

The Local



A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION OF THE NMRA

Volume 72

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Number 4

MER Reports from Divisions

collected by

Kurt Thompson, MER Vice President

Each year, the Divisions are required to report their activities in support of the hobby. What follows are the reports for 2016. If there is no entry for a Division, the report was not submitted. As you read what other Divisions have done, you may want to talk to your Division leadership about adding new events to your divisional calendar. They are presented here in their raw form, as submitted.

New Jersey Division (Division 1)

Currently planned meeting dates and locations for 2016-2017:

September 20, 2016	M. Jane Pearson Elementary School, Delanco, NJ
November 15, 2016	Saint Charles Borromeo RC Church, Turnersville NJ
January 7, 2017	Haddon Twp. High School
March 11, 2017	Switlik Park, Hamilton Twp.
May 13, 2017	Joint meet with Garden State Division, NER, location to be determined by GSD
Sept. 16, 2017	Cumberland Community Church, Millville, NJ

Registration opens at 8:30 am, meet activities from 9:00 am to noon, layout tours 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

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Secrets to our success:

We keep doing what works, but still try new approaches. The every other month meet schedule seems to be just right for our division. I've spoken with others who hold meets every month, but that would be overkill for us.

continued on page 4

The Local

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President's Column

P J Mattson, MMR

The elections for new Directors will be coming soon. As I write this there are five candidates for the three positions. Read their resumes carefully and pick the best candidates for the future of the MER. Also you will be asked to read the new By-Laws. It is long but please read all of it before making a vote to say no or yes for the new version. You make the difference and your vote counts for this. Any member of the Board can answer questions.

You will also be getting an eMail ballot for the election. We hope this is the future and will work well. There will be a number on your paper ballot and a corresponding number associated with your eMail ballot. If you use your

eMail ballot please don't send in your paper ballot. The number I mentioned earlier will be used so that two ballots will not be used. The eMail ballot will be the primary ballot. Remember for the Directors only vote for three.

With summer coming upon us, our activities on our Railroads will slow down. But as I always do, make some time to stay involved with your model projects. Enjoy the outdoors and have a great summer

This year's convention will be in Harrisburg, PA from Oct 12 to Oct 15. Registrar early and mark the dates on your calendar. We want to see you there. It promises to be full of activities and a lot of fun. This year it is called 2017 SUSQUEHANNOCK.

Until next time stay on the right track.

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MER BALLOTS NOTE:

The MER election ballot will go in the mail to all members first class on August 1. Included with this will be new bylaws that you also need to vote on, with some explanation of changes.

Please fill out and mail the ballot by Sept 1, or vote online.

On page 1, at the top, is a "work building". It was in the model contest at 2016's convention. Fred Willis, modeler.

Potomac Division (Division 2)

Meeting Times and Dates

March 28 (Membership mtg.) May 23 (Board mtg.) July 18 (Board mtg.) October 3 (Board mtg.) November 12 (Board mtg.)

List of Officers plus AP coordinator

Superintendent	Brian W. Sheron, MMR	BWSheron@mac.com
Senior Asst. Superintendent	Marshall Abrams	abrams_railroad@comcast.net
Assistant Superintendent	Ed Rosado	asstsuper@potomac-nmra.org
Achievement Program	Brian W. Sheron, MMR	
Paymaster	Tom Brodrick	t.brodrick@verizon.net
Clerk	William White	chesbaywatch@comcast.net

Achievement program highlights

John Paganoni	Author certificate
Bob Rodriguez	Civil certificate
Ron King	Scenery and Master Builder-Cars certificates
Bill Lyders	Author certificate
Ernie Little	Scenery certificate

Planned Activities from the past year

1) On April 30 we held our 2016 Mini-convention at St. Matthew's Church in Annandale, VA.. We had 8 clinics, three modular layouts, a white elephant sale, and a model/contest room.

2) Layout Tours/Open Houses

January 16 (Brian Benoit, Brian Sheron), March 5 (Pete LaGuardia), May 14 (Bob Johnson), June 4 (Bob Cook), September 10 (Ed Rosado, Dean Ripple), November 19 (Gary Eames), December 17 (Rick Wright)

Special projects or working with other organizations.

Began planning to host 2018 MER convention. Selected hotel (Rockville, MD Hilton), confirmed Lou Sassi as banquet speaker.

Any successful or new ideas that you have tried that might be helpful to other divisions.

The Division continues to sponsor its "Operations Initiative."

Objectives are:

- 1) To give members who do not own layouts an opportunity to run trains
- 2) To give members who are not familiar with the operations aspect of model railroading an opportunity to become more familiar.
- 3) To give members who would like to earn a Dispatcher Merit Award but do not belong to an operations group an opportunity to log operations TUs.

Where in your opinion could the MER provide support to your division.

Several initiatives suggested by the Division to the MER were not acted upon by the MER in a timely manner.

Philadelphia Division (Division 3)

Meet Times and Places:

January (Joint meet with NJ Division):	Hadden Township. H.S. Hadden, NJ
April:	Elkins Park Train Station; Philadelphia, PA
June:	Newtown Public Library; Newtown, Delaware County, PA
September:	Perkasie Fire Company #1; Perkasie, Bucks County, PA

November: Brandywine Town Center Com. Cntr.; Wilmington, DE

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Achievement Program Awards: Civil Engineering: Nick Brownsberger, Charles Long; Volunteer: Earl Hackett; Scenery: Earl Paine, Alden Smith; Electrical Engineering: Charles Long, Earl Paine; Structures: Alden Smith; Golden Spike: Ron Albert, Jonathan Black, Charles Long, Earl Paine, Norma Toll, Al Zollers

Division Newsletter: The Dispatcher, six issues, averages over 25 pages with articles on Division activities, model railroading and more.

Division Meets: The meet normal run from 9 to noon at which we brake for an independent lunch. A map with directions to several layout open houses in the meets area are available for visits from 1 to 4 that afternoon.

Division Successes: The major success has been the video recording of layouts not only within the Division but also neighboring divisions layout and across the country. Bill Fagan has provided a link to our members other layouts and their skill. These videos have also has been shown at our meets as well.

Tidewater Division (Division 4)

Meeting Times and Places: We meet on the third Saturday of the months. We try to vary the meeting location to promote the local attendance in our division.

2017 Division Meeting Schedule (tentative)

Date	Location	Contest
Jan 21	St. Matthew's Church, Va. Beach	Favorite Train
Feb 18	St. Matthew's Church, Va. Beach	Passenger Car
Mar 18	Eastern Shore RR Museum, Parksley, VA	On-Line Structure
May 13	Denbigh Community Center, Newport News	Freight Car
June 17	St. Matthew's Church, Va. Beach	Photos
Aug 19	St. Matthew's Church, Va. Beach	Locomotive
Sep 16	St. Matthew's Church, Va. Beach	Off-Line Structure
Nov 18	Va. Beach Central Library	Dioramas

We are looking into meeting at local Parks & Recs facilities to attract the local public that may be there too.

Officers (including AP Coordinator):

Superintendent:	Conrad Haas (757) 256-5989	conradh4@verizon.net
Asst. Superintendent:	John Cryderman	Paymaster: John Robey
Timekeeper:	Pat Mahoney	Director: John Fallon
Director:	Mark Nieting	Director: Bob Cook
AP Coordinator:	John Johnson	

Achievement Program highlights: Structures: Dale Ridgeway

Activities from the past year: Attendance up because of expanding the Tidewater Division up the Eastern shore. The 100% NMRA members club Tidewater Modular Railroad Club (TMRC) has promoted the hobby at local nursing homes, libraries, Pungo Aviation Museum and the annual train show. The TMRC started a Facebook Page to promote model railroading. We had a NMRA recruiting table at the annual train show to hand out invitations to local meetings. We donated a dollar of each show ticket in the form of toys to the "Toys For Tots". We were interviewed by a local news crew during the show that we can use next year to promote the show. We placed displays in the VB Central Library for November Railroad Month.

Special Projects or working with other organizations:

We invited several non-profits to set up tables at our annual show: CB&W railroad club, Norfolk Southern Operation Safe Crossing and Friends of Lee Hall Station.

Any successful or new ideas that your division has tried that might be helpful to other divisions:

The NMRA display table was successful. We encouraged visitors to attend our local meetings to get their Railpass.

James River Division (Division 5)

Meeting Times and Places:

5-6 times a year. Usually 2nd Saturday of odd numbered months.

Officers from last year (including AP Coordinator):

Philip Taylor - Superintendent	Ross Hunter - Asst Superintendent
Don Wells - Clerk	Jerry Ritter - Paymaster
Division AP Chair - Gerald Fitzgerald	

Achievement Program highlights:

Rod Vance became MMR. Several members now working on MMR due to efforts of AP Chair and promotion of program in JRD

Activities from the past year:

5 Meetings - Jan, Mar; May, Sept, Nov. Summer Lunch with DCC Clinic following at Rail Tales (LHS) in Charlottesville. Newsletter is Six times a year with seventh special issue for holiday activities

Special Projects or working with other organizations Operations Training.

Large layout owners need operators. When folks operate they tend to become more serious about the hobby and build their own layouts. Connecting people is a reason some will join the NMRA. Once this project is off the ground I hope we can write it up and recommend it to other divisions.

Any successful or new ideas that your division has tried that might be helpful to other divisions.

Modeling Theme: Mike Garber who chairs our Modeling Theme team has a long term list of popular vote model themes. These are not judged by NMRA standards but meant for modelers to bring models with a particular theme for show and tell. This is more low key and friendly; we are seeing more modeling done by members. We dramatically improved the magazine which rivals the National NMRA publication.

South Mountain Division (Div. 10)

Meeting Times and Places: All times 2PM - 5PM

Jan 10, 2016	John Madden	freelance HO Scale layout
Feb 21, 2016	Roy Hoffman	Penn Western Railroad S/Sn3
Mar 13, 2016	Rich Nemchik	Tugfork and Eastern HO Railroad

Apr 16, 2016	SMD Annual Mini-Con	Blue Ridge Summit, PA 9AM - 3PM
May 15, 2016	Paul Rausch	Ohio Northern HO Scale Railroad
Sep 11, 2016	Dave Moltrup	HO Steel Mill Operations
Oct 9, 2016	Dave Thalman	HO Pennsylvania Railroad
Nov 13, 2016	Mike Reed	Maryland and Southern N Scale Railroad
Dec 11, 2016	Mike Toms	Harrisburg and Potomac HO Scale Railroad

Change in Officers from last year (including AP Coordinator):

Paul Rausch (now deceased), Superintendent re-elected in May 2016
 Dave Sweeney was elected Clerk in May 2016
 Ray Price was re-elected Paymaster in May 2016
 William Wilson was re-appointed as Asst Super in May 2016
 Roy Hoffman was appointed Advisor in May 2016
 Don Florwick was reappointed Advisor in May 2016
 Bob Johnson was reappointed Advisor in May 2016
 Jane Clarke was reappointed as Division Achievement Coordinator

Activities from the past year: We conducted our annual Mini-con in April. We had approximately 225 attendees. We had tables of people putting on clinics at the same time and the attendees could find something they were interested in and stay as long as they wanted or move on to another clinic. We had two make and take clinics for the younger crowd that went over well. The primary speakers were from TCS Wow Sound decoders and a representative of Steam into History.

Susquehanna Division (Div. 11)

Meeting Times and Places:

February 11: Masonic Village Patton Conference Center, Elizabethtown, PA
 March 18: St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Lebanon, PH
 May 20: Christiana, PA
 September 16-17: Mainline Hobby Weekend Layout Open Houses, Blue Ridge Summit, PA
 October 6-7: LSOP9, Lancaster-Harrisburg and Allentown-Lehigh Valley
 November 4-19: Division Grand Layout Tour, Division-wide

Officers

Tim Himmelberger, Superintendent	Wayne Betty, Asst. Superintendent
Paul Tice, Chief Clerk	Dave Collison, Director
Howard Oakes, Director/Membership Chairman	Robert Charles, MMR, AP Chairman
Alan Mende, Training and Clinic Chairman	Ron Smith, Director, Sidetracks Editor
Lee Rainey, Director	

Achievement Program Highlights: Golden Spike: Bill Lesjack, Tim Himmelberger; Association Volunteer: Jerry Brittan

Carolina Southern Division (Div. 12)

Meeting Times and Places:

Regular member meeting third Saturday each month, January 31 Annual Business Meeting; January Board Organizational and Planning Meeting, June BOD Meeting

Officers (including AP Coordinator):

Superintendent, Curtis Alan Hardee	Asst. Superintendent, Larry Paffrath
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Paymaster, John Stevens
Director, Roy Becker

Clerk, Fred Miller, MMR

Activities from the past year:

Division promotion display with operating Timesavers at Train Shows
10th annual Railroad Modeling University (RMU), February
Division Picnic, September RailOps weekend, October Members Swap Meet, November
Wades Train Town Open House (2nd Saturday monthly)

Monthly activities

January	Annual Meeting. BOD Meeting
February	RMU and Monthly meeting clinic, basic soldering.
March	clinic, building a RR fusee by Fred Miller, MMR.
April	clinic, How to operate a steam locomotive.
May	layout visit and work session to Alan Hardee.
June	Introduction to modular model railroading. BOD Meeting
July	Layout visit, Ty Brown and clinic, making molds and castings.
August	Display at North Carolina Transportation Museum train Show.
September	Annual Picnic and layout visit to Jack Parker's Piedmont & Western Railroad.
October	Layout visit / ops session, Seth Gartner's NYC Piney Fork Branch.
November	Monthly meeting. Annual swap meet and show. Hickory, NC

Special Projects or working with other organizations

Sponsor Boy Scout Model Railroad Merit Badge with multiple Councils
Maintain & repair model train display at Levine Museum of the New South
Wade's Train Town – maintain and host monthly open house;

Any successful or new ideas that your division has tried that might be helpful to other divisions.

The Division has held a Railroad Modeling University for ten years. This event has been a half or full day collection of classes, clinics, demonstrations, and hands on work sessions on many aspects of the hobby. It is scheduled for January and always includes some classes targeting beginners.

Carolina Piedmont Division (Div. 13)

Meeting Times and Places: Monthly. BoD meet at 6:30, general meeting at 7 PM at St. Michael the Archangel Conference Center in Cary, NC.

Officers (including AP Coordinator): New Superintendent John A. Sokash and Assistant Superintendent Charles Rausch, New Director Bill Hanley.

Achievement Program highlights: Structures Jim Murphy. Bill Hanley, Merit Award for Cars; Daniel Fisher, Golden Spike; Author AP for Jim Murphy; Lou Sassi, Golden Spike; Charles Rausch, Golden Spike.

Activities from the past year: Monthly meetings feature a program and model popular-vote contest. Also hosted Mideast Regional Convention in October, Raffle Layout in November, Trainsets for underprivileged children in December.

Special Projects or working with other organizations: Neuse River Valley Club Train show in November, Wake County

Public Library Meet and Greet session in November.

Any successful or new ideas that your division has tried that might be helpful to other divisions. Raffle Layout this year raised over \$1700 in ticket sales which were used to purchase trains sets for kids for Christmas. It is a unifying project where CPD13 members cooperate in putting together a complete train layout with assembled platform, buildings, track, scenery and cars. Every January members prototype knowledge is challenged with a fun-orientated quiz. Every December members hold a banquet of sorts and participate in a Yankee-Swap.

Chesapeake Division (Div. 14)

Meetings:

February 27: Clinic on the basic functions of an Arduino, led by Kurt Thompson

Officers:

Greg Kidwell, Superintendent
Rick Uskert, Director at Large
Jeroen Gerritsen, Clerk

Bill Ataras, Asst. Superintendent
Dave Arday, Paymaster
Greg Meeks, AP Chair

Achievement Program Highlights:

Jeroen Gerritsen, Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Jeroen Gerritsen, Model Railroad Engineer – Civil

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2017 MER CONVENTION THE SUSQUEHANNOCK DETAILS ON CLINICS

Sean D. Gaston and Barry Schmitt

Greetings fellow MER members from your Susquehannock Convention clinic team! With just about 90 days remaining before Showtime we want to introduce you to several highlights of our clinic program.

Everyone who has attended a regional or national convention can agree that one of the many high points of a successful convention is the clinic program and Susquehannock is no exception. Our clinic team has been busy these past several months building our extensive program. To date we have over 90% of our 72 planned clinic slots filled and awaiting replies that will round out the few remaining openings.



Bernie Kempinski

of the NER Garden State Division, NMRA Education Department Manager, and frequent national, regional, and division clinician.

In addition to our extensive clinic program there will be many other diverse model railroading activities to keep you busy throughout our 4-day convention. Attending conventions always presents the challenge of choosing between clinics and the many other offerings. Accordingly, we have scheduled several repeat clinics on different days to ease that scheduling challenge.

Lee Rainey



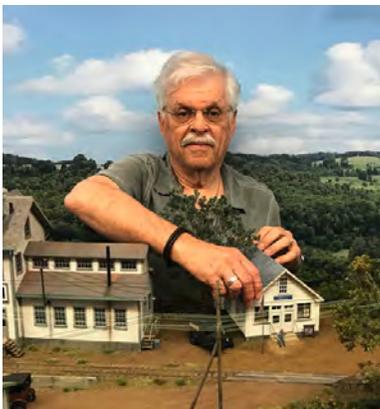
The Susquehannock will offer 3 large clinic rooms plus 1 extra-large room for those presentations that need more elbow room. Several of our clinicians are well known model railroaders who have presented at national and regional conventions as well as division gatherings. They include Neil Besoughloff, Model Railroader Magazine Editor and also our convention banquet speaker; Lou Sassi, Mr Scenery and nationally known writer, photographer, and new Model Railroader Magazine Contributing Editor; Bernard Kempinski, nationally known Civil War modeler, author, and clinician; John Forsythe, owner of TCS; Steve King, the recognized authority on all things TT&TO; Lee Rainey, President of the Friends of the East Broad Top Railroad, nationally known narrow gauge modeler and clinician; and Bruce DeYoung MMR, President and AP Chairman

We have scheduled a variety of interesting and diverse model railroading topics to include such topics as operations, structure building, all facets of scenery making, and electronics including 2 TCS Wow-Sound clinics. One clinic room on Saturday will be devoted solely to Railroad Prototype Modelers (RPM) presentations. There will be several general interest clinics such as estate planning, area railroad museum and tourist railroad presentations describing their future plans, and a fascinating Friday evening hands-on triple clinic program for both modelers and their spouses. This unique evening clinic presentation will feature an artist-led canvas painting session. Our guest artist will provide scenery painting instruction with emphasis on depth perception with the goal of bringing reality to any painting project you choose such as a model railroad backdrop. All art materials will be provided and wine and other beverages will be available for purchase at the hotel bar – a great opportunity to uncork your creativity!



Bruce De Young

Speaking of electronics one clinic will introduce the recently developed NMRA Layout Command Control (LCC) project. You have probably read about LCC in the NMRA Magazine or possibly saw the NMRA LCC display layout at the 2016 NMRA “Highball To Indy” Convention and associated clinics. We are very fortunate to be the first regional convention to not only introduce you to LCC, present its operating details, and answer your questions but to also demonstrate the system on the specially developed NMRA LCC layout. Due to the scope of LCC it will be presented in two back-to-back clinics – the first being an intro to LCC, and the second focused on system details. To provide maximum opportunity to attend these clinics they will be offered on both Friday and Saturday. The demo layout will be on display throughout the convention. Be sure to attend one of these fascinating double clinics and learn about the next major leap in model railroading.



Lou Sassi

So there you have it – 4 days and 72 clinics designed to immerse you in the many fascinating and diverse segments of our great hobby. All of us on the Susquehannock clinic team look forward to welcoming you in October where model railroading will be the name of the game!

**Welcome Aboard The Susquehannock
Your Next Station Stop - Harrisburg PA
ALL ABOARD!**

<http://www.mer2017.org>



Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2017 Convention

The Susquehannock

October 12th to 15th, 2017
www.mer2017.org



Please enter (print legibly) all names **as you wish them to appear on your registration badges**. They will not be changed at the convention.

Primary Registrant: _____ **MMR? Y / N, Any Title for Badge?** _____

Significant Other Attending (living at same address): _____

Children Attending (18 & under – list all): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip + 4: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

NMRA #: _____ Region: _____ Division: _____

Favorite Scale: _____ Is this your first MER Convention?: _____

Description	Act. #	Cost	#	Paying
Early Registration (through August 31)	E	\$49		
Basic Registration (September 1 thru October 7)	B	\$59		
At Door Registration (October 12-14)	D	\$59		
Non-NMRA Member Extra Fee	N	\$10		
Significant Other & Children Under 18	O	\$5		
Banquet – Saturday Night	401	\$45		
Breakfast Prepay, \$14 Day Includes Tax / Tip, normal price \$14.99 Plus tax/tip	-----	-----	---	-----
Friday Breakfast	402	\$14		
Saturday Breakfast	403	\$14		
Sunday Breakfast	404	\$14		
Convention Pocket-Polo Shirt, Black – S, M, L, XL. Quan- Size- // Quan- Size-	901-904	\$34		
Heavy Duty w/ Embroidered Logo – 2XL, 3XL. Quan- Size- // Quan- Size-	905-906	\$39		
Call Boards / Ops – Expanded Call Board Info Available on Website	-----	-----	---	-----
Thur. 7p-10p, Pittsburgh & South Pennsylvania RR, HO, Don Florwick # Open 5	801	\$5		
Fri. 12p-4p, Lancaster & Atlantic RR, HO, Wayne Betty # Open 5	802	\$5		
Fri. 1p-5p, Western Maryland RY, Blue Ridge Div., HO, Brian Wolfe # Open 3	803	\$5		
Fri. 6p-10p, PRR Buffalo Line, HO, Stephen Mallery # Open 3	804	\$5		
Sat. 9a-12p, Pennsylvania & New England, HO, Charles Kadyk # Open 6	805	\$5		
Sat. 1p-4p, Quaker Valley, HO, Bob Bucklew # Open 7	806	\$5		
Prototype Tours – More Info on Website	---	----	---	-----
Friday 8a - 5:30p EBT/Shade Gap Trolley/Museum/Shop Tours, Incl. Lunch	201	\$71		
Fri. AM – Harrisburg Station and Harris Tower	202	\$37		
Fri. PM – Harrisburg Station, Harris Tower, & Civil War Museum	203	\$53		
Made in the MER Tours – More Info on Website	---	----	---	-----
Thurs. 8a–5:30p ACF Tank Car Mfg.+ Bowser Tours, Incl. Lunch, & Sightseeing	701	\$67		
General Interest Activities – More Info on Website	---	----	---	-----
Fri. All Day – Harrisburg Capitol & Civil War Museum, Reserved On Your Own Lunch	501	\$53		
Sat. AM – Hershey Gardens & Guided Museum Tour	502	\$52		
Friday Evening - Wine & Paint Backdrop Clinic	503	\$45		
Total Advance Registration Paid				

Payment must accompany registration. **Visa, MC, Discover, & American Express Cards Accepted. Contact Registrar to use PayPal.**

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date: ____/____/____ 3 Digit Security Code: _____

Online Registration Available at - <http://merregistrar.coffeecup.com/forms/2017%20Online%20Registration/>
Fill in Form, Press the PayPal Buttons to Submit Form and Make Your Payment. A PayPal Account Is Not Required.

Checks payable to: MER Conventions, Send to: MER Conventions, P.O. Box 467, Crosswicks, NJ 08515-0467

Any Questions and/or additional information, e-mail to **Registrar@mer-nmra.com**, or 609-585-4616 (leave a message)

Hotel – Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel, 4650 Lindle Rd., Harrisburg, PA 17111, Hotel Reservations: 717-564-5511 or 800-325-3535 <http://www.sheratonharrisburghershey.com/> **Room Rate** - \$99 night + tax single, \$105 night + tax double, thru Sept. 15, 2017, Use: <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/ModelRailroadConv2017>

Or by phone use **Model Railroad Convention 2017**, Room Rate applies 10/9 thru 10/18

Watch the following sites to keep up to date on new information; www.mer2017.org, mer-nmra.com Updated 6/6/17



From a Director’s Desk

Martin Brechbiel
Director & Contest Chair

I have but another scant 5 months of time on the Board of Directors of the MER serving as one of the Directors (hold the cheering to a dull roar, please). I am term limited so I’ll be freed from that particular aspect of serving the MER, but I will be carrying on as the Contest Chair for the MER for the foreseeable future.

That brings me to my first bit of news that I want to share. When **Greg Meeks** vacated the position of Model Contest Chair last year, this left a chair open in the Contest Room that was very hard to fill. Fortunately, we had a few candidates step forward in response to the advertisement in The Local (thank you all!). Out that group of candidates, the Board of Directors saw fit to appoint **John Siegle** to take over for Greg and be rewarded with the great opportunity to spend endless hours in the Contest Room with none other than me at our MER conventions. He’s truly a lucky man and the MER is indeed lucky to have him agree to this position and be so willing to take on this role. Another bit of news relates to our web site. The

MER web site is something that I managed to take full control of on behalf of the MER when the NMRA wanted it off their server. Our current Web Master put in some very long hours (doing all of the real work) capturing the old site, migrated it to a new host service, repaired countless pages of errors and problems (24 single spaced, but who’s counting...), and then behind the scenes created a totally new site for the MER all within a year, and all with my endless assistance and moral support (read nagging and kibitzing). But, as my term comes to a close I am in a position now to fully turn that web site over to the MER (the hosting account has been in my name and on my credit card) just as planned. I am also able to do something rarely done before – actually execute an orderly transferral of the site operations and all of the files to a new Web Master this year while also transferring actual owner of record to the MER Business Manager. So, Web Master “Frodo” has already started this process with our next Web Master, **David Collison** of the Susquehanna Division. Once David gets all of the reins in hand, Frodo will fade away to the Grey Havens, and after Oct 22nd my involvement with this aspect of the MER will draw to a close. Someone new to this job will take over and work with David who will already be in place for that Director. And, things move on as they should.....

Editor and Publisher’s note: You see this space? See the other little empty spaces? We hate that. Those are spaces where YOU could have written something and gotten published, picked up an AP point. Not hard to do, not even time-consuming—maybe five minutes. Help us out!

Potomac Division Announcement:

Potomac Division will host **2018 MER Convention**

We are very pleased to announce that the Potomac Division will be hosting the 2018 Mid Eastern Region Convention. We have selected the dates of October 3-7, 2018, which is a Thursday through Sunday on Columbus Day weekend. We have also selected the Rockville Hilton, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD for the location of the 2018 convention.



Keeping In Touch...

*By Bob Price
MER Business Manager*

As you read this, various members of the MER Board and related committees are preparing for our upcoming election. The Nominating Committee did their job in locating the Candidates. The Candidate's statements have been collected and formatted for mailing to the membership. This election there will again be MER By-Law changes presented to the membership to vote upon. As we get closer to the actual election, the Candidate Statements and the By-Law changes will also appear on the MER website www.mer-nmra.com. Pre-addressed return envelopes will also be supplied again this election. For those eligible voting members for whom we have a valid email address, we are creating the opportunity to vote on-line instead of returning a paper ballot. On behalf of the members running and those who work to make the election possible, we ask that you, the member, take the time to vote.

Starting sometime in September, NMRA renewal notices and the NMRA web site will no longer accommodate MER members starting or renewing their paper subscription to The Local. This is process change requested and approved by the MER BOD. Instead, members who wish to renew their paper subscriptions will mail their monies directly to the MER Business Manager. Details on how to renew a paper subscription will appear in future issues of The Local.

There are numerous reasons for this change. First and foremost was the confusion members were experiencing when they renewed their NMRA membership. Many members were paying the \$9 Region fee, not realizing that it started a paper subscription when they had already chosen to receive the FREE electronic version. Multiply that amount by 2 or 3 for those members who selected multiple year renewals with the NMRA and you can see how that quickly adds up. Another challenge is the various fees that National was applying for processing MER subscriptions. In April, these fees totaled over \$21. While the fees applied were reasonable and justified, they impact the cost versus income ratio for producing The Local. At some point, these fees would contribute to a need for a subscription fee increase. Finally, there is the desire to move members towards the electronic version of The Local. This change will remove the simplicity of paying for a subscription when renewing your membership. If a member wants a paper subscription, they can still get it, it will just require some extra effort.

While we are on the topic of The Local, the previous MER BOD approved changing the number of issues published per year from 6 to 4. After months of coding, data changes and parallel testing, the MER database software is just about ready to handle this change. The target issue for the conversion is the first issue of 2018.

As always Keep in Touch with any questions or changes in your subscriptions or addresses. A current address on file saves the MER some money.

Deadlines and Schedules for 2017 Nominations and Balloting

By-laws changes adopted in 2016 require the publication of deadlines and schedules for nominations and balloting for 2017 to be published in the first issue of The Local for 2017. These dates are determined by Policies, Art. VI, except for the first one that is set by the Nominations Committee. Here they are:

August 1, 2017 -- Deadline for mailing paper ballots to members and for commencing electronic voting.

September 5, 2017 -- Deadline for online voting, also last day as shown by postmark for mailing paper ballots.

September 9, 2017 -- Deadline for receipt by Balloting Committee of paper ballots sent by mail.

September 20, 2017 -- Deadline for Balloting Committee to transmit results to President and Business Manager.

September 30, 2017 -- Deadline for communicating election results to candidates.

October 10, 2017 -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER-NMRA website.

Coupler Comments

dba “When You’re Retired, Every Day is Saturday”

Clint Hyde, Editor



In between last issue and this one, I got retired unexpectedly (woohoo! Yay me!). The whole crazy story is far too long for this column, and not even relevant here, but you can ask me in person at the convention this fall. In any case, while it means my income drops 80%, I have time to do projects for me finally. Regrettably that income lost means I can’t buy hardly anything. Food; yeah, that’s probably about it. Well, the bucket list is full of projects based on things I already have, so while I can’t support the economy like I used to, I’m not low on things to do. One of which is doing some more writing; I have several things in mind about model railroading.

We have not quite finished moving from Fairfax Country down to Madison (aka Potomac Division to James River Div), but that should conclude by next issue. Basement’s a little bit bigger in the new house, but not a lot. What’s good about new basement is that the “utilities” are around the sides, and not smack in the middle like the old house—that really cramped my style, although it did lead to a weirdly shaped layout. New work should end up looking a bit more linear, and afford the proper opportunity to do some slightly more hilly terrain. Both HOn3 and N scale layouts this time. There used to be a logging RR near here!

Last issue of The LOCAL went pretty well, as I am templating more of the content layout. The PDF LOCAL was nearly twice as long as the print LOCAL, with a slightly less crowded look to it, which was great. Of course the pictures being in color is more enjoyable. Please let me know if you are seeing anything weird about the fonts as you see them on-screen, They don’t always look right in the PDF where they did during document production; I haven’t figured out why that is happening, and I need to eventually find a good set of fonts that I can get consistent results out of. This font problem doesn’t happen in print, because that’s a whole different output process (and not casually readable, which is why the E-LOCAL is an entirely separate document and layout).

Because the PDF LOCAL is longer, I have room for more, longer articles, and more photos. I still need some layout tour pictures from any open house your Division holds this year, and I’ll need help on that during the convention (I hope to visit a couple, but without either a time machine or Calvin’s duplicator, I can’t possibly see them all).

Just let Bob Price, MER’s Business Manager, know when you are ready to just be receiving the PDF only.

As always, it is important for you, the MER members, to be doing some article-writing and photo-taking for this publication. Remuneration involves AP points towards Author, but not money (if I could pay you, it’d be taxable, and that wouldn’t be any fun). Expect me to twist your arm if I see/hear something interesting from you.

A couple of months ago I “promised” John Glaab that the print LOCAL will not be going away (Bob Charles reads his in that little room), and that continues to be true for now, but we are (as I’ve said before) re-orienting the direction of the publication towards the electronic delivery. The default when you renew with NMRA will be for the PDF LOCAL, you’ll have to separately write to Bob Price to pay for the print version. Since the beginning of the year MER has picked up a few new members getting print copies, so the print count has moved ahead again—it’s still about even at roughly 700 each (print is down drastically from when I first worked the LOCAL, where it was 2000+). Yes, there are some MER members who get neither.

John promised to write me an article in return (and no, it won’t be about brass, although I’d take one on that topic from him, for sure). I have an idea I have broached with another member about an article series; you won’t be seeing that just yet, but with luck starting next issue.

I had a death in the family last week; that’s never any fun, especially when it’s sudden and you don’t know why, and then it turns out to be completely not what you thought. My Windows PC decided to pass away. I lost a disk drive of content, I’m not sure what all was on it, and the Power Supply went bad too (or maybe it was the other way around, hard to tell). In any case, nothing to do with The LOCAL, I don’t do document production there, but it’s always worrisome. I do the LOCAL document work on my older Power Mac, it has built-in automatic backup, so no danger of losing anything I need. Lesson: make sure there are backups!

Subscriptions to **The Local**

Send requests to MER Business Manager address on page 2.

Free electronic **color** version

email _____

Printed black & white version, \$9/year \$ _____

Donation \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____

Zip (+4) _____

NMRA# _____ **Expire Date** _____

Scale(s) _____ **Telephone** _____

Make checks payable to the "Mid-Eastern Region"

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. The Editor 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. Upon receiving any submission, the Editor will confirm receipt, and, at a later date, indicate the anticipated edition the submission will appear in The Local. If you do not receive an email within two weeks, please resend your submission or contact the editor by phone.

Publication Schedule	Deadline
Jan/Feb	Nov 20th of previous year
Mar/Apr	Jan 20th
May/June	March 20th
Sept/Oct	July 20th
	Jul/Aug May 20th
	Nov/Dec Sept 20th

If you are interested in advertising with the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association, please contact the editor. The current advertising rates (6 issues) for The Local are as follows, and must include camera ready are (jpeg, pdf, bmp, tiff formats):

Callboard ads (30 - 50 words, Div and Clubs Only)..Free

Business Card size	\$60
Quarter Page ad.....	\$125
Half Page ad	\$225
Half Page ad per issue (Div only).....	\$25

NEW MEMBERS

John	Beaulieu	Susquehanna
Mark	Bletsh	James Rvr
Lynne	Brenneman	Caro Sou
Kelly	Buchanan	James Rvr
Scott	Carter	Caro Sou
Paul	Ciesmelewski	NJ
Thomas	Finner	Caro Sou
Tom	Gilbert	Philly
Richard	Harris	
Frederick	Humphrey	Tidewater
Robert	Kester	Susquehanna
James	McCarthy	NJ
Raymond	Mehl	James Rvr
Bill	Moitz	NJ
Jim	Moore	James Rvr
Rueben	Morningstar	Chesapeake
Ralph	Pfannenstiel	Philly
Paul	Prevost	Potomac
Richard	Richter	NJ
John	Snyder	Caro Pied
Robert	Stewart	Potomac
Derek	Thompson	Potomac
Joe	Trzybinski	Caro Sou
Guy	Wallace	Philly
Ray	Wassel	James Rvr
Harold	Weisinger	Chesapeake
David	White	Caro Pied
Craig	Williams	NJ
Cheryl	Zwierko	Potomac
Richard	Zwierko	Potomac

Achievement Program



Achievement Program Update By Charlie Flichman, MMR

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

Division 1 - New Jersey

Christopher Conaway - Association Volunteer

Division 3 - Philadelphia

Nick Brownsberger - Master Builder Prototype Models.

Howard Kaplan - Association Volunteer

Division 5 - James River

Gerard Fitzgerald - Association Volunteer

Philip R. Taylor - Association Volunteer

Division 11 - Susquehanna

Alan Mende - Master Builder Cars

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

PROBLEM - PLEASE HELP ME. National does NOT accept R&V forms. I am getting too many of them, only to have to return to the sender and get the proper form. NO R&V FORMS!

IMPORTANT NOTE!

Bob Price mentions this on p13, but it bears repeating, and we'll do so more than once.

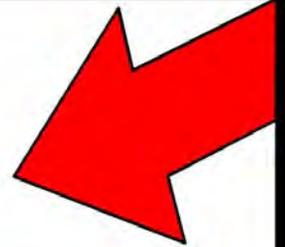
The LOCAL will drop to four issues per year. This was a MER Board decision last year, and is taking some time to implement effectively.

Details like the submission deadlines will get corrected when that begins, or sooner once we are sure of them.

The AP consists of four areas with eleven sub-categories:

- A. **Model Railroad Equipment**
 - 1. **Master Builder – Motive Power**
 - 2. **Master Builder – Cars**
- B. **Model Railroad Settings**
 - 3. **Master Builder – Structures**
 - 4. **Master Builder – Scenery**
 - 5. **Master Builder – Prototype Models**
- C. **Model Railroad Engineering & Operation**
 - 6. **Model Railroad Engineer – Civil**
 - 7. **Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical**
 - 8. **Chief Dispatcher**
- D. **Model Railroad Service**
 - 9. **Association Volunteer**
 - 10. **Association Official**
 - 11. **Model Railroad Author**

**Custom
Layout
Building**



Layout Design

By Lance Mindheim

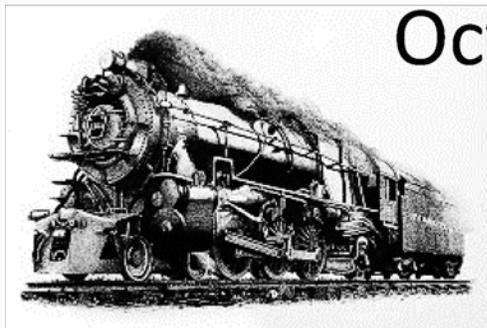
www.shelflayouts.com

301-404-8164

The Tidewater Division of the NMRA

Proudly Presents the

28th Annual Train Show & Sale



October 21 & 22, 2017

10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Virginia Beach Convention Center

1000 19th St.

Virginia Beach, VA 23451

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

MODEL TRAINS RUNNING IN A VARIETY OF SIZES

(LEGO, N, HO, S, O, G SCALES)

- TOOLS •BOOKS •VIDEOS •TRAIN SETS •ROLLING STOCK •PARTS •TRACK
- ACCESSORIES •CLOTHING •TOYS •MEMORABILIA •PHOTOS
- CONCESSIONS •WHITE ELEPHANT TABLES
- HOURLY DOOR PRIZE (1 free door prize ticket with paid admission)
- TIDEWATER TRAIN DOCTORS (bring your model train for repair)
- SCOUT MERIT BADGE PROGRAM •U.S. MARINE CORPS “TOYS FOR TOTS”
- OPERATION LIFE SAVER •HANDS ON SWITCHING PUZZLE
- NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION INFORMATION BOOTH

ADMISSION: **\$8.00** FOR ADULTS

\$1.00 from every paid admission goes to “Toys for Tots”

FREE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 (WITH A PAID ADULT)

FREE PARKING ON-SITE

FREE FOR SCOUTS IN UNIFORM (WITH THEIR SCOUTMASTER OR TROOP LEADERS)

Show Coordinator: Bill Miller

Phone: 757-409-3623

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Notes from 2017 Board of Director Meetings

eMeeting, January 22, 2017

Annandale VA, January 29, 2017

Harrisburg PA, April 22, 2017

Compiled by Ken Nesper, MER-NMRA Secretary

The Board of Directors of the MER-NMRA held three meetings in the first four months of 2017. All board members were present for each of the meetings. The January 22 meeting tested the board members ability to use teleconferencing technology; the January 29 meeting focused solely on financial matters; and the April 22 meeting covered a wide-range of issues based on director and committee reports.

A reminder that these notes are a summary of the highlights from those meetings. They are not minutes and they are not an attempt to report everything discussed at any of the meetings. Moreover, they are not presented in the order in which the topics were discussed at the meetings.

Last June (2016), the board members authorized and President P.J. Mattson, MMR, appointed a committee, chaired by Director Ken Montero, to undertake a comprehensive review of the MER bylaws. The other committee members were Director Martin Brechbiel, Treasurer Brian Kampschroer, and Business Manager Bob Price. Working diligently through the winter, Montero and the committee were prepared to present a draft of the “revised and restated bylaws” to the board in April. Although a copy of the draft was provided to the board members before the meeting, it still took us several hours to work through each paragraph of the document. The changes approved by the board members included addition of titles to all section headings; rewording for clarity or simplicity; renumbering and restructuring of some articles; standardizing the use of masculine personal pronoun; changing the term limits for the Secretary; defining more clearly the role and responsibility of the Audit Committee;

determining the number of mandatory board meetings per year; and relocating some text to other sections of Executive Handbook (EHB). Since the revised bylaws must be approved by the MER membership, a copy of the revised bylaws and an explanation of the proposed changes will be mailed to each MER member as part of the balloting process.

The board members also invested a Sunday afternoon digging into the financial affairs of the region. Because of the change of treasurers, an audit of the MER Treasurer's records for the period since the last audit in 2014, was conducted in December 2016. No discrepancies were uncovered, but the board members did decide that the audit's scope and the audit committee's procedures needed to be more completely documented in the EHB. Next, because four of us had not yet participated in the approval of a proposed annual MER budget as prepared by the Budget Committee, we conducted a line item review of the 2016 statement of income and expenses. This allowed each board member to become familiar with the intended purpose of each line item. It also resulted in the identification of duplicate, obsolete, and awkwardly named line items. The last item of business was to work through the revised line items of proposed 2017 budget. Treasurer Kampschroer insisted that the budget list all realistic proposed expenses, including director travel and supplies. Kampschroer wants the budget to show these possible expenses even if the director does not intend to file for reimbursement. The board members also included in this budget some items that previously were treated as “off budget” such as the Division Matching Funds program. As a result, the adopted 2017 budget shows a planned deficit of approximately \$3500. The board members instructed Kampschroer to prepare an inventory of MER non-financial assets.

The board members approved Division Matching Funds requests from Philadelphia (Division 3) and Tidewater (Division 4) for audio-visual equipment. We are awaiting feedback on a request

from Carolina Southern (Division 12) to expand its boundaries to include four North Carolina counties.

President Mattson delivered the update from Executive Convention Chair Eric Dervinis regarding upcoming MER conventions. Susquehanna Division is sponsoring the 2017 Susquehannock Convention in Harrisburg PA, on October 12 – 15. Potomac Division is sponsoring the 2018 convention in Rockville MD, on October 4 – 7. The Philadelphia Division is sponsoring 2019 convention. Vice President Kurt Thompson hinted that the Chesapeake Division is seriously considering making an offer to host the 2021 convention, but a southern sponsor is still needed for the 2020 convention.

Director Brechbiel lamented the continued search for a General Contest Committee chair. He has posted “help wanted ads” in The Local. He also proposed revisions to the rules for the Photo Contest and to the format of Popular Vote Contest ballot. The board approved both proposals. In addition, the board approved the creation of the Robert “Bob” Lieberman Award, to be sponsored by the New Jersey Division. Brechbiel and the region were more successful in recruiting Dave Collison, Susquehanna Division, as the new MER web master.

Business Manager Price has the task of removing all mention of a paid subscription to a paper copy of The Local from the NMRA web site. Subscription instructions will be included in the welcome letter sent to each new member of the region. The option to subscribe to the eLocal, however, will be posted on the NMRA web site as a free benefit to all MER members. The board members are unhappy with the fees that the region is charged by national for handling subscriptions to The Local.

Attention O Scale Modelers! The MER intends to be a sponsor of the 2018 O Scale National Convention that will be held August 23-25 in Rockville MD (same hotel as the October 2018 MER convention). Director Brechbiel agreed to serve as board liaison to the convention committee even after he leaves the board in October 2017 (term-limited).

For those who are interested, the board of directors will meet on Thursday, October 12, 2017, at the Susquehannock Convention in Harrisburg PA. Board meetings are open to all members. The next annual meeting of the MER-NMRA membership is scheduled for Sunday, October 15, 2017 at the convention. I hope to see you there.

**Attention O Scale Modelers!
The MER is a sponsor of the
2018 O Scale National Convention
August 23-25 in Rockville MD

(same hotel as the October 2018
MER convention).**

Visiting the famous RPI NEBW one more time

by Nick Kalis

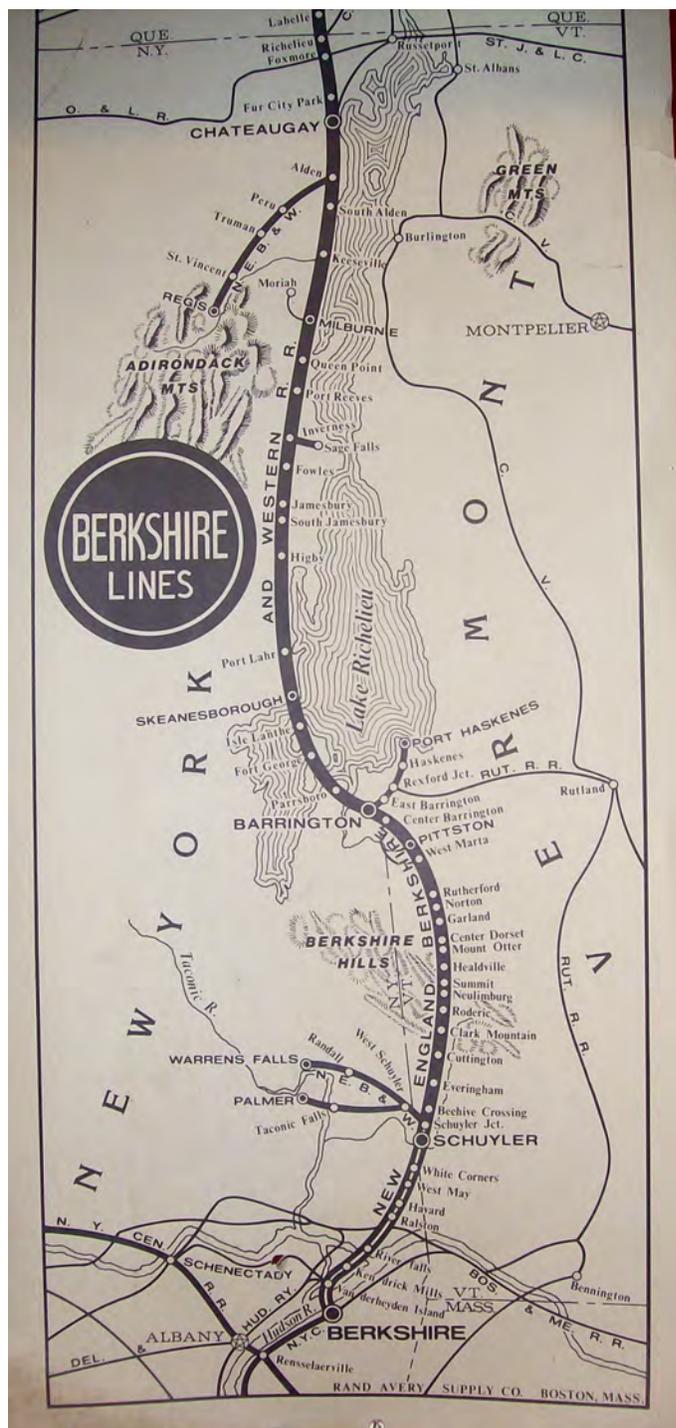
Gary Eames, Rich Randall and Nick Kalis enjoyed a private tour of the RPI layout given by John Nehrich. This famous HO scale layout is situated in the basement of Davison Hall on the campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York.

Private tours can be arranged with John Nehrich – be sure to provide an honorarium to John who works so hard and for so little to keep this student club going.

The Rensselaer School was established in 1824 by Stephen Van Rensselaer “for the purpose of instructing persons ... in the application of science to the common purposes of life” (Van Rensselaer to Blatchford, 1824). It is “...the first school of science and school of civil engineering, which has had a continuous existence, to be established in any English-speaking country” In 1833 the school became the Rensselaer Institute, and in the 1850s its purpose was broadened to become a polytechnic institution. The name was changed to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1861.

In the 1930s, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute got its first model railroad in the form of a large, live steam locomotive donated by the owners of the Burden Iron Works in South Troy. The "Rensselaer Central" was disbanded during WWII. Model railroads returned when an HO gauge club was launched in 1947. Over its history, the club has occupied several basements on campus. Since 1972, The Rensselaer Model Railroad Society has been constructing and refining an exhibit depicting the Delaware & Hudson and Rutland Railroads. Set in 1950, the thirty-five by 120-foot layout represents life in Troy, New York and points north in the Hudson and Champlain Valleys.

Originally, scenery was constructed with plaster over wire screening. Today, they use a variant of paper mache over foam. Foliage is represented with dyed foam rubber, and trees are made using carefully dried plants.

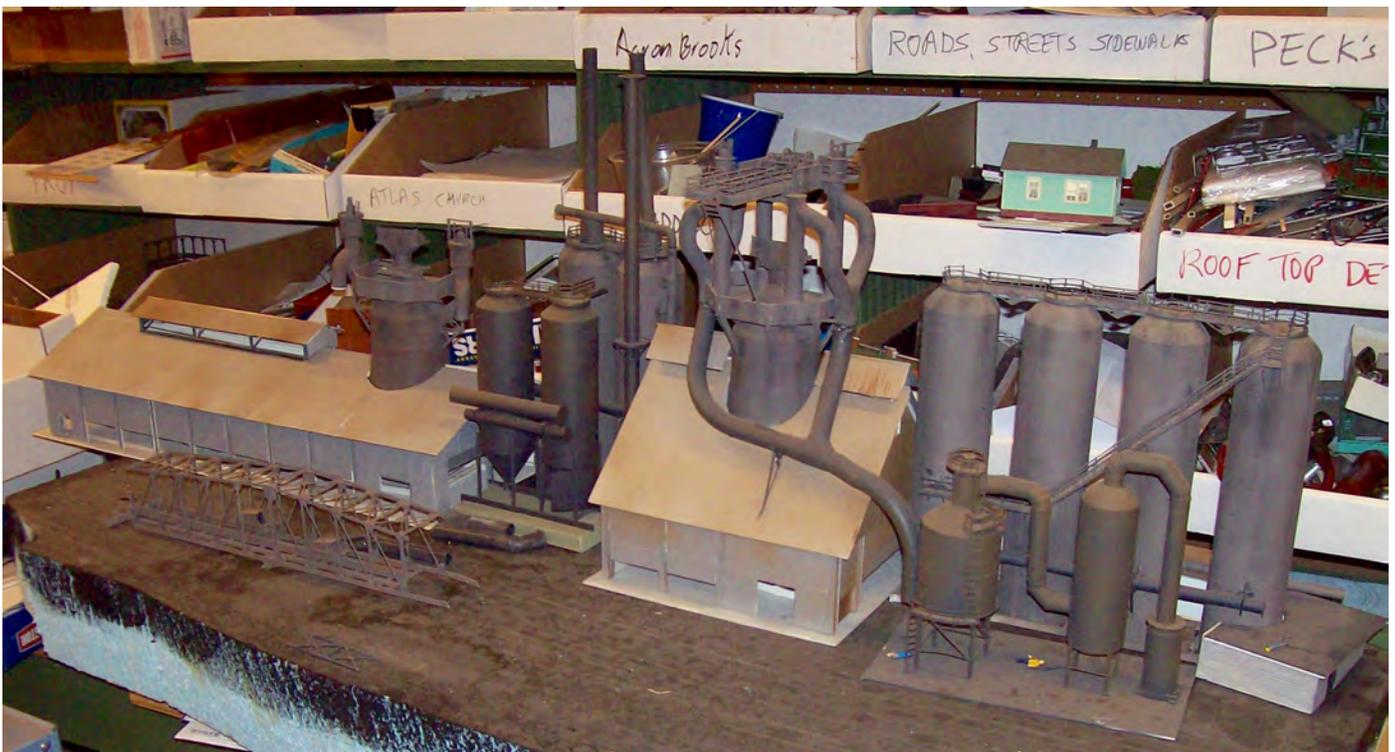


All photos are by Rich Randall.

This special feature on the NEBW is not in the print copy of The LOCAL. It's mostly photos, the NEBW has been in a number of articles in the slick-paper magazines over the years.



Tahawus Titanium Oxide Plant



Port Henry blast furnaces



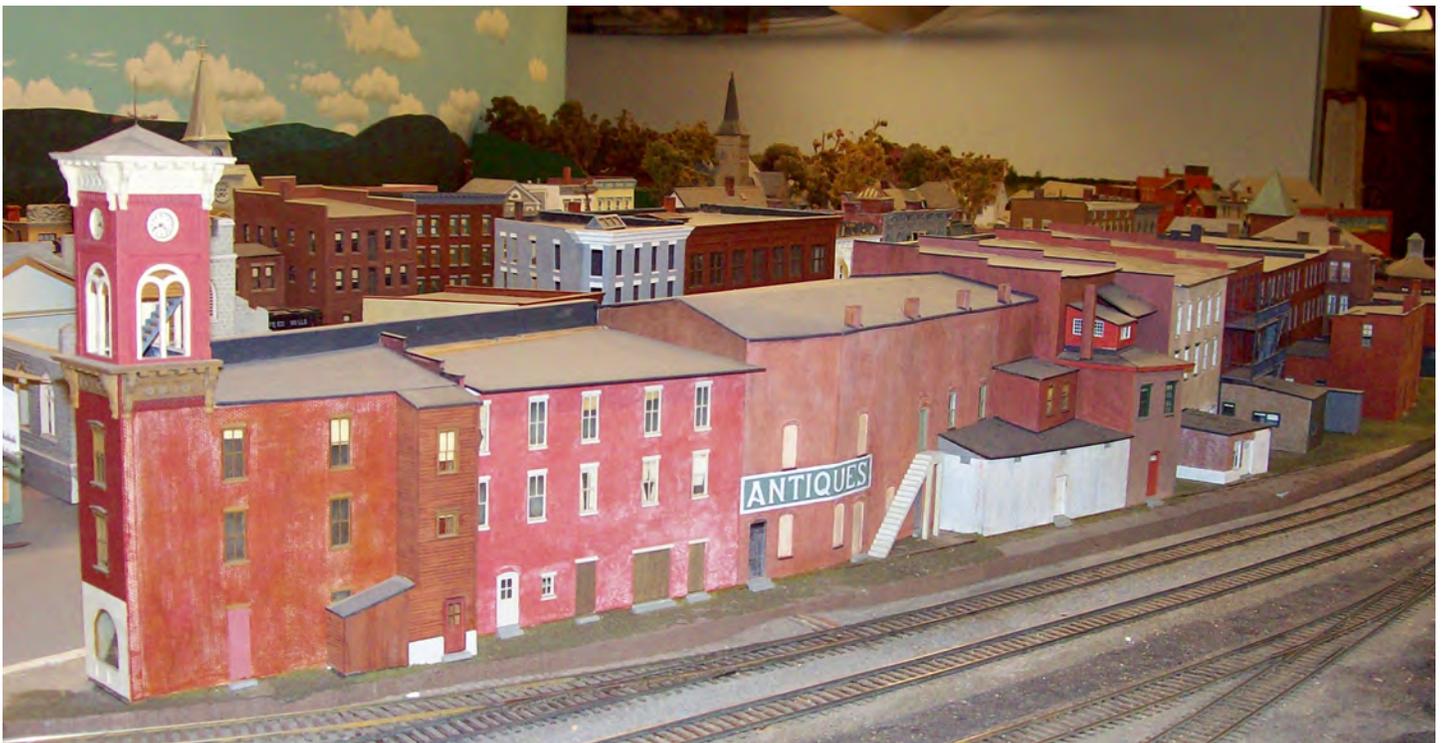
“bucolic scene”



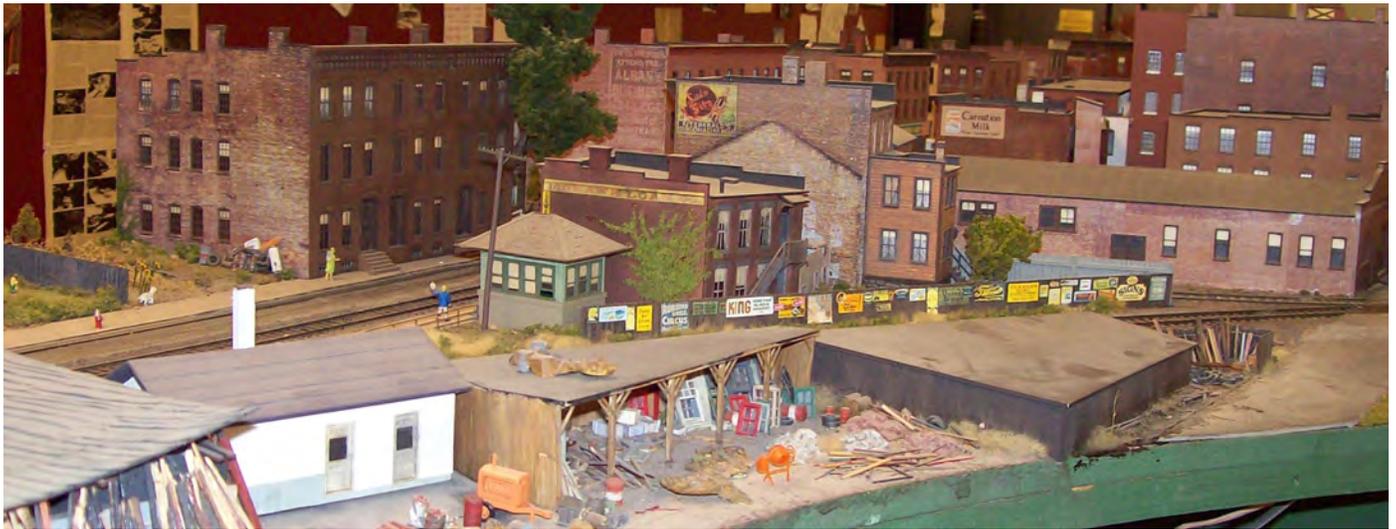
Burtonsville station, prototype scene



Chateaugay



Chateaugay



Structure modeling



More buildings



Lots of human figure details



Not something you see too often on a model railroad

2016 MER Convention in Raleigh/Durham North Carolina “Tracks to the Triangle” After Action Report

Jack Dziadul

Two years ago, the MER Board and Executive Convention Chair Eric Dervinis were seeking a host for the 2016 convention. They expressed a preference for a location at the south end of the Region. In other words, it was North Carolina’s turn. The matter was brought to the attention of the Carolina Piedmont Division Board for consideration. Thus, Tracks to the Triangle was born. The purpose of this report is to summarize what CPD did to plan and execute the convention. The intent is to offer a critical analysis, which would provide guidance for future conventions.

The CPD Board named Steve Milley and Jack Dziadul Co-Chairmen and they assembled the Local Convention Committee (LCC) to oversee various aspects of planning and managing the convention. The LCC was a talented and experienced group: Grif Bond (finance/budget), Bill Hanley (RPM), Bruce Faulkner (home layout tours), Steve Benezra (operations callboards), Jim Babcock (Silent Auction/Raffle), Jim Murphy assisted by Gene Sing, MMR (clinics), Rob Rousseau (webmaster), and Bob Bridges (marketing). This core group mostly stayed intact throughout the enterprise. The only subtraction was Bruce Faulkner, who needed to withdraw due to work demands, however, not before he developed the very creative logo for the convention. The logo mimicked the color scheme and font of the national NMRA logo, and captured the geography of Central NC, which is known as the Research Triangle for the three major research universities in the area; NC State/Raleigh; UNC/Chapel Hill and Duke University in Durham. Newly elected Superintendent John Sokash lent his guidance to the LCC and Nancy Murphy volunteered to lead a non-rail event, a tour of the NC Museum of Art.

The LCC drew upon the MER Convention Action Team (CAT) resources throughout the planning

The quick summary:

Attendance: 264
Registered: 218
Walkins: 5?
First-timers: 81
Distance winners were from Washington and California

Not many walkins. That is completely unpredictable. Low point was 2007 with 3, high was 2013 with something like 150 (that was Fed Gov shutdown week).

and implementation process. President PJ Mattson and Eric were periodically consulted and were kept informed of our progress via calls, emails and copies of LCC agendas and meeting minutes. Bill Grosse and Bob Price were significant contributors throughout. Martin Brechbiel took care of every aspect of the contest function except for the contest judges’ lunch. Bob Clegg added his many years of experience with sales, raffles and the initial draft of the program book. The Carolina Piedmont Division could not have managed this very successful convention without all of this support. For this, we are grateful. The LCC also had for reference, materials from the 2005 and 2011 conventions hosted by the Carolina Piedmont Division, program materials from recent MER conventions, and Section 6 of the Executive Handbook, which discusses the protocols of managing regional conventions.

Let us look at the 2016 convention and review what was new, what was traditional, what worked well and what we could have done better.

MARRIOTT RTP, Durham, NC

The ECC is responsible for negotiating the hotel

contract and has signatory authority delegated to him by the MER. Eric worked with us to identify the hotels that were considered. Our first choice was to return to the previous venue, but room rate and meeting space rental price increases eliminated that option. Eric recommended a hotel brokerage service called HelmsBriscoe. It advertises itself as "...a meetings procurement and site selection agency..." and its representative was a pleasure to work with. The selected hotel pays the commission. Eric and the LCC developed specifications, which the agency then used to narrow our search to several area hotels. Steve Milley and I visited and researched the short list. We selected the Marriott RTP for its compact, single-level floor plan, its convenient highway access, its achievable food and beverage (F&B) minimum of \$6,000, and its willingness to keep the group rate below \$100 per night, if even by a penny. Achieving the F&B minimum was important to earn the waiver of meeting room rental costs. The Marriott turned out to be a great choice as the service was superior; the entire staff was well trained, efficient and friendly. Marriott provided the LCC hotel liaison with an app called Red Coat Direct. This app was easy to use and allowed the LCC hotel liaison to communicate instantly to several of the hotel staff. I.e., more chairs, more lighting, less a/c, etc. for any specified function room. The hotel staff was expected to clear each work order within three minutes, or would receive a reminder from the app software.

With any hotel, cost creep is a risk and steps need to be taken to avoid additional charges. We contained costs by having one hotel liaison responsible for communication with the hotel staff. We also contained costs by purchasing or renting items from outside vendors. Marriott RTP has gone green with tables. They are now polished metal surfaces, which allowed the hotel to eliminate table coverings. This substantially cuts down on laundry and labor costs to the hotel. However, this was not very accommodating to models with wheels. We researched catering companies for table coverings and found costs to be approximately \$20 per table for the four-day convention. Bill Hanley researched more affordable alternatives and we ended up purchasing tablecloths for \$8 each. Throughout the convention, we invited attendees, especially other divisions, to take some or even all of the tablecloths. Several took

advantage and all table coverings found new homes.

The hotel liaison needs to communicate upfront with the hotel staff to understand how the HVAC (and lighting) is set up for each room. It is inevitable that there will be adjustments needed at the beginning of the convention. In the case of the Marriott, and no doubt many other hotels, the controls sometimes affect more than the room in which the controls are located.

The hotel staff was genuinely enthusiastic about hosting a model railroading themed convention. They removed a large table display in the main lobby to accommodate a train layout. They also removed five vases and sculptures displayed within five shadow boxes behind the hotel registration desk so that we could insert dioramas and models in those spaces. Reception staffers took the initiative to form candy into the shape of steam locomotives and presented those favors to our conventioner hotel guests. We were later told that the Marriott RTP was the highest rated hotel for service in the Marriott chain worldwide. Marriott required an initial deposit of \$500, which was advanced by MER. A second deposit of like amount was submitted at the start of the convention.

Hotel registration was an easy process and was readily linked from the convention web site. The only early glitch was when hotel bookings exceeded expectations. This occurred twice and the issues were quickly rectified by the hotel by expanding the room counts blocked at the discounted rate. The final hotel bookings were 322 room-nights broken down as follows:

Wednesday 4
Thursday 103
Friday 111
Saturday 104

The contract guarantee was for 146 room-nights. We achieved 221% of the guarantee. For each thirty-room nights, we received one comp room-night. The Executive Handbook provides that the MER President, the MER Registrar and the LCC Chairman receive complementary hotel lodging. The success with the hotel reservations allowed the convention budget to avoid incurring hotel charges for these three comp rooms.

We liked the idea of a prepaid breakfast, which had been brought to our attention by a previous MER convention. We offered this option and it was well received. Two hundred four breakfasts were prepaid, for an average of sixty-eight per day. This made for a very efficient check payment process, which both the membership and the hotel staff appreciated. An additional eighteen prepaid breakfasts were purchased by the MER for the Superintendent's breakfast. Two hundred twenty-two total prepaid breakfasts at \$16 put a \$3,552 dent in our F&B minimum. This all-inclusive price was directly passed through to the hotel. The hotel moved its restaurant open time from 6:30 to 6am. This accommodation helped to spread out the mealtime rush and allowed ample time to get folks out of the door for the various tours, or to prepare for clinics.

The only downside was that the hotel pulled our use of the concierge lounge that we had intended for the Superintendents' breakfast. Since the Triangle Board Room only seated ten, we had to improvise a relocation of that breakfast to one of the clinic rooms. This required a 6:30am start in order to re-stage the room for an 8am clinic. The early start was not well received by the Superintendents in attendance and should be set at 7am in the future. In planning for the Superintendent's breakfast, the hotel liaison will need to confirm which Superintendents and MER Officers and Directors will be attending. This breakfast is an MER cost, not a convention expense.

The LCC considered providing coffee each morning of the convention. Even a discounted quote of \$30 per 30-cup urn (\$40 with tax and service charge), the LCC decided against this option. Most conventioners would be having breakfast at the hotel and take-out cups were available to breakfast diners at no additional charge.

The hotel set up buffets for lunches with a different menu daily. This was direct self-pay with the hotel. As with prepaid breakfast, the Marriott offered pre-paid lunch buffet, but this was a last minute, ad hoc, offering from the hotel so we do not have a count of those who prepaid. The dinner menu and the bar did generate some negative pricing comments. However, many folks were

off on tours or simply went down the street for other restaurant choices. The LCC did neglect one minor hotel contract provision. The contract requires that all food consumed on the premises be supplied by the hotel. However, the LCC brought in sandwiches for the contest judges' lunch. Any future LCC should note this standard contract requirement.

The banquet was very much a success. The food was excellent and plentiful. The "Carolina Buffet" was selected for cost consideration as well as the menu offerings. The all-in price was \$39.35 for 114 meals for a cost of \$4,485.90. The prepaid breakfasts and banquet alone exceeded the \$6,000 F&B minimum. One hundred twelve registrants paid \$45 and two banquet tickets were complimentary. The sales of \$5,040 resulted in net positive proceeds of \$554.10 which covered some expenses not originally budgeted for (tablecloths and AV equipment rentals). Jim Babcock secured a very nice door prize that was offered to a lucky purchaser of a banquet ticket who attended that event. Congratulations to Cal Reynolds for winning two tickets for the Durbin Rocket in WV. Author / historian / modeler Bernard Kempinski was a popular choice as banquet speaker. Future conventions will need to communicate the availability of accommodating attendees with special dietary needs.

The banquet is an extra fare event that includes the dinner and dinner speaker. All MER members are invited into the banquet room once the contest awards part of the program begins. All MER members are encouraged to attend the latter portion of the evening when the MER president gavelled the annual meeting to order.

The LCC will prepare the order of events and coordinate the serving timing with the dining staff. MER executives reviewed the banquet schedule in advance. Grif Bond had copies of the program placed at each table setting. The program and banquet speaker bio was placed on the podium. The host Division Superintendent opened the banquet with brief welcoming remarks. The Superintendent then turned the program over to the LCC person tasked with acting as the master of ceremonies. An invocation preceded the meal service.

As per common practice, the following year's convention host, Susquehanna Division's Bob Charles, MMR, presented a PowerPoint exhibit of the "Susquehannock" Harrisburg, PA convention scheduled for October 12-15, 2017. There were also brief statements regarding plans for the MER 2018 convention by the Potomac Division's Brian Sheron, MMR, plus the Mid-Central Region's conventions upcoming in 2017 (Bob Weinheimer, MMR - The Pan-American Louisville, KY May 18-21) and 2018 (John Burchnall - Cincinnati Express, West Chester, OH May 17-20).

The LCC will need to consider the head table logistics.

- Elevated rectangular or round on the floor
- Seat eight or ten
- Typical seating includes the MER President, banquet speaker, host division Superintendent, and the convention Chairman. Allow for any spouses who might be attending the banquet.
- Be sure that those to be dining at the head table are invited well in advance. Otherwise, they might have made other arrangements.

Others with key banquet responsibilities should be seated at the head table as space allows, or at a table near the podium.

- Contest Chairman who will be presenting awards
- MER AP Chairman who will be presenting awards
- Technology personnel who will be handling audio-visual equipment
- Awards photographer

The Contest Chairman will need a table near the podium for the award plaques. If a live auction is to be a part of the convention, additional tables to display auction items will need to be set up.

The AV coordinator will need to ensure that all equipment for banquet presentations is set up and functioning properly before attendees have gathered for the banquet. AV needs of the banquet speaker were provided well in advance of the convention.

Live auctions have been a traditional convention offering. Tracks to the Triangle did not include a live auction, generally held immediately after the

banquet. Although an entertaining aspect of past conventions, the LCC felt that participation in the auction did not justify the time and resources (volunteer labor) required. This is an LCC judgment call and future conventions will need to make their own evaluation.

Marriott Rewards points were earned for this event. The 50,000 points were split and offered to the membership as two of the silent auction prizes. The Executive Convention Chairman and LCC hotel liaison were ineligible for the awards to avoid any potential conflicts of interest.

Marketing and Publicity

Bob Bridges put his marketing and photography skills to good use. Bob saw to it that the convention dates were posted to the NMRA calendar, and wrote a very nice convention article that was published in the NMRA Magazine. Advance planning is critical in order to meet publication deadlines. Bill Day's previous convention marketing report was an excellent reference. Several of us submitted material to Editor Earl Hackett for publication in The Local. Each of the Division superintendents and newsletter editors lent their support by writing articles and posting the convention to their newsletter and web site calendars.

Bob and Jack visited almost every planned call-board and open house layout to secure descriptions and photographs. Bruce Faulkner provided a fill-in-the-blanks layout description form that proved most useful.

MER Business Manager Bob Price assisted with promotional e-blasts to the MER database. These e-blasts, written by Bob Bridges, focused on one aspect of the convention with each communication.

Bob Bridges and Jack developed a PowerPoint exhibit to market the convention. This was presented at the 2015 convention in New Jersey, Carolina Southern Division's 2016 Railroad Modeling University (RMU) in Charlotte, and to the Carolina Piedmont Division membership.

The formal marketing program takes quite a bit of advance planning and co-ordination. But, sometimes ad-hoc communication fits the bill. Each evening of the convention we emailed each

attendee for which we had an email address. These emails provided timely updates to tours and clinics. We also used these notices to promote vendors selling from hotel rooms, and the next day's clinics and tours.

Web Site

We were very fortunate to have a very capable webmaster in Rob Rousseau. Rob set up the web site as soon as MER and the CPD Board approved of our hosting. We recommend purchasing a multi-year web site to avoid the annual charge, which is a bit more expensive. We had frequent changes to clinic schedules and descriptions, layout open house schedules, operation callboard slots availability, etc. This required frequent web-site updates and Rob handled each very promptly. All advertising and articles promoting the convention should include a link to the web site. The web site is also home to the most current version of the registration form.

Audio-Visual Equipment and Technology

The LCC toured the hotel facilities several times in the planning process. This enabled the LCC to visualize the screen and projector requirements along with the peripheral equipment needs. We identified what equipment was needed, defined what the hotel would be providing and sourcing third party vendors for lower costs wherever possible. Fortunately, CPD and several other Divisions were able to provide most the clinic technology requirements. The LCC did engage a third party vendor to provide screens, mics and some projectors for both the clinic rooms and for the banquet. This was cost-effective and convenient. Contracting directly with outside vendors is almost always less expensive than contracting through the hotel. Be sure that your hotel contract allows this. We used

William King, Producer of Corporate Events
Meeting Contact, Inc.
1202 Copeland Oaks Drive
Morrisville, NC 27560
(919)380-7903

Bill Hanley (RPM), Jim Murphy and Gene Sing, MMR (clinics) were intimately involved with the tech set-ups for their respective room assignments. Bob Bridges had experience with event planning and was the prime point of contact with

the AV vendor.

Rob Rousseau introduced the Guidebook app to the LCC. The demonstrations were impressive, so this individualized software was offered as a new convention feature and was met with favorable reviews by the attendees. Approximately one-half of the attendees took advantage of this application. This is a free app for up to 200 users. The app enables the user to set up a personalized calendar with reminders for selected clinics and other events.

Clinics

Jim Murphy, assisted by Gene Sing, MMR, developed a 58-hour program of clinics in three primary tracks: technology, military, and prototype modeling presented by thirty-two clinicians. Among them were seven Master Model Railroaders who conducted fourteen of the clinics. As is typical, over a two-year period of gathering clinician commitments, there were a number a changes, cancellations and substitutions. However, when show time arrived every one of the clinic hours was committed.

Perhaps the clinic schedule should not be printed in the published Convention Guide. The clinic schedule is always up-to-date on the website, so that would have the best and most current information. As the Convention Guide is printed 3-4 weeks ahead of the convention, that schedule will be out-of-date almost immediately. A single page schedule could be printed at a local copy shop the day before convention and inserted in the Convention Guide or envelop packet at registration.

Among considerations for this recent convention and for future conventions is the dynamic tension of locking in presenters for multiple hours, filling hotel rooms, and meeting F&B minimums. Consider, for example, the financial implications of three out-of-Division clinicians teaching three subjects versus one local presenter teaching three clinic hours. In the former case, this will likely result in three hotel room bookings and additional hotel meals purchased, especially if spouses are included. In the latter example, a local clinician will not likely book a room and will probably spend less on hotel meals. Convention management needs to be cognizant of the poten-

tial impact. Additionally, with one presenter responsible for multiple clinic hours any last minute cancellation creates compound rescheduling complications.

When we had cancellation issues crop up during the last 2-3 weeks before the convention, we put a call out to MMRs who were attending the convention. We received a very strong and prompt response and that support was very timely, encouraging and appreciated. Jim suggests that three to four months out, when the clinic calendar is nearly full, that the Clinic coordinator ask clinicians if they have a second clinic that can serve as a back-up or last minute fill-in. This preplanning might reduce the last minute stress levels.

Some conventions opt to run some clinics two times. This is a LCC choice and Tracks to the Triangle preferred a broader selection of clinics.

Volunteers were assigned to cover each clinic hour. Their responsibilities included:

- Assisting the clinician with any room set-up
- Introducing the clinician
- Assisting with distribution of any handouts
- Signaling the clinician five minutes before wrap-up.
- Presenting the clinician with a Certificate of Appreciation at the conclusion. Gene Sing, MMR produced the Certificates of Appreciation.

The LCC opted for fifteen minutes between sessions to maximize clinic offerings. Some conventions prefer thirty-minute breaks. A more leisurely pace allows more time for socializing, bidding in the silent auction room, and viewing contest models.

Keep in mind that Sunday morning clinics must also be scheduled. This helps to drive attendance to the Sunday morning business meeting. Without a Sunday morning program, the LCC would likely suffer fewer Saturday banquet sales and book fewer rooms on Saturday night.

The LCC did not provide printing services for clinician handouts. We encourage emailing exhibits or Power Point slides to interested attendees. Another option would be to post them to the convention web site.

Layout Tours

The Layout Tour program is one of the key elements of any convention. The LCC had several challenges to overcome. First, several mature layouts that were open for previous conventions were not available in 2016. The place for any layout tour coordinator to start is to contact past hosts. There will be some layouts taken down, some host relocations, etc. The outreach should be broad. Ask contacts if they are aware of any other layouts that they would recommend for an open house. We were able to add several layouts that we never knew of before. The Rail Pass program and NMRA insurance are good sales tools to have available. Any new layouts must be visited by the Layout Tour coordinator and marketing coordinator. An accurate description for tour books and the web site is important. Wheelchair accessible layouts should be indicated on the web site and in the Layout Tour Book.

A second issue was that a number of our layouts were in the early stages of construction. Of course, there are many advantages here as well. There is always interest in seeing in process layouts; how others are addressing benchwork, wiring, scenery, etc. All of this is good as the number of these under construction layouts bodes well for the next convention hosting opportunity in about five years. However, for the 2016 effort a few layouts needed to be withdrawn as not yet ready.

A third challenge was the lack of a volunteer for this critical position. One of the convention co-chairmen filled this leadership gap. Future conventions should make a priority of staffing this position as a separate function. The few glitches that we had with the printed schedule and directions might have been avoided. It is important to have layout hosts proofread the any print entries at the draft as well as web site descriptions.

The Tour Book has historically been a comprehensive guide to layouts in a printed reference format complete with maps and directions. Some past examples included layout descriptions. The LCC made an effort to reduce printing costs by eliminating the specific printed directions. The rationale was to take advantage of assumed GPS technology that virtually all conventioners

would have available on their phone. The few without GPS typically car-pooled with someone with GPS. We recommend continuing this practice, along with including the cell phone numbers of the layout hosts in case any direction assistance is needed. The LCC also made a point to include the international accessibility symbol on the few accessible layouts. These were mostly applicable to club layouts.

MER has approximately four dozen layout tour lawn signs. The layout tour coordinator needs to secure these signs from the past convention coordinator, distribute the signs to the layout tour hosts, arrange for the collection of the signs, and finally hand off the signs to the next upcoming convention volunteer.

Some conventioners will want to tour layouts that are open on the first day of the event, but before they have checked in at the hotel. They will not have a convention name badge for entry to the hosted layout. Layout hosts who are open on the first day (typically Thursday) should be provided with a list of those registered for the convention. Of course, without the closely protected personal contact information (homes address, telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.). The layout tour coordinator will need to communicate to attendees who to contact for the addresses of layouts open on the first day. The schedule will be available on the web site, but not the addresses of the hosts. The layout tour coordinator will try to schedule open houses that are clustered geographically to make efficient travel itineraries for the guests.

There are a number of articles, web posts and clinics that have addressed layout tour practices. Only a few will be addressed here and these should be shared in advance with hosts as well as guests.

Guests

- should ask permission before taking photographs
- not take food or beverages into the layout room
- legibly and completely sign guest books
- display your convention name badge
- Thank the hosts and any volunteers assisting. A follow-up email or written note would be

especially appreciated by the host.

Hosts

- Have adequate on site help. Do not go it alone. We have had as many as 70 guests and often 30-40 touring layouts during the convention.
- Well-known hosts, completed or near-finished layouts, layouts close to the hotel and close to a cluster of other layouts that are open at the same time typically have the largest turnouts.
- Proofread the schedule and directions that are posted on the web as well as the tour book.
- Determine in advance the maximum allowed to tour at one time. Some will assign a host assistant to manage this, or perhaps use a system of cards. I.e. six cards for six allowed in the layout room. When one exits, the card is handed off to the next in line.
- Layout tour yard signs are printed on one side. In some situations, two signs back-to-back would provide better visibility.

Operating Callboards

Steve Benezra did an excellent job of scheduling the operating callboard to ensure that we had a session or two going each day of the convention going each day of the convention. Many of the comments in the Layout Tour section above are applicable here as well. Operating hosts are generally very experienced model railroaders. Communication with those who have signed up should occur as soon as the host has the names of participants. Ideally, the operating host should know or find out the level of experience ahead of time. This will make the selection or assignment of the jobs ahead of time possible and allow the orientation to be a bit quicker. Some hosts provide a map, photos, a web link or other orientation guidance in advance. Having a map reference as a handout is helpful. More ops callboard folks will not be familiar with the road. Hosts will want to confirm attendance again just prior to the convention and to ensure that folks have transportation from the hotel and back, if applicable. Car pools should be encouraged.

The MER Executive Handbook does discuss a \$5 allowance per participant that can be paid to the host of an ops session (but does not apply to layout tour hosting). This is an option available at the discretion of the LCC to reimburse ops hosts

for miscellaneous items such as snacks. This reimbursement is often declined by the host. The policy is otherwise not consistently treated or communicated from one convention to another.

Prototype Tours

Prototype tours are another staple of conventions. We have historically had mixed results with setting these up and the tours are very much driven by the leadership of this function. Tracks to the Triangle was fortunate to have three quality offerings. Don Tichy had hosted open houses three times previously for the Carolina Piedmont Division and willingly opened his doors to our convention. There were almost 80 participants spread over two sessions. Buses could easily have been justified, but the LCC opted not to undertake the financial risk and logistical hassles of dealing with bus transportation. Instead, the LCC arranged for a tour captain to be pre-positioned at the Tichy Train Group factory to receive the attendees. These captains were provided with the attendee lists in advance. As to the departure from the hotel, two LCC members organized car pools in the hotel lobby. Car pools were very helpful for the few drivers without GPS. As each car was loaded, it was sent on its way. It proved to be quite helpful, even if by a bit of luck, that the last car pool had one rider with GPS. Note: always ensure that each carpool has at least one rider with GPS.

The New Hope Valley Rail Road was also a popular selection as all cab rides and engineer driver slots were sold out. There were costs involved for this type of excursion, so tickets were sold in advance. The coordinator needs to arrange through MER the payment to the host organization.

Our third proto-type tour was for the in-process restoration of a Pullman sleeper. This was an excellent opportunity to hear the history of this particular car, the on-going restoration efforts, and to photograph up close details inside and outside of the car. This event was lightly attended, most likely because it competed directly with the Tichy tour.

Other prototype tours were suggested, but no volunteer stepped up to take charge and follow up on making the arrangements.

Non-Rail Activities

Nancy Murphy volunteered to host a tour of the North Carolina Museum of Art. This was a very helpful addition to the convention as it provided spouses with a quality activity. This is a perfect example of a volunteer making a suggestion, then following through with leading the effort.

Raffle

Several years ago, MER decided to turn over responsibility for any raffle to the host committee. The Carolina Piedmont Division embraced this opportunity to the fullest. Under Jim Babcock's leadership the LCC secured almost 100 items from manufacturers, retailers and individuals. The contributed items filled tables along two walls of the raffle/silent auction room. Tickets were sold throughout the convention with winners posted on the wall outside of the room just before the Saturday banquet. Distribution began after the banquet and into Sunday morning. Tickets were \$1 with six chances for \$5. The raffle was very successful and raised \$973 that went directly to the host Division. Some points for future convention guidance:

- The Raffle coordinator will need to manage outreach to manufacturers and retailers. It is best to identify the host member who has a relationship with a potential donor.
- Provide as much advertising or recognition of donors as practical. (Web site, newsletters, articles, etc.)
- You can either copy and paste logos to your ads, or request the logo from the manufacturer, retailer, etc.
- Decide where raffle items will be stored until the convention.
- Thank you notes are appropriate.

Silent Auction

The Silent Auction is another traditional convention offering that the Region had turned over to the host division. Jim Babcock led this effort and introduced the Buy-It-Now concept that enabled the volunteers to move inventory throughout the convention, instead of leaving all collections for the convention's closing hours. It was hard to estimate how much room would be required for the combined Raffle / Silent Auction room, and we did come up short on space. However, it was only for a few hours that the products spilled out into the hallway on some temporary tables. 610

square feet proved to be inadequate. One of the 704 square foot clinic rooms would have served us better.

The host division charged 10% of the sales price with a minimum of \$1 paid to CPD for each sale. A \$5 minimum price was set in order to keep the volume of items under control. Low cost items were bundled in order to reach the \$5 threshold. Some recent conventions with \$1 minimum prices saw over 900 items. With a \$5 minimum, we were able to reduce the count to approximately 500. Bob Clegg's software produced an efficient administrative tracking system to register items and to log the sales. The New Jersey Division used a pre-convention capability in 2015 of registering items that lessened the administrative burden on the first day of the convention. Tracks to the Triangle continued with that idea and future conventions should continue with that as a best practice. The bottom line is that the Silent Auction raised \$477 that was a direct benefit to the host Division. The Silent Auction, coupled with the raffle, were exciting aspects of the convention.

RPM

Bill Hanley had extensive experience with Rail Prototype Modelers conventions and volunteered to take charge of what we believed to be the first MER convention to incorporate a RPM room. Bill arranged for us to get on various RPM related calendars and handled the logistics of ordering the table coverings as noted in the Hotel section above. Bill also took the initiative to create room plans showing table layouts for the contest room, silent auction room, as well as for the RPM room. The attendees seemed to appreciate displaying and viewing structure, and freight and passenger car models in a non-competitive environment. Also included was a T-Trak layout sponsored by the North Raleigh N-Trak Club. CPD member John Wallis arranged for this and managed this layout exhibition. There were also some scratch-building demonstrations to observe. Given that this was a first effort, the 704 square foot room was more than adequate.

When considering incorporating other entities into the convention, such as NMRA Special Interest Groups, it is important to communicate with the leadership of that organization. In the

case of RPM, we communicated with Joe Delia. <http://railroadprototypemodelers.com/history.htm>

Bill and Bob Bridges created placards with the convention logo. These were used to identify the modelers who displayed items. This was a nice touch and added a classy detail for minimal cost. We did not have a dedicated photographer to capture each of the RPM models. A future convention that includes a RPM component should consider having a volunteer named for this responsibility. Additional volunteers would have also helped to ensure 100% coverage of all open hours. Room monitors to ensure the security of models is an important consideration, just as in the Contest room.

Contest

The contest room and the contest itself are Region responsibilities under the leadership of Contest Chairman Martin Brechbiel. The LCC provided the room dimensions as well as the table layout plan to Martin well in advance of the convention for his review. Martin was also consulted regarding the table coverings. One area that could be improved upon is the room access control. The Marriott would not provide keys. Instead, the hotel staff needed to be summoned whenever the contest room needed to be unlocked. The room should never be unattended when unlocked.

Budget and Finance

The MER Registrar typically handles the Region finances for conventions. President PJ Mattson handled finances for Tracks to the Triangle as the Registrar responsibilities are transitioning to Bill Grosse. Bill took care of all registration functions. This was a very comprehensive and responsible position that Bill handled admirably.

Grif Bond was responsible for the LCC aspect of convention finances. This included Raffle and Silent Auction sales as well as convention budgeting.

Convention managers need to put as many of the budgeted expenditures as applicable through to the MER to ensure prompt reimbursement or direct payment. Delays in submitting receipts for reimbursement lead to delays in final convention accounting and delays in distribution of the 50/50

splits between MER and the host committee.

The Budget & Finance Chairman will need to assist the Raffle and Silent Auction functions with cash control and accounting. These controls are separate from MER level Treasurer and Registrar functions. The LCC will need to decide if and how personal checks or credit card payments will be handled for Raffle and Silent Auction sales. This will also be a Live Auction consideration, if applicable.

Registration

Nothing happens without registered attendees. Bill Grosse did a superior job of processing registrations and promptly communicating updates to the LCC. Together we developed a historical tracking template that should be helpful to future convention managers.

The LCC should be prepared to assist the Registrar administratively (clipboards, pencils, a wastebasket, or whatever might be needed). This includes giving the Registrar a periodic break, including to attend a clinic or two. (Put names on the back of clipboards so that they can find their way back to their proper owner after the registration function has closed.)

The Registrar provides convention name badges. There are special indicators for clinicians, first time attendees, etc. It has been suggested the first time attendee badges be a separate color, or otherwise be more prominent.

Authors' Table

Three of our clinicians were book authors. We invited them to autograph and sell books at a table set up in the hotel lobby. This a very successful event for the authors and added a unique convention activity that added no cost and required no dedicated convention space. We promoted the authors and their works in pre-convention marketing. Some authors preferred selling in their clinic room. That worked where the clinic schedule allowed for extra time (last clinic before a meal break or the last clinic in the evening). Note that authors selling books and vendors selling items from their hotel rooms might be able to expense their convention travel and lodging costs.

Volunteers

The LCC was discussed above. However, dozens of volunteers, volunteer assignments and volunteer hours must be identified. Steve Milley created a chart in which CPD and other MER members would post for available positions. A consolidated chart is important to ensure that all responsibilities are covered, and it serves to highlight to the LCC what holes or gaps need attention. It also ensures no duplication. Many volunteers are also clinicians, ops callboard hosts or home layout hosts. Therefore, coordination is important to ensure against scheduling conflicts. There should be a "captain" or leader for each key volunteer function. The convention managers need to see that each volunteer understands their "job description" and know how to communicate with the LCC in the event that any issues arise. Volunteer enticements were thoroughly discussed, and we settled on gray polo shirts for a minimum of four volunteer hours. We extended the golf shirt concept by making them available for purchase by non-volunteers. These were distinguished by color - white. Twenty-seven shirts were sold for \$18-\$20, depending on size, and raised \$494, which more than covered the cost.

Conventioneer and volunteer reviews, comments and suggestions

The LCC requested comments from convention-eers, volunteers, layout hosts, etc. Some of the comments are provided below.

- All (layout guests) were polite and interested. I enjoyed them all and would like to be on the tour again, perhaps for an operating session next time as well as open house for tours. You have a good group of folks for members. WA
- The raffle was a huge success with many positive comments as to the quantity and quality of the raffle items. JB
- Thank you all for a great job, the current newsletter in Division 12 has a great report telling what a great experience they had and what a great job Division 13 did with Tracks to the Triangle. I was amazed how quiet the halls, common spaces, clinic rooms, contest room, silent auction room and RPM room were. The staff at the hotel and the staff of Tracks to the Triangle were all happy to serve, treated us with kindness, nice job. Timing for the clinics was well done,

with little waste of time, but presenters were kind and removed themselves to allow the next presenter to start on time. Parking was ample and free, thank you. Communication before, during, and after Tracks to the Triangle was over the top, amazing. Volunteering was made very easy and many took advantage. MC (also recommended that special dietary meals be made available as needed for banquet attendees.)

- I wanted to thank...all those involved for a truly great weekend of model railroading. It has been the best I have attended. Had a lot of fun.

AD

- Great job with the convention. That was also the best food I have had at a convention...good choices. BG

- One of our visitors is on next year's MER convention committee. His group was quite excited about how the RPM was incorporated into our convention and asked if I would help with theirs.

BH

- Enjoyed the convention, saw a lot of OLD friends and made some new ones. As always, CPD does a great convention, BRAVO ... The buffet was flawed only in the hotel's layout or traffic flow, it is still probably the most efficient method of serving a meal. The hotel should have had name tents to let you what was in the chafing dish. The N-scale layout in the RPM room took away quite a bit of space, but gave you people to watch over the room. I prefer a live auction due to the fun that is had at them. As usual I had a great time and am looking forward to Harrisburg. CH

- The program guide descriptions got a lot of compliments. Maps and directions were excellent. Great job. The layout tour was a huge success. This tour we used a cool method to control how many people were in the train room at once. Since just eight can fit comfortably at one time, my gatekeeper gave out a bright red cardstock pass glued to a clothespin. Once all eight were used no one else went in until a pass was returned to the gatekeeper. Since I used all of my volunteers at the entrance, there was no one else in the train room, making breaks impossible. Next time I will be sure to have a volunteer available in the train room for back-up. To improve things, I would give a list of registrants to layout hosts who are on for Thursday and Friday morning. One fellow stopped by early Friday on his way to the hotel so he did not yet have a registration badge. My gatekeeper had been advised of the

liability issues of non-registered people. The program guide descriptions got a lot of compliments. Maps and directions were excellent. Great job.

JM

- Thanks for a genuinely fun convention.

NM

- Doing a good job with the layouts. (tours)

MP

- Thanks again for a very successful and extraordinarily well run convention. Having worked for a trade association that put on multiple conferences each year, I know what it takes to do it correctly, and you guys (and a gal or two!) get top marks. DP

- All did a great job the convention was a lot of fun. MT

- We travel all over the US for various model railroad conventions including NMRA Regionals and this is the best organized of any that we have attended. RT

- I think all of your guys had a good time. We did. At least 2, both relatively local, are interested in joining the railroad. BT

- Those in the Susquehanna who were able to attend TTTT--the overwhelming response was that TTTT was one of the best ever held.

- I also meant to tell you that I think the convention was a huge success. It seemed to run super smooth, which is indicative of good planning. I really liked your daily e-mails updating everyone about any changes, etc. BS

- The phone app and emails to keep everyone up to date were superb. I thought the layout book and the convention book were really good. The venue was excellent. My only complaint was the breakfast was a little pricey. But, all the hotel food was good. PR

- All positive overall! Very few things negative contest room opened when it shouldn't be – hotel just could not get it right on opening just 1 room...Guess we need to reinforce that with hotels in the future. Bar was rather expensive. Silent Auction – this continues to be a success story at the MER conventions – a member service that is liked, participated in significantly, and even produced a little income for the host. The Buy-it-now option was a good refinement. MB

- What was right – Layout tours, taking care of problems right away. Room space is always a guess. You did fine with that. PM

- That was a Great Convention. It rivals the Narrow Gauge Convention I just went to in

Maine. Everything worked out so well. Improvements to home tours: 1) Make up a sample sign-in sheet and post that sheet so layout folks have a standard sheet as well as visitors. 2) In the layout tour book show this sheet and make sure to tell the visitors to sign in to each layout. 3) Have visitors call layout homes if they are going to be coming late because they got lost. Again, thanks for doing a masterful job on this convention. CR

- CPD13 did an all-around fantastic job! This was the 2nd time that I hosted my layout and I look forward to doing it again! VD

- My wife and I had a wonderful experience with the home layout tour. All were extremely polite and courteous. The layout guide seemed well received as many said that they read the description on the way to our house so they had an idea of what they were seeing. I liked the way the layout guide showed the layout size, level of completion, etc. and I like the etiquette section. It was nice that there was a map as well to show who else was in the vicinity. The only thing that dawned on us was that it might help to have the yard sign printed on both sides so that you could put it sideways in the yard. That might make it easier to see from a distance. I will be more than happy to participate again. MH

- We had more visitors than last time in 2011 according to my logbook (an item that is recommended). I would also recommend that anyone who does not have a curtain around the bottom of the layout to buy some cheap landscape fabric / cloth and hang it with a staple gun. This is a quick and easy fix that draws attention to what's on top of the layout and not the chaos underneath. I would also label as much as one can on the layout (towns, streets, towns off stage, staging yards, other railroads, etc.) I wrote directly on the layout as I was giving tours to aid in describing certain areas. I'll make labels later and put them on the fascia. I like the Sunday afternoon time because it does not interfere with the clinic schedule.

Upcoming MER Conventions

2017 — Susquehanna Div, Oct 12-15

2018 — Potomac Division, Oct 3-7

Moving? Changing email addresses? Promptly notify the NMRA at

<http://nmra.org/members/update>

or by mail at:

NMRA
P.O. Box 1328
Soddy Daisy, TN
37384-1328

to insure continued timely delivery of The Local to you, and so we can contact you as necessary. (NMRA notifies the MER of such changes, saving you one more step).

The MER Grants Policy

The MER has a matching funds grant mechanism whereby any of the Divisions can file a request for funding for an item, or project. The rules for this are very straightforward and can be found in Section 5, Part X. Grant Policy, page 5-6 (page 52 of the current website version, available from the MER web site, <http://mer-nmra.com/pdfs/ExecutiveHandbook2014mwb610.pdf>, or the MER Secretary). In short, any active Division within the Region can apply for a matching grant of up to \$1000.00 by first submitting a proposal for that funding that describes the use and an estimate as to how it will be spent prior to spending any monies.

All proposals should be a single page. This does not need to be a long, drawn out document. A few clear sentences should suffice in almost every case. What is needed is also a clear cost estimate to be attached and it should all be sent to either the President or to the Secretary of the MER. Thereafter the MER Board will review and either approve or disapprove funding. All requested funds must be used for activities directly related to promoting model railroading and must relate to events, activities, and operations that occur within the MER. There is one limitation beyond that dollar amount - each Division can only present 1 proposal per year. But, each Division can also come back with a new proposal every year.