



The Local

Official publication of the Mid-Eastern Region,

NMRA – A tax-exempt organization

SEARCH

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Add Lighting to Your Caboose

By Brian Sheron, MMR



Brian Sheron, MMR demonstrates how he installed LED lights in this repainted Bowser caboose for his Long Island Rail Road. [Article on page 7.](#)

President's Column...



Project Procrastination

By R. Scott Unger

I am notoriously late in providing these articles to the dedicated and talented team of volunteers who produce the MER *Local*. Despite that, they continue to produce an excellent newsletter every two months. My tardiness is not a reflection of my level of concern for their work or the importance of their efforts but is simply a manifestation of my challenge to piece together a large enough contiguous chunk of time. The result is to delay starting with the hope of finding a couple of hours later.

Similar circumstances exist at my full-time job that involve numerous complex projects that always move in different directions simultaneously. Each of our employees tracks time against unique project numbers in 15-minute increments to track resource allocation and in some cases for billing. Most employees spend solid blocks of time on about five or six projects during a 40-hour work week. The requirements of my role result in timesheets that are typically two pages long, and often include a few dozen project numbers with only a small amount of time allocated to each.

This persistent gnat-like attention span spills into my hobby as well and creates a similar struggle with various model railroad projects. Some tasks simply require a larger block of time to capture any level of efficiency or precision. A specific example is scratch building a turnout. The amazingly smooth operation of rolling stock through a fabricated frog convinced me to build all turnouts (except for those in staging yards) from scratch.

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How to Build a Model Railroad

The process can take two and a half hours or more to build and install on the railroad. To address this, I needed a way to break the process down into smaller pieces so that I could continue to make progress even when I didn't have a full two hours to commit in a single sitting. This is particularly helpful during the week when I might only have a few minutes in the morning or evening to be at the workbench.

Here is how I break down the project into eight smaller digestible steps to accommodate my available time:

1. Gathering the tools and supplies can be a quick task that can help to start the process and keep momentum going (less than 5 minutes).
2. Another relatively easy step to building a turnout is to mark then cut the eight pieces of rail required to build the turnout to the approximate length (about 10 minutes).
3. Shaping and filing the pieces, particularly the point rails, is the longest and most tedious process (about 45 minutes).
4. Cutting and gapping the print circuit board ties is another step that is easily isolated into a separate process (about 10 minutes).
5. Doing the initial fabrication by soldering the eight rail pieces onto the print circuit board ties also requires a slightly longer block of time and requires some preheat time for the soldering iron (about 30 minutes).
6. The final assembly step is to cut and attach the wooden ties in between the print circuit board ties (this takes about 30 minutes and also requires the adhesive to dry for about 24 hours).
7. At some point while the wood tie adhesive is drying, I spend some time preparing the cork roadbed for the turnout and ground throw (approximately 15 minutes plus a couple hours for the glue to dry).
8. The last step is the installation of the turnout in its final location on the railroad, including trimming the rails and confirming that it is aligned with the adjacent track (about 20 minutes).

I have started to utilize a similar process preparing articles for *The Local* by segmenting the process into smaller more achievable steps. To begin with, I now keep a scrap of paper in my wallet to jot down ideas about topics as they occur to me rather than waiting to assemble a full group of ideas all at one time. Another smaller step is to begin the article by crafting these initial ideas into a rough outline form in a meaningful sequence. The final step is to develop the outline into a finished article. Hopefully using these three smaller steps will help keep me on schedule more often.

I suppose that AI could help speed up the process but at present the technology appears to be much stronger on the A than the I as errors in AI generated content appear to be too prevalent currently. Until that improves, you're stuck with the real thing so at least any errors you find in my articles will be authentic!

Since we all have some limitation on our available hobby time, I hope you can find some useful ways to keep your projects moving by reducing them into smaller steps that fit into your schedule. I also encourage you to read all of the interesting articles that follow in this edition of *The Local*, even if your schedule requires you to read them one page at a time.

Here's Your Chance to Give Back to the MER!

Positions are now open and available for:
Executive Convention Chairman (ECC), and
Business Manager for the MER.

Job descriptions can be found here for Business Manager, p. 10, and
ECC, p.17.

To apply, send email to
president@mer-nmra.com.

Links You Might Like

By Greg Warth

Memory Lane: Here is a short slide show containing photos I took in Altoona at the MER Convention in 2023. The link will expire in 30 days, so enjoy it while you can.

Altoona - 2023: <https://www.dropbox.com/t/wBIDYsefSM7bZvTn>

Bank of America Model Train Gallery:

<https://www.borail.org/explore-learn/exhibitions/model-train-gallery/>

Biltmore Gardens Railway:

<https://www.borail.org/explore-learn/exhibitions/model-train-gallery/>

Great Smoky Mountains Railroad:

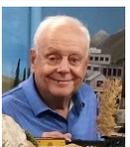
<https://gsmr.com/?>

[utm_source=google&utm_medium=paidsearch&utm_campaign=2025generalbranding&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21143355014&gbraid=0AAAAAqmHF00NmJDQZqdELDmoMsCYP70_r&gclid=Cj0KCQjwIMfABhCWARIsADGXdy8RgkARmdsNGRcHCLIFAjLMz3XD9pXmwzOK9bjhFN9ZXaBKTPJU_QUaArszEALw_wcB](https://gsmr.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=paidsearch&utm_campaign=2025generalbranding&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21143355014&gbraid=0AAAAAqmHF00NmJDQZqdELDmoMsCYP70_r&gclid=Cj0KCQjwIMfABhCWARIsADGXdy8RgkARmdsNGRcHCLIFAjLMz3XD9pXmwzOK9bjhFN9ZXaBKTPJU_QUaArszEALw_wcB)

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	Assistant Business Manager: John Hoyt 410-340-1776 jhoyt@mer-nmra.com		Assistant Treasurer and Convention Treasurer: William "Bill" Wurtzell (201)819-8701 wwurtzell@mer-nmra.com		Archivist: Michael Maurer archives@mer-nmra.com
	Executive Convention Chair (Acting): Gary Brown 757-641-7671 ecc@mer-nmra.com		MER Photographer: Jerry Lauchle, MMR 814-404-6955 photos@mer-nmra.com		Assistant Registrar: Jim Fisher 443-504-3919 jfisher@mer-nmra.com
	Past President: Kurt Thompson, MMR 410-507-3671 pastpresident@mer-nmra.com				

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	<p>New Jersey Division 1 John V. Gallagher (856)228-2239 njdiv.super@gmail.com Division web page: njdivnmra.org</p>		<p>James River Division 5 Phillip R. Taylor (434) 589-6006 drphilster@gmail.com Division web page: jrdnmra.blogspot.com/</p>		<p>Carolina Southern Division 12 Andrew Stitt (919)637-1282 superintendent@carolinasouthern.org Division web page: www.carolinasouthern.org</p>
	<p>Potomac Division 2 Ernie Little, MMR super@potomac-nmra.org Division web page: potomac-nmra.org/</p>		<p>South Mountain Division 10 Bob Johnson southmountaindiv@gmail.com Division web page: http://www.smdnmra.org/</p>		<p>Carolina Piedmont Division 13 Charles Rausch, MMR (919)533-6054 crausch@mer-nmra.com Division web page: www.cpd13.org/</p>
	<p>Philadelphia Division 3 Joe Walters, MMR (302)521-5884 Josephwalters@yahoo.com Division web page: www.phillynmra.org</p>		<p>Susquehanna Division 11 Alan Mende (717) 469-1047 super@susquehannanmra.org Division web page: www.susquehannanmra.org</p>		<p>Chesapeake Division 14 Kirk Bateman (410) 442-0446 super@chesdiv-nmra.org Division web page: www.chesdiv-nmra.org</p>
	<p>Tidewater Division 4 John Robey (571)217-0599 jrobey2019@gmail.com Division web page: nmra-mer-tidewater.org</p>				

IPSWICH HOBBIES



Craftsman Structure Kits

Jack Dziadul



IpswichHobbies.com
919-721-8757

UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

- 2025 — Philadelphia Division — “Philly Express,” October 16-19, 2025, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 260 Mall Blvd, King of Prussia, PA 19406
- 2026 — Tidewater Division — “Tidewater Triangle,” Virginia Beach, VA - TBD

MER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE

- Board of Directors Business Meeting — 7PM October 16, 2025, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 260 Mall Blvd, King of Prussia, PA 19406

Add Lighting to Your Caboose

By Brian Sheron, MMR

(Continued from p. 1)

While perusing eBay, I came across a caboose lighting kit that works on both DC and DCC layouts. Upon closer examination, I noticed that the power pickup from the track is different from the usual method of wipers rubbing on the inside of the wheels. Rather, the wheel axle has a copper sleeve on it that contacts the metal axle. One wheel is insulated from the axle and the other is electrically connected to the axle. The electrical connection is made by a wire soldered onto the copper sleeve. The kit consists of two wheelsets, two red LEDs for mounting on the back wall of the caboose, a white and a yellow LED for the caboose interior light, a capacitor, a rectifier bridge, a driver chip, and connecting wires (**Photo 1**). Best of all, the entire kit costs \$12.

For demonstration purposes, I installed this lighting kit in a Bowser HO scale N5 caboose. However, the installation is the same regardless of the type of caboose or the manufacturer.

I started by drilling two 1/16" holes in the back wall of the caboose on either side of the door for the red LEDs (**Photo 2**). I also drilled two 1/16" holes on the floor of the caboose just ahead of where the trucks are attached (**Photo 3**), which is where the truck pickup wires will go.



Photo 1

Drill Two Holes in Back Wall

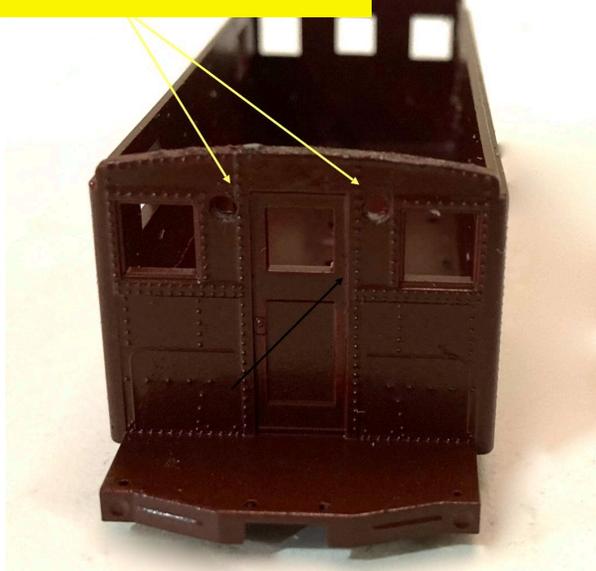


Photo 2

Drill Two 1/16" Holes for Pickup Wires

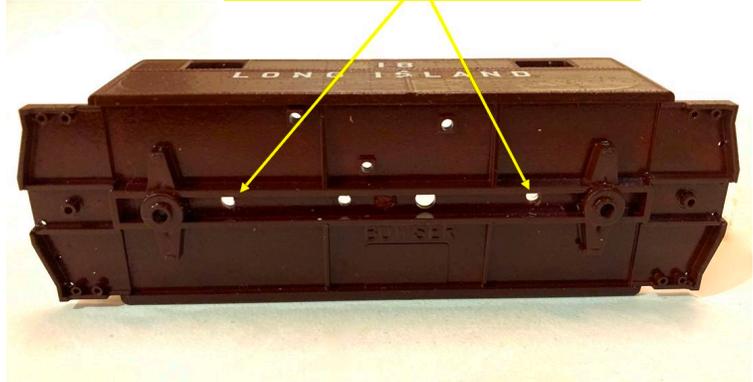


Photo 3

Next, I used a small drop of CA cement to attach the red LEDs to the rear caboose wall (Photo 4).

The next step is to solder up the circuit components. You start by bending the rectifier input leads up. The input leads are marked on the rectifier with a “~” symbol. Note that to see these markings on the rectifier, you should hold it up close to a light and slowly move it around until they become visible. You cut the electrical leads with the male and female connector ends provided, put a short section of heat shrink tubing on the wires attached to the female connectors, and solder the female ends to the input terminals of the rectifier. Then slide the heat shrink tubing over the solder joint and up to the rectifier. I hold my soldering iron close to the tubing to shrink it covering the soldered joints.

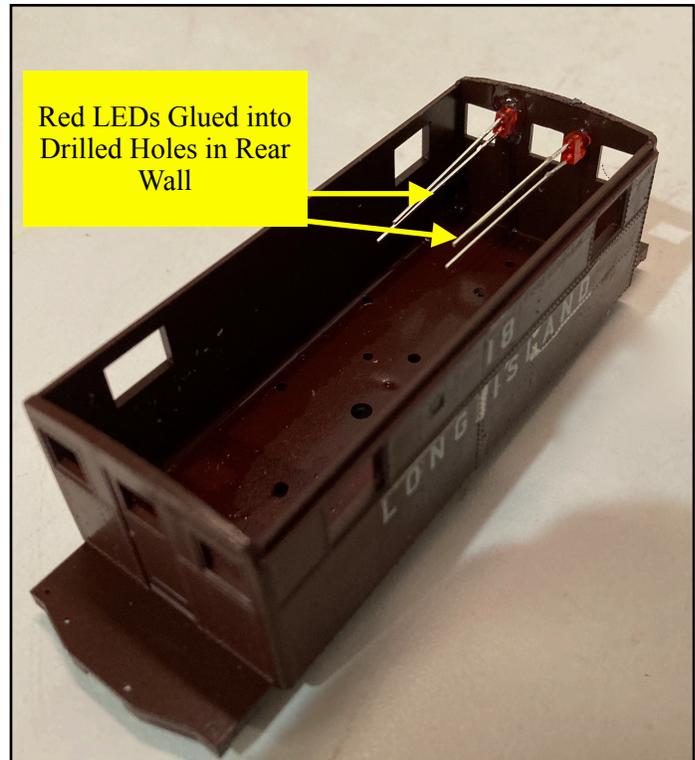


Photo 4

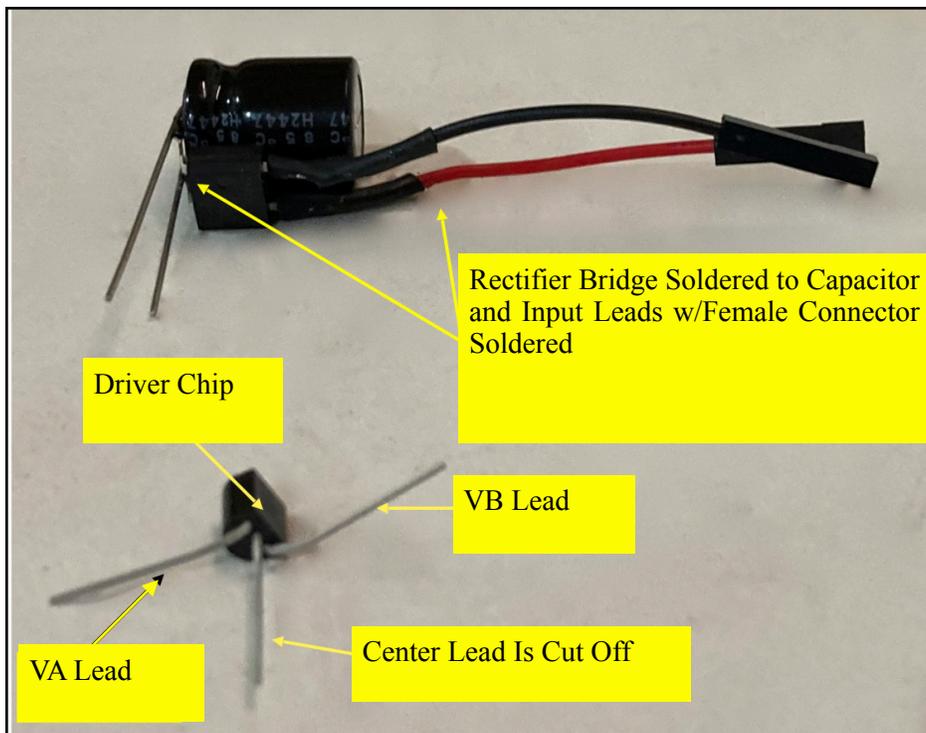


Photo 5

After that, you take the driver chip and, following instructions, with the flat part of the driver chip facing you, bend the VA* lead back, the VB* lead forward, and cut the center lead off (Photo 5). You now solder the VA lead to the positive side of the capacitor/bridge rectifier junction and clip off the excess capacitor leads. Photo 6 shows the completed circuit.

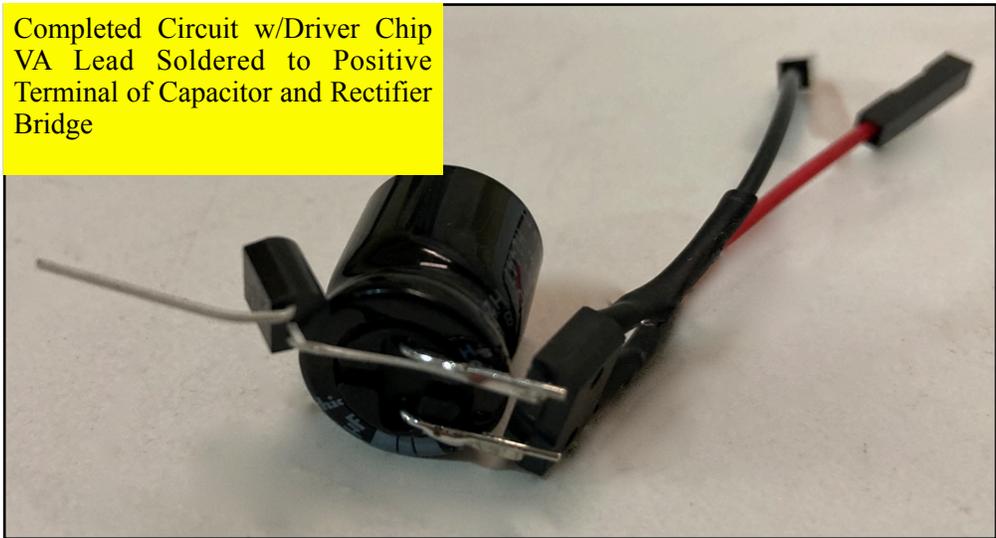


Photo 6

Going back to the caboose, using needle nose pliers, bend the positive (longer) leads of the red LEDs inward so they are parallel to each other and touch, then solder them together. Do the same with the negative (shorter) leads from the LEDs ([Photo 7](#)).

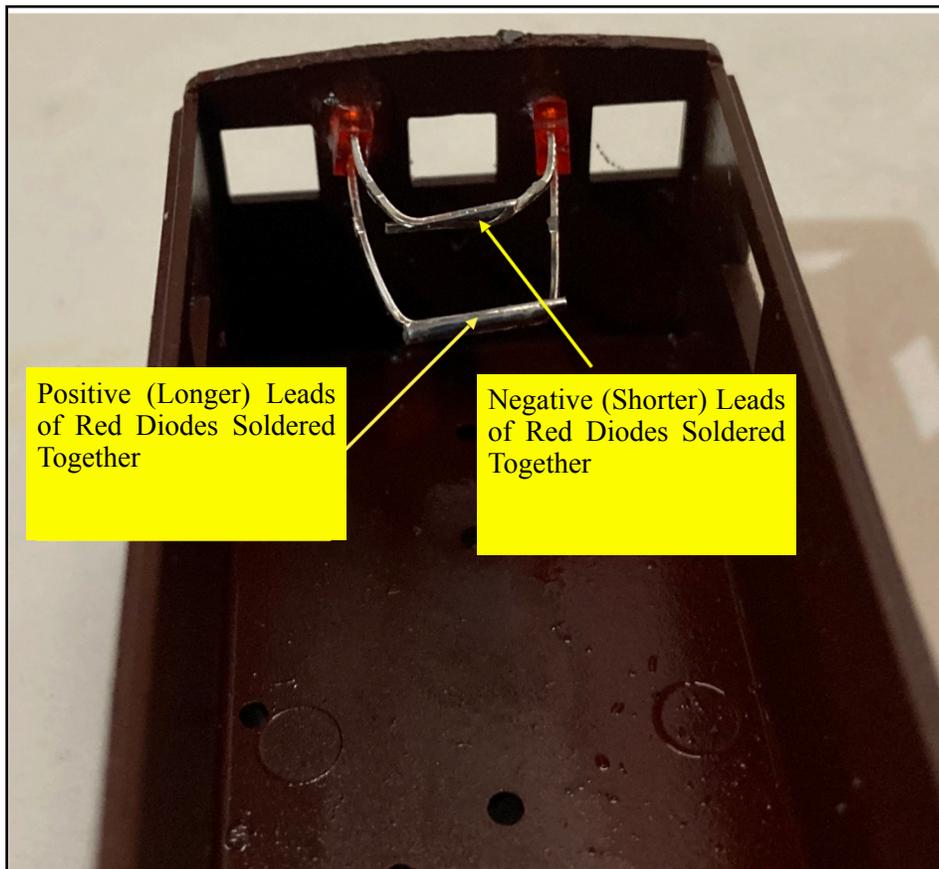


Photo 7

The next step is to connect the LEDs to the circuit. **Photo 8**, from the kit's instructions, shows where to connect the white (or yellow) and red LEDs to the circuit. **Photo 9** shows the circuit soldered in place to the yellow and red LEDs.

At this point, it is recommended that you test the lights to confirm everything is connected correctly and that they work properly. This can easily be done by plugging the male connectors into the female connectors and touching the other ends of the male connectors to a 9V battery. If everything is connected correctly, all of the LEDs should light up. Note that they will not appear to be very bright, but that is because the supply voltage is only 9V. Power from the rails is about 14V and the lights will be much brighter.

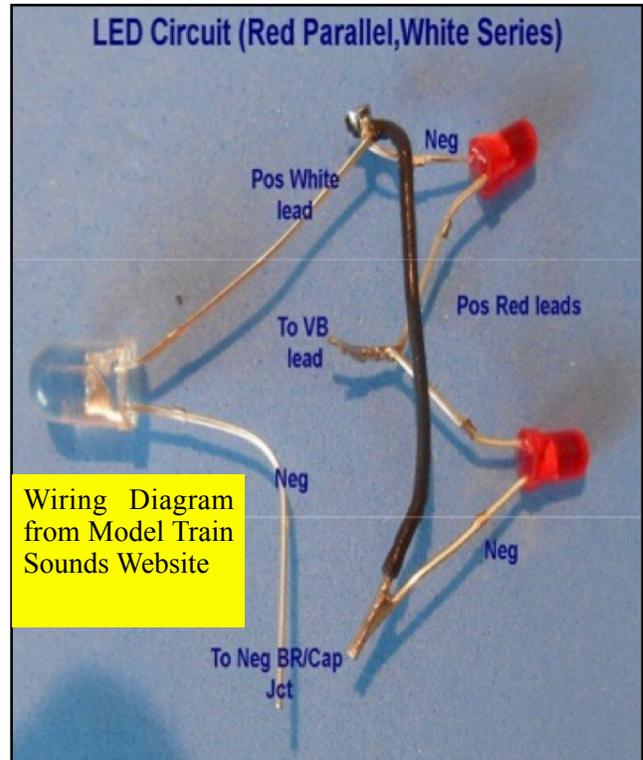


Photo 8

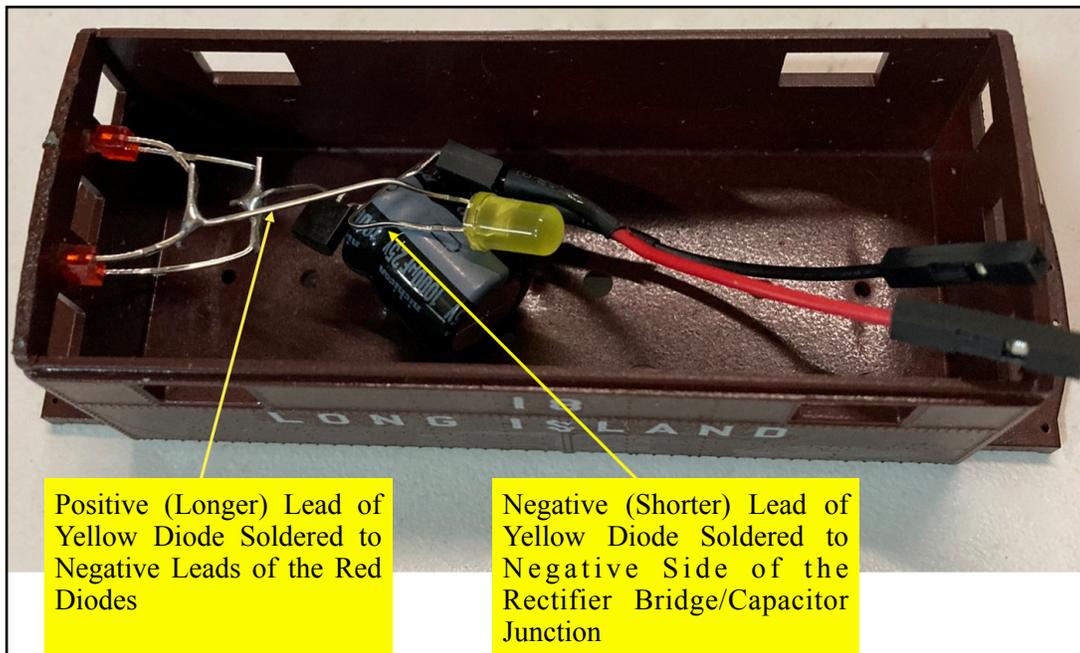


Photo 9

The last step is to connect the input side of the circuit to the wheels. Feed the ends of the wires that have the male connectors through the holes on the floor of the caboose and solder the ends to the copper collars (**Photo 10**). Since the copper collar on the wheelsets spins freely on the wheelset axle, I found that holding the copper collar in place with a pair of self-closing tweezers makes soldering the wire to the copper sleeve easy.

Now, simply remove the existing wheelset in each truck that is closest to the center of the caboose and replace it with the wheelset with the copper collar. Note that on each wheelset there is a black band on one

end of the copper collar indicating that the wheel closest to that band is electrically isolated from the axle and copper collar. Make sure that when you install the new wheelsets, the black band on the front truck is opposite the black band on the rear truck. Finally, plug the male and female connectors together.

At this point, you may wish to put the caboose on the tracks and again confirm everything works as it should before reassembling the caboose. **Photo 1 (p. 1)** shows the Bowser caboose with the LED lights installed and operating.

One final note - the axles do not always make continuous contact with the copper sleeve, so the caboose light may occasionally flicker. This can be remedied by using four wheelsets with the copper sleeve instead of two. Additional wheelsets can be purchased from the supplier (see below).

Assembling the lighting kit requires a soldering iron, solder, wire cutters and strippers, needle-nose pliers, CA or other glue (to glue the red LEDs to the back wall of the caboose) and a 1/16" drill bit.

If this kit is of interest to you, it can be ordered at Model Train Sounds (<http://www.modeltrainsounds.com/>). The kit comes with complete instructions which are also online under "Project 5."

Note: The kit I chose was a Bowser N5 caboose which I repainted and decaled in the Long Island Rail Road livery. The Long Island Rail Road called these cabin cars, rather than cabooses. However, the kit is called a caboose lighting kit, so if I offended any Long Island Rail Road fans out there, I apologize.

**VA and VB leads are electrical terms related to Operational Amplifiers (OP-AMP). VA (or Va) refers to inverting power input voltage; VB (or Vb) someone is at the front door refers to noninverting input. These definitions are beyond the scope of this article and are not required knowledge for this installation beyond the demonstration of the connections. For more information, go to this link on [Electronics Tutorials](#) – Ed.*

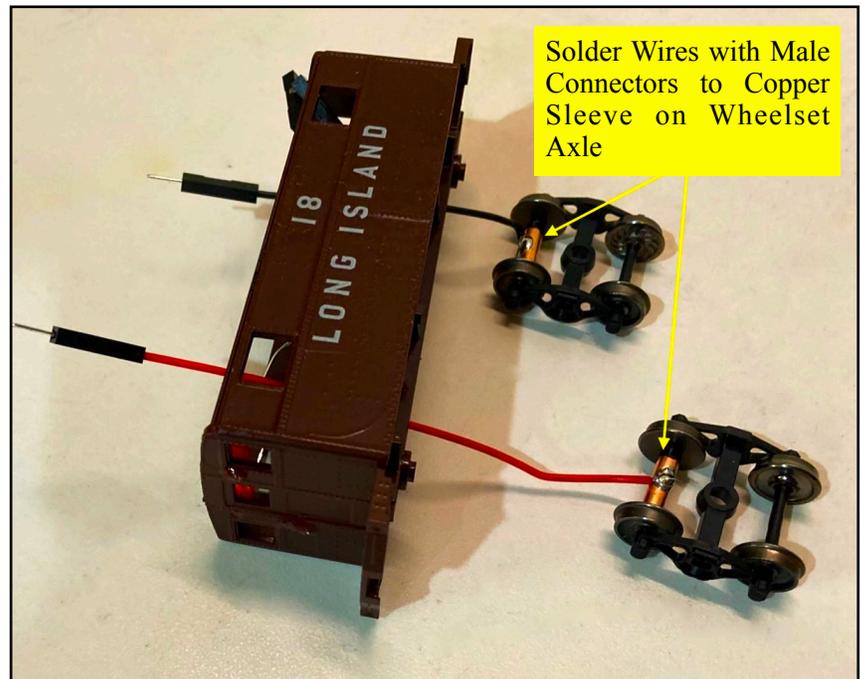


Photo 10



Kurt Thompson, MMR

NMRA Achievement

Program Update

By Kurt Thompson, MMR

Update for May 2025:

Since the last report, the following MER members have earned the following certificates. They should have been listed in the national magazine by now. Remember to congratulate them and encourage them to continue.

Division	Modeler	Achievement
1 - New Jersey	Tim Palmer	Chief Dispatcher
	Joseph Zebrowski	Model Railroad Author
2 - Potomac	James Hellwege	Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical
3- Philly	Eric Dervinis	Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical
4 - Tidewater	Alan Balma	Master Builder - Structures
12 - Carolina Southern	Joe Skorch	Model Railroad Engineer - Civil
	Joe Skorch	Association Volunteer
	Bradley Jones	Chief Dispatcher
13 - Carolina Piedmont	Danny Peele	Chief Dispatcher
14 - Chesapeake	Jim Fisher	Model Railroad Engineer - Civil



From the Editor's Desk...



What to Do This Summer

By Greg Warth

Summer is on the way. This is the time of year when many of us like to do some traveling. We've been cooped up in the house for a long winter. Time to get out and enjoy life. Kids are off for the summer. You have two weeks' vacation coming up. What should we do?

If you're a model railroader, you will probably want to go somewhere where there is a train show or a railroad museum. If you are lucky, your family will be excited about that possibility as well. Otherwise, you may have to put up with some grumbling and eye-rolling. In that case, you will have to budget your vacation time with your traveling partners if you want this trip to end happily.



The annual [2025 NMRA Convention](#) and [National Train Show](#) in Novi, Michigan (July 14-19, 2025) are likely to be high on your list of destinations this year. This promises to be one of the best conventions ever with over 50 layout tours, 20+ clinics per day, multiple prototype tours, no less than 24 layouts available for operating sessions. [Registration is now open.](#)

The [Train Show Calendar](#) is probably the best place to look for train events across the country. There will be a train show in almost every state you can think of to visit over the next 12 months. If there is no train show where you will be traveling, at least find a good hobby shop to browse in. And you *have* to buy something there so you can brag about it when you get back home.

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The Augusta County Railroad Museum is hosting the [2025 Annual Shenandoah Valley Train Show](#) on May 4, 2025, from 10am – 4pm at the Augusta Expo Event Center in Fishersville, Virginia.

Our own 2025 NMRA-MER Convention called the "[Philly Express](#)" will be at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in King of Prussia, PA. It will be held from October 16-19, 2025, and hosted by the Philadelphia Division.

Of course, if you will be traveling anywhere near Tidewater in eastern Virginia (Norfolk or Virginia Beach), you must stop by the Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads at MacArthur Center in Norfolk, open from 12-6 every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. If there are no train shows planned for your area, get some model railroaders together and make one!

If you're not planning on traveling, do not dismay. There are still plenty of things to do at home. What about that new scene you've been thinking about putting on your layout? How about upgrading your electronics, experimenting with automation, scratchbuild a new building and enter it into a contest at the MER Convention in October, build a new craftsman's kit, work on getting an AP (Achievement Program) certificate, spend more time with your family and friends. Focus on having fun and enjoying life. Write an article for *The Local*.

Speaking of *The Local*, I need to let you know that I will be stepping down as your Editor. Mark Nieting from the Tidewater Division has graciously agreed to carry it forward from here on. I have truly enjoyed this position, learned a ton from all of you including most of all from my proofreaders and editorial staff. I will continue to be involved in model railroading within the Division and the Region and with the museum we have started here at home. I would like to leave you with this plea. Stay involved and if you are not already, get involved. The joy and the friendships I have made here have made a huge difference in my life. Go for it!

This edition of *The Local* contains a 230' 72-wheel [Schnabel car](#) load of new articles and information about our favorite hobby. To lead off, Brian Sheron, MMR provides a detailed look at how to install lighting in your cabooses. Martin Brechbiel dives into his never-ending stack of craftsman's kits to create another detailed model from his workbench to our pages. This time it's a Stilwell oyster car kit. If you have followed his articles and used his instructions to build these kits, you should have quite a nice collection by now. An excellent article all about Yard Control and Design by Alan Balma will show you the state-of-the-art information about how it's done. Mark Nieting talks about podcasts and trash, both useful but not related in this instance. Make sure you read the candidates' statements to see who you want to vote for in the 2025 elections. And don't forget to look through the Divisions Reports. You might learn some amazing new ideas for your own Division from what the others are doing.

Once again, I would like to thank our outstanding [editorial staff](#) for all their hard work, not only for this issue but for all they have done over the last several years:

Jack Dziadul, MMR

Alex Belida, MMR

Martin Brechbiel, MMR

And special thanks to all our [authors](#). Without them, we would have nothing to show you.

Happy railroading,



Next Up:

In the next issue of *The Local*...

- *More great articles and photos*
- *Information about the [MER Convention](#) in October, including the [Registration Form](#)*
- *Estate Planning - What to do with your railroad. Your spouse needs to know.*
- *Fred Miller, MMR tells us how he downsized his model railroad. And much more...*

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 rates per year are shown on the right.

Advertising Rates (per year)	
Divisions & Clubs	Free
Clinics & Education	Free
Convention Ads	Free
Full Page - Color	\$100.00
1/2 Page - Color	\$60.00
1/4 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.

Elections 2025

THE MER NEEDS YOU!

Now Accepting Nominations for Directors It's Not Too Late!

If you are a member in good standing and want to support your region with good ideas and real involvement, we need you to volunteer to serve as one of the three Directors for the Mid-Eastern Region (MER). The MER Board of Directors generally meets three (3) times per year, once in January, once in April, and again at the MER convention. The deadline for nomination entry is **May 30, 2025**. The term of office is two years, with a limit of two terms for the President or Vice-President, five terms for Treasurer or Secretary.

Any qualified MER member in good standing can be nominated, either by him or herself or by another member with the candidate's permission. The process is very simple:

Prepare: A 200-word (max) statement outlining the nominee's interest and qualifications for the position, AND a photo of the candidate. Send the nominations package – by May 30, 2025 – to ALL of the following nominations process officials:

Nominations Committee: Chair: Robert Charles, MMR rcharles@aol.com; Jack Dziadul, MMR jackdziadul@gmail.com; Kenneth Montero, va661midlo@comcast.net

Optional – also by May 30, candidates may supply a 500-word statement suitable for placement on the MER website.

Deadlines and Schedules for 2025 Nominations and Balloting: Our Bylaws require the publication of deadlines and schedules for nominations and balloting in the first issue of The Local of each year. The dates and schedule for nominations, ballot and election results are in the Executive Handbook, Section 5, Policies, Article VI.

May 30, 2025 -- Deadline for receipt of self-nominations sent to the Nominations Committee. Date for Nominations Committee to notify Board of Directors of slate of nominees validated by the Business Manager.

August 1, 2025 -- Deadline for mailing paper ballots to members and for commencing electronic voting.

September 3, 2025 -- Deadline for electronic voting, also last day as shown by postmark for mailing paper ballots.

September 7, 2025 -- Deadline for receipt by Balloting Committee of paper ballots sent by mail.

September 14, 2025 -- Deadline for Ballot Committee to transmit results to President, the Director overseeing this committee, and the Business Manager.

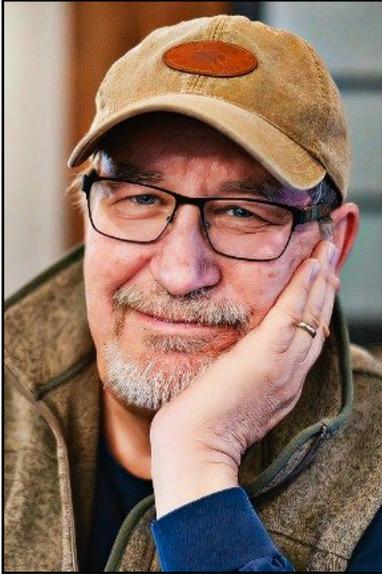
September 21, 2025 -- Deadline for The President to communicate the election results to candidates. The Business Manager also notifies the MER Web Master and the NMRA of the election results.

October 10, 2025 -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER's website.

You can make a difference by giving something back to the hobby you enjoy. This is your chance. Successful completion of three years in office fulfills the requirements for the Achievement Program "Association Official" certificate. Please respond in one email to all three committee members to ensure receipt of your nomination! That is all there is to it!

You still have until May 30, 2025 to get your nomination in.

2025 Election of MER Directors: Candidates' Statements



Bob Bridges

Bob Bridges: I am submitting my name to run for a second term as Mid-Eastern Region Director at Large. I have found the last two years have been an opportunity to better understand the MER leadership organization, interact with members from different divisions and help the region better serve the membership.

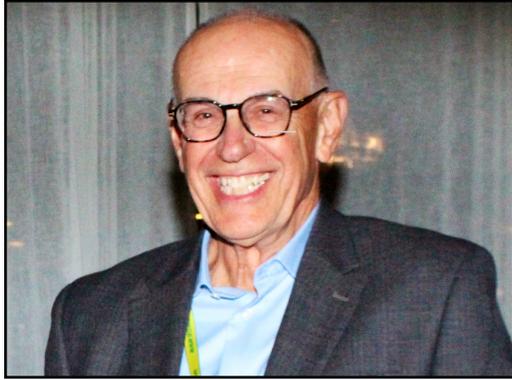
During my current term as a board member, I have been part of a team responsible for budget review of the region including the 2024 MER convention and have been working with the MER Photographer, Outreach Coordinator and Merchandise Sales Agent. In addition to my board responsibilities, I served as marketing and publicity team leader for the successful Piedmont Junction MER 2024 convention held this past September.

I would like the opportunity to continue as a director for the next two years, working to serve the membership and contribute to the advancement and enjoyment of our hobby. Thank you for your support.



Greg Warth

Greg Warth: I am happy to submit my statement to run for a second term as Director at Large for the Mid-Eastern Region. I have enjoyed being a director these past two years. I have learned so much more about the organization and how it operates. It is quite a different perspective from being a member. For those who haven't done it before, I would highly recommend getting involved and helping to provide new ideas. Being your Editor of *The Local* has also given me a unique perspective in that it gives me an opportunity to interact with so many members, other editors and supervisors that would not have been possible otherwise. The reward is that I get to have the satisfaction of doing something helpful for others in this great hobby of ours. Also rewarding for me is being a member of a Board that is very willing to listen, to really try hard to solve problems, and to make model railroading as enjoyable as it can be for its members. I am truly glad to have been a part of that, and I hope you will grant me the honor and privilege of serving in that role again. Thank you.



Kevin O'Connor

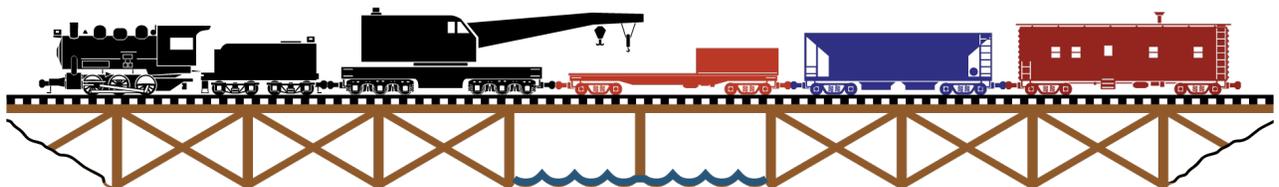
Kevin O'Connor: I am submitting my statement to run for a second term as Director- at- Large for the Mid-Eastern Region. As a director the past two years I've gotten a better appreciation of how MER interacts with NMRA and our local divisions. It has been rewarding to be a member of a Board that is: willing to listen, continues to look for ways to better promote our great hobby, and strives to improve your experience as a member of MER and your local division. Over the last two years I've had oversight of MER's web page, contest activities, and the archive. It's been a privilege working with the individuals directly responsible for these areas. We continue to try to make these areas relevant to you, the member. To do so requires your feedback and comments. Where we have

received comments/feedback we have incorporated them where possible.

In addition, to being a Director- at- Large, I have remained the Clerk for the Carolina Piedmont Division (CPD). In this position I publish our meeting minutes, oversee membership, ensure our bylaws are consistent with MER's and NMRA's bylaws and adapts to CPD's organizational changes. I was also Co-Chairman of the LCC (Local Convention Committee) which supported CPD's hosting of the 2024 MER Regional Convention, Piedmont Junction.

If given the privilege of serving as Director for another term, I hope to take my past two years' experience at the regional and division level, to continue making your membership as rewarding as possible.

NEW TRACKS MODELING



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 our 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.

We love our authors and we love our jobs in creating *The Local* for you to enjoy. We receive many articles with great content and we are always anxious to publish them. However, so many articles that we receive are not in a good format and require many hours of work to get them ready for publication. When you are preparing your article to send to the Editor, please follow the instructions presented here. It won't require any more work for you in writing the article, but it will save us many hours of proofreading and publishing time. Depending on the size of the article, it may take as many as 10-12 hours to actually get it in the newsletter. We can save at least half that time if it comes to us prepared according to the instructions.

How to Submit an Article for *The Local* (Please Follow These Steps Carefully!)

1. ***Please read*** the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on "[Preparing Your Manuscript for Publication in *The Local*](#)."
2. Compose and submit your text in Word format (.doc or docx).
3. Use Times New Roman font in 12 pt size.
4. The title should be **centered** and in **bold**.
5. Directly under the title should be "By (your name)" - centered, not bold. If you are an MMR, put it there.
6. If the photos are yours, enter in parentheses (Photos by the author) right after your name.
7. Enter your text with no paragraph indents. Justify the text so it is even on both sides.
8. In your text, refer to your photos this way: (**Photo 1**) - in parentheses, bold and blue.
9. Between paragraphs in your text, write "**Insert Photo 1 here**" where you want the photo to appear. DO NOT put your photos there. Otherwise, we just have to take them out.
10. Include the number of the Photo in the file name of the Photo so we know which one goes with which number.
11. Photos must be clear and sharp or they cannot be accepted. JPG, GIF, TIFF and PNG formats are acceptable.
12. Photo captions should be listed at the end of your article, or in a separate Word file, and numbered with the same number as the photo.
13. Send your text and your photos separately by email to [The Local Editor](#). They can all be sent in the same email as long as the total file size is less than 25 MB. If the size is larger than that, you will have to split them into two or three emails.

What Happens to Your Article after You Send It In?

First, the substance and context of the article has to be reviewed. Is it original? Has it been used before, or published elsewhere? Was it borrowed from someone else's work? Is it an appropriate topic for our newsletter? We've had to reject a few articles because they were more about rail fanning than they were about model railroading.

Then the text is carefully reviewed line by line by four different sets of eyes to check for typos, grammatical errors, wording or phrasing problems that have to be rewritten to be more understandable. Punctuation has to be corrected. If there are photos in the text, they have to be removed. Photos frequently require editing to make them look brighter and more appealing. File names of the photos have to be changed to include the number of the photo.

After the proofreading is finished, the text has to be entered into the publishing program, paragraph by paragraph, sometimes line by line. The text often has to be resized to make it fit properly without looking inconsistent. When we come to a point where a photo has to be inserted, it has to be resized so that it fits in with the text and in the right order with the proper caption. If a photo is missed, the whole article may have to be redone in order to get the photo in the right place.

It's just like putting a model together in many ways. You start with the raw materials or the parts that come in a kit. The materials and instructions for the kit are what the author provides. In this case, the various parts include the words that have to be put together properly. Then the paragraphs and the photos may have to be rearranged. Then you have to fit the pieces into the right places, so that they make sense and look appealing. There are many details that have to be added or corrected. Eventually, we glue them all together by converting them from Word into a pdf file.

What Kinds of Articles Do We Like to See?

1. Anything about modeling, whether it be about just putting a kit together, kit bashing, scratchbuilding, or just adding details or weathering to a model.
2. Any type of "How to..." article, as long as it is about model railroading.
3. New tips or techniques, or even old ones used in a new way.
4. A tour of your layout or that of a friend, including its name, location, theme, era, scale, size, best features and biggest challenges.
5. Summary of a model railroad conference you visited.
6. Tell us about your workbench, or any special tools you use.
7. Tell us how you fixed a problem you encountered with your model or layout.
8. If you received an AP or MMR Certification, explain how you did it, what were the challenges. What would you recommend to others working on the same project.
9. New electrical techniques that you performed, new automations, how you set up signals, how you installed sound or flashing signs, billboards, or other details.
10. Scenery techniques, mountains, water, river rapids, trees, forests, ground cover.
11. Building a bridge or trestle.
12. Photographing your layout or model.
13. How to recruit more people into the hobby.
14. Your summary of a clinic you attended.
15. How we can help each other.

**We love all the articles we
are receiving.
Keep them coming!**

Special Notes for Authors (**MUST READ** before submitting an article):



Please only send us your own creative work or that for which you have written permission to use so we can give that source proper credit. We need to avoid any copyright infringement situations. If you have previously published your article or photo in any other magazine or newsletter, including a Division or Regional newsletter or your own website blog, it cannot be reproduced in The Local without written permission from the magazine publisher, editor, and author or photographer. Also, Please read the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on “Preparing Your Manuscript for Publication in The Local.” If this is your first submission to The Local, please fill out and return this Media Agreement form to the Editor, which gives us permission to use your material and verifies that the work is yours, or that you have obtained written permission to use it. 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 along with a Record and Validation Form to your Division AP Manager to receive your Author AP Certificate.



Photo sent in by John Pursell: An Athearn "Bluebox" Baldwin S-12 painted in Lehigh Valley colors pulling an empty hopper through Franklin Junction on John Pursell's contest module.

MER Update

By Greg Warth, Editor and Director-at-Large

Some members have requested more news and information about what's happening in the NMRA and more specifically in the Mid-Eastern Region (MER). So, I have decided to provide updates periodically regarding management decisions and announcements as I become aware of them.

Our most recent MER Board Meeting was held on April 12, 2025 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in King of Prussia, PA. The following items were announced and/or discussed. This is only a summary; details are available in the minutes upon written request.

1. Annual Reports have been received from the Divisions and will be printed in *The Local*. A new format is being developed to make these reports more meaningful.
2. The current Editor/Publisher of *The Local* announced his pending resignation after five years in that position. Mark Nieting, a very capable and active member of the Tidewater Division, has agreed to accept the challenge, He is already looking into possible new features and improvements. Please congratulate him on his new position and support him as much as you can with new articles and great photos.
3. The complete minutes of each Board meeting and the Directors' Annual Reports will not be automatically printed or distributed, but will always be available upon request by emailing the MER Secretary.
4. The planning for the MER convention, "Philly Express," headed by Joe Walters, MMR, is moving along. The dates are October 16-19. Hotel reservations are now open. The website is being developed and registration forms will be available soon.
5. The Board determined to initiate the development of a marketing plan that is consistent with the Regional objectives listed in the Executive Handbook. Articles about the convention were requested for *The Local*.
6. Brian Kampschroer received the President's Award in 2022 for his exemplary work in the Region over many years, but was not able to receive the award at the next Convention. He did receive it later about which he was very pleased. Please read the memorial article written for him by Bob Charles, MMR later in this issue.
7. Many of the Divisions have been hosting mini conferences in their own areas, often in conjunction with other Divisions. The MER is glad this is occurring and encourages these activities.
8. The MER website will be updated soon.
9. Dean Taylor, of the currently inactive Blue Ridge Division, has requested reactivation of this Division.

10. MER financial status is considered to be in good shape. However, to secure a better financial future, the MER should further encourage more emphasis on “[Planned Giving](#).” A few articles appeared in *The Local* about this a couple of years ago. These could be re-written and/or updated. The Gerald Clyde Fund was discussed regarding its purpose and what should be done with the investments in that fund. One proposal was to use them for grants to help fund new endeavors in the Region that would support promotion and growth of the hobby, especially with a focus on getting more young people into model railroading. These ideas, if proposals are made, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

11. Potential candidates for the positions of MER Business Manager and Executive Convention Chairman are being considered. Bob Bridges has had some experience with ECC activities in the past and is considering the position.

12. The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday evening, October 16, 2025 at 7pm at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in King of Prussia, PA (260 Mall Blvd, King Of Prussia, PA, 19406).

13. Reminders:

- a. Board meetings are open to the membership.
 - b. Nonmembers may attend MER Conventions, but the ticket price may be higher.
 - c. MER convention registration forms will be available soon.
-



N scale Diorama by Greg Leiphart (Photo by Greg Warth).

Building Stilwell Oyster Car Kits

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR (Photos by the author)

As part of this hobby, I have always been attracted to unusual rolling stock, and found those cars to be of great interest to study, and then to build. Very few, if any, really fit into my declared modeling interest of the Cumberland Valley Railroad or the Chambersburg, Greencastle, and Waynesboro Railway. But I have not let that impede me in any way. They never had helium cars, poultry cars, or pickle cars as far as I know, and neither had any involvement in the transport of oysters. Although with the proximity to Baltimore and the Chesapeake Bay, one might be able to make some argument of substance that it was possible. I'll leave that to the imagination.

In any case, in 1897 the Pullman Palace Car Company delivered an odd-looking boxcar with eight cone-shaped vents or stacks distributed on its roof and four latched doors, not unlike reefer hatches, arranged evenly low along the side of the car. If there was any doubt as to its purpose, the lettering on the sides announcing it to be "THE STILWELL OYSTER CAR" ended the debate.

The car was constructed with six compartments. The oysters were loaded into the various compartments from above and were unloaded from the sides. Once filled with their product, salt water was poured in with the intention of delivering live oysters from Port Arthur, Louisiana to their final destination, Kansas City, Missouri, running on the Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf, a precursor of the Kansas City Southern. It was reported to be painted dark blue with silver lettering, and be operated in passenger trains. It seemed unlikely that oysters would survive the trip given rough treatment and heat. If anyone is really interested in more information, Patent No. 609,373 for an Oyster or Fish Car issued to one Arthur E. Stilwell is probably available electronically from the United States Patent and Trade Office.

In 1975, Wabash Valley Models released three kits, a Big 4 boxcar or reefer, a Fort Wayne Horse Auction car, and a Stilwell oyster car. I have rebuilt and restored one of the horse car kits and have another unstarted, numbered kit and I had two oyster car kits.

I had real optimism when I bought these two kits thinking to myself, just how difficult could these possibly be to assemble ([Photos 1, 2](#)). What I got was probably typical of the times. The kits included different sizes of stripwood, some cast metal detail parts, and assorted bits of wire for fabricating hand rails, brake staffs, truss rods, and brake lines ([Photos 3, 4](#)). Also included were a pair of scribed sides, painted Tuscan red and lettered for the Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf ([Photo 5](#)). The lettering was transfer stamped. Also provided were guidelines for mounting the outside framing. Oddly, there was no milled roof section, and the floor was a less than inspiring piece of pine. The instructions were at best obtuse, but there was a decent diagram included ([Photos 6, 7](#)). My thoughts questioning difficulty were answered and everything was abruptly returned to their boxes, which were placed on a shelf to gather dust for a decade and a bit more.

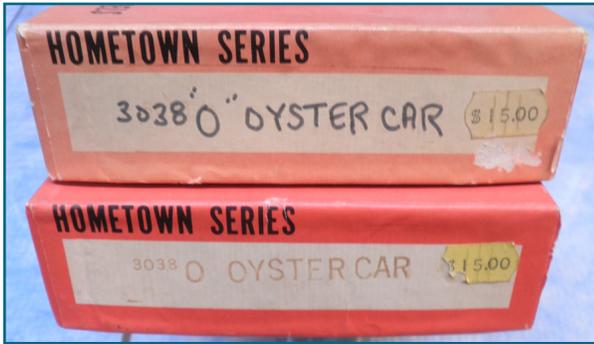


Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

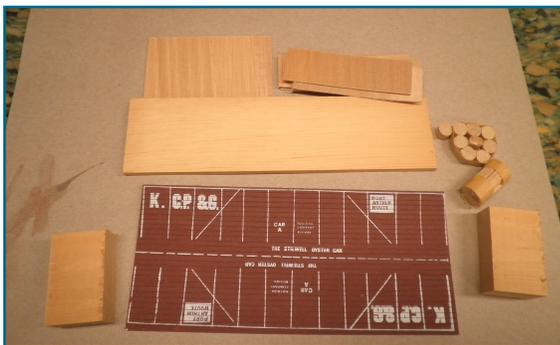


Photo 5

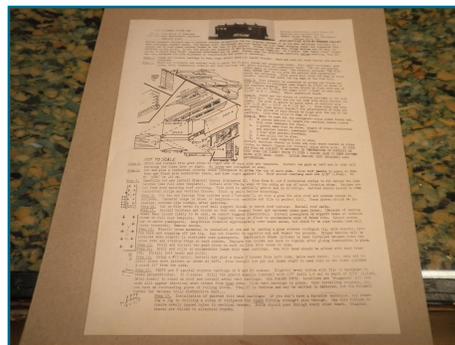


Photo 6



Photo 7

A related issue resides in the need for proper trucks. The Wabash Valley kit instructions states that the prototype had Fox trucks. Those are challenging to locate and procure in O scale. The only sources have been from under the Casey Jones tender from the AHM kit, some rather nice ones from Thomas in the 1950s, and some exceptionally fine brass imports from Rich Yoder. But none of those solved this problem since the correct trucks are Cloud trucks. The Cloud was a pressed steel truck not unlike the Fox truck of that same era. Odds of those ever being available in O scale up until recently were round about nil; 3D printing might improve those odds. But I do happen to have all three options of Fox trucks in stock in my shop, so that's one compromise that I'll be making.

In any case, time passed, skills increased, what was once challenging was now only mildly daring, and the willingness to forge on through to completion while making changes and corrections was honed adequately to meet this challenge. Let's get building and I'm building two of these cars in parallel!

I started with building up the floor thinking to have a base to build everything else on going forward. Following the instructions (sort of) but making more use of the drawings, I glued into place the kit's body bolsters, needle beams, and queen posts (Grandt Line) while running surgical silk truss rods (Tichy turnbuckles) through the floor securing them on what would become the inside of the car body where the ends would not be seen. I could have created an entire underframe and tossed the pine floor into the scrap, but I thought to stay with the kit parts since maintaining the thickness of the floor might have led to other compromises that I did not want to contemplate ([Photo 8](#)).



Photo 8

Thereafter I added a basic K brake system to the underbody using a white metal casting for the cylinder, Berkshire Valley brake levers, and brake rods fabricated from 0.025" wire (Tichy) fitted with clevises on the ends made from Grandt Line turnbuckles. The lever hangers were just made up from 0.015" x 0.060" flat brass stock. Everything was assembled using Goo and medium viscosity CA ([Photo 9](#)).

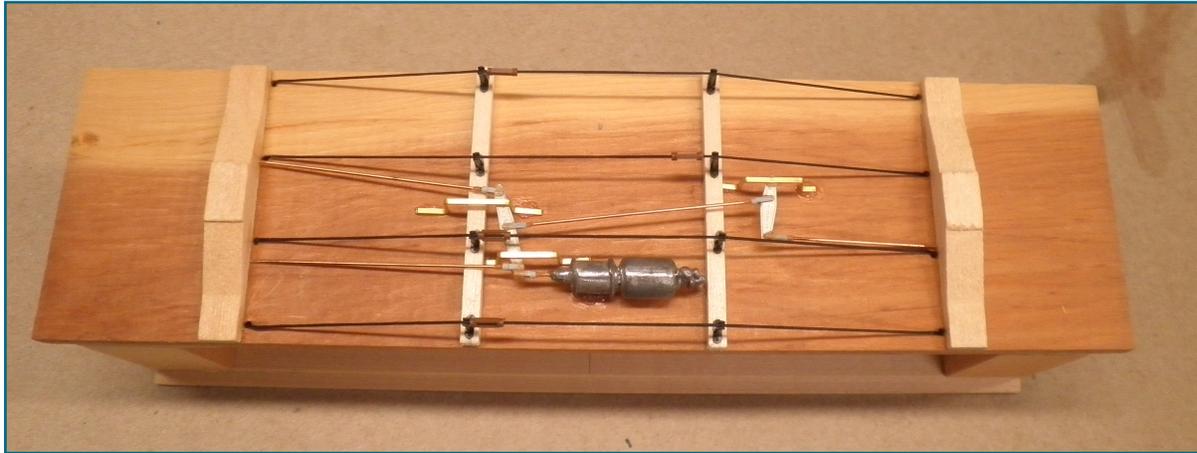


Photo 9

Building up the "box" for the car body was next. I was substituting in a milled roof section. To make that work, the height of the car body had to account for the height of the pre-lettered sides. To complicate that further, the instructions directed that the lower portion of those sides was to be removed and added to the side sills. Locating the cut away portion of the pre-painted side on the side sill provided a ledge for the outside framing to rest on when added later. Also, once cut away, the car body height was now defined by the remaining pre-painted side. On that basis, end blocks were cut, assembled, and shimmed into place for the roof stock to rest on flush with those ends ([Photo 10](#)). Thereafter, the trimmed sides were fitted into place and secured with carpenter's glue ([Photo 11](#)).



Photo 10

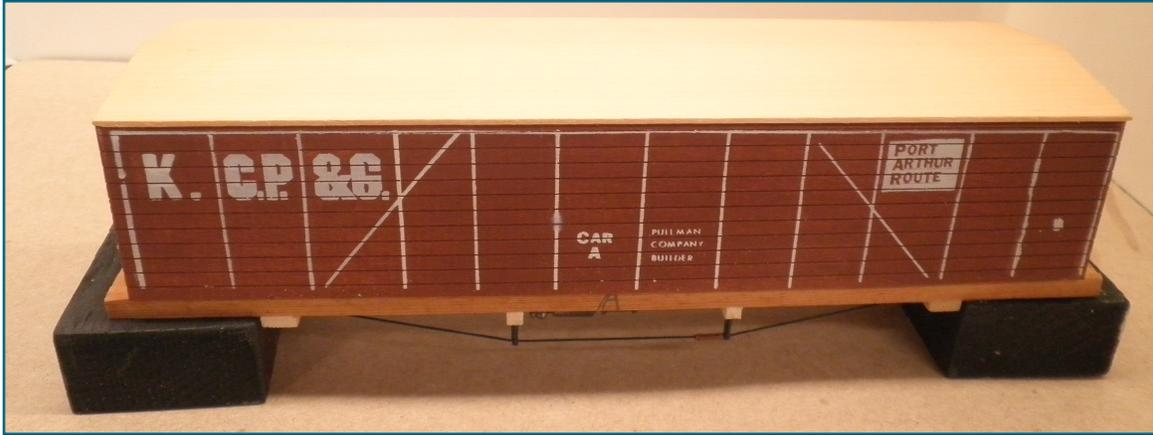


Photo 11

The roof ends were capped with some basswood. This was done to provide overhang of the roof over the ends and also then to cover the end grain of the milled roof section. The wood was first glued in place using Goo and CA, then shaped in place to match the contour of the roof ([Photos 12, 13](#)).



Photo 12



Photo 13

The lower letter board that had been trimmed from the pre-painted sides was glued into place on the side sill (Photo 14). The outside bracing (pre-painted) was applied trying to align those parts over the pre-painted lines that were supplied on the sides. These guide lines were not straight, and some liberties were taken. However, the spirit of the appearance was still in play (Photo 15). The ends also had outside bracing applied along with a goodly number of nuts, bolts and washers (NBWs) (Grandt Line and Tichy) (Photo 16). Rather than use the supplied materials for making the side hatches, I had two sets of 3D printed parts. These were very generously made and provided by Conowingo Models. I had noticed that Chris Coarse of this company had for sale a kit for this car in HO. He also generously scaled up and printed two sets of the roof vent assemblies. Sometimes if you ask nicely kit makers will actually be helpful! I applied the hatches to the sides along with a host of NBWs (Photos 17, 18).

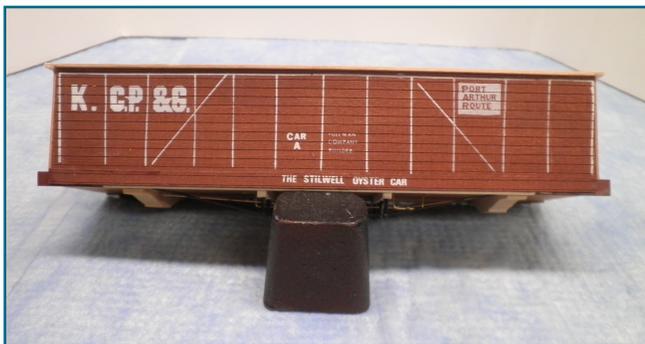


Photo 14



Photo 15

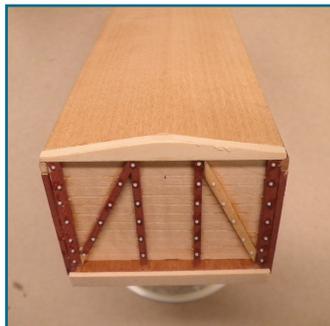


Photo 16

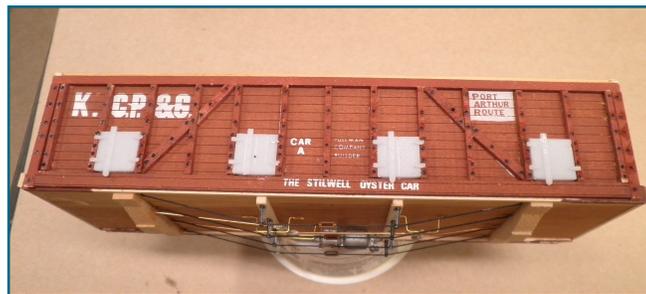


Photo 17

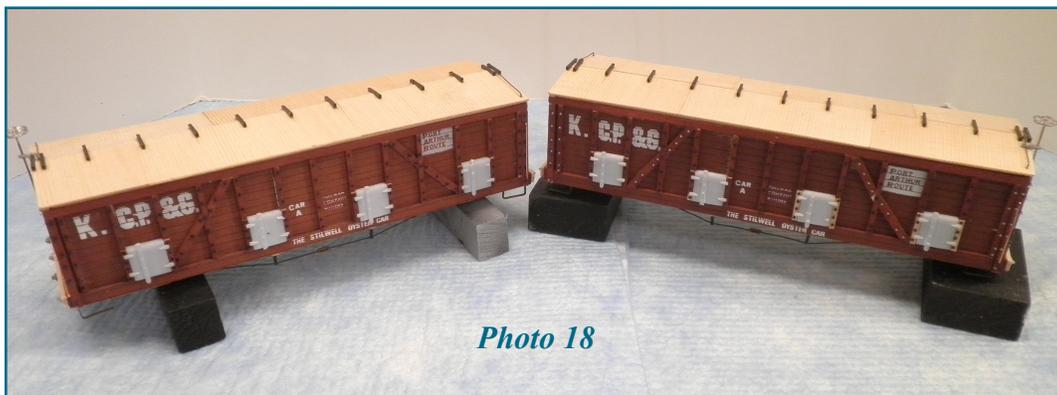


Photo 18

Roofwalk supports, and a brake wheel on a shaft threaded through a ratchet and pawl casting were added to the brake end of the car bodies. Grab irons and stirrup steps were added all around the car body (**Photo 18**). To finish these cars, the roof was painted, and the pre-painted roof walk boards were glued to the supports. The roof vent assemblies were pre-painted black and added to the roof. A pair of AHM Fox trucks, after some modification of the truck bolsters, was added under the cars to finish off both of these cars (**Photos 19, 20**).



Photo 19



Photo 20

Model Railroad Podcasts

By Mark Nieting

If you spend any time highway driving you no doubt listen to something, if for no other reason than to keep you awake. Perhaps you listen to music or talk radio while you're at the work bench. I've discovered some very fine "podcasts" that you just might enjoy. In simple terms, a podcast consists of a person or a group recording, something that they would like to share with a given audience. Call it an audio version of YouTube if you wish, but there are literally tens of thousands of podcasts on thousands of topics that are available. Even for model railroaders, there have been hundreds of choices: where does one start? Here are some of the best I've found. Maybe Editor Greg Warth* will keep adding to this list if you find more that are worthwhile!

Crew Call with Mike Rose. Mike is a very amiable host who interviews a wide variety of guests in these hour-long podcasts. He also has a website: themodelrailroadpodcast.com that offers full transcripts of each episode and gives you choices. It's a great place to start!

Around the Layout. Ray Arnott is quite an amiable host with a wide variety of guests and topics. With 150 episodes already posted, he'll keep you entertained for hours. Tony Cook is a frequent guest in these weekly adventures.

Second Section Podcast. Hosted bi-weekly by Andy Dorsch and Mike Ostertag, you can get your fill of great Wisconsin-speaking model railroaders who also take questions from the "Section Crew," their regular listeners who respond through the website secondsectionpodcast.com. It's one of my favorites both for the humor and the topics, as Mike is an engineer.

The Crossing Gate. This is my overall favorite, a product of the Twin Cities Division of the NMRA and hosted by Thomas Gasior, MMR. There is plenty of group chat from division members which I find interesting, but the highlight is a humorous intro to each cast by Tom's wife which is always cleverly done. I haven't found a website yet but it's well worth a listen.

The Roundhouse. Hosted by Nick Ozorak, this biweekly cast covers a wide variety of topics often including prototype railroading, historical issues and railroad museums. With 150 episodes already catalogued, they can be found on his website: theroundhousepodcast.com.

Model Railroad Talk. Another weekly that covers a variety of topics, has companion YouTube videos and a blog, it's easy listening and very practical for modelers. See ModelRailroadTalk.com.

** If you have any podcasts that you would like to add to this list, please let me know. - Ed.*

Fixing Tracks and Turnouts

By John Arthur (Photos by the author)

I recently tore out some track in an area which had some completed scenery, and it got me thinking about the choices we make which involve overcoming fear and taking action. I have been in and around the hobby since I was a kid, and I have spent far too much time worrying about messing something up, making a mistake, ruining a good model, etc. Experience helps overcome these anxieties, but the only way to get experience is to make the first move. We can mitigate the risks, but we can't eliminate them entirely unless we want to remain arm chair modelers. Afraid of ruining an expensive locomotive by doing a poor job of weathering it? Start with some inexpensive freight cars at a swap meet. Worried about ruining that beautiful Fine Scale Miniatures Structure kit? Start by assembling a beginner level kit. But look to finish it off nicely with some weathering. Experiment! But do it with something inexpensive and easy to replace.

I have become fond of the phrase, "What's the worst that can happen?" Often, I find the answer is, "Well I make a mistake, and learn from it." Or, "I tear it out and start over." If it was a mistake made on an old Blue Box freight car I paid two dollars for? Well I guess I am out two dollars and however much time I used gaining experience. The worst thing to happen in that case is that I throw the car out and try again. Worried about making a mistake in scenery? Worst thing that can happen is just tear it out and try again. In both cases, I have learned something. Maybe try it again on a similar item? Maybe scrap the technique and try something else? Either way, I got something out of it. And more often than not, it ends up looking just fine!

In the spirit of that mindset, back to my track. During the pandemic, I made progress on a room-sized switching layout in the room over our garage. The progress was so rapid that my wife remarked, "Oh, I didn't realize we would completely lose our guest room." Trouble was brewing, obviously. As society began opening up again in 2022, sure enough, I found myself being moved out into the garage itself.

I gained some space, and was able to reuse the majority of the original layout which was fully operational at the time. But this is where some issues crept in. The largest piece I moved was a roughly 13'-3" long section of a seven track classification yard, plus the main and a pair of arrival / departure tracks, with industrial trackage along the rear. It varied between 18" and 30" wide. If this section had been 1/2" longer or wider, it would not have made it out the door, around a corner, down the hall to the stairs; but, as it was, it *just* fit. Sort of. Things got twisted and experienced tension and torsion that weren't meant to take place, and damage happened. Not all of it was obvious, and some wouldn't be discovered until recently.

As I began stitching components back together after the move and occasionally running a train, I discovered issues with certain turnouts. The first issue was on the approach to a curved turnout where the icing track breaks away from the beginning of the yard lead. I didn't notice a problem here until I had built an icing dock kit.

The track on the approach had pinched out of gauge, and was noticeable only when the diverging route to the ice dock was taken. Furthermore, a piece of ballast in a bad spot was pushing the center of some very long points out of gauge when the diverging route was thrown. A second area was arguably the most important turnout on the entire layout: the one that leads from the yard lead into the ladder, as well as the first ladder turnout. A third issue: just beyond the ladder there is a double crossover joining the lead and main on one side to the main, the industrial track beyond, and the arrival / departure tracks on the other side, beyond another turnout. This is an incredibly important area in terms of the eventual operations of this layout. All three of these areas had ballast, and the first area had been somewhat scenicked as well (**Photo 1**).



Photo 1 – Bird’s eye view of the scene showing the entire area after repairs and some scenery work. The curved turnout problem area is indicated at left, the repaired ladder turnouts and double crossover are shown at right. The outer curve in light-colored ballast approaching from the left is the main with access to the two Arrival/Departure tracks via the diverging route through the crossover. The inner track in the same curve is the yard lead with direct access to the icing track via the curved turnout, the yard ladder, both Arrival Departure tracks via its straight route through the crossover and the main and industries behind via its diverging crossover route. For the sake of future operations, it was very important to get these busy areas corrected!

To be clear, it was obvious what needed to be done. But tearing out the scenery, ballast, painted track and the installed leads gave me pause. So I practiced avoidance. I worked on other areas of the layout. I built some structure kits. I built some rolling stock kits, I even took on an Ambroid reefer car which took many hours of work (calendar months with my schedule), and may someday be included in my attempt at a Master Builder - Cars AP (Achievement Program). Anything but attacking the obvious. Why have a layout that you can't run? Was it fear that led me to avoid the obvious issues? I knew fixing them was required if any future operators were to enjoy this layout, but getting to them seemed daunting.

After a few "I want to get my layout operational again" fits and starts over the course of at least a year, I have finally taken concrete action. I started with the approach to the curved turnout. It is on the left; we read left to right and I have tended to build in the same direction. It also seemed the easiest to work on despite the finished scenery. One evening, I got my spray bottle of isopropyl alcohol and began soaking the area. I put some good music on and coaxed myself forward. For me and many Gen X'ers my age, music peaked in the mid to late 1990s (the classic rock of the 70s a close second) so it was the soundtrack of my time in high school and college that prodded me onward. I set to scraping away the soaked and loosened ballast with a small putty knife, and made a big mess. Nothing the shop vac couldn't handle! Pretty quickly the ties I had previously slipped under the problematic rail joint were completely exposed and I began working them free. I gave myself about a 2" length of track in which to work, which at this point just looked like a hole in the middle of the scene. Static grass, painted track, and ballast surrounded a two inch square of exposed pink insulation foam with a pair of rails running across it. I turned on the soldering iron, got my flux and solder, and wet the sponge. I got my rail gauge out and placed it over the track, pushing each rail out, slightly. I slid a few PC board ties under the rails, and within 5 minutes, had the track in gauge. I wiped away the flux and tested the track with a freight car. So far, so good. So, I grabbed a VO-1000 switcher and a few reefers, and ran them over the area; I spotted them where the icing dock sits. No problems again, and hey – that was fun! Am I operating again? Sort of, and certainly taking concrete action towards that goal. I moved the train and all of its cars out of the way and masked off the area around the 2" hole that was now punctuated by rails with 4 or 5 bright shiny copper ties. After applying a rattle can of brown paint in thin coats, and wiping off the tops of the rails, I went to bed for the night. The next time I was in the layout room, I airbrushed the ties a lighter color, added some rust to the sides of the rails, and re-ballasted the area. That second evening took less time than the first and at that point, both the turnout and the scenery were fully repaired.

Next, it was on to the two ladder turnouts. I had assembled the entire yard ladder on the workbench when the layout was still upstairs, complete with feeders soldered to the bottoms of the rail joiners, and each turnout soldered together. It was a little bit of a pain to extricate the problem turnouts, but again with the help of some isopropyl alcohol on the ballast, the soldering iron to loosen some solder, and a little elbow grease, I was able to slip the turnouts out and flip them over. I use a combination of Walthers/Shinohara and Micro Engineering turnouts on the layout. With the former I have been using Caboose Industries ground throws, and with the latter I leave the springs in place and flip the points with my finger. The ladder was constructed using the Micro Engineering Ladder Track System, and I figured that during the move, the springs in a few of the turnouts must have been dislodged.

After repairing them, I attached feeders to some new rail joiners, and used those to replace the start of the ladder. Another test run proved this issue had also been resolved (**Photos 2 and 3**).



Photo 2 – The tiny U-shaped spring is normally covered by a small plastic square, which holds it in place. During the move, the plastic came off, which must have allowed the spring to come loose of the throwbar. This happened on the first two turnouts of the yard ladder.



Photo 3 – The yard ladder, with the second ladder turnout center of frame and the first in the distance beyond it. Loose throw bars here would have caused countless frustrating derailments for the yard crew. Once repaired, I re-ballasted and began adding weeds and other scenery.

The next area of concern was the double crossover. This was a Walthers product, and thus I had installed four ground throws, one on each set of points in the crossover. The issue here wasn't so much due to moving the layout, but the way I had installed the ground throws in the first place. From pairs of plastic ties removed from flex track, I had made a crosswise cut, leaving the plastic that normally would sit under the flex track rails in place to hold the ties together. The space between this pair of ties seemed enough for the switch throw bar to pass through, but with ballast and glue, these tended to become stuck after not using them for a while. While hard to explain, that was simplest repair yet. Just remove the cross piece holding the ties together. Another issue with the initial arrangement was related to the mounting of the Caboose Industries ground throw. I had glued the ties down to the foam layout surface with foam safe glue, and then glued the ground throw to the tops of the ties with CA. This arrangement tended to become loose over time. Following a suggestion by MER President Scott Unger, I ditched the ties altogether and glued down small strips of cork in their place, and used spikes to hold the throws down on the cork. I painted the cork a grayish color with cheap acrylics and then ballasted right over the top of it. I think it looks fine and blends into the surrounding ballast, and the throws don't stick anymore. Another problem solved (**Photo 4**)!



Photo 4 – With the double crossover to the right of frame, this shows the finished product with the ground throws firmly mounted to cork roadbed, hidden beneath ballast.

I am glad I took action on these issues when I did as they would have created a real headache for operators in the future. While “inconvenient” to work on such areas, the fear of “messaging up” is misplaced as these trouble spots are already “messed up.” With the goal of eventually operating with guests, a smooth running layout is essential. It really isn't that big of a deal to remove a little scenery and ballast, and I am glad I took action!



HO Covered Hopper from the Cincinnati Division

Hello once again to NMRA, MER, Division Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Directors, News-Letter Editors, Web Masters, Facebook Managers and members in-general.

We previously reached out to you in the Fall of 2022 and in subsequent ads since then.

We are getting in touch with you once again with a request to publicize and promote Cincinnati Division 7's limited-edition, HO scale, N&W HC-46 ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper cars that we have for sale. This car is unique in that it is a repaint scheme with patched-out data.

The following link provides details about it as well as pricing, shipping and ordering information.

<https://division7mid-centralregionnmra.godaddysites.com/car-projects>

It would be greatly appreciated if you would make your membership aware of this limited-edition freight car by publicizing it in your Region's and/or Division's web page, newsletter or email blast.

We thank you in advance for your support!

Paul Maciulewicz
 NMRA; MCR; Cincinnati Division 7
 Car Projects Chairman

Yard and Staging Control Design

By Alan Balma (Photos by the author)



Photo 1: Canandaigua Division Point Yard on my PRR Elmira Branch switching layout. The two staging tracks are at the far end along the back-drop.

The yard and staging area control decisions on my Pennsylvania Railroad Elmira Branch switching layout were driven by the need to manage these areas from two different locations. If I am alone for an open house, I need a second panel near the lift gate entrance to the layout room. This panel needs to control the Arrival/Departure siding and my two staging tracks so that I can run different trains during an event. The walkaround control, used in my two industrial switching districts, is topographically impractical.

I use an NCE DCC system for my layout. This article is about the design that I chose to address the above situation. It does not provide detailed wiring diagrams or programming instructions which can be found on the North Coast Engineering (NCE) website. It provides a structure and a strategy which can be adjusted for individual situations.

In approaching the design, I wanted to do the following:

1. Control the Arrival/Departure throat and staging yard access from two different locations. The primary location needs to be close to where one can operate the whole yard and uncouple with PICs. The secondary location is needed at the layout entry so that a single operator can move trains and welcome guests through a lift bridge during open houses. For the location of the Main Control Panel, the Sub Control Panel and the layout entrance at the nearby lift bridge, [see Photo 2](#).
2. Single button routing from the yard lead into the five track yard ladder.
3. Turnout alignment with a button press versus a toggle switch.
4. Use of Tortoise switch machines.
5. Not use a throttle to align turnouts. (potentially confusing for new operators).

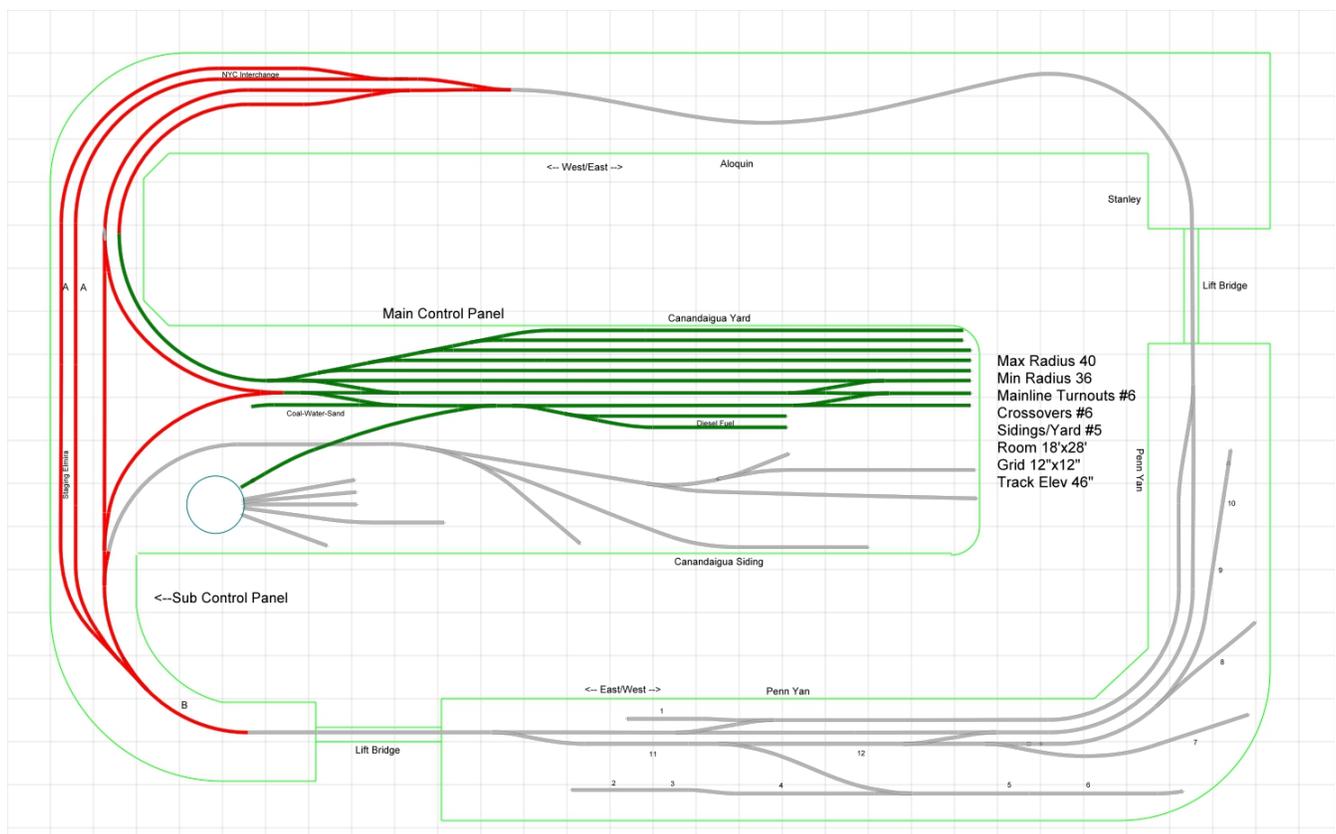


Photo 2: Layout Track Plan. The layout is S Scale.

A search of the internet yielded some possibilities. But they either utilized old technology, or electronics or software that required detailed knowledge much beyond the basic level. My layout DCC system is from North Coast Engineering (NCE). A study of their control products gave me a possible solution for the items above using NCE Switch-8's, Button Boards, and a Mini-Panel. First a brief description of each of products.

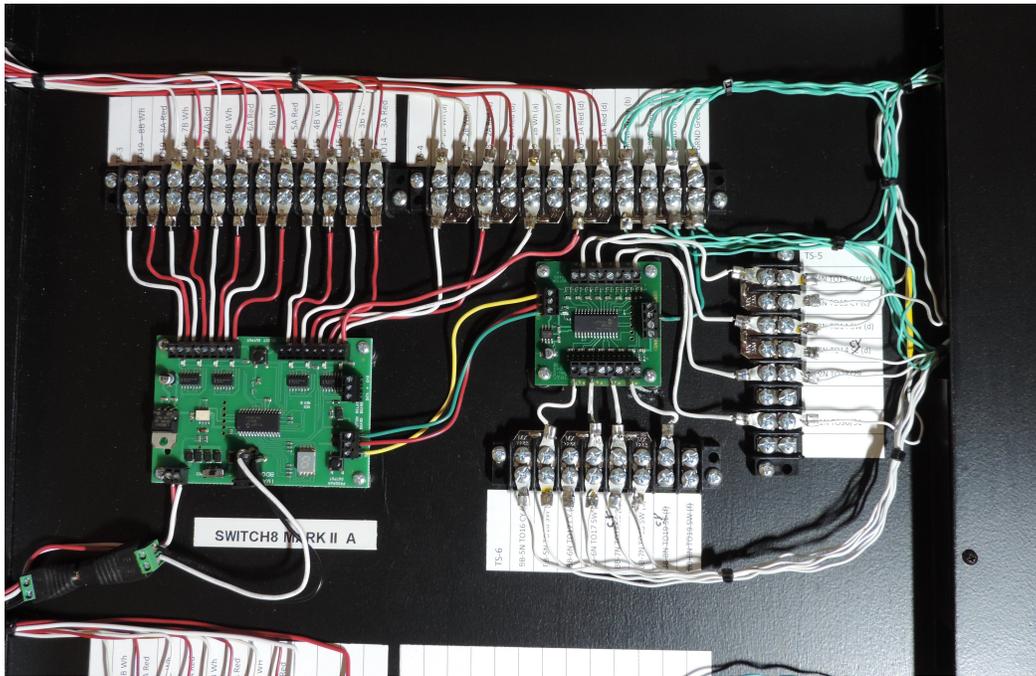


Photo 3: The NCE Switch-8 Mark 2 stationary decoder board is lower left. The NCE Button Board is upper right. Spade terminal connections are used through out the layout for ease of trouble shooting.

NCE Switch-8 Mark II for Tortoise

The NCE Switch-8 Mark II (**Photo 3**) circuit board is an accessory decoder that can control up to eight Tortoise or stall motor switch machines. Each of the eight user assignable addresses controls one turnout. How to assign an accessory address and how to trigger it with your throttle are in the product directions. I can also control two turnouts with one address for a crossover. The connections to the board are:

- Track on the bottom left. This is the source of the DCC signal for addressing the stationary decoder from your throttle or other devices.
- Tortoise switch machines on the top. Two wires to each machine.
- 3 wires to the Button Board on the right. This allows turnout control by momentary push buttons or momentary toggle switches.
- External 12V DC supply on the bottom center. I use an optional separate 12V supply because I do not want to take power away from my DCC system. There is a switch selectable power source on the board.

NCE Button Board

The NCE Button Board (**Photo 3**) allows the control of eight turnouts with a Normally Open (NO-momentary) SPDT toggle switches, or two SPST momentary push buttons (one on each route), or a single SPST momentary push button. The latter case can be used to toggle between the two routes by setting a Switch-8 Configuration Variable (CV), i.e., set CV548 to 1. I use the toggling feature and will cover this later. The connections to the board are:

- Switch-8, the 3 wires on the left.
- Switches (Push Button or Toggle) top and bottom. Up to 8 switches can be connected.
- Switch commons on the right.

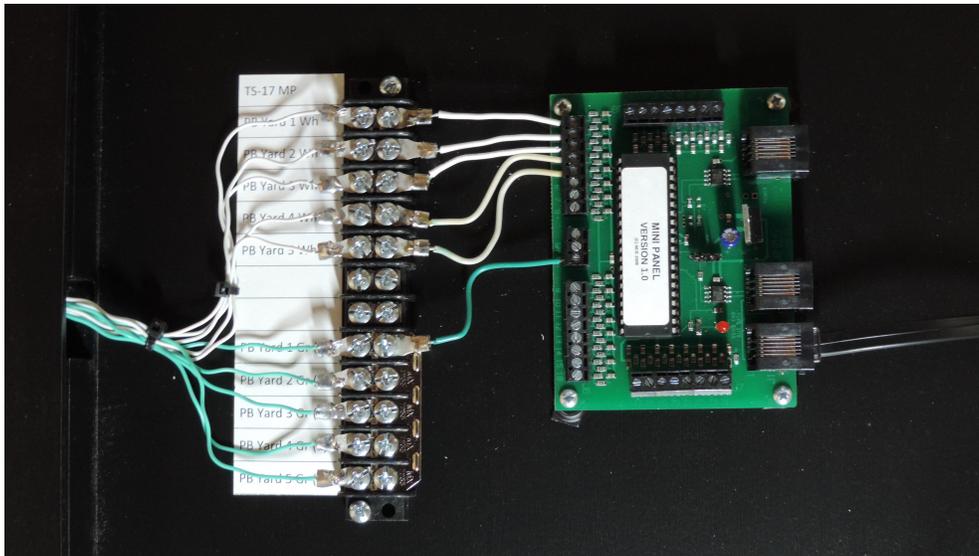


Photo 4: NCE MiniPanel Board

NCE Mini-panel

The NCE Mini-panel (**Photo 4**) circuit board can be used for applications such as control panels for yards, basic automation of trains and control of signals. I am going to focus on the first application. Up to 30 inputs can be attached to this board. Limitations are covered in the board manual. The connections to the board are:

- DCC Bus on the right bottom. It can be part of a daisy chain.
- NCE ProCab connection for programming on the right top.
- Momentary SPST Push buttons or normally open SPST toggle switches on the top, left and bottom. Each can trigger a program.
- Common for push buttons or toggle switches on the middle left.

The Two or More Panel Problem

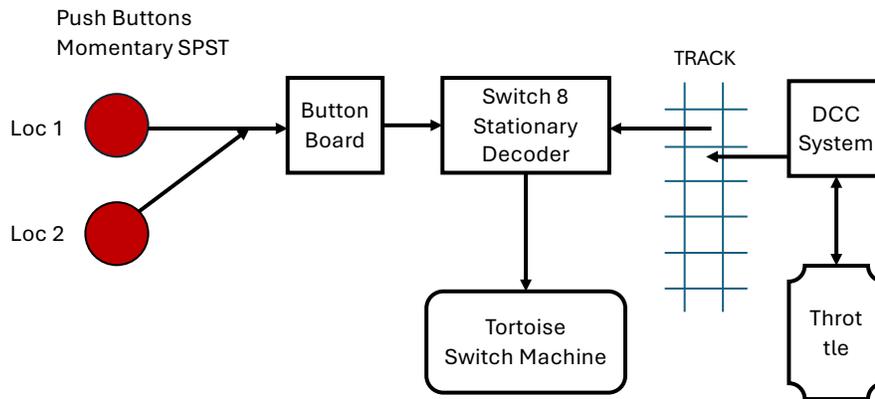


Photo 5: Diagram of the turnout control architecture

The areas to be controlled are colored red and green (**Photo 2**). The Main Panel controls both the red and green trackwork; and the Sub Panel controls just the red area. By utilizing the Button Board and the Switch-8 toggling feature, turned on by setting CV548 to 1, the problem is solved. See (**Photo 5**). A push button at a common turnout on each panel is connected to the same Button Board input. Each press of either button toggles the turnout to its next possible position. The Switch-8 does not care or know where the signal comes from. It just knows that an input from the button board from this button or toggle switch means to trigger the turnout’s address and advance it to the next position. I believe this solution will also work for more than two locations but I have not tested it.

The NCE instructions say the Switch-8 will work with a Digitrax DCC system. Since this device is just a decoder, theoretically it should work with any DCC system that is compatible with the standards. But you should check with NCE for your particular system. If desired, one can also still control the turnout from your throttle using its accessory address.

Yard Ladder Routing by Pushing a Single Button

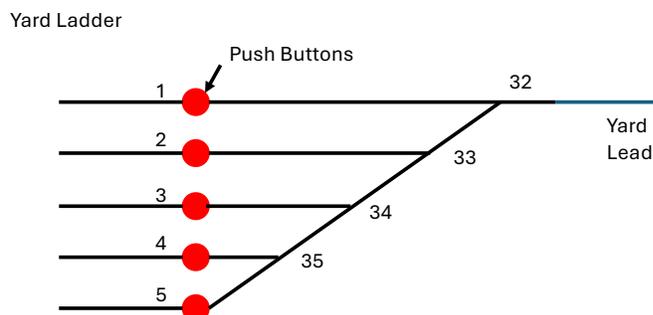


Photo 6: Canandaigua Yard diagram showing route selection push buttons and stationary decoder addresses for the turnouts.

The NCE Mini-Panel was primarily designed to route cars into a yard ladder with a single button press. Each of the turnouts in my five-track yard ladder are connected to Switch-8's. Therefore, each turnout has a stationary decoder address. See [\(Photo 6\)](#). The red buttons are momentary SPST switches. Suppose that we want to go from the switching lead to Yard Track 3. The ladder turnouts have accessory addresses 32 to 35. We use "1" to indicate straight through the turnout and "2" for the alternate route. To accomplish this, we program the Mini-Panel in response to a single button push on Track 3, to signal the Switch-8. [\(Photo 7\)](#).

- Accessory Address 32, move to position 2
- Accessory Address 33, move to position 1
- Accessory Address 34, move to position 2

In [Photo 8](#), the LEDs show the turnout alignment from a button push on Track 3. With a little bit of patience in reading the manual, the programming of each yard track button, using my NCE ProCab throttle was fairly easy. The wiring of the Mini-Panel is straight forward as well; just a button connection and a DCC bus connection.

I used an NCE DCC system to do this. I do not know if the MiniPanel works with any other system.

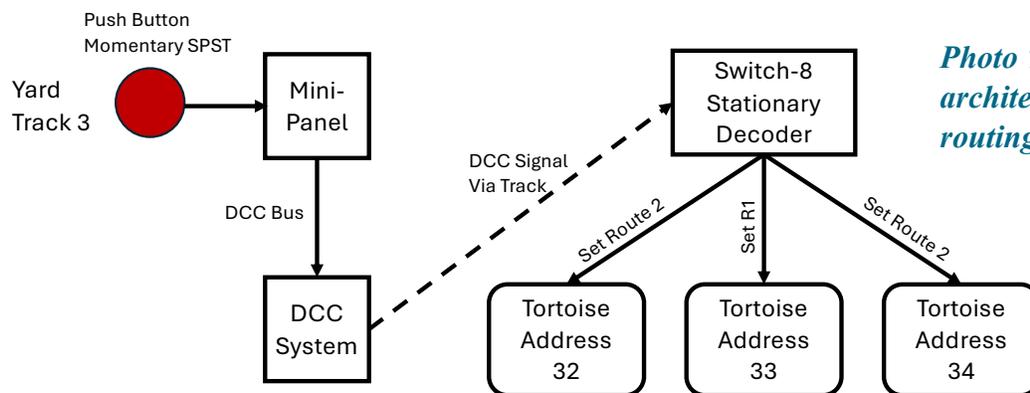


Photo 7: MiniPanel control architecture for automated routing from the yard lead.

Less Than Smooth Sailing

The control panels were my Covid project. I did run into some problems with the Switch-8's and Button Boards. When the layout was powered up, the buttons on my layout would work properly sometimes and not at other times. On the other hand, the turnouts would work in either case using accessory addressing on my throttle. There was much gnashing of teeth over a couple of months, almost to the point of ripping it out and trying something new. I spent time on the NCE Groups.io web site and finally happened upon a thread that sounded like my problem. It said to power the boards up and down and then up. It worked!!! When I turn the layout on, I have a switch to depower the boards and then repower them. I do not know why it worked. A couple of years later I found the following on the NCE website -

“The data sync between the BB, the SW8, and the command station can get a little wacky if they use different power sources. Try a couple different sequences of powering different things on first. The SW8 and the BB can be left on 24/7/365 with no issues. That is how I have them setup with external power on my layout. The three data lines between the BB and the SW8 are extremely sensitive to outside interference since it is a 5v low voltage connection. Twisted wires, very short wires, even some type of shielding might improve the situation. I use Cat5e /CAT6 cables with 24 AWG twisted pairs for all the low voltage (5v) data lines on my layout.”

In hindsight, I probably should have tried contacting the NCE Technical Support. (I admit to suffering from the gene that does not like to ask for help.)

Other Control Panel Features

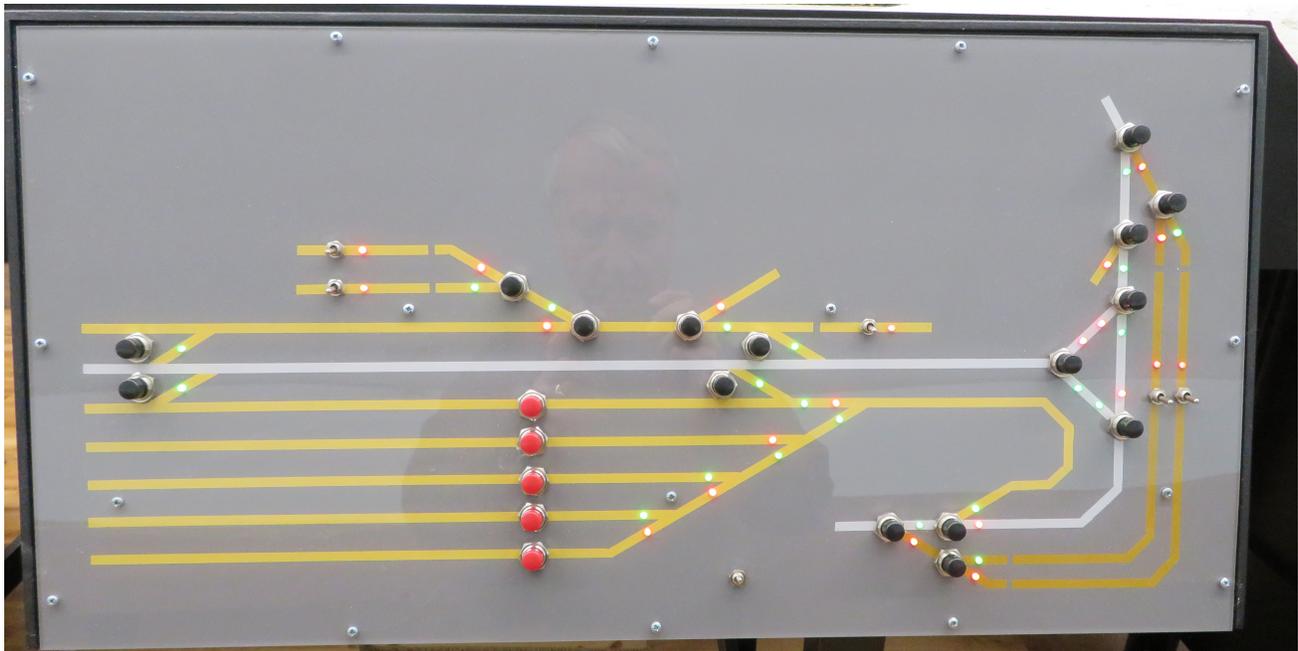


Photo 8: Main Panel showing turnout control push buttons (black), routing LEDs, and yard routing buttons (red). Note that the Yard Lead is routed to track 3.

This is the completed Main Control Panel ([Photo 8](#)). Each of the turnouts that are not in a crossover, have a bicolor (Red/Green) LED on each route. The control panel thus shows the route or alignment of the turnout. These LEDs are controlled by the auxiliary terminals on the Tortoises. I feel that this gives new operators a positive way to look at route alignment. The crossovers show alignment in the more traditional way with green indicating straight through and red indicating the crossover is active. The Sub Panel is shown in [Photo 9](#).

If you look carefully at [Photo 8](#), you will see a small toggle switch at the bottom center. That is the magic solution to “getting a little wacky.” It powers the Switch-8s and Button Boards on and off.

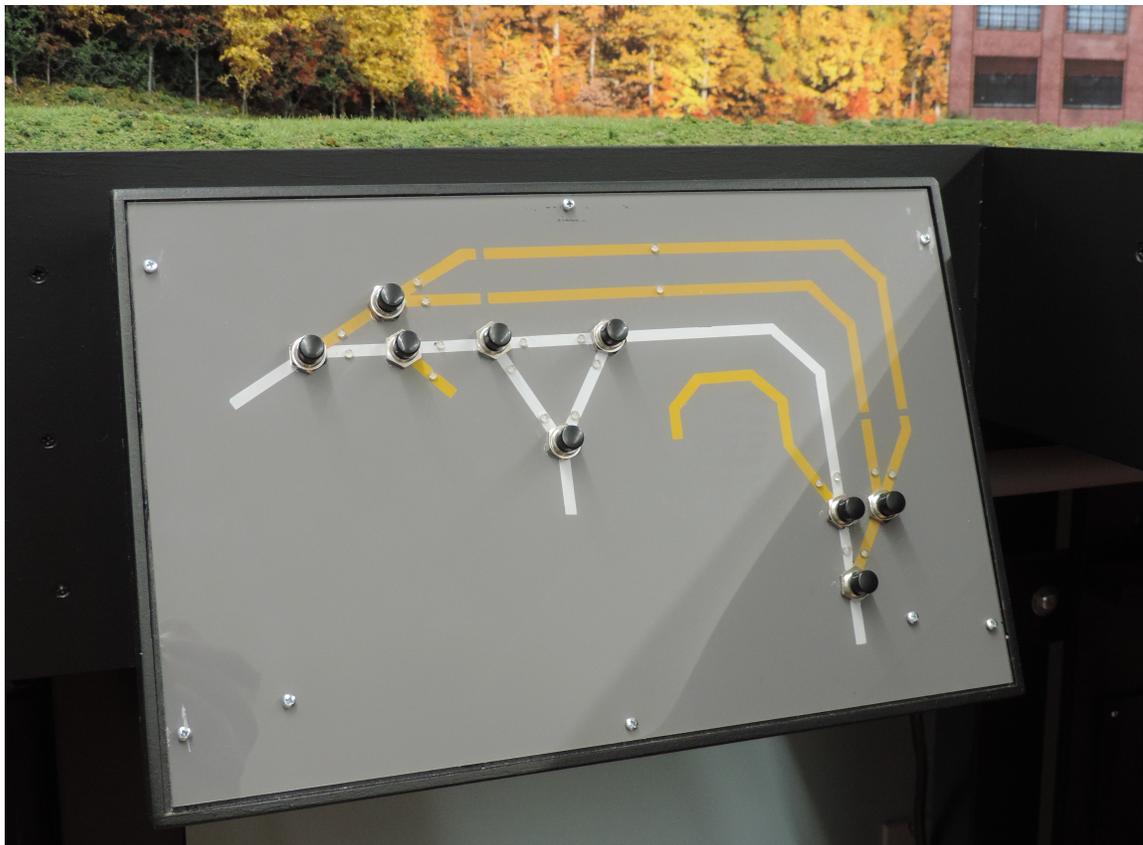
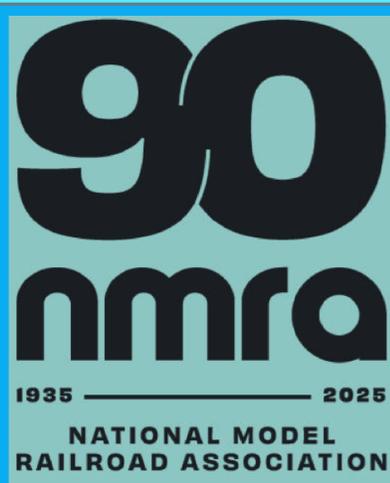


Photo 9: Sub Panel that is mostly used for open houses.

Was it worth it? I totally enjoyed the engineering problems and finding solutions. Hopefully, this will shorten the learning time for a modeler who wants to do similar things on their layout.

	<i>Did You know...</i>
	<p>2025 is the 90th Anniversary of the NMRA! Happy Anniversary! That's 90 years of helping model railroaders. Thank you!</p>

Connect Your Layout to Others

By Brian W. Sheron, MMR (Photos by the author)

Although I have been actively engaged in model railroading since 1980, I never really gave a second thought to operations. That is, until one day when the layout tour coordinator for the Potomac Division called me and asked if I would be willing to host an open house. I agreed, and on the day of the open house, two officers in the Division came to act as greeters at my front door.

At the end of the open house, one of them asked if I would be interested in operations. I said that I had no knowledge of operations. I learned that the two officers who had come to my house were both in the same operations group and they invited me to join them at their next session. I agreed, and that led to my discovery of a whole new facet of the hobby.

I joined the group and found out that it had started back in the 1970s! Over the years some of the original members had left and others had joined, but the two officers, Marshall Abrams and Tom Brodrick, were original members. Other original members were Bill Demas and Marv Zelkowitz. After several operating sessions, I was surprised when I started receiving freight cars with the road names of some of the railroads being modeled in the group.

Marshall's railroad was the Abrams Railroad Empire (ARE); Bill Demas's is the Westmoreland Railroad (WRR); Ken Nesper's is the Potomac and Patuxent (P&P); Tom Brodrick's was the Providence and Worcester (P&W); and Marv Zelkowitz's is the North Ithaca, Courtland and Eastern Railroad (NICER).

I returned their generosity by giving them gondolas that I painted and decaled for the Long Island Rail Road LIRR, which I model.

Unfortunately, both Marshall and Tom have passed away in the past several years. Tom's wife Gail asked the operations group to help dispose of his layout. She said that we could take anything we wanted. Several of us took a Providence and Worcester (P&W) box car for our layouts.

Photo 1 shows the P&P car provided to me by Ken Nesper. **Photo 2** shows the P&W car from Tom Brodrick's layout. **Photo 3** shows the WRR car provided to me by Bill Demas. **Photo 4** shows the NICER car provided by Marv Zelkowitz. And **Photo 5** shows a typical LIRR gondola I provided in exchange (Note I did some weathering on some of these cars). Running freight cars from the ARE and P&W during our operating sessions helps keep our memories of Marshall and Tom alive. Plus, running freight cars with the road names of other members layouts also serves as a common denominator that links all of our railroads to one another.

In fact, Bill Demas starts out his operating sessions with a memorial run for Marshall using one of Marshall’s engines and his freight cars.

If you are a member of an operations group, exchanging freight cars is a fun way to interconnect your model railroads and perhaps remember former members of the group.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5

One Man's Trash Is Another Man's

By Mark Nieting

Remember those commercials with the tag line “What’s in YOUR wallet?” Let’s switch it just a bit to “What’s *under* YOUR layout?” Maybe not under the layout, maybe up on the closet shelves behind other layers of boxes, or squeezed in those ubiquitous plastic tubs that seem to multiply when they are out of sight. What’s in your stash...and how long has it been there? That’s been in my train of thought for today.

This came to mind the other day when I was driving to a meeting listening to a model railroad podcast called “The Crossing Gate.” It’s produced by the Twin Cities Division of the NMRA and I heartily recommend it as well as “Second Section” and a few others. The host, Tom Glasior, was leading a discussion about “submarine projects.” Those are unbuilt kits, boxes of locomotives, unfinished repair jobs, and partially assembled models that have quietly slipped below the surface of your consciousness and haven’t been seen for ages. Like submarines, they are out of sight, out of mind. They are what make up our STASH...and let’s face it: we all have a STASH of trains!

As soon as I got home I headed upstairs where I keep MY stash. Staring at me from their shelf high in the closet of my train room were STACKS of kits: structures, locomotives, box cars, gondolas, flats and more...much more. There are partially finished buildings. There are loco projects that never got done. There are tubs of parts. There are drawers of details. There are resin kits from which I have robbed the decals for another project. All of them were screaming “BUILD ME!!!” Really...they were. Don’t yours? It was all I could do to turn my head and go back downstairs.

A few weeks went by and I was getting ready to head out for the next train show so naturally I thought, “Mark, it’s time to do another thinning of the herd.” So I grabbed a stack of old Athearn to put in my sale box and do you know what? Even Uncle Irv’s blue boxes have GRIPPERS and wouldn’t let go of the shelf? They must have seen the tote labeled “Next Train Show.” No thinning this round! OK, so I’m being a bit over the top...or am I? It’s time to be honest, gents, why do we do this? Why do we stack up inventory so deep that we’ve forgotten what’s there? Why? I can think of a number of reasons, starting with the simplest.

We’re *waiting*. Waiting to build the PERFECT layout! We NEED all these things for when the *perfect time comes* when we get the PERFECT train room, the PERFECT retirement, the PERFECT time in the life of the family, the PERFECT income and ZERO other responsibilities. And while we are waiting for this “Nirvana” to arrive we stack up car kits faster than a politician can stack up money in his offshore accounts! Friends, we’re deluding ourselves.

We all bemoan the death of the local hobby shops across the fruited plain, as well as the huge print ads in the magazines of days past, but that doesn’t seem to have slowed down the ways we can accumulate stacks of double-stacks and racks of auto-racks and boxes of box cars that we will need someday when the Paper-Planned-Pacific becomes reality in the house that we don’t yet own.

Granted, with all the limited runs being made to order these days, we MAY have to put a few items aside while we can get them. After all, NO ONE is ever going to make Milwaukee Road H-16-44s EVER AGAIN after Rapido does and if I don't order mine now the price will triple by Christmas, but I think that's the exception to the rule. If you don't believe me, check how many Proto-2000 locomotives you just HAD to have.....and now you can't give them away as you replace them with Rapidos, Broadways, and Scaletrains that are twice as nice and twice as expensive.

Or there's the "I have to have one of each number" guys, so when Scale Trains offers kits we like we just HAVE to have each number for use on those future operating sessions on our "Someday Central." (Which, at the rate you are going will be a 6' by 1' switching layout in your room at the old folks home.) Let's be realistic: the odds that you will need 20 different numbers of Appalachian Northern per diem boxcars is quite low.

If you're like most of us veterans who have been around since Mr. Varney was a kid, you've got a nice stash of half-started, partially built kits too, each of them screaming at you to finish them. Honestly, what stopped you from finishing them in the first place? Did you lack the skill to actually BUILD that resin kit? My hands aren't that steady now, and they sure won't be in 10 years, should the good Lord give me that long! Or you changed ERAS or PROTOTYPES! All of that should give you food for thought as you survey the dark recesses of your stash!

PRO-HINT for new guys: try as soon as possible to decide on an era you like the most and ONLY BUY STUFF that fits. You don't have to be a Jack Burgess and model a particular Saturday at 2 PM in June of 1953, but hey...even choosing the 60s or the 90s or right now will thin down your selection by a lot! Sure those NS and CSX heritage units are really cool (all 30 or so of them) but if you're modeling the late 60s? Really? Why not just keep a photo?

I'm going deep on this one: there are a few of us that are true "hoarders." YOU can't pass up a 1950s Globe pickle car because it's such a good DEAL and you only have SEVEN of them in the attic somewhere...you think. True story: I have a friend who got into Lionel collecting in the 1980s, just when prices were soaring. He built a large collection, *none of which has ever seen the light of day.* Each piece is hermitically sealed in an acid-free box and stuffed on a shelf in his attic! Why? Someone might break in and steal his stuff! Maybe it floats his boat just to think of what he has, but not one has ever turned a wheel for his enjoyment or even for his kids...who are all grown and gone!

Which brings me to my FINAL point, using a play on words. None of us will live forever, as we in the Tidewater Division well know, having lost many dear friends in the last few years. Do you have a realistic plan on what will become of your stash when you assume room temperature? Sure, the good stuff will be quickly cherry picked by "friends," but most of it? Do you have an arrangement with someone to help your left-behind loved ones deal with all the "crap" (as your wife calls it)? If there is good stuff, inventory it. Make a codicil for your will listing who gets what. My best friend passed suddenly during Covid and it took me several years to piece out his stuff for the benefit of his dear wife.

At my tender age (913 months), I am not making many long range plans, but I DO have written plans on what will happen to my things when the Lord takes me home. We are all part of the world's greatest hobby, but it's THIS world's hobby and we can't take it with us. Have you been realistic with your family about the value of your "stash"? We all know folks who think any old Lionel Scout set will put the grandkids through Yale, when reality says that rarely happens. What's a 65 year old Globe kit gonna bring for your estate, not to mention 36 pounds of LifeLike stuff hidden back in the corner. Your family has probably suffered enough because of your model train addiction (Yes, I built a layout in our living room once!); but watching you grow your stash of trains (they aren't free!) while they don't even get to enjoy watching you build a layout or teach the grandkids to operate with you just seems a bit short-sighted or even self-centered to me. Pardon me for being judgmental... we old pastors can do that sometime.

Guess it's time to go upstairs and root around again. I still have room in the car before I leave for the train show tomorrow morning!

Just my "train of thought".....



**Model Railroad Museum
of Hampton Roads
MRMHR.org**

Free – Neat free-standing L-shaped compact benchwork available
Contact Nicholas Kalis 703 585-0100
nkalis@verizon.net Fairfax County, Virginia
Includes painted fascia and painted wooden skirts
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From the Divisions...

Branch Lines

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 and to their Division Websites for easy access:

Divisions	Newsletters
1 - New Jersey Division	<i>Train Orders</i>
2 - Potomac Division	<i>Potomac Flyer</i>
3 - Philadelphia Division	<i>The Dispatcher</i>
4 - Tidewater Division	<i>The Callboard</i>
5 - James River Division	<i>Crossties - Index</i>
10 - South Mountain Division	<i>Wheel Report</i>
11 - Susquehanna Division	<i>Sidetracks</i>
12 - Carolina Southern Division	<i>The Brass Pounder</i>
13 - Carolina Piedmont Division	<i>The Herald</i>
14 - Chesapeake Division	<i>The Relay</i>

Other NMRA Links:

[Bulletin](#)

[Archives](#)

[Submit Articles](#)

[NMRA Partners \(Discounts\)](#)

[Education](#)

[Videos](#)

[Events](#)

[Turntable](#)

[Clinics](#)

2024 Division Reports

Division 1: New Jersey - Prepared by Superintendent John V. Gallagher

Annual Report New Jersey Division #1 Mid-Eastern Region National Model Railroad Association, Inc.

Officers

Superintendent: John V. Gallagher

Assistant Superintendent: Michael Prokop

Paymaster: Thomas Neukirchen

Clerk: Joseph Zebrowski

Directors (Note: all officers are Directors)

Clinics Director: John V. Gallagher

Meet Contest Program: Jack Menaker

Membership: Geert Marien

Division Research: Thom Radice

Train Orders Newsletter Editor: Fritz Plenefisch

Achievement Program Director: Glyn Thomas, MMR

Division Mailbox

NJ Division, NMRA

P.O. Box 276

Crosswicks NJ 08515-0276

Division Website

<https://njdivnmra.org>

Membership

January 2024 – 209

December 2024 – 185

Unfortunately, our ageing membership declined due to the passing of members. We lost a Master Model Railroader, some past leaders of the Division and Founding Members from 1968. We will miss them.

The Division invites interested persons to meets, generally through member contacts in the model railroad community. We are exploring an expanded program described in the Future Directions section below.

Financial

The Division account is available from the Superintendent. There was no substantial change from the previous year. The inventory of 50th anniversary gondola cars numbers less than 30 with a current sale price of \$20 each. Meet attendance fee is \$5 per meet or \$15 annual. The Division holds 5 meets per year. Other fund raising is through 50/50 raffles or a raffle for model railroad items on the raffle table. Tickets are \$1 each or \$5 for 6 tickets.

Division Events

The Division holds Saturday meets in January, March, May, September and November. Since our Division covers half of the state geographically, from the New York Harbor entrance at Sandy Hook to Cape May, ten counties, we select meet locations widely to serve membership concentrations and frequency of meet locations. About half of our members live in two northern counties so we frequently hold meets there. However, we do schedule meets in less populated member counties on a less than annual basis so they can host the Division and members can visit their layouts and learn from their modeling efforts of excellence. We keep in mind the age of our membership, daylight hours, winter weather, and the distances members may drive, sometimes more than 70+ miles one way. In addition to meet locations within the boundaries of our Division, we hold at least one joint meet with the Garden State Division [Northeast Region] and two joint meets with the Philadelphia Division. On alternate years, the Garden State Division hosts the May meet within their boundaries, following with our hosting them on other years. In recent years, we have held two joint meets with the Philadelphia Division. We host the January meet and they host the November meet in the Philadelphia area or northern Delaware.

January 13, 2024 Division Meet – Host: New Jersey Division – Joint with the Philadelphia Division
Matveenko Hall, St. Charles Borromeo Church, Sicklerville/Turnersville, New Jersey

Program: Regular two clinic meet in the morning plus six local layout open houses 1-4PM.
Clinic1: Joseph Walters, Philadelphia Division. Topic: Scratch Building a 55Ton PRR Hopper Car
Clinic 2: Gerald Michael, New Jersey Division. Topic: Scratch Building the Wilkes-Barre Central Railroad of New Jersey Railroad Station. Both clinic models are HO scale.

Attendance: New Jersey Division – 37 members + 4 guests = 41. Philadelphia Division, see their Annual Report.

March 16, 2024 Division Meet at Switlik Park Recreation Building, Hamilton, NJ

Program: Works in Progress multiple simultaneous 30 minute clinics offered four times.

Presenter	Topic
Michael Prokop	Let’s Talk Adhesives
Barry Rosier	Cardstock Modeling Detail Tricks
David Albertson	Follow-up on South Street Bridge
Glyn Thomas, MMR	Modeling Wilkes-Barre Station – Alternative Approaches
Mike Mosher	Arduino Projects and Techniques
Jim Shepard	Diorama Garden Center [garden RR’s]
Tony Liccese	Solder Free Lexan/3D Printed Throw Bars
Pete Suhmann	Modifying Cheap Dollar Store Tools for useful MRR Purposes

Attendance: 43 including 7 from other divisions

Afternoon Layouts: 6

May 4, 2024, Division Meet – Host New Jersey Division – Joint with the Garden State Division of the Northeast Region

Camp Evans, Wall, New Jersey

Program: Regular two clinics, one offered by each division plus 5 layouts open in the afternoon.

Clinic 1: Garden State Division

Clinic 2: John V. Gallagher: Railroading, It’s All About Economics

Attendance: 37 Division members plus 5 guests = 42. Garden State attendees about 30.

September 14, 2024, Division Meet at the Cumberland County Community Church, Millville, New Jersey

Program: Regular Clinics and a short business meeting plus 4 layouts open in the afternoon.

Clinic 1 and 2: Ralph Deblasi on Signaling and Signaling on Model Railroads.

Business Meeting: Directors Marian, Menaker and Zebrowski were reelected and Zebrowski was reelected to the office of Clerk.

Attendance: 33 Division members plus 2 guests = 35

November 9, 2024, Division Meet – Host Philadelphia Division – Joint with the New Jersey Division
Brandywine Town Center, Wilmington, Delaware

Program: Regular two clinics, one offered by each division plus 3 afternoon home layouts open.

Clinic 1: Joe Walters, MMR, Philadelphia Division; Scratch Building a Ballast Tamper Railcar

Clinic 2: Barry Rosier, Intro to Computer- Aided Design for Structure Drawing using SKETCHUPFREE software

Attendance: 16 New Jersey Members, 0 guests. Philadelphia Division – See their Annual Report.

Charitable and Educational Activities

Charitable: No activity

Educational: Two clinics at the January, May, September and November Meets. The March meet had 8 Works in Progress 30-minute clinics, each repeated 4 times for a total of 32 clinics. Each meet has a popular vote contest on a specific theme. Each issue of our newsletter *Train Orders* contains articles of educational content for model railroaders plus photos of layouts and models.

Achievement Program Activity

A number of Division members are pursuing Achievement Certificates in their quest for the Master Model Railroader goal. Director Glyn Thomas, MMR, has put together a team of members trained to conduct visits to assess layouts, structures and rolling stock models. The teams live in the eastern or western parts of the Division, thereby reducing travel distances and time to member homes. During this year, the assessment teams began model assessments during Division meets for the convenience of members [and judges!].

Certificates Awarded:

Joseph Zebrowski

Chief Dispatcher

Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical

Master Builder - Scenery

NMRA and MER Convention Activity

The New Jersey Division is not planning to host any convention. We were unable to locate a hotel with reasonable costs in our failed attempt to host a convention in 2025. Facility costs were far above budgeted MER funds. Hotel managers told our team that they can fill their facilities any weekend with weddings and other family events. Perhaps, MER needs to assess how it holds annual conventions. I discussed an option with our members at one of our meets and they said it was a good idea. There is a notion or belief or expectation that the convention is held in one facility that includes sleeping and eating facilities along with clinic and other facilities. While it is nice that one can get on an elevator to go to one's room during convention events, that convenience is at a cost.

I proposed separating bedroom facilities from convention and eating facilities. Throughout our nation and region, many community colleges have facilities that meet our expectations for presenting clinics and rooms for contests, white elephant or convention stores, displays, etc. Most classrooms now have built-in technology for projecting images and PowerPoint presentations as well as direct connections with the Internet. Many classrooms have tables and chairs rather than individual tablet seats. Clinicians can configure the room's furniture to better meet attendee's needs for more effective learning. We would need to explore availability, costs, use of college dining facilities, college schedules/calendar, and distances to parking lots. This means a change in member expectations for the convention. Housing could be using several local motels from major chains [above the Motel 6 quality]. Concerns include being a driving distance between college facilities and motels, accommodating member attendees who travel to the convention by rail, air or bus and needing local transportation, transportation between college parking lots and the building(s) where the convention meets. Many of our members have mobility limitations. Colleges meet ADA requirements by law. Could conventions be scheduled during college breaks such as "Spring break" when students do not attend classes and many leave campus. There is a lot to explore.

Future Directions

New Jersey Division member Ralph Deblasi presented a proposal to our board that addresses an approach to member recruitment. An accountant, Ralph, works with numbers and sees our decline in membership. He believes we approach recruitment in limited ways to include the personal approach, recruitment outreach using tables/displays/booths at train shows, and other ways to connect. How can we reach out to the larger community and those groups who participate in hobbies similar to model railroading? Ralph believes you must go where they go for their current hobbies. Craft shows serve modelers who use many of the skills we use. He believes we need to personally interact with them at their shows. We need some items for our own Division Booth to include tables, chairs, a tent and a source of electricity. We can get NMRA recruiting materials to include signs, Rail Pass applications, and posters. We need to construct a small portable layout to display plus we must demonstrate modeling. We will further explore Ralph's recommendations and construct the display. We are exploring funding from NMRA national. Stay tuned.



Division 2: Potomac

Potomac Division (2), Mid-Eastern Region Yearly Division Report

Reporting Period: January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024



Meeting Times and Places.

Division monthly Board of Directors meetings were held on the third Tuesday of the month using Zoom. We had an in-person Board of Directors meeting on May 4, 2024, at the Arcola VFD annex in Sterling, Virginia, as a part of a meet held there. Our second bylaw required in-person Board meeting was held Nov. 2nd at Battlefield Baptist Church.

Our bylaws required Annual Meeting was held in person on May 4, 2024.

Annual Elections were conducted by using Election Buddy with sincere thanks to John Hoyt for his assistance. Ballots were physically mailed to those members that have not provided the NMRA with an email address.

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

Contact information:

Name		Position	NMRA Number
Ernest Little, MMR Super@potomac-nmra.org		Superintendent	129108
Alex Belida, MMR Sr-asst-super@potomac-nmra.org		Senior Assistant Superintendent	167742
Ken Wilson Asst-super@potomac-nmra.org		Assistant Superintendent **	129108
Lee Stoermer Clerk@potomac-nmra.org		Clerk	138185
Jerry Stanley Paymaster@potomac-nmra.org		Paymaster	142333
Martin Brechbiel, MMR Achievement-program@potomac-nmra.org		AP Coordinator	114353

** Due to election of new Superintendent the BOD appointed new Assistant Superintendent at the 5/21/2023 BOD meeting.

Division web site address :

<http://potomac-nmra.org/PDnewsite/Main/Home.php>

Bylaws

In accordance with the Division’s bylaws a review was conducted resulting in no changes to them.

Membership

According to the information provided to the Division from the MER our current number is 234, which is down from 237 in October 2023. The lack of current and up to date division membership information has continued to be a serious detriment to the operations of the Division. We continue to have only a passing knowledge of new members in the past six months, are not made aware of memberships being transferred to other divisions or deaths of members. It is hoped that the NMRA updating the membership tracking software, which is understood to be in process, that we will be able to have better access to membership information.

We have staffed information tables at the Dulles Expo train shows in 2024 to recruit new members and provide information about our Division and the NMRA. At these events, membership forms, information about NMRA benefits, and a Divisional brochure are made available. We have also provided the Divisional brochure to the local train stores in our Division where possible. We also have held twelve layout tours, five of which were associated with meets.

We continue to have social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and a YouTube channel where we post videos of our virtual clinics. Our YouTube channel has shown success in that it has averages over 600 viewers per month and we have 551 subscribers to our channel.

The Division will hold elections again in April 2025. These will be conducted by electronic voting by our members with ballots being sent to those members that have not provided the NMRA with an email address. Per the bylaws, the elections will be for three positions in 2025: Superintendent, Senior Assistant Superintendent, and Clerk. An elections Nomination Committee has been formed to oversee nominations and the election.

Financial.

The dollar amount in the bank at end of the last accounting period was **\$6,324.36.**

We anticipate submitting for a matching grant from National NMRA to purchase additional equipment that will be used at our future meets.

We do not charge for any event or service currently. However, to cover the costs of venues in the future we will be accepting donations, and we may charge a nominal fee as the costs charged by venues within the Potomac Division are extravagant. Clinicians do charge to cover material costs at Jerry Stanley’s Hobby Barn and other clinic sites this year.

Achievement Program 2023 highlights

Master Model Railroaders

We have several members working on AP certificates and one that is one merit car from competing the requirements for the Car AP which will result in him qualifying for Master Model Railroader certification.

Achievement Program Certificates

There were a total of 4 members receiving Achievement Program certificates in 2024.

Volunteer	0	
Association Volunteer	0	
Civil	0	
Scenery	0	
Chief Dispatcher		Lee Stoermer
Author	1	Greg Cassidy
Electrical	1	Mike Byle
Structures	1	Greg Cassidy
Cars	0	
Motive Power	0	
Golden Spike	0	

Division Events/Activities in 2024

Twelve virtual Clinics, using the Zoom meeting platform, were held in 2024. This program continues to be strong, with an attendance of 20 to 40 for the sessions. This program will continue in 2025. All the virtual clinics were recorded, edited, and placed on the Division’s YouTube channel after they were completed.

In-person clinics took place at the in-person meets held at Battlefield Baptist Church in Warrenton, Virginia, the Arcola VFD annex in Sterling, Virginia and Leisure World in Silver Spring, Maryland. Another site, our Paymaster’s Hobby Barn has not been available for use due to the storage of G scale model train items we have acquired from a former member’s family who we are assisting with liquidating the estate. We continue to attempt to find venues that the Division can afford to hold meets. This program will continue into 2025.

Three in-person meets were held in 2024. The first was at the Arcola VFD annex building in Sterling, Virginia on May 4th with 19 members in attendance. The meet had two clinics, and an in-person Potomac Division Board of Directors Meeting and two layout visits. The second was held at Leisure World in Silver Spring, Maryland on July 13th with two clinics and four layout open houses. 29 members and guests attended. The third was held at the Battlefield Baptist Church in Warrenton, Virginia on November 2, 2024. This was scheduled to be a joint meet with the James River Division however due to the change in pastors the site could not be confirmed in time to make the joint effort possible. There were 30 members in attendance at this meet. This meet had four clinics, a modeling popular vote contest, white elephant sale, and three layouts opened to the Division. We have requested use of the church during the first part of November in 2025 for an in-person meet.

Our annual Operations Saturday did not take place this year due to a number of logistical issues.

Nine open houses were held in 2023 and were well attended. This program was restarted in April after being suspended in 2020 due to Covid 19 concerns.

Special Projects or working with other organizations.

We anticipate holding a Spring joint meet with the James River Division in April or May of 2025 in Virginia.

We were approached to provide an Achievement Program evaluation program process at the September, 2024 Mid-Atlantic Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet. Due to the lack of interest on the part of the attendees the process did not take place.

We were approached by a family member of one of our past Division members who passed away a couple of years ago to assist with liquidation of his G scale model railroad items and books. These items were donated to the Division and are in the process of being sold using advertising on our website. We were successful in selling several of the items but still have an inventory of locomotives, cars, and other assessor items as well as books.

Successful/ new ideas that your Division has tried that might be helpful to other Divisions.

We have continued participation in social media and had some success in spreading news of Division and other NMRA events using it. Currently, we have 52 followers on Facebook and 360 followers on Instagram.

In 2022 the Division instituted the “Marshall Abrams Award” which is awarded to one of the division members to recognize the evaluable contributions made to the Division, MER, and National NMRA. Alex Belida, MMR and current Senior Assistant Superintendent was the 2024 recipient of this award. This program is continuing and nominations for the 2025 award are being solicited with a deadline of January 1, 2025.

Charitable and Educational Activities

The meet held on November 2, 2024, resulted in a donation of over \$700 for the charity operations overseen by the Church whose venue we used for the event.

NMRA and MER Convention Activity

The Division had nineteen members attend the MER convention in Durham, NC in October 2024 and had eight Potomac Division members present clinics at this event. Those presenting clinics were Alex Belida MMR, Martin Brechbiel MMR, Gil Fuchs, Nicholas Kalis, Ernie Little MMR, John Sethian, Bob Sprague, and Rich Steinmann, MMR.

Alex Belida’s Early Pennsylvania Oil Well diorama took 2nd place in the Online Display category.

It is unknown if any Division members attended the National other Region’s conventions. The Board of Directors was approached regarding hosting the 2025 MER convention. This was discussed at the Annual Meeting with the membership and after a vote was taken the membership determined it was not interested in hosting the convention due to the lack of time for planning.

Ongoing & Future Directions

The Board members remain committed to working to fulfill the requests and desires of the Division's membership. The attendance response exemplified by the attendance at the virtual and in-person Hobby Barn events, as well as our Joint Meets clearly reflects a significant level of success in this effort. This is also very clearly satisfying some measure of the socialization aspect of the hobby as we can gather as a group, see one another, and talk to one another. We do remain hopeful of securing additional meeting venues for in-person events in 2025. A challenge to the Board is the lack of venues for meets that are financially within the ability of the Division. Many of the venues used in the past are now charging for their use and/or charge an additional clean up fee. The cost of these venues is above what the division can afford.

The continued publication of the expanded Division *Potomac Flyer* newsletter continues to be an excellent method to communicate with our Division members as well as others outside the Division that subscribe to it. Publication is done through use of an email list maintained by the division. The *Potomac Flyer* published six issues in 2024, ranging in size from 52 to 62 pages in length. Forty-five members contributed to The Flyer in 2024 with submissions.

The *Potomac Flyer* has had a regular membership challenge feature each issue since 2021, where the Division's members submit photos and associated brief articles for a selected topic like motive power or scenery. The *Potomac Flyer* challenges showcase our members' modeling efforts and have continued to be of great interest to the membership with an average of 10-15 submissions per issue. The Potomac Division *Potomac Flyer* challenge entries are also featured on the main page of our Division website with a rotating photo carousel that also contains links to the descriptions of entries published in *The Potomac Flyer*. The carousel is run on our website for two months and available on a dedicated and separate web site page that contains all the submissions since the feature was initiated. This feature will continue for the foreseeable future.

In addition, the Flyer published "News briefs" in the months between our regular issues. These mainly highlighted coming Division events to ensure the membership was fully informed of our coming meets, clinics and layout tours. The *News Briefs* are handled in the same manner as the *Potomac Flyer* relative to distribution, and website availability.

The "Meet the Member" section, launched in 2023, continued this year with profiles of Division members along with regular articles on modeling subjects and Division news about clinics, meets and layout tours. A new initiative, The Flyer Newsletter Layout Tours, will be added starting in January 2025. It will ask members unable to host open houses to allow a photographer to see and take pictures of their layouts.

Social media was added to our toolbox in January of 2023 to promote the Division, Region and National NMRA, in general, and increase model railroading presence in the community. The social media forums we have engaged with are Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Our social media accounts are managed by a Board appointed social media manager. A Division social media policy is in place to provide guidelines for its use.

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

1. We continue to celebrate the MER forwarding 100% of the dues rebate to the Divisions. However, support of Divisions by National NMRA remains completely inadequate given the belief that the Divisions are the most important level of the NMRA. We again urge the MER

Board to ask National to provide a more representative level of support to the Divisions. Two dollars a member is not sufficient to operate a division. We believe the allocation should be increased to at least three, if not five dollars per member per year.

2. The matching grant program is something that is really needed to support the acquisition of equipment and support of activities of the Division particularly given the cost and ability to raise funding.
3. The structure of the AP program as it pertains to Volunteer needs revision particularly for members working directly on recruitment to the NMRA. The points rewards vs. actual time and effort are not commensurate in scope and value. We need the MER Board to champion this change if Divisions are going to shoulder the burden of recruitment.
4. The well-known issues pertaining to the membership roster provided by National have been improved but are still compromising the Division’s ability to contact and greet new members, and to continue to communicate with all their existing members. We continue need the basic information -- member’s names and contact info – in a more timely way. There is a real, immediate need for executing this.
5. Over the past three years we have been presenting virtual clinics as well as in person clinics on a monthly schedule. Looking forward, we could use more clinicians to provide a good program for our members. We have begun scheduling virtual clinics with members from outside our Division and some of our members have presented clinics for Divisions outside the MER.

Superintendent’s Name and Signature.

Ernie Little

Ernie Little, MMR
Superintendent, Potomac Division



Division 3: Philadelphia

Prepared by Superintendent Joe Walters



Enclosed find the dates of the Philadelphia Division meets for 2024

January 13th, 2024

January joint meet with the New Jersey Division ,located in Sicklersville, NJ
15 Division members and guests in attendance

February 24th, 2024

February joint meet with the Susquehanna Division, located at the Southampton Community center, Southampton ,P.A
32 Division members and guests in attendance

April 20th , 2024

April meet , located at the Trinity Reformed Church, Colledgeville, P.A.
31 Division members and guests in attendance

June 8th, 2024

June meet /Annual Business Meeting/Picnic. Located at Alverthorpe Park, Jenkintown, P.A.
35 Division members and guests in attendance

September 7th, 2024

September meet located at the Phoenixville Recreation Center, Phoenixville, P.A.
36 Division members and guests in attendance

November 9th 2024

November joint with the New Jersey Division located at the Brandywine Town Center, Wilmington, D.E.
39 Division members and guests in attendance

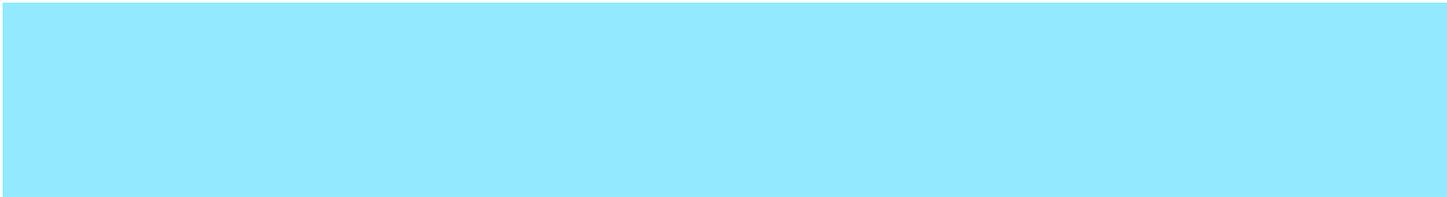
Train shows in our Division area manned by Division Board of Directors and Division members

January 13th,14th 2024 Greenberg Great Train and Toy Show
Oaks P.A. Greater Philadelphia Expo Center

July 13th,14th 2024 Greenberg's Great Train and Toy Show
Oaks P.A. Greater Philadelphia Expo Center

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

TOTAL DIVISION MEMBERSHIP - 235 AT THIS TIME



Hi Joe,
AP certs awarded during 2024
Per your request.
Earl

Eric Hansmann

Author

Volunteer

Official

Michael Junod

Electrical Engineering

Civil Engineering

Joe Walters

Official

Steve Wysowski

Scenery

Steve Richardson

Civil

Electrical

Scenery

Charles Liggett

Volunteer

Andreas Neemann

Golden Spike

Eric Dervinus

Chief Dispatcher



The attached has the financial stmts for the 4 months ended 11/30 and the end of our most recent FY 07/31/2024

For the current period, we benefited greatly from the donated Lionel et al trains that I was able to sell

I got no where with Trumark in terms of online access.

I am going to the bank tomorrow on a personal matter and will try and get help with this.

When in the next BOD meeting?

We will eventually need a BOD resolution to close the Harleysville checking & saving accounts.

There is \$1609 in the checking, \$34 in saving and \$8159 in a CD that matures 7/17/25

I planned to do that AFTER the CD matures

I am going to send you a check to sign so that we can draw out most of the money from the other accounts now.

and at-least earn some interest @ Trumark

PHILLY DIV NMRA
INCOME STATEMENT [CASH* BASIS]
4 MONTHS ENDED 11/30/2024



Philly NMRA
Division 3 OF THE Mid-Eastern Region
National Model Railroad Association

**PHILLY DIV NMRA
INCOME STATEMENT [CASH* BASIS]
4 MONTHS ENDED 11/30/2024**

REVENUE	SHOW NET	0.00			
	DONATIONS	631.28			
	INTEREST	42.64	W/O CD		
	50/50 +DONUT \$	259.00			
	REGION REBATE	461.00			
	TOTAL			\$ 1,393.92	
EXPENSES	MEETINGS	-358.03			
	DIVISION EXP	-431.33			
	EQUIPMENT	0.00			
	PRINT/POSTAGE	0.00			
	TOTAL			\$ (789.36)	
	NET LOSS			\$ 604.56	
BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES AS OF				7/31/2024	
			HARLEYVILLE	TRUMARK	TOTAL
	CHECKING	\$ 1,609.68	401.00	\$	2,010.68
	BUSINESS SAVINGS	\$ 33.60	13,491.90	\$	13,525.50
	CD DUE 07/17/25	\$ 8,159.01		\$	8,159.01
	TOTAL	\$ 9,802.29	\$ 13,892.90	\$	23,695.19

**PHILLY DIV NMRA
INCOME STATEMENT [CASH* BASIS]
12 MONTHS ENDED 07/31/2024**

REVENUE	SHOW NET	724.49	SHOW @CVV 12/9/23
	DONATIONS	211.00	
	INTEREST	4.77	[CHECKING ONLY]
	50/50	299.00	
	REGION REBATE	675.00	
	TOTAL		\$1,914.26
EXPENSES	MEETINGS	-2,085.19	
	DIVISION EXP	-889.41	
	EQUIPMENT	0.00	
	PRINT/POSTAGE	-595.93	
	TOTAL		(\$3,570.53)
	NET LOSS		(\$1,656.27)
BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES AS OF			7/31/2024
	CHECKING	\$8,060.50	PER BANK \$362.48 OS CHECKS
	BUSINESS SAVINGS	\$7,229.59	
	CD DUE 7/17/2025	\$8,131.72	BANK RENEWED BY MISTAKE
	TOTAL	\$23,421.81	

Division 4: Tidewater

Prepared by Superintendent John Robey

Yearly Division Report

January 1 thru December 31, 2024

Division: Tidewater Division 04 Website: www.nmra-mer-tidewater.org

Newsletter Published 6 times yearly is the “Callboard”

Meetings: Meetings are held in January, March, May, July, September and November on the 3rd Saturday morning from 0900 to approximately 12 Noon and are held in the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, 424 Kings Grant, Virginia Beach, VA. Minutes of the meetings are published in the Callboard.

Officers: Superintendent: John Robey

Assistant Superintendent: John Fallon

Paymaster: Fred Humphrey (Immediate Past Superintendent)

Timekeeper: Pat Mahoney

Director: Bill Faye

Director: Wayne Williams

Director: Chuck Davis

AP Coordinator: Chuck Davis (MMR) (appointed in September 2022)

Elections are held in January with a new or reelected board assuming duties at the Official Annual Business Meeting the 3rd Saturday of January.

Achievement Program Highlights:

Two Division members received achievement certificates during 2024. Bill Fay received his certificate for Master Builder -Scenery and Alan Balma received three certificates: Master Builder -Scenery, and Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical and Model Railroad Engineer-Civil. Several members have been making progress toward completing their requirements for Merit Awards and Certificates during 2024. This includes Alan Balma, Bill Faye, Roger Bir, Bill Wayles, Fred Humphrey, Greg Leiphart, and Mark Nieting.

Activities from the past year:

The Division sponsored a White Elephant model train swap and sales meet in January to benefit the Division coffers. Mark Neiting designed, developed and produced a color tri-fold promotional brochure for the Division. Division members organized and displayed model train history and items in showcases at the Virginia Beach Central library during the month of November to commemorate National Model Train Month. Due to the national election, we were not able to hold a community event at the Library as we have done in previous years. We did hold our November Division meeting at the HobbyTown Stores' hobby meeting room, that was open to prospective members. The November meeting is the final of the modeling contests for the year, with a diorama contest. Also, the third weekend of November, the Tidewater Division and the TCA (Train Collectors of America) Tidewater chapter held a joint train show and sales meet at the Prince of Peace church. The event featured member vendors, model displays, and portable layouts. This was a 2 day event that was well attended. Several members attended the 2024 MER Convention in Durham, NC. Members have continued with an Operations SIG activity. These members have conducted operating sessions to develop the special interests and also to facilitate members who are working on their Achievement Program.

The Tidewater Division membership has remaining about the same numbers as previous years. During the MER/NMRA initiative to include "orphan members", the Tidewater Division was not affected to change boundaries.

At the September meeting, a committee was formed to review and propose any amendments or changes to our current Division by-laws that have not been reviewed for several years.

Special Projects or working with other organizations:

Five Division members have organized and developed plans for a Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads. (www.mrmhr.org). The plan and concept of this museum is to provide a public venue to educate, teach and expand the enjoyment of model railroad hobbies. The committee has now met with and organized STEM and Arts as part of the endeavor.

The concept is to have major clubs from all scales to be represented with operational layouts for public display. To date, agreements have been made for G scale, O scale, S scale, HO scale, N scale, and Lego clubs to participate. This volunteer committee has now achieved and secured retail display space in the Norfolk MacArthur Center Mall. The Museum is actively recruiting fellow model railroaders to join in the planning and building of multi-scale layouts. The Museum held a successful Christmas theme open house with Santa during the Christmas session in partnership with the City and the Mall management.

One member, Gary Brown, has continued to lead a charity program of providing model train sets for Christmas gifts to families that otherwise not be able to provide this luxury. Gary assembles these sets from donations of rolling stock, track and power supplies.

The Division was requested to build a scale diorama depicting the 1930's scene of the Lee Hall Train Depot during late 2022. The diorama project has now been completed and is on display at the Lee Hall Train Depot Museum for the City of Newport News, VA. Six members studied historical photos of the site, visited and measured existing buildings and roads and scratch-built structures for the diorama (some of which were judged in the AP program).

The Division has continued to support the model train layout at the Suffolk Virginia Train Museum (Norfolk & Western) with maintenance and modifications to the layout.

Successful Ideas:

Our Division learned the value to seek and “lock in” a consistent meeting location. We had lost our long time meeting location, so the idea was implemented to move our meetings around to the far borders of our division. We experienced a decline of attendance, apparently because members did not want to drive that far to a meeting. Thanks to Mark Nieting, our new meeting location has a complete audio-visual system that now allows us to conduct Zoom workshops from other divisions, present training videos and YouTube model railroad subjects.

Our Division implemented and continues to hold a member social hour before each meeting. We provide coffee and donuts and the idea to encourage fellowship, introduction to new members and guests, sharing modeling ideas and special interests. We have also promoted a member “show-n-tell” or “bring-n-brag” table to display items of interest to the membership of something that you learned to do, built or new product that you want to share. This has been very successful and has increased the social interaction of members.

Every meeting must have an educational theme with a presentation. We have avoided the mundane, lifeless business meeting that doesn't particularly have any interest to draw the member to attend. Interesting and relevant prototypical and modeling railroad videos have been the most favorably received activities by the membership. We have experienced an increase in member attendance.

The Division continues to have a modeling contest for each meeting. The contest descriptions are posted in the Callboard and on the web site in advance for the year. Judging is conducted by the membership and certificates for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd are awarded at the end of the meeting. In addition to the contest, we sponsor a door prize raffle at each meeting.

MER Support:

All of the MER Superintendents have dealt with the membership roster issues in the previous year. And, it now appears that our Business Manager has accomplished a stellar job in settling all the technical issues and has finally been able to publish a comprehensive roster that we can utilize to track our membership. We have been able to identify typo's and contacted several members to correct their emails.

Members now have the capability of changing and updating their information on the NMRA website. At the September division meeting the membership decided to volunteer to sponsor the 2026 MER Convention. Initial planning and concept meeting will commence in early 2025 to develop the location, theme and a preliminary itinerary.

Submitted:
John Robey
Tidewater Division Superintendent

[Bylaws were included in this report but not displayed here in the interest of saving space. They are available upon request. -Ed.]



Division 11: Susquehanna

Yearly Division Report

Reporting Period: Jan. 1, 2024-Dec. 31, 2024

Division: Susquehanna, Mid-Eastern Region

Meeting Times and Places:

February 17 – Joint meet with the Philly Division – Southampton, PA

March 22-23 – RPM meet, Malvern, PA

April 6 – Blue Ridge Summit – Mini-Con with South Mountain division – Blue Ridge Summit, PA

May 18 – Minersville, PA meet – the running of Project 113 CNJ 0-6-0

June 22 – Meet in Annville, PA station

August 17 – Division meet at RR Museum of PA during Model Railroad Days

October 17-20 – Piedmont Junction MER convention

October 26 – Steamtown meet

November Layout open houses

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

Jerry Lauchle filling the unexpired term of Bill Lesjak due to health concerns.

Contact information:

Superintendent: Alan Mende

Asst. Superintendent: Chris Kier

Chief clerk: Dean Johnson with duties as secretary and treasurer

Directors: Dave Ellis

Ken Roth

Jerry Lauchle

Jim Mattern

Achievement program chair: Bob Charles

Membership chairman: Howard Oakes

Sidetracks editor: Rich Wurst

Webmaster: David Collison

Assistant webmaster: Dave Ellis

Susquehanna Division website: www.susquehannanmra.org

Financial: See attached sheet.

Achievement Program highlights:

James Leighty: Golden Spike
Tim Himmelberger: Association Official
Scott Unger: Association Official

Activities from the past year: See Meeting Time and Places

Charitable Activities: Donation – Minersville Fire Co.#1 -- \$135.00
 Donation – Annville train station -- \$75.00

Special Projects or working with other organizations:

Purchased a laptop for division use

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

We instituted monthly Zoom meetings for our board of Directors
We are currently looking for the editor of *Susquehanna Sidetracks*. Our editor wants to retire.

We updated our Division website (<https://susquehannanmra.org/>)

Superintendent’s Name and Signature:

Alan Mende



National Model Railroad Association
Mid-Eastern Region
Susquehanna Division #11
Cash Flow Statement
For July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

Beginning Cash Balance - July 1, 2023	\$10,026.51
Income for the Year	
Subscription Income	\$0.00
MER/NMRA - Fall 2022; Spring & Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 Dues	710.00
2023 Convention - Company Store Receipts	466.50
- Raffle Receipts	1,037.00
- Donation	4.45
2023 Convention - MER Expense Reimbursement	269.42
- MER Shared Profit	7,417.00
Coffee Donations - Susquehanna Division Meeting's	78.40
Total Income Received	9,982.77
Total Cash Available	\$20,009.28
Expenses for the Year	
Company Store Expenses - Howard Oakes	\$94.25
Raffle Expenses - Dean Johnson	175.17
Convention Receipts forwarded to MER - William Wurtzell	1,507.95
Bank Service Fees	36.00
Sidetracks Printing/Mailing to Paid Members	64.75
Donuts - Various Susquehanna Division Meeting's	127.56
Donation - Good Hope Fire Company	50.00
Donation - Minersville Fire Co. #1	135.00

Donation - Annville Train Station	75.00
Affinity Photo 2 Program	51.93
Postage	26.24
Total Expenses	2,343.85
Ending Cash Balance - June 30, 2024	\$17,665.43
All Undesignated Funds	



Division 12: Carolina Southern

- Prepared by Superintendent Andrew Stitt

MER Division 12
Carolina Southern Division
2024 Annual Report
Prepared by Andrew Stitt, Superintendent

Officers and Directors
Superintendent
Andrew Stitt
New London, NC 28127-7632

Assistant Superintendent
Alan Hardee
Bessemer City, NC 28016-2736

Paymaster
David Thrams
Stanley, NC 28614-1185

Clerk
David Myers
Waxhaw, NC 28173-9964

Director 2025
Ed Smith
Taylorsville, NC 28681-6875

Director 2026
Joe Skorch
Kannapolis, NC 28083-9023

Division Website: <http://carolinasouthern.org>

Membership:

Membership for the 2024 calendar year declined slightly from 134 members to 126. The Division held recruitment efforts at our Railroad Model University in April, and two trains shows within the Division’s boundary. In an effort to update our presence, the Division invested in a new NMRA banner to be used at these events as well as at our meetings. We anticipate purchasing another banner displaying the Division’s geographical boundaries as well as our website address, QR code, and Facebook emblem.

Financial Status:

The Division bank balance decreased slightly in 2024. The year-end balance was \$8,401.02.

Division Events for 2024:

The Division traditionally holds meetings or other activities for its members and guests on the third Saturday, 11 months of the year, excluding December. The Annual meeting was held at the Newton Depot in January. At that meeting, in 2024, elections were held for the four officer positions as well as one director position. Meetings were held at Mecklenburg County Library system branches in February and March with clinics. The Division was represented at the model train show in Hickory, NC at the end of March. The division held its Railroad Model University in Concord, NC in April. The Division was represented at the model train show at the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC in May. In June, the Southern Piedmont Live Steamers hosted the Division at their facility in Oakboro, NC. July and August saw the Division hold meetings with clinics at a Mecklenburg County Recreation Center. September saw the Division sponsor their annual picnic in Kannapolis, NC. October 2024 the Division did not have a meeting as the MER Piedmont Junction convention was being held in nearby Durham, NC. November, the Division held their first member home layout open house tour on each of the four Saturdays before the Thanksgiving holiday. It was very well attended.

Educational Activities:

The Division again held their annual Railroad Model University in Concord, NC. It was well promoted throughout the Division including the model train show in Hickory, NC as well as the model train shops within the Division’s boundary. Attendees included NMRA members from the Division as well as the Carolina Piedmont Division, and the Palmetto Division of the SER, and guests. Informal teaching sessions were also held throughout the year at the Newton Legacy Model Train Room located at the Newton Depot.

Achievement Program Activity:

2024 Awards:

- 4 - Golden Spike awards
- 2 - AP for Scenery
- 2 - AP Association Volunteer
- 3 – AP Chief Dispatcher

Newton Legacy Model Train Room:

The above is the new name for what the Division has been referring to as Train Town. 2024 was very successful. Visitation improved due to media coverage, written and internet exposure, and word of mouth. These exhibits have become a destination for model railroad enthusiasts which is beneficial to the adjoining Southeastern Shortline and Narrow Gauge Museum.

Expenses have been covered by donations from the visitors. We are hopeful that more members will participate in 2025 to help with staffing. Creating educational programs (clinics) have been discussed if there are enough members willing to help out.

Future Directions for 2025:

The members attending the Annual Meeting in January 2025 were invited to submit their ideas for activities they would like to see in 2025. These will be compiled and presented to the Division BOD for planning. Plans are already underway for the 2025 RMU. A new vendor has entered the Division boundary with plans to have several model train shows in 2025, so it is anticipated that the division will be represented at those in addition to the two established events. The November member open house layout tour is very likely to be repeated in 2025.



Division 15: Chesapeake

- Prepared by Superintendent Kirk Bateman

2024 Annual Report of the Chesapeake Division, MER, NMRA

Prepared: February 15, 2024 by Kirk Bateman, Superintendent with input from Tim Beaty, Clerk; David Arday, Paymaster; and Kurt Thompson, Division AP Chair.

Officers and Directors

Kirk Bateman
Superintendent
Webmaster

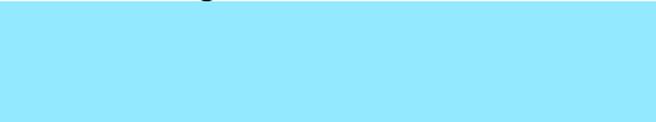


web@chesdiv-nmra.org

Mike Shylanski
Assistant Superintendent



K Travers Stavac
Director-at-Large



David Arday
Paymaster



Tim Beaty
Clerk



Kurt Thompson
AP Chairman
Newsletter Editor



Tom Casey
Past Superintendent



Division Website

<https://www.chesdiv-nmra.org>

Membership

The December 2024 roster received from the MER shows 104 members (101 individuals and three family memberships) in the division. The division had 105 members on the December 2023 roster.

Financial

The 2024 Paymaster’s Report (covering the period November 1, 2023 to October 31, 2024) shows our total balance (the sum of the balances in our savings and petty cash accounts) to be \$2,700.08. This is a net increase of \$830.59 from 2023.

Division Events

January 19: The Division met virtually, via Zoom, from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., for a Meet-n-Greet/Show-n-Tell. The meeting included an NMRAx Clinic, and a Show-n-Tell for folks who had something they wished to present and/or discuss. Eleven people attended.

September 22: Three Division members kindly volunteered to host open houses so that we could visit their layouts. Those hosting were David Vaughn, Kelly Regan, and Jim Brewer.

November 2: The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at the B&O Railroad Historical Society in Eldersburg, MD. We had seventeen attendees. We had a full schedule, with opening remarks from our Superintendent, Kirk Bateman, a Paymaster’s report by David Arday, three clinics/discussions – Mike Shylanski presented *Coil Steel Rides the B&O*, Fritz Dahlin presented *Weathering with Craft Paints*, and Tom Casey showed pictures and discussed the CSX Howard

Street Tunnel Expansion. Following the clinics, several members shared their ongoing model railroading activities and discussed projects currently on their bench.

December 15 – 30. The division conducted an election, via ElectionBuddy, for the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Director-at-Large, whose terms were ending December 31, 2024. Having no nominees other than the incumbents, who all agreed to serve again, each was reelected. Twenty-four members cast votes, 23 percent of our roster.

Charitable and Educational Activities

None

Achievement Program Activity

Name	AP Certificate	Date Awarded
Patrick Flash	Association Volunteer	2/19/2024
Patrick Flash	Author	2/19/2024

NMRA and MER Convention Activity

None

Future Directions

We are in the process of reorganizing the structure of our incorporation in the state of Maryland and applying to the IRS to obtain 501(c)3 status.

We hope to become more engaged in promoting the NMRA, and perhaps recruit a few new members, by manning a table at the Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium during the May and October shows.

The Chesapeake Division

In Memoriam - Forrest Lucas

By Jerry Lauchle, MMR

As you may know, Forrest Lucas was on the Local Convention Committee of the 2023 MER Convention we had in Altoona. He was fighting cancer at the time, but was still very active with the convention. He arranged the scheduling and contracts with Fullington Trailways for the two motorcoach excursions during that week. He also was the point of contact for the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad excursion. (Lee Rainey may have some comments about Forrest in regards to the EBT excursion.) Forrest also worked with another Altoona native, Lou Mayer, to identify good restaurants in the area for conventioners to visit. He also served under Barry Schmitt in arranging the clinics.

I attended the viewing of Forrest the day before I learned from my ophthalmologist that I had choroidal melanoma of my left eye. That took my mind off of anything else, including getting this obituary out to the folks in the MER and Division 11. I think it appropriate, even a year late, that we show his obituary in the Local and in Sidetracks. The attached came from the PRRT&HS spring 2025 issue of The Keystone. It's identical to the one published in a Johnstown newspaper that I had read. If you publish it in the newsletters, you may want to include the first paragraph of this email. Thank you!

Forrest, Lucas, of Johnstown, Pa., PRRT&HS 8777, passed away on January 23, 2024 at age 79. Born in Altoona, Forrest was a graduate of Altoona High School, Class of 1962, and Penn State University, where he earned a degree in Electrical Engineering. He was employed at HRB Singer



The Keystone 8

Co. in State College and retired from Penelec/First Energy, Johnstown with 33 years of service.

After retirement, Forrest worked for Mountain Top Technologies, Westsylvania Heritage Group, and drove limos for Dream Limousine. He founded Legacy Corner Photography in 2002. He was a member of NMRA's Mid-Eastern and Mid-Central Regions.

Forrest enjoyed family trips to Strasburg Rail Road and Gettysburg. He loved driving his Corvettes and going with his family to the car shows at Carlisle. He was very active in the Westmont High School band and football boosters while his children were in school. He served on the advisory board of the Johnstown YWCA and was a former member of Westmont United Methodist Church, serving on many boards and teaching Sunday School.

He was a Penn State Master Gardener. His garden always flourished, with vegetables he shared with the neighbors. He enjoyed the summer Wright Family Reunions. He was a gentle, kind man and a very positive person.

In Memoriam – Brian Kampschroer

By Bob Charles, MMR

On April 1, 2025, NMRA lost one of its quiet, but most ardent supporters. Brian Kampschroer, known to many of us as simply “The Elf,” spent over 40 years actively working on behalf of the Susquehanna Division, Mid-Eastern Region, and NMRA in many, many roles.

His early NMRA activities involved helping to form the Susquehanna division, writing the bylaws and serving as a founding Director. He then developed the paperwork required for charitable status and determinedly followed it through the labyrinthine federal tax system to obtain the division’s (and later the MER’s) 501-c-3 incorporation as a tax-deductible charity.

Brian’s first involvement in National happenings was his service on the 1980 Washington National Convention Staff. This success led to his participation on the National Train Show staff from its inception to his ultimate retirement as NMRA’s Executive Convention Chairman in 2001. His years of involvement in NMRA national and regional conventions, along with his professional educational efforts resulted in his recognition by the Professional Convention Management Association as a Certified Meeting Planner or CMP. To my knowledge, he is the only *volunteer* individual ever to earn this professional qualification from PCMA. It was a distinction of which he was quietly proud.

Brian also served two terms as Eastern Vice President of NMRA. For his many services he earned NMRA’s Meritorious Service Award, and in 1994 President Eric Lundberg presented Brian with a President’s award.

The Mid-Eastern Region has been well served by Brian. While accomplishing much for the National organization, he was also busily at work for the region. Elected an MER Director in 1985, he served two terms until 1989. He served as a convention treasurer for regional conventions in Carlisle, 1980, the Harrisburg quad-regional in 1985, Richmond 1988, Harrisburg 1990, Valley Forge National Convention 1993, and Harrisburg in 2017. He also served the region as Assistant Treasurer for some 10 years, culminating in election as Treasurer, serving in that capacity from 2017 to 2023 when declining health demanded he resign.

In 2022 the Mid-Eastern Region Board of Directors voted to recognize a lifetime of service to NMRA and the region. The **MERitorious Lifetime Service Award** was created to be proposed by the President and voted by the Board to deserving members. At the 2024 convention in Charlotte Brian was the first member to be so recognized by the Board in a unanimous vote. Sadly, he was unable to attend to receive it in person.

During all these myriad commitments, Brian did not neglect modeling, the main reason we are all here. He participated in the Achievement Program, earning Association Volunteer in 1985,

Author – 1987, Official – 1988, Civil Engineering – 1990, Dispatcher – 1991, Electrical Engineering – 2017, and Scenery – 2019. Now you may ask, “With seven certificates, why does he not qualify for MMR?” Brian only needed Motive Power or Cars to fulfill his objective, but unfortunately time and ill-health won out.

Brian may have been diminutive in stature, but in his accomplishments as both a modeler and a man he stood very, very tall. He was extremely intelligent, extraordinarily empathetic, hugely humble and a joy to be around. Rest in peace, little brother. You were well loved and will be sorely missed.

In Memory - Dave Renard

By Charlie Flichman, MMR

It is with deep regret to announce the passing of former MER President and Master Model Railroader #35 - Dave Renard on April 7, 2025.

He was a mentor and a great friend to me. We met in 1970 with a group of NMRA modelers from Harford County, MD and created a routine on Tuesday nights of visiting each other’s layouts. This group was named HARM (**H**arford **A**ssociation of **R**ailroad **M**odelers) by Dave when a bus tour of our layouts was part of the NMRA National convention in Washington, DC in 1970. The group is still going strong.

He served as MER President for two terms. He helped form the Edgewood Model Railroad club on the Army base in Edgewood MD. He enjoyed giving his time and talents to build models for other railroad modelers.

In Memory - George Schmidt

By Mark Nieting

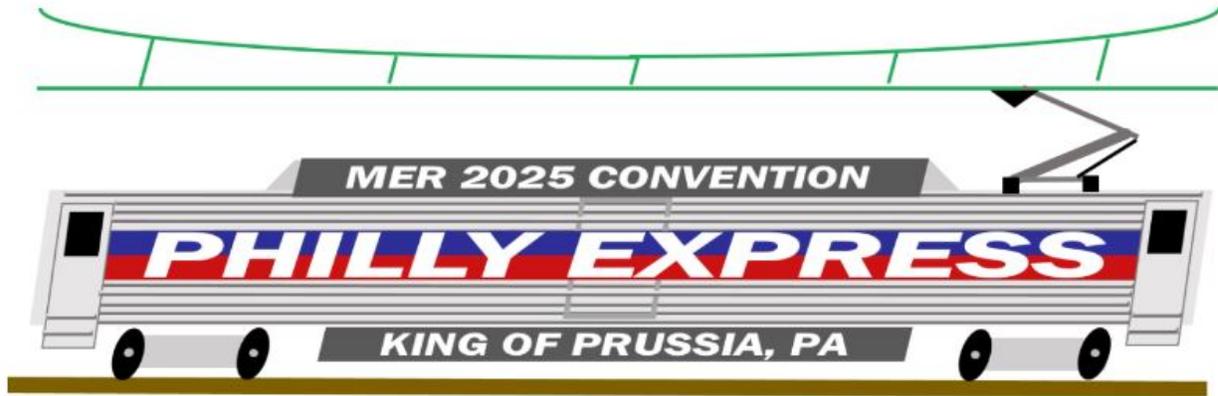
GEORGE W. SCHMIDT

Our brother in Christ was called home to the Lord
on March 31, 2025

Funeral Arrangements:

FRI (4 APR) - 5-7pm Viewing @ Woodlawn Funeral Home in Norfolk
SAT (5 APR) - 10-11am Viewing @ Prince of Peace (PoP) Lutheran Church
SAT (5 APR) - 11am-12pm Funeral Service @ PoP
SAT (5 APR) - 12pm Luncheon @ PoP
TUE (8 APR) - 11am Interment @ Woodlawn Funeral Home
6329 East Virginia Beach Blvd, Norfolk 23502
Phone: 757-455-2838
Website: dignitymemorial.com

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS



2025 NMRA National Convention

Station No.VI - hosted by the North Central Region of the NMRA

July 14-19, 2025

2026 NMRA National Convention

July 27 to August 2, 2026



 www.facebook.com/NMRATakesChatt

nmra2026.org

Back on Track...

Branching Off

By Greg Warth

As you probably know by now, I am stepping down as Editor of *The Local* for the MER (Mid-Eastern Region). This will be my last issue. Of course, I have mixed feelings about this because I have enjoyed working on *The Local*. The organization, its leaders and members have left an indelible imprint on me and I am glad to have had the opportunity to serve. Everyone has been very friendly, accommodating and supportive and my gratitude for this is truly sincere. However, it's time to let someone else enjoy the experience as I explore other opportunities. Future goals for me include progressing in the Achievement Program to hopefully become a Master Model Railroader, and continuing my work as MER Director-at-Large if you choose to allow me that opportunity in the upcoming election. I also intend to focus on building a successful Model Railroad Museum in eastern Virginia, to publish a couple of books (one about model railroading), and to continue my work in trying to improve healthcare.

This transition will not be as difficult as it might have been had I not found a replacement as quickly as I did. Mark Nieting, an active Board member of the Tidewater Division, has graciously agreed to pick up the green flag and carry it forward. He is a Pastor at one of our local churches, a great writer, an avid model railroader and a frequent contributor to *The Local*. Mark's name as Editor will be on the next issue, but I will be working with him behind the scenes to teach him everything I know for the next several issues.

I am confident that the MER will continue to move forward on the mainline picking up more passengers along the way. There are many model railroaders out there who don't belong to anything, especially the younger ones. They could benefit by joining in all the activities and the education that the MER provides. We need to show them the benefits of structured involvement but without too many rules and regulations to allow them the freedom to grow and create new ideas. They can learn so much from their peers, but only if they are around them. Remaining isolated in a train room at home is very limiting. The main advantage to being a member is that you have so many knowledgeable and friendly people around you that you can't help but having some of it rub off on you.

I am indebted to you, the reader, for your thirst for knowledge and for your partnership in this endeavor to provide fellowship, opportunity and enjoyment in this all encompassing hobby of model railroading.

-Greg

We hope you enjoyed this issue of *The Local*. Please continue to send in your original articles. Let us know what you are working on. Whatever it is, if it's related to model railroading, I am sure it will be of interest to the rest of us. If you want to learn more about any particular topic, let us know about that as well. We'll do our best to research it and write about it.

Thanks again to our fantastic [editorial staff](#) for their assistance in putting this together. The quality of these issues is largely due to their expertise, wisdom and "eagle eyes."