



The Local

Official publication of the Mid-Eastern Region,

NMRA – A tax-exempt organization

SEARCH

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“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen...”

Following a Remarkable MER Convention



It's All in the Details: Photo of Steve Wysowski's layout taken by Jerry Lauchle, MMR at the 2025 Philly Express MER Convention layout tour.



The Journey

By Greg Warth

I had a roommate in college named Ron who taught me a valuable lesson, but I frequently have to remind myself of it, even 50 years later. I would occasionally say to him that I wish I were finished with this semester, or I would wish winter to be over with, or whatever I was complaining about at the time. I wanted it to be completed, finished, done. The faster that would happen, the better.

Then surprisingly he would say, “Not me.” He would further explain to me more than once that life is too short as it is. He did not wish for it to go faster just to get it over with. He wanted to enjoy every day, take the bad with the good, and embrace it, because we do not get it back. When that time is gone, it’s gone forever. There are no redoes, no extra lives like in video games.

“Nothing can last
 There are no second chances
 Never give a day away
 Always live for today.”

(Song by Camel, “For Today:” https://youtu.be/Vn_iZ_xGJ4E).

Of course, he was right. It is so obvious. I should always be conscious of that philosophy, but somehow, I get so wrapped up in the daily routine of life that I forget it and start wanting to get things over with again. I start thinking I will be happy when I get this layout done, or when our museum has a more permanent place, or when I get this issue of *The Local* done.

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Your Guide on How to Build a Model Railroad!

But then I think I should be happy *now*. I should relish the time it takes to get there. Anticipation is half the fun, right? And it is when you look at it from a more positive direction.

So, I have to remind myself when I get busy that I need to enjoy the journey, every day, every minute of it. I have to focus on that perspective so I do not waste my life worrying about when this will be done or when that will be finished.

Ron was studying electrical engineering at the time. He would have been a great model railroader. Unfortunately, I lost track of him after college, and we went our separate ways. I heard a few years ago that he had passed away although I never discovered the details. Of course, I was saddened by that, but in retrospect, I was glad he had that view of life. In many ways, he probably lived a fuller, longer life than I have because of his philosophy, even though I have been here for more years than he had been.

So, I put a sticky note on my computer with the words “Enjoy the Journey” to remind me of Ron and his wisdom whenever I start wishing I were done with this or that. It helps.

On a different note, I have to say I truly enjoyed the Philly Express 2025 MER Convention. The clinics were excellent and different from prior years. Everyone was super friendly. The layouts in and out of the Crowne Plaza were really impressive as you can see from the photos later in this issue. It takes a lot of work to put on one of these conventions and the Philadelphia Division did a great job in pulling it together in a relatively short time.

Now it is up to us in the Tidewater Division to do the next one, “Tracks to Tidewater,” in Virginia Beach. I am excited about it and will look forward to helping plan for it and work on it. I was about to jokingly say I just wish it were over with, but no, I truly will enjoy the journey.

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.



(AI generated photo, purchased from Adobe)

Happy Railroading.

Happy November (Model Railroad Month).

And Happy Holidays!!





Railcars waiting for their journey to begin. (From PBCMRR, Photo by Jerry Lauchle, MMR).

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

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

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

Save The Date

2026 NMRA MER Convention

Oct 15-18, 2026



CLINICS, LAYOUT
TOURS, OPERATING
SESSIONS, CONTESTS,
PROTOTYPE TOURS

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

BRINGING TOGETHER
MODEL RAILROAD
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VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

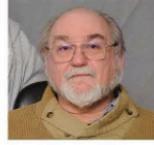


Celebrate the rich history and continuing legacy that the railroad industry developed in Virginia's Tidewater region.

Industry and infrastructure tours are being planned with a focus on international commerce and the rail systems that keep them moving.

Visit <https://mer-nmra.com/savethedate/> or scan the code for more information



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	President: Scott Unger 610-462-0756 president@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large Greg Warth 757-816-8399 gjwarth@mer-nmra.com		Achievement Program Manager: Kurt Thompson, MMR 410-507-3671 apchair@mer-nmra.com
	Vice President: Gary Brown 757-641-7671 vp@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large: Bob Bridges rkbridges@mer-nmra.com		Nominating Committee Chair: Bob Charles, MMR 717-763-1848 rcharles@mer-nmra.com
	Secretary: Rick Stoneking (856)296-9291 secretary@mer-nmra.com		Director-at-Large: Kevin O'Connor 919-593-2537 kjoconnor@mer-nmra.com		Editor: Greg Warth 757-816-8399 local-editor@mer-nmra.com
	Treasurer: William "Bill" Wurtzell (201)819-8701 wwurtzell@mer-nmra.com		Business Manager: Howard Oakes 717-632-5990 301 Moulstown Rd Abbotsstown PA 17301 business@mer-nmra.com		Registrar: Kirk Bateman 410-442-0446 mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com
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	Executive Convention Chair: Laura Bateman 410-442-0446 ECC@mer-nmra.com		Contest Chair: Alan Mende 717-469-1047 contests@mer-nmra.com		Web Master: Jeff Burch 443-280-9127 webmaster@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
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MER Division Superintendents

	<p>New Jersey Division 1 Glyn Thomas 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>				

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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.



Holiday Inn on Greenwich Road in Virginia Beach, VA: Site of the 2026 MER Convention, “Tracks to Tidewater.”

UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

- 2026 — Tidewater Division — October 15-18, 2026 — “Tracks to Tidewater,” Holiday Inn, 5655 Greenwich Rd. Virginia Beach, VA 23462
- 2027 — South Mountain Division — Location: Hagerstown, MD

MER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE

- Board of Directors Budget Meeting — 1pm January 10, 2026, (virtual - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7161954603?omn=84887934378>)
- Board of Directors Business Meeting - 10am, April 18, 2026, Holiday Inn, 5655 Greenwich Rd. Virginia Beach, VA 23462

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

- Call to Order at 7pm Oct. 17, then recessed until 10am on Oct.18, 2029
Holiday Inn, 5655 Greenwich Rd. Virginia Beach, VA 23462



POTOMAC DIVISION VIRTUAL CLINIC 66

WHEN: SUNDAY, November 16, 2025

TIME: 3:00 PM (Eastern time)

TOPIC: A History of Narrow Gauge Railroads, Part III, D&RGW Narrow Gauge through the Cameras of Richard Kindig and Richard B. Jackson ‘The Northern System’

WHERE: ZOOM CONFERENCE PLATFORM

Experience the Denver & Rio Grande Western’s “Northern System” through the remarkable lenses of two masters of railroad photography — Richard Kindig and Richard B. Jackson.

Edward Kohler will be our host for the first of two presentations exploring the fabled “Narrow Gauge Circle” of the D&RGW. Through vivid imagery and captivating stories, this session brings to life the drama, grit, and glory of mountain railroading — where steam, steel, and scenery met in unforgettable harmony.

[Register for the Virtual Clinic by clicking this link](#)

After you register you will receive another email containing information about joining the meeting with the meeting link in it. If you do not get the email check your junk or spam folder s Zoom is known for landing in those folders on some of the email vendors.

You can either go to www.Zoom.com and download the Zoom application to your computer then use the meeting ID and password or just click on the URL shown below to access the clinic. More information on how to use Zoom is available on the Potomac Division Website if you need help or have questions. You can view the clinic without a video camera and if you want to ask questions you will need to have a microphone set up on your computer or type into the chat box on the application. Please remember to keep your microphone "MUTED" unless you are addressing the group.

On the day of the clinic you will need to start Zoom and click on "Join". The application will ask you for a meeting ID and password which you will need to enter. If you do not want to use the Zoom link and then just click on the meeting link.

All MER members are invited.

2025 Mid-Eastern Region Philly Express Contest Results

By Dan Peele, Photos by Jerry Lauchle, MMR

I would like to thank Joe Walters, MMR, and his team in Philadelphia for hosting another outstanding convention.

Please allow me to personally congratulate all the winners, competitors, award sponsors, our contest evaluators, our MER Photographer, and modelers who shared a sample of their skills with us under the NMRA's Celebration of Models. The viewing of your models and modules was enjoyed by all who entered the contest room.

We had 42 models submitted for viewing and evaluating. Each model for evaluation was scrutinized by five teams of four evaluators. Eighteen of the models achieved Merit Awards. Anyone considering becoming an evaluator? Just think about the pleasures enjoyed by the evaluators during this contest to jointly determine 18 Merit Award worthy models in what I would call a long morning. Now for the sad news, these 42 models were submitted by just 20 model railroaders. Thank you to the 20.

Best in Show

The Chuck Hladik Memorial Award



Congratulations to Bernard Kempinski, MMR for his scratchbuilt USMRR Engine House and Machine Shop. This fantastic model was also awarded First Place On-Line Structure and earned Bernard a Merit Award.

President’s Award for the Convention Topic: “Steel”



Congratulations to new modeler Gary Stroh for his scratchbuilt Conrail Coilshield #631083. This model also earned Gary a Merit Award.

The Philadelphia Division New Modeler Award

Congratulations to new modeler Stephen Richardson for his scratchbuilt Daily Inquirer Building.

Stephen also carried home First Place Off-Line Structure which earned him a Merit Award.



The Clyde Gerald Award



Congratulations to Jerry Lauchle, MMR, Evergreen Hill Designs Ash Drugs #EHD-203. This model also earned Jerry a Merit Award.

The Ray Bilodeau Award



Congratulations to George Phillips, Flat Car Eagles Mere RR with 1904 Oldsmobile.

Favorite Model



Congratulations to Joe Walters, MMR, for his scratchbuilt Schnabel Car CERX 800. Joe also carried home First Place in Freight Cars and earned a Merit Award.

Favorite Train



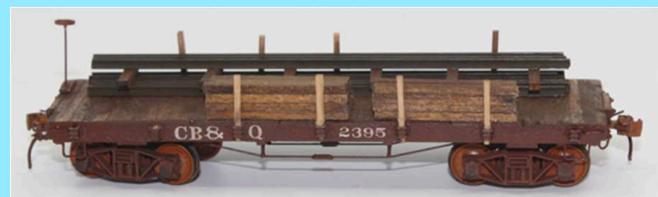
Congratulations to Joe Walters, MMR, for winning Favorite Train with his Military Train.

Contest Winners

Category	1 st Place	2 nd Place	3 rd Place
Caboose	NA	NA	NA
Diesel	John Pursell Lehigh Valley S-12	NA	NA
Freight Car	Joe Waters, MMR Schnable	Mike Rossi B&O P-32 Flat Car 9212	Mike Rossi B&O P-32 50' Flat Car 9211
Maintenance-of-Way	Don Winn CB&Q 2395 MOW Flat Car	Joe Walters Gondola with Crane & OTM Tracker	NA
Modules	Karen Confer Milepost 53 – the Abandoned Farm	Jim Cubie Late Winter Wells-Lamson Granite Quarry, Graniteville, VT	NA
Non-Revenue	DC Cebula USMRR Flat Car with Dictator Mortar and Crew	NA	NA
Off-Line Display	NA	NA	NA
Off-Line Structure	Stephen Richardson Daily Inquirer Building	TIE	
		John Pursell Farmers Co-Op	Jerry Lauchle Evergreen Hill Designs Ash Drugs no. EHD-203
On-Line Display	NA	NA	NA
On-Line Structure	Bernie Kempinski USMRR Engine House & Machine Shop	Dennis Colucci Hopewell Depot 1970s Hopewell Junction, NY	John Pursell Abandoned Freight Station
Passenger Car	Kevin O'Connor Ambroid Kit H-21 NYO&W Milk Car	NA	NA
Steam	NA	NA	NA
Traction	Jim Murphy Holyoke Street Railway Traction Car	Mark Schmidt SPECR S-2 McGuire- Cummings Sweeper	NA



1st Place Diesel



1st Place Maintenance-of-Way

1st Place Non-Revenue1st Place Passenger1st Place Traction1st Place Module

The evaluators award the points based upon the latest NMRA's Achievement Program Judging Guidelines. The purpose of this document is to “**recognize and reward good model building.**” A maximum of 125 points may be awarded across five categories. The most points are awarded in **Construction** (40 points) – Difficulty or complexity of the attempted model and how well it is constructed.

Detail (20 points) – How many detail parts are added to or incorporated in the model and how complex is the detailing job.

Conformity (25 points) – How well does the model reproduce the prototype.

Finish & Lettering (25 points) – The complexity of the finish and lettering, and the quality and skills of application.

Scratchbuilding (15 points) – How much of the model is built from scratch, and how difficult was the scratchbuilding.

Achieving a score of at least 87.5 points in the regional contest is just one method of completing the required Merit Awards. Congratulations to Achievement Program Merit Award winners!

Convention Clinic Programming – 2025 Update

By Jack Dziadul, MMR

This brief article serves to provide notice that the Clinic Sources spreadsheet available on the MER website has been updated to include clinic information from the recently concluded Philly Express convention. 2025 convention clinics have been added to the spreadsheet, and 2019 clinics have been dropped.

Convention planners and those programming “mini-cons” and Division events might find clinic ideas on the exhibit. A more thorough description of convention clinic programming can be found in *The Local*, 77 #2, March / April 2023.

A link to the sortable Excel spreadsheet is here: [MER-NMRA : Clinic Indexes](#)

Clinic Photos by Jerry Lauchle, MMR:



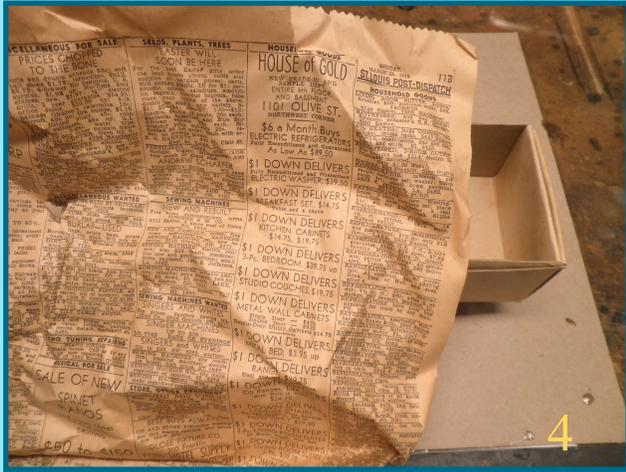
Building a Trio of Old Time Tank Cars

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR (Photos by the author)

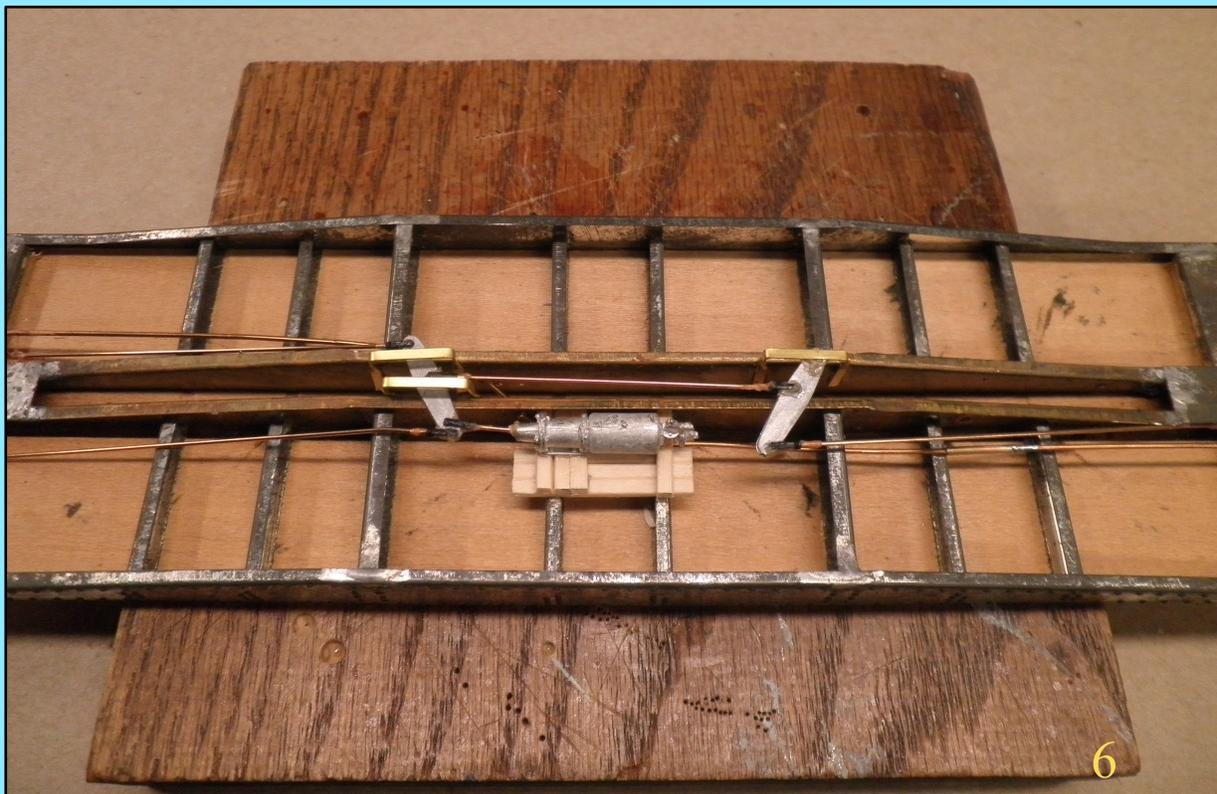
The starting point for this project was a trio of Rail Craft kit flat cars that I managed to secure off eBay a number of years ago. Rail Craft made O scale kits in the late 1940s into the 1950s. I had already reworked a handful of Rail Craft hopper cars that once re-detailed, painted, decaled, and then filled with loads were surprisingly nice models. Rail Craft also produced a kit for a B&O utility flat car that, as far as I know is a unique model in O scale. I had a few of these and still have an unbuilt kit with decals that is, again, a surprisingly nice model given its vintage. Based on that experience the plain flat cars were probably as good and something I could make use of in my shop. However, I really had no interest in plain flat cars. These were going to have to become the bases under some other class of car. I had been building and rebuilding Thomas and other tank cars, and that drawer of parts was still “fresh” in my shop. I also had a file of photos of old-time tank cars that were really just tanks on flat cars. So that’s where the direction for this project originated.

Opening up the boxes for these cars was a step back in time. There was a blue print included that labeled these as B&O flat cars. Decking was not supplied, but there was a collection of small bits that included stirrup steps, coupler pockets, and some rather small stake pockets (**Photo 1**). The sides of these cars have nice rivet details (**Photo 2**). And there is a fully installed fish belly underframe already soldered in place (**Photo 3**). Soldering these cars is interesting as they are generally tin-plated steel, although now and again I have found some of the hopper sides in brass. It seems whatever was available got put to use. Here is the blast from the past part. These cars were all new in the box and never out of the box, still wrapped up in pages of an issue of the St. Louis Dispatch newspaper from 1949 (**Photo 4, 5**).





As I wanted to back date these cars a bit, I installed a K brake system into the underbody frame. Drilling holes to run the train line (0.033” phosphor bronze wire) through was facilitated by first spotting the hole by a punching a dimple in the metal with a 10p finishing nail that I sharpened on the belt sander. The train line was anchored at each end running through some styrene channel secured in place with Goo & CA. The underbody install was done using a white metal K brake casting, brake rigging made from 0.025” phosphor bronze wire with cut down Grandt Line turnbuckles for clevises, and Berkshire Valley brake levers. The brake hangers were fashioned from 0.015” x 0.060” brass flat stock with a ½ twist to mount them onto the sides of the center sill (**Photo 6**).



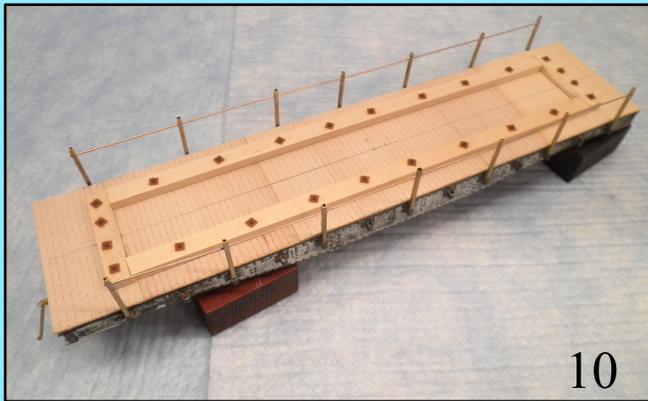
Since I had the car bodies to define length, it was time to move on to making the tanks. I have found that visiting the electrical aisle at Home Depot can be a great source of raw material for tanks. The plumbing aisle is also pretty good. Both are quite wallet friendly given the number of tanks per dollar! I had three pairs of cast brass tank car ends (Back Shop) available in the parts bin. While these were a close match to the electrical conduit, they needed a little help in both the mounting and shaping departments. For mounting these end castings to the conduit I used a generous amount of JB Weld epoxy while being careful to get these parts centered over the end of the tubing. After letting the joints fully set for several days, I cleaned and shaped all six ends using my upright belt sander and then progressively finer sanding blocks. I also added alignment markings for the sides and top of each tank in red (Photo 7).



The tanks needed to be held in place on top of the flat car cars, so decking was added first using scribed siding. Cradles for the tanks to rest in were assembled using 8" x 14" basswood. The ends of the cradles were shaped with a drum sander in the Dremel to accept the contour of the tank ends, glued to the decking, and then test fitted with the tanks (Photos 8, 9).



A series of nut-bolt-washer (nbw) castings were added to the cradles. The supplied stake pockets were added to the side sills and brass square stock was used to make the stakes. These were all through drilled to accept 0.025" phosphor bronze wire for side railings. The wire was run through the stakes and soldered into place to make these railing units a little stiffer (Photos 10, 11).

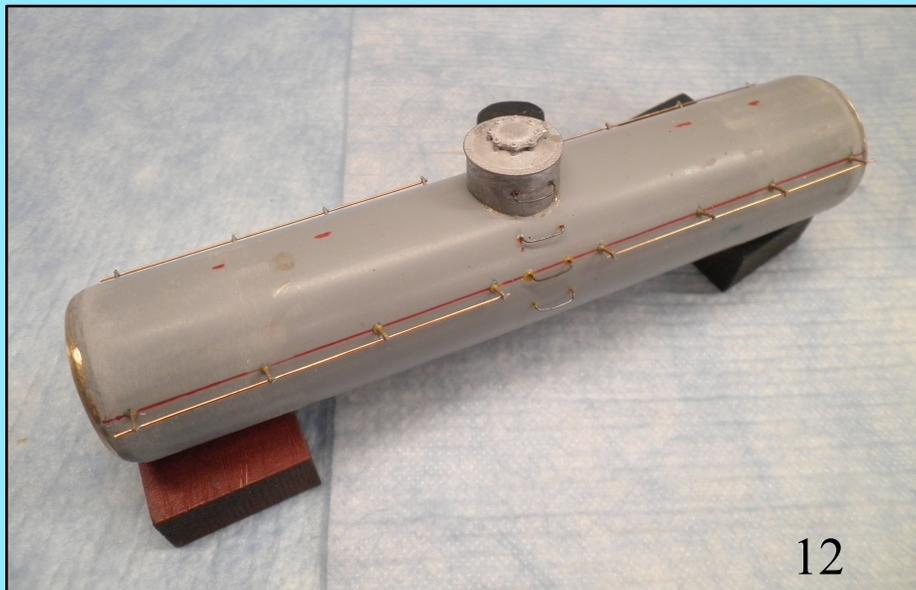


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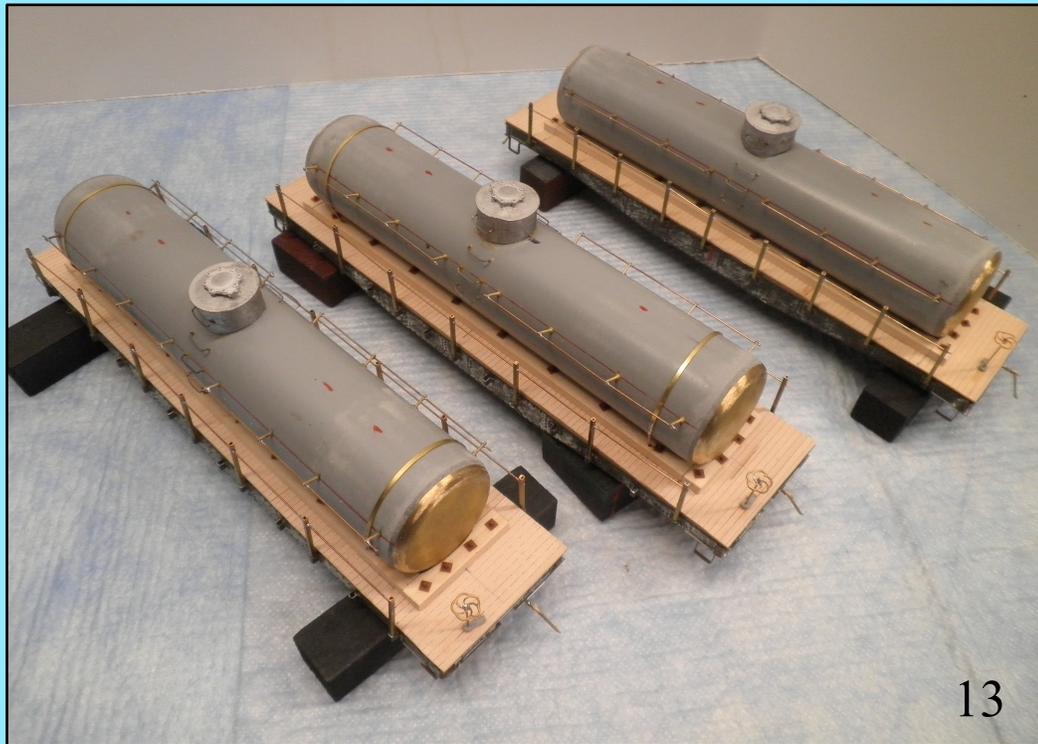
11

The tanks were fitted with a dome casting from Scale City Designs (No. 390). Hand rail stanchions (PSC No. 4340) were mounted into the tank and connected together using 0.020" phosphor bronze wire and soldered in place. Wire grab irons were mounted to the tanks and up onto the dome and set into place using CA ([Photo 12](#)).



12

Tank bands to hold the tanks in place in their cradles were fashioned from 0.015" x 0.060" brass flat stock soldered to 0.032" phosphor bronze wire that were threaded through the cradle and deck under the car body. The bands on these cars were not set into place in any final manner at this time to permit painting the tanks a different color than the car body. A brake wheel (PSC) was soldered to some 0.028" brass wire threaded with a ratchet & pawl casting (PSC) and this unit was set into the decking of the car at the brake end of the car. Stirrup steps (0.015" x 0.060" brass flat stock) were formed and attached, and air hoses (PSC 4278) were added ([Photo 13](#)).



Two of the cars were painted with Rust-Oleum Red Primer with the tanks painted Candy Apple Red (gloss). Thereafter, the tanks for these two cars were mounted and secured in place with the bands touched up with the same paint. Decals (K4) were applied and the cars sealed with Rust-Oleum Clear Matte. Trucks and couplers were added to complete these two cars ([Photos 14-17](#)).



The body of the third car was painted flat black while the tank was painted Flat Aluminum. The tank was then mounted and secured in place with the bands touched up with the same paint and then a coat of gloss was applied. Decals (K4) were applied, and the car was sealed with Rust-Oleum Clear Matte. Trucks and couplers were added to complete these three cars ([Photos 18, 19](#)).



18



19

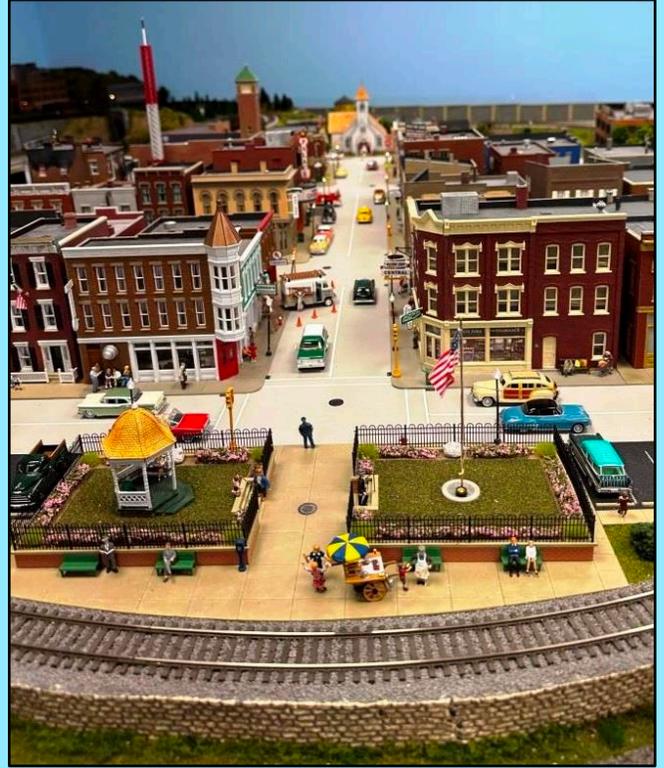
And that completes this project making three more early period style tank cars for my freight car roster!

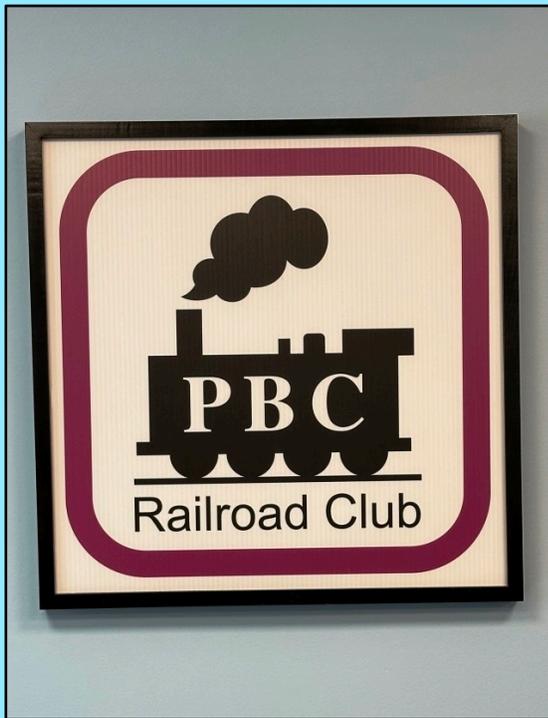
Photos from the Philly Express 2025 MER Convention

By Jerry Lauchle, MMR unless otherwise noted

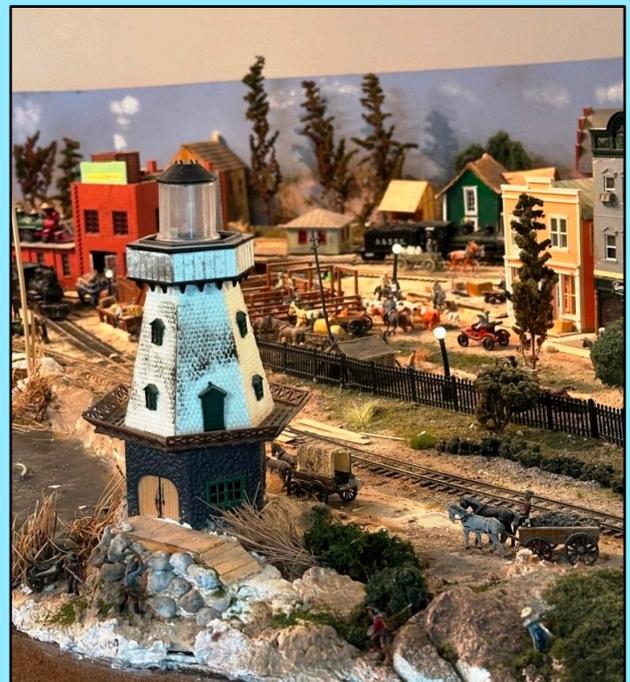
From the PBCMRR (Peter Becker Model RR Club) Layout:







Steve Wysowski's Layout:





Inside: Photos By Greg Warth

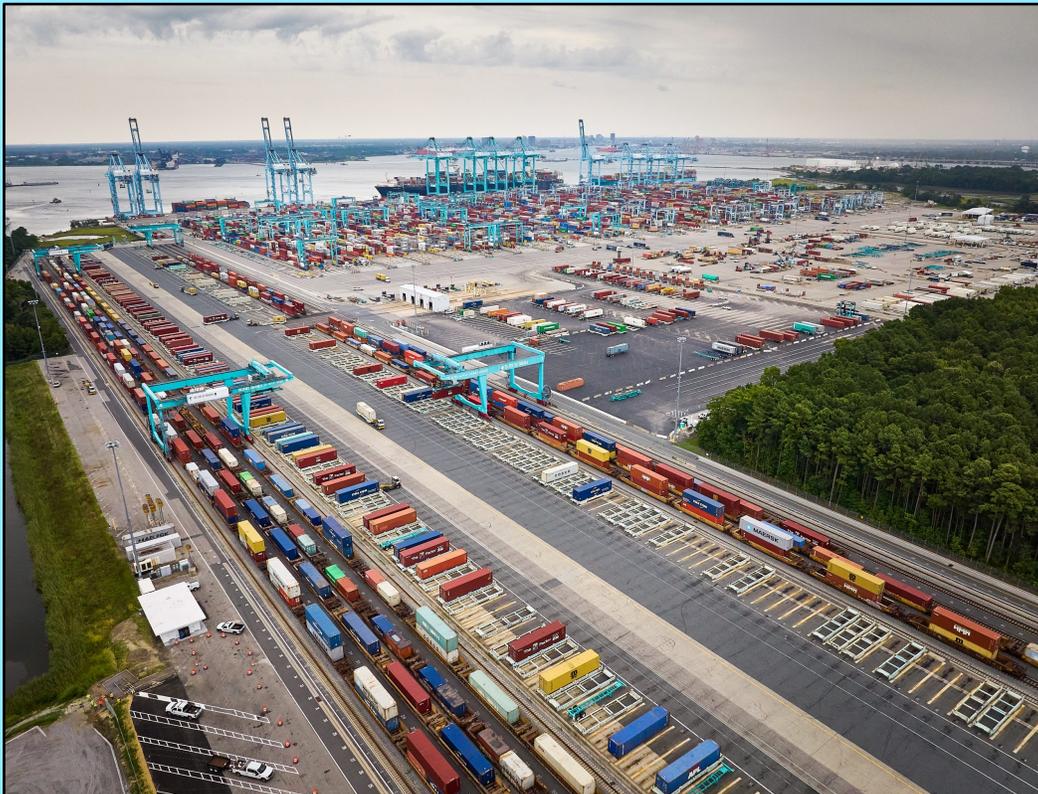


UPCOMING CONVENTIONS

Save the Date:

Tracks to Tidewater

October 15-18, 2026 Virginia Beach, VA



2026 NMRA National Convention

July 27 to August 2, 2026



 www.facebook.com/NMRATakesChatt

nmra2026.org

Becoming Prototypical

By Mat Thompson, MMR (Photos by the author)



Photo 1: OCRR GP7 #47 is following the Columbia River west from Portland to Astoria. The model is an Athearn Genesis offering.

My HO Oregon Coast Railroad exists only in my train room and in my imagination. Even so, I want it to look like a real railroad and tell a believable story of time and place to railfans, operators, and other visitors (**Photo 1**).

I was hooked on model railroading when I was a boy growing up in Oregon. The thrill was building models and running trains. As the years passed, the sophistication and complexity of my modeling improved, but I didn't pay much attention to the history and operations of real railroads.

In 2005 we settled in a home where I could build the layout I had thought of for so many years. My idea was to model the Spokane, Portland and Seattle (SP&S) between Portland and Astoria during WWII. I had the space, time, and resources. What I didn't have was prototype knowledge.

In building the layout, my goal has been to create a realistic depiction of my fictional railroad. The challenge is to combine engines, rolling stock, and railroad facilities with scenery and structures together in a way that keeps the story alive.

As I learned about the SP&S, I realized my concept would be hard to model and operationally suspect. The only HO steam engine offerings were a few expensive, non-DCC ready, brass models. At the time, even updating to the 1950s and first-generation diesels didn't help since there were only a few SP&S diesels on the market. I also found actual SP&S traffic in my area did not offer the volume I wanted for operations.

Location was still important to me so my freelanced Oregon Coast Railroad (OCRR) was born. My story is that the OCRR is owned by the SP&S and operates the Portland to Astoria line. I increased rail traffic by making Astoria, Oregon a busier Pacific port than it was and adding a fictional expansion south to Tillamook. My modeling year became 1957 to take advantage of the many good diesel engines now available.

First, I gave the railroad a one sentence description: The Oregon Coast is a branch line railroad hauling lumber products and general freight in 1957. This sentence has focused my modeling and my hobby purchases for twenty years.

In just a few words, visitors, railroad knowledgeable or not, have an idea of what to expect. Steam engines are gone or barely hanging on, replaced by diesel power. Freight trains have cabooses. Cars are 40 and 50 feet long. Scenery includes pine forests, and industries are dominated by lumber products.

I use real Oregon place names although I am not specifically modeling any of them. Model railroaders, especially those who are operators, tend to be map sensitive. Even if they aren't sure where Kenton is, knowing it is between Portland and the Pacific Ocean makes learning the railroad easier. Casual visitors often know the area and hearing names they recognize increases their interest.

Scenery is the stage for our model railroads. Oregon is known for pine forests and that's what visitors see as they enter the layout room. Knowing the railroad's name and seeing the forests leaves no doubt about the railroad's location.

Low mountains, numerous streams, and thick underbrush are also conspicuous features of the Coast Mountain Range modeled on the layout. Combined with the pine forests they create a signature look without modeling any actual scene.

My backdrop is simple: green hills with barely suggested pine trees and in some places only blue sky and clouds. It was painted to extend the illusion by subtly blending in with the scenery. Forest green fascia complements the green colors of the scenery and expands the story beyond the layout boundaries. Water in the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean port of Astoria is also a dark green to create the impression of great depth.

Even if the railroad is fictional, copying typical SP&S traffic, equipment, and industries along the line boosts prototype reality. Railroad books can be expensive, but I found just a few well-chosen ones that provided the knowledge I needed.

As was true for the SP&S, my OCRR mainline is single tracked. Passing sidings for 12 to 18 cars capture the feel of SP&S traffic where short freight trains were common. The last revenue steam runs were in 1956 so the OCRR is all diesel powered. The SP&S ended passenger operations on the branch in 1952 so there is no passenger traffic on the 1957 OCRR.

Useful references are not all focused on railroads. *Streetcar Scenes of the 50s in Color* by Leroy O. King, Jr. shows the variety of red and brown tones on brick buildings and the details of city streets make the book a great aid to good modeling. Colors of automobiles and men and women's clothing help my modeling to suggest the era. This book, and others like it, is a treasure chest of appropriate billboards and commercial signs even though I don't have street cars on the layout (**Photo 2**).



Photo 2: GP7s are passing through Astoria, Oregon, a small city located where the Columbia River flows into the Pacific Ocean. Structures are a combination of kits, kit bashes and scratchbuilt models.

By 1957 the SP&S had sixteen different types of diesel locomotives. Any switch engine or road engine suitable for the SP&S would be right for the OCRR since my fictional railroad would be hauling the same freight over the same terrain as the real SP&S (**Photo 3**).



Photo 3: Engines at the Hoyt Street engine house have all been re-lettered for the Oregon Coast Railroad with decals that Mat made.

Then, like many modelers before me, I searched for engines with easy to modify paint schemes. I choose black and dark green because both are common to many prototype roads and many models are available. Removing the original lettering was easy. Minor touchup painting and weathering cleared up any blemishes. Adding OCRR decals and additional yellow striping to some engines gives a family look to my engine roster just as was common on prototype railroads.

Most of the SP&S cabooses came from the Northern Pacific (NP) or Great Northern. When I started building the layout, only brass cabooses were available so I chose to repaint Southern Pacific C-30 wooden cabooses as acceptable stand-ins. Both the NP and SP&S had script font company tags lines painted on their cabooses. I continued the family look by adding similar lettering to OCRR cabooses ([Photo 4](#)).



Photo 4: The real Spokane Portland & Seattle Railroad was owned jointly by the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railroads. Since Mat's story is that the fictional Oregon Coast RR was owned by the SP&S, he decaled his cabooses with company mottos to echo the parent railroads' practice.

Railroad cars are as much a scene setter as locomotives. On my 1957 OCRR, tanks cars would be in the 8,000-12,000 gallon range. Box cars of the era were predominantly 40' and 50' cars painted some variation of boxcar red. Oregon logging roads mostly used skeleton logs cars, not heavy-duty flat cars. Wood chips were just becoming a raw material for composition products, so chip cars were converted gondolas and hoppers with side extensions. Grain was still carried in boxcars, not covered hoppers (Photo 5).

Photo 5: Wood chip cars are being loaded at the Christopher Paper Mill. Chips were burned as waste until 1957 when an inland Oregon mill started using them to make plywood and similar products. Christopher Paper is an older mill so their chips are being shipped to the more modern plant.



Just as important in telling the story is not having cars that wouldn't have been in Oregon in 1957. Piggyback traffic was just beginning and wouldn't be common in the mostly rural locations of my layout. There were never coal mines in Oregon. Coal was not common for heating. SP&S steam engines were oil-fired. All of this means coal hoppers are not right for the layout. Pulpwood logging was not common so pulpwood cars are also wrong for the layout.

Industries on the OCRR are typical of those in Oregon in the 1950s. Many are even named for real industries although none of the structures are models of their buildings. The OCRR has a sawmill, a paper mill, a salmon cannery, and freight terminals at both ports ([Photo 6](#)).



Photo 6: It's Oregon so the layout must have a lumber mill. This one, complete with a log pond is a slightly modified kit from Sierra West Scale Models. The mill is completely built of strip lumber and took 400 hours to construct.

Besides the forest industries along the line to Astoria, the OCRR serves a large industrial area in North Portland, the city's industrial and warehousing district. Even industries that would be common to any large city have names that locate them in Oregon such as Portland Produce. Fred Meyer Bakery is a commercial bakery supporting a chain of Walmart-like stores common in the 1950s Pacific Northwest. My Swift Packing Plant was inspired by the real Swift Plant in the area ([Photo 7](#)).



Photo 7: There was a large Swift Packing Plant in Portland. Mat has modeled one guided by Doug Harding's two-part article in the October and November 2004 issues of Railroad Model Craftsman.

Industries are also modeled large so they appear to justify rail traffic. Some industries are a single big building. Other large industries have been created by combining buildings into a single complex. A few large industries provide the same modeling and operating opportunities as several small industries and the large industries add to the realism of the railroad.

Many automobiles are easily recognizable by layout visitors, even non-model railroaders, who have little knowledge of locomotive build dates. Chosen wisely, they can add to the layout story. On the other hand, out of era automobiles can be mood breakers. The 1957 Chevrolet is a good example. It's well known. On a layout modeling the fall of 1956 (that's when next year's new model cars were released in that time) or anytime in the following 20 years or so, it's a good fit. Later than that, the car becomes an anachronism. If the layout is set in earlier years, the car can be a jarring sight disrupting the credibility of the modeling efforts.

As hobby manufacturers release more freight hauling vehicle models, a simple reference book on trucks and trailers of the 1950s can serve as a guide to knowing which offerings are right for my layout. My book is *American Trucks of the 1950s (Those were the days...)*.

Signs and billboards have the same potential to add to the story the layout tells or to be a distraction. A billboard advertising radios fits well in a 1920s to 1950s layout. Later than that, a television advertisement would be more believable.

Besides enjoying the fun of operations and being with people who share my love of the hobby, building my layout for operations has helped me make the layout believable. It reinforces a prototype basis for engines, cars, industries, and scenery on the railroad. I learn continuously from my fellow operators. Applying their critical and knowledgeable suggestions keeps the Oregon Coast Railroad looking and running like a real railroad. And last, nothing encourages me to make progress more than knowing the operating session next Saturday will be at my house.



FYI: NMRA is changing its branding and has developed a new logo and new promotional materials. Here is a sample of what you'll see moving forward:



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](#)

[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.

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.

Did You know...**2025**is the 90th 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...

Reflections on 2025

By Greg Warth (Photos by the author)

Amazingly, another year has come and is almost gone. That was fast! Thanksgiving and Christmas are right around the corner. It seems as if I have crammed in a lot of stuff over the past 10 months and there is even more to do now.

I continue to remain thankful for still being able to get up in the morning and accomplish things that may be helpful to others. I have enjoyed the meetings and conventions I have attended. I relish the friendships I have made. Being a volunteer to participate in doing things to promote this great hobby of ours is continually rewarding to me. My protective wife keeps asking me why I do all this. She says I work too hard. I'm supposed to be retired. And I say it's because I want to. I enjoy it. I don't want to sit on the couch all day. The stuff I do is fun and interesting to me. And I still get a kick out of creating something that actually works and is hopefully a little artistic at the same time, and maybe even if it is appreciated by others. That keeps me going. I suspect many of you feel the same.

The kids who come into the museum are truly a delight. They get so excited to see and hear the trains running and even run some themselves. One of our displays is called "The Great Locomotive Race," where we line up two locomotives on parallel tracks, each powered by its own generator. The faster you turn the crank on the generator, the faster your locomotive goes (**Photo 1**).

The teens are coming in and building their own 8' x 4' layout. Some of them know as much or more than I do about it. It is fun for me to watch them. They play on my N scale layout as well (**Photo 2**).

The older "kids" get excited about all the displays as well. They are reminded of what it was like to have a train when they were much younger. Nostalgia reigns supreme. I think we have stimulated many of them to pick up the hobby again. That makes it all worthwhile. Spreading a little joy goes a long way these days in improving people's lives. We need that.

So, what do I want for Christmas? I'd say more of the same. I'd be happy with that.

Thanks for reading *The Local*. I hope you enjoy it. Let me know if you have any suggestions or if there is a topic you would like to know more about and we will try to produce it for you. You are the reason we create this. Send us your stuff!

Happy Holidays: from all of us on *The Local* Staff, the MER Officers and Directors!



Photo 1: The Great Locomotive Race driven by hand-cranked generators. Race cars in the middle.



Photo 2: Teens having fun on my N scale layout.

Minutes and Directors' Reports from the MER Annual Meeting on October 20, 2024 Marriott at Research Triangle Park Durham, NC

October 20th, 2024

President Unger called the 2024 Annual Membership meeting of the MER to order at 8:02pm EDT Oct 20th, 2024.

President Unger recognized the MER Board members present, the NMRA Vice President Rick Coble, and the SER President Roy Masterson.

President Unger adjourned the meeting until 10am on Oct 22, 2024.

October 21st, 2024

MER Officers in Attendance:

Name	Position	NMRA Num	Place of Residence
Scott Unger	President	162837	Allentown, PA
Gary Brown	Vice President	125966	Virginia Beach, VA
Rick Stoneking	Secretary	168580	Lumberton, NJ
William Wurtzell	Treasurer	150943	Keswick, VA
Bob Bridges	Director at Large	149962	Clemmons, NC
Kevin O'Connor	Director at Large	163322	Cary, NC

Meeting called to order by President Unger @ 10:00am EDT.

Ken Montero asked if a quorum was present, and President Unger confirmed that there was. Ken then made a point of order indicating that President Unger had mistakenly Adjourned the meeting at the Banquet on Saturday night, instead of placing it on Recess. The incorrect language should be corrected in the minutes of the meeting and made a motion to that effect. The motion was seconded by Kirk Bateman and was passed unanimously. This correction has been made in the minutes.

The published meeting agenda was approved and adopted by the Board.

President's Report

President Unger discussed the need for volunteers for the following open, or soon to be open, positions within the MER organization:

Business Manager – Howard Oakes will be stepping down from this position at the end of 2024

Executive Convention Chair – VP Brown has been serving ‘temporarily’ in this role for 2 years, so we need someone to fill this position

Assistant Treasurer – this position has been vacant since Bill Wurtzell stepped up into the Treasurer’s role at the 2023 Annual Meeting.

President Unger pointed out that this is a good time to take on these roles as things are running smoothly, convention hosts/location are set for the next several year, and there people who are, or have, served in those positions are available to guide and mentor.

Ken Montero pointed out that an individual CAN hold a position in both their Division organization as well as the Regional Organization. Kevin O’Connor stated that this was true unless the Division ByLaws did not allow it, and Ken stated that the Division ByLaws could not supersede National regarding this.

Vice President's Report

MER Conventions

2025 being hosted by Philly Division in King of Prussia

2026 being hosted by Tidewater Division, location TBD

2027 being hosted by South Mountain Division, location TBD

National Convention

NMRA President Gordy Robinson has made it clear that he wants to see a National Convention hosted by the MER, which has not hosted one since 2006. Gary has been contacted by the DoubleTree hotel in King of Prussia and this may afford an opportunity to get a good price on a venue. Gary will reach out to Jenny Hendricks to start a conversation about the MER possibly hosting the 2028 or 2029 National Convention.

Gary also reiterated the comments made by President Unger regarding finding a volunteer to replace him as Executive Convention Chair, and that the next 3 conventions are set so now is a good time to take it on.

Gary then turned the floor over to Jack Dziadul, co-chairman of the 2024 Convention, to provide a report on the convention. Jack reported that all of the events had been very well received and attended. The Company Store was very successful in terms of items, some logistical lessons learned regarding staffing to manage such success.

Kirk Bateman, MER Registrar, gave a snapshot of the statistics for the convention:

The total registration of members was lower than anticipated (175 vs. 200) but the number of family members was far more than expected (38). The Banquet had 131 attendees vs. the 100 planned, so that was a tremendous turnout.

Treasurer's Report

Bill Wurtzell reported that financially the Region is doing well, with the treasury being up ~\$26,000 since January 1st but that included convention income but not all convention expenses yet. Overall Investments up ~\$5000, Net worth up ~\$4800.

Jack Dziadul asked what the total liquid assets of the MER were and Bill reported (approximate numbers):

\$86,000 in Cash

\$44,000 in Investments

\$ 10,00 Miscellaneous

\$140,000 Total (convention expenses still to come out of this number)

Reports of Directors

Director O'Connor

Archivist: Request to purchase two SDD drives for storage of digital archives was approved at the Oct 17th Board meeting, so Mike with purchase those and start scanning the box(es) of paper records he has.

Webmaster: Jeff Burch has done a great job getting the web site maps updated after the Division expansions last year, as well as convention related support activities.

Contests: Alan Mende has changed the way plaques are done to eliminate unusable plaques when a category has not had entries at a convention. This was in place this year for contest award winners.

Director Warth

Director Warth was not present at the meeting. President Unger entertained a motion to destroy the ballots from the election. Kurt Thompson so moved, seconded by Ken Montero. The motion passed unanimously. President Unger will direct the committee (not present) to destroy the ballots.

Business Manager's Report

The Business Manager was not present at the meeting, President Unger mentioned that a new MER Member listing had just been received from National. Director Bridges asked what the current membership count was. President Unger opened the report and after a quick review reported that the latest list shows ~1500, he could not be sure of the exact status of all of them so the number was a quick estimate.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Installation of new Board Members

The following officers were installed:

President Scott Unger

Vice President, Gary Brown

Secretary, Rick Stoneking

Treasurer, William Wurtzell

Adjourned



How to use a narrow space efficiently (Photo by Greg Warth).

Draft Copy (Not yet approved)

**Minutes from the 2025 Annual Meeting,
“Philly Express” October 19, 2025 at Crowne Plaza
Hotel, King of Prussia, PA**

October 18th, 2025

President Unger called the 2025 Annual Membership meeting of the MER to order at 8:12pm EDT Oct 18th , 2025.

President Unger placed the meeting on recess until 10am on Oct 19th, 2025.

October 19th, 2025

MER Officers in Attendance:

Name	Position	NMRA Num	Place of Residence
Scott Unger	President	162837	Allentown, PA
Gary Brown	Vice President	125966	Virginia Beach, VA
Rick Stoneking	Secretary	168580	Lumberton, NJ
William Wurtzell	Treasurer	150943	Keswick, VA
Bob Bridges	Director at Large	149962	Clemmons, NC
Kevin O’Connor	Director at Large	163322	Cary, NC
Greg Warth	Director at Large	131107	Virginia Beach, VA

MER Members in Attendance: 21

Meeting called to order by President Unger @ 10:00am EDT.

President Unger presented a couple of corrections to the published Agenda. Director Bridges made a motion to accept the agenda as modified, seconded by Joe Walters – vote passed unanimously.

Approval of the 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes. The Secretary apparently did not send the minutes to the Editor of the Local for publication, so the approval of the 2024 Member Meeting Minutes was tabled until the next Member Meeting.

President's Report

President Unger reported to the Membership that there have been two changes to the MER organization. Laura Bateman has been appointed as the new ECC Chair, and John Hoyte has been appointed as the new Ballot Committee Chair.

Vice President's Report

VP Brown Commended the Philly Division on the excellent 2025 Convention that they put together. The 2026 Convention will be hosted by the Tidewater Division in Virginia Beach, VA and the 2027 convention will be hosted by the South Mountain Division in Hagerstown, MD.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Stoneking apologized for not having gotten the 2024 Meeting Minutes published ahead of this meeting. Nothing further to report.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Wurtzell provided updates to the membership regarding the financials of the Region. All bills to date have been paid and the MER is "in good shape" financially.

Directors Reports

Director Bridges

Director Bridges had nothing to report

Director O'Connor

MER archives: The archivist is approximately 50% of the way through digitizing all of the paper records in his possession.

Director Warth

Director Warth gave an update on the Local and stated that he had no major changes planned for the The Local in the near future.

Business Manager Report

Howard was not present so there was no report received.

Old/Unfinished Business

President Unger reminded the members in attendance that the 2026 MER election will be for the Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) and encouraged any member who is interested in being part of the MER leadership team to consider putting their hat in the ring next year.

President Unger then entertained a motion to destroy the ballots for the 2025 MER Election. Joe Walters made the motion, which was seconded by John Robey. Motion passed.

President Unger reported that the Region is looking for someone to take over the Business Manager role as Howard Oakes is looking to step down. Position does not entail a great deal of work, and anyone who might be inter

New Business

President Unger reported that Directors Bridges, O'Connor, and Warth were all elected to another term in the 2025 election.

Good of the Order

Director Warth commented that he always needs articles, and that his looking to find his replacement so he can step down as the Editor of The Local.

Date, Time, and Place of next BOD meetings

2026 MER Budget Meeting – January 10th, 2026 @ 1pm (virtual meeting).

2026 MER Board Meeting – April 18th, 2026 at the 2026 MER convention site, Holiday Inn, Virginia Beach, VA @ 10am

No further business appearing Jeff Burch made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ken Montero. Motion passed and the President Adjourned the meeting at 10:15am EDT.

