The Local

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A Lionel Christmas Story

By Tom Bavolar

Editor's Note: *Author, Tom Bavolar is the proprietor of TOM'S MODEL TRAINS (1791-A East Second Street, Scotch Plains NJ 07076, 908-322-6122). He graciously allowed me to reprint his story, which appears on his web site,* http://www.tomsmodeltrains.com/. *In this spirit of the season, I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.*

THIS SAGA BEGINS several months before Christmas Day, circa 1955. I was 11 years old and considered myself the luckiest kid on the block because of the large Lionel layout my Dad had built. Except for a narrow center isle, the train table filled a basement party room that was about fifteen feet wide by forty feet long. The layout was "U" shaped and consisted of three separate tables interconnected with bridges. Except for an occasional evolutionary change, the layout was finished, fully landscaped and fully operational. Thinking back it was truly a work of toy train art. Except for the trains, scale made little difference to my Dad. The size of vehicles, people, lamp posts and structures had only to be "close enough" and with this philosophy, he created a wonderland of endless enjoyment and fascination.

It was at this point that Dad decided he needed to have an area of real water as part of the layout. After all, he had the bascule bridge and it seemed almost indecent to have this marvelous accessory span a pond made from crumpled up blue cellophane. So, he set about to incorporate a section of real water into the layout.

My Mom was vehemently opposed to this notion. Her position was that electricity and water don't mix and either he or me or both of us or who knows how many other innocent bystanders would be electrocuted by the giant blue spark that would eventually issue from the inevitable contact of the afore mentioned ingredients.

As I write this I can hear the arguments. "Vince," she would say, "Don't you care about safety?" "Irene," he would say, "This is not like sticking your tongue into an electrical outlet. It's safe. 110 volts of electricity are not in those tracks." "Vince," she would say, "You're going to burn the house down if there is a short circuit." "Irene," he would say, "That's why there are fuses in the fuse box."

Vince had his way. On the layout he surveyed a large rectangular area that was as wide as the bascule bridge and ran straight across the table from the wall to the isle. He measured and calculated taking into consideration the weight of the proposed metal trough and the water it would contain. He paid a sheet metal worker at his company to construct and paint the trough. He modified the table to accept the trough and its weight. Then one day he arrived home from work with the trough tied to the top of his DeSoto. Several hours later the trough was in place, its drain hole was secured and countless gallons of water, bucket by bucket, were dumped into the trough. My mother was upset with the amount of water it took to fill the trough. She was now concerned about an event of Biblical proportions. I recall her having made a reference to the Egyptian Army and their fate at the closing of the Red Sea.

Undaunted, my Dad was intent on finishing the project and when done, to my eyes, it was magnificent. There were boats that he bought at the five and dime stores. There was a large plaster hill with tunnels for the trains and, by the water's edge a campground and

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Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager

I JUST RECEIVED my copy of the Walther's 2006 HO 'catalog' and it seems to be bigger than ever. The shear size brought to mind the wonderful array of materials we modelers have today. Sure, some of us 'old-timers' may look with skeptical eyes at the amount of ready-to-run rolling stock and structures which seem to flood the market, but the wealth of craftsman type kits and scratch building materials also is at an all time high for those who want to keep the model building in their hobby.

One problem is in keeping up with what is available for that planned project. Too many of us now live in locations not graced with well stocked hobby stores where we can go and see a particular little widget. So we need to access catalogs like Walther's, read the magazine ads and perhaps browse the growing amount of info on the Internet.

But there is another way to stay abreast with what's going on in the hobby. I hope many of you were able to attend the recent fall MER convention, *Rails to Raleigh* in Cary, North Carolina. Conventions and meets like this are a sure way of not only getting some of the latest info about the hobby, but also making and renewing friendships. If you haven't attended a region or division meet, I would encourage you to give it a try. It's a great way to keep in touch.

Anyone with questions about NMRA/MER membership, subscriptions to **The Local** or **eLocal**, contacts with your local Division, or any related question, please get in touch with me at the address and email listed to the right of this column.

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The Local welcomes articles, photographs and model railroad related material as contributions to members' mutual enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. Editors will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send originals without having back-up copies of both articles and photographs. Editors, by definition, reserve the right—and have the responsibility—to make corrections, deletions and changes to accommodate space.

MER web page URL is http://members.cox.net/chyde/MER/MER.html

President's Column

By Clint Hyde

IN SEPTEMBER, the new MER bylaws took effect. The important thing for most readers to remember is that you are now paying for a subscription to **The Local** (the electronic version is free), not for a membership in MER. If you are an NMRA member and live in MER territory, you are an MER member. As a result of that, MER now has about 2400 members, more than double what we had in August.

Welcome Aboard, new folks! We are glad to have you. Look on the web site to find the Division you live in or near, and go visit them.

At the NMRA convention this year MER made an excellent showing in the AP/model judging, well beyond our usual quantity. Next year, 2006, the NMRA National Convention is in MER territory, in Philadelphia, you do need to make sure you register soon (me, too), and do try to volunteer some time there somewhere—these things are not put on by a huge paid staff, it's pretty much all volunteers.

The next full convention, in 2007, will be in the James River Division territory; five years since the last one there, and in 2008 we'll repeat in the Potomac Division. There have also been suggestions to pursue a joint convention with another region. We encourage inter-division gatherings (especially in 2006)—I've found visiting other divisions to be valuable.

We have a couple of new Directors to introduce; Dick Genthner, MMR, from the Raleigh NC area, and Herb Gishlick from N.J. area, meanwhile Chuck Hladik continues his duties as a Director.

Congratulations are extended to the two newest MMRs, Dave Lynam and Bob Charles, the annual auctioneer (and a variety of other less important elected positions in the past).

Other folks helping out: **The Local** has a new editor, Steve Kindig. MER will also have a new website soon, courtesy of the new webmaster, Martin Oakes. Thanks for volunteering! A couple of folks offered to help with the budget committee, please contact me again, I've lost that info somewhere.

Next year we will have elections for the officers, so it's not too early to be thinking about whether you are interested in running for president, vice president, treasurer or secretary. Thanks for voting this year, everyone!

Remember, Model Railroading is fun! Especially if you're organized.

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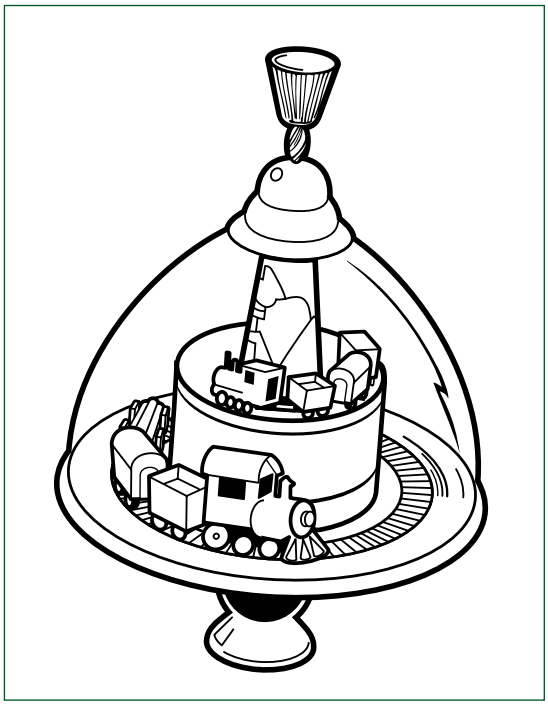
Popsicle stick dock. Lead figures of campers and fishermen abounded and in the water huge plastic fish with weighted bellies floated lazily, taunting the unresponsive sportsmen.

It was idyllic until my dad decided that he wanted running water as a scenic element. The mountain was there for a waterfall. The trough had a built in drain hole. All he needed was a pump, some hose, fittings and an electrical connection. Bingo, instant running water. One of his friends at Worthington in Harrison NJ gave him the pump and fittings. Dad modified the mountain to accommodate a water fall. Connections to the trough were made. An electrical supply was installed and that weekend the assemblage would be put to the test.



Saturday morning came and after breakfast we went down to the train room. Dad unlocked and opened the door. Beams of early morning sunlight from the two, narrow basement windows, sliced through the dark, illuminating portions of the room. Each breath taken carried with it the scent of the train room with is compliment of Lionel trains and somehow, in addition, also brought a sense of excitement and expectation. Dad turned on the light and we both went back to control panel.

I thought that he had already tested his handy work. He had not. In fact it would be left to me to throw the switch that would, for the first time, activate the pump and the water fall. The power was put on and I was instructed to flip a switch which I did.

There was a loud whine of the pump followed by a ferocious sucking sound as every ounce of water drained out of the trough. Then from the hole in the mountain, through which a gentile trickle was supposed to flow came a mighty, 50 gallon, jet of liquid disaster. In an instant the watery blast shot more than sixteen feet down one leg of the layout. The resulting catastrophe was rivaled only by the epic flood in Johnstown PA.

During the frenzy that ensued, my Dad uttered words that I had only heard spoken by others and my Mom, thinking that her worst fears of electrocution had come to pass, pounded down the stairs to add her own invectives. I, with my finger still on the switch, flipped the toggle to off just as the pump began to smoke.

It took Dad several weeks to clean up the sodden remains of what used to be a residential area. There were a lot of cardboard buildings that had warped. On the sly, Dad learned how to use Mom's iron to press the building sides flat so they could be reassembled and Dad's friend at the pump works provided a reducing valve.

Undaunted, Dad set to work in a feverish effort to reengineer his hydraulic debacle. The holidays were fast approaching and there would be company for whom he would need to proudly display his Lionel trains. At long last the pump worked as it should. It sent a gentle stream of water down the side of the mountain where it cascaded into the trough. In the current the little boats and the over sized plastic fish meandered randomly around. Mom became more accepting of the use of real water. It was a perfect world. Then came Christmas Day.

Even though I was part of a small family, any holiday, birthday or anniversary was always encumbered with the inevitable task of preparation. To a degree, as a child I was somewhat insulated from most of the chaos. Christmas however was different. I became part of the organized frenzy that accompanied this holiday and as a result became swept up into the hubbub. The participation created in me an immense sense of anticipation.

It was now Christmas Eve Day. The tree, which had been up for a couple of days, now received the obligatory necklace of some Lionel trains at its base. I helped Mom, Dad and Grandma prepare some of the food that would be consumed.

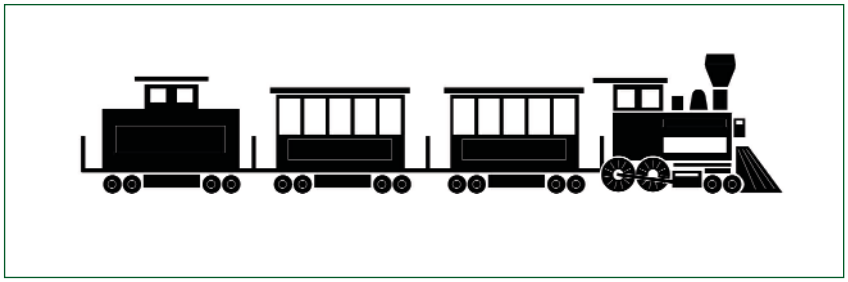
My Dad liked to bake and having completed his model train duties, turned his attention to the production of pies and cakes. My Mother and Grandmother labored over ethnic foods for the Christmas Eve supper and Christmas Day breakfast and dinner. My Grandfather, being true to his 19th century sense of how men participated spent the day in the basement hosting numbers of his cronies from Esso Standard Oil by smoking Blackstone cigars and sipping blackberry brandy.

It was very late by the time Christmas Eve dinner was ready. After we all had our fill of the traditional dishes it was up to Grandpa to blow out the ceremonial candle. The brandy he had consumed during the day did not facilitate the ritual. According to tradition, if when the candle was extinguished, the smoke went straight up, the extinguisher and all at the table would go straight to heaven at their demise. As the most elderly, only Grandpa could perform the task. After several attempts and several different candles, our place in the hereafter was assured and at last Grandpa and I went to bed. Grandpa had no trouble falling asleep. I was not so lucky. The nasal cacophony of his loud snoring perme-

ated the walls and floor to reach my bed room which was directly under his. I was wide awake but I wanted desperately to fall asleep because I knew that the sooner I did the sooner Christmas mourning would come.

Feigning sleep, I remember Mom closing my bed room door and then the muffled whispers of clandestine conversation. At last I drifted off to the crinkling sound of wrapped Christmas presents being transported by Santa from their hiding places to the tree.

On Christmas morning, I woke up to the sound of the Lionel tree train. No doubt Santa stopped back to turn it on. Santa had also opened my bedroom door. Interpreting these events as an invitation, I tip toed into the living room to survey the bounty. The presents were all carefully arranged. There was a pile for me, Mom, Dad, Grandpa and Grandma. Inspecting my pile I was able to determine by the weight, feel and size which contained the dreaded cloths and which, for a child, contained merchandise of a more desirable nature. I had almost a sixth sense that allowed me to predict which package contained Lionel trains and I knew that this Christmas was going to be the best ever. But first I would have to endure the preparations for and participation in the obligatory church services.



We all got back home at about 10 AM but before the pile of gifts could be dispensed; I had to sit through the traditional Christmas morning breakfast. It occurred to me that the speed at which I ate would somehow hasten the ritual of opening the presents. Such was not the case as all it did was to encourage Grandma to pile more food on my plate. Then, not remembering that the previous evening's candle ceremony had guaranteed us a place in paradise, Grandpa insisted on repeating the rite.

Fortunately the lucky candle was one of the first ones used and so in a short time we were all down stairs clustered around the tree. My mom, ceremoniously, distributed the gifts. The best was always saved for last. I had already opened several presents. Grandma was delighted that I liked the socks she gave me. The winter coat from my aunt was too small. When I put it on my arms stuck straight out like a penguins wings. It would have to be returned. The largest box was still unopened. Its tag read "To Tommy from Santa." I knew intuitively what it was but I had to wait for the allocation of gifts to reach the point at which this treasure was the only one remaining.

When there were no unopened gifts left my father got up, slid the giant box over to me and said "Well Tommy, looks like this is for you and it's from Santa."

I didn't have to open the box to know what it was. Of all the items I circled in the Lionel catalogue, there was only one that could have been this big. It was comforting to know that Santa and I had the same taste in Lionel trains. After looking up at Dad for a second or two I ripped into the package.

It was the Lionel Santa Fe passenger set with two gleaming diesel engines and a set of shiny, aluminum passenger cars. They would have been beautiful in any light but now, reflecting the multicolored tree lights, the pieces seemed to shimmer. It was magical as I inspected each piece and I was speechless. I was transported into another world. It was a place of imagination and fantasy. A place where the mighty engines, struggled to pull their cars up steep grades and through deep mountain chasms and tunnels. A place where the trains flew across the flat lands so fast that it was hard to turn around quickly enough to see them come and watch them go. A city place where the train slowly wound its way through freight yards and around buildings. A place like our model railroad empire in the basement.

As I slipped back into reality, as if increasing a radio's volume, the voices of my family gradually became louder. "Let's go son," Dad said, "Let's get this beauty on the layout." It was, at one time, both what I did and did not want to hear. Usually my Lionel presents were mine until I got them out of the box. Once on the layout, they somehow became his.

Grandpa, like an old cat, fell asleep in the big wing chair. Mom and Grandma went to the kitchen to finish the preparations for Christmas dinner. Dad and I packed up the set and headed to the train room. "Be careful of the electricity." my Mother said. My dad carrying the large box rolled his eyes upward. In a sort of annoyed sing song manner, "OK Irene." he answered.

Once there, for the horn, a fresh D cell battery was installed and my father carefully placed the new acquisition on the rails. It was his plan to teach me how to properly run the new train set. As usual, although I didn't think I needed any instruction, I let him have his way without complaint.

We sat at the controls, which for this section of track was a powerful ZW transformer. Dad allowed me to advance the transformer's lever just a bit. The engine sprang to life in neutral. A flick of the direction button and it began to move, ever slow slowly on its way. We tried the horn. A resounding blast of sound assured us both that all was well. First one loop around all three tables at slow speed just to make certain that there were no clearance problems. Now through all the different switches and routes. All was still perfect. What a thrill

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for us both. Everything worked even the automatic station stop. The only accessory left to try was the bascule bridge across the trough.

The accessory was wired so that a train, approaching from either end, would stop at a certain distance from the opening bridge thereby preventing disaster. I asked my dad if I could open the bridge. Opting for caution, my Dad suggested that we try another train first to be certain that the bridge worked. The new Santa Fe set was put in a siding and one of the other engines was dispatched to test the bridge's circuitry. As the bridge rose the test engine stopped at a safe distance.

Now our new passenger train slowly departed its siding and began to traverse the serpentine labyrinth of tracks. Picking up speed it clattered over the bridges and across the switches as its horn sounded powerfully. As my fantastic chariot neared the appropriate spot, having had my Dad's permission, I threw the switch to raise the bridge. The train hurtled forward.

Responding to the electricity flowing through its motor, the bascule bridge rose majestically while my Christmas train approached at speed. My Dad and I watched with pride. The train did not stop. At least not right away.

The first of the pair of diesel engines flew off the rails and into the water filled trough. Waves of tsunami proportions swept down stream swamping the boats and washing over the dock and its metal figures. The bridge, having reached its apogee began to return to its closed position. The second engine of the pair remained stopped in the spot where the first unit should have halted. My Dad, again using words I only heard from others, vaulted into the air and threw himself across the table in an effort to quickly rescue the submerged engine. I remained frozen in place in total disbelief of the spectacle before me.

In his effort to reach the scene of the disaster my father managed to crush part of the plaster mountain and several buildings. The pump continued to push out a steady stream of water which now saturated much of my fathers clothing. As he dragged him self along the table top, in an effort to prevent any more damage, he shouted to me, "Turn off the power, turn of the power!" I dutifully obeyed. There was more shouting "Get rags," quick get rags!" The physical demands of his rescue attempt must have been too much for him because before I could oblige, my father who was not an athletic man, must have pulled a muscle in his leg. His cries of pain added not only to my panic but to that of my Mother's and Grandmother's as well. They both had heard my father's yelling and fearing the worst had run down, still in their aprons, from the kitchen to the train room.

Vince was soaking wet, sprawled across about four feet of track, in obvious pain, still shouting and trying to reach the engine. My Grandmother, who was first into the train room and thinking my Dad was dying, dropped to her knees in the narrow isle and clasping her hands together raised them and her eyes towards heaven in a loud and desperate prayer. My mother thinking he was being electrocuted was shouting "Pull him off, pull him off!" All my Dad wanted was a rag. He settled for my mother's apron.

Having rescued and dried the engine it became obvious to my father why the train hadn't stopped. The unit he held in his hand was the dummy. It had no motor. It was pushed into the water by the second, powered unit which had halted in the normal spot. In his exuberance to get the train on the tracks and teach me its proper operation, he had forgotten to put the powered unit first.

Dad was deeply embarrassed and regretful of having made this mistake. By the time he crawled back off the table my Grandmother had already gone back up to the kitchen. I still stood by the silent controls. I wish my Mom would have been as mute. She launched into a verbal tirade chiding my Dad for being so reckless as to put his life and mine in jeopardy especially on Christmas Day. She wouldn't stop. My dad was loosing his patience and wanted to demonstrate to her, once and for all, how safe water and model train electricity really were.

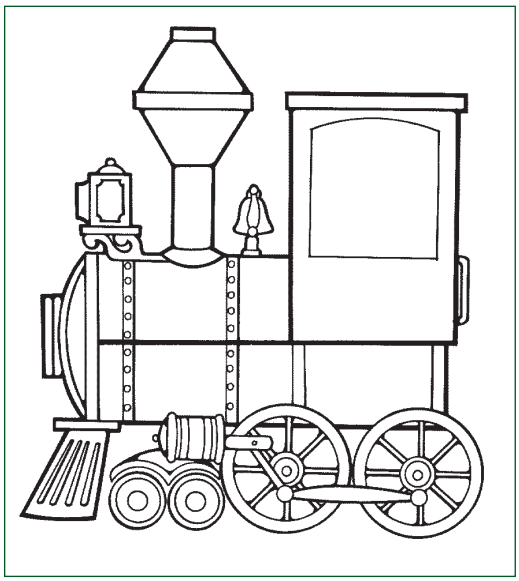
Dripping wet, still hurting from the cramp, with a torn shirt and some minor abrasions he commanded me to turn up the power. "Tommy," he said, "Turn up the power, turn it all the way up. All the power as far as it will go. All the tracks. All the lights. All the accessories. Turn it all on." I did as I was told and the layout sprung to life. The room was aglow and every engine hummed loudly in neutral, waiting for the next electrical command.

Glaring at each other, Mom and Dad faced of in the isle. He rolled up his left shirt sleeve and shouted at her "Watch this!"

He rose is arm and slammed it down across the three tracks that, at this point, parallel the edge of the layout. In his haste to prove a point, he had forgotten about the

metal, Speidel band that secured his watch to his wrist.

Upon contact with the track all the layout lights dimmed and it took a while, several very long seconds for the transformer circuit breakers to kick in. Being emotionally and physically frozen by the incident, I was paralyzed and couldn't act. During these situations, time seems to stop and events seem to proceed in slow motion. Large blue sparks flew out from the spot where the metal wrist band touched the track. They flew upward in gentle arcs and outward bouncing off the table and other tracks. As the heat from the short circuit increased, the wrist band became welded to the rail and the odor of singed hair became noticeable. Trying to free his arm my father pulled up several sections of track while shouting to turn off the power. I obeyed and the layout fell quiet. My mother, remaining silent for a change and seeing that Dad had not been electrocuted, turned and went back up stairs to the kitchen.



Except for the clinking sounds of knives and forks, Christmas dinner, that day, was consumed in silence. Grandpa, who had slept through it all, must have been told by Grandma, to keep his mouth shut. Having changed his clothes, Dad sat at the table with his wrist slathered in chicken fat or some other grease. The wound was protected by several layers of gauze strip which had been tied into a neat bow where, at one time, his watch had been. Mom and Grandma passed food around without question or discussion. All I wanted to do was finish eating and return to the basement to run the trains.

With the meal done, I helped Dad do the dishes. Today though, due to his wound, I washed and he dried. Grandpa went back to his wing chair. Grandma helped put away the cleaned dishes and Mom talked to someone on the phone, When all was complete Dad looked down at me and asked, with his with his usual rye sense of humor, "Well son, what kind of trouble would you like to get into now?" "Could we run the trains again?" I asked. "You bet we can!" was the reply and down to the basement we went.

It was, most certainly, the best Christmas ever.

Thanks Dad, Thanks Mom.

Achievement Program Update

By Charlie Flichman
MER AP Manager

Since the last report in **The Local**, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded:

Division 2 - Potomac
John Griffith- Association Volunteer
Marc Sisk - Author

Division 3 - Philadelphia
Richard Newmiller - Association Volunteer
Richard Newmiller - Author

Division 10 – South Mountain
Ronald L. Smith - Gold Spike

Division 13 – Carolina Piedmont
Victor Bitleris - Gold Spike
David Derway - Engineer - Electrical

In a perfect world, this information will appear soon in **Scale Rails**. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in **Scale Rails**

Scratch Building a Simple Line Side Structure – A Milk Station

By Martin Brechbiel

THERE ARE A LARGE NUMBER of small, line side structures when added to your layout that will add detail and interest. Years ago, milk was transported by rail in a vast array of specialized and often very colorful reefer cars. Along branch lines there would be small sheltered platforms for framers to set out their daily collection of filled milk cans for transport into larger centers for combined processing and further shipping throughout the nation. These small milk stations can add a little interest point and also give you an excuse for making a brief stop to pick up a few milk cans off your rural branch line for transport into the nearest town or city.

CMA does make a HO scale kit for a milk station in styrene based on an O&W prototype. However, being an O scale modeler and preferring wooden structures for staining and weathering purposes, this only served to provide a starting point for my building my own version of the structure board by board. This turned out to be a relatively easy build that could be simplified by using commercial siding and decking, but that might sacrifice the scale wall thickness with the look of exposed framing.

I started by building the platform and set the dimensions to be 10' x 20'. I made the 20' front and back sills from 1/4" x 3/32" dimension lumber. See Figure 1. The 9-1/4' ends were 1/4" x 1/8" dimension lumber while the rest of the 9-1/4' platform joists were fashioned from 1/4" x 3/32" dimension lumber. The frame was assembled using Walther's Goo to hold it together until the deck was installed.

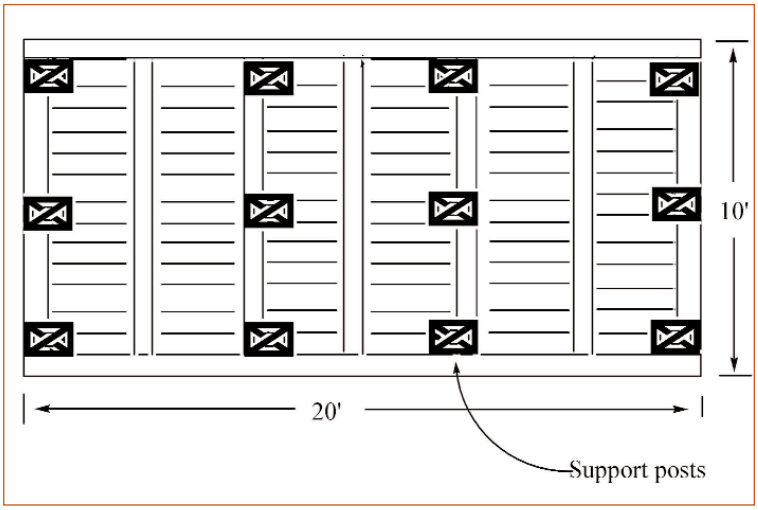


Figure 1: View of platform from below

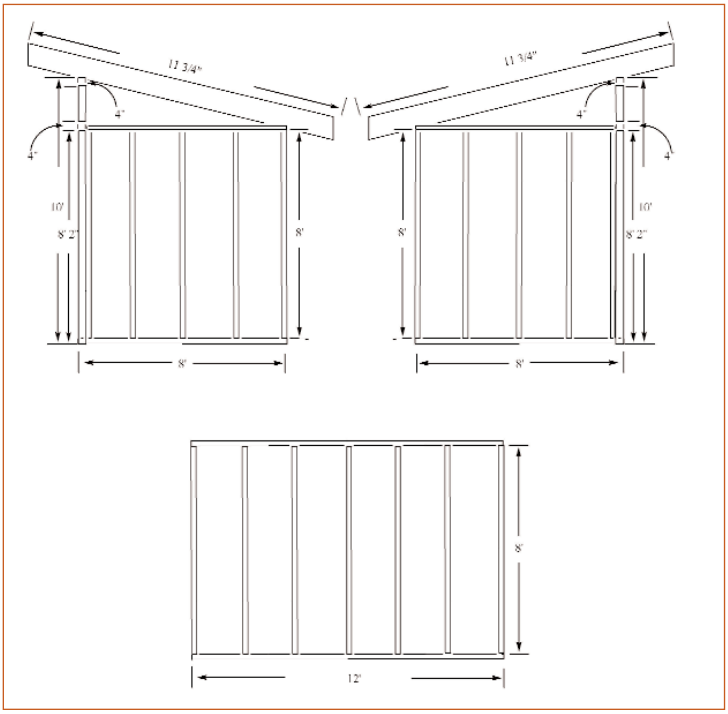


Figure 2: The left and right walls as viewed from the interior and the back wall

The decking was made from one of my favorite sources of rough lumber, wooden coffee stirrers, which were ACC'd to the platform frame leaving the excess to be trimmed of later with a utility knife. I smoothed the ends off with my belt sander, but you could use a sanding block just as easily.

The twelve 5' long posts for the platform were cut on the band saw from HO 10 x 22. More often than not, everyone just glues these underneath onto the inside surface of the joists. This time I cut a mortise out of each leg, on the band saw (mind the fingers!), to accept the joists so that they would actually rest on the posts, and then I ACC'd them into place. Diagonal bracing made of HO 3 x 10 was added front to back on both sides of each row of posts and then across the front and back as well. I dressed these up a bit by adding Grandt Line #23 nbw castings at every joint and that completes building the platform.

The station was built of 2" x 4" and 4" x 4" framing. The 2 side walls were built on an 8' long 2" x 4" sill with 4" x 4" ends; one end was 8' high while the other was 10' high. See Figure 2. The 10' long 4" x 4" was doubled inside the wall with a 2" x 4" that served to support the 2" x 4" cap. There were three 8' long 2" x

4" studs in the wall. All of these were assembled using Goo. Next, the interior surface, (There is a left and a right so these were built as mirror images, See Figure 3.) of the 10' long 4" x 4" was doubled with an 8'2" long 2" x 4" that started flush with the sill base. I left a 4" gap above this 2" x 4" and then added another piece of 2" x 4" leaving yet another 4" gap that between that and the top of the 4" x 4". These two gaps were left to inset two 4" x 4"'s that would connect these two walls. The 12' back wall was framed entirely of 2" x 4"'s with the studs set on 2 foot centers. See Figure 2.

Seven rafters were made from rough scrap (~2" x 12") and were 11-3/4' long, beveled are each end, and mortised to set down onto the framing of the sides.

The structure was assembled by ACC'ing the right side to the back which was in turn then glued to the left side remembering that the sides have an outside and an inside with mortises to accept two 4" x 4"'s that were cut the length of the back wall. These were secured with a dab of Goo. After the glue has set up, cripple wall studs made from scrap 2" x 4" were installed in between those two 4" x 4"'s and aligned with the studs in the back wall. Then, the rest of rafters were installed resting above the studs in the back wall and those in the cripple wall.

The entire exterior was finished with a board and batten outside wall. First the exterior framing was sheathed in individual boards made from HO 2" x 20" including the front area covering up the cripple wall studs. I mortised these boards so that they would tightly wrap around the rafters. After this, I covered the gaps with HO 2" x 6" to make the board and batten exterior. The roof sheathing was also added at this time and I made this from HO 2" x 24" cut to leave ~ 4" overhang and left it loosely spaced on the rafters.

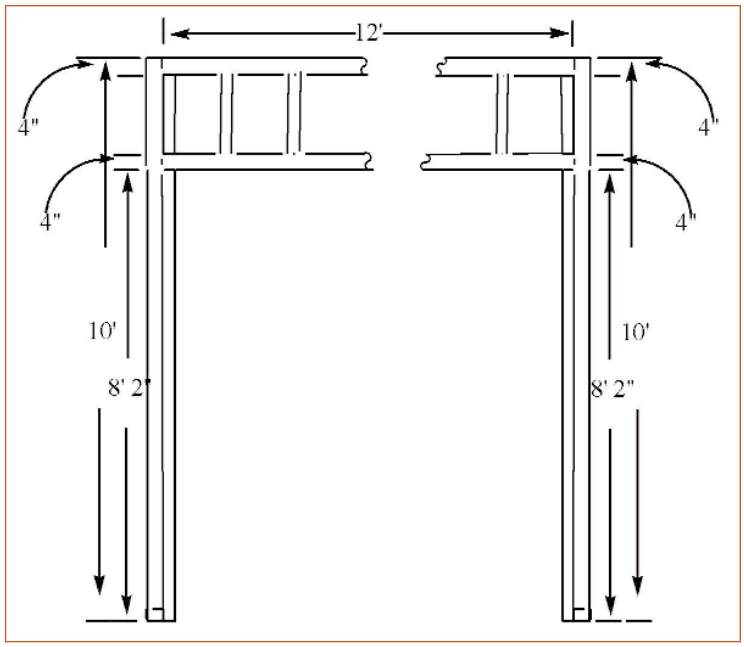


Figure 3: View from the front showing how the cross-members fit into the mortises and support the cripple wall.

At this point, I decided to do some staining and painting any before further assembly. The deck was stained with Pecan Minwax followed by darkening the posts and sides a bit with my Minwax mystery mix (leftovers in bottle…). I stained the entire structure with Pecan Minwax as well. After drying, the board & batten exterior was painted first with Floquil Wisconsin Golden Yellow. This was pretty much quickly slopped on using a very stiff brush and then while it was still quite tacky to the touch, the entire exterior was painted over with Polly S Sea Green and then left to dry. This combination produces a visual effect of crackled and peeling paint over the yellow, which after drying took on a more faded appearance. The tarpaper roofing was added; 600 grit sand paper cut into – 4' x 8' sheets that were glued down with carpenter's glue and then painted over with Polly S Oily Black.

I glued the station structure to the back left corner with ACC and then wrapped up the finishing by painting the tar seams on the roof with Polly S Steam Black, dry brushed the exposed decking, and the posts with Polly S Milwaukee Road Grey, and lastly I over sprayed the entire structure with very dilute Floquil Grimy Black. After that, I added a collection of milk cans both inside and out, a couple of barrels, a ladder, and then added a crow to the roof.

Figure 4: Finished Milk Station

So, here's a really simple project that can get you started building board by board or you can shortcut it using scribed siding and commercial board & batten, or even clapboard siding. But, however you build it, this is simple enough that you can customize it, and detail and weather it to suit your branch line. Have fun building!

Railroad Research for the Modeler – Official Registers

By Thomas Mossbeck,
Research Associate

THIS IS THE SECOND IN A SERIES of articles about the Kalmbach Memorial Library and its resources.

When you need comprehensive freight, passenger and intermodal equipment information, then the various official registers are the number one source. The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER), the Official Register of Passenger Train Equipment (ORPTE) and the Official Intermodal Equipment Register (OIER) make up the collection of official registers. This article will deal only with the ORER, but similar information for the other equipment types can be found in their respective registers.

WHY USE THEM?

I was once told that "you don't enjoy a book like this," but the information contained within each volume gives complete insight into the equipment holdings by each railroad in a given quarter of the year, something I both need and enjoy for research and modeling purposes. Note that there is also information pertaining to private car owners, such as oil, steel, chemical and other companies. You can find a complete listing of the library's freight, passenger and intermodal registers on our website, **www.nmra.org/library**, under "Our Collection."

AT A GLANCE

Let's take a look at the January 1943 ORER. The first thing we see is "The Pennsylvania Railroad" and the PRR herald. Below are the railroads which this listing applies to, in this case "The Pennsylvania Railroad Company," "Baltimore and Eastern Railroad Company," and "Waynesburg and Washington Railroad Company." Reporting marks are "PRR," gauge is 4 ft. 8_ in., and we also learn that the Railway Express Agency and Pullman Company operate over this line. Next are the main sections: "Refrigerator Cars," "Freight Equipment," "Passenger Equipment," "Miscellaneous and Work Equipment Cars," "Recapitulation of Car Equipment," Notes, and "Freight Connections and Junction Points." The practice of listing passenger cars in the ORER is inconsistent from railroad to railroad, and the ORPTE should be considered the best resource on this subject since its introduction in March 1943.

INDIVIDUAL FREIGHT EQUIPMENT

Equipment is listed in ascending numerical order with the following information given:

A.A.R. Mechanical Designation, Markings and Kind of Cars, Pennsylvania System-Class, Numbers, Dimensions (inside length, width and height, outside length, width and height from rail, side and end doors where applicable), Capacity (cubic feet and pounds or gallons, and finally, the number of cars in each series.

Looking at the listing for the pictured car number 793164, we find that it is listed as a gondola with steel underframe, wood sides, drop ends, flat bottom and wooden floor. The AAR mechanical designation is GB, which refers to "an open top car, having fixed sides, fixed or drop ends and solid bottom, suitable for mill trade." The PRR-system class is Gra, part of the series 792473 to 793373. It is 40 ft. 6 in. long, 8 ft. 9 in. wide, and 2 ft. 6 in. high on the inside. Outside it is 43 ft. long, 9 ft. 4 in. wide at the top of the

COLLECTIONS OF REGISTERS AVAILABLE:

ORER: "Showing by car numbers, the marked capacity, length, dimensions and cubical capacity, of cars used to transport freight."
ORPTE: "Containing – a list of passenger train car equipment of railroads in the United States and Canada. Showing by car number, serial numbers or names, information as to type, length, seating capacity and special features of the equipment and mileage and per diem rates applying thereto."
OIER: "Containers, trailers, chassis and bogies in intermodal service."

sides, and 10 ft. 1 in. extreme width. Its extreme height from the rails is 7 ft. 4 in. (we'll leave out other dimensions in the interest of space). It has a capacity of 897 cubic feet and 100,000 lbs. maximum, and there are 444 cars in the series.

So what can we do now? Well, we have information about the car's materials and its interior and exterior dimensions. We also know what use the car was suited for which can assist us in choosing industries for our layout, and knowing how many of them there were will help us put together a prototypically accurate mix of freight cars, if that is what you are after. If you are working from a photo or drawings with no measurements, the information contained in the ORER is a huge step towards building a model freight car.

RECAPITULATION OF CAR EQUIPMENT

In this section, the PRR lists all its Class X, box cars and Class S, stock cars. Note that the practice of listing recapitulations varies from railroad to railroad; many, especially smaller roads, do not include such a listing. The interesting thing about a recapitulation is that you can easily see how many cars of each type (AAR mechanical designation) the railroad had, including their capacities. For example, the PRR had 28,114 40 ft. 6 in. type XM box cars with a capacity of 3056 cubic feet each, and just one type XM box car measuring 50 ft. 6 in. Clearly, you want to keep these ratios in mind when putting together a consist so that you don't see a string of cars of which the railroad owned only a few.

FREIGHT CONNECTIONS AND JUNCTION POINTS

Here you will find a list of railroads and cities with which the PRR can interchange. Some, like the Baltimore & Ohio, New York Central, and the Nickel Plate, had many cities, while others, like the Ann Arbor, Belt Railway of Chicago, and the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac only had one or two. This information is helpful when planning which cities to include on a layout to facilitate interchange with some of your other favorite railroads.

FINAL NOTE

The NMRA has published reproductions of the January 1943 and 1953 issues of the ORER. Both are still available in soft bound, while the '43 is also available in the hard bound edition. This concludes the discussion of equipment registers. Watch for more topics in upcoming issues. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me any time.

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Email: KMLResearchDesk@aol.com

IMAGES AND CREDITS:

[PRR-ORER–1]
"The Pennsylvania Railroad. From the January 1943 *Official Railway Equipment Register.*"

[PRR-ORER–2]
"Close-up of gondola listing. From the January 1943 *Official Railway Equipment Register.*"

[PRR-ORER–3]
"Recapitulation of Car Equipment. From the January 1943 *Official Railway Equipment Register.*"

[PRR-ORER–4]
"Freight Connections and Junction Points. From the January 1943 *Official Railway Equipment Register.*"

[PRR-Gon-793164]
"PRR Gondola 793164 in Harrisburg, Penn. February 27, 1942. From the R.W. Charles Collection of the Kalmbach Memorial Library."

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Journey To The National Railway Museum

By John Darlington

Editors note: This article appeared in the **Bantrack Newsletter** *in November 2004 and this slightly edited version is reprinted with permission from the author.* **The Bantrack Newsletter** *is the official publication of the Baltimore area N-Trak club.*

IT HAS BEEN MY OBJECTIVE to visit the **National Railway Museum** in York, England ever since the mid-eighties when I read an article about the NRM in a periodical on British railroads. As many of you know, the world's first organized railroad began in England in 1825, a good five years before they became a reality here in the United States: in Baltimore no less. Additionally, the two cities between which this first railroad ran were Stockton and Darlington, a city that sprang from my ancestor's land holdings beginning shortly after the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066 AD With this "ancestral connection" to the first railroad coupled with my fascination in British railroads in general, I was naturally interest in seeing what is called the finest and largest railway museum in the world. My eager anticipation of seeing it first hand was finally satisfied on Wednesday, October 20, 2004 when the family and I took a two-hour train ride from Kings Cross Station in London to York. It was a surprise to see the Museum was just across the tracks from the station. The weather was overcast with periods of raid, but nothing was going to dampen my enjoyment of the day.

Figure 1: The detail of perservation is amazing as shown above.

Figure 2: The South Eastern & Central Railway in all its glory.

The main entrance was somewhat inauspicious. You can see form the photo that there are two main museum buildings. The entrance is behind the building in the front that is used as general offices. As you enter the museum you will see an extensive gift shop full of railroad memorabilia, tapes, records, clothing and model trains. You go through the shop and enter the Station Hall that is full of early engines, rolling stock and support equipment. One is struck by the unbelievable setting and condition of the exhibits. Everything looks as if it is brand new, you can tell that the engines and rolling stock have been painstakingly preserved and not just given a coat of paint to hid the rust like many museums I have seen in the U.S. See figure 1.

Figure 3: Not only did the NMR perserve engines they also preserved box cars.

The interior of the engine cabs were unbelievable with shined up brass piping and controls. In this first building you will find many of the legendary roads that made up the English and Scottish Railways during the late 1800's and 1900's, i.e. LNER, GWR, LSRER. An example of this is the SE&CR (South Eastern & Central Railway) seen it its shinny green and black livery. See figure 2.

The exhibits were not just limited to engines, as the box car shown in universal color red will attest. See figure 3. Note the difference in figure 4 with the door arrangement. This earlier car has hinged doors while the later version has the sliding door that we are more familiar with.

Figure 4: Note the doors on this box car.

We next moved over to the Great Hall and Shops Building that housed newer engines and rolling stock as well as the museum's shops where they restore these remarkable machines for display. When you enter this building you come face to face with one of the most famous steam engines in history – The Mallard. See figure 5.

The Mallard for those who are a little weak on railroad history, has the distinction of holding the world speed record for a steam engine at 126 miles per hour set on July 3, 1938.

Back in the early '30's when National Socialism was coming into power Germany boasted of having the most powerful and fastest steam engines in the world. In fact, their BR 01 engine previously held the steam engine speed record at 122 miles per hour. During this time in history, Germany and Great Britain were rivals in all kinds of areas. One of the fiercest rivalries involved warships. Knowing they could not really compete with Britain's navy, Germany sought to highlight their achievements under National Socialism by competing in activities involving speed. Germany had the fastest race and production cars (Mercedes 500K) and they naturally wanted other speed records as well. This is why the British decided to challenge Germany's speed record for steam engines, and the Mallard took the prize.

Figure 5: The Mallard.

Figure 6: Example of the post war engines.

Before the Germans could attempt to exceed the Mallards record, World War II broke out and more important issues were at stake. You will note that the Mallard was a main line engine used by the LNER, London, Northeastern Railway which took it out of regular service just prior to the outbreak of hostilities. By then, the railways were nationalized by the British government and dropped their colorful livery in favor of less attractive, but more practical dull coals of brown and gray.

Figure 7: Example of the post war engines.

As we walked towards the interior of the Great Hall and found many examples of heavy steam engines of the post war era as well as well as more modern diesel engines that were in service up to the late 1980's. See figures 6 and 7. Towards the center of the Great Hall was a turntable showing an array of both steam and diesel engines. See figure 8.

There was one last section of the NRM that I wanted to see the Repair Shops, and I was kind of glad that I did not have any company to rush my enjoyment. I cannot say what I expected but I was amazed at the facility's extensive equipment and it's cleanliness. See figure 9.

Figure 8: On the turntable at the NMR.

You may thing that this is just a "display" area for visitors, but after checking with one of the staff and seeing one of the engines going through a wheel set overhaul, it was obvious that this area was used for actual service and repair. I must admit that I stayed around this area for quite some time. I even had a demonstration of their signaling and train control equipment by one of the staff.

It was now around 5 PM and the Museum was about to close. I was disappointed because I wanted to go back over some of the exhibits and maybe take a few more photographs.

Figure 9: A photo of the Repair shop at the NMR. Note the cleanliness.

After some "Bangers and Mash" (sausage and potatoes) and another pint, we walked onto the platform to catch our train back to London. See figure 10. While we were waiting I happened to notice a plaque on the station's wall mentioning the damage it sustained during WWII. It is hard to picture the devastation of this beautiful and peaceful area, and it brought me back to the realization that in the scheme of things, trains are not really that important as some other things. We boarded our train and I promptly dozed off. I was really pooped. Before I shut my eyes thought I replayed my day at the NRM and I was happy that I had accomplished my goal set so many years ago.

Figure 10: The platform and the train back to London.

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P.J. MATTSON (2)

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This HO-scale building kit is designed around E.L. Moore's "Bunn's Seed & Feed" building which appeared in the 8/73 issue of **Model Railroader**. The kit features laser cut wood components as well as other parts and castings.


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Small Freight Station, Tichy windows and detail parts, laser-cut walls, roof, tar paper, and stripwood for the platform.


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Independence Junction Update

THE PHILADELPHIA DIVISION'S planning for the 2006 National Convention in Philadelphia (July 2 through July 9) is proceeding. Currently the Committee is hard at work planning and coordinating the prototype tours, layout tours, and fan trips. The Prototype Tour team is targeting several tour sites. These are scheduled to include ISG (former Bethlehem – Lukens Steel Mill), Carpenter Steel, PATCO river line & shops, Amtrak (CETEC Northeast Control Center, Bear & Wilmington shops), SEPTA (Frazier, Overbrook & Wayne Junctions Shops, Reading Tech. Society (including the Reading & Northern RR), and the Lehigh Cement Plant.

Our fan trips will include the Strasburg Railroad and the Pennsylvania State Railroad Museum in nearby Lancaster County. Lancaster County is home to the world famous Amish country. There will be more than 30 local layouts open along with Operations Callboard, which allows modelers to sign up to operate a variety of layouts.

Philadelphia, an Exciting Place to Visit

The convention will highlight the prototype railroading around the Philadelphia area. Philadelphia was most recently home to Conrail and is still central to the Conrail Shared Assets Operation. Both Norfolk Southern (East – West routes) and CSX (North – South routes) serve the city. Both railroads also operate major classification yards in the region.

Passenger rail service is alive and well in the Philadelphia Region. The nation's fourth largest city is home to SEPTA, the nation's third largest passenger rail system. SEPTA operates a variety of light rail and heavy rail lines, including eight commuter lines all radiating out of Center City. Five traditional trolley routes and two suburban trolley routes along with the subway and elevated system highlight the variety of the area. Amtrak also calls the region home to the Northeast Corridor operations. The CETC Northeast Corridor Control Center is one of the prototype tours included during the week of Independence Junction.

The convention also takes place at the same time as Philadelphia's Welcome America festivities for the Fourth of July holiday. There will be hundreds of free events including fireworks and an old fashioned parade that will pass right in front of the convention hotel. Other local attractions include the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Franklin Institute Science Museum, the Philadelphia Zoo, the Camden Aquarium, and the Battleship New Jersey.

With all the rail and non-rail related activities Independence Junction will be fun for the whole family! Make your plans now to attend! You won't want to miss it!

Registration information should be sent to:

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Coming Events

November 26-27, 2005, 12 Noon to 4 PM both days. Cheltenhills Model Railroad Club Open House. 8000 Old York Road (at railroad bridge), adjacent to Elkins Park Square, Elkins Park, PA 19027. Admission free, but donations gratefully accepted. For more information, call (215)-635-9747, go to our web site: http://www.cheltenhillsmrr.org. Or contact Bruce Binder at (215)-722-4542.

December 3 & 4, 2005, 12 Noon to 5:00 PM each day. Severna Park Model Railroad Club Open House. 3 Riggs Road, Severna Park, MD. Admission free, donations welcomed. Contact Sam Shepherd (410) 647-6007

January 7-8 and 14-15, 2006, 12 Noon to 4 PM all days. (Snow dates: January 21-22, 2006). Cheltenhills Model Railroad Club Open House. 8000 Old York Road (at railroad bridge), adjacent to Elkins Park Square, Elkins Park, PA 19027. Admission free, but donations gratefully accepted. For more information, call (215)-635-9747, go to our web site: http://www.cheltenhillsmrr.org. Or contact Bruce Binder at (215)-722-4542.

January 14-15, 2006, 10 AM til 4 PM Gateway Model Railroad Club Annual Open House. 100 E. Browning Road, Brooklawn, NJ 08030. $3 donation. Contact: Nicky Caccavo, 8 Forrest Drive Turnersville, NJ 08012 or call (215) 514-6591