



THE PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER

Official publication of the Philadelphia Division
of the Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

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The Philadelphia Division is pleased to announce that we will be conducting our next meeting on Saturday, June 12th at Saint Alban's Church in Newtown Square, PA. The doors will open at 9:30 AM, with the meeting beginning at approximately 10:00 AM. All members are encouraged to attend. A map is located on page 3 of this issue.

The clinics for this meet will include a presentation by Jim Dalberg on railfanning in the Lehigh Valley area. Many of these slides cover areas Jim has modeled on his extensive home layout. There will be additional clinics presented, but the schedule has not been confirmed at presstime.

The contest for this meeting will be weathered models. That's right; anything you have that is weathered can be brought for this popular vote contest. It can be a structure, locomotive, freight or passenger car, figure, or a tree, whatever! This is a little different twist, so let's see what you bring.

After the meeting, the STARR modular railroad will be conducting an operating session for you to participate in. This extensive layout includes a long mainline run and much local switching. Control is by DCC. Here is a great opportunity to get your feet wet in operations if you haven't done it before, plus the chance to use DCC in an operating session to see the many advantages it offers.

Burned teens sue railroads

By Brett Lovelace

Two teenagers who were severely burned by an electrical wire in 2002 while they were on the roof of a parked railroad car near the 700 block of New Holland Avenue are suing Norfolk Southern and Amtrak for damages in excess of \$150,000. The lawsuit, filed earlier this month in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, claims the accident could have been prevented had there been signs warning the teens of the electricity surging through the catenary wires stretched above the railroad car. The wires power locomotives.

Jeffrey Klein and Brett Birdwell, who were both 17 at the time, climbed the Norfolk Southern railroad car parked on Amtrak property on Aug. 10, 2002, to "see what the view looked like from there," according to the civil complaint. Norfolk Southern Railroad spokesman Randy Husband declined to comment on the lawsuit, immediately available for comment.

Klein, of East Stroudsburg, was burned first and collapsed on the railroad car. Birdwell was burned after touching Klein. Klein suffered second- and third-degree burns over 75 percent of his body, including his left ear, neck, shoulders, arms, left hand, back and groin. He was treated at Temple University Hospital, Philadelphia.

Birdwell, of Stroudsburg, was

burned on his face, forearms, wrists, hands and left leg. He was treated at Crozer-Chester Burn Center, Danville.

Lancaster attorney Joseph F. Roda, who is representing Klein and Birdwell, wrote in the lawsuit that "if a sign warning of the danger of electrical arcing had been posted next to the ladder that Jeffrey and Brett climbed, neither boy would have climbed that ladder."

In the lawsuit, Roda cited a 1986 Federal Railroad Administration report as saying: "Electrical current of catenaries is so great that shocks can result without actual contact with wire; Warning signs along electrified railroads can reduce accidents; Signs should provide both symbolic representation such as a lightning bolt and the warning legend." The railroad tracks are located near Grandview Plaza at East Ross Street and New Holland Avenue. Trespassing is prohibited on the tracks.

A flash illuminated the sky when Klein was burned. Witnesses called 911 at 10:19 p.m. and firefighters subsequently rescued the teens. Investigators found a skateboard on top of the railroad car near Klein and Birdwell.

One of the problems with being the editor of a newsletter such as The Dispatcher is, no matter what happens it needs to be out and it needs to be out on time. This issue is a little late and a little thin, and I must offer my apologies to all the division's members.

My family suffered the loss of my father Eugene E. Salotti on Sunday, May 2nd. Being involved in making all the necessary arrangements and caring for my mother has left precious little time for any hobby activities, and thus the delay.

Division member Paul Backenstose has prepared the following report on the RPM Meet hosted by the Division in March of this year. If you missed this, you missed one of the best model railroading activities to happen in the Philadelphia Division in quite some time. I hope you won't miss it in the future.

Railroad Prototype Modelers-Valley Forge

Railroad Prototype Modelers-Valley Forge is history and was, by all accounts, a huge success. 174 people attended and brought along 312 high quality models for display. Attendees were from as far away as Portland, Maine and England.

The idea for holding an RPM Meet in the Philadelphia area began in a van returning from an RPM Meet in Pittsburgh in March of 2003. The occupants of the van, Paul Backenstose, Jim

Dalberg, Dick Foley, Bud Kaiser, and Ken McCorry agreed to try holding an RPM Meet and to seek sponsorship from the Philadelphia Division. This sponsorship was approved and a Committee was formed. Andy Hart, Val Pistilli, and Steve Salotti joined the five van passengers on the Committee. The next order of business was to decide on a hotel. The Desmond was chosen and turned out to be an excellent choice. Publicity was sent out and we sat back and waited (and waited) for registrations to come in. Registrations were slow in coming in and we had visions of the Division losing money, which certainly wasn't our intent.

Come winter, things started picking up with eventually 122 people pre-registering and 52 people registering at the door. This is far more than we expected. Surveys, e mails, letters, and conversations all indicated a high level of praise for our first RPM Meet. Tentative plans call for RPM-Valley Forge to be held every other year.

Paul Backenstose



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Submissions: The PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER welcomes any model railroad- or railroad-related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc. Submissions are preferred typed, double-spaced. The editor reserves the right to, when necessary, paraphrase small portions of the text in order to fit the space available.

Next issue: September 2004. Due out approx. Sept. 1. Deadline: August 15.

Membership: \$7.00 per year. Address all membership applications, renewals; address changes, etc. to the Clerk. If the date in the upper-right corner of your mailing label is highlighted, your membership will expire soon. Please pay at the next meet or mail payment to the Clerk. Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Division, NMRA."

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From the Superintendent

Well, the end of the Spring Model Railroading season is almost upon us, and it is time for the Summer modeling season. Remember to re-mark your calendars for the 12 June Meet at St. Albans Church. In addition to the morning program, in the afternoon, StARR will host an operation on their modular railroad in the basement. This is a large, dispatcher controlled DCC operation with plenty of room to run trains. They have re-done the main yard. If you haven't operated before, this is a great way to start and find out if this facet of the hobby is for you. There will be folks to help you out. As some of you know I have been involved in operations (defined as running a railroad (reasonably) like the prototype) for many years (36 and counting), so I tend to push this aspect of the hobby. Operations may not be for everyone, but give it a try—at least you'll know how it is done on one railroad!

I really like all aspects of the hobby, although wiring is probably a little farther down the list than other things. That's what I like about DCC—simplicity: as Win Gross, expert extraordinaire, says, or at least I think I heard him say, "...only two wires, but one should be red...".

Several Divisionnaires attended the recent joint MCR-MER Regional Convention in Pittsburgh. There were over 80 from various parts of the MER. There were a number of good clinics, several tours and some interesting layouts to visit, all of which made it very enjoyable.

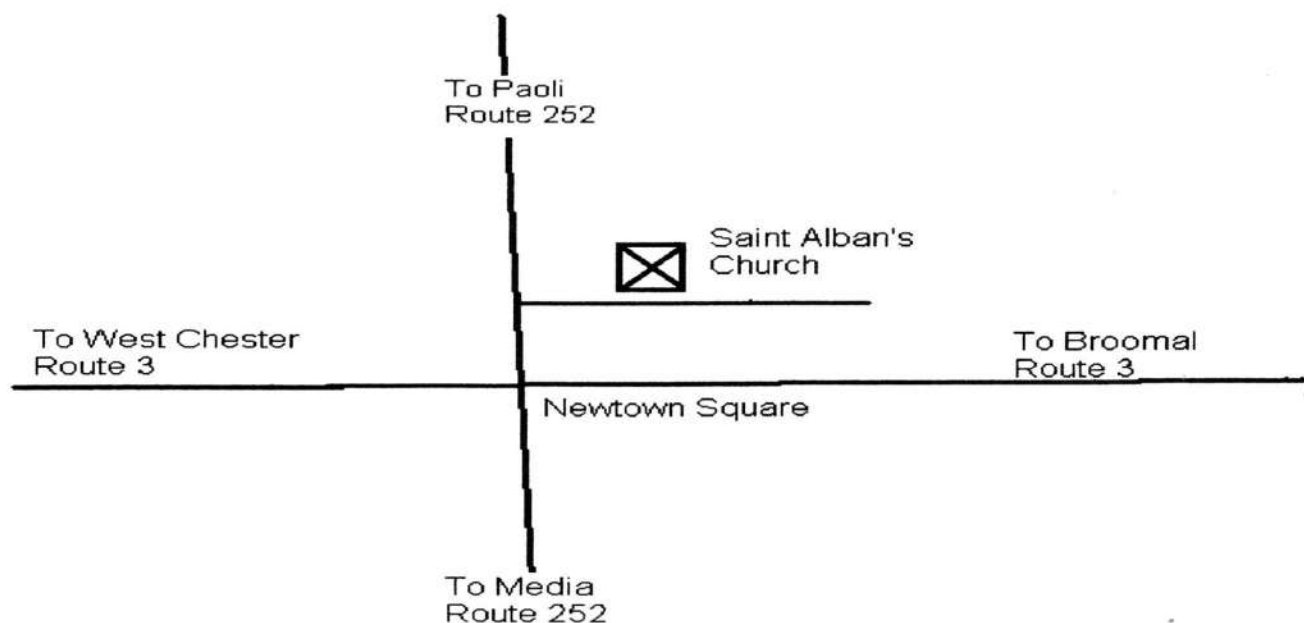
We have two more meets scheduled for this year: one in September (18th) and one in November (6th). In addition the MER Fall Meet will be in Hagerstown the weekend of 12-14 November. I encourage everyone to attend. In that regard, attendance at recent Division meets has been a little sparse, and I am not sure why. I do know that there are only so many Saturdays, and we are competing with a plethora of other activities, but we (your Board) are interested in your comments for improvements.

In March, the Division sponsored a very successful Rail Prototype Modeler Meet (RPM). Chaired by the ever able Paul Backenstose, and held at the Desmond Great Valley, we had 170+ attendees from places afar as Maine, Upper New York and the Washington, D.C. area, as well as many from our own area. In fact, given that this was our first time for running one of these meets, attendance was well beyond our expectations, and we are considering hosting another in early 2006. For those of you who buy or read RMC, there was a nice write-up in the most recent issue. We will give some further information at the June Meet.

With that, I hope to see you at the Meet in June.

Jim Dalberg

Map to Saint Alban's Church in Newtown Square



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Inside: RPM meet
Division Meet

Do you need to renew? If the date on your mailing label is highlighted, please renew promptly. Thank you for renewing promptly.

Discounts for Division Members at Local Hobby Shops

Be sure to patronize the area's hobby shops that are now offering discounts on model railroading purchases to members of the Philadelphia Division.

Kenwood Model Hobbies

8436 Perry Hwy, Rt. 19
Pgh., PA 15237-5228
10% discount
(412)-364-2913

Herb's Hobbies and Crafts

200 W. State St. in Doylestown

\$25 of free merchandise for every \$250 spent

Iron Horse Hobby Shop

60 S. 6th St. in Reading
10% discount with \$10 min purchase

Nicholas Smith Trains

2343 West Chester Pike (3) in Bromall
10% discount (excludes O & G items)

Jenkintown Train & Hobby

Greenwood Ave & Leedom St
Jenkintown, PA 19046
5% in addition to discounted prices

Lin's Junction

128 South Line St.
Lansdale, PA 194446
5% in addition to already discounted prices

Mitchell's Family Store

2119 Concord Pike (202) in Wilmington DE
10% discount on train department items

Bussinger Trains

Old Ambler Station, Ambler
10-12% off retail