



SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS

An Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division,
Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA
Vol 24 No. 2



The Keystone Model Railroad Club in Mechanicsburg PA, as viewed from the balcony

From the Superintendent's Desk – Barry Schmitt

My wife Sue and I thoroughly enjoyed spending the month of January in Ft Myers FL. Yes, we traded your 30"+ of snow for an equal quantity of white sand – hot-doggie! While we definitely enjoyed the great weather I also had the fortunate opportunity to spend every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning at my former 100% NMRA club in North Ft Myers – the Scale Rails of Southwest Florida. Because of the large snowbird influx during Jan-Mar, they present an open-to-the-public clinic each Saturday morning. Two of those clinics covered mountain scenery techniques that were new to me, and scenery building is one segment of the hobby I thoroughly enjoy. I plan to use both of those processes at the 2 clubs I belong to here in central PA – the Short Line Club in Ephrata and the Masonic Village Club in Elizabethtown. I was also fortunate to be part of the team that built most of the benchwork and unique spline sub-roadbed for their new 8' x 20' narrow and standard gauge extension to their existing double deck layout. I have included an article describing that project at page 18. So besides the great weather I was able to enjoy some fantastic model railroading with several old friends and learn some new modeling techniques – in short, a perfect trip!

Thirty-five members enjoyed a great Mechanicsburg event on February 20 thanks to project officer Ron Smith's excellent efforts. Ron presents a comprehensive report on the event along with photos at page 13. I don't know how he does it – this was the 3rd straight Feb event where our more typical nasty winter weather did not cause any problems. Maybe the key is Ron holds the event at his church where I'm sure he dare's Mother Nature to cause any weather problems. Way to go Ron!

My phone has been thunderously silent concerning volunteers or those considering a run for our Division Superintendent position that must be filled in our upcoming June elections. Many members believe they are not qualified because they lack Division leadership experience. Experience would be a nice to have asset; however, in the real world it is an overrated requirement and rarely found in most volunteer organizations. When I received the call while on a business trip back in June 2012 I was given 2 choices - either volunteer for the position or see the Division go away. What Division leadership experience did I have up to then? None – zip zero. What truly trumps prior leadership experience is a passion for model railroading and a sincere desire to support your fellow members. You have the passion; otherwise, you wouldn't be an NMRA member. And for those who say "I have a fulltime day job which doesn't allow time to run the Division" I strongly disagree. Most of the Supers I know across the country have fulltime jobs. So stop searching for reasons why you can't take the job and instead be positive and toss your hat in the ring. You have a dedicated team of BOD members and me eager to help you learn the ropes. Time is short - give me a call at 717-877-1810 and let's get your name on the June ballot.

April, May, and June have a string of 3 very diverse and great model railroad events: Sat, April 16, an all-day Mini-Con in Blue Ridge Summit (*see article on page 5*); Sat, May 14, our Eastern Sub-Division event at the Quakertown Train Station (*see article on page 7*); and Sun, Jun 26, is our Live Steam day at the Pennsylvania Live Steamers in Collegeville. A full article, registration procedures, and a map for our June 26 Live Steam Day will be featured in our May Sidetracks. For those who have expressed concern that we do not offer events in our Eastern Sub-Division, you should be more than pleased with the great program project officer Howard Oakes has planned for May 14: morning clinics in a great railroad station and a full afternoon of top notch layout visits. *(continued on page 4)*

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 April 24, 2016.

Board of Directors

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Superintendent

Barry Schmitt
bschmitt@susquehannanmra.org

Asst. Superintendent

Wayne Betty
wsb@susquehannanmra.org

Chief Clerk

Paul Tice
ptice@susquehannanmra.org

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Dave Collison
dcollison@susquehannanmra.org

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lrainey@susquehannanmra.org

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rsmith@susquehannanmra.org

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hoakes@susquehannanmra.org

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rcharles@susquehannanmra.org

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amende@susquehannanmra.org

Model Showcase Program Chairman

John Wissinger, MMR
jwissinger@susquehannanmra.org

Sidetracks Editor

Ron Smith
rsmith@susquehannanmra.org

Membership Information

Susquehanna Division website:
www.susquehannanmra.org

Mid-Eastern Region website:
www.mer.nmra.org

National Model Railroad Association
 8414 Gulf View Drive, Suite A & B
 Soddy Daisy, TN 37379-2200
www.nmra.org

Cover photo credit: Barry Schmitt
 Inset credit: Ron Smith

Editor's Notes

Hello everyone!

I hope 2016 is treating you well so far. Some of you will recall that I used a winter-time photo for the cover of our January issue, with a somewhat snarky remark about our unusually warm December. Therefore, I take full credit for the record-breaking snow we had in south-central PA in January...and apologize to the readership for the resulting pain that caused. Be careful what you wish for!

We had another good turnout at our February meeting in Mechanicsburg; there is a write-up and photos on page 13. John Wissinger summarizes the Model Showcase segment on page 15.

Elsewhere in this issue we have more info on near-term events in our Division, including the April Mini-Con and the May outing in Quakertown PA. Due to seating capacity within the Quakertown station, early registration is encouraged.

As always, comments and suggestions that would improve *Sidetracks* are always welcome; my contact info is at the left. Your contributions in the form of articles, tips and photos are especially needed.

Happy modeling!

Ron

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!!

Robert Bakelaar
 Barron Batchelder
 Jeffrey Beil
 William Davids
 Chris Kacsur
 Harold Shirk

Harrisburg, PA
 Sinking Spring, PA
 Mohnton, PA
 Fogelsville, PA
 Alburtis, PA
 Lititz, PA

(Super's Corner from page 2)

As was discussed at the Feb Mechanicsburg event your Division has agreed to host the October 12-15, 2017 Mid-East Region (MER) Convention. The Convention Chairman and Vice Chairman are Bob Charles (MMR) and Brian Kampschroer, respectively. After they contacted over 50 properties and issued requests for proposals from those hotels who qualified to host the event, 15+ properties were visited. After considering those who responded with quotes, the committee unanimously selected the Harrisburg-Hershey Sheraton Inn located on Lindle Rd in East Harrisburg for our convention site. The property offers very comfortable accommodations at a reasonable price with excellent meeting facilities. The contract between the MER and Susquehanna Division 11 was signed on Feb 20. If you would like to join the planning team kindly contact either Bob Charles (MMR) at rcharles@susquehannamra.org or Brian Kampschroer at RRelf@aol.com.

Current members of the convention planning team are presented below.

I look forward to seeing you at the April 16 Blue Ridge Summit Mini-Con.



2017 MER Convention Planning Team

Bob Charles (MMR) – Division Convention Chairman

Brian Kampschroer – Assistant Division Convention Chairman

Wayne Betty

John Wissinger (MMR)

David Collison

Jim Long

Howard Oakes

Forrest Lucas

Lee Rainey

Harry Haddon

Ron Smith

Dan Horting

Paul Tice

Brian Brandt

Rich Wurst

Bill Lesjak

Rob McClenaghan

Pat Mulrooney

Harry Baker

Alan Mende

Susan Charles

Barry Schmitt

Bob Bucklew

April 16 Blue Ridge Summit Mini-Con

This is the 4th annual Mini-Con program, and the first year the event is jointly sponsored by Mainline Hobby Supply of Blue Ridge Summit, the South Mountain Division (SMD), and our Division. The program runs from 9AM-4PM, is free, and is open to the public. As in previous years the program will be held at the Blue Ridge Summit Fire Hall which is located directly across the street (PA 16) from the Mainline Hobby Supply shop. For those unfamiliar with the area the fire hall GPS address is 13063 Monterey Lane, Blue Ridge Summit PA. Parking is behind the fire hall. The program includes both informal and formal clinics, a few vendors, and some modular layout displays. Pizza will be available for lunch based on a headcount taken at about 10:30. Soda, water, and possibly some baked good will also be available. Payment will be by the honor system.

Clinics will be divided into two segments – informal morning clinics from 9AM-1PM and formal afternoon clinics from 1PM-4PM. The informal clinic program consists of several continuous on-going presentations offered at several tables throughout the large fire hall. Attendees are free to move from clinic to clinic where each clinician will present specific modeling topics and displays, answer questions, and in some cases provide handout information. The currently scheduled informal clinics and their respective time segments are:

9-10 AM and 11AM-Noon

Model Railroading On A Budget

Scenery From Your Backyard

Glueshell Scenery

Casting Rocks Wet

Casting Rocks Dry

Timesaver Layouts

Structure Painting or Making Window Glass Using Crystal Clear

Weathering Freight Car Trucks In 60-Seconds

10-11AM and Noon-1PM

Figure/Vehicle Painting/Weathering

Layout Design

Layout Design and Construction

Scratch Building Structures With Styrene

The Frugal (cheap) Model Railroader

Mountain Scenery

Also offered during the morning informal clinic segment will be one or two Make-and-Take clinics. These hands-on clinics will run until the guests complete their model, give up, or stop at 1PM. One group of 11 modelers will build Cape Fear Company Houses kits donated by Carolina Craftsman Kits, and another group of eight modelers will build DPM Modular Learning kits donated by Mainline Hobby Supply.

The afternoon formal clinics begin at 1PM. First will be a presentation by Roger Cutter on “Steam Into History” - the tourist and civil war themed railroad headquartered in New Freedom PA. Their custom built 4-4-0 steam locomotive and cars all represent those in use when President Abraham Lincoln rode the railway enroute to Gettysburg where he delivered his famous Gettysburg Address. Next will be a clinic demonstrating the TCS Wow Sound decoders and their new diesel sound decoder systems.

The last formal clinic of the day will be a very interesting group participation program. The title of this clinic is: “You Should Model This Railroad and Here’s Why.” Each presenter will be allowed a few minutes to speak and show pictures of the railroad they feel is best to model. Then SMD member and moderator Bob Johnson will lead a roundtable discussion in which he will pose questions to the panel members. Current scheduled topics are: Steel Industry, Railroading in the 1800’s, The East Broad Top (EBT), Proto Freelance-The South PRR, The Western Maryland, Short Line Railroads, Narrow Gauge (not the EBT), Join a Club vs Building Your Own (by Div member Rich Wurst), Western Maryland in 1900, and The Erie-Lackawanna (by Div member Ron Smith). Near the end of this clinic members of the audience will also be provided an opportunity to ask the participants questions. This portends to be a very interesting and lively program so be sure to stay and enjoy.

Finally, Mainline Hobby is just across the street from the fire hall and will be open all day. Stop by, enjoy their special discounts for the event, and say hi and offer thanks to owners Bonnie and Brian Wolfe for sponsoring the event. Bring a friend to the event and particularly those who either are new or considering entering the hobby. The Mini-Con provides a great venue where the public as well as model railroaders of all skill levels can meet with other model railroaders, make new acquaintances, pick up new items from Mainline Hobby, and trade ideas with other modelers.

Questions: contact Don Florwick at DJFlorwick@comcast.net or 717-414-0660 or Barry Schmitt at bschmitt@susquehannamra.org or 717-877-1810.



We hope you get the chance to attend the Railroad Prototype Modelers Valley Forge Meet at the Desmond Great Valley Hotel, Malvern, Pa. It will be held March 18-20, 2016. Registration is \$35; there will be operating sessions, 60 prototype clinics, model display and vendors’ rooms, and Sunday open house tours. There is also a buffet dinner available for extra cost Saturday evening (sign up when you register).

Go to www.RPMValleyForge.com for info and updates.

Saturday May 14th, 2016 Division Meet

Division 11 will hold the Eastern Subdivision spring event at the Quakertown Train Station, 15 Front Street, in Quakertown, PA 18951 (approximately 15 miles south of Allentown). The date is Saturday May 14 beginning at 9:30 AM. The station will open at 9:00 AM for meet, greet, and registration with coffee and donuts.

Cost is \$2 for NMRA members and their families, and \$5 for visitors paid upon entry. Visitors who sign up with RailPass will receive the \$2 NMRA price. Due to space limitations at the Quakertown Station it is necessary to pre-register for this event. **Kindly register before May 8th** by contacting Howard Oakes at hoakes@susquehannamra.org or 717-632-5990. Full clinic and layout tour information will be presented in our May Sidetracks newsletter at <http://www.susquehannamra.org>.

The morning program at the station will consist of clinics, our Model Showcase program and a door prize drawing. All attendees are encouraged to bring a model for display during our Model Showcase segment. Before departing the station you may want to visit the J&D Whistle Stop hobby store just across the tracks at 106 E. Broad St. The store will offer our attendees a special discount.

For our afternoon activities, home and club layouts are open for our viewing pleasure. We are fortunate to have two well-known home layouts open for us:

Larry Reynolds' PRR Altoona Area railroad models the Huntingdon to Tunnelhill PA area. The layout features a four track mainline, is completely signaled and has yards representing Altoona and Tyrone. The era is roughly 1953 with plenty of steam and first generation diesels.



Jim Hertzog's Reading Shamokin Division models the operation between Tamaqua and Shamokin PA in the steam to diesel transition era. The double track mainline also interchanges with the Lehigh & New England, Pennsylvania and Jersey Central railroads. The focal point of the railroad is the steep Locust Summit grade which requires steam helpers.



There are also 4 club layouts open for us:

The **Keystone N-Trak** club located in Dublin PA has a permanent layout with full scenery. The layout features a coal mine, industries and several country scenes. Using a downloaded throttle app some members operate with smartphones in lieu of their Digitrax throttles. Several times a year they set up their modular layout at local train shows.



The **Coopersburg Area Society of Model Engineers** formed when the members of the former East Penn Model R.R. Club from Emmaus, PA., and the Bux-Mont Model Engineers from Quakertown PA. merged to create a new group. The members are constructing the Lehigh, Bucks and Western (LB&W), a 35' x 44' multi-level, HO scale, DCC walk around layout.



The **Black Diamond Society of Model Engineers** has layouts on 2 floors. The first floor 650 square foot layout features O, On30 and S scale steam trains along with modern diesels. The second floor 800 square foot HO layout has several trains in operation including a 100 car coal train.



The **Lehigh & Keystone Valley Model Railroad Museum** 4,000 sq. ft. layout models the Lehigh Valley, Reading and the CNJ Railroads. The double deckered layout features several prototypical areas of the railroads modeled including Quakertown and Coxtton.



Event Recap

What: Eastern Subdivision Program

When: Saturday May 14, 2016 beginning at 9:30 AM, registration starts at 9:00 AM.

Where: Quakertown Train Station, 15 Front Street, Quakertown PA 18951.

Cost: \$2 for NMRA members and their families, and \$5 for visitors paid upon entry. Visitors who sign up with Railpass will receive the \$2 NMRA price.

Register by May 8th with Howard Oakes (hoakes@susquehannanmra.org) or call 717-632-5990.

Nearby: J&D Whistle Stop Hobby Shop across the tracks from the station.

Several restaurants within the area for lunch.



C&O #1309 at the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad – Update by Howard Oakes

The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad runs from Cumberland MD to Frostburg MD; both stations still exist.

Background: The #734 Consolidation that has pulled tourist trains for several years needs a complete rebuild. It will only run a couple of times early in 2016 and then will be shut down. Then the WMSR in conjunction with the B&O museum will operate the C&O #1309 2-6-6-2 to pull the trains for the next few years. They have been rebuilding #1309 to pass all the required inspections.

Update: #1309 should be ready to run in July 2016. Until then a diesel – ugly but functional - will pull the trains. In Cumberland (actually in Ridgeley WV just across the Potomac River) there is a wye to turn the engine. The turntable at Frostburg is big enough to handle the #1309. This may be the largest engine used on a tourist train; I intend to see and ride it a few times. I’m sure there will be several videos made featuring this massive and incredible engine.

From where most of us live, it’s a hike to get there but worth the trip. For example from Lancaster, it’s just a 2 hr 45 min, 170 mile ride to Cumberland MD – a great weekend family trip. You can always see plenty of CSX trains on the move in the yard, through the Narrows, etc. Cumberland is an enjoyable walk-around city. For those who enjoy the around-the-clock sounds of heavy modern railroading the Cumberland Ramada Downtown is directly across from the Amtrak Station and the CSX mainline – ask for a trackside room. Sand Patch is also in the area, as is the WM Salisbury Viaduct at Meyersdale PA.

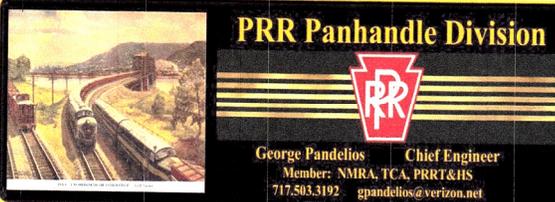
The websites below provide further information and plenty of pictures.

<http://www.wmsr.com/>

<https://www.movingfullsteamahead.com/content/co1309>

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

PIKE ADS



PRR Panhandle Division
 George Pandellos Chief Engineer
 Member: NMRA, TCA, PRRT&HS
 717.503.3192 gpandellos@verizon.net

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Open Houses the first weekend monthly Sept. thru April: Sat-Sun 2 - 4 PM. Extra times at Christmas

Masonic Village & Elizabethtown Model RR Club.
 Meets 7:30 PM the first Tuesday Sept- June



FORKS RIDGE RAILWAY

Gary P. Nastase-President & CEO
 Kathleen A. Nastase-Train Wifey
 207 State Street
 Woodbury, PA 16695
gpnastase@aol.com

Route of the Whitetail



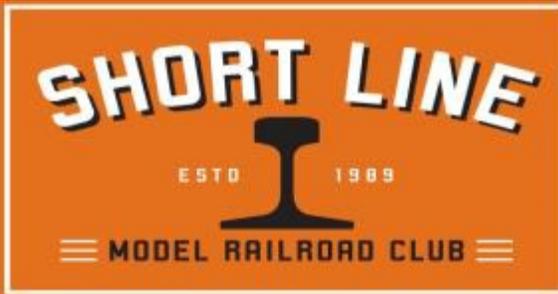
B&O WESTON SUBDIVISION
 (Under Development)
 Barry W. Schmitt, Superintendent
 405 Ford Drive
 Elizabethtown, PA 17022
 (717) 877-1810 sbschmitt@comcast.net

THE BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD



Ron Smith

Modeling the Southern Tier of New York in N Scale
 717-253-1431
rs25760@hotmail.com



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wsb@mycyberlink.net
<http://www.wsbcos.com/trainsmenu.htm>
 Op Sessions 2nd Saturday of the Month



March 18-20, 2016

Malvern, PA

Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet \$35 Registration

Desmond Great Valley Hotel,
Malvern PA (Valley Forge)
Operating sessions, 60 prototype clinics, Sunday Open House Tours
www.RPMValleyForge.com

Saturday April 2nd & 9th

Cumberland MD

100th birthday of WM Ry steam engine 734. One Photo Freight will run each day. Tickets \$180 and \$200. More info: email to wmsrphoto@wmsr.com

Sunday April 3, 2016

Leesport, PA 9 AM – 1 PM

RCT&HS Scale and Toy Train Show, Leesport Farmer's Market banquet hall, 312 Gernant's Church Road

Sunday April 3, 2016

Mill Hall, PA 9 AM – 2 PM

Clinton Central Model RR Club
Spring Train Meet at Mill Hall VFD, Water St & Peale Ave. \$3 Adults
www.ccmrr.org

Saturday April 16th

Blue Ridge Summit, PA

2016 Division 10 & 11 Mini-Con
See page 5 for more details

Saturday April 16th

Scranton, PA, 10 AM – 3 PM

The Phoebe Snow Gala

Friends of Northeast Railroading Assoc. and the Erie Lackawanna Dining Car Preservation Society present a day of railroad memories. Local historians and guest speakers share the story of Phoebe Snow, with exhibits provided by the Steamtown NPS. Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel. \$10 donation requested.

May 1, 2016

Scranton PA 10 AM – 2 PM

European Train Show & Sale
Electric City Trolley Museum
Cliff Street adjacent to Steamtown
\$5 admission, \$5 trolley ride

Saturday May 14, 2016

Quakertown PA 9 AM

See page 7 for more details

Sunday June 26, 2016

Collegetown PA

Pennsylvania Live Steamers
Stay tuned for details in the May Sidetracks

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

2016 NMRA Convention
Indianapolis, IN
July 3-10

2016 Nat'l Assoc. of S Gaugers Convention
Novi, MI
August 10-14
www.nasg.org

N Scale Weekend
Altoona PA
August 19-21

www.n-scaleweekend.com

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

2016 MER Fall Convention
Durham, NC
October 20-23



October 20-23, 2016

2016 MER Fall Convention

Tracks to the Triangle

www.mer2016.org



Make your plans now to join us this Fall from October 20 – 23, 2016 at Tracks to the Triangle in Durham, NC!

Mechanicsburg Meet

About 3 dozen members attended our February Meet in Mechanicsburg. Again this year Mom Nature cooperated with good driving weather and the church basement cooperated with warm heat – something that could not be said for the sanctuary upstairs, which was at 53 degrees that morning!

After opening remarks by Superintendent Barry Schmitt, we were given an update on our 2017 MER Convention activities by Eric Dervinis and Brian Kampschroer. Informative clinics were presented by Jim Long (spline roadbed construction and rosin-paper scenery techniques) and Rich Wurst (The Cheap and Frugal Modeler). The meeting closed with our Model Showcase segment, hosted by John Wissinger MMR.

We have many more activities coming up in 2017, and we hope to see you in Blue Ridge Summit in April, in Quakertown in May and Collegeville in June.



Jim Long describes his scenery techniques.



Rich Wurst describing his sources of materials.



Spline construction on Jim's layout. (Photo by Dennis Blank)



Rich Wurst's bag o' tricks



Harry Owens is at the dispatchers' panel at the Keystone Model RR Club.

Barry Schmitt photo.



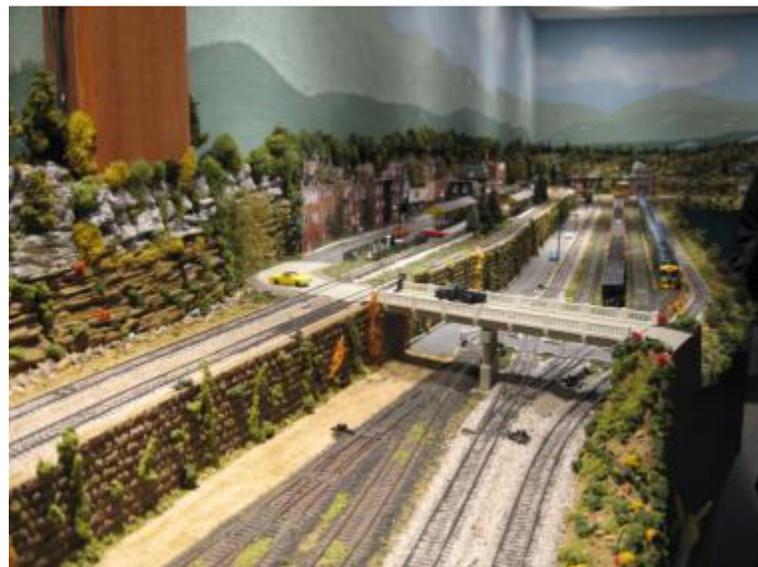
The engine facilities under construction on Jim Long's layout.

Dennis Blank photo.



A lumber mill scene on Jim Long's layout.

Dennis Blank photo.



Cumberland on Jim Long's layout.

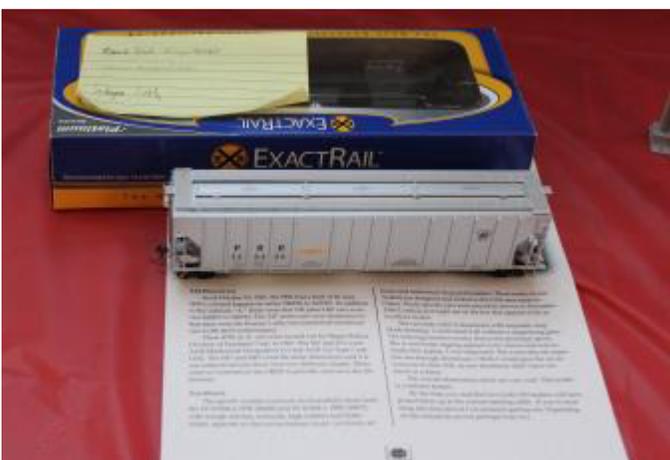
Dennis Blank photo.

The Model Showcase was held at the February 20, 2016 NMRA meeting at the Grace Methodist Church in Mechanicsburg. Many models were on display, the most we have had to date. This was a very good turnout for this relatively new program.

The models shown were as follows:

1. Wayne Betty brought several models. First was an ExactRail PRR H47A covered hopper. Next were 2 Shapeways 3D Printed HO PRR Catenary towers in 2 and 4 track designs. His third model was a Rivarossi GE U25 Diesel locomotive.
2. Bob Bucklew brought his model of a freight house. Next to the freight house was a Quaker Valley plug door box car and N&W highway trailer.
3. Scott Unger brought the beginnings of a scratch-built pagoda style interlocking tower. The exterior structure is from laser-cut Masonite hardboard.
4. Don Stafford brought kit parts that could be used in model railroading for various projects.
5. Dennis Blank brought an Athearn SD40-2 lettered for his proto-freelanced Birdsboro & Reading RR. Dennis said it is a work in progress.
6. Tim Himmelberger brought a Tichy Reefer with light weathering. Disregard the Accurail box in the picture.
7. John Wissinger brought an Accurail undecorated data only refrigerator car that he lettered for his Allegheny Midland, Connellsville branch (no relation to the better known Allegheny Midland)
8. Barry Schmitt brought a section of stone outcropping that uses a new molding method.
9. Martin Brechbiel brought several models. First was a scratch built Doyle's Ice house display in O Scale. Also was a scratch built O Scale MOW car CVRR #111
10. John Wissinger brought a model of "Lake Monitor Sash and Door Company" that he scratch built several years ago. The model won first place and several other awards at the MCR Convention in 2012. It won Second Place Structures at the Grand Rapids National Convention in 2012

The model turnout was very good; however it should have been better. Nine modelers brought in a total of 17 models which was good. But there were 35 people at the meeting. If everyone else had brought a model we would have had over 45 models to display. The Showcase is not for the master modelers to show off their work, but for all of us to have a model on display and have the opportunity to talk about it in front of the group. For the next Model Showcase if you do not have a special model or a work in progress, as you walk out the door pick something off the layout and bring it. This is a special time for all of us to look at what you have done in the hobby. Perhaps something you think is ordinary will be viewed by one of our members and will provide an answer to a problem he/she has encountered. Don't be ashamed of your work or be intimidated by other modelers.



Wayne Betty's PRR covered hopper.



Wayne's PRR U25C



Wayne also brought in PRR catenary structures produced by Shapeways.



Don Stafford displayed a military kit that could be a source of materials for model railroaders.



Bob Bucklew's freight house, plug-door boxcar and N&W trailer. The boxcar is lettered for Bob's home road, the Quaker Valley RR.



Dennis Blank is working on an EMD SD40-2 lettered for his home road, The Birdsboro & Reading RR.



Scott Unger is scatchbuilding a DL&W pagoda-style tower. The walls are Masonite cut on a laser cutter.



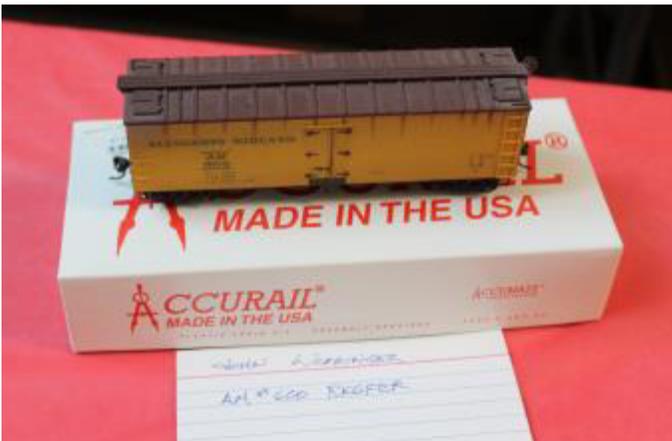
Barry Schmitt found a new material for rock outcroppings.



Tim Himmelberger's Tichy reefer. Don't be deceived by the box...



Martin Brechbiel's scratchbuilt O scale ice house.



John Wissinger's reefer. This one really is an Accurail kit. Note that it is lettered for his home road, the Allegheny Midland, which pre-dates the "other" Allegheny Midland.



The rear side of Martin's structure. The lazy susan made it easy to view the entire structure.



John's scratchbuilt Lake Monitor Sash and Door Company.



Martin's On30 MoW car.

Scale Rails of Southwest Florida Layout Extension Project

While vacating in Ft Myers FL during the month of January I attended the every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday 10AM- 2 PM work sessions at my former all NMRA Club – the Scale Rails of Southwest Florida. My vacation was timed perfectly to join their 10-person team involved in the initial construction of their large 8' x 20' narrow and standard gauge extension to their existing double deck layout. The most interesting part of that project was their use of spline sub-roadbed – something I had read about but never tried. While many use the more traditional Masonite or lattice material for their spline structure, the club by accident wound up using something new to them – ¼" x 1 ½" plywood spline strips.

The club originally planned to use Masonite; however, when they went to Home Depot to purchase a 4' x 8' sheet they found the store was out of stock. While looking at other materials they discovered 4' x 8' sheets of cabinet grade ¼" plywood. One member of the team is a professional carpenter and cabinet maker and recommended using it in place of Masonite. He believed ripping the 1 ½" strips would be easier and produce much less of a mess in their parking lot where they planned to do the strip ripping. He also thought the plywood would be easier to bend and nail-gun together into spline layers. All agreed, they purchased a sheet, and it turned out to be the ideal solution.

After the main extension benchwork was built (photo 1) we cut the 4' x 8' plywood sheet into 8'x 1 ½" spline strips (photo 2). We then used 9 layers for the single track HO mainline. The spline strips were glued, clamped, and nailed in layers (photo 3) and finally nailed to the many vertical risers placed throughout the benchwork (photo 4). After the spline roadbed was checked for level throughout the loop it was hand sanded to eliminate any imperfections (photo 5). Next came gluing down the cork roadbed, installing the flextrack, dropping electrical leads from each flextrack section, and finally making several successful test runs in both directions from both ends of the old layout and around the new loop. We completed the full standard gauge spline loop and test run in just 2, 5-hour work sessions. Like any large model railroad construction project the key to our success was having the right tools (the nail gun was a true time saver), a well thought-out plan, and a top notch team leader who effectively led the effort.

Photo 6 is our ten person team (I'm number 10 taking the photo). And yes, we did have a hard working and talented lady on the team. Photo 7 shows how the project looked on my last day at the club with project designer and manager Jim Morse in the blue shirt. The spaghetti-like oval and multi-level extension will be mainly a narrow gauge climbing switch back operation supporting both logging and coal mine activities. Photo 8 is a drawing of the overall floor to near ceiling heavy mountain extension plan.

If you are ever near Ft Myers let me know and I'll call ahead and arrange a personal tour of the club. I assure you it will be well worth your time.

Barry



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



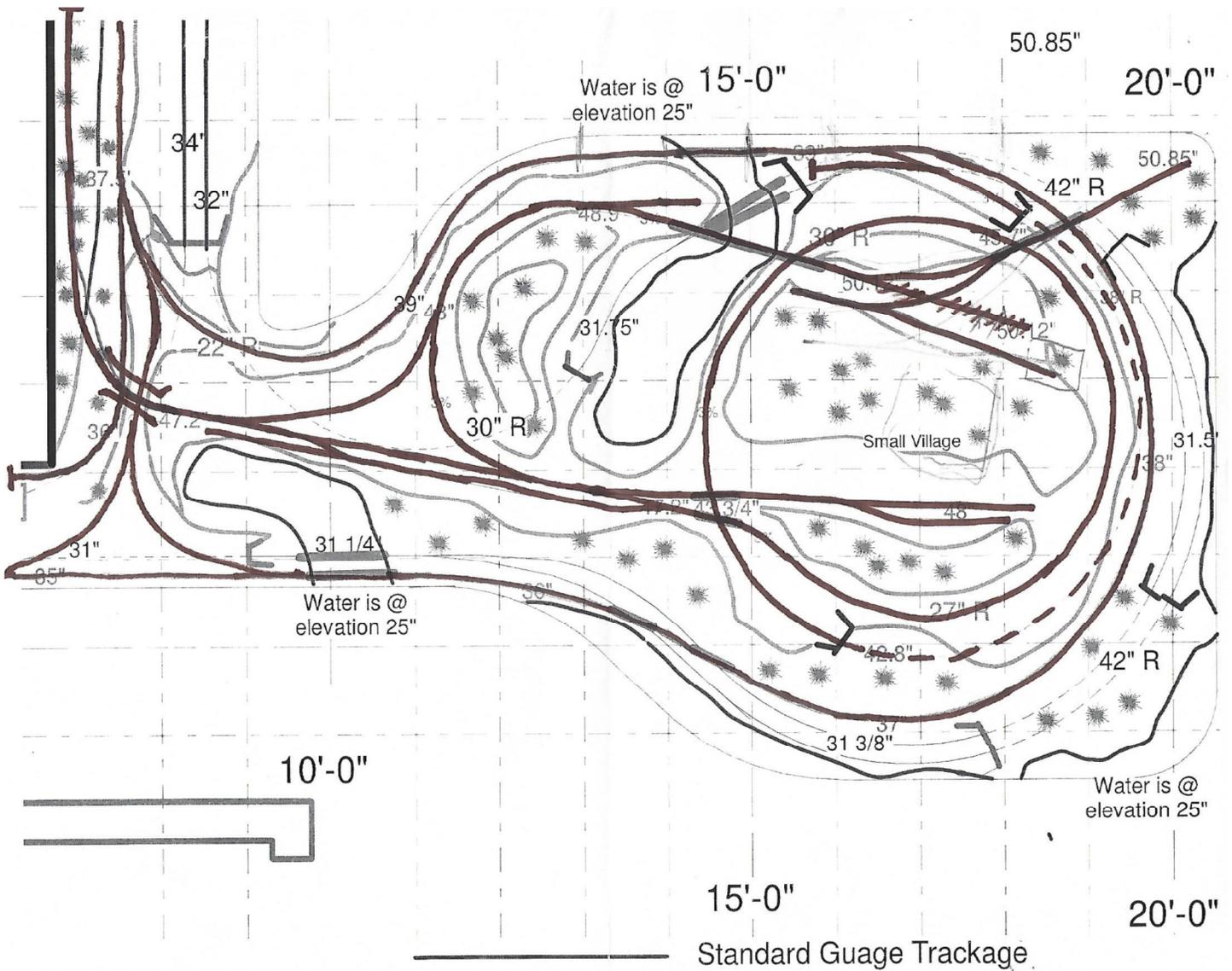
Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



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