



# SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS

An Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division,  
Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA  
Vol 23 No. 6



*Friends of the East Broad Top RR gathered in Orbisonia on a beautiful October 10<sup>th</sup>.*

## From the Superintendent's Desk – Barry Schmitt

Fall Greetings to All,

Fall has arrived, the colors are vibrant, the air has turned crisp, and our model train rooms are calling. While my home N-Scale layout depicting the B&O Weston Branch in central West Virginia is still in the armchair development stage, I do get to devote a fair amount of time at both the Elizabethtown & Masonic Village Model Railroad Club and the Ephrata Short Line Model Railroad Club. At the E-town club I'm rebuilding a large coal mine scene on their large O-Scale layout, and in Ephrata we hope to complete our HOn30 logging line by summer 2016. For sure there is nothing like working on your own home empire; however, clubs offer a great place for those with limited space, finances, time, or all three. Clubs are also a great place to begin your model railroading hobby by learning from others and enjoying the company of fellow model railroaders. During my military career, my son and I found clubs a great place to stay active in the hobby while moving 11 times over 24 years. Our November Division-wide open house program has 12 great club layouts open. Hopefully you can visit a few – if not, check their schedules as most clubs have open houses scheduled several days during the holidays. Enjoy your visits!

We are about halfway through preparing our event program for 2016. As of now we have our traditional winter gathering scheduled for Saturday, February 20, at the Grace United Methodist Church thanks to project officer Ron Smith and a tentative large live steam event in June courtesy of project office Dan Horting. We are also working on an April event, another Model Railroad Day at the PA Railroad Museum in Strasburg in either August or September (similar to our 2014 program), an event in our Eastern Sub sometime during the summer, continued sponsorship of the September Mainline Hobby Layout Open Houses program, LSOP8 the first weekend in October, and our Division-wide November layout open house program. If you have a suggested event please contact me by the middle of this month so we have time to get it on our 2016 event schedule. We plan to publish that schedule to all members in early January.

At our September 12 Board of Directors meeting we agreed to bite the bullet and offer to host the 2017 Mid-East Region (MER) convention. We are just beginning to develop the committee structure needed to manage a convention and ask you to volunteer by becoming a member of our convention development team. Obviously our first priority is selecting a date (MER conventions are normally held in October) and convention location. We plan to have our convention site selection team ready to begin their work in early December. If you have questions or would like to join our team please contact me.

To all the layout owners and club members who will graciously open their layouts for our visits this month, we extend our sincere thanks for your efforts. My wife Sue and I look forward to visiting several all three weekends and look forward to seeing you at one or more layouts!



## Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official Newsletter of the Susquehanna Division  
Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA  
138 Old School House Lane  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

### Contributing to Susquehanna Sidetracks

Sidetracks welcomes contributions from the Division membership. Letters, articles, photos and other items may be sent to the Editor at the e-mail address listed below or the street address above. Deadline for submission for the next issue is December 22, 2015.

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### Membership Information

Susquehanna Division website:  
[www.susquehannanmra.org](http://www.susquehannanmra.org)

Mid-Eastern Region website:  
[www.mer.nmra.org](http://www.mer.nmra.org)

National Model Railroad Association  
8414 Gulf View Drive, Suite A & B  
Soddy Daisy, TN 37379-2200  
[www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)

Cover photo credit: Chris Coleman  
Inset credit: Ron Smith

## Editor's Notes

Hello everyone!

I hope you have enjoyed the beautiful autumn scenery lately. I was fortunate to take a few road trips in October and saw a lot of colorful places.

Speaking of colorful places, I attended the MER / NER joint convention in New Jersey. This was a great event with interesting clinics and 59 – yes, 59 – layouts open for tours and operating sessions. In the two days I was at the convention, I attended 6 clinics and visited 8 home layouts. One of the layouts, Mike McNamara's Maine Central features beautiful autumn scenery. I have a small section of my layout with fall colors, and after seeing Mike's layout I know I have some rework to do on mine.

All of the other layouts that I visited had interesting features about them. For example, Rick and Linda Spano's N scale Scenicked and Undecided RR has lots of animation, including operating cranes, a fireworks display and a moon that rises and sets. Bill Rose's HO layout is incredibly detailed with vehicles and figures. Rich Murray's HO Rutland RR layout's overall trim and finish made it a pleasure to view. I came away with lots of ideas to improve my own layout. If you attended the convention, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

November brings our annual Open House layout tours. It's a great opportunity to get out and see what your fellow modelers are doing, so I hope you can take advantage of it. My layout will be open November 8<sup>th</sup>; if you visit please be sure to introduce yourself.

As Barry notes elsewhere in this issue, our 2016 events are well into the planning stages. We encourage you to attend our meets, bring models to display, and we are always in need of clinicians / layout hosts. Please contact any of your BOD members if you would like to present a clinic or host a layout tour or operating session during one of our meetings.

Enjoy the upcoming Holiday season, and I hope to see you at an upcoming event.

Ron

PS Happy Thanksgiving!!

## DIVISION MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Way back in April we sent a survey to all members. We received our last survey in late April and will present the results of the 13 questions in this and future Sidetracks.

A total of 260 surveys were either emailed or delivered by USPS but only 28 were returned which represents just 11% of our members. If you did not receive a copy of the survey and would like to provide your response, contact me by either phone at 717-877-1810 or email at [bschmitt@susquehannamra.org](mailto:bschmitt@susquehannamra.org) and I will provide a copy.

Below are the results of the responses for questions 1 and 6. The remaining questions and their responses will be presented in future Sidetracks.

I want to personally thank members Rich Wurst, Bill Lesjak, and David Collison for their many hours of work in preparing this extensive survey and the 28 members who took time to reply. The results will help guide our future Division planning activities.

Survey question 1: What are the primary reasons you belong to the NMRA?

- a. Fellowship: 11.
- b. Interested in and like model railroading: 2.
- c. Attend NMRA model railroading events: 4.
- d. Support/Setting model railroading standards: 6.
- e. Learn where model railroading clubs are located: 1.
- f. Attend national, region, and/or division conventions: 2.
- g. Promote the model railroading hobby: 2.
- h. Improve my model railroading knowledge, skills, and/or techniques: 7.
- i. I'm a serious modeler - all serious modelers should be members: 2.
- j. Working towards earning Master Model Railroader award: 2.
- k. The NMRA liability insurance coverage: 1.
- l. Support the mission and purpose of the NMRA: 1.
- m. Mastering DCC: 1.
- n. Support the model railroading hobby: 2.

Survey question 6: Planning events is a time consuming task. Past events have been offered based on perceived interest. Some have been very well attended while others suffered from low attendance. Please tell us which of the following events you are most interested in to least interested (rate from 1 through 6 with 1 being the most interesting).

The Table below displays the six event categories and the number of responses by rating level. The top rating is (1) and the lowest rating is (6). For example the numbers shown for Museum Visits mean 2 members rated this event as of most interest while 10 members rated it their least interesting type of event.

Type of Event	Ranking (1 = most interesting)					
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
a. Museum Visits:	2	5	2	3	6	10
b. Manufacturer Visitations:	1	5	7	8	2	2
c. Tourist Visits:	0	1	1	7	11	7
d. Home/Club Layout Visits:	9	7	7	2	2	1
e. Operating Sessions:	5	5	6	4	2	6
f. Educational Clinics/Workshops:	11	4	4	3	3	1

*NOTE: not all responders provided answers to each question and some responded with multiple answers.*

Based on the above limited response combined with the comments our BOD members most frequently receive when soliciting thoughts, suggestions, and likes/dislikes from members we will continue structuring future events with emphasis on clinics and layout visits. We will also continue to support our annual October LSOP program that features a two-day series of operating sessions and examine other new operating session opportunities.

Once again we enthusiastically welcome your input to our event planning process. With one exception we unfortunately have not received any event and associated location recommendations from our large and dispersed membership for our 2016 program. Without your input and suggestions our planning team has no alternative but to develop what we believe offers the best program for all our members.

Locating and arranging clinics and layout visits in our eastern and northern areas has been a top planning team priority for the past three years; however, we have not had any offers of help in developing such programs from members in those areas. Member boots-on-the-ground in a specific geographical area offers the best opportunity for the development of high interest and top quality programs. We continue to request your help and suggestions!

////////////////////////////////////

We hope you'll be able to enjoy other model railroads and support National Model Railroading Month this November. Please see the September 2015 issue of *Sidetracks* for a more in-depth article, and be sure to visit our Division website for specific layout descriptions and visiting hours / directions. The link is here:

<http://www.susquehannamra.org/events.html>

## New Division Event Attendance Policy

I'm sure by now most of you have read about what the NMRA refers to as "The 3-Strikes Attendance Policy" which was discussed on page 10 of the October NMRA Magazine. Before discussing our Division non-member attendance policy that was approved at our Board of Directors (BOD) meeting on September 12, I want to be absolutely clear that your BOD does not characterize any non-members who have attended our meetings more than three times as "freeloaders" – a term used multiple times in the cited NMRA article. As we look back over our attendance book that we started keeping three years ago we have not had non-members who "...show up at meetings and make themselves at home, month after month, year after year." In fact it does not appear that any visitor attended more than three meetings without completing a 6-month free rail pass form.

Apparently allowing only three non-member visits has been the NMRA policy since 2007 – a policy I was unaware of until recently. The importance of setting our policy to match that of the NMRA is its direct link to the liability insurance coverage extended to each NMRA member and other IRS rules applicable to membership organizations. Based on those two critical issues and the overall fairness issue that apparently has been abused at other divisions we have developed the following meeting attendance policy: Non-member visitors are allowed three visits to Susquehanna Division meetings in their lifetime. All visitors will be encouraged to complete a free 6-month rail pass application upon their first Division meeting visit. If they elect not to complete a rail pass at their first visit they will be offered another application at their second visit. If the visitor has not completed a rail pass form and attends a third meeting they will be offered an application and the attendance policy will be explained. An attendance book will be used to document all attendees at all Division events.

While that seems like a fair and easy to understand policy it also raises many questions concerning our many types of events. So here are the guidelines where the three meeting limit does not apply:

- Member spouses
- Caregivers who accompany members who need transportation or other personal support
- Events that are organized for the general public such as jointly-sponsored events with other non-NMRA organizations. Examples include
  - o Our annual Mainline Hobby Open House program
  - o Our 2014 PA Railroad Museum Model Railroad Day and 2015 Live Steam Day
  - o L-SOP events jointly held with OPSIG
  - o The November Division-wide layout open house program in support of National Model Railroad Month.

Bottom line – we now have a written policy that will be implemented at our first event in 2016. However, it is not a policy that has been a problem for us over the past several years. Please continue to encourage your non-member friends to accompany you to our programs and take advantage of our excellent and free 6-month trial membership rail pass program.

2016 Sidetracks Home Delivery Changes

As many of you know we offer home delivery of a black and white hard copy of each Sidetracks issue. For 2015 the cost of that program was \$11. Due to increased postage and printing costs the 2016 program cost will increase to \$15.

An invoice reflecting the new rate will be sent by our Division Membership Chairman, Howard Oakes, to all current subscribers in mid-November with payment due by December 20, 2015. Payment not received by December 20, 2015 will be assumed to mean you no longer wish to participate in the home delivery program and your last issue will be the November 2015 Sidetracks.

If you are a non-subscriber and wish to join the home delivery program kindly send a \$15 check made out to Susquehanna NMRA Division to Howard at 301 Moulstown Road, Abbottstown PA 17301-8912. For questions about the program either email Howard at [hoakes@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:hoakes@susquehannanmra.org) or call him at 717-632-5990.

Sidetracks are published bi-monthly beginning in January. Also, special Sidetracks Express issues are published during the year to announce time sensitive issues.

All Division members are provided a full color email copy of each Sidetracks based on your currently listed email address even if you participate in the home delivery program. If you do not receive an email copy or experience problems receiving your copy contact Howard. Notifying Howard of an email or address change is essential to receiving all Division, Region, and National NMRA products and correspondence.

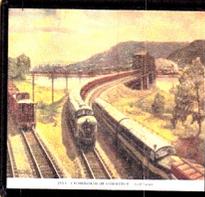


**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!!**

Robert Bakelaar	Harrisburg, PA
William Davids	Fogelsville, PA
Harold Shirk	Lititz, PA
Scott Unger	Allentown, PA

Pike Ads are available for \$10 for a 6-issue year. This fee helps to further offset the cost of mailing hard-copy newsletters, and your support is greatly appreciated. For information about placing an ad, please contact Ron Smith at [rsmith@susquehannamra.org](mailto:rsmith@susquehannamra.org)

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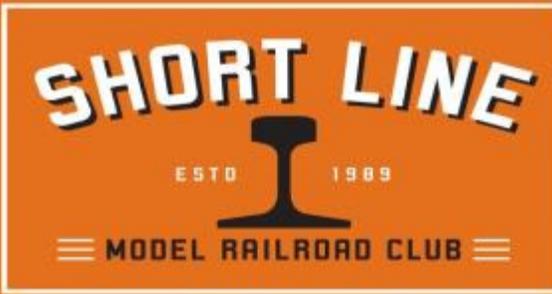
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---

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## Division Members Out and About!

*Earlier this summer Forrest Lucas visited the TVRM, and shares the highlights with us. Ed.*

Since the early 70's I have been a fan of live steam and the preservation of vintage railroad equipment and buildings. On July 16<sup>th</sup> my wife and I were able to visit both the museum yard and back shops of the Tennessee Valley RR as well as ride the Missionary Ridge local.

While at the back shops I was able to spend time with several men working to ready the 2-8-2 steam engine for the following day Saturday run called the Summerville Steam Special. I will say they certainly had the engine spit shined and looking great.



The TVRR has some really great passenger equipment and feature many different passenger runs pulled by both steam and diesel. The two day trip from Chattanooga to Cincinnati sounds really great with full dining and observation club car.

## Division Members Out and About!



One of the most interesting pieces of rolling stock is the NC & StL caboose which was used for both passengers and the conductor in local merchandise runs and passengers in farm country until the late 50's.



The telephone number for information is 423-894-8028; the website for the TVRR is [www.tvrail.com](http://www.tvrail.com)  
*Forrest Lucas*

## Division Members Out and About!



Above: A rare treat - Two NKP Berkshires in adjacent stalls in a roundhouse – in 2015!!



Except for the modern pickup truck, a quick glance would make you think this is 1965, not 2015!

*2 photos at Steamtown: Ron Smith*

**Sunday November 1, 2015, 9-2**  
**Mill Hall, PA**  
**Clinton Central Model RR Club**  
 Annual Fall Train Meet  
 Mill Hall Vol. Fire Co.  
 Water St & Peale St. \$3

**November Home Layout Tours**  
 First three weekends in November:

**Nov 7-8: South-Central PA**  
 (Roughly Harrisburg / York / Lancaster)  
**Nov 14: North-Central PA**  
 (Roughly Altoona / State College / Lewistown / Wilkes-Barre)  
**Nov 21: Eastern PA**  
 (Roughly Allentown / Reading / Easton)

**Sunday November 22, 2015 10-3**  
**Monaca, PA**  
**Fall Model Train Show & Sale**  
 Center Stage  
 1495 Old Brodhead Road  
 Monaca PA 10561  
 Beaver Count Model RR & Historical Society  
 beaverctymrr@gmail.com

**Nov 28-29, Dec 5-6,**  
**Dec 12-13, Jan 2-3**  
**Coopersburg PA**  
 Coopersburg Area Society of Model Engineers (CASME) Open House. Free, donations welcome.  
 Basemen of Borough Building, 5 North Main Street

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

**Saturdays and Sundays**  
**Nov 28 – Jan 9, 1-4 PM**  
**Ephrata, PA**  
 The Short Line Model RR Club 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Train Show  
 11 S. State Street (entrance at rear of building). Free, donations welcome.

[www.slmrc.com](http://www.slmrc.com)

**Saturdays and Sundays**  
**Nov 28 – Jan 3, 12-5 PM**  
**New Eagle, PA**  
 Mid-Mon Valley Model RR Club  
 Holiday Open House  
 159 Main St. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of New Eagle Borough Office Building.  
 Free, donations welcome.

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

**Sunday November 29, 2015, 10-4**  
**Kittanning, PA**  
 Train Show at the Kittanning Valley Volunteer Fire Hall, Rte. 422 East of Kittanning. \$3.

**Saturday Dec 5, 2015**  
**Horsham PA 9 AM – 3 PM**  
 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Main Street Hatboro Train Show, \$5  
 Keith Valley Middle School  
 227 Meetinghouse Rd  
[www.hatborotrainshow.org](http://www.hatborotrainshow.org)

**December 5-6, 2015**  
**Severna Park, MD**  
 Severna Park Model RR Club  
 Open House in the B&A Train Station on the Bike Trail.  
 Noon to 5 each day.  
 Free, donations welcome.

**2016 NMRA Convention**  
**Indianapolis, IN**  
**July 3-10**

**2016 MER Convention**  
**Durham, NC**  
**October 20-23**

**2016 National Narrow Gauge Convention**  
**Augusta, ME**  
**September 7-10**

**2016 N Scale Enthusiast National Convention**  
**Overland Park, KS**  
**June 29 – July 3**

## SEPTEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup> DIVISION MEETING AND EDUCATIONAL CLINICS

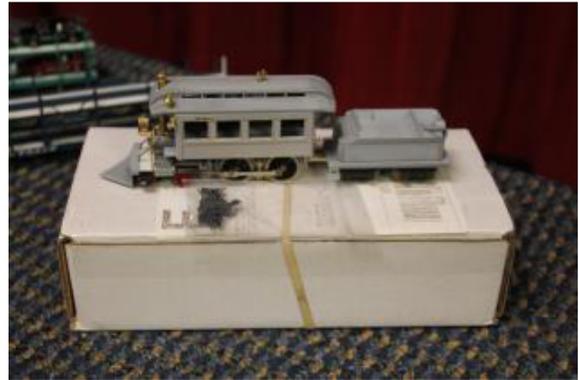
Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> turned out to be a gloomy day outdoors but indoors at Grandview Methodist Church model railroaders were treated to many 'bright' ideas as they shared their knowledge, skills and experiences. This was the first Susquehanna Division event held at this venue. It proved to be an effective program location providing separate areas for registration, refreshments, large group meetings and small group clinics.

The Annual Division meeting was conducted by Superintendent Barry Schmitt. He formally announced the recently elected Board of Directors: David Collison, Howard Oakes, Lee Rainey and Ron Smith. These gentlemen will assist the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Chief Clerk in the management and operations of the Division. The agenda included the treasurer's report, current status of the Division and future programs/events for 2016.

A popular feature of past meetings has been the Model Showcase. Participants have the opportunity to bring engines, rolling stock, structures, etc. that they have made and 'showcase' their talent. Impressive items included a highly detailed 19<sup>th</sup> Century American 4-4-0 (Bill Lesjak), a collection of 1970's autorack cars with period cars and vans (Jody Gontero), a 4-4-0 inspection engine being kitbashed (Alan Mende), several HO structures (Dennis Lenz), an HO cement car (Tim Himmelsberger) and a tip for using security envelopes' printed patterns for interior building details such as flooring, wallpaper and curtains (Rich Wurst).



1 Bill Lesjak 4-4-0



3 Alan Mende - Inspection Engine



2 Jody Gontero - Autoracks



4 Dennis Lenz - HO Structures

The clinic schedule provided a variety of subjects from operations, structure building, scenery enhancement, lighting techniques and specialized tool use. Jody Gontero presented means and methods for interchanging backdrop flats; Bill Grosse shared his design and construction of a hot wire form cutting unit that produced not only dimensional cut foam but also could cut intricate curves and unique shapes all with no mess and no smell; Mike Prokop 'enlightened' us about the application of LED lighting for layout illumination; Fred Phillips presented his research, constructed prototype and final model of the Dando Coal Breaker; and Bob Bucklew (the guru of JMRI) provided instruction on the use and application possibilities of Java Model Railroad Interface. In addition to the instructional information regarding JMRI, Bob brought a small layout and gave clinic participants an opportunity to try out JMRI switch and engine control!



5 Tim Himmelsberger - HO Cement Car



8 Bob Bucklew - JMRI Clinic



6 Fred Phillips - Coal Breaker



9 Jody Gontero - Interchangeable Backdrops



7 Bob Grosse - Foam Cutting Tool



10 Mike Prokop - LED Layout Lighting

The September event could not have materialized without the support of each of our clinicians (some who traveled several hours to present). We express our thanks for sharing their knowledge and expertise. Also important was the event staff including Barry Schmitt, David Collison, Bill Lesjak and Lorraine Lesjak. Without their help the event would never have taken place. We also extend appreciation for the attendees and look forward to future event participation.

*Rich Wurst*

The New Jersey Division hosted a joint MER – NER Convention in Mt Laurel, NJ the next-to-last weekend of October. The convention was well organized, well-attended, and offered 59 home and club layouts to be visited and/or operated. Clinics ran from Thursday evening through Sunday morning, with none of them being repeated. There was a Free-Mo layout consisting of many individual modules that was available for operations too. At times there were more “supervisors” than engineers / conductors around the operating sessions!

The following photos are a sampling from the several layouts I visited during the convention. There were three layouts I visited where I left the camera in the car, which was a big mistake!

Ron Smith

## Ralph DeBlasi's HO Lehigh Valley:



The Lehigh Gorge



Staging and engine Facility

## Mike McNamara's HO Maine Central / Lamoille Valley



Crawford Notch



Fisher Covered Bridge near Hardwick VT

John Rahenkamp's HO Central of New Jersey:



City Scene



Double-track Bridge (Gate spanning an aisle)

Bill Fagan's N Reading Pacific



Double-deck Scene



Details!!

Rick Bickmore's HO Harrisburg Line



Large Steel Mill Complex



Small Town Scene

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**COME SEE US WHEN YOU'RE IN THE AREA!!!**

## Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official publication of the Susquehanna Division 11  
Of the National Model Railroad Association

138 Old School House Lane  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

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