

***Round the Curve to Altoona***

October 19-22, 2023

<http://mer2023.org/index.html>



▲ *Frank Coat of Windber will have his Laurel Mountain Division of the PRR transition-era HO-scale layout open for layout tours and operating sessions during the Round the Curve to Altoona 2023 MER Convention.*

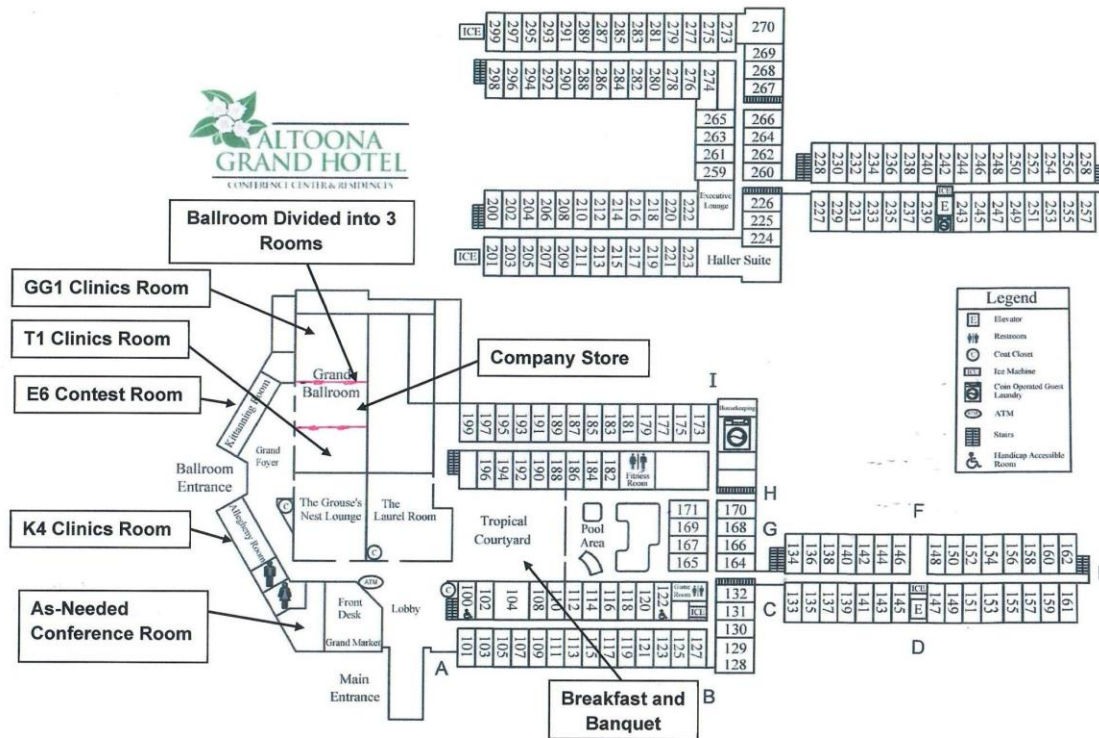
**The early registration discount ended at the end of August! Have you registered?**

We are one month closer to the convention [Round the Curve to Altoona](#) being held October 19-22, 2023 in Altoona, PA, also known as Railroad City. The [Susquehanna Division](#) of the NMRA [Mid-Eastern Region](#) will be our hosts for the convention and has assembled a great program.

The Round the Curve to Altoona convention offers numerous opportunities to participate in your favorite train activities. The program includes: clinics, visits to local layouts, operating sessions on some of these local layouts, real steam railroad tours, model contest, company store, raffle, railfanning, non-rail activities, banquet, and more. The early registration fee of \$70 runs until the end of August. The on-line rate will then increase to \$80, and the on-site rate will be \$90. [Register](#) NOW to have the best selection options.

Explore and keep up to date by visiting the convention website <https://mer2023.org/index.html> on a regular basis. You will find information on registering, hotel reservations, layouts to be open, operating sessions, clinics, steam railroad excursions, railroad museums, and more!

The convention will be held at the [Altoona Grand Hotel](#) which will provide for our convention attendee lodging, meeting rooms, and a banquet. It's only \$89 per night plus taxes; call the hotel directly and reference model railroad convention.



**2023 MER Convention Schedule – Altoona, Oct. 19-22 (as of Aug. 17, 2023)**

**Thursday**

**Registration Desk (Convention Rooms Hallway):** 4-5:30pm / 7:30-9:30pm

**Bus for Western Maryland Scenic Railroad:** 9:30am-5:30pm

**Company Store/Raffle (Center Section of Grand Ballroom):** open 6-9pm

**Clinics (K4, GG1, & T1 Rooms):** 7-9:30pm

**MER BoD Mtg. (Conference Room):** 7pm-?

**Contest (E6 Room):** Open for Contest Entries 7-9pm

**Op Sessions:** 1-5pm / 7-11pm

**Layout Tours:** 12-5pm / 7-10pm

**Vendors:** None

**Modular Layouts:** TBD

**Friday**

**Breakfast (Tropical Courtyard):** 6-10am

**Registration Desk:** 8am-11:30pm / 1:30-5:30pm / 8:30-9:30pm

**Bus for East Broad Top Narrow-Gauge Railroad:** 8:15am-4:15pm

**Editors' Breakfast (Tropical Courtyard):** 7-8am

**Contest:** Open for Contest Entries 10:30am-12pm / 1-5pm / 7-9pm

**Contest Judges Orientation (E6 Room):** 9-10pm

**Clinics:** 8-12pm / 1:30-5:30pm / 7-9:30pm

**Company Store/Raffle Viewing:** 9am-11pm / 12-4pm / 5-9pm

**Op Sessions:** 1-5pm / 7-11pm

**Layout Tours:** 12-5pm / 7-10:30pm

**Modular Layouts:** TBD

**Saturday**

**Breakfast:** 6-10am

**Superintendents' Breakfast (Tropical Courtyard):** 8-10am

**Registration Desk:** 8am-11pm

**Railroaders Memorial Museum and Bennett Memorial Roundhouse Tour:**

9-10:30am / 1-2:30pm; drive yourself

**Contest:** Open for Contest Entries 8-8:30am, closed for judging 8:30am-4pm, open for entry pickups and viewing after banquet until 10pm



**Clinics:** 8am-12pm / 1:30-5:30pm

**Company Store/Raffle/Settlement/Pickup:** 9-11am / 12-3:30pm; raffle drawing at 3:30 with winners posted outside room; pickup prizes and settlements 4:30-5:30pm / after banquet-9:30pm

**Op Sessions:** 1-5pm

**Layout Tours:** 10am-5pm

**Reception & Cash Bar (Tropical Courtyard):** 6:00-6:45pm

**Seating at Banquet Tables:** 6:45-7:00pm

**Banquet:** 7-9pm

## Sunday

**Breakfast:** 7-9am

**Contest Room:** Pickup contest items 8-9am

**Company Store/Raffle/Settlement/Pickup:** 10:30-11:30am

**Conversation with NMRA President, Gordy Robinson (Room TBD):** 9-10am

**MER Annual Meeting (Room TBD):** 10-10:30am

**Layout Tours:** 10am-5pm

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Two excursions to operating steam railways are planned. The first will be to the [Western Maryland Scenic Railroad](#) to ride behind the fully-restored ex-Chesapeake and Ohio 2-6-6-2 #1309. This tour will depart the convention hotel in a modern 52-passenger, restroom-equipped motorcoach and arrive at the 1913 Cumberland depot where we will board the train at 11 am. The 2-hour round trip will make its turn at the 1891 Frostburg depot where a boxed lunch will be distributed. We'll board our motorcoach in Cumberland at 4:00 pm, and will be back at the convention hotel by 5:30 pm. Preregistration is required for the day's activities. The all-inclusive price – tickets, lunch, motorcoach – is \$99. As of 09-06-2023 there are only 8 seats remaining!



The second steam tour will be to ride behind [East Broad Top](#) 2-8-2 #16, returned to service this year for the first time since 1956. This exclusive tour which includes transportation to Rockhill, rail coach tickets, and lunch has sold out. Please note that you can book your own ride behind this legendary locomotive by visiting the linked website and choosing the day that you can be there.

A third, nearby, self-drive-to operating steam tourist railroad is the [Everett Railroad](#) that runs between Hollidaysburg and Roaring Springs, PA. If you plan to ride this train during the convention, please book your [reservation](#) now, because seeing the fall foliage on this ride is very popular in October and coach seats fill quickly.

On Saturday there will be two guided tours at the [Railroaders Memorial Museum](#); one at 9:00 am and the other at 1:00 pm. Tour guests will spend about 45 minutes in the museum proper, and then about 45 minutes in the [Harry Bennett Memorial Roundhouse](#) where the renowned K4s #1361, built in 1918 at the nearby [Juniata Shops](#), is being restored. You can sign up for this private tour on the convention registration form; cost is \$15. As of 09-06-2023 there are only 2 spots available for the afternoon tour. The morning tour is sold out.

There are many self-drive-to rail and non-rail points of interest. These include the [Horseshoe Curve](#), the [Allegheny Portage Railroad](#), the many museums at [Penn State University](#), the [Altoona Rail Walk](#), the [Gallitzin Tunnel](#), and others.

Clinics will be held Thursday through Saturday. Here is a list of the titles, authors, and scheduled times as of August 17, 2023.

Thursday - 10/19/23			
TIMES	101 Room	201 Room	21 Room
7:00 PM	Kurt Thompson MMR -- Returning Contest Judges	John Burchnall -- Prototype Timelines for Modelers	Jane Clarke -- Natural Scenery
8:00 PM			break
8:30 PM	Ernie Liittle MMR -- Becoming a Master Model Railroader		Doug Bosley -- Allegheny Portage Railroad National Park
9:30 PM			
<i>This Make &amp; Take session requires pre-registration and has a maximum of 20 participants (there is no fee).</i>			



Friday - 10/20/23			
TIME	K4 Room	GG1 Room	T1 Room
8:00 AM 9:00 AM	Alan Mende -- Obsessive, Compulsive Detailing Revisited	Brian Sheron MMR -- Expanding the Long Island Railroad	David Ellis -- Expand Your Horizons with Backdrops
9:30 AM 10:30 AM	Alan Mende -- Soldering Essentials	Brian Sheron MMR -- Modeling Urban Scenes	Kevin O'Connor -- Getting a Frieght Car Kit Ready for Your Layout
break			
11:00AM 12:00 PM	Andrew Dodge MMR -- Building Model Structures with Plexiglas	Joe Walters MMR -- Scratch-building a Jordan Spreader	
LUNCH			
1:30 PM 2:30 PM	Andrew Dodge MMR-- Modeling to Prototype Standards and Operating Procedures	Lance Mindheim -- Model Railroading as Art	Jeff Witt -- Remembering John Allen's Gorre & Daphetid Railroad
break			
3:00 PM 4:00 PM	Ron Smith -- PCC Trolley Restorations	Lee Rainey -- East Broad Top 101	Jeff Witt -- John Allen in Print: A Survey of his Publications
break			
4:30 PM 5:30 PM	Ernie Little MMR -- Building a Programming Track/Using Decoder Pro to Program a Locomotive	Bob Bucklew -- JMRI Throttles and Virtual Signals	John Sokash -- Pennsy Steam Locomotives
DINNER			
7:00 PM 8:00 PM	Alan Maples -- The Everett Railroad Story	Kurt Thompson MMR -- TinkerCAD	Jack Dziadul -- Building a RR Tool Shed
break			
8:30 PM 9:30 PM	Jim Fisher -- Introduction to Technical Aspects of DCC		
<i>These two-part clinics are Make &amp; Take sessions that require pre-registration and a small fee.</i>			
<i>This clinic requires pre-registraion and a laptop computer.</i>			



<b>Saturday - 10/21/23</b>			
<b>TIME</b>	<b>1st Room</b>	<b>2nd Room</b>	<b>3rd Room</b>
8:00 AM	Dr. John Pursell -- Misers Guide to Model Railroading	Brian Sheron MMR -- Building an Automatic Operational RR Crossing	Mike Prokop -- Easy Coal Loads
9:00 AM			
<b>break</b>			
9:30 AM	Andrew Dodge MMR -- Reconfiguring a Layout: From the Colorado Rockies to the Rocky Coast of Maine	Brian Sheron MMR -- Details Can Make the Difference	Mike Prokop -- On the Waterfront
10:30 AM			
<b>break</b>			
11:00AM	Lance Mindheim -- Layout Planning: Putting the Horse Before the Cart	Rob Hinkle -- Researching and Designing a Hershey Inspired Reading Layout	John Burchnall -- Engineering Secrets of Eastern Loggers
12:00 PM			
<b>LUNCH</b>			
1:30 PM	Bernie Kempinski MMR -- Manifest Destiny - Expanding the USMRR Aquia Line	Andy Blenko -- Design of the Pittsburgh Mainline Layout	Jeff Witt -- The Gorre & Daphetid: Past, Present & Future
2:30 PM			
<b>break</b>			
3:00 PM	Joe Walters MMR -- Building the PROSES Locomotive House	Tom Neukirchen -- Garden Railroading from Beginning to Now	Matthew Hurst -- The Supplee Milk Cars
4:00 PM			
<b>break</b>			
4:30 PM	Bernie Kempinski MMR -- Waterfront Terminals and Operations	Jim Rose -- Consider Mixed Scales and Gauges in Layout Planning	Matthew Hurst -- Supplee Milk Car Operations
5:30 PM			
6:00 PM	<b>RECEPTION</b>		
7:00 PM	<b>ANNUAL BANQUET</b>		

**There will be eleven model railroads open for tours.** Please see the convention website for [dates and times](#). Three of those railroads will also have op sessions; register for the op sessions on the convention [registration form](#).

**The Company Store** will have on display all of the raffle items that have been donated by hobby shops and industries as well as individual modelers. Raffle tickets may be purchased in the Company Store or from volunteers who may be walking around the convention venue including the registration desk area.

Also located in the Company Store will be the [White Elephant sale](#). This is where registrants can bring model railroading items (kits, cars, locomotives, tools, structures, books, etc.) that they would like to sell. They put the price on the items and at the conclusion of the convention can receive the cash if the item sold.

Instructions for White Elephant sale items are posted on a downloadable spreadsheet on the [convention website](#) under the White Elephant tab. On the spreadsheet, please complete the entry for each item you want to sell. When finished attach the spreadsheet to an email and send it to the email address provided on the spreadsheet. Please return your spreadsheet list by **Monday October 16** to allow the staff time to prepare the necessary paperwork and database.

For any questions contact Howard Oakes at [business@mer-nmra.com](mailto:business@mer-nmra.com)

**There are many fine restaurants in the Altoona area.** An interactive map showing the location of these restaurants as well as many of the points of interest can be seen by clicking [here](#).

**Please remember that NMRA President Gordy Robinson will be at this convention for all three days!** He will present NMRA highlights and will answer questions from the convention attendees Sunday morning between 9 and 10am.



The Saturday evening banquet will be in the Tropical Courtyard. Meal choices at \$57 per person are:

- Penne Pasta Primavera with herb roasted vegetables & white wine cream sauce
- Roasted Chicken marinated in chicken velouté, with mashed potatoes, and green bean almandine
- Herb encrusted salmon with herb roasted vegetables, wild rice pilaf, and lemon herb sauce
- Filet Mignon in a red wine demiglace with asparagus & whipped boursin potatoes

After the meal, awards will be presented to the winners of the model contest, and our banquet speaker will be Joe DeFrancesco, CEO of the Railroaders Memorial Museum.



Tropical Courtyard

Joe DeFrancesco

