



# The Local

Official publication of the Mid-Eastern Region,

NMRA – A tax-exempt organization

SEARCH

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## Philly Express: MER Convention 2025

By Steve Wysowski and Howard Kaplan



*Colebrookdale RR Excursion Offered at the [Philly Express 2025 Convention](#) in King of Prussia, PA, October 16-19. [Sign up Now!](#) [More on p. 4.](#)*

President's Column...



If you are new to the NMRA, or even a long standing member, the purpose or function of the NMRA Regions might not be fully clear to you. Frankly, it periodically gets a little bit murky to me as well. The MER Board of Directors had some discussion about this topic at our meeting this April.

The Regions are in a unique position with the NMRA. When we join the NMRA our membership is registered at the National level. Members are then assigned to a Division according to their county and state address and their most frequent interaction with the NMRA occurs at the Division level. So if the brand of the NMRA is a National one, and the members typically become involved at the Division level, where does that leave the Region? Since we are model railroaders, perhaps we should use a railroad analogy. The NMRA being the leadership of the entire organization would be the locomotive of the train. Depending on what era you model that could be a mountain class steam engine or a matched set of A-B-B-A F-units. Each of us as members are individuals with different interests and abilities, much like the cars of the train each with unique reporting marks.

Using that same analogy, the Region serves like couplers holding the entire consist together. Modern couplers are rated between 350,000 to about half a million pounds depending on their service class. When one considers that an entire train can easily weigh several thousand tons, the forces applied to a coupler (particularly those closer to the power) can easily exceed the 175 ton rating of the couplers.

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How to Build a Model Railroad

So careful train handling is required to avoid knuckle failures that result in the train pulling apart and going into emergency braking.

Additionally, being around couplers can be a dangerous position. In the early days of railroading, brakemen with all ten digits were assumed to be inexperienced. My copy of the Chessie System's Brakeman's Manual (no date is obvious on the publication) specially advises that when going between cars to make a coupling one foot should be kept outside the rail should it be necessary to get in the clear.

When operating between the cars it is also important to have a clear purpose of action and for that reason the MER Board will be developing a marketing plan to help focus and guide all our actions, and confirm their alignment nationally and divisionally. While serving as the "couplers," the Region plays a very important role, although it is not a particularly visible or "showy" one.

The Executive Handbook cites the purposes of the Region as follows:

- Expand interest in and publicize the hobby of model railroading.
- Promote membership growth.
- Sponsor at least one convention per year. Operate on a balanced budget.
- Improve and publicize contest judging standards and procedures.
- Support the National Achievement Program.

Basically we, the MER, are the link that connects the leadership of the NMRA with the membership. Without us, the whole thing falls apart. I would say that's pretty important. So, next time you help to support the MER, whether it be by volunteering, becoming an officer, participating in the Achievement Program or even just writing an article for *The Local*, you are a key part of the organization, without which the NMRA train derails, or malfunctions. As a result, all those model railroaders that depend on the NMRA standards, conventions, meetings, socializations, friendships, education, information and everything else would be out of luck. Your presence and your support is what keeps the whole thing going.

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

**Positions are now open and available for:  
Treasurer, Editor and  
Business Manager**

## Philly Express - MER Convention 2025

By Steve Wysowski and Howard Kaplan



In just over one month the 2025 Mid-Eastern Region Convention “Philly Express” will be under way. Mark your calendars for October 16th through the 19th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in King of Prussia, PA. Hotel reservations can be made by going to the website, <https://phillyexpress.org>.

As of this writing, 10 ops sessions on eight sites are confirmed. 60+ clinics and counting. 46 layouts have been established in nearby member homes, an excursion to a heritage railroad, the Colebrookdale Railroad, has been finalized and will be a special trip hosted by a division member who is a conductor and director on that line, and includes lunch and a special tour for those who sign up. And now a second rail excursion—the West Chester Railroad—has been added.

As is with all MER conventions, there will be a contest room. A White Elephant room is in place with modular layouts set up, door prizes will be available, a train show with vendors, hands-on clinics, and a special clinic—Modeling with the Masters (MMR members)—will be presented.

This article only mentions a few of the activities—a full list of the numerous options can be found on the website.

Shirts are available and can be purchased online. The website explains all options for delivery.

Please note that we are still in need of clinicians, layouts, and volunteers. Any help would be greatly appreciated. Email Webmaster Howard Kaplan at [hakaplan@rcn.com](mailto:hakaplan@rcn.com) to be forwarded to the appropriate contact.

Here's a more detailed look at sampling of what you can expect:

- **Clinics:** Presentations and workshops on various aspects of model railroading, covering techniques, tools, and specific modeling skills.
- **Layout Tours:** Opportunities to visit impressive home and club layouts, providing inspiration and a chance to see different modeling styles.
- **Operating Sessions:** Participating in the operation of model railroads, following schedules and procedures similar to real railroads.
- **Contests:** Model contests, where participants can showcase their creations and compete for awards.
- **Prototype Tours:** Visits to real-world railroad locations or museums, offering a chance to see the prototypes that inspire modelers.
- **White Elephant Room:** A marketplace where attendees can buy or sell each others' model railroad equipment and related items.
- **Banquet:** Dinner to celebrate the winners of the contests, the accomplishments of model railroaders in the region, and an opportunity to connect with fellow model railroaders. An noted individual in the world of model or prototype railroading will deliver a keynote speech.
- **Modular Layout Displays:** Local groups or individuals bring portable modules and assemble them into operating model railroads for display

The Philadelphia Division looks forward to seeing all of you at the convention. Everyone is invited!

## Register for the 2025 MER Convention

### **PHILLY EXPRESS**

Pre-Convention Early Registration (through 8/31/25) is \$75.

Pre-Convention Basic Registration (9/1/25 through 10/4/25) is \$90.

Registration on-site is \$100.

One-day fare is \$50

Spouses/Significant Other - additional \$10

Children 18 and under are free

Non-NMRA members incur additional \$20

**NOTE: IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU CLEAR YOUR BROWSER CACHE FIRST TO BE SURE YOU ARE GETTING THE MOST UP-TO-DATE FORM**

**NOTE ABOUT BANQUET:** Attendees have a choice of three options:

- 1) Railroad-themed buffet
- 2) Vegetarian plated meal
- 3) Gluten-free plated meal

The options will appear once the "Yes" button is selected for the Banquet. More details on the specific menus will appear in the BANQUET section when available.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR PDF REGISTRATION FORM](#)



## Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2025 Convention Philly Express · October 16 - 19, 2025



<https://phillyexpress.org/>

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

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

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

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

NMRA Member #: \_\_\_\_\_ Region: \_\_\_\_\_ Division: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Scale: \_\_\_\_\_ Is this your first MER Convention? \_\_\_\_\_

Registrar  
Use  
Only!

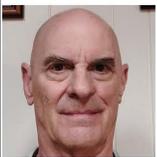
Description	ID	Cost	Qty	Amount
<b>Registration</b>				
NMRA Member: ___ \$75 thru Aug 31, ___ \$90 Sep 1 – Oct 4, ___ \$100 On-Site Oct 16–19				
Non-Member: ___ \$95 thru Aug 31, ___ \$110 Sep 1 – Oct 5, ___ \$130 On-Site Oct 16–19				
One-Day (circle day)   NMRA Member: \$100 Fri Sat   Non-Member: \$70 Fri Sat				
Spouse/Significant Other		\$10		
Children 18 and Under (Name & Age)		\$0		
Banquet – Saturday Night Buffet Vegetarian Gluten-Free	401	\$65		
Editors' Breakfast Fri (Division Editors)	420	\$0		
Superintendents' Breakfast Sat (Division Superintendents)	421	\$0		
<b>Call Boards / Ops – See Convention Web Site for Latest Information</b>				
Earl Paine's Reading Mainline	801	\$10		
Steve Salotti's New York, Susquehanna & Western (Sect 1 -Thu)	802	\$10		
Steve Salotti's New York, Susquehanna & Western (Sect 2 -Sat)	803	\$10		
Eric Craig's Philadelphia & Reading	804	\$10		
Mike McNamara's Northeast Kingdom Railroad (Sect 1 -Thu)	805	\$10		
Mike McNamara's Northeast Kingdom Railroad (Sect 2 -Sat)	806	\$10		
Greg & Angel Shindledecker's Western Maryland Railway in West Virginia	807	\$10		
Charles Kadyk's Pennsylvania & New England Railroad	808	\$10		
St Alban's Model Railroad (StARR) Club	809	\$10		
Mike Berus's Baltimore & Ohio in Maryland and West Virginia	810	\$10		
<b>Extra Fare Clinics – Registration Required, Further Information on Web Site</b>				
Build a Kato Mini-Module (Thu) N (\$10) HOn30 (\$12)	601			
Build a Kato Mini-Module (Sat) N (\$10) HOn30 (\$12)	602			
Build a Craftsman Kit ____ N (\$16) ____ HO (\$24) ____ S (\$32) ____ O (\$39)	603			
Repurposed Boxcar Craftsman Build (HO scale)	604	\$20		
<b>Prototype Tours – Further Information on Web Site</b>				
Colebrookdale Railroad Excursion Lunch Selection: ___ Chicken Salad ___ Ham & Cheddar w Dijon Spread ___ Hummus & Vegetables	201	\$65		
West Chester Railroad	202	\$25		
<b>Convention Shirt</b>				
Order online at <a href="https://phillyexpress.org/store/">https://phillyexpress.org/store/</a>				
<b>TOTAL</b>			➡	
<b>Would you like to be a contest judge at the convention – Circle YES or NO</b>				
<b>Have you been a contest judge in the past – Circle YES or NO</b>				

Print registrations must be accompanied by check payable to **MER Conventions**. Send to: MER Conventions, PO Box 426, Sykesville, MD 21784-0426

Any questions and/or additional information, contact the Convention Registrar: e-mail [mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com](mailto:mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com) or call (410) 442-0446.

**Hotel – Crowne Plaza King of Prussia, 260 Mall Blvd, King of Prussia, PA 19406. Room Rate - \$136 per night (incl two breakfast coupons daily) + tax.** To receive the convention room rate, book via the convention website <https://phillyexpress.org/hotel/>

# Who's Who...

Board of Directors & Administrative Staff				
	<b>President:</b> Scott Unger 610-462-0756 <a href="mailto:president@mer-nmra.com">president@mer-nmra.com</a>		<b>Director-at-Large</b> Greg Warth 757-816-8399 <a href="mailto:gjwarth@mer-nmra.com">gjwarth@mer-nmra.com</a>	 <b>Achievement Program Manager:</b> Kurt Thompson, MMR 410-507-3671 <a href="mailto:apchair@mer-nmra.com">apchair@mer-nmra.com</a>
	<b>Vice President:</b> Gary Brown 757-641-7671 <a href="mailto:vp@mer-nmra.com">vp@mer-nmra.com</a>		<b>Director-at-Large:</b> Bob Bridges  <a href="mailto:rkbridges@mer-nmra.com">rkbridges@mer-nmra.com</a>	 <b>Nominating Committee Chair:</b> Bob Charles, MMR 717-763-1848 <a href="mailto:rcharles@mer-nmra.com">rcharles@mer-nmra.com</a>
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	<b>Assistant Business Manager:</b> John Hoyt 410-340-1776 <a href="mailto:jhoyt@mer-nmra.com">jhoyt@mer-nmra.com</a>		<b>Assistant Treasurer and Convention Treasurer:</b> William "Bill" Wurtzell (201)819-8701 <a href="mailto:wwurtzell@mer-nmra.com">wwurtzell@mer-nmra.com</a>	 <b>Archivist:</b> Michael Maurer  <a href="mailto:archives@mer-nmra.com">archives@mer-nmra.com</a>
	<b>Past President:</b> Kurt Thompson, MMR 410-507-3671 <a href="mailto:pastpresident@mer-nmra.com">pastpresident@mer-nmra.com</a>	Photo not yet available.	<b>Executive Convention Chair:</b> Laura Bateman 410-442-0446 <a href="mailto:ECC@mer-nmrs.com">ECC@mer-nmrs.com</a>	

	<p><b>MER Photographer:</b> Jerry Lauchle, MMR 814-404-6955 <a href="mailto:photos@mer-nmra.com">photos@mer-nmra.com</a></p>		<p><b>Assistant Registrar:</b> Jim Fisher 443-504-3919 <a href="mailto:jfisher@mer-nmra.com">jfisher@mer-nmra.com</a></p>
	<p><b>Contest Chair:</b> Alan Mende 717-469-1047 <a href="mailto:contests@mer-nmra.com">contests@mer-nmra.com</a></p>		<p><b>Web Master:</b> Jeff Burch 443-280-9127 <a href="mailto:webmaster@mer-nmra.com">webmaster@mer-nmra.com</a></p>

### MER Division Superintendents

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



*Convention Hotel, King of Prussia, PA*

## **UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS**

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

## **MER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE**

Board of Directors Business Meeting — 7pm Oct. 16, 2025,  
Crown Plaza Hotel, 260 Mall Blvd., King of Prussia, PA19406

## **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

Will be called to Order at 7pm Oct. 18, then recessed until 10am on Oct.19, 2029  
Crowne Plaza Hotel, 260 Mall Blvd., King of Prussia, PA 19406



Kurt Thompson, MMR

## NMRA Achievement Program Update

By Kurt Thompson, MMR  
MER AP Manager

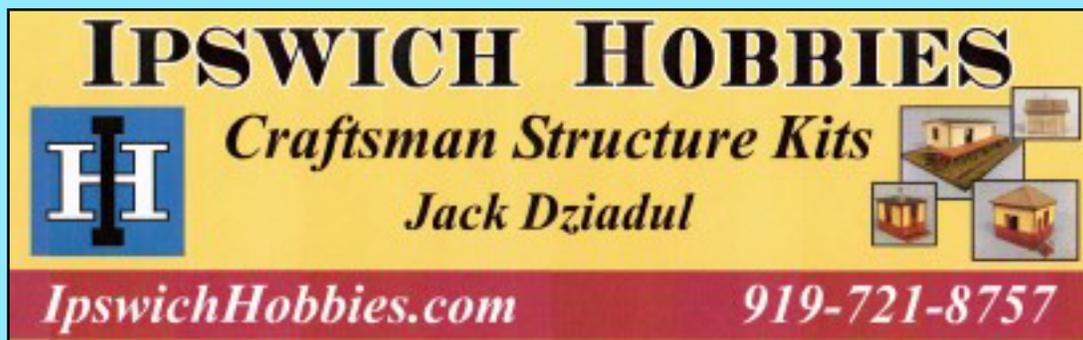
### Update for Sep/Oct 2025:

Since the last report, the following MER member has earned the following certificate. He should have been listed in the national magazine by now. Remember to congratulate him and encourage him to continue. Also, it's a great way to motivate ourselves to continue the journey towards MMR!

### Division 12, Carolina Southern

Dylan Petro

Golden Spike

An advertisement for Ipswich Hobbies. It features a yellow background with the text "IPSWICH HOBBIES" in large, bold, black letters at the top. Below this is the "IH" logo in a blue square, followed by "Craftsman Structure Kits" in a cursive font and "Jack Dziadul" in a serif font. To the right are three small images of model structures. At the bottom, a red banner contains the website "IpswichHobbies.com" and the phone number "919-721-8757".

From the Editor's Desk...



## Traveling

By Greg Warth

I recently had the opportunity to visit a fantastic model railroad museum in Prague, Czechia, called the Railway Kingdom. It was easy to get lost in this maze of HO and N scale model railroads totaling 37,000 sq. ft. and occupying three floors of a large warehouse. I briefly met with many of the Czech visitors there and found that they were just as excited and amazed as I was. It was a joy to talk to them.

The enthusiasm for model railroading in Europe is certainly no less than it is in the US. The Railway Kingdom is one of the largest and most detailed model railroad museums that I've ever seen. I think the only one greater is the Miniature Wunderland in Hamburg, Germany, which I didn't get to see on this trip unfortunately.

The massive amount of landscape devoted to this project was awe inspiring to say the least, almost like looking over the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. The overhead lighting changed intermittently so you could get the illusion of night scenes or sunset scenes in various areas. There were no details left undone. There were tens of thousands of miniature figures inside and outside the many villages, cathedrals, castles and other architectural structures as well as in the streets and parks. Streetlights lit up the highways. Cars with working headlights and taillights moved smoothly around in the roadways.

Multiple interesting scenes were demonstrated, some showing extensive realism, depicting the local centuries-old architecture, some just for fun. Jurassic Park was one of them and of course a

soccer field. There were lots of small villages surrounding cathedrals, which is typical for the rural countryside around Prague.

There was even a large, working marquis that signified the arrival and departure of the trains into the main station.

Children delighted in sitting in a simulated passenger car with videos in the windows showing the scenery going by. A real sized electric locomotive was available for them to climb into, look around, and pretend like they were driving.

I enjoyed the Lego-like display, the erector sets, the auto raceways, and the stationary displays of locomotives and railcars that surrounded the perimeters of the museum.

I spent at least two hours in the museum and probably could have spent two more hours and still not seen everything.

If you ever have the chance to visit this area of the world and especially the Railway Kingdom Museum, I would highly recommend it. Of course, taking the Viking Cruise to get to Prague was nice as well. The centuries-old city architecture was enthralling. I have added a few pictures at the end of this newsletter that you might enjoy.

Speaking of traveling, this issue of *The Local* will transport you into some excellent original articles thanks to our dedicated authors and superb modelers within our Region. Martin Brechbiel, MMR never disappoints us with another great scratchbuilding article. Alan Balma magically provides us with a great article on how to make waybill boxes disappear in between operating sessions. Also the President's Award for 2025 Division Service has been presented to Alex Belida, MMR. His modeling, journalistic skills and volunteer service are exceeded only by his kindness.

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,



*Busy Train Station in Railway Kingdom, Prague, Cz*

### 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.

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.

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

# Alex Belida, MMR -- President's Award for Division Service 2025

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR



The NMRA President's Award for Service to the Division (established in 2017) is awarded by the NMRA President to one member in a Division in each Region per year. The awardee is one that has performed outstanding "beyond-the-call-of-duty" work to make their Division effective, engaging, and welcoming to members. Individuals are generally nominated by the Division Superintendent through the Region President to the NMRA President.

Alex Belida, MMR has been a tremendous asset to the Potomac Division in his capacity as a Board member for several years and as the Editor of our newsletter, *The Potomac Flyer*. He has been exceptional in producing a high quality bi-monthly newsletter along with regular news briefs that greatly assist the Division in communicating with its members and other NMRA Divisions. The *Potomac Flyer* has been positively commented on in the Mid-Eastern's Local and by many readers both within and outside of the Potomac Division.

Alex has also, within his role as the Senior Assistant Superintendent of the Division, implemented several activities such as the bi-monthly *Potomac Flyer* challenge where he has challenged the Division members to provide submissions on topics such as "show me your favorite layout," "show me your favorite piece of rolling stock," "show me your favorite crane, loading dock, or engine facility," "show me your favorite billboard or sign," "show me your favorite mini scene (scene with people and or animals that tell a special story)," "show me your kit bashed model," and "show me your silliness on the layout." These challenges have been very successful in engaging members and getting them to participate in sharing modeling activities and models they have built. Alex really turned the *Potomac Flyer* into a significant high quality professional appearing publication averaging 50 pages full of articles and more to share, and to communicate with our members.

Alex has also demonstrated on several occasions that he is, as expected as an MMR, to be an excellent modeler. He has constructed several models that have won contests. These models have also served as sources of both articles and clinics.

In summary, he has done a Herculean and thankless task by serving on the Board of Directors, and as our Editor of our newsletter, *The Potomac Flyer*! His efforts have been greatly appreciated by all as well as by the Potomac Division Board of Directors.



**NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION, INC.**

P.O. Box 1328 • Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328 • (423) 892-2846

July 19, 2025

Dear Alex,

Since 2017, the National Model Railroad Association has honored its top division volunteers with the "NMRA President's Award for Service to the Division." As you probably know, only one person from each Region receives this award, and nominees are chosen by the National NMRA Board. You have been chosen as the Mid-Eastern Region's most outstanding volunteer for 2025.

This award is a very special one because it honors individuals like you who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to make their Division vibrant, energetic, and welcoming. You have been a tremendous asset to your division as editor of the *Potomac Flyer*, implemented activities that challenge the Division members to provide submissions on various topics, and served on your division's board of directors.

We thank you for your time and energy, and your dedication to helping ensure your fellow modelers get as much out of the NMRA as you have.

Sincerely,

Gordy Robinson, MMR  
NMRA President

## President’s Award for Division Service- MER

Year	Name	Division
2017	Jack Dziadul	Carolina Piedmont
2018	No nominee	
2019	Howard Kaplan	Philadelphia
2020	Rick Uskert	Chesapeake
2021	Alex Polimeni	South Mountain
2022	Ernie Little, MMR	Potomac
2023	Paul Tice	Susquehanna
2024	No nominee	
2025	Alex Belida, MMR	Potomac



## General Contest Information for Philly Express 2025 October 16-19, 2025

By Alan Mende

The 2025 MER Convention, **Philly Express**, will feature both evaluated and popular vote contests that are part of all MER conventions. There will also be Special Awards including the President's Award.

The contest room at the hotel will contain all the contest activities. The room will be open for contest entries on Thursday evening and on Friday:

- 9 am – noon
- 1 pm – 5 pm
- 7 pm – 9 pm

***NOTE: For security reasons, those visiting the contest rooms are asked not to bring large purses/bags, shoulder bags, backpacks, camera bags, or things of that nature into the room. Thank you for your cooperation.***

Evaluations (formerly judging) will begin at 9 am on Saturday and continue until 4 pm with a break for lunch at noon. Entry owners are to pick up their models between 9 pm and 11 pm following the Convention Banquet. Arrangements for entry pick up on Sunday morning can be made with the Contest Chairman on an individual basis, but all entries must be retrieved by 11 am, Sunday, October 29.

Evaluators (they're no longer called judges) will assemble in a clinic room with the Contest Chairman at 9 pm on Friday for orientation. They should report to the contest room on Saturday by 8:30 AM to start evaluating the entered models.

The MER allows NMRA and Region officials who wish to help evaluate the model contest to do so and still enter models in the contest. Those who evaluate and enter models must, however, recuse themselves from evaluating the entire category in which they have entered a model.

Any questions? Please e-mail the Contest Chair at [contests@mer-nmra.com](mailto:contests@mer-nmra.com) or speak with one of our contest staff members. The staff will be available in the Contest Room during the Convention. Any persons wishing to serve as an Apprentice Evaluator should contact the Contest Chair as early as possible and plan on spending the day evaluating with several of the teams.

There is a place on the Registration form to indicate your interest in evaluating.

### **Evaluated Model Categories**

- Steam Locomotives
- Diesel Locomotives
- Traction Power
- Revenue Freight Cars
- Passenger Cars
- Non-revenue Equipment
- Maintenance-of-Way
- On-line Structure
- Off-line Structure
- On-line Display/Diorama
- Off-line Display/Diorama
- Modules

Plaques will be awarded for first place in each model category. Second and third place will be awarded certificates. The model winning the Best of Show Award allows other models in that category to move up one place for a 1st place plaque or certificate. If your model scores 87.5 points or greater, it will earn a merit award from the Achievement Program. For more information on the AP, contact the MER AP Manager or your Division AP Coordinator.



### **Popular Vote Model Contests**

There are three popular vote model contests which will be voted on by convention attendees through a paper balloting method:

- Favorite Train Award
- Favorite Model Award
- Favorite Module Award

The winners in each category will receive a plaque for their modeling efforts.

The Contest Room will be open during evaluating on Saturday for convention attendees to pick up their popular vote ballots and make their selections. Please be quiet during these times so as not to disturb the contest evaluators who will be hard at work. Ballots must be returned to the Contest Room by 4 pm on Saturday to be included in the official count.

### **Models and Displays not Evaluated**

Members who wish to display models or dioramas that are not entered in any of the contests above may bring them to the Contest Room. They will be displayed depending upon space available. This is a first-come, first-served service. The Contest Chair will make the final determination as to when there is no more space for additional displays. They will be displayed on tables specially set aside for non-contest items.

### **Contest Rules**

Our model contest rules are short and to the point! We follow the basic NMRA National Contest Rules. Visit its site for a more detailed explanation of all these rules, and to download the forms needed to enter all the contests; if you need help or forms, contact Alan Mende, MER Contest Chair ([contests@mer-nmra.com](mailto:contests@mer-nmra.com))

Here is a summary of some of the basic rules:

1. Entrants must be current members of the NMRA.
2. Contest entrants cannot be professional model builders, i.e., derive over 50% one's income from constructing models.

Each model must be accompanied by the official [NMRA Entry Form #901](#), filled out and signed by the entrant. In addition, model entries must have a filled out [Judges Score Sheet #902](#). Modules should use [NMRA Entry Form #901b](#). Writeable Entry Forms and Judges Score Sheets are available from the MER website (<https://mer-nmra.com/judge.html>). Go to the website by clicking on the above links, download the forms, fill them out as a Word document, print, and bring them with you to the Contest Room at the Convention.

3. You may enter the contest by proxy. Whoever submits an entry for someone else, however, must present the owner-builder's NMRA membership number.
4. Models that have won a 1<sup>st</sup> place in any prior National or Regional contest cannot be entered in the same category at this contest.
5. There are no restrictions on the number of models entered by a member.
6. For those modelers who wish to have their work evaluated for the Achievement Program only, your models will be evaluated during the model contest.
7. Models that have achieved a Merit Award in regional or national competitions are ineligible for another Merit Award. Models achieving a Merit Award on the local level are eligible for regional and national Merit Awards.

## SPECIAL AWARDS

The following special awards are sponsored by the NMRA and various Divisions and private groups and will be made to selected entries in the evaluated categories:

**THE BEST IN SHOW AWARD** is given to the model that scores the highest point total in the model contest. In addition to the plaque, this award also provides registration to next year's convention!

**THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD** for 2025 will be chosen by MER President, Scott Unger, and given to the most deserving person.

**THE CLYDE GERALD AWARD** is sponsored by the MER and named for the late Clyde Gerald, former MER Business Manager and longtime modeler. It is awarded to the kitbashed model which scores highest in the evaluated model contest. Be sure to check the definition of kit-bashed for this award.

**THE NEW JERSEY DIVISION CAR INSPECTOR'S AWARD** is given for the model freight, passenger, caboose, or MOW car that the awarding committee chooses as the best detailed car in the contest. The award includes a plaque and \$100.00 Gift Card/Certificate to the hobby store of the winner's choice.

**THE PHILADELPHIA DIVISION NEW MODELER AWARD** rewards excellence in model building by first time entrants in the MER judged model contest. The highest score achieved by a new modeler is awarded a plaque and a cash prize of fifty dollars.

**THE CHUCK HLADIK MEMORIAL AWARD**, sponsored by the James River Division (JRD), shall be for a model of a prototype that best exemplifies modeling a prototype from the "South." For this award, the "South" is the United States territory south of the Mason-Dixon Line and the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River plus the states of Arkansas and Texas. The Superintendent of the James River Division, in his sole discretion, shall determine the recipient of the award. If the Superintendent is unable to do so, then a Division member so designated by the Superintendent shall do so.

**THE RAY BILODEAU NARROW GAUGE AWARD** is also privately sponsored by a group of narrow gauge modelers and encourages building models depicting aspects of narrow gauge railroading.

**THE FAVORITE TRAIN AWARD** is a popular vote award and will be included on the Popular Vote ballot. Yes, members who can find their way to the contest room and fill out a ballot get to choose the winner.

**THE FAVORITE MODEL AWARD** is another popular vote award and will also be included on the Popular Vote ballot. Yes, those same members who can find their way to the contest room and fill out a ballot get to choose their favorite model.

# Custom Decals with Ghost White Toner\*

By Garth G. Groff

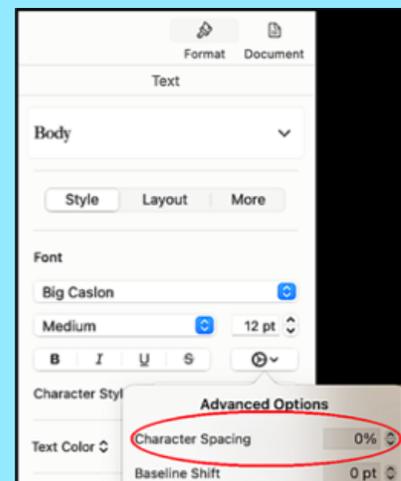
During the past year I have experimented with making my own waterslide decals for HO-scale freight cars using a product called Ghost White Toner.

Ghost White is an opaque white laser toner from a German firm that makes various specialty toners for the arts-and-crafts and graphics markets ( <https://www.ghost-white-toner.com/landingpage-us/> ). They fill cartridges to fit nearly 400 machines. Over 300 are Hewlett-Packard (HP) printers, mostly “legacy” machines, a nice way of saying they are obsolete and out of production. If you own an older HP color laser printer, or one of several other brands, you are likely to find it on Ghost’s list. Older factory-reconditioned color laser printers are also sometimes available direct from HP at a hefty discount, and Ghost cartridges may be available to fit them. Several current-production HP printers are also on Ghost’s list: Color LaserJet Pro 4201dn, Color LaserJet Pro 4201dw, Color LaserJet Pro MFP 4301fdn, and Color LaserJet Pro MFP 4301fdw.

Ghost White is not available for ink jet printers.

I work on a Macintosh computer, using Pages word processing software, so I cannot comment on techniques for other software or offer specific advice to PC users. My printer is an HP Color Laser Jet Pro M254dw, a machine typical of HP’s recent small home/office printers. I chose Apple Pages word processing software for ease of use over Microsoft Word for the Mac and Apache Open Office (both of which I also have on my computer). Pages also has some special features not found in the other two programs, which generally offer fixed combinations of features via style sheets instead of Apple’s more flexible individual tools.

Mac Pages includes a Character Spacing tool hidden on the Format menu behind a tiny gear wheel icon (**Fig. 1**). This gem allows adjustments to horizontal spacing between highlighted characters. Each click on the up or down arrows increases or decreases the spacing by 1%, though the characters themselves remain unchanged. This is useful for establishing the right-hand margins for stacked lines in capacity and dimensional data blocks, for centering stacked road names, and correcting “spacing drift” as multi-line type block elements are pasted across a page. It is also handy for moving periods closer to initials, adding space around hyphens in reweigh data, and making tiny repack lettering easier to read with aging eyes like mine.



*Fig. 1: Character Spacing*

\*This article was previously printed in the July-August 2025 issue of *The Local*.

Unfortunately, there were errors made in the publishing of the article which

detracted from the content and the author’s intent. Therefore this corrected

article is being reprinted in its entirety. The Editor apologizes for any inconvenience to the author or to the readers that

this may have caused. - Ed.

The other really useful tool is found on the Format menu under “Spacing” (Fig. 2). After highlighting all the lines in a block, the vertical spaces between the lines can be tightened by specifying “Exactly” and setting the points to the same size as the type. Further adjustments can be made by increasing or decreasing the point size.

TrueType railroad fonts for either Macs or PCs are available from several sources. A great source for fonts is RAIL SIM STUFF ( [www.railsimstuff.com](http://www.railsimstuff.com) ). They offer some 40 free fonts, and most are rich with heralds and other goodies. Some of their fonts are steam-era, others are more modern, and some can do double-duty. As a sample, their “Norvegan” font combining Norfolk & Western and Virginian, is shown below (Fig. 3):

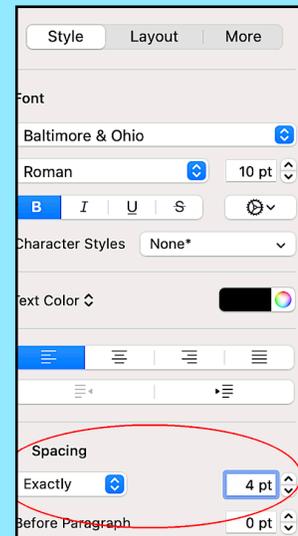


Fig. 2: Spacing



Fig. 3: Norvegan Font

Perhaps the best known railroad font source is [RailFonts.com](http://RailFonts.com), which offers some 46 fonts at reasonable prices. Their most useful fonts for steam/early diesel-era freight cars are in their Railroad Roman series, with lettering for Chesapeake & Ohio, Chicago & Northwestern, Clinchfield (regular and condensed), Northern Pacific, Pere Marquette and Southern Pacific.

My current favorite font is B&O Railroad Roman, available as a free download from the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Historical Society ([https://borhs.org/Logos/bo\\_font\\_logo.html](https://borhs.org/Logos/bo_font_logo.html)). This font includes the 1946 “13 Great States” and the 1960 “Capital Dome” heralds. I discovered that this font is a near duplicate for steam/early diesel-era lettering used by the Southern, the original Norfolk Southern, and Rutland. It is also now my go-to font for most freelanced cars.

Some other useful fonts that can found on general free download websites include “Railroad Roman 1916” for general use, “Futura Demibold” adopted by the C&O and B&O about 1960, and “Helvetica Bold” (pre-loaded on many computers) for *sans serif* capacity and dimensional data preferred by some railroads over Railroad Roman.

Heralds included in font sets are also TrueType characters, and so can be enlarged almost to gargantuan size without losing definition. My Southern “Serves the South” heralds were correctly sized for HO scale when enlarged to 52 points. Various other heralds matched prototype sizes at 28 to 42 points.

In the 1930s the American Railway Association (ARA), and its 1934 successor the Association of American Railroads (AAR), created standards for the size and position of freight car lettering.

The Wabash and the Southern both flaunted the standards in various ways. Later other railroads such as the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe eliminated periods in the initials, and removed the lines above and below the initials and car numbers.

According to the ARA/AAR standards, the initials on the car sides were supposed to be 9 inches high. The car number was set at 8 inches. The capacity block lettering was supposed to be 3 inches in height, and “NEW” or the reweigh station code and date at the same size. The dimensional data and build date were to be 2 inches high. Car-end initials and numbers were 4 inches high. My source for the size information was a very old NMRA Data Sheet D5e, “Freight Car Lettering”, dated April 1956.

I found that compromises were needed on most models, and some can be seen in my sample Virginia Midland boxcar decal (Fig. 4). The railroad initials are in 9-point type, with the numbers at 8 points. For the capacity block 3-point type would have been correct, but I chose 4 points. The dimensional lettering should have been at 2 points, but lettering this small tends to be unreadable, so it was enlarged to 3 points. Because the capacity block lettering was usually larger than the dimensional block’s, I bumped the capacity lettering up from 3 to 4 points. Repack data and special car loading/routing information (the latter not shown here) was set at 2.5 points, again a bit larger than normal to give the letters visual weight. The end lettering initials and car number should be 4 points, but this is often too large to fit in the upper right corner on steel-end house cars, so I substituted 3.5-point lettering here. Road name and slogan sizes were not regulated by the ARA/AAR, so railroad officials could make this lettering any size they wanted. My Virginia Midland road name is in 10-point type. The tongue-in-cheek “*Tradition Bound*” slogan, which substitutes for a herald, is 19 points.



*Fig. 4: This fictional Virginia Midland Boxcar represents a car assigned to the Frank Ix & Sons textile factory, once the largest employer in Charlottesville, Virginia. The real factory did not have direct rail service, though in my world it does. The car is an upgraded C&BT Shops 12-panel body with 7’ doors, a combination not known to exist in real life, but the VM fleet has three examples.*

When filling a whole 8.5 X 11-inch sheet, I first create a single initial/number block, one capacity block and one dimensional block (all on separate lines). It is a lot easier to make corrections to just one block than to a whole row of them across the sheet. When I like how the lettering looks, I print a paper copy with black toner, then compare the size, spacing style to trusted factory-lettered freight cars. Kadee, Tangent, Branchline and Proto 2000 are noted for their letting accuracy, and are my cars of choice for comparison.

This step is especially important for gondolas, ribbed hoppers and single-sheathed boxcars, where point size and spacing may require some fussy adjustments for a proper fit. With gondolas in particular, I learned the hard way to cut the paper letters apart and drop them onto the car side to check for a correct fit. Where railroad names need to be broken up to fit around ribs, on the decal sheet I allow several extra spaces between letter groups to make cutting easier.

When I am satisfied the sizes are correct, I copy-and-paste each line's elements across the page, moving left to right usually with 8 or 10-character blank spaces between. Often I find that about 1/3 of the way across the page my so-carefully aligned characters on the second and subsequent lines begin to "drift" as tiny spacing errors too small to have been seen add up. The Character Spacing tool can be used in the blank areas between or inside the type blocks to correct any misalignment. Depending on how many similar cars I plan to letter, I make several extras of each car initial/number block, capacity block and dimensional block in case I ruin a decal during cutting or application. I usually make lots of extra reweigh and repack decals with different dates and station symbols, as such tiny pieces are easy to damage. Any extras may be useful later for other cars.

I recommend only one brand of decal paper: Tango Papa from CMR Hobbies (<https://www.cmrproducts.com/Tango-Papa-Decal-Paper-c124226851>). Tango Papa paper's blue backing is slightly darker than MicroMark or Microscale papers, which makes cutting A LOT easier. Tango Papa papers also come in three thicknesses, which govern how fast the decals release in water.

Tango Papa decal paper is also usually available with a white film. This is useful for printing building signs and heralds that have color or black elements using the printer's regular toners. Except for black, HP toners are NOT opaque. When a colored decal printed on clear film is applied to a car side, any background will suck the life from the decal's translucent colors. Printing on white film solves this opacity problem.

Printing itself is very simple. With the printer off, I remove the black cartridge, then drop in the Ghost White cartridge. After decal paper is loaded into the paper tray print-side up, I turn the printer back on. The machine will make some interesting whizzing and zizzing sounds until a text block on the computer screen tells me I can issue the print command. For best results, through the printer preferences in the print command menu I specify "HP Presentation Paper Glossy 120g", which is close to the qualities of the decal paper.

I noted during early experiments that some smaller characters and thin lines were not printing completely. I solved this drop-out problem by activating the "Archival Print" command on the printer itself (not on the computer screen). On my printer this is found through the "Set-up" and "Service" commands in the printer's tiny menu window.

Early on I learned NOT to spray fixative on the finished decals while they are still on the uncut sheet (once again the hard way!). If sprayed, the decal will lose the slight differences in reflectivity and contrast between the white lettering and the backing, making accurate cutting almost impossible. Not sealing leaves the decals vulnerable to damage, especially during the application process, another reason for making extra pieces in advance.

I save the spray for the whole car when the decal process is finished. I recommend Microscale setting products rather than Walthers Solvaset, which actually melted some lettering.

NEVER use inkjet decal paper in a laser printer. NEVER! Inkjet paper lacks the top hard glaze layer applied to laser printer paper. Without this protection the ink jet paper's adhesive layer can melt during the fusion stage and clog the laser printer's tiny toner nozzles. This will void the warranty, and turn the printer into an expensive piece of e-waste.

This project has been an interesting experiment, and provided me with decals for my fictional Virginia Midland Railroad (**Fig. 4**). I have also been able to correctly letter some favorite prototype cars when decals were not available, including the original Norfolk Southern, the Rutland, and an 11-mile Wabash subsidiary, the grandly named New Jersey, Indiana & Illinois Railroad (**Figures 5-9**).

Although I don't actually model the Norfolk Southern, it is a railroad of great interest to me. My NS boxcar (**Fig. 5**) is based on a photo from my collection, with original lettering as it was before the original herald appeared in the late 1950s. The car body is from C&BT Shops upgraded with details parts from a Front Range kit.



**Fig. 5: Norfolk Southern (original) steel boxcar**

The Rutland flat car (**Fig. 6**) is based on a model by the late Richard Hendrickson, described in the August 1993 Rail Model Journal, and from my photos of a preserved car at Steamtown. It is a modified Athearn 40' flat car.



**Fig. 6: Rutland Flatcar**

After photographing one of the last New Jersey, Indiana & Illinois boxcars in a train some 40 years ago, I had to have one. No Wabash decals I have ever seen included a full alphabet. I used Rail Sim Stuff's Wabash font to make decals based on a builder's photo. The car uses a Front Range body with correct Branchline ends spliced on to depict an AC&F welded car from 1950 (**Fig. 7**).



*Fig. 7: Wabash Boxcar*

Southern WWII-era composite hoppers were being rebuilt with steel sides by my chosen era, but a few were still in original condition. This car is based on a Proto 2000 model (**Fig. 8**). The capacity information took special care to fit into the small space below the diagonal rib.



*Fig. 8: Southern Hopper*

My planned Virginia Midland will also serve the Monticello Dairy, again a real firm in Charlottesville that did not have a railroad connection. This milk car (**Fig. 9**) is a class XI insulated boxcar, kitbashed from a Train Miniature refrigerator car with the ice platforms removed. It rides on Athearn express reefer trucks. The VM herald was printed with black toner on clear decal paper, then dropped onto a disk of white decal film stamped out using a large round leather punch.



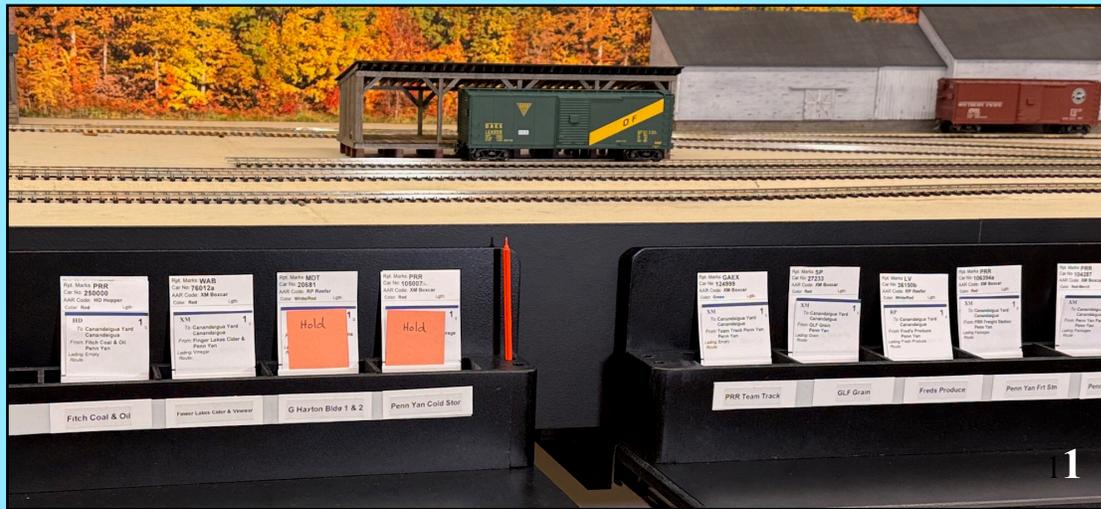
*Fig. 9: Monticello Dairy Milk Car. Note the Fred J. Swaine building in the background.*

For the curious, the [Fred J. Swaine building](https://www.gatewaynmra.org/2011/industrial-warehouse-background-buildings/) in the background of these photos was a real structure that stood until recently in St. Louis. I found the image in an article by Richard Schumacher at <https://www.gatewaynmra.org/2011/industrial-warehouse-background-buildings/>. The cars were photographed on a portable stage with interchangeable backgrounds.

# Waybill Boxes - Now You See Them / Now You Don't

By Alan Balma

## Now You See Them



## Now You Don't



Unless I am hosting an operating session, I do not like the view of waybill boxes hanging onto the fascia of my layout. Even though my aisles are a minimum of 42" wide, guests at open houses or informal visits always seem to be bumping into them. Under the philosophy of "It's my layout," my preference is a fascia with clean lines.

So I designed easily removable waybill boxes. They needed to be functional and solid when installed, but easy to take down when not needed. The design I chose was an upside-down drawer to which the waybill box could be quickly fastened. When not in use, the drawer closes under the layout.

The waybill boxes are usually available from Micro-Mark. If you have them, they can easily be used in this design. I made my own boxes from 3/4" pine (base and ends), 1/4" MDF (front and back with dados to accept 1/8" hardboard), and 1/8" hardboard dividers (**Photo 3**).

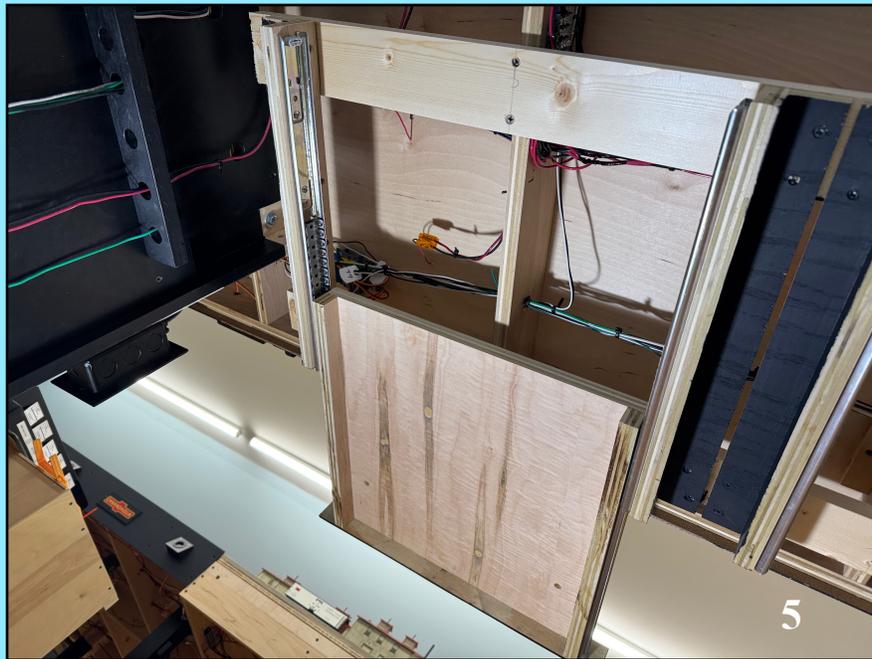


*Construction of the waybill boxes.*

The boxes are completed with a 5" tall back made from 1/8" hardboard, a second set of ends that are drilled for pencils and uncoupler pics (an idea I got from Mat Thompson, MMR), and a small table that the box sits on made from 1/2" plywood (**Photo 4**). I noticed in many layout pictures the incorporation of small shelves to sort out the car cards and waybills. This is an attempt to keep them off the scenery. All the edges are rounded to reduce the opportunity for bump injuries.



*Completed waybill box and detached worktable.*



*The underside of the drawer and frame as viewed from below the layout.*

The drawers are made from surplus hardware and scrap wood found in my shop (**Photo 5**). The drawers should be narrower than the boxes so that the drawer slides are not a hazard. Mine are 15 ¾” wide. The outer drawer frame and drawer are made from ½” plywood and ¾” pine. The slides are just ones I had around. These were 16” long with a ¾” opening and rated at 75 pounds. In choosing a slide, you want the drawer to come out beyond the fascia a couple of inches more than the width of the waybill box assembly.



*In the front right corner the thumb screw comes from the bottom of the drawer and is threaded into an insert. The blackened holes under the waybill box are where the threaded inserts are actually installed. The four threaded inserts laying on the drawer deck are to show what they look like.*

The waybill box is fastened to the drawer with thumb screws inserted through holes on the underside of the drawer into threaded inserts that are installed in the bottom of the waybill box assembly (**Photo 6**). I used ¼” x 20” hardware that I bought from Amazon. (Best to install the threaded inserts before assembly).

When getting ready for an operating session, I pull the drawers out and mount the boxes in a few seconds with the thumb screws. I push them in until they back against the fascia. I added felt bumpers on the back of the waybill box so as not to mar the fascia. I have installed five of these boxes of different sizes; two 7-slot boxes, two 8-slot boxes and one 3-slot box. The 3-slot box uses a 6” wide drawer.

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## UPCOMING CONVENTIONS



# Building the P. Raith Tobacconist Building

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR

Some years ago I had the pleasure of seeing someone build up one of the old paper kits that had been included in an early 1950s issue of Toy Trains. This paper model was called “Jack Kett’s Clothing Store” and seemed amenable to being translated into a more 3D version. It featured a glass storefront entrance that would take some creativity to build in paper to get that to look right, but having seen it done in paper; using modeling supplies seemed a straightforward exercise.

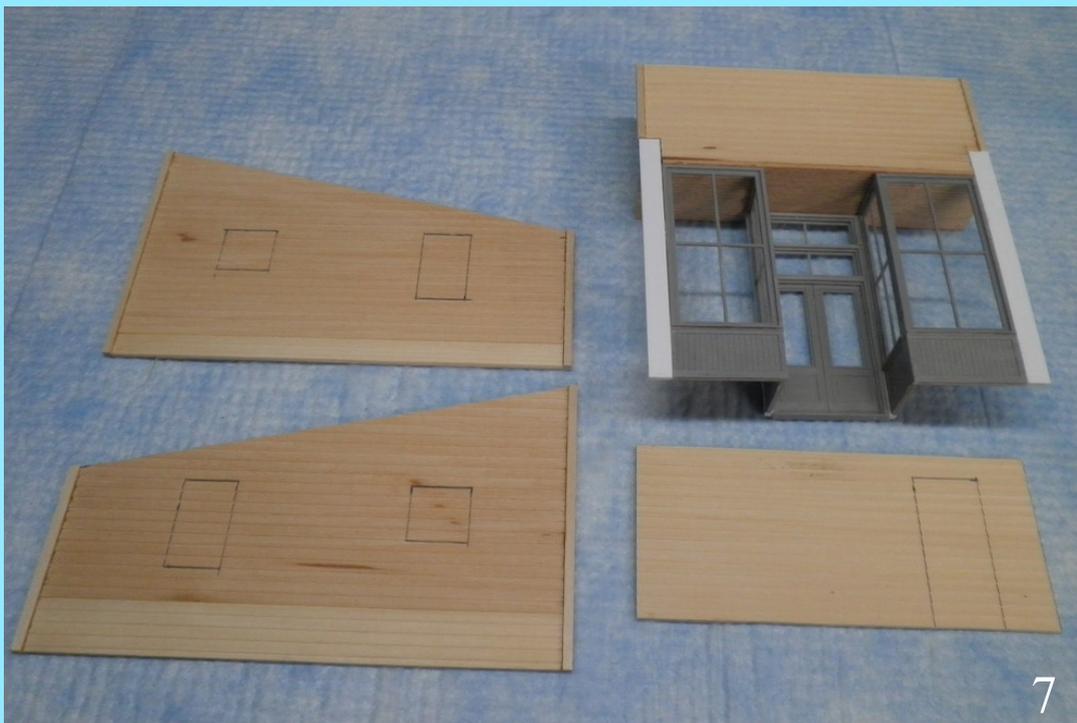
I started with a Grandt Line 3565 commercial store front. This is sold as a kit and there are several subunits to assemble to make an entrance with recessed doors and large glass storefront windows (**Photo 1**). A handful of other windows from Grandt Line and Tichy were set aside for the rest of the walls would be cut from milled clapboard (Northeastern) (**Photo 2**). Assembling these parts (methylene chloride – Tenax) is a bit tricky but working on a glass surface to get everything flat and square where that is required helps hugely. Once assembled with some 0.080” x 0.080” styrene filling some outside corners, I tied the upper edge together and closed this off with a section of 1/16” thick scribed siding with the 1/32” scribed surface facing down (**Photos 3, 4**). Two pilasters were assembled from 0.040” x 0.250” styrene doubled in thickness. This was glued into place with Goo and CA.



The upper section of the false front for this building was made filling between the pilasters with milled clapboard and some 4" x 6" stripwood. The back of the false front wall was filled in with 1/32" thick scribed siding with a 1/32" scribed surface (**Photos 5, 6**).



With the front wall assembled and the width set, the back was derived from that dimension and the Grandt Line 3601 door casting. Then I just connect the front to back with a sloped roof profile to generate the two sides for this building. Once the sides and back were cut out, I was able to layout the locations for the door and windows. The sides also had 3/32" square stock added to make the corners (**Photo 7**).



The next step was to assemble the four walls. This was done using Goo and CA on the end grain of the corners setting the walls flush on the interior surface. Glue blocks were added at the base of the back wall and at the base of the two front display windows. Additional glue surfaces were added at the top of the sides for securing the roof (**Photos 8-10**).



I added a foundation platform for the building to sit up on using some very hard resin cast stone wall material that I ripped down to thin sections for around three sides. The fourth side was finished with 3/16" x 5/32" stripwood. These four parts were glued to some 1/8" sheet basswood glued up to meet the dimensions needed for the platform. This unit was then topped with 1/16" scribed siding that was also 1/16" thick. The marks correspond to the mounting blocks of the building and where three small wood screws were planned for attaching it to the foundation base (**Photos 11, 12**).



After adding a few additional ornamental details above the pilasters, wood and washers, it was time to paint the building. I used Depot Buff and Br. Dk. Slate Grey (Polly Scale). All of the other windows and the back door were also painted Slate Grey. I painted the interior of the display glass and entrance toying with the idea of someday maybe doing an interior. The front entrance decking was painted Roof Brown. After painting, all of the doors and windows were glazed using 0.010” clear styrene ([Photos 13, 14](#)).



The roof was added using HO 4” x 20” stripwood (Kappler) and pre-painted HO 3” x 10” was used for trim wood on the sides ([Photo 15](#)). A 6” x 20” was used to cap the false front wall ([Photo 16](#)). A tarpaper roof was added over the wood sheathing using Builders in Scale paper. A smoke jack was added to the back wall using a casting from Turner Modelworks ([Photos 17-18](#)).



Final touch for this project was adding signage. I found lots of vintage signs online that I could capture, resize, straighten out and edit in Photoshop. I also found a sign that I liked for making the main front business sign. After resizing it, I only used the outer framing and created an overlay for the name that I wanted to use in PowerPoint. Once printed, all of the smaller signs were mounted using a thin application of Carpenter’s glue to the paper pushing it into every crevice of the clapboard to make it fit tightly on the sides of the building. The front business sign was mounted to some 1/32” sheet basswood with Carpenter’s glue and then framed using some small wood angle pre-painted black. This sign was added to the front of the building using Goo and CA to get a good bond through to the clapboard. This build was now complete and was sent off to its new owner ([Photos 19-21](#)).

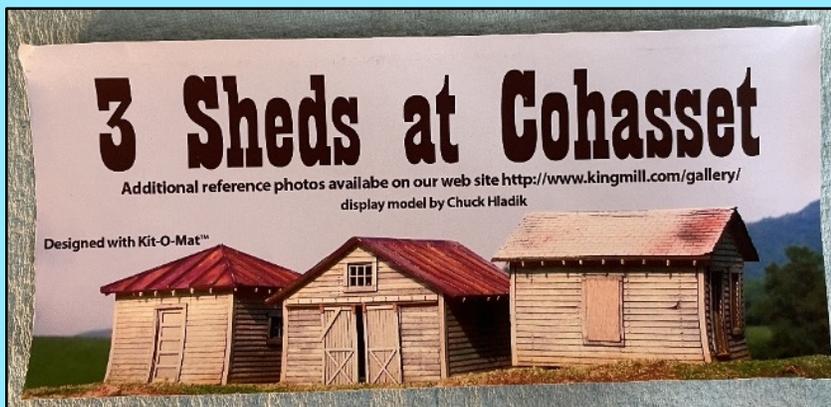


## 3 Sheds at Cohasset

By Jack Dziadul, MMR

Jim Murphy, MMR hosts a two-hour weekly modeling session that he has aptly named his “Build and BS” sessions. I usually try to find a small, repetitive task or a small kit to start when planning for the upcoming B&BS. Looking through my stash for a small project, I came across a small bag that contained three simple, HO scale wood structure kits from KingMill Enterprises, which is no longer in business. **(Photo 1)** Product #3000, **3 Sheds at Cohasset**, was released in 2006. I have no recollection of when I acquired this three-pack as it is not listed on my inventory. Perhaps it was a gift, or a rare raffle victory. But it was the perfect project for the B&BS.

All but new members of the Mid-Eastern Region will recognize the name on the reverse side of the packaging label. Dear friend and former MER Vice President Chuck Hladik (1944 – 2018) built the display models for Chris Jessee, the owner of KingMill Enterprises. **(Photo 2)**



*Photo 2 - Reverse side of packaging label.*



*Photo 1 - Packaging Label*

As to how I came to this product, it very well could have been because of the name. I am an easy mark when it comes to acquiring structures or rolling stock that has any hint of New England in its name. I am a Boston & Maine modeler and Cohasset, Massachusetts is in New Haven territory, but close enough. That is until I opened the poly bag and read the instructions. Page 1 of the six pages includes some background of the three sheds that are in Cohasset, Virginia. Yes, VIRGINIA. Oh well, a shed is a shed. **(Photo 3)**



Photo 3 - Instructions

The instructions read that the sheds are authentic, but no prototype photos are provided. Mr. Jessee offers speculation that one of the so-called sheds might have been a rural post office due to its common design. With that hint, and out of my own curiosity, I looked up Cohasset, VA on Google Earth. If the shed in question was an old post office and still exists in its original location, I just might be able to find it by following a main street with Street View. Voila! 12954 West River Road (Route 6), Palmyra, VA captures the three sheds, clustered as displayed on the packaging photo. (Photo 4) (Palmyra is the seat of government for Fluvanna County. Cohasset is an unincorporated community in Fluvanna County.)



Photo 4 – 12954 West River Road, Palmyra, VA. A cropped street view from Google Earth.

Enough research, on to modeling. Let’s get back to the instructions. Aside from information on the prototype sheds, KingMill provides an illustrated, numbered parts list, and suggested tools and materials to build the kits. The “Getting Started” page has several tips applicable to all three kits (distressing wood, bracing, staining, painting, etc.) Then each shed has a dedicated page of shed specific instructions along with an isometric illustration.

Photographs of my sheds follow. You will see that I added a few details not included in the kit, and that I built the sheds as active rather than boarded up. Two of the kits call for stairs that are not provided. I will add steps once I decide where on my layout the sheds will end up. Most likely they will each find the back yard of a residential structure. My sheds will not be heated, but I did install electric meters. Before assembly, I stained the wood parts of each structure with Vetro Shadow Gray, then sponge painted acrylic white over the walls and corner trim. This produced an aging effect.

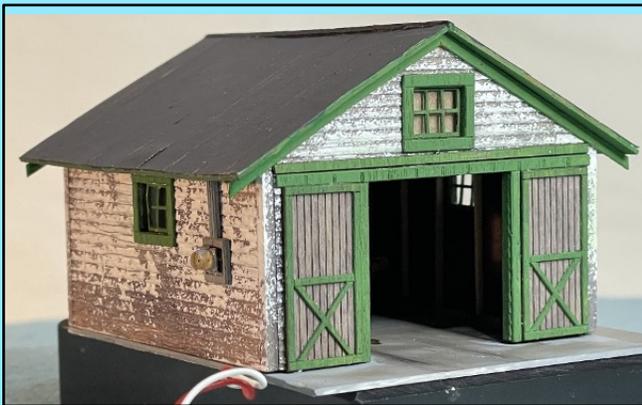
Starting with the detailing of Shed 1, **(Photo 5)** the laser cut windows have shades from cut up pieces of cardstock. I scratch-built a foundation from my stripwood inventory, then covered it with “stone” paper from Foggy Mountain Models. **(Photo 6)** (The prototype photo appears to show piers instead of a full foundation.)m



*Photo 5 - Shed 1*



*Photo 6 – Shed 1 foundation and lighting*



*Photo 7 – Shed 2 was glued down on a slab cut from sheet styrene.*



*Photo 8 - Shed 2 with ladder detail.*

The interior was detailed with some simple framing and weathering the slab floor to include some tire marks, plus an oil spill. Three white metal castings were hand painted, and a figure was also added. The HO scale tools look very over-sized. (Photo 9) It would take “Big John” himself to lift that sledgehammer. No matter: layout guests will not be able to see the interior from the likely three-foot viewing distance.



*Photo 9 - with detailed interior.*

Shed 3 was the simplest of the three. It is just a square box. (Photos 10 and 11) I made a foundation from stripwood that I painted gray to represent a slab.



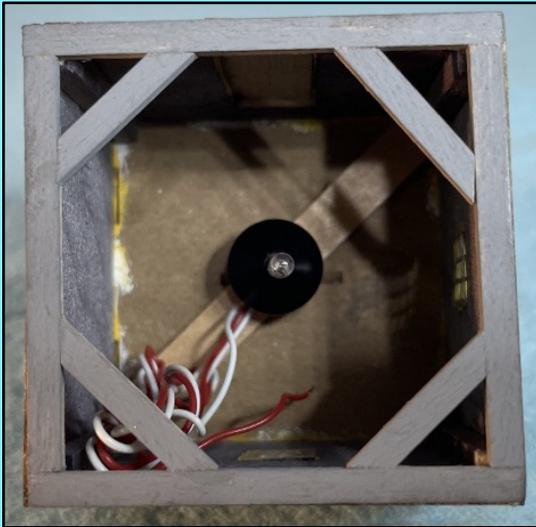
*Photo 10 - Shed 43 backyard storage*



*Photo 11 - Shed 3 with side window*

Aside from the electric meter and “concrete” base, the only other detailing was installing a light.

(Photo 12)



*Photo 12 Shed 3 showing foundation and lighting.*

Small structures can have a big impact on just about any layout that is not modeling desert scenery. If you have not yet registered, there are still some seats available for my Hands-On “Make and Take” clinic scheduled for Friday, October 17th at 8am.

[2025 Registration Form](#)

We’ll have all morning, so there will be sufficient time, even for beginners new to wood structure kits, to complete a section house (available in N, HO, S, and O scales). Experienced modelers can show their creativity with super-detailing or repurposing the kits. Greg Cassidy turned his into an auto repair shop. The link to Greg’s video is below.

[Ipswich Garage in O Scale](#)

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**Advertise in The Local**

**If you own a business, you may want to consider advertising here. The rates are very reasonable. Click on the link above to find out more.**

## Roger Sekera

### Modeler and Brooke Avenue Compatriot

By Kurt Thompson, MMR

On August 16, Roger Sekera passed away from complications of a heart attack while he was on travels with his wife. For me, his passing carries with it the loss not of a fellow modeler but one of the few other modelers of the C&O Brooke Ave. facility in Norfolk.

I first met Roger over 20 years ago when he invited Jeff Mutter's operating crew over to Potomac to operate the Clinch Valley Lines. There I was faced with operations on a different layout. What I did find most importantly was Roger and his love for our hobby and for operating a layout with a purpose. The Clinch Valley Lines was a coal hauling railroad first and foremost. It was a fun day.

Over the years, after Jeff's layout became operational, Roger would occasionally be over to operate the Scranton Division. On one visit, Roger brought along his trackplan for a layout based on the C&O Brooke Ave. facility that used to be in Norfolk, VA.

Talking with Roger over lunch, I learned about his soon to be built new layout. He had been working with Bernie Kempinski to develop a track plan for his own version of Brooke Ave. Ever since I read Bernie's article on Brooke Ave. in *Model Railroad Planning 2002*, Brooke Ave. was bouncing around in my head. Now here was somebody who was considering it and moving forward.

After that talk, I knew Brooke Ave. was going to be the focus of my next layout. Because of the contained size of Brooke Ave., I would have the opportunity to model it more faithfully in my limited layout space. However, since I'm modeling in O scale, Selective Compression and I were going to be even more familiar than on either of my preceding layouts.

Through all of this, Roger was a steady and willing helpmate. After his HO layout was operational, he invited Jeff Mutter and me over to his new home in Easton MD to see and experience his Brooke Ave. layout. Never one to miss an opportunity to operate on a new layout, we headed over. (His website is currently still operating - <https://modelingbrookeave.com/>).



*Roger sitting in front of the Welcome Pagoda made from the base for the Molasses Tank at Brooke Ave.*

The layout was fun to operate. The layout supported two different operating crews at the same time - the barge and west end crew and the east end crew. For the next 2 hours and some change, Jeff and I were transported back to Norfolk, Virginia in the mid 60s. After the operating session, Roger even gave us a brief demonstration of his weathering methods which included using window cleaner as a rain source.

After that day, Roger and I began to exchange frequent emails as I stumbled along in getting an operational trackplan developed that would emulate Brooke Ave. while fitting in my 8-½ by 14-½ foot layout space. Between Roger and me, we found and traded many sources of information.

The culmination of our collaboration was our trip down to Norfolk August 31st of last year. Though Brooke Ave. was demolished and suffered massive urban renewal, we agreed we both needed to “immerse” ourselves in the physical location that was Brooke Ave.

I left home at 6 am from Arnold and picked Roger up at 7 am in Easton. We then followed the route of the old Pennsylvania RR line down the middle of the Eastern Shore and slipped in the “back door” to Virginia Beach and Norfolk through the Bay Bridge-Tunnel.

It was a long day. I returned Roger to his house around 3:30 pm. Total miles on the car was over 320, round trip. Though we logged many miles and hours in the car together and really only had two hours walking around the former site, it provided me time to spend with a fellow modeler and to discuss modeling methods, ideologies, and our backgrounds in and out of the world of model railroading.

During the last year, as our emails bounced back and forth, Roger continued to amaze me with his enthusiasm for improving his operational layout over something simple one of us had newly found. I am deeply proud of the fact, according to Roger, we were the Brooke Ave. SMEs (Subject Matter Experts).

Though I felt then and now, there is so much more for us (now me) to find out about Brooke Ave. As such, I’m very grateful to have had Roger as my Brooke Ave. compatriot and all around good modeler and great guy.

Roger, I will miss you. I know you’ll be sitting at the base of the Molasses Tank in spirit just as you sat there last August.



## Announcing Craftsman's Showcase

By Randy Foulke



Neuse River Valley Model Railroad Club (NRV) and NMRA Carolina Piedmont Division 13 (CPD13) are sponsoring a Craftsman's Showcase at the NRV Fall Train Show in Raleigh, North Carolina. The NRV Fall Train Show is reported to be the third largest train show on the East Coast. It is held in the 100,000 square Jim Graham Building on the North Carolina State Fairgrounds. There will be multiple layouts on display and 480+ vendor tables. Show hours are 9 AM to 5 PM on Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup> and 10 AM to 4 PM on Sunday, November 9<sup>th</sup>.

The goal of Craftsman's Showcase is to build enthusiasm for our hobby by encouraging people of all skill levels to show off what they have created. Bring your structures, engines, rolling stock or dioramas, whether built from kits, scratch built or kit-bashed from some existing products, to show off your modeling skills in a variety of categories in a judged contest. Contest categories are anticipated to include locomotives, rolling stock, structures, dioramas, and "Anything But." The "Anything But" category includes any structure kit in any scale that has been repurposed into anything but the original structure.

Judges, including Master Model Railroaders (MMRs) from CPD 13, will evaluate the entries and determine 1<sup>st</sup> Place and Honorable Mention awards in each category. A "Best of Show" prize will also be awarded.

Models should be entered at the show's Craftsman's Showcase display by 9:30 AM on Saturday morning. Judging will occur on Saturday afternoon. Awards will be presented at 1 PM on Sunday, and models should be picked up at 2 PM on Sunday. Please note that security is provided 24 hours/day through the NC State Fairgrounds.

This is a great way to display and enhance your craftsmanship skills. Contact us for more information at [NRV.Shows@gmail.com](mailto:NRV.Shows@gmail.com) or Bob Witwer 919.632.0785 or Randy Foulke 919.649.8253.

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

### Other NMRA Links:

[Bulletin](#)

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

[Events](#)

[Archives](#)

[Education](#)

[Turntable](#)

[Submit Articles](#)

[Videos](#)

[Clinics](#)

## 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.

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

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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.

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***Did You know...*****2025**is the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NMRA!**Happy Anniversary!**

That's 90 years of helping model railroaders.





*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

**Back on Track...**

## Illusions

By Greg Warth

One of my most fun things to do on a model railroad layout is to create an illusion, to make it look like something is happening when it's not really happening. It's like a magic trick. And when you realize you've been tricked, even for just an instant, it's mildly exhilarating.

Here are a few fun illusions that you can incorporate into your layout that you might like:

**Concealed mirrors** can be used in a variety of ways to create illusions:

- Place a building in front of a mirror to make it appear larger.
- Place a mirror inside a tunnel to create greater depth in the tunnel.
- Make a short train look much longer.
- Make a road appear to go off in the distance.
- Create a large industrial park with only a few small buildings.
- Make an eight-track yard where there are only four tracks.

**Scenery tricks:**

- Create a “dead” track or road that appears to go around a bend and on into the next county when in reality it stops right beyond where you don't see it anymore. The realism is enhanced if you place a train or a row of cars on the track that is disappearing around the bend. Similarly create a tunnel that goes nowhere.
- Copy and resize a photo of the inside of a building and place it inside one of your structures to make your buildings more realistic.
- Forced perspective: Place smaller structures, trains, trees, figures, bridges, billboards, etc. In the back of the layout so that when you look at the scene at eyelevel, it looks much deeper than it truly is. This is great for shelf layouts.
- Use a painted or photo backdrop with distant mountains or roads that give the sense of more depth to the scene.
- Curved backdrops give the illusion of continuous space.
- Layered scenery with fences, trees, roads at different levels and depths increases the overall depth of a scene.

**Tracks:**

- A spur leading off the track appearing to go to the “rest of the world.”
- Use shorter cars in the background of a stationary train to make the train look longer.
- Hidden staging concealed behind scenery “disappearing” to other destinations.

**Lighting:**

- Using dimmer switches to suggest the illusion of dusk or nightfall.
- Cast shadows to suggest early morning hours. Use a red-orange light to indicate sunset.
- Dark spaces in tunnels or underpasses that appear to go somewhere but don't go anywhere.



*The long shadows suggest a morning scene. Can you pick out an unusual prisoner, or is that just an illusion?*



*Dimming the lights creates a pleasing night scene.*

# European Connection: More Photos from Prague

By Greg Warth







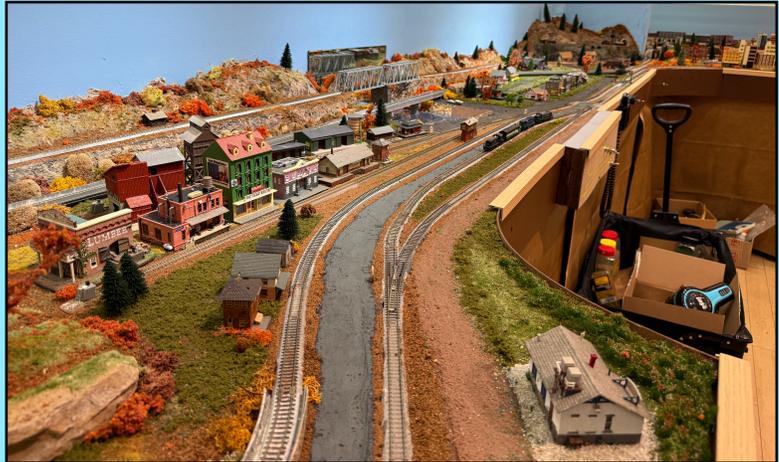


# Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads

By Greg Warth

Visitors are amazed when they come in. “How could you guys do all this in such a short time?”

“Hard work, dedication, perseverance, obsessiveness and maybe a little bit of craziness,” we say. We have no less than 10 layouts to view, all operational. All the major scales are represented. The only scale we don’t have is narrow gauge and I’m thinking about adding that one as well.



*N Scale at the Museum ([MRMHR.org](http://MRMHR.org))*

Our current 6500 square feet space is bursting at the seams now. We already need to find a bigger space. Moving

would be a huge undertaking, but we may not have much choice. The current shopping mall where we are located will be undergoing renovation if not destruction starting in January of next year.

We’ve been looking at a larger place in Virginia Beach which has 37,000 sq. ft., which the city may lease to us for \$1 a year. We will have to share it with an art gallery and theater, but that’s okay. We can each draw more traffic in for the other. We have put in our proposal and now it’s up to City Council. We’re hoping we get an answer by the end of the year.

We’re already making plans for where we will put what, etc. It’s exciting to think about. We’ll be disappointed if we don’t get it, but we already have a plan B to get into another place if this one doesn’t work out.

We’re going to need a lot more members and volunteers to pull this off. Manpower could be our weakest link. We know there are lots of model railroaders out there. We just have to figure out how to pull them in. I think the biggest problem is the aging of the current model railroader population and the reluctance for them to start something new.

We have started a STEAM program with children K-12 to show them how to incorporate science and technology into building a model railroad. We had three very successful sessions so far and it seems to be working out very well. If we can convince these youngsters to be future members and volunteers for our Museum, that may be the answer to our workforce problem.

Also, if any MER/NMRA members are out there and living in the area of Hampton Roads (Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Portsmouth or Suffolk), let us know if you are interested. This may turn out to be an opportunity of a lifetime ([secretary@mrmhr.org](mailto:secretary@mrmhr.org)).