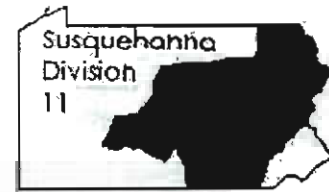

Susquehanna Sidetracks



Serving the Susquehanna Valley, MER, NMRA, Inc.

Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division 11
of the Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

May 2002
Volume 10, Number 2

Last month's division meet at Mel Agne's was a lot of fun. For those of you who missed it, let me point out some of the highlights of Mel's railroad. First off, he has a complete signal system, which adds to the fun and challenge of running trains. I found this a challenge, as I missed a red signal and plowed into the back of another train! So, needless to say, I learned fast to pay attention to the signals. Brian Brandt spent his time at the working coal tipple loading up coal cars destined for the working coal dumper at the power plant at the other end of the railroad. Brian had to leave early, so he missed running his train to the coal dumper, but I was glad to fill in for him. The railroad is controlled by Digitrax DCC and several locomotives had sound decoders in them. Things that move like the coal tipple and dumper, plus the added bonus of sound, really make the railroad come alive. I look forward to seeing Mel's railroad again.

Our next division meet will be held in the summer and will be a family picnic. Look for

more details in an upcoming issue of *Susquehanna Sidetracks*.

Division Officer Elections

The following Division Offices are up for election: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Clerk/Paymaster. Currently those holding these offices will be running unopposed. If you have any interest in running for one of these offices, please contact Brian Brandt. In June, you will receive a special mailing that will contain a brief biography of each candidate, as well as a ballot for you to vote. The division will even pick up the cost of the stamp!

Division Bylaws

Starting on page 3 is an updated proposal to the division bylaws. A special committee was formed in April to modify the bylaws that were published in the January 2002 newsletter. The modifications are based on division member feedback and suggested changes from the MER Board of Directors.

Included in the special mailing in June for voting on

the division officers, you will receive a final copy of the proposed bylaws. On the election ballot for the officers, you will also vote to approve the bylaws. Once we have the approval of the division members, the bylaws will then go to the MER BOD for approval. If you have any questions or comments about the bylaws, please contact any of the division officers list on page 2.

Down the Tracks

MER Spring Convention
Richmond Rails
Richmond, VA
June 6-9, 2002
richmondrails.homestead.com
See the May/June *Local* for more details

Great Scale Model Train Show
Timonium, MD
June 22-23, 2002
9 AM – 4 PM Saturday
10 AM – 4 PM Sunday
www.gsmts.com

Blue Mountain Express
Hagerstown, MD
August 24 & 25, 2002
301-739-4665

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Susquehanna Division 11,
Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

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Submissions: The Susquehanna Sidetracks welcomes any model railroad or railroad related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc.

Super's Corner – Brian Brandt

Greetings, here we are with the summer season arriving. I guess this is the time that our hobby is put on hold for outdoor things, yard work, cookouts, and most important, vacations. We have had a rather active year so far. Starting with the convention, we had three meets at home layouts. I would like to thank Bob Martin, Jim Clay, Ray Fisher, and from our last one, Mel Agne. I know for myself, that I came away with many new ideas for my own layout. I have seen many different levels of operation of a railroad, from a card order system, to actually running like a real railroad with certain sizes of locomotives for certain trains, with a timetable for the railroad's operations.

We have written a new set of Bylaws for the Division. I want to thank the committee that sat with me and worked them out. We sent a copy of the proposed bylaws to the Region for their approval. They have been accepted on the condition of the membership agreeing on them. You will be receiving a copy of the proposed by-laws in this newsletter. Please take time and read them over. In about thirty days, we will be sending all members a post card to be returned to us with your vote. I am doing this so everyone has a vote.

The region has asked if we thought that our division is too big, and could be divided into two. I would like to hear from you about any changes you have. I will send a message to the board that we need to discuss this among the members, and I will have a decision for the fall convention, hopefully there will be a Board meeting there.

At this time I am working on a date for another family style picnic. I am looking at sometime in mid to late July. I would also to maybe make it like a mini meet. Bring some models along to be judged by our AP, or to show your talents. We can always learn from others. Please send me by e-mail or call with your ideas.

While on the subject of the AP program, I want to congratulate our members who have received certificates: Alan Frame Association Volunteer, Author, and Electrical Engineer; Mel Agne Association Volunteer; and Jim Atkinson Author. Looking at our listing of certificate recipients, we are a very active group. If you need any advise toward the AP program, please contact Jim Atkinson.

Have a great spring

Comments from Your Assistant Superintendent and AP Chairman - Jim Atkinson

I Apologize for missing the last meeting at Mel Agne's. I had another commitment that Saturday.

We have conscientiously reworked the division's by-laws recently after many discussions amongst ourselves and with the region leaders. I hope you give us a positive vote on the proposed by-laws.

As a business man with a normally busy spring season and a home owner with the usual spring responsibilities, I have been quite occupied with things other than model railroading lately. I will get to the AP requests soon, give me a little time, please. As your AP Chairman, please call me to judge your accomplishments or to simply answer questions concerning the Achievement Program. I can't help you, if I don't hear from you. The problem with the AP at the MER level has been rectified. The new Chairman, Roger Cason, is busting his tail to get the AP back on schedule.

I got an e-mail from Bob Martin recently. As a member of the PRR Historical group, he had a chance to preview the new Broadway Limited NYC 4-6-4 on his layout. Like all the recently introduced steam locomotives, he said it looked great, but it really lacked pulling power. The Bachmann, Life-Like, and Athearn steamers all have this limited tractive effort problem. I hope the manufacturers can correct this deficiency. Note that Bachmann's Shay, Walthers' C&O 2-6-6-6, and Trix's Big Boy do not have a traction problem. Walthers uses two 'traction' tires on the Allegheny and Trix's Big Boy and Bachmann's Shay are die cast metal.

The Mid East Region's Convention is in Richmond, Virginia, in early June. If you've never attended a region convention, I urge you to do so. They are fun and interesting. You get to meet and talk to many terrific folks, modeler's just like yourself. There are fascinating clinics and tours and it's nice just to get away for a long weekend.

See you at the next meeting.

Update Division By-Laws

BY-LAWS of the SUSQUEHANNA DIVISION, DIVISION 11
of the
MID-EASTERN REGION of the NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE 1 - Preamble

THE SUSQUEHANNA DIVISION #11 of the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association, serves to promote the hobby of model railroading through educational, fellowship, and historical activities in accordance with the policies and actions of the MER, NMRA.

The Susquehanna Division shall include the area of Pennsylvania bounded to the east by the Philadelphia Division, to the south by the South Mountain Division, to the west by Mid-Central Region, and to the north by the Northeast Region and the Niagara Frontier Region, as specifically determined by the MER and NMRA.

ARTICLE 2 - Membership and Dues

REGULAR membership in the Susquehanna Division shall be given upon receipt of an application and yearly dues to anyone with an interest in model railroading, without discrimination. Regular members must be

members of the MER and NMRA. Regular members shall have full voting rights and the right to hold any division office.

GUEST privileges will be granted to model railroaders, without discrimination, in the Susquehanna Division to encourage their participation in the Division's, Region's, and NMRA's activities. A time limit of six months shall exist for guest privileges. At that time, the Division will encourage the Guest to become a full Regular member. Guests will have no voting rights with Division 11, nor will they be allowed to hold any offices or any committee chair positions.

MEMBERSHIP privileges may be terminated upon written resignation, non-payment of dues, by two-thirds vote of the entire membership responding to the ballot, or failure to maintain proper membership requirements as determined by the Board of Directors.

DUES for regular members shall be determined by the membership and be enough to cover our basic organizational costs, primarily the Division news letter, SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS.

ARTICLE 3 - Officers

OFFICERS of the Susquehanna Division shall consist of: the Superintendent (with duties as president), Assistant Superintendent (with duties as vice-president), and Chief Clerk (with duties as secretary and treasurer). They shall be elected for a two year term in Spring of even-numbered years, actually holding office from July 1 of the first year to June 30 of the second year. There will be three (3) Directors (with duties as assigned by the Superintendent). They shall be elected one every year for a three year term in the Spring, actually holding office from July 1 of the first year to June 30 of the third year. All Officers and Board members have full voting rights at all meetings. All officers and board members must be members of the Susquehanna Division 11, the MER, and the NMRA.

The Chief Clerk shall keep an account of all funds received and dispersed, render a proper accounting for these funds at the annual business meeting, make books available for an annual audit by a properly qualified member of the Susquehanna Division #11 as appointed by the Superintendent and prior to each time any Chief Clerk leaves office. The Chief Clerk shall be Bonded by Division 11 in regards to their activities as the Division Treasurer. The bond shall cover any and/or properties and monies held by the Treasurer.

The Superintendent shall appoint to fill out the unexpired term of any Board of Directors position subject to the approval of the Board of Directors.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS shall consists of the elected Officers and three Directors and the Past Superintendent (until he is replaced by the next Past Superintendent) and be chaired by the Superintendent. A member of the Board of Directors only has one vote at a Board meeting or a General meeting. The Board of Directors shall hold legal title of all Susquehanna Division #11 property and monies in trust for it's members.

COMMITTEES: The Superintendent shall create Committees as needed and shall appoint Committee Chairpersons as required. The Superintendent shall also disband committees and dismiss members as necessary and require reports from committee chairs as necessary..

ARTICLES 4 - Conduct and Practices

GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING: There shall be one general business meeting each year in the spring. Business shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, by Division 11 By-Laws, by MER By-Laws, and any subsequent changes required. Each year by August, the Superintendent will submit an Annual

Report to the MER Board and the NMRA on the State-of-the-Division per MER/NMRA requirements. This report will also be made available to the division membership.

MEETINGS: Susquehanna Division #11 will hold a minimum of four meetings a year with a minimum of thirty days notice of each to the members.

The officers and any committees shall do their utmost to arrange and present to the members and the general public programs and activities that promote the hobby of model railroading. They shall work cooperatively with other divisions of the MER, with the MER itself, and with division area Model Railroad Clubs in the planning of model railroading activities.

FISCAL YEAR: The Susquehanna Division #11, shall operate on a fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30 of the following year.

ARTICLE 5 - Nominations:

NOMINATIONS for an elected office position may be made by (1) a written submission from any member in good standing to the Nominating Committee or (2) by the Nominating Committee of members in good standing. Nominations are to be published in the division newsletter at least sixty (60) days prior to the election to include a bio-sketch, not to exceed 250 words.

ARTICLE 6 - Elections

VOTING/ELECTIONS: Voting shall be by secret ballot of the regular members of Susquehanna Division #11, by mail ballot. Elected positions will be filled by a simple plurality of votes.

ARTICLE 7 - By-Laws Changes:

BY-LAWS: These By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the membership responding to the mail ballot. Proposed changes must be published in the division newsletter not less than sixty (60) days prior to any vote. The amendment(s) to take place after approval by the MER Board of Directors.

ARTICLE 8 - Publications:

NEWSLETTER: The Susquehanna Division #11 shall maintain a publication, SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS, to be mailed to all members and guests to keep them informed of division activities. Copies will also be mailed to the Editor of the MER LOCAL, other MER division Superintendents or newsletter editors, to the NMRA Library, and the NMRA President.

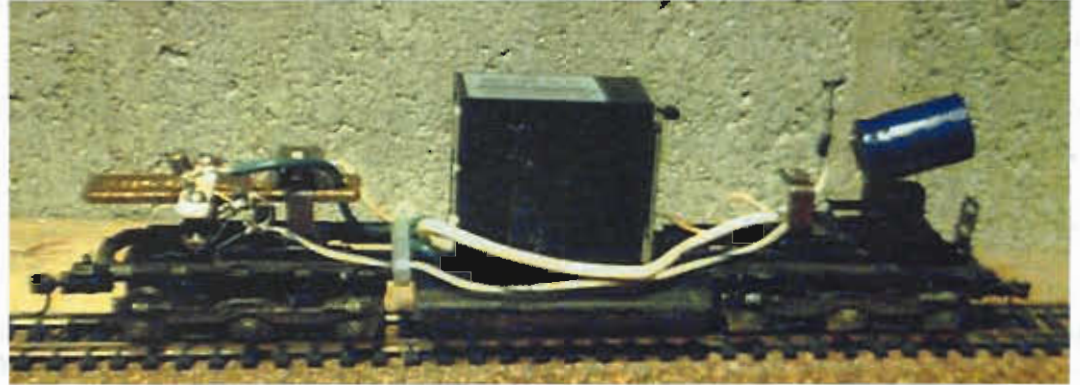
ARTICLE 9 - Dissolution:

DISSOLUTION of SUSQUEHANNA DIVISION #11: Upon dissolution of Susquehanna Division #11, all assets must be distributed per the Constitution of the NMRA (Article i, Section 2). If the purpose of the NMRA should change, then the Board of Directors, Susquehanna Division #11, may designate any other model railroad organization(s) that subscribe to the same purposes as fostered by Susquehanna Division #11 to receive the divisions assets.

Proposed Revision 4/6/2002

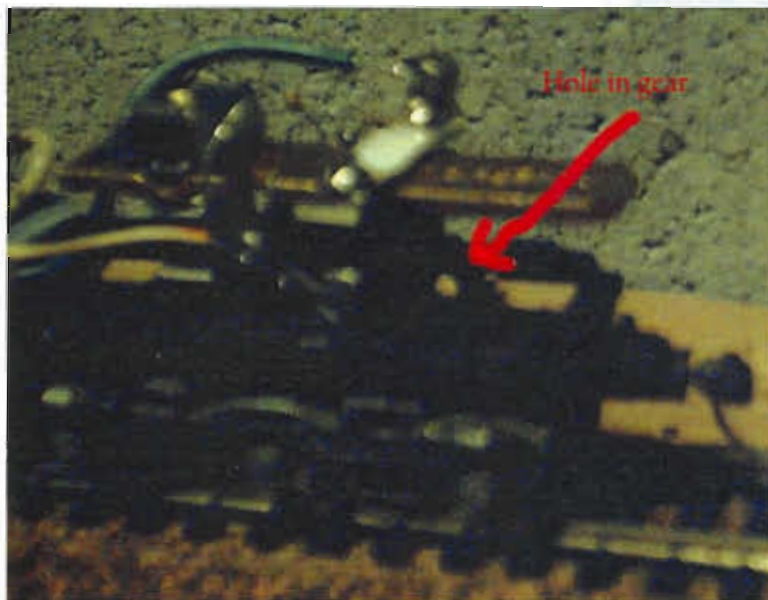
Build a simple Odometer Car - Mel Agne

In the course of developing grade profile charts for my Moose Valley Railroad timetable, I came across the need to effectively measure the linear distance between two points on my railroad. I first tried using a tape measure, but this was clumsy and inaccurate, not to mention dangerous to the scenery. I then began to think of ways to apply several of the commercially available devices used in the engineering and construction arena to measure irregular surfaces and dimensions, and found that while many of these could be applied to this particular use, most were costly and perhaps too accurate. I was aware that one or more hobby articles had been done in the past to achieve this same purpose, and I looked at



one of them which utilized a gondola and LCD counter to achieve good results, but 2 factors about it's design did not meet my criteria for this project. The first was that it used batteries, and the second was that it would lose its count if there were an electrical problem. I let the project languish for an evening or two, and then the collision of two items in the same space and time in my workshop resulted in an instant idea of how to make what I wanted. In less than a half hour, I had what I was looking for.

If necessity is the mother of invention, then coincidence is the father of creativity. I was already aware of the fact that I had in my possession several Radio Shack part number 276-xxxx electromechanical counters. What I found in my drawer that I forgot that I had was the crusty remains of an old Athearn SD-45 sans shell,



motor, and drive train. However, the trucks and gears were in fair shape. This unit had been equipped with Ernst Gears at some point in its life, and this results in the top gear of the gear tower being of very large diameter, relatively speaking. My idea sprang to life, as I quickly used a pair of diagonal cutters to do a very nasty job of butchering the top of one of the gear towers away, thus exposing a full quarter or more of the upper gear. I then used a 3/16" drill bit to perforate the gear in a location about 1/4" away from the edge or teeth of the gear. This hole would facilitate the passage of light, generated and received through a surplus optical sensor that I had on hand, which was mounted next, on an old piece of electrical box hardware that I clamped to the electrical pickup on the Athearn truck.

Drilling a hole through the center of the frame, and attaching the counter with a #4 bolt mounted the electromechanical counter to the center of the old locomotive frame. The whole thing was then wired up according to the attached schematic.

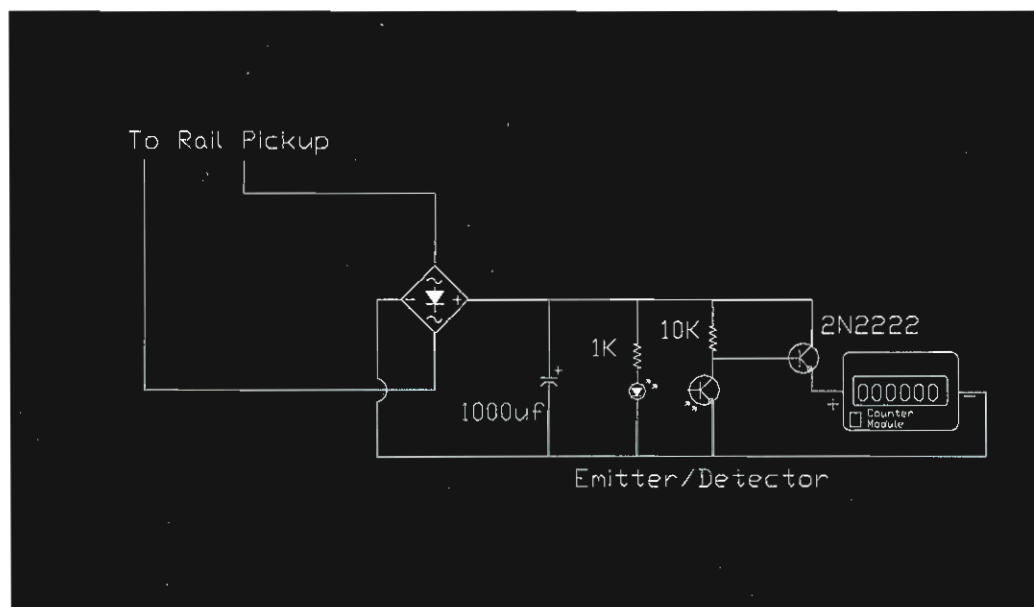
The counter increments by one for each 2.23 inches of travel. It would have been nice, if this were a 1 to 1 relationship, as the odd amount requires you to use a calculator to obtain the true distance, however operation of the counter is almost flawless. Due to the 12 wheel electrical pickup, and low current draw of the circuit, the odometer vehicle operates over track which regular locomotives may have trouble with due to dirt. Because the counter is self powered, and mechanical, the device can be picked up and moved without losing count. One must be careful however, when the hole in the gear is in the vicinity of the sensor, as any rocking of the hole in this region, will cause the counter to increment in an unwanted fashion. Since I am a DCC user, I find it convenient and wise to turn off track power when it is necessary to relocate the car, to prevent any unwanted counter increments.

Obviously there are many ways that this device could be improved, and also several variations that one could consider. I used a 6-axle locomotive, but virtually any locomotive capable of exposing a gear in the manner I've described could be used. Many different types of sensors could also be used, and different



mounting techniques could be tried. In any case, the simple purpose is to cause the counter to advance once per revolution of something, in this case, the large gear. I could have done some math, and perhaps determined that by drilling multiple holes, evenly spaced, in some fashion, that I might have arrived at a different ratio of travel to counter increments, but again, one of my personal criteria for this project, was that it be simple and fast. I now have a car that can handily measure any length of track. It is train compatible, and counts equally well in either direction. It can be used to measure a finite distance, or to keep track of miles accumulated in a train during a run. It works

with regular DC cab controlled layouts, or with DCC powered layouts, and it could even be used with Marklin AC if desired. I've used it to measure the circumference of various modular displays at the train show, and have even offered it's services to other clubs much the way the Sperry Rail Services do real railroads. Having practical maintenance of way equipment is fun!



Parts List

- 1 Athearn Locomotive chassis with Ernst Gearing.
- 1 Radio Shack Electro Mechanical Counter, Part Number 276-xxx or equivalent
- 1 35V 1000uf Electrolytic Capacitor (any value above **this will work too**)
- 1 Bridge Rectifier of almost any type. Small 1 amp plastic package is fine.
- 1 Optoelectric Sensor of almost any type wide enough to accept the gear. NPN transistor output required.
- 1 2N2222 NPN Type transistor.
- 1 1K resistor, any wattage.
- 1 2.2K resistor, any wattage,

MER Fall Convention – October 4-6, 2002 – Cherry Hill, NJ

The New Jersey Division is proud to announce...



MER Fall 2002 Convention

October 4-6, 2002

Clarion Hotel

Cherry Hill, NJ

Clinics, Layout Tours, Auction, Door Prizes

Homasote Plant Tour

Railfan Trip to Cape May aboard RDC's

Banquet featuring speaker Steve Barry of *Railfan & Railroad*

<http://home.earthlink.net/~mikemcnh/boxcar/fall02.html>

Photo Gallery

Below are some photos from The Rockville Limited train excursion out of Harrisburg on April 13 & 14. For more information about this trip and photos from it, please check out the following web site: http://nrhs-hbg.pennsyrr.com/Events/Rockville_limited/index.html



Photo was taken by Ray Fisher on April 13, 2002 at about 7:00 AM from the parking garage on Market Street.



Photo was taken by Ray Fisher on April 13, 2002 after his train ride. This was the second engine in the consist.



Photo was taken by Scott Turner on April 14, 2002 from inside the train. This shows the train as it was just about to cross the Susquehanna River on the Rockville Bridge



Photo was taken by Scott Turner on April 14, 2002 at the end of the trip. An Amtrak train had just pulled into the station at Harrisburg when this was taken.