

SEPT. 12 DIVISION MEET & LAYOUT TOUR REPORT

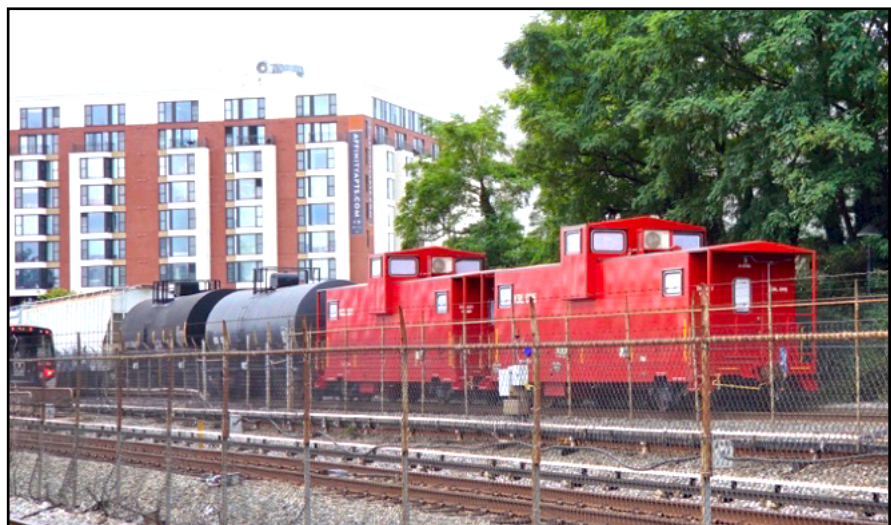
Article by Greg Cassidy

Photos by Greg Cassidy and Ken Wilson



The Potomac Division of the NMRA held its fourth public membership meeting of the year at the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. This is a wonderful venue for holding any kind of railroad-related meeting, whether it's prototype or model. You not only get all the historical architecture and vintage artifacts from railroading's Golden Days, but you

also get to see quite a few trains passing by on Amtrak and the CSX Metropolitan Branch. We even caught a mixed freight that had two cabooses on the end ([photo below right](#)), causing a fair bit of speculation as to why they were there. There is also an HO display layout that set up in the baggage room and maintained by the Rockville Model Railroad Society. It operates whenever the station has an open house, which is the first Saturday of every month as well as other times. The one caveat to this location is that there isn't very much parking at the station. That unfortunately means that some people had to use the parking garage across the street, which does charge on Saturdays. The Division was putting on two presentations at this meeting. One, by **Ernie Little**, MMR, dealt with the Achievement Program certificate for Dispatcher, and the other, put on by



Martin Brechbiel, MMR, was the Achievement Program certificate for Author. A fair bit of discussion and questions occurred between the Board members and the attendees, especially about the Author certificate. One of the lesser-known details, for anyone planning to put on a clinic or presentation to count towards their Author AP, is that they must include handouts. This is one of the requirements that unfortunately sometimes gets overlooked.



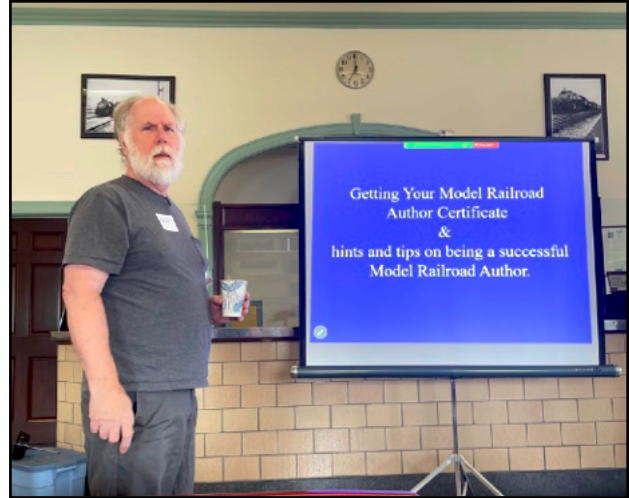
The meeting was followed by four layout tours, three in Maryland and one in the District of Columbia. A separate article covering the layouts follows in this issue of *The Flyer*.

Regrettably, we were disappointed at the turnout for both the meeting and the layout tours. Very few people attended either. As part of our effort to make sure we stay relevant to the members of the Division and offer them what they want, we must try



Rockville Model Railroad Society Layout

to understand why the last couple of meetings have had low turnouts. In the case of this meeting there is, of course, the possibility that having to pay for parking could have had a negative impact. We are also wondering if, perhaps, the Achievement Program presentations this year dealing have not been of as much interest to the membership as we thought they might. In addition, this meet was held in Maryland, even though it is inside the Beltway.



Clinicians: Ernie Little, MMR (left) and Martin Brechbiel, MMR (right)

Please send me an email if you have ideas that might help us put on meetings that are of more interest. Consider this less of a survey and more of a chance for you to let us know what you would like to see. Send your thoughts to my email, Sr-Asst-Super@potomac-nmra.org. I will treat all the emails confidentially, unless someone wants their thoughts to be known to the membership.

SEPTEMBER. 12 MARYLAND LAYOUT TOUR

Article and Photos by Ken Wilson

Potomac Division members had the opportunity to visit three layouts in Maryland and one in Washington, D.C. These tours were arranged by **Greg Cassidy**, Senior Assistant Superintendent, as the afternoon activity followed two in-person clinics held at the historic B&O station in Silver Spring, MD.



My first stop was to see **Jim Anderson's** HO-scale 1930s PRR switching layout set in North Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Camden and Newark, New Jersey. Jim ([photo left](#)) is new to the NMRA but certainly not a new modeler. His layout is 20 years old. It fills his basement with numerous switching locations, mainline trackage, and over 250 city structures ([photo top next page](#)). The complexity of his urban scenes is quite stunning, with trackage running through canyons created by a blend of industrial and high-rise buildings. His opportunities for switching include passengers or a variety of industries to be served. Several of my favorite views didn't even

include trains! Jim told me that his degree is in urban planning, but he said that he never did anything using that education: I respectfully disagree. Welcome to the Potomac Division, Jim!

My second stop was in Laurel, Maryland. We were fortunate to have good weather that afternoon, which allowed **Glenn Olsen** (photo below) to show his G-scale outdoor layout. I had seen his railroad previously when I delivered some cars he purchased from a Potomac Division donation. Since then, he has added those cars, plus a GE 44-tonner painted in Washington and Old Dominion scheme.

His operation loosely mimics the W&OD in that trains originate at either end of the railroad, and meet in the middle to swap cars. A loop at either end allows for continuous operation. Outdoor layouts have unique challenges. Since his locomotives are battery powered, his railroad operates using non-powered "dead rail" (not to be confused with the novel *Dead Rail* by Potomac Flyer editor Alex Belid). Track cleaning is rather simple using a leaf blower. Apparently single leaves are not a problem, but clumps of them or sticks need to be cleared to prevent derail.

When I asked about snow, Glen told me that he has a wedge plow that works quite well when there is a limited snowfall. (That would be quite an event

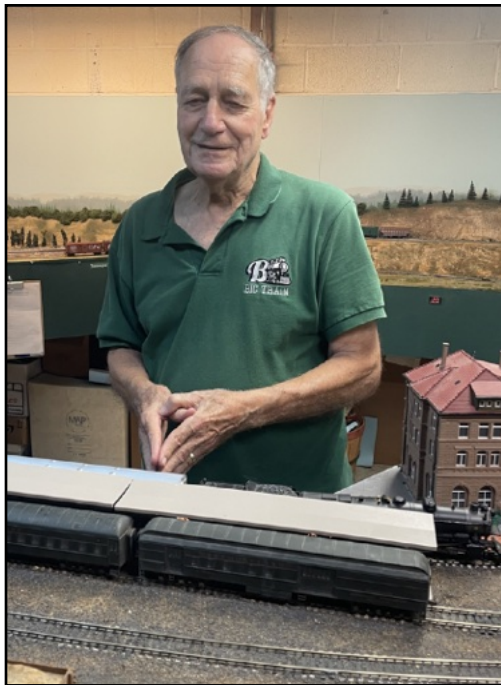


to witness!) One significant new feature was not planned by Glen. A storm had toppled a dead tree which fortunately missed all of his structures and tracks, but what has been left is a very nice natural bridge over the railroad [\(photo right\)](#)!



For the third layout, I returned to see the HO-scale Westmoreland Railroad layout by **Bill Demas** set in the 1950s [\(photo below\)](#). I have visited several times before, but I always pause to enjoy seeing the tributes that honor the memory of the late Marshall Abrams and Tom Brodrick, who were both Potomac Division Board of Directors members. Tom and

Marshall were regular operators on the Westmoreland RR, and Bill begins each of his operating sessions with a run from each end of his layout with a train from the Providence and Worcester (Tom's railroad) and the "ARE" Abrams Railroad Empire (Marshall's railroad). Once they meet at the middle of his layout, the operating session then begins. Bill's layout design is two peninsulas connected by narrower wall shelf track. The blend between three-dimensional structures and scenery flats creates an image of visual depth. Switching locations are found



throughout along with engine servicing facilities for both steam and diesel and a large passenger terminal [\(photo right\)](#).

My final visit was to Washington, D.C. to see **Ken Nesper**. I had never visited before, so I was glad to have this





opportunity. Whenever we have layout tours, our superintendent, Ernie Little, is the one who creates the color maps and driving instructions that are available for members. However, I was grateful for my GPS, since looking at a paper map while driving in the Brookland neighborhood of D.C. can be a bit challenging. Once I turned onto Ken's street, his house was easy to find since it was the only one with an authentic railroad crossing cross buck at the top of the steps from street level ([photo left](#)). He also participates in the Little Free Library program by providing a box of books near the sidewalk. Whimsically, his box is in the form of a boxcar lettered for (of course) The Reading Railroad. Ken has

built three separate model railroads in his basement by stacking them vertically ([photo right](#)). The top level is his O-scale Shepard Branch based on the B&O's trackage in Southeast D.C. set in 1958. His track is all hand-laid and has numerous structures and switching locations for operations using switch lists (photos 30-32) along with a waterfront scene featuring the B&O tugboat William J. Dickey (photo 33). In



the middle level, he has built an O-gauge three-rail Potomac & Patuxent Railroad to operate old Lionel, American Flyer, and Marx locomotives and cars, including a vintage deck plate bridge (photo 34). At desktop level is the Ohio River & Western On30 layout set in southeast Ohio in 1912 (photo 35). He has been working on adding numerous structures to upgrade from his mockup ones (photos 36-37). From what I saw that Ken has stuffed into his three-layout basement, adding a bunch of additional structures should be no problem for him.

[\[More Ken Wilson photos from the layout tours follow on the next page.\]](#)

Jim Anderson's Layout



Glenn Olsen's Layout



Bill Demas' layout

