



# The Local

Newsletter of the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA  
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## 2023 Texas Express National NMRA Convention

By Greg Warth

The [Gaylord Texan Resort](#) in Grapevine, TX was every bit as impressive as you might imagine. The hotel was quite massive and was bustling with people from at least three different conventions all going on at the same time. The décor was in Texan and western motif, and country music played continuously in the courtyard. My wife was in heaven.

The courtyard contained three separate G scale train displays that were fully automated, with trains and trolleys starting and stopping on their own, 24 hours a day ([Photo 1](#)). These layouts weren't just here for the train show. They run like this all the time. There were rivers, canyons, waterfalls, bridges, rock formations, geysers, innumerable cactus plants and other vegetation throughout the yard. The courtyard was surrounded by the hotel and convention center, covered with a glass roof, all enclosed and well-protected from the steaming 108 degrees outside. Guests were also entertained by exquisite, albeit expensive, dining, family bingo, multiple retail boutiques and gift shops,



*Photo 1: One of three G scale layouts in the courtyard.*

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summer cirque shows, a host of other family activities, and a 5-minute light show every evening.

Our first day here for the [2023 NMRA Convention](#) was mostly spent just taking in this resort experience. While enjoying all of that, we also spent time registering, getting oriented, going to a few clinics, and meeting new friends. Later that evening, we attended a get-together with the leaders of the convention and the ever-affable [NMRA President Gordy Robinson, MMR](#) over soft drinks and delicious hors d'oeuvres.

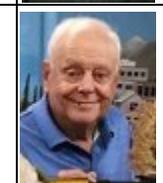
Gordy, in his Scottish uniform, provided a state-of-the-hobby address reviewing where the NMRA has been for the past 90 years, what has been accomplished in the past year, and where we are going into the future. We were told that we are in the Golden Age of model railroading. It was a nice, easy, light-hearted presentation that set the tone for the rest of the convention.

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Continued from page 1

The meeting was well organized, and well-attended by over 900 modeler railroaders. The NMRA does seem to be strong and continuing to grow as boomers are often turning to trains as part of their retirement plans. We were asked to try to recruit new members as much as possible. Interestingly, it is estimated that 90% of model railroaders are not in the NMRA. There was an emphasis on learning new things and incorporating more educational concepts into model railroading as we progress into the future. This may help in getting more young people and students to sign up. In fact, I was quite impressed with the number of younger and middle-aged people I saw during the convention and the train show.

There were bus tours every day traveling to the multitude of layouts surrounding the area. Here are a few pictures that I took of the layouts we visited on one of the bus tours (**Photos 2-9**).



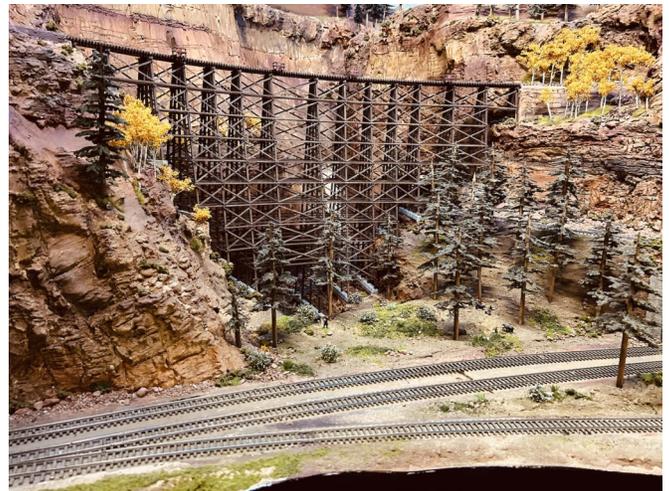
Photo 2: Bait and Tackle Shop on the lake on Lou and Lorrie Palitti's HO Black Bear and Bayou RR (BB&B). Lorrie keeps up the layout now that Lou has passed.



Photo 3: Bailey Brothers' Packaging Company on the BB&B.



*Photo 4: H. J. Zane Mercantile on the BB&B.*



*Photo 5: Trestle Bridge on the BB&B.*



*Photo 6: Mike Walter's Cheapskate & Ohio O Scale Railway.*



*Photo 7: The O scale Virginian Railroad by Mike Ross, MMR.*



*Photo 8: Coal Mine on the Virginian Railway.*



*Photo 9: Texas Western Model Railroad Club (rebuilding in a new location)*



Photo 10: Schitt Creek N scale modular layout inside the hotel ("Bring your own paddle").



Photo 11: Bridge over water on the FreeMoN layout inside the hotel.



Photo 12: EMD FL9 Locomotive pulling the Grapevine Vintage Train on excursion to Fort Worth stockyards.

#### On Site Layouts:

These layouts and the several HO, N, and even Z scale modular layouts that were present inside the hotel demonstrated no lack of modeling talent in this area ([Photos 10 & 11](#)).

The [National Train Show](#) which was held on site this year was quite impressive and well worth attending. There were at least ten different layouts to view inside the almost 127,920 square feet convention center, not to mention almost every model railroad manufacturer in the US and some from other countries as well. As you might expect, most of the scale locomotives and railcars sold here carried midwestern and western railroad labels, like BNSF, Union Pacific, Illinois Central, and MKT ("Katy").

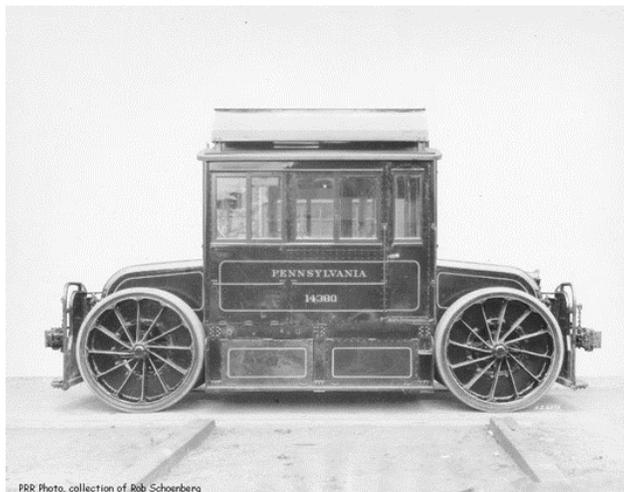
On the last day of the show, my family and I took the [Grapevine Vintage Railroad](#) excursion

to ride in one of the restored, air conditioned 100-year-old passenger coaches pulled by an [EMD FL9](#) diesel. We visited the Fort Worth longhorn stockyards where there just happened to be a multitude of little tourist shops nearby. During that excursion we were treated to a train robbery and a gunfight. I had a chance to talk with the engineer for a little while who explained that this locomotive had two axles on the front truck and three on the back. This was one of sixty New Haven FL9s that had been lengthened to accommodate extra equipment for the train's heating system, so three axles were used on the back to support the extra weight. These locomotives also had the ability to operate either as diesel-electrics or as electric locomotives powered by a third rail.

All-in-all, this was a fun and exciting convention where I learned a lot and had the opportunity to see a variety of very well-done layouts. Once again, I came home inspired to work on my own layout. I have learned some new tips on modeling water just in time to install a new waterfall and lake on my Blue Ridge & Southern Railroad. And I'm already looking forward to our next [Mid-Eastern Region Convention in October!](#)

# I Love Building Model Stuff!

By Jim Kellow, MMR, Founder of New Tracks Modeling



PRR Photo, collection of Rob Schoenberg

*Photo 1—My next project!*

I am one of a rare breed that is an O Scale trolley modeler who loves to scratchbuild brass models (of anything, really) from the 1920s -1930s.

I recently found some photos of automobiles from that period: Duesenbergs, Cords, Auburn, Cadillac, Chrysler, Packard, Ford, Bu-gatti, etc., that I fell in love with, for various reasons, and decided to scratchbuild some in brass for my O scale JN&P Traction line. Why, you ask? Partly, I guess, just to see if I could, and partly because I like to build stuff that I see in real life that you probably won't see a model of on another layout anywhere.

I found that 0.005" and 0.010" brass, card stock and bass-wood dowel worked for me so off I went. I guess I have about 15 or so automobiles by now of different makes and models, including one French car with a propeller. I even created a classic car business for the city to have a place to put some of them. (**Photo 2**).

Here are a few photos of my automobiles so far including a 1938 Buick "Y" I am currently working on (**Photo 3**).

I am happier with some of my efforts more than others, but I have to say all of them were a fun challenge to build and to me that is part of what I enjoy most.



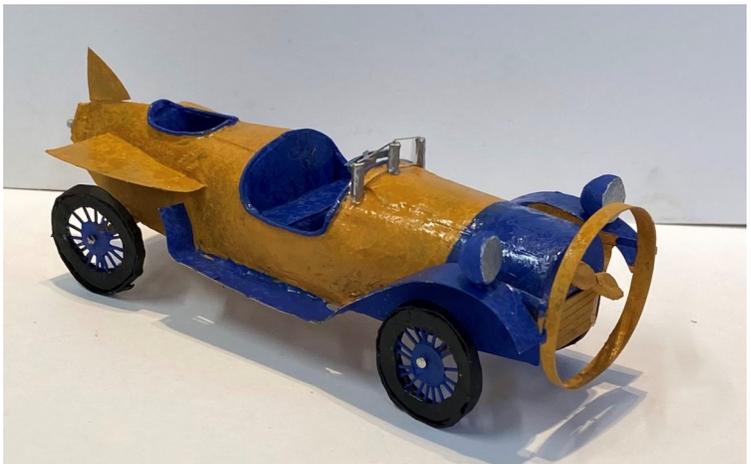
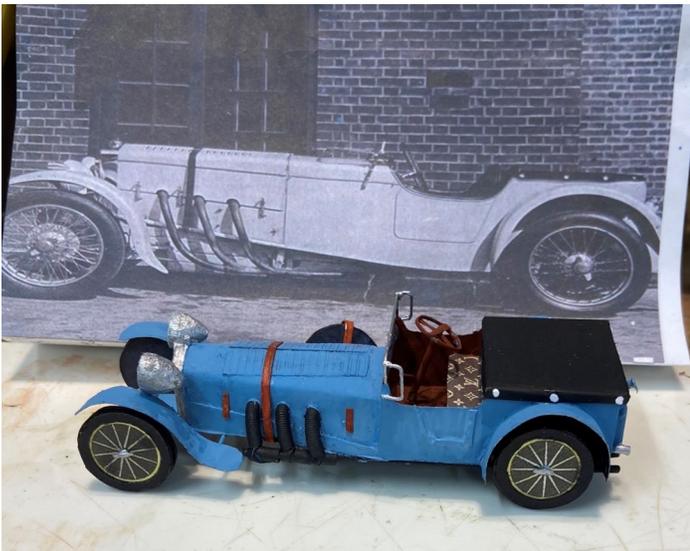
*Photo 2*



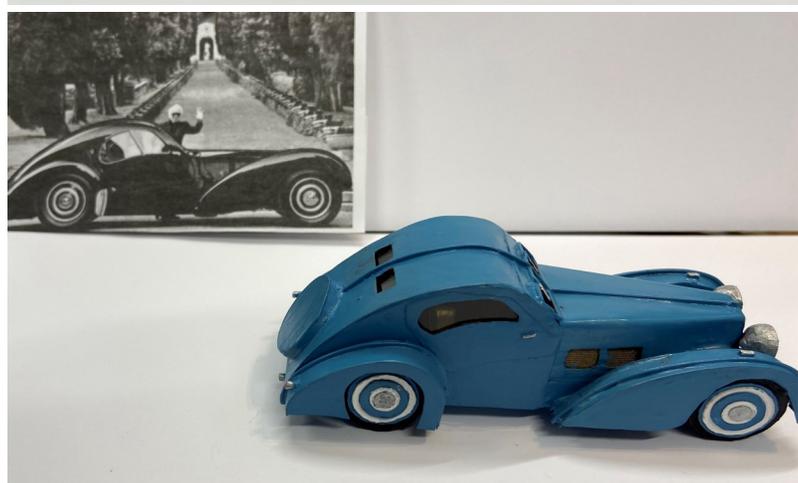
*Photo 3*

Some of you may say I just have too much time on my hands. Maybe so, but guys, at 84 and able to write articles, host weekly zoom shows, sponsor a scholarship for young model railroaders and build models I want, I actually need more time every day. Wait till you retire and have the chance to goof off like I do! Any questions, I always have time, send me an [email](#).

Here are more examples of the models I have built and the photos that inspired them (**Photos 4-14**).



...so treasured that, in 2015, one sold at auction for an in-  
*\*Mention offer code in the yellow box on back cover to receive promotional price*





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **NEW TRACKS MODELING MENTORING SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS INAUGURAL SCHOLARSHIP**

August 30, 2023

The New Tracks Modeling Mentoring Scholarship for 2023 has been awarded to Ethan P. Bernstein of Maryland. The \$1,000 scholarship will help Ethan continue his studies at Johns Hopkins University for the 2023-2024 academic year. Ethan has completed his sophomore year and is studying nano medicine and immunotherapy. He is an avid N-scale model railroader and member of the National Model Railroad Association and Baltimore Area N-Track (BANTRAK) club. Ethan was chosen from 7 applicants across the United States to receive the inaugural scholarship.

While the initial scholarship was funded by New Tracks Modeling, LLC, the scholarship is now a project of New Tracks Mentoring Inc., a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 2023 that is committed to assisting young model railroaders pursue STEAM studies at the college or technical school level. The non-profit plans on awarding at least \$4,000 in scholarships for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Donors wishing to support the program, as well as students interested in finding out more about the scholarship can visit: [www.newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship](http://www.newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship)

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## President's Column

President Scott Unger

### "Modeler's Block"

While I have been interested in model railroading since I was about six years old (my mother says my interest in trains started much earlier), it took me until 2015 to join the NMRA. I could have joined sooner, but a series of events during my teen years derailed my model railroading for several decades. I mentioned in my article in the May/June issue of *The Local* that I assisted my grandfather with building the benchwork for my original model railroad in the basement of my parents' house when I was about ten years old. I made several attempts to develop a track plan on top of the stout framing. The early version featured a looped track plan allowing for continuous running and not much in the way of scenery or topography other than a bridge my great uncle had built. I enjoyed the hobby to a point, but something was always missing for me. I could never quite put my finger on it. Then in December of 1987 it happened...I read the article in *Model Railroader* about Tony Koester's Allegheny Midland Railroad.

The Midland Road was a point-to-point railroad built with a purpose, and up until then I had never considered the operations aspect of model railroading. I am not sure if I finished reading the rest of that issue before heading to the basement to tear up every piece of track from the railroad to establish a point-to-point configuration. I even worked in a surface level staging yard on one end of the benchwork that I believe I intended to be an interchange servicing an end of the line branch that was to be the subject of my new and improved track plan. After completing the trackwork I was excited to start running trains in prototypical fashion and very quickly found that it was not rolling stock but operation that was my vision for the hobby. What I had clearly overlooked were the barriers existing at that time to operating my railroad in a walk-around fashion. I struggled with remote uncouplers and lack of a tethered throttle and eventually I lost focus. My hobby was "on the ground." I had developed a form of modeler's block, so to speak, and other interests came to the forefront. I must have missed working with my hands that summer as I purchased a 1966 Ford Mustang that became the focus of much of my free time for the next decade. After college, my model railroading was reduced to a display case on my desk at work protecting an SD40-2 and GP35 (both Chessie System) from dust.

In 2015, while in Madison Wisconsin over a weekend for a work conference, I did an internet search to see if I could find a nearby area to do some railfanning during my free time. I never did see a train on that trip, but I did find a YouTube channel of someone's HO scale model railroad. Were those diesel locomotive sounds coming from the model? This discovery quickly propelled another series of internet searches and in less than twenty minutes I was trying to wrap my head around Digital Command Control (DCC). As it turned out, DCC provided a solution to each of the barriers that had led to the entombing of those Chessie units in clear plastic so many years earlier.

I don't recall if I joined the NMRA while still in Madison or if I waited until I arrived back in Pennsylvania but do recall liberating the Chessie units at the sacrifice of an Erie Berkshire when I got back to my office at work. I will spare you the details (at least for now) of the railroad construction that started in 2015. A couple years later I was selling raffle tickets at the 2017 Mid-Eastern Region's convention in Harrisburg, PA at which Tony Koester was also in attendance. I shared with him an abridged version of the above events and he responded with "you picked a great time to get back into the hobby!"

Tony has a long history of making profound statements about model railroading and his response to me was no exception. Today there are more choices, more information, and more opportunities to connect with other modelers than possibly ever before. Contemporary models offer amazing detail, DCC, sound and wireless control options. At the same time, older rolling stock and locomotives are widely available and affordable on various online platforms. In addition to a selection of models and kits at various price points, YouTube and NMRA Interchange give us ways to connect with each other that would have been very helpful to the discouraged modeler in 1987.

Because there are so many ways to enjoy the hobby not everyone would find barriers to operations to be a significant issue, but most of us do bump up against some challenge that stalls our progress or interest in model railroading. Chances are that you are not the first person to encounter such a problem and someone else in the NMRA might already have the solution that DCC provided for me. I seek advice and guidance regularly from modelers both older and younger than me and am privileged to engage with and learn from each of them. With so many choices and connections to other modelers, now truly is a great time to be a model railroader!

## Advertising in *The Local*:

If you have a model railroading business and would like to place an ad in *The Local*, please contact the Editor. The new rates per year are as follows:

Divisions & Clubs	Free
Clinics & Education	Free
Convention Ads	Free
Full Page - Color	\$100.00
½ Page – Color	\$60.00
¼ Page – Color	\$35.00
Business Card	\$10.00
Text Only	\$7.00

Your ad may appear as text, photo, art, or any combination thereof. Art must be of high quality and camera-ready. Formats must be in txt, doc/docx, pdf, jpeg, bmp or tiff only. The content must be related to model trains or railroads or provide a benefit specifically to model railroaders. If you need help with your ad, please don't hesitate to ask the [Editor](#).

## Send in Your Articles

We are always looking for new articles, tips, ideas, photos, and comments from our readers. If you have been awarded an AP (Achievement Program) Certificate or an MMR (Master Model Railroader) award, please consider writing an article about it so others can learn how you did it. We always enjoy looking at new layouts, dioramas, and models that our members have created. If you would like to contribute to *The Local*, please send an email containing your article and photos to [The Local Editor](#).

*The Local* welcomes and encourages articles, photographs, and model railroad related material as contributions to members' education and enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. The Editor will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send paper/photo originals without retaining back-up copies. Editors, by definition, reserve the right and have the responsibility to make corrections, deletions, and changes to accommodate space. If your item is time-sensitive in any way, please advise the Editor. Otherwise, stories and photos that are accepted are published in approximately the order in which they were received.

## How to Submit an Article for The Local

Please observe the following steps to submit your contribution:

Please read the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on "[How to Prepare a Manuscript for The Local.](#)"

Compose and submit your text in one of the following formats: TXT, DOC, or DOCX.

Consider what photos, illustrations, or other graphics can go with the text. These are essential. But DO NOT include/insert

them into your text. DO put notations in the text such as "Insert Photo #1 here."

Your photos should be high resolution and very clear. We cannot accept photos that are fuzzy or out of focus. JPG, GIF, TIFF, and PNG formats are acceptable.

Please rename your photo files in the order you want them to appear, e.g., Photo-1.jpg, Photo-2.jpg, etc.

If you have captions for your photos, etc., create a separate text file for the captions, each of which should be numbered to match a numbered photo or figure.

Send your article or photos by email to [The Local Editor](#). There may be a limit on the number of megabytes you can send depending on your email program. If necessary, either send the photos three at a time, or compress the photos with a "Zip" program to send more at one time.

## Deadlines for Submitting Articles to The Local:

Issue:	Deadline:
Jan/Feb	Dec 1 <sup>st</sup> of previous year
Mar/Apr	Feb 1 <sup>st</sup>
May/June	Apr 1 <sup>st</sup>
Jul/Aug	Jun 1 <sup>st</sup>
Sept/	Oct Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>
Nov/Dec	Oct 1 <sup>st</sup>

### Special Notes:

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Once your article is approved for publication, and you have qualified for 42 or more points in the [Author Category](#) of the Achievement Program (AP), you may submit a [Statement of Qualifications Form](#) to your Division AP Manager to receive your Author AP Certificate.

\*\*\*\*\*



## From the Editor's Desk

Greg Warth, Editor

### Railroad History

Part of the fun in building a new layout or diorama is the research involved in learning about the era you wish to model. This applies to both prototypical and freelanced displays. If you are doing a modern-day railroad, the research is probably easier because you are living in the era you are modeling. All you have to do is look at what is on the tracks or next to the tracks in your chosen locale. In that case, your research includes some railfanning and learning about the rolling stock, locomotives, and other equipment currently in use. You can also look at train stations and other modern structures that your railroad would support and/or serve. If the era you want to model is in the past, you will have to look at old pictures and read stories of railroads that existed then. You may even draw on your own memory if that era was part of your past.

There is something romantic and nostalgic about railroads that lived in the past. They represent part of our own personal history. They are part of the reason why we are who we are today. Many of those old photos show the railroad workers sitting on or standing near the locomotives they spent so much of their lives maintaining. It's no wonder they had [special names](#) for them and the railroads they served, like "The Katy" (Missouri-Kansas-Texas), "Old Reliable" (Louisville & Nashville) and "Susie-Q" (New York, Susquehanna & Western). I am so glad that manufacturers continue to make such good replicas of the engines and railcars of old. Of course, the reason they make them is because we keep buying them.

And I wonder about the workers in those photos. What were their lives like? I suspect they were not as easy as ours. At least that's what they told us when we were growing up, having to walk to work in six feet of snow going uphill both ways, etc., but there was probably some element of truth to that. Almost all of them would lose a finger or two during their lifetimes. But they had the same goals as we do, like making a living, having a family, trying to make their kids' lives better than theirs. Their dedication to their jobs and their families was most likely above the norm, just like our dedication to the details that make our layouts come alive. We labor to capture the essence of their lives while throttling these trains through the mountains. Just like in the days of old, we are making sure all the equipment works properly, spotting railcars, picking them up, yard switching, and waving at the railfans as we rumble through the landscape.

It's good to know the history of the railroad you are modeling or at least something about the era, how the people lived at the time, and the limitations they had to overcome. Our appreciation of the models, the scenery, and the operation of our layouts goes up exponentially as we immerse ourselves in the work of the day, getting the goods from one place to another, devising ways to get around the blockages, and troubleshooting the problems. The good thing is, we *usually* don't have to worry about losing any fingers!



## NMRA Achievement Program Update

Kurt Thompson, MMR  
MER AP Manager

Since the last report in The Local, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded in the Mid-Eastern Region (MER):

### Potomac Division

Alex Belida, MMR	Motive Power
Marty McGuirk	Electrical
Marty McGuirk	Scenery
Paul Hutchins	Volunteer

### James River Division

Glenn Lapkin	Motive Power
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### Carolina Southern

Ed Smith	Cars
----------	------

### Unassigned division

Mike Byles	Scenery
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And the MER's most recent Master Model Railroaders (MMR):

**Philly Division**  
Steve Salotti

**Carolina Southern**  
Ed Smith

# Featured Layout

## Reading Company Technical & Historical Society Train Layout

Text and Photos by Greg Warth

I was honored to have been invited to visit this wonderful HO depiction of the Reading Railroad during the Reading Company Technical & Historical Society modular display at the Pennsylvania Model Railroad Museum in Strasburg during Independence Day weekend. My wife and I received the royal 160' tour of this highly detailed, prototypically designed railroad hosted by the current chairwoman of the organization, Karen Confer, and her husband Charlie (**Photo 1**). Duane and Greg (see Photo 2) also assisted with the tour and provided even more insight into the history of the railroad. The team that helps to create the modules and put them all together for shows is an outstanding group of high level, dedicated modelers, many of whom have been with the company for years (**Photo 2**). The amazing thing is that they can set up the whole display within 4-6 hours, including all the details. Sometimes, with space limitations, they won't always put up all the modules, but on this occasion, it was on full display.



**Photo 1:** Karen Confer and her husband Charlie



**Photo 2:** Left to right across the front: John Brown, Duane Engle, Duane Briscoe, Bob Capone, Bill Bubeck, Rob Biamonte. Second Row: Randy Kline, Ian Hollida, Greg Yanos, unknown, Matt Simon, Karen Confer

I first met Karen by email about a year ago. She had read an article in [The Local](#) where I was discussing something about the attendance at the St. Louis National Convention, saying that "Most of these gentlemen (and ladies!) were die-hard modelers..." Karen took issue with that and sent an email protesting that I was considering ladies as an afterthought rather than an integral part of model railroading, which they already had been involved in for many years. I totally agreed with her sentiment and immediately apologized. She then invited me to see their modular layout, which I finally did in Strasburg. It was great meeting her, her husband, and the whole team of builders and operators of this wonderful railroad.

There was plenty of room in this museum for the whole layout which was sandwiched in between six prototype locomotives and railcars, three on each side, adding to the atmosphere and providing an idea of how large this layout really is (**Photo 3**).



**Photo 3:** East Penn Yard

The main purpose of the Reading Company display is to keep the history of this great railroad alive to be sure that younger people don't forget about these magnificent steam trains, the workers who toiled over them, and the tremendous industrial progress that they brought to the area. The modelers took great pains to make the display as realistic and prototypical as possible.

We began our tour at a coal-mining facility (Photo 4), then moved into the Locust Summit Coal Yard (Photos 5, 6) ending in an engine facility with a turntable and roundhouse under construction (Photo 7) featuring the "little engine that could" (Photo 8).



Photo 4

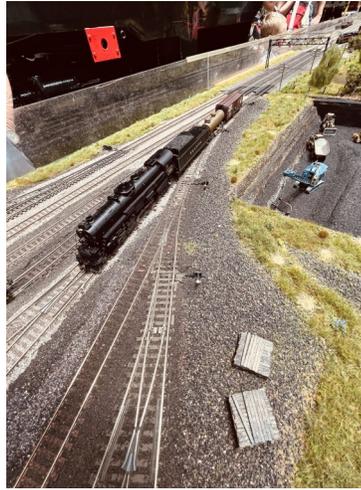


Photo 5: Locust Summit



Photo 6: RDGT-1



Photo 7: Saucon Roundhouse



Photo 8: 0-6-0 Switcher. The prototype is in the Railroad Museum of PA

Along the way, we happened to catch several areas of interest. The detailed scenes on this railroad were quite impressive and testified to the mastery of the modelers. They even put a family of turtles in one of the lakes (Photo 9), a gaggle of geese in the field nearby (Photo 10), a partially hidden abandoned barn among the trees (Photo 11), and a well-made fence in the field (Photo 12).



Photo 9: Milepost 53



Photo 10



Photo 11: Abandoned Barn



Photo 12

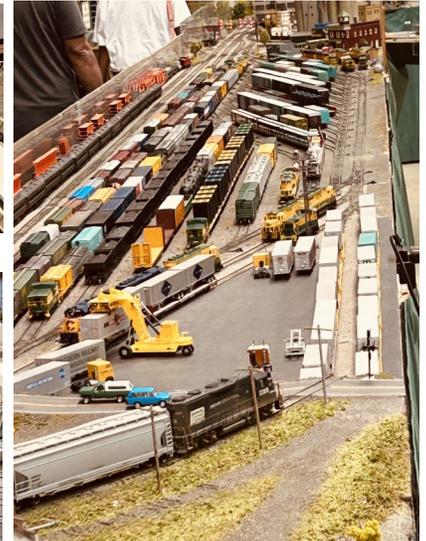
The business was coal primarily, but later all other types of freight, containers, trailers, and automobiles filled its railcars. Three of their biggest customers were Bethlehem Steel (**Photo 13**), Hershey's Cocoa Plant (**Photos 14, 15**), and Cadillac at Stowe Yard (**Photo 16**).



**Photo 13**



**Photo 14**

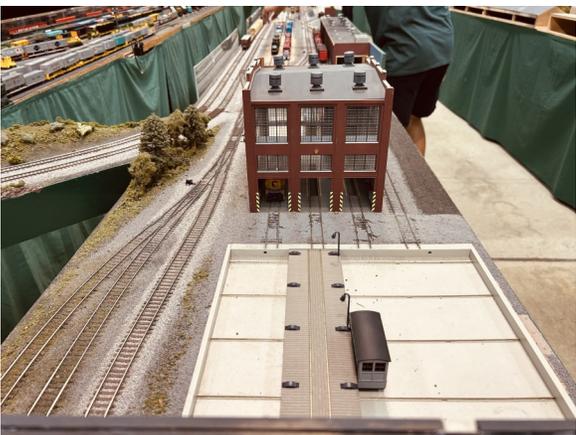


**Photo 16: Stowe Yard**



**Photo 15**

A lateral operating engine staging facility and repair shop (**Photo 17**) marked the end of the first loop of this large display. Every layout needs one or two junkyards (**Photo 18**) to pile up stuff you don't need now, but maybe you will later.



**Photo 17: Engine Facility**



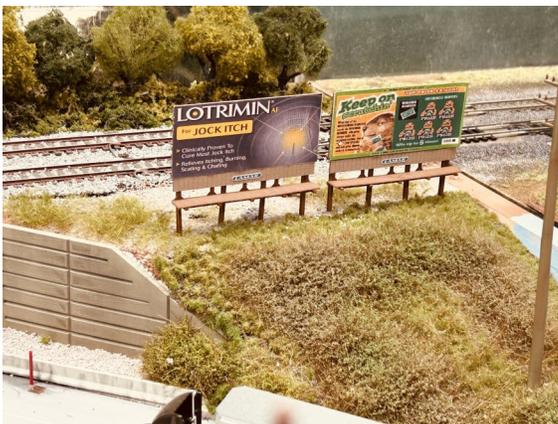
**Photo 18**

The scenery was done very nicely. Here is a church with some people in the parking lot and bikers going by (**Photo 19**). The trees look great. Even the roads look like roads!



**Photo 19: Derry Road**

The next scene along the way shows a couple of billboards (**Photo 20**). Look at how well done the field is, and the trees and underbrush.



**Photo 20**

This company has some fantastic bridge builders. Here's one made with very believable-looking bricks (**Photo 21**).

Of course, everyone has to have a place to eat and hang out, both on the inside and the outside of this Burger King (**Photo 22**).



**Photo 21**



Photo 22

A railfanning photographer is taking advantage of the nice weather and lots of trains rolling by (Photo 24).



Photo 24: This photographer found the ideal spot for railfanning at Derry Road.

The trackwork is impeccable. I didn't see one derailment the entire two to three hours I was there, and there were trains running constantly. Most of the structures were kitbashed and very well done (Photo 26).



Photo 26

There are little details everywhere. This fellow is wondering if he's got enough tools in his pickup (Photo 23).

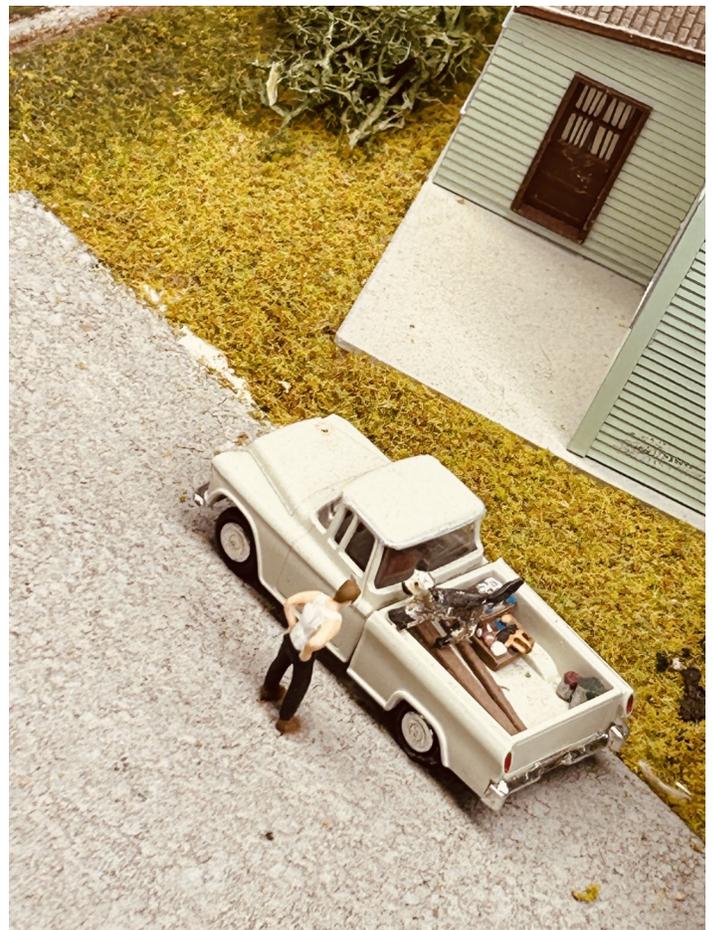


Photo 23

Next up is Rutherford Yard (Photo 25), a trailer facility, where you will see a meeting of trucks and trains picking up and dropping off trailers. Trucking is a big business in this country.



Photo 25

The Phoenix Bridge is nicely done. The water looks like glass. Almost too realistic (Photo 27). Great day for fishing (Photo 28)!



Photo 27: Black Rock Railroad Bridge over the Schuylkill River, just outside of Phoenixville, PA



Photo 28

A nearby creek enhances the landscape (Photo 29), along with an osprey and her nest (Photo 30).



Photo 29



Photo 30



Photo 31 shows another beautiful bridge. A few gentle waves are made by the rocks just the water surface.

Photo 31: Shepp's Dam Bridge. The rocks under the bridge are the remnants of a dam that once stood there.



Photo 32



Photo 33

The layout also contains the Glen Gary Brick Company (Photo 32) and a nicely weathered overpass (Photo 33).



Photo 34: Colonel Sanders was buying chickens from the farm the day I visited.

The farm was quite impressive, but that’s to be expected. After all, this is Amish country (Photo 34). Each of the corn stalks is an individually planted, decorated toothpick used for drinks at the local bar!

One of the many highlights of this layout was the drawbridge, which came in a kit and was meant to be a static display. However, the builder, Bob Capone, wasn’t satisfied with that. He wanted to



Photo 35: Hack Bridge—Hackensack, NJ



Photo 36

make the bridge operate. So, after a few months of tinkering with it, adding pulleys, threads for cables, motors, wires, and electronics, it now operates very smoothly and slowly with the flip of a switch. I asked him to send me an article about how he did that for one of next year’s issues (Photos 35, 36).



Photo 37



Photo 38



Photo 39

Another big family thing in Pennsylvania in the 60s was to go to a drive-in movie (Photo 39). Not to be remiss in showing that, the Reading Company just had to have one on their layout. It is currently showing an actual John Wayne movie. I wanted to stay and watch it, but we were almost at the end of our tour.

And last, but not least, West Cressona, shown here, demonstrates again some great fall scenery (Photo 40).

Family get-togethers are a big part of Pennsylvania life (Photo 37). And here's another auto junkyard (Photo 38).

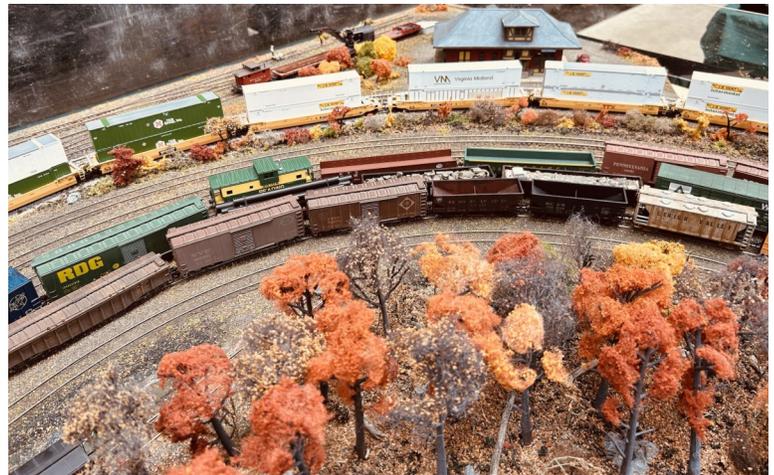


Photo 40: West Cressona

# Having Fun While Connecting STEM and STEAM with Model Railroading

By Greg Leiphart, Director of Education, Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads

Some of you may have heard of STEM or STEAM initiatives and projects, but are you aware of what they are, what they mean, or how much of our beloved hobby ties directly into such matters? Let's take a look at these, how they affect our hobby, and how we can use STEM and STEAM to help grow our hobby with informed, enthusiastic participants.

## A Look Back

STEM was created in the early 1990s by a variety of educators with help from the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the United States as SMET – Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology, mainly to integrate pure and applied sciences into a single unit. The STEM acronym was officially coined in 2001 by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), and the STEM movement developed in response to growing worries about students not being sufficiently prepared for the 21st century's high-tech jobs.

As STEM progressed, programmers and engineers increasingly teamed up with *artists* to co-develop software, products, renderings and more. As a result, around 2012, education professionals developed the acronym STEAM (science, technology, engineering, **art**, and math), leading many to assess STEM vs STEAM in explaining their programs. STEAM is becoming the more popular term, and it ties in nicely with model railroading!

Those developing and presenting STEM and STEAM projects focus on a hands-on approach with their participants. Mentors explain the principle and then guide the participants through age-appropriate model railroad projects. These tasks demonstrate the concept in action. The presentations and projects used are often built upon any lower level, less detailed projects and tasks developed.

## Joining STEM & STEAM Tracks With Model Railroad Tracks

While it is easy to see how art applies to model railroading, the others (science, math, engineering, and technology) may give some of us a challenge. Let's take a look at these and how they may connect with typical model railroading activities. While many examples can be found on the internet, I will later provide an example or two used by the [Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads \(MRMHR\)](#)\*.

**Art** – is easy to see its application with color schemes, structure colors, scenery design and coloring, logo designs, as well as the mediums used. We also learn about scene design with foreground, mid-range, distance applications and use of perspective. Art is used heavily in connecting the model to reality.

**Science** – science applies when we consider how locomotives work, electrical applications, the purpose of structures and rail cars, and how their purpose affects how they look. How things age and weather as well as seasonal changes and geographic location affects the design of most every structure. Bringing science into our modeling helps us understand how to build and display our railroad.

**Technology** – growth in technology is displayed throughout our modeling. The most prevalent may be the change from steam locomotives to diesel and electric engines. We learn construction technology as we build structures and learn terms and types of building parts, doors, windows, etc. The same applies to locomotives and rolling stock. We also learn technology as we progress in our building and construction of the layout. Construction technology of a different nature is learned as we actually build a layout with platforms, legs and supports. Electrical and digital technology is learned as control and animation of the layout takes place.

**Engineering** – the basis of engineering rests in solving problems. Engineering concepts are displayed as we model such problem resolutions as bridges built over gaps or tunnels passing through mountains. Civil engineering projects are on full display as we lay out our cities, towns, and roads, and even our railroad tracks! We learn additional engineering concepts as we build and study the drawings and prints of our models and layout.

**Math** – it is surprising how much math we actually use performing routine tasks within our modeling. Concepts of squareness,

measuring techniques, geometric concepts, and angles, just to name a few. The concepts of scale and ratios are used every day, (Z, N, HO, S, O, G, and others). Hands on math is practiced as we measure and cut materials, measure space for a structure or a layout, and don't forget the math involved in determining our budget and purchase costs!

### Examples

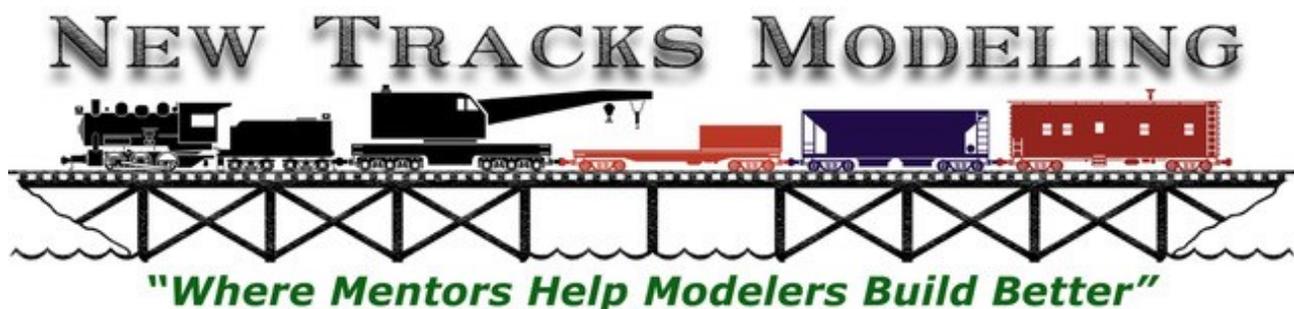
When considering STEM/STEAM projects, a template should be developed. This can be used for any project and will provide consistency, enabling the developer, and others, to review and revise as necessary. In the case of funding for STEM/STEAM projects, grants and scholarships are available. Many schools and educational centers have resources that they are willing and eager to share, when documented.

When looking for donors or funding, a template provides the grantors with the information and links they need for their review. There are already scholarships available for young model railroaders who have shown such skills and performed STEM/STEAM projects. A popular scholarship is currently offered by New Tracks Modeling. Information on their scholarship program can be found via their website or email at [NTMMS@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:NTMMS@newtracksmodeling.com). Their first scholarship, in the amount of \$1,000.00, will be awarded the summer of 2023 with a goal of offering multiple scholarships in future years.

The mentor, or teacher, benefits from the template by having the educational topics necessary to cover while performing the hands-on activities in one document. **Figures 1 and 2** (Pages 22 & 23) show samples used by the MRMHR for plastic structure and plastic railcar projects. Many more have been developed by the museum, but these are typical, and all use the same template.

While not everyone gets excited and enthusiastic about school and technical subjects, with a proper approach using STEM and STEAM, coupled with model railroading, we will be on the right track for success both personally and within our hobby. By using model railroading to teach STEM/STEAM concepts to students, we can further promote the benefits of our hobby to younger people, and perhaps foster a league of new railroad modelers.

\*The Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads is currently in development and will be integrated with educational hands-on STEAM programs in coordination with local schools. The facility is not yet open, but the organization does provide local traveling exhibits (not affiliated with the NMRA).





# STEAM

## Project Summary & Overview

**Project Name** – Building a **plastic structure kit**

**Project Summary** – in this project participants will prepare, build, paint, and construct a plastic structure kit.

The kit will be a basic structure similar to DPM, Atlas, or those of similar manufacturers.

**S.T.E.A.M. goals-** at the conclusion of this project, participants will have an improved understanding and familiarity with the following concepts...

### Science –

Structures with a purpose and how purpose affects how the structure looks.

Structure material selection, why certain parts are made of different materials.

### Technology –

Construction technology (basic structure component identification)

Proper hand tool use

### Engineering –

Print and drawing comprehension.

### Art –

Understanding color selection and color combinations

Use of various media and adhesives

Connecting the model with reality

### Mathematics –

Concepts of squareness

Measurement techniques

Geometric concepts and angles

*Figure 1*

# STEAM

## Project Summary & Overview

### Project Name – Building a rail car kit

**Project Summary**– Participants will prepare and build a rail car kit. The kit will be a basic plastic rail car of some type

similar to an Athearn “blue box” or similar level kit. After construction, the kit will be prepared for operation

by learning the concepts of car weight, wheels set to standard, and coupler operation, with NMRA standards.

While the car to be built is likely to be a type of freight car, passenger cars may also be used.

**STEAM goals**- at the conclusion of this project, participants will have an improved understanding and familiarity with the following concepts...

### Science –

Types of rail cars, freight and/or passenger cars, their use and purpose.

Weight and friction, effect on train length and power required.

### Technology –

Construction technology (Rail car major component identification).

How loads determine car requirements.

Key concepts for building model railcars.

Weight.

Key Truck concepts (looseness, wheel gauge).

Key coupler considerations.

Proper hand tool use.

### Engineering –

Print and drawing comprehension. Variations

within car types and reasons why.

### Art –

Understanding color selection, color combinations, and logos.

Use of various media and adhesives.

Connecting the model with reality.

### Mathematics –

Measurement techniques.

Gauges and tolerance concepts.

Understanding weights and standards (lbs., ounces, grams).

Figure 2



# Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2023 Convention

Round the Curve to Altoona

October 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

<https://mer2023.org/>



## Use Online Registration for Secure Payment and Most Up-To-Date Activity Availability

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

Primary Registrant: \_\_\_\_\_ MMR? Y / N, Title for Badge \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Other Attending (living at same address): \_\_\_\_\_

Children Attending (18 & under - list all + age): \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Registrar's Use Only!</b>	Address: _____
	City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
	Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____
	NMRA #: _____ Region: _____ Division: _____
Favorite Scale: _____ Is this your first MER Convention? _____	

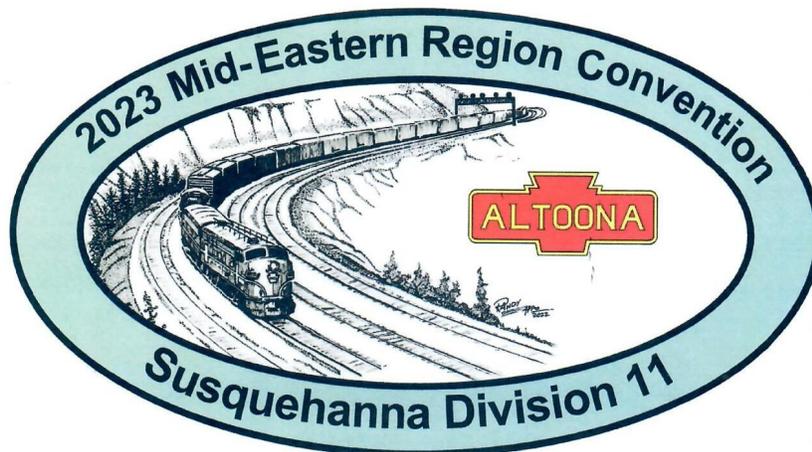
Description	ID	Cost	Qty	Paying
<b>Registration</b>				
NMRA Member: ___ \$70 thru Aug 31, ___ \$80 Sep 1 – Oct 5, ___ \$90 On-Site Oct 19 – 22				
Non-Member*: ___ \$90 thru Aug 31, ___ \$100 Sep 1 – Oct 5, ___ \$110 On-Site Oct 19 – 22				
One-Day (circle day)   NMRA Member: \$45 Fri Sat   Non-Member*: \$65 Fri Sat				
Spouse/Significant Other (Name)		\$5		
Children 18 and Under (Name & Age)		\$5		
Banquet – Saturday Night _____ Fillet Mignon _____ Herb Encrusted Salmon _____ Penne Pasta Primavera _____ Roasted Chicken Veloute	401	\$57		
A Grand Start Breakfast _____ Fri _____ Sat _____ Sun	402-4	\$17		
Editors' Breakfast _____ Fri (Division Editors and Webmasters)	420	\$0		
Superintendents' Breakfast _____ Sat (Division Superintendents)	421	\$0		
<b>Call Boards / Ops – See Convention Web Site for Latest Information</b>	-----	-----	----	-----
Lee Rainey's East Broad Top	801	\$5		
John Bennett's B&O-WM-PWV (Section 1)	802	\$5		
John Bennett's B&O-WM-PWV (Section 2)	803	\$5		
John Bennett's B&O-WM-PWV (Section 3)	804	\$5		
David Baker's Cumberland & Lake Erie (Section 1)	805	\$5		
David Baker's Cumberland & Lake Erie (Section 2)	806	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 1)	807	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 2)	808	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 3)	809	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 4)	810	\$5		
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of PRR (Section 5)	811	\$5		
<b>Extra Fare Clinics – Registration Required, Further Information on Web Site</b>	-----	-----	----	-----
Build a Craftsman Kit ___ N (\$15) ___ HO (\$25) ___ O (\$45)	601			
Tinkercad	602	\$0		<b>No Fee</b>
Getting a Freight Car Kit Ready for Your Layout	603	\$12		
<b>Prototype Tours – Further Information on Web Site</b>	-----	-----	----	-----
Western Maryland Scenic Railroad #1309	201	\$99		
East Broad Top, Rockhill Trolley, Bricktown Club	202	\$99		
Railroaders Museum K4 Roundhouse (Sat morning)	203	\$15		
Railroaders Museum K4 Roundhouse (Sat afternoon)	204	\$15		
<b>Convention Shirt</b>	-----	-----	----	-----
___ Small ___ Medium ___ Large ___ XL		\$36		
___ 2XL ___ 3XL		\$40		
<b>Would You Like To Be A Contest Judge At The Convention – Circle - YES or NO</b>	----	----	---	-----
<b>Have You Been A Contest Judge In The Past – Circle - YES or NO</b>	----	----	---	-----
<b>TOTAL</b>			➔	

\* Non-members must complete and be eligible for a Rail Pass. Please contact the Convention Registrar (contact info below) for details.

Print registrations must be accompanied by check payable to **MER Conventions**. Send to: MER Conventions, PO Box 426, Sykesville, MD 21784-0426  
Any questions and/or additional information, contact the Convention Registrar: e-mail [mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com](mailto:mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com) or call (410) 442-0446.

**Hotel – Altoona Grand Hotel, 1 Sheraton Drive, Altoona, PA 16601, (814) 946-1631. Room Rate - \$89.00 per night + tax.** Contact the hotel at the telephone number provided and reference the National Model Railroad Association. The convention rate is not available via online booking.

**Please refer to COVID-19 and cancellation policies at the convention website online.**



**Round the Curve to Altoona**

October 19-22, 2023

<http://mer2023.org/index.html>

## Convention Update



**By Jerry Lauchle, MMR**

*Frank Coat of Windber will have his Laurel Mountain Division of the PRR transition-era HO-scale layout open for layout tours and operating sessions during the Round the Curve to Altoona 2023 MER Convention.*

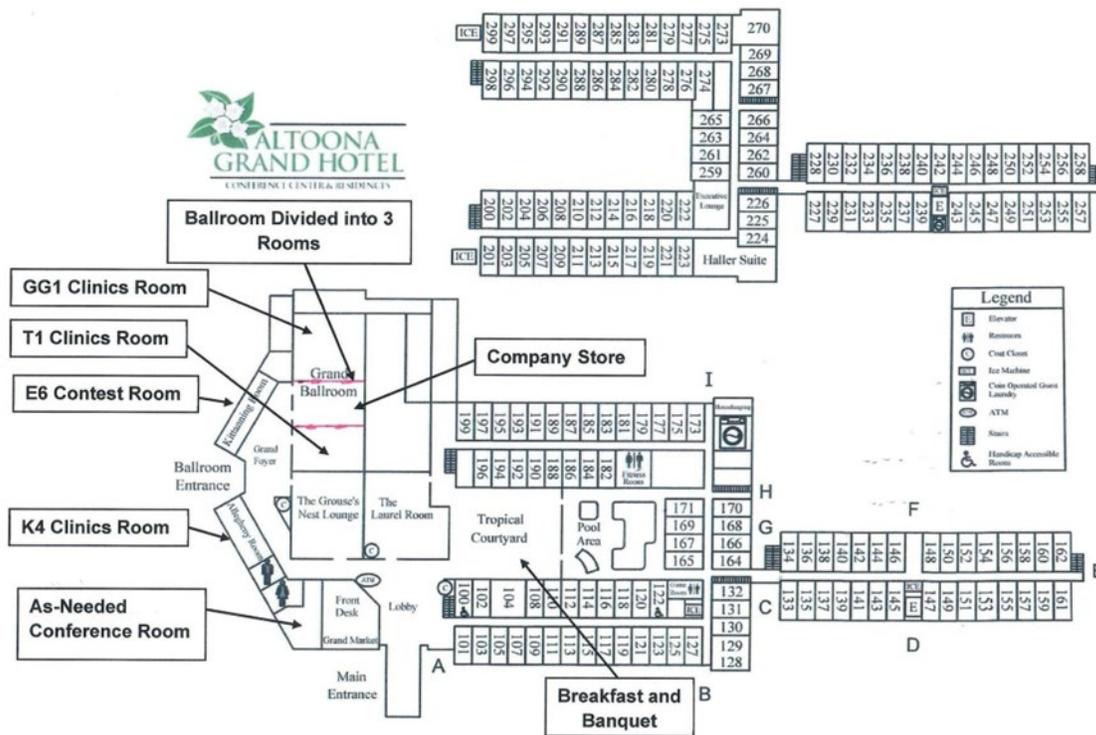
**The early registration discount ended at the end of August! Have you registered?**

We are one month closer to the convention [Round the Curve to Altoona](#) being held October 19-22, 2023 in Altoona, PA, also known as Railroad City. The [Susquehanna Division](#) of the NMRA [Mid-Eastern Region](#) will be our hosts for the convention and has assembled a great program.

The Round the Curve to Altoona convention offers numerous opportunities to participate in your favorite train activities. The program includes: clinics, visits to local layouts, operating sessions on some of these local layouts, real steam railroad tours, model contest, company store, raffle, railfanning, non-rail activities, banquet, and more. The early registration fee of \$70 runs until the end of August. The on-line rate will then increase to \$80, and the on-site rate will be \$90. [Register](#) NOW to have the best selection options.

Explore and keep up to date by visiting the convention website <https://mer2023.org/index.html> on a regular basis. You will find information on registering, hotel reservations, layouts to be open, operating sessions, clinics, steam railroad excursions, railroad museums, and more!

The convention will be held at the [Altoona Grand Hotel](#) which will provide for our convention attendee lodging, meeting rooms, and a banquet. It's only \$89 per night plus taxes; call the hotel directly and reference model railroad convention.



**2023 MER Convention Schedule – Altoona, Oct. 19-22 (as of Aug. 17, 2023)****Thursday****Registration Desk (Convention Rooms Hallway):** 4-5:30pm / 7:30-9:30pm**Bus for Western Maryland Scenic Railroad:** 9:30am-5:30pm**Company Store/Raffle (Center Section of Grand Ballroom):** open 6-9pm**Clinics (K4, GG1, & T1 Rooms):** 7-9:30pm**MER BoD Mtg. (Conference Room):** 7pm-?**Contest (E6 Room):** Open for Contest Entries 7-9pm**Op Sessions:** 1-5pm / 7-11pm**Layout Tours:** [12-5pm / 7-10pm](#)**Vendors:** **None****Modular Layouts:** TBD**Friday****Breakfast (Tropical Courtyard):** 6-10am**Registration Desk:** 8am-11:30pm / 1:30-5:30pm / 8:30-9:30pm**Bus for East Broad Top Narrow-Gauge Railroad:** 8:15am-4:15pm**Editors' Breakfast (Tropical Courtyard):** 7-8am**Contest:** [Open for Contest Entries 10:30am-12pm / 1-5pm / 7-9pm](#)**Contest Judges Orientation (E6 Room):** 9-10pm**Clinics:** [8-12pm / 1:30-5:30pm / 7-9:30pm](#)**Company Store/Raffle Viewing:** 9am-11pm / 12-4pm / 5-9pm**Op Sessions:** 1-5pm / 7-11pm**Layout Tours:** 12-5pm / 7-10:30pm**Modular Layouts:** [TBD](#)**Saturday****Breakfast:** 6-10am**Superintendents' Breakfast (Tropical Courtyard):** 8-10am**Registration Desk:** 8am-11pm**Railroaders Memorial Museum and Bennett Memorial Roundhouse Tour:**

9-10:30am / 1-2:30pm; drive yourself

**Contest:** Open for Contest Entries 8-8:30am, closed for judging 8:30am-4pm, open for entry pickups and viewing after banquet until 10pm

**Clinics:** 8am-12pm / 1:30-5:30pm

**Company Store/Raffle/Settlement/Pickup:** 9-11am / 12-3:30pm; raffle drawing at 3:30 with winners posted outside room; pickup prizes and settlements 4:30-5:30pm / after banquet-9:30pm

**Op Sessions:** 1-5pm

**Layout Tours:** 10am-5pm

**Reception & Cash Bar (Tropical Courtyard):** 6:00-6:45pm

**Seating at Banquet Tables:** 6:45-7:00pm

**Banquet:** 7-9pm

## Sunday

**Breakfast:** 7-9am

**Contest Room:** Pickup contest items 8-9am

**Company Store/Raffle/Settlement/Pickup:** 10:30-11:30am

**Conversation with NMRA President, Gordy Robinson (Room TBD):** 9-10am

**MER Annual Meeting (Room TBD):** 10-10:30am

**Layout Tours:** 10am-5pm

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Two excursions to operating steam railways are planned. The first will be to the [Western Maryland Scenic Railroad](#) to ride behind the fully-restored ex-Chesapeake and Ohio 2-6-6-2 #1309. This tour will depart the convention hotel in a modern 52-passenger, restroom-equipped motorcoach and arrive at the 1913 Cumberland depot where we will board the train at 11 am. The 2-hour round trip will make its turn at the 1891 Frostburg depot where a boxed lunch will be distributed. We'll board our motorcoach in Cumberland at 4:00 pm, and will be back at the convention hotel by 5:30 pm. Preregistration is required for the day's activities. The all-inclusive price – tickets, lunch, motorcoach – is \$99. As of 09-06-2023 there are only 8 seats remaining!



The second steam tour will be to ride behind [East Broad Top](#) 2-8-2 #16, returned to service this year for the first time since 1956. This exclusive tour which includes transportation to Rockhill, rail coach tickets, and lunch has sold out. Please note that you can book your own ride behind this legendary locomotive by visiting the linked website and choosing the day that you can be there.

A third, nearby, self-drive-to operating steam tourist railroad is the [Everett Railroad](#) that runs between Hollidaysburg and Roaring Springs, PA. If you plan to ride this train during the convention, please book your [reservation](#) now, because seeing the fall foliage on this ride is very popular in October and coach seats fill quickly.

On Saturday there will be two guided tours at the [Railroaders Memorial Museum](#); one at 9:00 am and the other at 1:00 pm. Tour guests will spend about 45 minutes in the museum proper, and then about 45 minutes in the [Harry Bennett Memorial Roundhouse](#) where the renowned K4s #1361, built in 1918 at the nearby [Juniata Shops](#), is being restored. You can sign up for this private tour on the convention registration form; cost is \$15. As of 09-06-2023 there are only 2 spots available for the afternoon tour. The morning tour is sold out.

There are many self-drive-to rail and non-rail points of interest. These include the [Horseshoe Curve](#), the [Allegheny Portage Railroad](#), the many museums at [Penn State University](#), the [Altoona Rail Walk](#), the [Gallitzin Tunnel](#), and others.

Clinics will be held Thursday through Saturday. Here is a list of the titles, authors, and scheduled times as of August 17, 2023.

Thursday - 10/19/23			
TIMES	MMR	GBT Plans	TB Tours
7:00 PM	Kurt Thompson MMR -- Returning Contest Judges	John Burchnall -- Prototype Timelines for Modelers	Jane Clarke -- Natural Scenery
8:00 PM			break
8:30 PM	Ernie Liittle MMR -- Becoming a Master Model Railroader		Doug Bosley -- Allegheny Portage Railroad National Park
9:30 PM			
<i>This Make &amp; Take session requires pre-registration and has a maximum of 20 participants (there is no fee).</i>			

Friday - 10/20/23			
TIME	B4 Room	GS1 Room	T1 Room
8:00 AM 9:00 AM	Alan Mende -- Obsessive, Compulsive Detailing Revisited	Brian Sheron MMR -- Expanding the Long Island Railroad	David Ellis -- Expand Your Horizons with Backdrops
9:30 AM 10:30 AM	Alan Mende -- Soldering Essentials	Brian Sheron MMR -- Modeling Urban Scenes	Kevin O'Connor -- Getting a Freight Car Kit Ready for Your Layout
break			
11:00AM 12:00 PM	Andrew Dodge MMR -- Building Model Structures with Plexiglas	Joe Walters MMR -- Scratch-building a Jordan Spreader	
LUNCH			
1:30 PM 2:30 PM	Andrew Dodge MMR-- Modeling to Prototype Standards and Operating Procedures	Lance Mindheim -- Model Railroading as Art	Jeff Witt -- Remembering John Allen's Gorre & Daphetid Railroad
break			
3:00 PM 4:00 PM	Ron Smith -- PCC Trolley Restorations	Lee Rainey -- East Broad Top 101	Jeff Witt -- John Allen in Print: A Survey of his Publications
break			
4:30 PM 5:30 PM	Ernie Little MMR -- Building a Programming Track/Using Decoder Pro to Program a Locomotive	Bob Bucklew -- JMRI Throttles and Virtual Signals	John Sokash -- Pennsy Steam Locomotives
DINNER			
7:00 PM 8:00 PM	Alan Maples -- The Everett Railroad Story	Kurt Thompson MMR -- TinkerCAD	Jack Dziadul -- Building a RR Tool Shed
break			
8:30 PM 9:30 PM	Jim Fisher -- Introduction to Technical Aspects of DCC		
<i>These two-part clinics are Make &amp; Take sessions that require pre-registration and a small fee.</i>			
<i>This clinic requires pre-registraion and a laptop computer.</i>			

Saturday - 10/21/23			
TIME	1st Room	2nd Room	3rd Room
8:00 AM	Dr. John Pursell -- Misers Guide to Model Railroading	Brian Sheron MMR -- Building an Automatic Operational RR Crossing	Mike Prokop -- Easy Coal Loads
9:00 AM			
break			
9:30 AM	Andrew Dodge MMR -- Reconfiguring a Layout: From the Colorado Rockies to the Rocky Coast of Maine	Brian Sheron MMR -- Details Can Make the Difference	Mike Prokop -- On the Waterfront
10:30 AM			
break			
11:00AM	Lance Mindheim -- Layout Planning: Putting the Horse Before the Cart	Rob Hinkle -- Researching and Designing a Hershey Inspired Reading Layout	John Burchnall -- Engineering Secrets of Eastern Loggers
12:00 PM			
LUNCH			
1:30 PM	Bernie Kempinski MMR -- Manifest Destiny - Expanding the USMRR Aquia Line	Andy Blenko -- Design of the Pittsburgh Mainline Layout	Jeff Witt -- The Gorre & Daphetid: Past, Present & Future
2:30 PM			
break			
3:00 PM	Joe Walters MMR -- Building the PROSES Locomotive House	Tom Neukirchen -- Garden Railroading from Beginning to Now	Matthew Hurst -- The Suppllee Milk Cars
4:00 PM			
break			
4:30 PM	Bernie Kempinski MMR -- Waterfront Terminals and Operations	Jim Rose -- Consider Mixed Scales and Gauges in Layout Planning	Matthew Hurst -- Suppllee Milk Car Operations
5:30 PM			
6:00 PM	RECEPTION		
7:00 PM	ANNUAL BANQUET		

## Convention Notice!!

- 1. Both train excursions are sold out!**
- 2. The rooms set aside for the convention at the Altoona Grand Hotel are all allocated.**

Accommodations can be made at nearby hotels in Altoona. Here is a link to other hotels in the Altoona, PA area:

<https://goo.gl/maps/tuRUSwBkk7emj1Hi7>.

**There will be eleven model railroads open for tours.** Please see the convention website for [dates and times](#). Three of those railroads will also have op sessions; register for the op sessions on the convention [registration form](#).

**The Company Store** will have on display all of the raffle items that have been donated by hobby shops and industries as well as individual modelers. Raffle tickets may be purchased in the Company Store or from volunteers who may be walking around the convention venue including the registration desk area.

Also located in the Company Store will be the [White Elephant sale](#). This is where registrants can bring model railroading items (kits, cars, locomotives, tools, structures, books, etc.) that they would like to sell. They put the price on the items and at the conclusion of the convention can receive the cash if the item sold.

Instructions for White Elephant sale items are posted on a downloadable spreadsheet on the [convention website](#) under the White Elephant tab. On the spreadsheet, please complete the entry for each item you want to sell. When finished attach the spreadsheet to an email and send it to the email address provided on the spreadsheet. Please return your spreadsheet list by **Monday October 16** to allow the staff time to prepare the necessary paperwork and database.

For any questions contact Howard Oakes at [business@mer-nmra.com](mailto:business@mer-nmra.com)

**There are many fine restaurants in the Altoona area.** An interactive map showing the location of these restaurants as well as many of the points of interest can be seen by clicking [here](#).

**Please remember that NMRA President Gordy Robinson will be at this convention for all three days!** He will present NMRA highlights and will answer questions from the convention attendees Sunday morning between 9 and 10am.

The Saturday evening banquet will be in the Tropical Courtyard. Meal choices at \$57 per person are:

- Penne Pasta Primavera with herb roasted vegetables & white wine cream sauce
  - Roasted Chicken marinated in chicken velouté, with mashed potatoes, and green bean almandine
  - Herb encrusted salmon with herb roasted vegetables, wild rice pilaf, and lemon herb sauce
- Filet Mignon in a red wine demiglace with asparagus & whipped boursin potatoes
- After the meal, awards will be presented to the winners of the model contest, and our banquet speaker will be Joe DeFrancesco, CEO of the Railroaders Memorial Museum.



Tropical Courtyard

Joe DeFrancesco



## Carolina Piedmont Division HO Car for Sale

### Carolina Piedmont Division, Mid-Eastern Region



N Scale version  
coming in Fall 2023!

Exclusive Limited Edition Custom Decorated by Accurail  
Norfolk Southern Rwy HO Scale 70-Ton Offset Triple Hoppers  
*2 Road Numbers Available*

Exclusive, first time run of 86xx series HO scale Norfolk Southern 70-ton Offset Hopper. These ex-B&LE cars were leased by Norfolk Southern from U.S. Ry Equipment in 1967. They were photographed in service and all have lightweight dates that was always stenciled to the right of the car's light weight on the left side under reporting marks. WA was for Washington, Indiana on the B&O, the old B&O car shops on their route to St. Louis. The shops were closed and US Ry Equip acquired them.

Carolina Piedmont Division is offering these in two unique road numbers, 8613 & 8724 for sale as limited edition kits using Accurail's 70-Ton Offset Hopper car. Pricing is \$28 per car plus USPS shipping.

To order, visit <http://cpd13.org> or email [railroad@nc.rr.com](mailto:railroad@nc.rr.com) today!

# IPSWICH HOBBIES



*Craftsman Structure Kits*

*Jack Dziadul*



[IpswichHobbies.com](http://IpswichHobbies.com)

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### UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

2023 – Susquehanna Division - "Round the Curve to Altoona" October 19-22, 2023, Altoona, PA

2024 – Carolina Piedmont Division—"Piedmont Junction" Sep 26 - 29, 2024, Durham, NC

2025 – New Jersey Division Dates and location TBD

### MER Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors Meeting – 7 pm Oct 19, 2023 – Altoona Grand Hotel, Altoona PA

Annual Business Meeting— 10 am Oct 22, 2023—Altoona Grand Hotel, Altoona PA

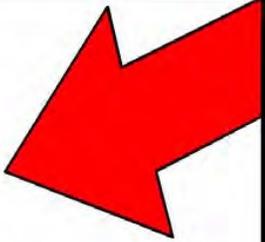
# Branch Lines

## From the Divisions...

As *The Local* Editor, I have the distinct pleasure of receiving a copy of all the Division newsletters, which are all very informative and creative to say the least. Here are links to those publications so you can stay up to date on what the other Divisions are doing:

NEWSLETTERS	DIVISIONS	MOST RECENT EDITION
<a href="#">Wheel Report</a>	<a href="#">South Mountain Division</a>	<a href="#">Summer 2023</a>
<a href="#">The Potomac Flyer</a>	<a href="#">Potomac Division</a>	<a href="#">Aug-Sep 2023</a>
<a href="#">Train Orders</a>	<a href="#">New Jersey Division</a>	<a href="#">May 2023</a>
<a href="#">Sidetracks</a>	<a href="#">Susquehanna Division</a>	<a href="#">July-Aug 2023</a>
<a href="#">The Dispatcher</a>	<a href="#">Philadelphia Division</a>	<a href="#">July 2023</a>
<a href="#">The Callboard</a>	<a href="#">Tidewater Division</a>	<a href="#">July 2023</a>
<a href="#">Crossties - Index</a>	<a href="#">James River Division</a>	<a href="#">Aug 2023</a>
<a href="#">The Brass Pounder</a>	<a href="#">Carolina Southern Division</a>	<a href="#">Aug 2023</a>
<a href="#">The Herald</a>	<a href="#">Carolina Piedmont Division</a>	<a href="#">Aug 2023</a>
<a href="#">The Relay</a>	<a href="#">Chesapeake Division</a>	<a href="#">Aug 2023</a>

Custom  
Layout  
Building



Layout Design

By Lance Mindheim

www.shelflayouts.com  
301-404-8164

And don't forget the  
new digital NMRA  
Magazine

**Reminder:** Here's how to access the  
[Digital NMRA Magazine:](#)

1. <https://www.nmra.org/user/register>
2. Answer a few questions
3. Click on Create a New Account
4. You will receive an email on how to set your password.

# Modeler's Haven...

## Tips from the National NMRA Convention

By Greg Warth

*This section of The Local is for all members to share any tips, techniques, tools, books, fixes, new products, or any other information that might be of interest to others. One of the many benefits of being an NMRA member is spreading knowledge about the hobby and learning things from other modelers. Please submit your tips to the [Editor](#) for consideration on publishing them here.*

I always learn a great deal from attending clinics. I went to as many as I had time for at the 2023 Texas Express Convention so I could pass them on to those from our Region who couldn't attend. Here are a few highlights from some of those clinics.

### Modeling Water

#### Based on a Clinic by Jerry Hoverson, MMR:

Jerry presented a very nice review of some of the best methods of modeling water. Here is a summary of his clinic:

After designing the size and shape of your lakebed or river, create the bed by cutting into an insulation foam sheet. Sculpt the shape of the lake according to your design and then cover it with plastercloth. Make sure there are no holes or openings in the bottom of the bed. You can use Sculptamold or spackling compound to seal these holes. Once that dries, you are ready to paint the bottom realistically with a darker color in the middle and lighter shades blended in as you get closer to the edges (**Photo 1**).

After a review of all the different products and methods of modeling water, probably the best product for standing water like ponds or lakes is Realistic Water by Woodland Scenics (my opinion). It is the easiest to use. You don't need any special sealer. You can optionally add a few drops of cerulean blue or brown for a hint of color. Otherwise, you don't have to mix anything; you just pour it right out of the bottle over your painted lakebed. It is self-leveling, less likely to leak through the lakebed than polyester resins and doesn't yellow over time. Bubbles are easy to manage by just poking with a toothpick. It is less likely to creep up the embankment, unlike some of the other products.

If you want ripples or waves, after the "water" is dry, you can add Liquitex, a thicker gel that you can apply with a fan brush. After it dries, you can use a dry-brushing technique with a slightly off-white color to enhance the ripples or waves. Liquitex can be also used for falling water, like a waterfall or water coming out of a drainpipe. It can be applied to strips of Plexiglass or angel hair to create a waterfall that projects out over the rocks as it is falling. Liquitex is good for rapids and creeks to simulate water flowing over rocks and logs.

If you want to see things below the surface of standing water, first add whatever you want in your painted lakebed, like rocks, logs, fish, skeletons, sunken boats, etc. Then place a sheet of Plexiglass over the lake area. Add the embankments around the edges. Then pour the Realistic Water over the Plexiglass.

Don't forget to add details around the edges and the embankments, like ground cover, field grass, cattails, and other scenery (**Photo 1**). When you are adding these details, be careful not to get any glue on the "water." Otherwise, some of your ground cover is sure to get stuck in the middle of your lake.



*Photo 1: Water scene on the Virginian Railroad built by Mike Ross, MMR.  
Photo by Greg Warth.*

### Photo Backdrops and Railroad Graphics:

The owner of Larc Products, Bill Brown, gave a presentation on his products which appear to be some of the best custom photo backdrops that you can buy anywhere. He has been all over the US and Canada taking photographs of natural and urban landscapes over the past 18 years and has placed these images on DVDs that you can buy and print out on your computer at home. If you print them on 60-pound paper, you can glue them to your background wall or board in sequence and create large natural scenes up to 48" high and 20' long. The sheets fit together well enough that you cannot see the seams from more than two feet away and can be mounted easily with Elmer's white glue. He can also create custom backdrops on large rolls of paper or vinyl using your choice of thousands of photos. Or you can send him photos that you have taken that he can blend together into a backdrop to fit whatever size you need.

He can also provide thousands of railroad graphics including almost any type of signage or decals that you might ever need. They are all available on DVDs. You just pick whatever graphic you want, drag it into a Word document, resize to your exact specifications using the vertical and horizontal rulers in Word, and print it out. Use 60-pound paper for stiffer signs, or regular typing paper or decal paper for faded signs on buildings. You can also print out brick, block, or stone sheets to use for the sides of buildings, for roads or for retaining walls. Roofing sheets, windows, doors and building interiors are available as well. His website is [larcproducts.com](http://larcproducts.com).

### Lighting Your Layout

#### Tips from Steve Crise, Photographer of Rod Stewart's Layout:

Don't use fluorescent or halogen overhead lighting for your layout or diorama. It is unrealistic and not good for photos. LED lighting is the best. For photography, it is best to have the light coming from one direction so that the trees and structures on your layout have only one shadow. This simulates natural sunlight and will look more realistic. Applying a warming translucent gel over your LED lights helps to create a more dramatic lighting effect in your photos.

### Dead Rail

#### Presented by Pete Steinmetz:

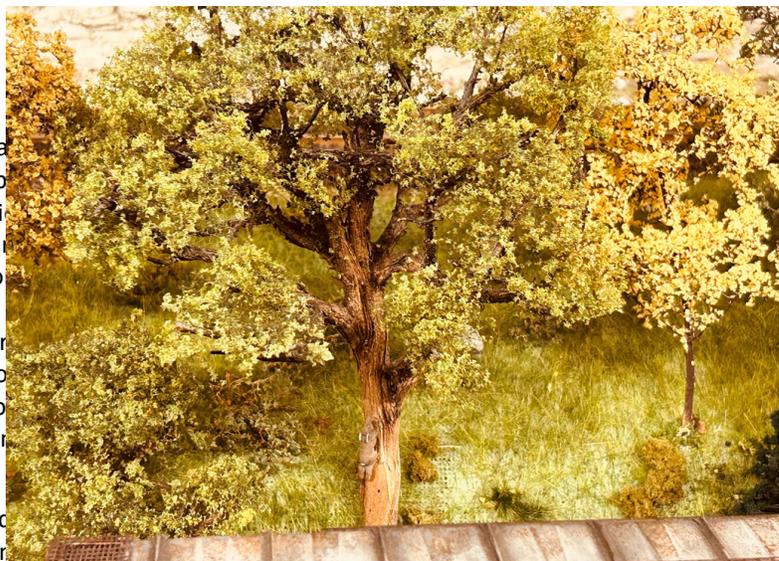
If you are tired of messing with wiring for your layout and constantly cleaning your track and wheels, this is for you! Using battery-powered locomotives has all the advantages of DCC, but none of the hassles. Pete has 20 years of experience in designing and marketing rechargeable battery systems and personally models in On30 and HO scale. His company, [Dead Rail Installs](http://DeadRailInstalls.com), sells and installs battery packs for locomotives in a variety of scales. They also sell the battery chargers, the CVP T-5000 Transmitters, and Soundtraxx decoders with and without sound. Pete will consult with customers directly to determine exactly what they need. You can send your loco to him in California and they will return it to you fully operational. Support service is excellent.

### Making Deciduous Trees

#### Presented by Mike Ross, MMR:

Use Woodland Scenics armatures and bend the branch to a realistic shape. Hold the trunk in a vise. Apply strength white glue to one branch and stick on a pile of clump foliage. Do the same with all the other branches. Use at least two different shades of clump foliage for the tree applied randomly. Use a light grey acrylic paint to brush the trunk of the tree. Let everything dry overnight then plant the tree into a drilled hole in your layout board glue into a foam board surface. It is always best to plant trees in odd numbers in any particular scene; it tends to be more pleasing to the eye.

A more realistic armature to use would be a dried plant or a branch of a crepe myrtle as shown here in [Photo 2](#).



*Photo 2: Deciduous tree using a crepe myrtle branch by Mike Ross, MMR. Photo by Greg Warth.*

### Use a Smaller Scale if a Detail Doesn't Look Right

By Nicholas Kalis

When choosing details for one's layout, it can soon be apparent that an item we have bought or are considering buying is overscale - that is it is too big and just does not look right. A solution to this problem is to try to find that detail in a smaller scale; I did this years ago with my HO scale Montauk Branch layout. I saw some HO scale retaining walls by a popular manufacturer (Woodland Scenics) and just hated the way they looked. My solution was to buy those same retaining walls in N scale. Voila! These N scale retaining walls look superb ([Photo 3](#)).



*Photo 3: Retaining walls in different scales.  
Photo by Nicholas Kalis.*



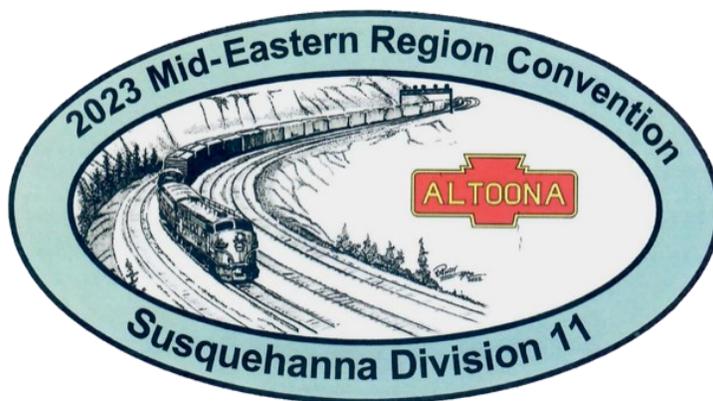
*Photo 3: Retaining walls in different scales.  
Photo by Nicholas Kalis.*

Another example of this technique is seen in [Photo 4](#), a pair of crows -

Scenic Express *O-Scale Black Crow Raven/2PCS*. Item Number CG403. Made of pewter, a set consists of two crows painted black. My friend, Gary Eames, purchased them for his O scale layout and just never used them because they did not look right. They seemed overscale. Gary gifted two packages of these - four crows in all - and I have used all four on my Fn3 (1:20.3 scale) Oahu Sugar Company to great advantage.

So next time you are scratching your head over a detail that does not look right, try what I and others have done. This can work around many scales. If an N scale item is overscale, try Z scale. If an O scale item does not look right, try that detail in HO or S scale.

*What tips and techniques do you use in your modeling? Please send us a paragraph or two about something you have modeled or a tip that would help the rest of us improve our modeling skills. It does not have to be perfect or too long. Even one or two sentences would be great. I know those tips are out there. [Send me a note](#). -Ed.*



## Electronics Corner

### MODEL RAILROAD PRESENCE DETECTOR

By Fred Miller, MMR

On occasion it is useful to 'detect' the presence of a visitor or operator on your Model Railroad layout. The device described in this article can detect a person standing in front of a portion of the layout. The device described in this article can detect a person standing in front of a portion of the layout and then activate some animated feature like sounds or lights. The electronics can be adjusted to 'detect' a person standing in a range from a couple inches to several feet from the fascia strip on a layouts edge. Similarly, the time the device stays active after first detecting someone can be set at a few seconds or up to 10 minutes.

The device makes use of an output relay with contacts both normally closed (NC) or closed only upon activation (NO) to operate the controlled feature. The contacts are rated 10 amps at 250V, sufficient to control any device one might have on a model railroad.

#### DESIGN

This presence detector ([Figure 1](#)) uses an inexpensive ultrasound device (HC-SD04) which emits high frequency sound waves and detects those waves bouncing back to the device. A small micro-controller (ATTINY85 USB Board) is used to control the ultrasound unit and operate the output relay. The micro also lights an LED to show when the detector is active. Settings for the maximum distance and activation ON time are set with onboard rotary potentiometers.

The micro used is a small, inexpensive ATTINY85 mounted on a board with USB connections to enable programming using the standard Arduino IDE as used for programming Arduino UNOs, NANOs, or MEGAs. This board eliminates the need to use a programming device for the ATTINYs which require plugging and unplugging the ATTINYs into the project circuit. In fact, the micro board has contacts which plug directly into a USB port without the need for any cables.



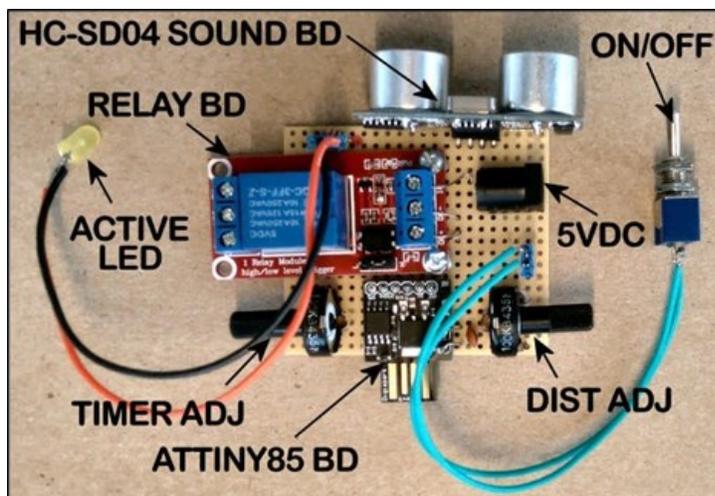
*Figure 1 - Visitor/operator Presence detector*

#### CONSTRUCTION ([Figure 3](#)):

The HC-SD04 module, the ATTINY85 USB board, and the 5V Relay module are mounted on a small piece of perf board. Off board connections are provided for the Active Indicator LED and a SPST ON/OFF toggle switch ([Figure 2](#)).

As is my usual practice, I use a graphics PC program to graphically place those components on a simulated perf board and then graphically wire them together. Flipping the drawing gives a good wiring aid for actual soldering.

The completed board is mounted to a panel using the HC-SD04 module's tubes. Note that the ATTINY85 USB board is mounted such that the USB pins can be inserted into a PC's USB port. The distance range adjustment potentiometer and the time delay potentiometer are mounted so that they can be accessed after the assembly is mounted on a layout's fascia edge ([Figures 4 and 5](#))



*Figure 2—Detection Circuit Board*

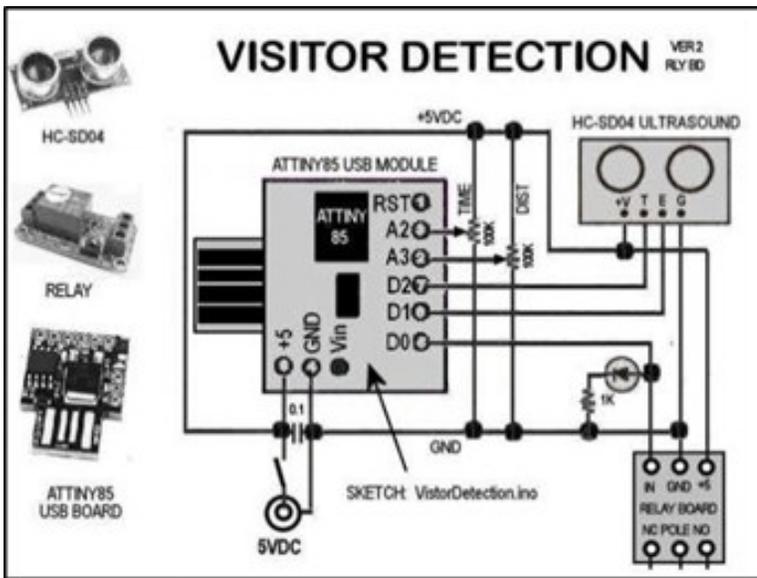


Figure 3—Detection Circuit

PROGRAMMING:

The ATTINY85 ‘sketch’ is programmed using the Arduino IDE. However, some preparation is needed to make the IDE able to recognize, program, and download the sketch. The link shown in the REFERENCE section of this article provides a good guide to preparing the IDE as well as a link to my Github site which contains the sketch.

It should be noted that the process of downloading the compiled program sketch to the ATTINY85 board is somewhat different than that used for

typical Arduino UNOs and related micros. The ATTINY85 board must NOT be connected (plugged into the PC USB port) until the downloading message instructs to do so. After the download is completed, the ATTINY85 USB board can be removed from the PC port.

DEVICE OPERATION

When 5VDC power is applied to the project board, the range pot can be adjusted (a couple of inches to 3+ feet) and the timer pot can be adjusted to keep the device active for 10 seconds to approximately 10 minutes.

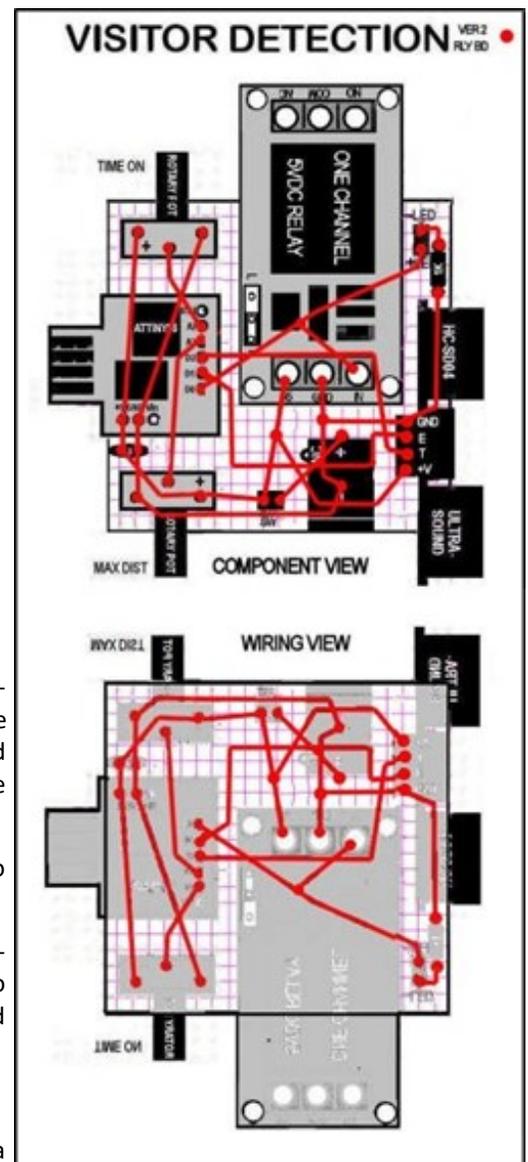


Figure 4—Wiring Aid

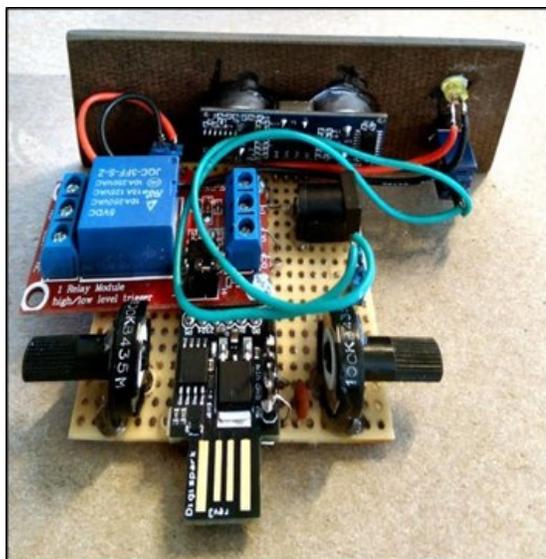


Figure 5—Assembled Unit

These settings can be adjusted at any time. The relay output (and active LED indicator) will remain on reflecting the timer setting even after there is no detection. In other words, the device will stay on while an individual is standing in front of the device and remain on for the timer setting after the person moves away and is no longer detected (Figure 6).

See Figure 7 for a parts list and Figure 8 for a potential variation on the available ATTINY85 USB Boards.



Figure 6—Example Application

REFERENCES

1. The micro-controller programs (sketches) for this project are available on my Github website: <https://tinyurl.com/35jyv4r>.
2. A YouTube video demonstration of the project is available on my YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/USVlgnv0FKw>.
3. A good guide for preparing the Arduino IDE to deal with the AT-TINY85 USB board:  
<https://iotprojectsideas.com/program-digispark-attiny85-with-arduino-ide/>
4. Response to questions and further help is available by email: [tractionfan@aol.com](mailto:tractionfan@aol.com)

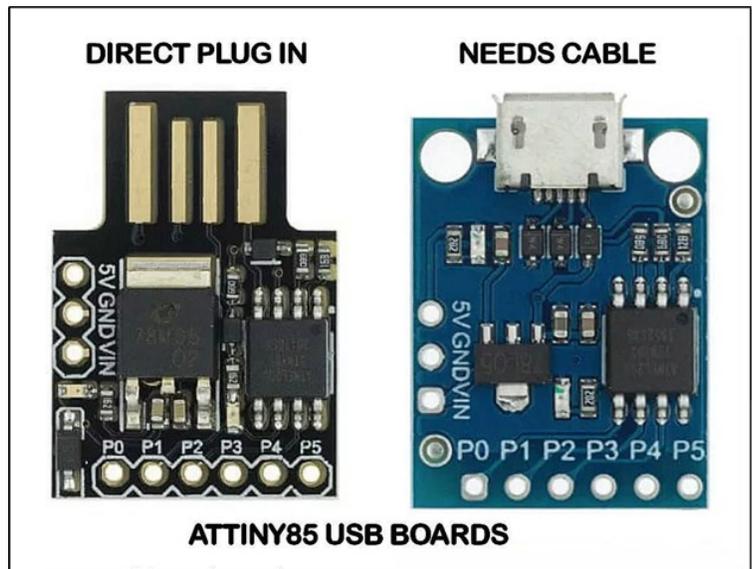


Figure 8—ATTINY85 USB Board Variations

PARTS LIST - PRESENCE DETECTION PROJECT

QTY	PART	SOURCE	PART #	PRICE	QTY PURCHASE NOTES
1	HC-SD04 ULTRA SOUND	AMAZON	HiLetgo	\$ 1.83	5 FOR \$9.19
1	1-CHANNEL 5V RELAY MODULE	AMAZON	CHENBO	\$ 2.25	4 FOR \$8.99
1	5VDC POWER ADAPTER	AMAZON	JOYNO	\$ 5.59	
1	DC POWER RECEPTICLE	AMAZON	AiTrip	\$ 0.30	20 FOR \$5.99
1	ATTINY85 USB MODULE	AMAZON	AOICRIE	\$ 3.20	5 FOR \$15.99
1	YELLOW LED (T1 3/4)	JAMECO	34825	\$ 0.15	10 FOR \$1.50
2	100K POTENTIOMETER	AMAZON	TAIS	\$ 2.00	10 FOR \$9.99
1	SPST MINI TOGGLE SWITCH	JAMECO	76523	\$ 1.59	
1	MALE HEADER STRIP 12 PIN *	JAMECO	686680	\$ 0.49	
1	FEMALE HEADER STRIP 8 PIN *	JAMECO	2144631	\$ 0.75	
1	1K OHM 1/4W RESISTOR	JAMECO	690865	\$ 0.05	10 FOR \$0.55
1	0.1 25V DISC CAPACITOR	JAMECO	2300975	\$ 0.10	10 FOR \$1.00
**	2x2 IN PORTION OF PERF BD	JAMECO	616690	\$ 0.90	4x6 INCH FOR \$5.95
	MISC HARDWARE/WIRE/SOLDER			~	
			~TOTAL	\$ 19.20	

Figure 7—Project Parts List

\* HEADER STRIPS CUT TO MAKE (2) 2-POSITION MALE AND FEMALE HEADERS  
 \*\* 2x2 INCH PORTION CUT OUT OF 4x6 IN BOARD



# Potomac & James River Divisions

## Joint Meet Program

### November 4, 2023



9:00 am				<b>Open to Members for Registration @ Gym Entrance</b>	
9:20 am	Greeting and Announcements – Superintendents	Pastor Greeting – Needs and Prayer – Passing the Bucket – Fellow Ship Hall - 109		<b><u>In the Gym 114</u></b>	
9:40 am – Clinics – Set 1	<b><u>Room 106</u></b> Clinician - James River  Topic TBD	<b><u>Room 107</u></b> Clinician, John Sethian  Topic - Converting 3 rail O Gauge to 2 rail.	<b><u>Room 111</u></b> Clinician- Pete LaGuardia, MMR  Topic – Visual Aids & Wiring Tech	<b><u>In the Gym –</u></b>  <b><u>Popular Vote</u></b>  <b><u>Models Model</u></b>  <b><u>Judging</u></b>  <b><u>White Elephant</u></b>	
9:40 am -	<b><u>Room 118/119</u></b> DecoderPro clinic briefing – George Meyrick/Ernie Little, MMR				
10:25 am – Break for Coffee and White Elephant Shopping – Popular Vote				<b><u>In the Gym 114</u></b>	
10:40 am – Clinics – Set 2	<b><u>Room 106</u></b> Clinician – James River  Topic TBD	<b><u>Room 107</u></b> Clinician – Mark Gionet  Topic – Building a Bridge	<b><u>Room 111</u></b> Clinician – James River  Topic - TBD	<b><u>In the Gym –</u></b>  <b><u>Popular Vote</u></b>  <b><u>Models Model</u></b>  <b><u>Judging</u></b>  <b><u>White Elephant</u></b>	
10:40 am	<b><u>Room 118/119</u></b> DecoderPro hands-on clinic				
11: 25 am – Break for Coffee and White Elephant				<b><u>In the Gym 114</u></b>	
11: 45 am – Final Assembly				<b><u>Fellowship Hall 109</u></b>	
12: 00 pm – Popular Vote Results; Raffle (Door prizes), Close out				<b><u>Fellowship Hall 109</u></b>	
12:45 – 1 pm – Clean-up (volunteers)				<b><u>Everywhere!!!</u></b>	
1 pm – Off to Lunch (all)				<b><u>On your own</u></b>	
1:30 pm – Layouts Open		4:00 pm – Layouts Close			

## Popular Voting Contest

The Popular Vote will be held in the Gym. There are two categories: On-Track, which is for engines and cars, whether freight or passenger; Off-Track, which is for structures of any kind, whether building, bridge or other type of structure.

If you bring a model to display in the Joint Meet Popular Vote, please bring a slip of paper to place by your model with your name and the name of your model. (We will have extra paper in case you forget.)

Those attending the meet will be able to cast ballots for both categories. Voting slips will be provided. The winners will have their photos taken and displayed in a future issue of *The Flyer*.

## AP Judging

Potomac Division AP Manager Martin Brechbiel, MMR, will oversee AP judging on an ad hoc basis for any members who bring models for evaluation.

All those interested should contact Martin as well as fill out the forms, etc. in advance. Any questions, needed forms, etc., just contact Martin directly.

You can email Martin at: [Achievement-Program@potomac-nmra.org](mailto:Achievement-Program@potomac-nmra.org)

## White Elephant Sale

At the November 4 joint Potomac and James River Divisions meet, attendees will have an informal opportunity to sell surplus or estate model railroad items to the attendees. One person's trash is another's treasure, so here is an opportunity to change trash to cash.

### Who may sell:

- Only NMRA members may conduct a sale in this White Elephant sale.
- Dealers who also are members may participate as sellers.
- Sellers may sell only railroad-related items (model or prototype).

### Table Reservations:

- Table reservations must be requested **no later than Wednesday, November 1**.
- Tables are 72" long and 30" wide.
- Requests should be sent to Ken Montero by email to: [va661midlo@comcast.net](mailto:va661midlo@comcast.net). In the subject line, use "White Elephant Sale Request."
- A member may request more than one table. In the unlikely event that the number of tables requested exceeds the number of available tables, Ken will allocate tables and notify the requesting member of the number of tables so allocated when he sends the confirmation. All requesting members will be able to get at least one table.
- Confirmation will be sent by Thursday, November 2.
- Questions: Call Ken Montero at 804-822-0854 (cellphone) and leave a message or send your inquiry by email.
  - While Ken checks this voice mail frequently, please include in your message your inquiry and when he may return your call.
  - Email will get an immediate response when read.

**Sale staffing:**

The member requesting one or more tables will have to staff his/her tables (set-up, sales, close-out), either alone or with the help of one or more fellow attendees.

**Set-up:**

- Starts from **8:00 a.m.**
- Tables will be set up in the gymnasium of the meet's building (Battlefield Baptist Church, 4361 Lee Highway [U.S. 29 north of Warrenton], Warrenton, Virginia 20187).
- There is no parking next to the entry doors. Be prepared to carry your items at least 50 feet. The entryway has no steps, so hand carts will work well.
- Sales may commence at any time from set-up until the opening portion of the meet.
- Sellers are encouraged, but not required, to bring a table covering. "Dollar store" cheap plastic tablecloths (about \$1.50 each) are suggested.

**Sales:**

- Sellers will handle all aspects of their own sales.
- Sellers are responsible for their own security of items brought for sale.
- Neither the James River Division, the Potomac Division or any of its members assisting with this sale accept any liability for items brought to the meet for sale.
- If away from one's tables, such as during a clinic, a seller may want to use a "Dollar store" plastic table cloth to cover the sales items to indicate that the seller is away momentarily.

**Sales Times:**

- The sales area will be closed during the opening and closing portions of the meet. Doors to the gymnasium will be closed.
- It will be open before the opening portion, during clinics, and after the closing portion.

**Close-out:**

- The sales area will remain open after the closing portion of the meet.
- The seller is required to pack up any unsold items, then fold up and return to storage all tables by **1:00 p.m.** Only limited meet staff assistance may be available.

**Questions:**

Contact Ken Montero a [va661midlo@comcast.net](mailto:va661midlo@comcast.net) or 804-822-0854.



**In Memoriam,  
John Michael Johnson, MMR (“JJ”)  
June 26, 1940 – August 23, 2023**



Franklin – John Michael Johnson, 83, passed away August 23, 2023 in his home with his family by his side. Born in Trenton, NJ, he was the son of the late John and Mary Ann Zelenak Johnson. He was also predeceased by an infant daughter, Dawn Renee Johnson, and a sister, Mary Ann Johnson.

John was a Navy Veteran and retired from AT&T. He was a member and former treasurer of Bethel Assembly of God. John’s passion was trains and he was a Master Model Railroader. He was published in Modern Railroad Magazine in 2019 because of his expertise in the field. His works are also displayed in the Suffolk Seaboard Station Railroad Museum.

Left to cherish his memory is his wife of 57 years, Brenda Waff Johnson; three daughters, Andrea Cherie Gatten (Chuck) of Franklin, Joy Lynn Johnston (Jack) of Hamilton, NJ, and Charlene Ann Johnson of Franklin; and eight grandchildren, Shane Johnston, Brianna Karmilovich, Katie Johnston, Joshua Johnston, Erin Karmilovich-Weaver (Melachi), Conner Karmilovich, Caleb Johnston, and Emma Johnston.

A Memorial Service with Military Honors will be held at 11AM Saturday, September 9, 2023 at Bethel Assembly of God, 8904 S. Quay Rd., Suffolk, VA 23437 with Pastor Becky Rudash officiating. A reception will follow the service in the church. The family suggests that memorial donations be made to the Bethel Assembly of God.

[www.wrightfuneralhome.org](http://www.wrightfuneralhome.org)

“JJ” was an accomplished model railroader in the Tidewater Division of the Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA. He spent a lot of his time teaching the rest of us about modeling. His display of the Pennsylvania Railroad was one of the best layouts we’ve ever seen. Not only was he a great modeler, his leadership in the organization was exemplary. He was instrumental in establishing the New Jersey Division. He will be sorely missed as an excellent modeler, a wise teacher, and a great friend. Thanks, JJ, for leaving us such wonderful memories, and for making the world a better place.



# Back on Track...

## Still Teaching

By Greg Warth, Editor



Photo 1

The clinics were great. I always learn a lot at these National NMRA Conventions. Number 88 in Grapevine, Texas was no exception. I met some new friends and connected with some old ones. That's always fun. The Gaylord Hotel was amazing. But one of the main highlights of the trip for me was visiting the Black Bear and Bayou Railroad built by Leo and Lorrie Palitti. This amazing, freelanced HO/HOn3 layout was housed in a detached building behind the house in Fort Worth. The era was set in the 1940s to 1950s to include steam and diesel motive power. DCC operations were designed to be point-to-point with trains running from Southern Colorado to the bayous of east Texas and southwest Louisiana. Scenery included magnificent mountains, beautifully painted backgrounds, switchbacks, four turntables, and a sound-enhanced thunderstorm. There was a six-track staging yard, a homemade remote switch panel, a dual gauge yard, an 80" double track helix. What struck me

the most about this layout however were the large number of very impressive, highly detailed craftsman and scratch-built structures that populated the entire layout. **Photo 1** is a small sample. Even more impressive was the fact that Lorrie who built many if not most of the structures decided to continue to maintain the layout and open it for this tour even after her husband Leo passed away.

One of our own Division members, John Johnson, MMR, who also built a fantastic layout, this one representing the Pennsylvania Railroad, also passed away just a few days ago. His layout was extremely well-done and admired by all of us.

I guess this just brought to mind that we are not here forever, but we have legacies that we leave behind. I will never forget my tour of the Black Bear and Bayou RR, nor the well-known Pennsylvania RR (**Photo 2**) by "JJ." Nor will I forget the modelers who built them, even though I didn't really know either Leo or "JJ" that well. Having seen what they dedicated much of their lives to, I feel a connection to them in some way, that I know who they were, their thoughts and feelings, what was important to them and what they strived for from the perspective of model railroading. What they did with their railroads, the artistry, the creativity, the dedication, and the desire to build something great reflects on what they did with the rest of their lives as well. They continue to express themselves in their work, and they continue to teach what they knew, not just details about model railroading but about life as well. I am grateful for what they have accomplished and what they have taught me, even though they are no longer physically here. Their legacy lives on. They have somehow influenced me and inspired me to be a better modeler and a better person. We can all hope to do the same for those who follow us.



Photo 2