crates and to secure it in the flat car's stake pockets.

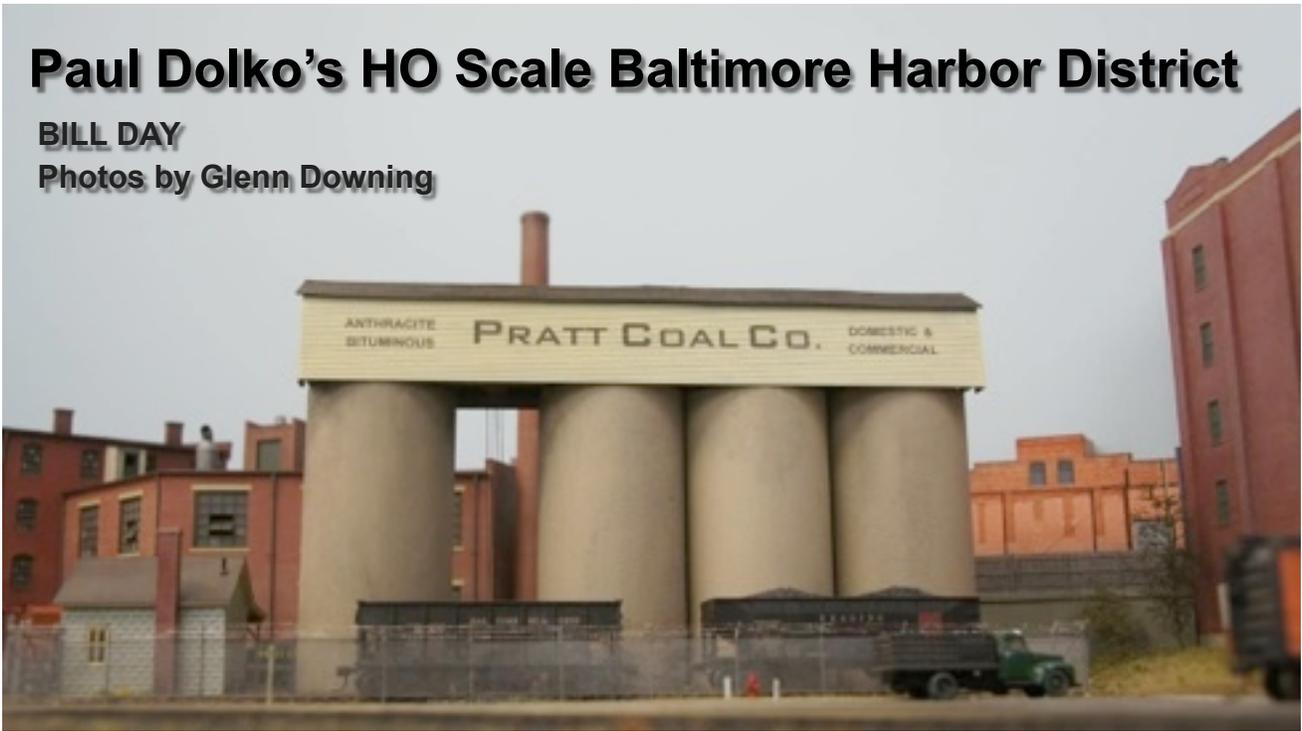


Around the Division – Layout Open House Report

Paul Dolko's HO Scale Baltimore Harbor District

BILL DAY

Photos by Glenn Downing



Expert modeler Paul Dolkos hosted a layout open house in December with so much fine modeling one visitor said, "I came to be inspired and I was, but also left somewhat intimidated."

The layout, the Baltimore Harbor District, features Paul's innovative structures using photographs supplemented by styrene cornices, windows and steps. The first coverage of such buildings appeared in the cover story of the October 2011 Model Railroader, followed up by more detailed article in the May 2012 issue. Paul's coal yard was another cover story in the December 2012 MR.

The layout, set in 1955, includes Baltimore harbor operations and neighborhoods. Motive power includes that of the Baltimore & Ohio, Western Maryland, Pennsylvania and Canton Railroads, used on local switch jobs or transfer runs. Attention to prototype photos enables the layout to represent the harbor in er, verisimilitudinous, ways.

The open house drew 47 modelers, probably a modern record. Visitors saw a layout

designed to be run. Bernie Kempinski and Bob Warren—were on hand to shuttle cars in and out of spurs and to the harbor.

A car float revealed a variety of details down to the life preservers required by maritime rules. Asked whether the float was kit built or scratch built, Paul said the float is a Home Depot Special—a one inch



Division Calendar

January 5, 2013 1-4 pm

Layout Open House

Howard Zane, Columbia, MD

January 20, 2013, 10 am and 2 pm*

White Flag Extra Clinic

Bill Day - Easy Animation

Potomac Falls, VA

(*Two sessions, limited to 6 people each)

February 23, 2013, 1-4 pm

Layout Open House

John Teichmoeller, Ellicott City, MD

July 14-20, 2013

NMRA National Convention "Peachtree Express"

Atlanta, GA

www.nmra2013.org

October 10-13, 2013

MER Regional Convention, C&P Junction

Rockville, MD

<http://home.comcast.net/~CandP2013/>



board. The exacting barge structure showed us what expert craftsmanship can do with the most basic of materials.

One feature of the layout that caught everyone's attention was the CVP Easy DCC command control station mounted on keyboard drawer slides so it can be slid out of sight since its not used for normal operations. Also on this drawer mount is the programming track. The master control panel can also be used to operate the layout's moveable swing bridge, although this is normally done with a wireless throttle.

All the layout's trackwork is complete. He built his benchwork in two rooms, one used for staging. The benchwork is in part cantilevered off the walls, part normal tabletop benchwork, built with cabinet-grade 3/4 plywood covered with homosote. In my experience, rarely has so much attention gone into the quality and strength of the benchwork. Engines performed flawlessly, gliding over scratch-built switches on the main line, spurs and in yards.

Readers around the globe know the Dolkos name as an author, photographer and modeler.



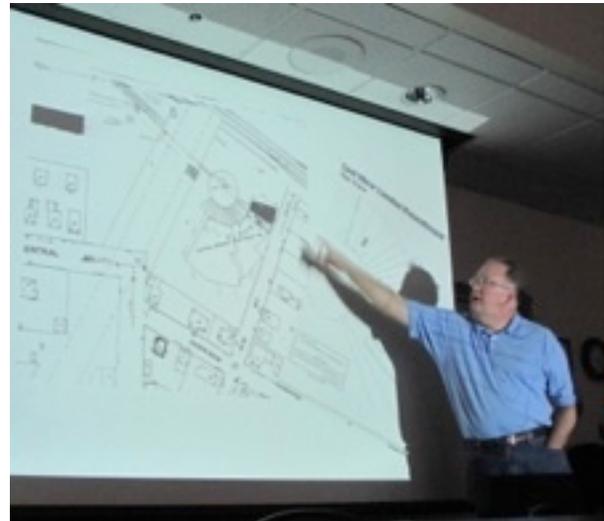
Around the Division – White Flag Clinic

BILL DAY

Photos by Fred Sauerburger



The Potomac Division's latest Extra provided a one-two punch for modelers. John Drye, an acknowledged expert on weathering, took us through the basics - and the refinements - of model weathering. Using N gauge cars that had been sprayed with Testor's Dullcoat, John painted them - with thinned, water-based paint - to simulate the overall layer of grime on cars long in service. John then drybrushed cars with thinned white to highlight grabirons, panels and roofwalks, "painting on sunshine" and streaking cars to represent oil, cement or grain. He noted that glossy paint can be used to show overspill on tank cars. He recommended using scotch tape to mask parts of cars for different effects--such as masking reporting marks to simulate fresh paint. For weathering large numbers of cars, John airbrushes with water-based PollyScale paint, especially effective with coal hoppers. On the other hand, he recommends chinks for final weathering of gondolas. John suggested mixing rust colored paint and dirt on the tops of locos to represent soot, over spraying with Dullcoat to protect the result. Finally, modeling brick structures, John used thinned gray - not white - to simulate mortar lines, laying the structure flat to permit paint to settle into the lines. No one left without knowing how to weather virtually anything.



Marty McGuirk, an extraordinary modeler who is building the Central Vermont Winooski Subdivision, showed a PowerPoint presentation that took us from benchwork to trackwork to finished scenes. Using Sanborn maps and online photos, Marty researched Vermont territory to reproduce scenes at key places on the prototype line, showing the value of carefully scouting scenes and structures before beginning layout construction. Marty also shared a mainstay of his modeling philosophy: Have the courage to change those things that don't meet expectations. During the presentation, he imparted tips and suggestions sometimes missed in enthusiast publications: use ground cover for foliage, straighten Super Trees with a soldering iron, choose the correct type of static grass machine, try Minwax products to create ripples for streams, use Crape Myrtle branches for armatures, make ground cover by grinding real leaves in a blender, use Foxtail ferns for pine trees and decide early on using foam or traditional plaster cloth for contouring. Marty's expertise, with occasional kibitzing by friends Bernie Kempinski and Paul Dolkos, promise to make the Winooski Sub one of the premier layouts in the country.

Around the Division – Layout Open House Report

Dan Vandermause's S Scale B&O/Allegheny Western Subdivision

BRIAN W. SHERON, MMR

Photos by author



Dan Vandermause is one of those rare model railroaders that chose to model in S scale. If memory serves me, HO is considered the most popular scale, with O scale and N scale about equal in second place. My guess is that S scale comes in at least a distant third. However, at 1/64th scale, half-way between HO and O scale, in many respects it is the ideal scale. Many of the operational problems associated with HO and smaller scales are not there, while the scale is not so large that you can have a layout with lots of operational flexibility in a moderately sized layout room.

On Saturday, November 10th, about 30+ visitors from both the Potomac and Chesapeake Divisions got to see Dan's magnificent layout and what I'm talking about.

Dan's layout is 11 feet by 45 feet, and represents a portion of the B&O operations through the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area in the late 1950's/early 1960's. Thus, Dan runs both steam and first generation diesels on his layout.

Dan uses Shinohara Code 100 flex track and turnouts. His subroadbed is plywood, with Homasote roadbed, all supported on a 1x4

sectional grid framework. His mainline is double track and about 100 feet in length, with minimum radius curves of 45 inches. Digitrax DCC provide the power to his layout.

The photos attest to Dan's modeling skills, and more photos can be found on the Potomac



Howard Zane's HO Piermont Division

When: SATURDAY, January 5, 2013, 1:00-4:00 pm

Website: www.zanestrains.com

The Piermont Division is in a 2800+ sq.ft. basement. Main line is over 1400 feet traversing what is call a blended double deck design or double deck without the overhanging shelf. Scenery is 95% complete influenced by Western Maryland and set in early 50's. Power is NCE and all locos...steam and diesel are sounded with lights. Most scenery is "glueshell" with mountains extending to ceiling in many areas. Much of the scenery is negative (descending below track level). Most rolling stock is either scratch-built or fashioned from wood kits. Structures are mostly scratch built as are bridges and viaducts. Minimum radii is 36" and track is code 83. Turnouts are 8 and 10. The Piermont Division leases or purchases equipment from railroads throughout North America...thus allowing Howard to play with any toy he likes, and it is believable. However, most locos are either WM, C&O, B&O, PRR, NYC and N&W. The layout room in many areas have 5' aisles allowing comfort for visitors. Minimum height is 54". The layout has fully operational signals that were custom designed, built, and installed by Sam Talbot.



Easy Animation with Bill Day

When: SUNDAY, January 20, 2013.

Two sessions:

Session 1: 10:00 am (Limited to 6)

Session 2: 2:00 pm (Limited to 6)

Reserve with Bill Day billday22@verizon.net, 703-406-4112 or Walk-In

“Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!” Go backstage at Bill Day’s layout to see the behind-the-scenes ways he animates bascule bridges, water plugs, water tanks, coal tipples, conveyor belts, warehouse doors, engine doors, warehouse fans, mine elevators, dump trucks, Greyhound buses, gantry cranes, and other animated effects. He calls this Easy Animation because most effects use Tortoise switches, turntable motors and black thread. The effects are designed to enhance operation; no Ferris wheels, carousels, angels in the snow-- only things that add realism to operation.

Starting with a demonstration of these effects on the layout, the clinic will progress to a PowerPoint presentation showing how the effects work, followed by an inspection of the items on the layout—with the fascia removed. Additionally, there will be on display (but not working) national prizewinning animations (Hulett ore Unloader, bascule bridge, coal tipple) as well as animated structures that didn’t work (coal collier, bascule bridge, engine house, warehouse door).

Driving directions will be emailed to registrants.

John Teichmoeller's H0 Scale B&O's Old Main Line in the Lower Patapsco Valley

When: SATURDAY, February 23, 2013 1-4 pm

This layout represents 7 miles of the B&O's Old Main Line in the lower Patapsco River valley from East Avalon (just west of the famous Thomas Viaduct) to Union Dam tunnel (where the railroad runs underneath US Rt. 40). The time is November 1967 (just prior to Penn Central). There is an overlay of historical fiction, the fiction being that the Patapsco Valley had become an industrial corridor.

The layout occupies an L-shaped finished basement room of about 20'x24'. The core of the layout was fabricated and installed in 2004 by Lance Mindheim (www.shelflayouts.com). John laid yard and other industrial trackage.



Since the layout open house for the Division in 2006, numerous other cardboard mockup industrial structures have been added. The layout uses Atlas Code 83 flex track on cork roadbed over 3/4" plywood subroadbed. Atlas No. 6 turnouts are used (plus 4 Walthers/Shinohara curved) with Tortoise machines. Minimum radius is 26," and the continuous-loop main line is about 120' long. Maximum grade is about 1.6%, and there are three passing sidings permitting ca. 15-20 car trains. There is an open 6-track staging yard. Temporary signs consisting of yellow cards on bamboo skewers identify trackage and industries. The basement floor is professionally epoxy coated. The layout is controlled with a CVP radio DCC system. Aisles are a bit tight in some places, and the duckunder is suboptimal, but, hey, you do what you have to. Also different since 2006 is the third and hopefully final trial installation of industrial trackage in the steel mill peninsula using Atlas Snap Track.

Scenery is in its infancy; we are having fun trying to improve upon and expedite various published "winter tree" construction techniques. Some of these trees should be on display. And new since last time is a masonite riverbed that now runs through part of the layout. Most of the signature structures are only represented by cardboard mockups. Industries represented include a blast furnace, byproducts coke plant, slag processing plant, open hearth steel plant, heavy forge, flour mill and textile mill, some but not all of which are based on prototypes on the line. John has been fortunate to be able to arrange to have laser kits produced of the actual B&O stations at St. Denis, Ilchester and Ellicott City. The kits are on display on the layout. Ilchester has been built-up so far. Quite a few pieces of interesting steel mill rolling stock will be on the layout or on display.

Due to the time of year, please enter via the outside basement entrance at the rear of the house across the patio.